### Primitive Liars

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**Summary**

Light is a being of intellect, not of instinct; however, he may be starting to understand that the two are not mutually exclusive. While he struggles to define himself in an unjust world, a new Kira holds society - along with a couple other valuable things - hostage.

(Omegaverse AU. L/Light, Matt/Mello/Near and others to be announced.)
PART ONE: Prologue

Instinct is intelligence incapable of self-consciousness. –John Sterling

Though there were several fortunate circumstances surrounding the day Light Yagami presented as Omega, the young man could not manage to consider himself lucky.

It was true, of course, that he had not started going into heat in public, with no notice at all. It wasn’t uncommon and it was rare for the Omega in question to get out completely unscathed.

He’d been in his room when he’d felt the first stirrings. The twinge of pain in his stomach that he’d assumed meant he was merely hungry. He’d ignored it for quite some time before reaching a stopping point in the essay he was writing. It wasn’t the first time he’d forgotten to eat during hours of studying and homework, so he’d picked himself up and headed downstairs to see when dinner was going to be ready.

Light hadn’t even reached the kitchen when the pain in his stomach sharpened and his steps actually faltered, pressing a hand to the wall to steady himself. Still calm, still quiet, not wanting to disturb either of his family members over nothing. He could smell the stir-fry his mother was making from where he stood, hear her humming over the sizzle of the pan. His eyes shifted over to the living room, where he could see Sayu sitting on the floor, painting her toenails and watching a popular TV show, giggling here and there or sighing when a particularly handsome actor came onto the screen.

The food smelled amazing, but almost too strong. As if it was seasoned too much. It seemed an odd mistake, as his mother had been an excellent cook for as long as he could remember.

He could smell the nail polish too, and it almost made his nose curl it was so foul. It nearly soured his appetite all together.

The next pain brought the slightest of noises to his lips, because it wasn’t just discomfort, it was warmth too. His first deduction had been gas, as childish as it was, but that wouldn’t make him feel like a fever had started at his core and was spreading up through his chest and down through his legs.

Appendicitis. That would make sense. It had to, didn’t it? It could not be anything else.

Not a single damned thing.

Though fevers due to actual medic conditions didn’t start in the abdomen, and the pain wasn’t intense, just a subtle cramping that he wasn’t at all used to that was already starting to fade.

If it was appendicitis, then he should tell his mother now. Right now. He’d be taken to the hospital and the treacherous organ would be removed. Then he could go back to normal. He just had to tell her now, before it got worse.

He was silent.

“Are you okay, Light?”
Fuck.

That was when he’d felt the first of it leaking down his thigh, thick and molten and awful. The very moment when the fear that had been nudging at the back of his mind came to fruition.

This was where a second smidgeon of good luck showed itself. All of his immediate family were Betas, even his father who wasn’t home, and so they could not smell the terrible, stinking Omegan bodily fluid that was currently forming inside for the first time. Sayu had not presented as either other second gender yet, though she was about that age.

Though presenting at sixteen was a on the late end of the spectrum, it was not unheard of, statistically speaking. Light was not exactly an outlier.

But Light did not want to think of statistics.

He wanted to fucking scream.

“Light?” The tone in Sayu’s voice had grown more concerned now, and only then had Light realized that he’d been completely ignoring her. He took a long, steadying breath and fixed his eyes on his sister, trying to give her a reassuring smile. It worked, of course, faking smiles was kind of his specialty but he couldn’t help but think it wasn’t as genuine as it usually was.

“Sorry, Sayu…I think I’m coming down with something.” Light spoke after a moment, taking his hand from the wall and standing up straighter, though his every fiber wanted to curl protectively over the heat in his stomach.

“Yeah, you do sort of look sick to your stomach,” Sayu agreed with a frown, glancing down at her still-drying toes as if she would have come over to check on him if she could.

Another spark of good fortune, then. He hadn’t wanted anyone to touch him like this, even family.

Though nausea wasn’t strictly one of the symptoms of heat, even first heats, Light was sure what she said was true. He’d likely gone pale with the realization, and he could even smell the slight sheen of sweat that had started to manifest on his skin.

Increased olfaction. He hadn’t noticed it before, not really, and now it struck him as an unkind addition for what he knew he was about to go through. The teenager grit his teeth as another wave of warmth spread through him, surely intending to envelope him. He had to get out of here. Had to prepare, in whatever way he could, without drawing attention to what was about to happen to him.

“Please tell mom not to disturb me. I’m just going to go try to sleep it off so I don’t miss any school.” His voice was much calmer than he felt, which he was proud of. It was the only thing he could currently think to be proud of in that moment.

“Ah, okay, do you need anything--?”

But Light was already half way up the stairs, all but bolting to the linen closet next to the bathroom. He’d pushed off the clawing panic in his chest to make room for rationality. He was a logical boy, methodical and systematic to the point of compulsion. Quickly, he thought of what he was going to need for the next two or three days.

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God, he hoped it didn’t last that long, but without someone to share it with, that prediction was an optimistic one.

He’d brought a mug of coffee up to his room earlier in the day. Check. He went to the bathroom and
filled it with water from the sink that he otherwise would have never ingested.

Towels. Check. He draped a couple of them over his bed so that they would keep whatever mess that was even now running down his leg.

An extra sheet to cover up with, because he doubted he’d want the weight of his duvet on him when —

Well. When it started.

He cursed himself for not knowing more about what to expect. He knew anatomy and physiology, obviously, but he wished that he’d read up on the experience before now. He knew there were plenty of books to help prepare those who thought they might present Omega through the experience, but he had never considered himself a god damned candidate. Generally, even before presentation, it wasn’t that difficult to guess what a young person might grow up to be.

Light had never been overly sentimental, or openly compassionate. He didn’t giggle, or shy away from leadership roles or talk about clothes, however much he took pride in his appearance. These were all complete generalizations, he knew, but they were not completely without basis. He’d never once seen the possibility in himself.

It was insulting, as well as terrifying.

He stripped down to his boxers, and mopped up the mess that was covering his thighs. The part of him that was a scientist took note of how clear the biological lubricant was, how thick and slippery. How disgusting, when he thought of the reason it was there, that not even a century ago Omegas had been considered breeding machines, property of Alphas, meant only to be mounted and to rear children.

His life. His whole goddamned life could have been over.

If he hadn’t been at home when it started. If he hadn’t locked his doors, drawn his curtains and suffered through the humiliating experience as quietly as he could. If even just one member of his family had been able to smell him, either as an Alpha or Omega. Even he could smell himself, the sickly sweet scent of slick running down his legs and drenching the layers of towels beneath him as he ached for a fullness that he would never allow himself.

He’d missed two days of school. His mother had come to check on him and he’d told her it was the flu, that he wouldn’t unlock the door because he didn’t want her to catch it. She’d been upset with him. He had been too out of his mind to care.

During the evenings, when his mother and sister were home, he bit down on one of the hand towels he’d taken and sobbed silently through the worst of it. When his mother went out to run errands during the day, he stole a couple showers, got more water, ate whatever he could stomach and waited for the next wave.

While she was away on the first day, he threw a fucking tantrum, screaming and cursing God, science, himself, his parents—anything that might in some way be responsible for the quivering lump of hormones he’d turned into.

Even alone, with no one to see the shameful state he was in but himself, it was the most mortifying experience of his entire young life.

When he awoke early on the morning of the fourth day, feeling vaguely human again, the first thing he did was vow that he would never let himself agonize in such away again. He would not allow his
body to rule his mind, he would not let his biology ruin his entire fucking life.

After he’d showered thoroughly, and washed everything that he’d touched in the last few strenuous days, twice, he left his house for the first time since, every nerve on edge, horrified by the idea that someone might still be able to smell him.

If any of the strangers he passed on the way picked up his scent, they ignored him. He stopped at a store to buy an over-sized hooded sweatshirt, pulling the hood down low to shadow his face, then took a bus to the other side of the city. It was a part of town that he hadn’t ever been to before, with the sort of people that made his faith in humanity sneer.

But no one recognized him at the free clinic. He was just one of many teenagers with aliases who came through to pick up suppressants, just another pathetic Omega trying to make it by.

He took his pills and studied and tried not to think about the creature he was under his skin, the one that hid beneath a layer of suppressants, that would—if he missed a dose—allow his traitor of a body to break down once more. To whimper and beg at nothing and ache *inside* for a knot, any one, any god damned one would do—

So, perhaps he was lucky, but more so than that, he was determined. Obstinate. Suppressants and scent blockers and birth control, he did everything in his power to hide, to make sure that not a single person in the world would truly see him. As far as they were concerned, Light Yagami was a Beta. Just a normal fucking Beta, like the rest of his family.

Perhaps not normal, he never had been. Intelligent, hard-working, studious. One of the top students in Japan, a future member prized of the NPA. That was who he was, who he’d always been, and certainly not *in spite* of being an Omega.

He was brilliant, lovely, perfect son with no secrets at all.
“Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another.” — Arthur Conan Doyle

“I understand, Matsuda-san, but please calm down—making a scene won’t help anything.”

“But Light-kun.” The words came out as a long, high pitched whine. “If they don’t let me on this case I don’t know what I’ll do.”

“Of course you know. You’ll work on a different case.”

“But this case is important,” insisted the older man, and Light was as patient as ever.

“Every case is important,”

That halted him for a moment. “Yeah—yeah, of course, but…it’s not…it’s just not the same.”

Regarding his companion from behind his desk, Light couldn’t help but pity him. It wasn’t even that Matsuda was a drama queen; he truly was as devastated by the news that he would not be allowed to work on such a high priority case. None of it was put on, it never was. Matsuda just felt things—joy, surprise, sorrow—with an intensity that must have been draining, especially because he exuded every bit of it. Every facial feature, every muscle in his body seemed to be designed to convey his feelings with exactness that was nearly excruciating.

It was no wonder, really, that everyone thought he was an idiot.

“Listen, I’m going to try to talk to them, but the case is pretty elite.” Light paused, giving a sheepish smile as he offered a benevolent lie. “I was probably chosen purely on nepotism.”

The older man’s face contorted so quickly from abject misery to shock and horror. Light wondered if his face actually hurt at the end of each day with all the exercise it got.

“No way! You were chosen because you’re so good!” Matsuda flattered him, but he did so with such sincerity that it was almost disconcerting. “I mean, I don’t think we would have gotten that last guy, if it weren’t for you.”

At this, Light couldn’t help but sour somewhat.

“I’d hardly count Yuko Kamimura as gotten, Matsuda-san.” Light ignored the twitch of Matsuda’s lips as he called him ‘san’ for the millionth time. It wasn’t even about propriety anymore. He was friendly enough with the Omega at this point that he’d started to openly enjoy annoying him. “Even with his sentencing hearing next week, I’m not going to assume anything.”
“Come on—you don’t think so?”

“He hasn’t been sentenced yet, and his father was a judge many people though highly of.” He couldn’t help but sneer at the notion, straightening a pen on his desk that hadn’t been out of place to begin with. “I’m not going to assume that he’s going away for good until it’s done.”

That made Matsuda pause and frown thoughtfully. He knew well enough that Light was correct.

Perhaps, three years ago, when he was fresh out of To-Oh, he might have been satisfied with simply catching the criminal. The few cases he’d worked on before joining the NPA had all been cut and dry, with criminals so deplorable or greedy that there was no question of their guilt.

But after becoming an actual officer, he’d seen that arresting the criminal was only the first half of the equation. He’d never been all that interested in the trial; it was all formalities, he’d thought. He’d never looked past the confession or the concrete evidence, because the puzzle was solved, the mystery clarified. But in many cases that did not mean that criminal was no longer a threat to innocent people.

Brilliantly solving a case and snagging a villain was an incredible feeling, to be sure. However, on more than one occasion the prosecution had screwed up, forensics had lost valuable evidence, the judge was too lenient or the jury was bought off.

It was infuriating.

Light was bothered by it more than he allowed himself to show. It wasn’t professional, and his father had very gentle views on the subject that Light would rather not challenge openly, out of respect. He couldn’t very well declare that he thought a life sentence was too little, that he thought the man should be locked away for life, for good, if not murdered in the precise way his victims had been—

Sometimes the anger did not go away as neatly as he’d prefer. His eyes flashed, or he seethed quietly, or his fist clenched by his side. They were little moments where the injustice wouldn’t release him.

Matsuda had seen it in him more than once. Which was why he looked at him with those dark, soft eyes, like he was right now, as if Light were not nearly twenty-five years old. The man, despite all of his childishness, could act like a real mother hen sometimes.

Omegas.

The thought came to him without warning, and he quickly turned a page in his head.

“Maybe karma will get him.” Matsuda offered this consolingly, but his words came out louder than he’d meant them to in his fervor. He flushed slightly, glancing around, and Aizawa looked at him disapprovingly. The gaze, even from a Mated Alpha, was more than enough to cow the emotional man. “I didn’t mean—”

“That isn’t funny. You should joke about people dying,” the tone was firm. Though Light agreed, he didn’t really see how it was really Aizawa’s place to chastise Matsuda like a child.

Even though Alphas comprised only 20% of Japan’s population, law enforcement was comprised of 64% Alphas, 29% Betas, leaving only tiny sliver of the pie chart for Omegas. Most of them worked in office jobs even still, generally considered at least a slight liability. Even those that actively tried to make Matsuda feel like part of the team still tended to talk down to him out of habit.

“I know, I really do,” the Omega over-explained. “It’s not that I think some unknown force of nature
“Good,” Aizawa stated, only partly appeased. “Because saying karma like that seems like you’re hinting at ridiculous urban legends that have no place in an office of law.”

“I didn’t quite mean it like that—“

“Then how did you mean it?”

Light spoke up now, politely appealing, “I don’t think that Matsuda was trying to hint that Kira exists, Aizawa-san.”

Dark eyes moved from Matsuda and over to where Light sat back in his chair. He brushed a strand of hair from his eyes and gave a nonchalant gesture, a small motion of his hand.

“Karma was a concept long before ‘Kira Karma’ or ‘Kira Kira’ or whatever you want to call it was. That’s a relatively new idea—a fad, even. A morbid fascination that the world has with the occasional strangely fitting freak accident.”

“I’m well aware of that,” Aizawa spoke as if Light had proven his point.

“Matsuda-san was merely saying that he hopes that Yuko gets what’s coming to him, in the spirit of the original principle, rather than nodding toward any non-existent entity that the internet’s fallen in love with,” Light concluded amiably enough, and gave Matsuda his moment to chime in.

“Yeah! Exactly, I didn’t mean Kira. We just all want that monster Yuko put away, right? That’s all.”

Aizawa sighed and rubbed his temples. “…Yeah, I’m sorry, Matsuda-san. Yumi’s just gotten that age where she thinks it’s… fun. There are damned jump-rope songs with Kira Kira in it now.”

“Oh man, I’m sorry, Aizawa-san!”

Matsuda seemed pleased that he was no longer the subject of Aizawa’s frustrations and Light nodded agreeably. He was quite aware of how ridiculous the entire idea of some sentient cosmic entity coming down to strike down the wicked with painful irony.

Despite his words, Light knew that—though the masses had turned the unknown figure into one--Kira was not just a fad. He was a person, an impossible person with an incredible, terrifying power, but one nonetheless.

Saying so to anyone in the NPA could majorly discredit a person, however, and so Light kept his suspicions to himself.

“It any case,” Light went on after the pause, uncrossing his legs and standing up. “It’s about time for the meeting, isn’t it? My father likes you, but you won’t convince the board you’re serious if you show up late.”

Matsuda’s face did another abrupt twist to an expression of surprise and outrage.

“Wha—you’ll be late as well, you know!”

“I’m already on the case,” Light replied, raising his eyebrows as he buttoned his suit jacket with a fluid motion. “You aren’t. You did say you wanted to be, did you?”

“Well—” There was a hopelessness in the sag of Matsuda’s shoulders that spoke for him. It was uncomfortable sensation, one that Light often got when he noticed the subtle discrimination that the
other man faced on a day to day basis.

It wasn’t common for Omegas to join law enforcement, and when they did they had to be twice as good in order to get the credit they deserved. Matsuda was not twice as good, but he wasn’t stupid either. There were Alphas and Betas on the Yoshiro case that had a worse track record than he did, but had either bullied or schmoozed their way onto the team.

At times Light grew frustrated with him, with how very open he was. How sweet and smiley and Omegan he was, because if he just acted a little more passable he might not suffer so much—

He drew in a breath, inhaling slowly. That wasn’t fair of him, even just to think, and he knew it.

Matsuda was every bit his second gender, and that was fine, but in this field that was just…difficult. It shouldn’t have been, but it was, which was why he’d known from the moment he’d realized his own nature that he’d have to hide it. Wasting precious time proving himself would mean less cases solved, and he would have made enemies of Alphas who didn’t like being shown up. He was already doing that, of course, but it would have been a terrible hindrance. Every genius deduction he made would have been considered a fluke by half of the NPA, every word of anger he spoke would be dismissed with a comment like “Someone’s heat is coming up soon”, every mistake (however rare that was) would be taken as proof that he did not belong.

Light didn’t have the patience, time or pride for that nonsense.

He wasn’t sure if that meant Matsuda was brave in a way that he was not, or if he was just that much more willing to sacrifice an entire part of himself for the sake of his career.

“We’re going to get you on the case.” Light said eventually, as firmly as possible, his chin high, exuding a confidence he knew would instinctively put Matsuda at ease. It worked. He picked up his file of notes for the status meeting and nodded toward Matsuda’s. “Come on. You don’t want to forget those.”

“…Again.” Matsuda commented as he took the folder in hand.

“I didn’t say anything,” Light told him as he started walking toward the conference room, at this point actually somewhat concerned that they might not make it in time.

“I know.” Matsuda said after a moment, appearing at his side.

And just like that, his brave, stupid grin had returned.

Light couldn’t stand to look at it, so he rolled his eyes good-naturedly and lead the way to the conference room.

Chapter End Notes

More about Kira in the next chapter. Please let me know what you think!
Throughout his last years of high school, Light had never been quite sure that the suppressants were going to work the way that he wanted them too. He’d never known anyone who hid their second gender—or, at least, no one who had shared the information with him. He remembered in middle school there had been a large scandal in France that a popular movie star, known for the tender, sweet Omega characters, had later been revealed as an Alpha. The media had a field day with that one.

But, as far as Light knew, it had taken a team of agents and managers to keep that a secret. He’d never heard of anyone doing it by themselves.

And so each day he sat on edge, waiting for someone to smell him, or for a new heat to sneak up on him. He picked up the habit of sitting by the door wherever he went, especially in school, where he spent most of his teenage existence. While generally he preferred to sit by the window, a few rows back, so that he could gaze out and day dream rather than be bored with the lecture, he changed position as soon as possible so that he could make a quick escape if things went wrong.

They never had. There were only few close calls that ended up being paranoia.

He’d read up on suppressants as soon as he’d started taking them and learned that they were never 100%, especially in situations of great stress. Panicking was not good for him, and while he was not the type to hyperventilate over nothing at all, he rather thought that going into heat in front of all of his classmates was a worthy stressor.

But time had passed and no one had ever smelled him. His scent blockers and suppressants worked; hadn’t had another heat since that first.

Yet still, eight years later, he had not kicked the habit of sitting in the seat closest to the door, whenever possible. It was no longer something that he’d thought about for quite some time, but his mind was trained after formative years living in constant uncertainty.

Today he was not on alert, sitting leisurely in one of the many armchairs that were set fastidiously around the NPA waiting area, idly typing into his phone to pass the time.

You’re late.
He’d only just pressed send on the text when he heard a familiar voice call his name.

“Light!”

He stood up as Sayu approached at a jog, smiling at him and waving unnecessarily. Her vibrant dress swayed around her as she did so, giving her the appearance of a girl younger than she was. She stopped a few feet away from him, digging her phone out of her purse as it chimed.

“Hey, I’m not that late.”

“I didn’t say you were that late, just that you were.” Light smiled pleasantly and gestured toward the doors, where the limo waited for them. “Shall we?”

“Yeah, we don’t want to miss the reservation.” Sayu took his arm and lead him outside, to where their parents were sitting in the back of the vehicle. “You really went all out for them, Light. You should have seen mom’s face when the limo pulled up.”

“It’s their twenty-sixth anniversary. I recently got a raise, so I decided to treat them,” Light responded casually, as if it were the only thing to do. He released her arm as the driver got out of the car just to open the door for them, giving a bow as he did so.

“Right, because you basically solved that one case all by yourself.”

“It wasn’t all by myself, Sayu. There were several other men on the team,” Light replied modestly, letting Sayu climb in ahead of him.

“He’s right, Sayu,” Light heard his father say as he slid into the seat beside his sister. The door closed shortly after and Light settled in, crossing one leg over the other. Soichiro continued sagely, “It takes more than one man’s work to bring a criminal to justice.”

“Of course, dad,” Sayu agreed amiably, and Light inclined his head respectfully.

“Though sometimes,” He spoke just as seriously, but with a hint of wryness. “…one man does bring more to the table than others, and should be commended for it.”

Light’s mother laughed out loud and squeezed his father’s hand as she did so, patting his shoulder in a fashion that was very clearly an ‘Oh, you’ gesture.

“On occasion.”

Light’s mouth twitched up into a smile, “Of course, dad.”

“I believe Matsuda mentioned something about having lunch with you and I on Monday. His treat, to celebrate Kamimura’s sentencing hearing. Does that work for you?” Soichiro was fond of Matsuda and it showed sometimes even in their professional life. “He was…ah, quite insistent.”

This caught Light off guard. “I’m sorry, but I actually have plans for lunch on Monday. I was going to make it a long one, and then just stay late.”

The wrinkles on Soichiro’s forehead raised with his brow. “Is that so?”

“Yes.” Light mentally cringed at the plausible lie. “I have a lunch date.”

“Really!?”

“With an old friend.” Light elaborated, noting the tone in Sayu’s voice, the surprise in his father’s
eyes and the glee in Sachiko’s. Even the word ‘friend’ did not assuage them. “…Kiyomi Takada. We’re catching up, that’s all.”

“You mean that pretty Alpha news correspondent?” Sayu asked coyly, though she knew the answer already. “Old friend. I don’t think so. You dated her at To-oh, didn’t you?”

“…I did, briefly, but this has nothing to do with that,” Light assured her, much to his mother’s chagrin. It had always been one of his failings, in his mother’s eyes, that he didn’t date. That it hadn’t occurred to him yet at all to even start to get ready for marriage or children. School, exams, establishing himself in his career...

He was beginning to run out of excuses.

“You know, she interviewed Ryuga Hideki the other day,” Sayu’s voice rang out again. “She’s sort of a rising star.”

“You’re too old to still have a crush on some silly celebrity, Sayu.”

“Ryuga? I don’t have a crush, and he’s not silly. Do you know how popular he is?”

“Sayu,” Soichiro cut in, holding up a hand. “It’s not our place to assume things about Light’s relationship with this Takada. I’m sure he’ll tell his family about anyone he starts to have serious feelings for.”

“I was just teasing.”

“In any case, we’ll have lunch with Matsuda on Tuesday then. We’ll know the result of the hearing by then, which will make it all the more celebratory.”

Light’s father was faithful to the system to the last. He had doubts, he wasn’t an idiot, but he would never voice them, as if it were blasphemy. As if just speaking the words would make it true, as if things weren’t unfair enough as it was.

Light nodded his assent. “It’s a plan then.”

“…Light, we’re so proud of you.” Sachiko spoke up in order to make up for the pressure she no doubt felt she’d put on him. She leaned her head on Soichiro’s arm, meeting Light’s eyes adoringly. “You’ve been doing so well at work. Your father’s told me all about it.”

“Yeah, can you tell us more about the case now that it’s over?” Sayu asked interestedly, going along with the change of subject eagerly, her eyes shining up at him with genuine intrigue.

“Thank you, mom.” Light spoke slowly, and then turned his eyes over to Sayu. The victims were girls younger than her, brutalized and abandoned. He hardly wanted to put those thoughts in her head, let alone on a night that was meant to be about celebration. “Actually, I’d like to know more about how your classes are going.”

Part of him expected her to groan and roll her eyes at him, to pout and say something about ‘having to talk about her schooling even during her breaks’. But she merely sighed at being redirected, putting her hands into her lap and looking every bit the dutiful college student, one who was asked this question quite a bit. Light suddenly noticed that her left leg was crossed elegantly over her right in a similar way to that of his own, though with a slightly more feminine tilt to her hips.

He was suddenly struck by the thought that she was an adult now, and that if she had presented as Omega she might have been bonded already. Might never have gone to college, might already have
a child. Or two.

Light might have already been an **uncle**.

The bitter taste in his mouth was gone as soon as it had come. He’d never been more pleased with the person his sister had grown into, and never been more relieved that she was a Beta. Things would be easy for her. She could go about without hiding, without being treated as different, because she was the majority. She would never have to go through the humiliation of heat, or the fear of being exposed.

An envious little snake curled in the pit of his stomach, but he squashed the thought before it could slither further.

“University is great. I’m really enjoying my literature and science classes. While math’s a struggle, I have a great teacher, and I joined a study group so I’ve been doing a lot better.”

“Oh **please**.” Light’s mother suddenly spoke up, leaning in. Soichiro chuckled as if he knew what was coming. “Light, Sayu is at the top of her **class**. Just like you were!”

“**Mom!**” Sayu hissed, flushing slightly and looking at Light quickly, before rubbing the back for her neck and averting her eyes. “I mean, yeah, I am, but…it’s hardly To-Oh.”

“That’s great, Sayu,” Light touched her arm and gave her a reassuring smile. “Really, it is. I’m proud of you for working so hard.”

She beamed, starting to look more like the kid that Light remembered rather than the young woman who had been sitting there a moment before. It was then that the car pulled up, rolling to a stop just outside of the restaurant Light had picked for the occasion. Light helped each of them out of the car, and they were welcomed by warm lights strung up all down the walkway toward the large, graceful front doors.

They were ushered in by two gracious doormen, and their coats were taken by someone just inside. They were then lead to an elevator by a pretty Omega hostess, who seated them at a table by a series of large windows. Sachiko couldn’t help but look around in awe and compliment the various decorations, gasping when a passing waiter offered her and Soichiro a complimentary glass of wine and congratulated them on their anniversary. The hostess bowed to them deeply once they were seated and assured them that their waiter would be right with them.

It was quiet but for the murmur of the other occupants, warmly lit and well-designed, their table overlooking the sparkling lights of the city.

“So,” Sayu spoke up suddenly, a mischievous glint in her eye. “I can order whatever I want to, right?”

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**Chapter End Notes**

*A/N:* I’m really trying to work on pacing, sort of like ‘scenes’, so sorry, but Kira wasn’t
really in this chapter at all. This was to establish several things, before shit hits the fan. I hope it didn’t bore you! I don’t want to intimidate myself into not updating, with uber-long chapters, so I’m going to do shorter chapters (1.5k – 3k words unless I run away with myself) with quicker updates.

Thanks again for reading!

Feedback is love.
“An earthquake achieves what the law promises but does not in practice maintain — the equality of all men.” -Ignazio Silone

It was not the first time that Light had attended a sentencing hearing. It wasn’t even the first time he’d attended one in this suit. After he’d realized how the system could fail the world so completely even when everything went well, he’d decided to take a more active approach. When he was not content to leave well enough alone, he came to the sentencing trial. When he was not certain that the criminal he’d handed them on a silver platter was going to be served the justice he deserved.

In the case of murderer, rapist and cocaine-addict Yuko Kamimura, there was more than a chance. No one wanted to be the judge that hung the first born son of a prominent family.

He’d made friends with more than one prosecutor during his short time with the NPA, and when he unexpectedly showed up for a hearing now and again, but none quite as eager or equip to help him as Teru Mikami.

However passionate the prosecutor was, however clever, book smart and good at his job, at convincing a jury, he came on too strong to appeal to the judge when it came time to decide on the sentence. He’d done so on more than one occasion, drilling the death penalty home so fervently that a few judges had become more lenient than they had originally been inclined to.

Which was where Light came in.

“Mikami-san,” Light greeted, bowing just slightly to the Beta before him. “You’re early.”

“You’re earlier,” commented the bespectacled man, in the low, near-monotone that he’d had ever since Light had been introduced to him. His eyes were intense even behind his glasses, a cool gaze that didn’t tone down the volume even when his own broke away. “I came to rehearse.”

“You’re a natural speaker,” Light complimented graciously, and the stoic man straightened just slightly.

“I want to do your words justice, Yagami-san.”

The wording was vaguely amusing, as ‘justice’ was one word that Light’s speeches tended to center around. This would be the sixth that Light had written for Teru Mikami all out. Although in the beginning, he’d simply stuck up a conversation with him in order to implant a few ideas, subtly showing him how to rephrase his words, it had become standard for them to email back and forth. The first time, Light had merely written an email with his thoughts on the case at hand, expecting Teru to draw from it when he wrote his own argument.

He’d attended the hearing and was surprised to find that Teru practically repeated him word for word.
word.

“You always do, Mikami-san.”

“It helps that your ideals are almost identical to my own,” continued the attorney, intent on flattery. “Your way with words helps convey our convictions in a way that my own do not.”

“Anything to help put Yuko away,” Light nodded, offering the man a smile with a hint of modesty, one that he knew was fetching and earnest. Designed to hide the fact that what he really meant was ‘put Yuko down’.

It wasn’t long after that they were joined by the Toya family, consisting of the deceased girl’s mother, father and older brother. They were an ideal average family, with an Omegan father and Alpha mother. Their son had presented as Alpha—though Light could only smell him vaguely, and only because his scent was young and therefore potent. Their daughter had not yet presented. She’d been too young.

Light bowed to them, ignoring the tears that were threatening to spill in the father’s eyes. The mother stayed by his side and the son seethed behind them, torn between misery and anger. Polite conversation ensued, condolences and reassurances, platitudes that Light was used to spouting in an effort to appear like the normal, kind-hearted detective that the family knew him to be.

It was not that Light did not feel for them. It was just that his attention had never been on the victims—if it had, he would have become a grief counselor. His focus was on the criminal.

The family of the other victim had chosen not to come to the hearing. Many families couldn’t bear to look at the villain who had taken their child away from them. In fact, he was surprised that the Omega father had come, but it appeared he was trying his best to be strong, although it was taking a great deal of physical comfort from his Alpha to hold it together. She had not taken her arm from around his shoulders, and when they sat down in the pews a few rows ahead of him he saw the tender stroking of his hair. He could even hear the low cooing.

Although he’d blatantly lied to his family about seeing Takada today, it was not untrue that he had dated her throughout college. It was a casual thing, coffee dates and movies and dinners. Her interest in him had been uncomfortable due to the fact that, in essence, it could have actually worked out if he’d told her his secret.

If he’d wanted, the Alpha would have bonded him a heartbeat. It could have been an ideal coupling, if Light had truly been a Beta—no children for either of them. No real dynamics that might give her the upper hand.

While she’d always seemed somewhat irritated by the majority of typical, over-the-top Omega behavior, she’d adored him as a Beta (which was not saying much, Light was fairly used to the admiration of others), but she was quiet, almost regal about it, and for a while Light had been horrified that she might know. She’d never touched him the way an Alpha would an Omega, however, never stroked his hair or wrapped her arm around him or brushed her fingers over the scent gland in his neck.

He’d ended it when he’d left college and he was fairly certain, however high she’d held her head walking away from him, he’d broken her heart. A strand of disgust and muted longing twisted together within him, neither one truly winning out over the other. Pride stepped in, though, and cut them both down.

Light grit his teeth, averted his eyes and shoved the stupid, stupid feeling away. Suppressants could
not account for all things.

The proceedings went on in their formal fashion. Yuko was brought out by two large Alpha guards, as he was a rather large one himself. The handcuffs were not removed, but he was allowed to sit next to his attorney while the security officers stepped back. Even from behind him, Light could tell by Yuko’s posture that there was not an ounce of regret in any fiber of his body. Next the judge entered through his private entrance and seated himself behind his wooden throne.

The prosecution spoke first, which could be a disadvantage, and often was. He turned his attention to Teru as he stood up, not bothering with notes, speaking concisely but also sincerely.

“I did not come to speak of vengeance for the Nimura or Toya family.” It was important to put a name to the girls, rather than just calling them ‘the victims’, and to gently prod the word ‘family’ into the judge’s mind. “I’m here to impress upon the facts, so that we may all reflect on the seriousness of the murderer’s crimes so that justice is served.”

A passive way to say it. As if justice could serve itself.

As if the man behind the bench and the lawyers themselves held no responsibility, like nothing they could do could change the outcome. It implied justice was not a truth, that it was a meaningless, malleable concept with no ties to reality whatsoever.

However, it sounded much better than ‘this man must die’.

“And so what do we know about this particular murderer?”

Humanize the victim, but dehumanize the assailant. Perhaps that would drill it into the judge’s head how insane it would be not make sure this man suffered for his crimes. It wasn’t fighting fire with fire; it was fighting fire with water. He would put devil out.

“We know that this murder was premeditated.”

Light had proven that by finding the second cell phone, filled with pictures of each of the girls from months prior to their deaths. That had been his claim to fame, so to speak. The other members of the team had completely discredited the idea of a second, and not only had Light figured out that there was, he’d found it.

“We know that it was cruel beyond measure.”

That part was more about appealing to the judge’s sympathy. It had been a methodically brutal assault of two teenagers, so he wasn’t exactly stretching the truth. Only one of them had presented, just barely, an Omega fresh out of her second or third heat.

“We know that he fled from police. We know that he has destroyed two families.”

The father made a pitiful sound and buried his face in the neck of his wife. In turn, she tightened her hold on him and whispered into his ear, in the tone that Alphas used to soothe supposedly ‘hysterical’ Omegas. Even as immune as Light was to the rest of his biology due to his medication, that tone had always struck a chord in him.

He loathed it.

“It is our responsibility, in turn, to make sure that they do not live in fear that their daughter’s killer
may be released now, or ever.”

There was a quiet after Mikami spoke that nearly rang throughout the room. It was good, he’d done well, but the defense attorney did not seem phased. The judge thanked him for his input, and then allowed for the defense’s closing remarks.

It was always the same. Deep regret to the families, he wasn’t in his right mind, it was the drugs that did it, please take into account the good he has done for society…

Blah, blah, fucking blah.

Light sat in his place at the back of the room, closest to the aisle, still, regal and completely focused on that bastard Yuko as he leaned back in his chair, as if he didn’t have a care in the world. The defense’s speech ended and the judge excused himself for deliberation.

He was gone for five minutes.

When he returned, his vision narrowed to the old man as he looked over what he had written down, keeping his eyes on the paper like the coward he was. He read out his verdict and Light saw red.

The wave of fury that swept through him was so intense that he felt a migraine forming deep behind his eyes, and though he did not shake with it, had anyone been looking they would have noticed he was far too still to be completely natural for several seconds. He heard the father sob, heard the son curse as the judge left once again.

Fifteen years.

Fifteen years? Some had gotten more for murders of passion. This was a calculated, veritable slaughter of two high school girls. If Yuko managed to behave himself, he could he out in ten. Even life sentences were not absolute in Japan, as most of them got out in twenty-five if they were well behaved. That had been something that Light had prepared himself for, as it had happened on two other occasions. He hadn’t been happy then either but this was nothing short of a disgrace.

As the one closest to the door, Light was the first out, unable to stand listening to either the Omegas whimpers or the Alpha’s comforting hums.

He walked in long-legged, swift strides, keeping himself as poised as humanly possible, but he did not immediately seek to exit. Light was aware that he should get back to work, that if his ‘lunch with Takada’ took too long then his father might actually be inclined to speak to him about it.

Or tell Matsuda in an attempt to explain why he was so late, which would be even worse.

Light found himself around the corner, in a nearly empty hallway with several doors that lead to judge’s chambers. He knew this courthouse well enough by now where Judge Tadasuke would be exiting from, and he positioned himself near the door. He wasn’t sure why he had come, as he had no intentions of actually speaking to the man. Perhaps he’d just wanted to see the man’s face up close, to remember it for the future so that when he thought about what was wrong with the justice system he could recall the wrinkled features, the bald head, the black, beady eyes, and direct his anger at one of the many people that was making it that way.

“Yagami-san.”

The voice grated on his nerves, but Light turned to face him just the same.

“Mikami-san,” Light greeted, a little terser than he’d meant for it to be. “You followed me.”
“You seemed upset,” explained the dark-haired man, stepping closer as if he were going to touch him, to put a consoling hand on his shoulder. In the end, he didn’t go for it. Light was glad he didn’t have to pretend to be alright with such a thing.

“Did I?”

There was a pause, before Teru amended. “No, you were actually quite composed. But you must be. I am.”

“You’re quite composed yourself.”

“It would be unprofessional not to be.”

“I agree.”

The silence was uncomfortable, and Light knew he should leave, but the judge had not yet exited. No doubt there were reporters in the main hall right that second letting all of Japan know just what had occurred, and he was waiting it out for a few minutes to let security shoo the parasites away.

“I apologize,” Mikami said after a moment, straightening his glasses in what Light had come to find was his only self-conscious tell. It could be difficult to determine between the times when he was truly uncertain, and when was actually just fixing the alignment of the frames on the bridge of his nose.

“You have nothing to be sorry for.” Light gave him a smile, all the while resenting him for making him do this. Now he had to console the man, reassure him, instead of sulking and stewing at the injustice of what had just occurred. “You delivered the speech brilliantly.”

“It was your words that were brilliant.” Adulation could get truly tiresome. “I have no doubt that if you had been the one saying them—“

“Even I can’t single-handedly fix all of the corruption in the system, Mikami-san.” Light interrupted him, a hardness to his voice that he couldn’t bring himself to soften for the man at the moment.

There was another moment of quiet in which Light wished that he could just will Mikami to leave him be.

“Perhaps not,” Teru finally admitted. “But you’re certainly trying more than any other person I’ve ever come across before. You’ve gone above and—“

A shriek cut the prosecutor off this time, one that was so high pitched that it actually took a moment for Light to decipher the contents.

“Oh my God, he’s got a gun!”

Light turned in time to see a figure sprinting down toward him and Mikami from the opposite end of the hall, laughing maniacally and shooting at the ceiling. Everyone he passed on the way forward cowered. Security officers appeared behind him, shouting at him to halt. He did not.

It was then that the door to the judge’s chambers opened. Tadasuke exited, completely oblivious as to the man currently running toward him.

In an instant, the judge met Light’s eyes, and the look in them struck him as if a cold fist had just closed around his innards. There was no light in them, though he was still moving, walking and breathing just like anyone else. They were glassy and unfocused, the eyes of a doll. Light realized,
with an absoluteness that sunk down through his stomach like lead, that the man he was looking at was no longer the same one who had sentenced Yuko Kamimura to only fifteen years in prison.

That man was already dead.

Then, seconds later, he was actually dead.

All Light saw was red for the second time in less than twenty minutes, but this time it was not due to overwhelming rage. There was a resounding bang and then blood was splattering over him. Light jerked back in disgust and fear, stumbling in his alarm. The judge’s face suddenly had a hole in it.

Light was terrified, frozen in place with his breath locked in his chest. He had never liked guns even though his job sometimes required him to carry one, and somehow this convict—he could see the handcuffs now that he was close—had gotten a hold of an officer’s revolver and had murdered the judge right in front of him.

And now Light had blood all over him. He could feel it trickling down his chin.

He thought he might vomit.

The judge had barely hit the ground when he felt arms tugging him aside, pulling him onto one of the many benches that lined the hallway and partially covering him. It was Mikami, he realized, but he was in too much of a state to truly comprehend it. He could die. He could die here and now and that was unacceptable, but didn’t think he could move, petrified into place as the madman drew closer.

He saw, from the corner of his eye, that it was Yuko Kamimura himself that had killed the very judge that had sentenced him, but he only caught a glimpse before he passed them by.

There was another gunshot that had tension curling through him coldly, but this one was from elsewhere and hit Yuko in the leg. He barely made it another ten feet before collapsing. Officers were on him in seconds, beating the still laughing, struggling man into submission with their batons.

Only the sudden spike of irritation at actually enjoying the arms around him was enough to break him out of his shock.

Taking a deep breath through his nose, he shrugged off Teru’s hold and the man released him immediately, allowing him to move away. Light didn’t dare speak just yet. His face was wet with the judge’s blood and he didn’t want to take the chance that any of it got into his mouth. He noticed after a moment that Mikami wasn’t even looking at him, but at the judge that lay dead in a broadening pool of his own blood.

It was then that Light heard a word slip out of Teru’s mouth, not in his usual flat, unchanging voice. His tone was one of awe, of reverence, a murmur that might as well have been a prayer.

“Kira.”
“A mind all logic is a knife all blade.” – Rabindranath Tagore

The blue white glow of the computer illuminated L’s face in the dead of night as he watched blood and brain matter splatter in bright red specks over Light Yagami’s face.

It was a nice face.

He had well-sculpted features, bright eyes, clear skin and well-kempt hair. His shirt was pressed, his suit jacket pristine, his tie tightened almost too snug against the hollow of his throat. There hadn’t been a hair out of place, before he’d jumped back at the initial spray. There was something distinctly satisfying about seeing something so immaculate get perturbed, the childish pleasure of knocking over perfectly placed dominoes or scribbling on a newly painted wall with brightly colored crayons.

L really shouldn’t have been pleased to see that hair become disheveled. He really shouldn’t have.

Someone had died.

Well, two people had, in truth. Yuko Namimura had been sodomized in prison, beaten further by other prisoners after the police had forcibly subdued him, and later died of internal injuries. Another fitting, dramatic death. One of thousands over the last seven years, each one written out like a scene in a play, designed to punish those who were immoral in some way. Usually the victims were violent offenders or those that had taken advantage of the weak, but there were some cases in which they were just enablers, such as the judge in this instance.

There was a logic to the killings, they were not mindless, which was what made the cruelty of them both incredible and chilling. Kira, whoever he was, had taken it upon himself to punish those that society would or could not.

Billionaires who embezzled or otherwise committed large-scale theft, but were exempt from the law due to their status, died in their trophies. Sometimes their private jets would crash, or they would choke on caviar, or they would drown in their salt-water swimming pools. Arsonists spontaneously combusted, or their vehicle would blow up with them inside after an accident, or they were asleep during a house fire. Rapists, although not always raped in turn, were almost always left humiliated, their privacy and body violated, if not impaled in some manner.

What L found interesting was that Kira left the incarcerated alone, as long as they were serving the sentence he seemed to think they deserved. It was only those that were still a threat to the world that he made examples of.
In the beginning, L had been openly working on the Kira investigation, and had been almost certain that the culprit was in Japan. But after broadcasting all over the country (and subsequently the world) with a false L, a criminal by the name Lind L. Taylor, to no avail—he had lost all backing for his investigation.

The deaths shifted more carefully between countries, so much so that the NPA had become almost insulted by his assertion that Kira was someone in Japan. He had been discredited, distrusted, and after a while there had been no country in the world that would pay for him to chase a ghost. Not when there were other, tangible criminals that he could be capturing.

Whoever Kira was, he was somewhat clever. But more importantly, he was patient. He never killed more than half a dozen a week or so. Those that were deemed ‘bad guys’ would die in freak accidents or dramatic scenes fit for any action movie.

To most of the world, he was a force of nature. A God enacting strict karma, subtly punishing all those that he deemed a danger to society in some way. To the internet, it was a satire that was written in the stars.


But L knew that he was a man. After all, it was ridiculous to assume that a God would need a man’s name and face to kill them, as he suspected he did. No, Kira was definitely a person, most likely working alone, likely with ties to the justice system considering his unfailing sense of righteousness. Probably Beta, he’d deduced, just due to the how very calm the man seemed, how slow he was willing to build the world he wanted. Even that was based on generalization, however handy they were from time to time.

Nothing to date had come close to explaining just how the bastard was committing the murders.

The most recent case in Japan was one of the more intriguing leads he’d had in some time. Light Yagami and Teru Mikami. Both of them fit the profile based on their demeanor and career choice alone, but *Yagami* was the one that truly rang out to him. Even in spite of the fact that it seemed from the tapes he’d looked over the attorney had actually said ‘Kira’ after the whole event was over.

Would Kira himself have said something like that? Unlikely.

He couldn’t be positive, so he had cameras placed in Mikami’s apartment as well as Yagami’s, just in case. He was the more likely suspect, and it wasn’t the first time his name had appeared in his research. His father was a good man, almost too good. L could easily fathom how such a man could raise a son who was self-righteous.

Even if Soichiro had been one of the few people to believe in his Kira search long after the NPA had withdrawn its support, L could not ignore the signs his son might be the mass murderer he longed to find.

The more he dug into Light’s history, the more he was convinced that the young man was hiding something.

While placing the cameras, Wedy had found a safe box beneath his bed that could only be opened by both a fingerprint and a code that could be of any length. Of course, that didn’t prove anything at all. There were several things that could be locked inside, but it did beg the question –what did such an openly polite, honest man have to hide?

Why had he immediately moved away from home after getting into To-oh, if his family life was as
charming as it seemed? What did he need a PO box for when he had a perfectly sound apartment for deliveries? Why did his childhood desk, still practically untouched, have a drawer with a false bottom?

He had been popular with people of all genders in high school and middle school, but he hadn’t seemed to have any love interests in the last three years. From what he could tell, looking in on his apartment once all the cameras were set up, he rarely had company. Why would such an outwardly friendly man never have guests?

Circumstantial, all of it. Anything could be in the safe, plenty of people had PO boxes, many young adults can’t wait to get out of the house, asexuality, introversion, a teenager’s need for privacy…

Each one could be a coincidence. Alone, the clues certainly didn’t point to the man being Kira. But there was something about him, the confidence and the holier-than-thou attitude that came along with being so damned pretty and smart and perfect—even if L had never seen him be anything but well-mannered—

It was just so suspicious.

“Ah. He’s home.” L murmured, narrowing his eyes as the door to Yagami’s apartment opened. He flipped a switch and spoke up, though his eyes never left the screen as he watched Light toe off his shoes. “Quillish, can you please bring me more tea? And another slice of that cheesecake?”

“Of course. I’ll be up shortly.”

“Thank you.”

Click. Time for the show.

Each television screen he had set up on the table before him showed different room in Light Yagami’s apartment. There were more to the left that had Teru’s apartment fed to him live, but the man was so painfully scheduled that L knew that he would be cooking dinner at this hour, like he always did. He was much more interested in the NPA officer’s screens now.

Light Yagami had incredibly good posture, but also managed not to be stiff at all. There a grace to his movements that was pleasant to watch, even in a simple motion like removing his shoes. He slid them into place beside the door and then he pause for a moment, eyes seeming to hone in on something or other.

Had he spotted something on the ground? It seemed the most likely conclusion, but he didn’t stoop down to pick anything up. There didn’t appear to be anything there at all.

L’s eyes narrowed, but he couldn’t see anything of note that Yagami could be looking at.

Before he could linger on it too much longer, the young man was straightening up and heading to the kitchen first, his cadence neutral and the sway of his arms casual. Exactly what one would expect of someone that was alone. However, despite all of his poise, L couldn’t help but note a tightness in his shoulders when he moved. There was something in the way that Light held himself, something that spoke of---

Alertness. L might have called it paranoia, but he was in fact being watched.

Did he know?

Could he know that someone had put cameras in his home? Or at least been there?
That was impossible. Wedy never left anything out of place, and she had assured him that Yagami did not have any sort of security device in place. She had never let him down before on such a front, and so how?

Or perhaps L was overestimating him. Perhaps the man was just stressed from a long day at work. Perhaps he was still shaken, after having a man’s blood splatter all over him two days prior. He knew he was currently working on the Yoshiro case, so it made sense that he might have a lot going on at work that could account for his apparent over-awareness.

But L knew that men did not become vigilant because they had nothing to hide.

“Is this him?”

L didn’t look away from the screen even when Quillish put his cheesecake and tea down in front of him. He saw the slice out of the corner of his eye, the hint of red that spoke of strawberries. Good, he’d forgotten to ask, but the man had anticipated his needs as usual.

“Yes. Chief Yagami’s son, Light.” He watched the practiced motions of the officer’s hands as he turned on his coffee maker, letting it brew as he headed to his bedroom.

There was a clink as Quillish set a cup of sugar cubes beside the cup of tea. “Chief Yagami is a good man.”

“That he is.” L picked up his fork and watched as Light changed out of his work shirt and into a cotton tee, all lean lines and smooth contours.

“You suspect his son is not, however.”

L’s eyes followed Light as he knelt by his bed, going straight for his safe. So it wasn’t something that he just had locked away, like money or a gun. It was a secret that he took out of its confines to play with on a regular basis.

“He’s hiding something.”

“Is that all?”

L sighed, picking up his fork and taking his first bite as he watched Light put in his code for the safe, then press his index finger to the scanner so that it could confirm his print.

He answered once he’d swallowed. “He’s too perfect, Quillish. Not a single person has a bad thing to say about him. Even those that resent him for his mind can’t really bring themselves to dislike him. He was the best in Japan in high school, received a perfect score on the entrance exam to To-Oh and graduated top of his class.”

The door to the safe popped open just as L’s fork slid into the creamy confection a second time.

“Then he went into the NPA. Most brilliant over-achievers are driven by the pursuit of wealth or glory, and yet he decided to become an officer of the law.” Simply put, it was very Kira-ish thing to do.

“So what you’re saying is,” the old man clarified, voice calm and vaguely amused in a way that only those closest to him would be able to detect. “Is he sounds like he should be Kira.”

It was then that Light finally dug deep into the shadows of the lock box and pulled out…what appeared to be a book. Some sort of thick, leather-bound journal that wasn’t at all what he’d been
expecting. Or hoping for. L tried not to pout as he took another bite, looking to his companion for the first time with the utensil hanging from his lips as Light shut the door and crossed back to his living room.

L pulled the fork out of his mouth with a small ‘pop’. “You make my sound psychological analysis sound like I just want him to be Kira because he’d make a good adversary.”

“You’re right. My apologies,” Quillish even bowed in mock seriousness. “What in the world was I thinking? You’re much too mature for that.”

The corner of the detective’s mouth quirked. “The two things are not mutually exclusive.”

“No, I suppose they aren’t.”

The white-haired man chuckled. L took another bite, but he noticed immediately when the amusement began to fade in his mentor’s voice. It was a sudden thing, after the nearly light-hearted conversation they’d been having, and it caught L rather off guard.

“L, you’ll be wanting to look back at the screen now.”

He did.

In the minute that he’d taken his attention away from the screen, Light had opened up the previously boring binder and had pulled out several papers from inside. He had unfolded a few of them already, meticulously, smoothing out the first one so that it was legible and then working on the next. It was a map of the North America, with markings on it in blue and red. The second paper that the officer unfolded was of Europe, and the next of Japan. From what L could see, there were more maps neatly tucked away in the binder, but Light only took out those three for now, smoothing a graceful hand over each one.

What L saw on the table was so profoundly shocking that he set his fork down and put his thumb back to his mouth, the pad of it sliding to the right as it did when he was truly intrigued.

He was so rarely fascinated.

L knew at first glance what these maps were and so had Quillish, hence his sudden directive. He had those same maps, with his own markings in almost exactly the locations, though his were computer generated. He hadn’t worked on paper for quite some time. Too much of a hassle. It even seemed to him, though it was a very quick count, that Light’s maps had more little dots than his own did.

There was only a split second of triumph in L’s brain before logic won over. For a mere moment he thought that Light Yagami had these maps depicting Kira victims over the years because he’d used them to plan the murders. But no, that was too easy.

Just as insouciantly as he had displayed his maps, Light retreated back into the kitchen and poured the now simmering coffee. Yagami didn’t take it completely black; he spilled a dollop of cream into it and stirred with a spoon. L noted this somewhere in the back of his mind, which was absolutely ridiculous considering he had Kira’s killings mapped out on his table--

“Those are my notes on the Kira case.”

What?

“Oh, my.” L could hear the restrained chuckle that came from the old man as he spoke, but he was leaning forward, much more interested in what Light Yagami had to say.
To him.

He knew. Somehow, he knew. Whatever he’d been looking at on the ground, imperceptible to the cameras unless L rewound and zoomed in, had signaled him to the presence of someone in his home. Was it a guess? It was a damned good one, if it was.

The young man was making his way back to the dining table, setting his mug down carefully so as not to spill before sitting in one of the chairs. Every motion was so very aware, cautious almost, but also elegant. He wasn’t stiff, really, just exact; for whatever reason, Light Yagami was used to moving in this way, as if the entire world were looking at him and suspecting him of something.

L noted this in his mind too, but more deliberately.

“You’re probably wondering how I know you have cameras in here,” Light finally spoke again, no rush to his words, even going so far as to lean back in his chair and cross one of his long legs over the other languidly.

He had a captive audience, after all, and L was captivated.

“I knew that L would never give up on the Kira case, even if the rest of the world has chalked it up to karma.” Light took a sip of his coffee, not tilting his head up just yet, the fall of his hair covering part of his face in shadow. “I also know, however, that it was only a matter of time before I became a suspect. I fit the profile.”

He had his own profile. One that, according to him, was eerily close to L’s own.

Suddenly, his suspect’s hair shifted with a tilt of his head, and his gaze lifted from the cup of coffee on his hands and up, directly into the camera that Wedy had placed in the top most shelf of a book case. The color of Light’s eyes was too soft a shade to be called truly brown, with too many flecks of amber, but they were also too fierce in their intensity to truly be described as ‘doe eyes’ either. No matter the hue, L was caught by them, as irritated by his folly as he was enraptured by the young man’s perception.

“Kira is real, of that I am sure. I don’t know how he does it, but he’s not an entity, he’s human.”

“Hm.” Quillish made an acknowledging sound from behind him, and L knew that tone. He was impressed. L felt the young man’s lovely voice grating on his nerves even as his thumb shifted ever further to the right side of his mouth.

Light paused, keeping his focus in that spot, though it shifted just slightly. He didn’t know where the camera was then, not for sure. He was guessing at where the camera was hidden and that was a relief of a sort, however accurate his inference had been.

“He’s just not me.”

This has hardly cleared you, L thought, teeth gnawing at the side of his thumb. Putting everything on the table, literally. It could be an act, a distraction.

“So why don’t you stop suspecting me and let me help you?”

Perhaps it was the Alpha in him peeking its head out, but he was agitated, somehow feeling like he’d lost this interaction somehow. If one could quantify everything in terms of competition, Light had won this one. It made L want to growl in frustration, but instead he just bit his thumb a bit harder.

Light’s tone was clipped, self-assured and practically cheeky as he finished his presentation. “It
would save us both a lot of time, if you did.”

With that, he went back to his coffee, apparently done with his little speech.

“One thing is certain,” Quillish stated, starting to stack the dirty dishes onto a tray. “If he is Kira, you’ve certainly got your work cut out for you.”

“Even if he isn’t, I suspect,” L murmured.

“Shall I make arrangements with the task force you decided on before?” His mentor’s tone was casual, but the man knew him well.

“Mhm, yes,” L responded, taking a long sip of his tea before going on. “But I want to speak with them before we call Light Yagami in. Prepare them. Show them this video. They all know him well.”

“They won’t like that you suspect him.”

“No, they won’t.” L agreed, and that was all he had to say about the matter.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for all your lovely comments! Feedback feeds the muse.

-Nilah
There is a face beneath this mask, but it isn't me. I'm no more that face than I am the muscles beneath it, or the bones beneath that.” — Steve Moore

"Light-kun, where are you?"

It had been a bad idea to pick up the phone. He'd known it would be, but he was working on pure muscle memory at this point, now officially on his twenty-fourth hour without sleep.

"At work, Matsuda-san." Light closed his eyes briefly, but the temptation to fall asleep on his desk was too great, so he forced them open again. "Why?"

"You're at work at five in the morning, on a Saturday?"

Rubbing at his temples impatiently, Light sighed, "I'm more interested in why you're calling me at five in the morning on a Saturday."

"…Wait, did you not leave work last night?"

Matsuda's voice was starting to grate on his sleep-deprived nerves. "What do you want Matsuda-san? I've been reviewing videos and statements in relation to the Yoshiro case."

"Um…my friend said that he's ready to see you now."

"What are you—"

Light was almost ashamed that it took him even those few seconds to understand what was going on. When he did, he woke up instantly.

Of course. Matsuda had been an officer before Light had graduated high school. The Kira killings began in Light's senior year, and for a while there had been talks of actually putting officers on a case in order to catch the unknown vigilante with apparent magical powers. It had all been dropped rather quickly even after a man that was supposed to be L himself (though Light later deduced was almost definitely not the actual detective) had appeared on television to confront the murderer directly.

The case had faded, and L's broadcast had only spread the word, giving those that hadn't been previously invested in the mysterious deaths a name to put to the entity.

But if there had been a team that was willing to help at the time, it was obvious that Matsuda would have been on it. Light's mind ran through the other options, picking out the members of the NPA that had been there back when people had first started dying in increasingly ironic freak accidents.

"I see." His voice was calm when he responded, picking up a stack of paper and setting it on the
table so that they all fell in line evenly. "Now?"

"Yeah, he's sending a car to come get you."

Irritation started to prod at the back of his mind as he responded. "It's been a week since my invitation."

"Ah, yeah, I mean, he showed us the tape and I'm sure he's sorry to interrupt you—"

There was a pause, some distant voices.

"...Okay, I'm sorry to interrupt you."

That told him a little about who L was. He'd already figured out that L was willing to break inconvenient laws, such as putting cameras in his home, in order to serve his own agenda. Now he knew he was also rude, and that Matsuda was clearly intimidated by him. To be fair, that last one wasn't a difficult feat.

Light withheld a sigh and picked up what was left of his coffee. "Is my father there?"

"How did—" Matsuda cut himself off, but that had told him what he'd wanted to know. Light took a sip of his coffee as the older officer recollected himself. "I, uh, mean, that's privileged information."

"Please let me speak to him, Matsuda-san."

There was a long pause, in which Light thought he was able to hear Matsuda pressing his palm to the receiver to muffle the conversation instead of pressing the mute button.

After a moment, Light heard his dad's voice.

"Light. It's good to hear your voice. The video Ryuzaki showed us was a little...unsettling."

Ryuzaki. Good, his father established that there was a common alias they were all using for L. He was glad he wouldn't have to resort to calling him 'L-san'. Even in his head it sounded ridiculous.

"I thought it might. I wanted to reassure you, before I came over." That hadn't been the real reason Light had asked to be put on the phone with his father, but he could tell the man needed the comfort. He'd wanted to know what he was going to be walking into. If Matsuda and his father were both there, it likely meant that there were more members as well, all of whom had been alerted to the fact that he was under suspicion. Light needed to prepare himself for that. "I'm going to head downstairs once I get off the phone."

That was another question. Did his father want him to come? He had firsthand experience working with L, he knew. He didn't want to take the chance that this wasn't the real L. He figured his father would know the difference.

"The sooner you're here the sooner you can clear all of this up."

That settled it then.

"I'm sorry to have worried you."

"It's nothing. He explained his reasons." He paused, and the tone of the silence said that he did not consider the reasons enough to suspect his son. "See you soon, son."

"I'm on my way."
Light hung up the phone, tucked the notes he would need for the Yoshiro case into his briefcase and finished the last of his coffee. He dug into a small hidden pocket within his coat where he kept an extra pill just in case he was kept away from home for longer than usual. It was an hour or so earlier than he generally took his suppressant, but it wouldn't hurt anything.

The elevator ride seemed to take forever in the dark, nearly empty building, but he did eventually make his way to the first floor and then out the front door of the lobby. Sure enough, there was a car waiting for him, black and sleek next to an elderly man dressed similarly in a sharp suit made out of dark, soft material.

Once, not long after he'd joined the NPA, he'd seen Watari walk passed in a dark trench coat and fedora, looking every bit like the 'elusive top detective' that L was supposed to be. The outfit was nearly cartoon-ish. However steady his stride, there was stiffness to it that spoke of old bones.

He'd wondered then if Watari was not as young as he presented himself, and when the mustached man opened the door for him, he found himself considering it once more. Was this a nameless driver, or L's right hand man?

The drive took less than fifteen minutes, and though Light checked his phone a few more times than necessary, there were no interruptions. When they arrived, the driver led him to the elevator of a positively lavish hotel, and though Light knew instinctively that he didn't look out of place, he found himself wishing he'd dressed better. He hadn't slept or showered since the morning before and he hadn't been expecting to be dragged away like this. He wasn't quite unprepared, because he'd expected this at some point, but he was as close to it as he'd ever been.

When tiredness began to once more push at his temples, Light found himself annoyed with the faceless man. He'd been watching him all week—surely he'd known that he hadn't come home last night. This was on purpose.

The door was opened, and Light was allowed to enter, but the driver did not come in with him. Stepping inside, Light took in his surroundings carefully, over each face that greeted him.

His father, standing behind the couch. Too unsettled to sit down, agitated at the prospect that someone might consider Light a murderer.

Touta Matsuda, openly nervous and seated on the couch, waving at him openly. He had no doubt in his mind that L was wrong about Light.

Suichi Aizawa. That was surprising. But he had his arms crossed, possibly not even fully yet convinced that Kira was more than an internet conspiracy, just here on principal, perhaps. The chance to meet L, and possibly the fact that he respected Soichiro.

Kanzo Mogi. Light had never worked with him directly, but he knew the man had a great respect for Aizawa and his superiors in general. Light had considered that he might see him there.

Not far from Mogi, there sat attractive woman sitting in an arm chair whom he'd never met before, with sharp eyes that regarded him calmly. There was appraisal there, but her gaze gave very little away.

She was seated closest to the desk where an open laptop was displayed, but in the corner was the figure that Light had seen years ago walking down the NPA hallway. Cloaked as usual in a hat and coat, Watari stood near the computer, shadowed in the corner and quiet.

Light gave a slight bow of greeting when he'd taken in the whole room.
"Light Yagami, please feel free to sit. I think you know almost everyone here," came the electronic voice from the computer. "The exception is Naomi Misora. We've worked together before. She is a former FBI agent."

"Pleasure to meet you, Misora-san." Light said formally, and the woman named Naomi inclined her head in return.

Because his mind was twitching with the lack of sleep, he almost didn't want to sit down, but to be the only one standing (other than the cloaked figure in the corner) seemed a worse option. There was one other armchair left, and Light took it, leaning back and keeping both feet on the floor.

"I've shown everyone the tape from the first night that the cameras were in your home. I have fully disclosed my suspicions to them." The computerized voice was unpleasant, though he chalked it up to his unrested brain finding fault in every sound that was even slightly off. "But I have also shared with them that I believe that, whether you are Kira or not, your deductive reasoning skills and experience as a detective will be be an asset to this case."

Excitement jolted through him suddenly, and Light had to suppress a triumphant smile.

"I appreciate it," Light responded politely. "I hope in time I can convince you of my innocence."

"I do have questions for you, however, as to your notes on the Kira case and your presence at the Yuko Kamimura sentencing hearing."

Light hid a wince at that last part. He hardly wanted to go into his relationship with Teru Mikami in front of his father. While he'd broken no laws, he knew it was not something that his father would look kindly upon.

Even so, Light replied evenly, "Of course."

"First of all, can you please tell us why you were at the aforementioned sentencing hearing?"

It wasn't as though Light had never prepared for this line of questioning. The first time that he had attended a sentencing hearing, he had been on edge, somehow feeling as though he was doing something taboo. He'd had all sorts of defenses in mind then, and they would come in useful now. He didn't have to lie, because he was doing nothing wrong, but he did have to word it correctly so that they would understand. Rooting for the death penalty was never the socially acceptable thing to do.

"I was assisting a friend of mine, Teru Mikami," Light replied cordially, and then elucidated for those in the room that might not know him by name. "The prosecutor. I help him with his closing arguments when it comes to sentencing, at his request."

"I see." There was a slight pause. "However, you have attended other sentencing hearings in the past. Twelve, actually, and only seven of those were Teru Mikami's."

His father shifted out of the corner of his eye and Light did what he could not to look at him.

"In some cases," he started out, carefully, words tiptoeing around his meaning. "I like to attend the sentencing, at the very least so that I can hear it for myself and not through someone else later, if I feel strongly about the case in question. At the most, it shows the prosecutor solidarity."

"Yet somehow you ended up writing the speeches for Mikami."

No doubt the emails were accessible. There was no use lying. Light had nothing to guilty about.
"Yes."

"Forgive me, but if I'm looking at you as a Kira suspect, then it seems like your entire intention may have been to play both detective and prosecutor."

"That was not my goal," Light stated crisply. "I just wanted to do everything in my power to make sure that the criminal was brought to justice."

There was another beat before L responded.

"Some would say that your job as an officer on the case was over when the trial was. Perhaps even before that."

Aizawa agreed, frowning. "It's true. That's …not what we're here for."

"Then what good are we?"

That…had come out a little harsher than Light would have preferred. Not a snarl, but it had bite to it, more than he had allowed himself in the company of—practically anyone. He drew back, held his breath a moment and pinched the bridge of his nose. He blinked hard to soothe his sore, sleepless eyes, and apologized.

"That was rude of me. I'm sorry for my tone, Aizawa-san."

Matsuda whispered urgently to the Alpha, hand cupped uselessly beside his mouth. "He hasn't slept, he didn't mean it."

"Light," He heard his father say, gently. His voice said that he understood, but was also somewhat disappointed. Aizawa shifted, glancing over at Mogi. Matsuda gave him a tender look that Light couldn't help but resent. Naomi's eyebrows had risen slightly, but other than that she was still merely observing. Despite himself, Light twitched in irritation. He needed a cup of coffee to ease his growing headache. He had been expecting some sort of interrogation, but L entire purpose seemed to be discrediting him at the moment.

"Yagami-san, you didn't know about your son's excursions, did you?"

"…No," Sochiro admitted, coming around the couch to stand behind his son. "But as misguided as it was for him to try to take this into his own hands, I don't blame him for trying to do everything in his power to help."

"Of course not," the computer agreed.

"I apologize for lying to you about my whereabouts, Dad." Light spoke up, feeling like he would be amiss not to do so, especially now that his father knew that he had blatantly lied to him about his lunch with Takada. "I felt like it would be frowned upon. I feel responsible, if the perpetrator isn't sentenced accordingly."

There was a deep, parental sigh and a hand on his shoulder.

"You're an adult, Light. I don't agree with what you did, and I don't like that you lied. But I understand that coming into this job is difficult. The system does not always pan out the way that we want it to." The hand on his shoulder gave a squeeze before releasing. "However, it's...it's just not our place, to say what accordingly is."
"Perhaps we should come back to this subject later." The robotic voice interrupted. "I'm still interested in your motivations, but I have another pertinent question, about the maps that you displayed for me."

Light offered a small smile to show that he had recovered from his bout of crabiness. "If you'd given me some warning, I could have brought them with me."

"Thank you, but that won't be necessary."

Without so much as a cue, Watari moved from his corner in the room to turn on seven different larger monitors, each showing a different one of Light's maps. He'd zoomed in on each of them when he'd spread them out on his dining room table for the detective's viewing pleasure and then captured a picture of each of them for this purpose.

It was actually rather dramatic. L had always had a silly sense of showmanship, what with the gothic 'L' on the screen and the eerie, electronic voice and Watari's ridiculous -

Light's eyes suddenly narrowed, honing in when Watari moved back into place.

Oh.

Light suddenly felt a million times better, a smirk threatening to pull at his lips, a genuine one that he had to swallow hard to keep from looking like a fool in front of everyone.

"These are the maps that you took out of your safe and presented to me on November 21st, correct?"

"Actually, I didn't present them to you." Light tried so hard not to be smug, but in that moment he forgot how much he wanted to be in his bed at home. His eyes shifted poignantly from the computer screen, to the figure of 'Watari' in the corner. "I believe it was you that I showed them to. Correct, Ryuzaki?"

There was a second of pure silence before Matsuda made a sound of amazement from his end of the couch.

"Wow, Light-kun, that was—!"

"Calm down, Matsuda." Aizawa hushed.

"Yes," the figure spoke for the first time, pulling the hat off of his head and revealing a mess of raven hair. "Light-kun has impressed me yet again."

"I'm glad to hear it," Light replied, though the familiar address caught him slightly off guard as he watched as the man peel away the jacket, even going so far as to step out of the black boots. "It took me a while."

"Watari, you can stop being me now. I've been shockingly unveiled." The coat fell. Light tried not to roll his eyes. "Please bring tea and coffee for our guests."

"Of course, Ryuzaki." The white screen went dark.

"It's not like it was something we were expecting you to figure out," Mogi offered, looking between Aizawa and L. He had a unobtrusive air to him, but his eyes were interested, aware of all of his surroundings.

"He said he wanted to observe you up close, before revealing his face." Aizawa added gruffly, lacing his fingers together. "…Considering."
Naomi shifted forward and put her hands on her knees, speaking for the first time. Her eyes were bright, curious, ever-assessing. "Yes, Yagami-san, what gave him away?"

Without the layers, Light was surprised by how disheveled the man's appearance was. He was younger than he'd expected L to be, and much less...presentable. When he'd pulled the boots away completely, he stood barefoot on the carpet, casually slouching with one hand in his pocket and the other ruffling his own hair from where it had been matted by the hat. He moved in a strange fashion, disjointed but agile. He was decidedly odd-looking, though not ugly, nothing about his appearance what would pass for 'normal' or 'average'.

Light realized after a moment that he couldn't tell what the man's second gender was. He had no outstanding scent—he was likely on suppressants of his own, if he wasn't Beta—but usually Light had some hint from body language. For example, he was fairly certain Naomi was a Beta—she held her head high and had made eye contact with Aizawa several times and had not flinched when Light had snapped. But L was nothing and all things all at once when it came to his movements. Hunched over but not shy, fluid but not feminine, awkward but also exact, nothing at all clumsy or unsure about his steps.

"I've seen Watari walk once before. I mean no offense to Watari, but his gate is decidedly more aged than Ryuzaki's." Light explained with an air of modesty. "I'm sure without that experience I would have never been able to tell."

"That's very astute of you," Naomi complimented, brushing her hair behind her ear. "But I suppose I should have expected. I've seen the video, after all. You're very clever."

"That brings us back around to my original point," L stated, eyes shifting up to the ceiling as if he were not listening carefully to Light's every word. "I haven't explained to them exactly what these maps entail, though I'm sure some have had good guesses, Light-kun. I can call you that, can I not? It would be tedious and confusing to have to call two separate people 'Yagami-san'."

"Of course, Ryuzaki. Feel free."

"Very gracious of you, Light-kun." L drawled, his eyes dragging back down to focus on Light as he moved to sit in on of the computer chairs by the desk. In a ridiculous fashion that Light had to make himself ignore for the sake of manners. "I didn't tell them that the blue markings on your maps almost all correlate to my own. Each one is a Kira killing."

Aizawa fidgeted briefly in his seat, but he did not scoff. It had been a long week, Light considered. Plenty of time for L to have spelled out every scrap of evidence to the skeptical man. He wondered how long they had been looking at the videos, if he'd let anything slip during the week of intense observation, despite how careful he'd been-

"Yes, that's correct. It's been a side project of mine, going through the mysterious deaths and recording them—anyone that fits a Kira victim's profile," Light agreed, refusing to rub at his eyes even though he was getting so tired that his eyes were starting to dry out.

"Yes, and you've got most of them." The tone was only slightly baiting. Most. L pressed a button on the keyboard and green dots covered each of the blue ones, and some appeared where there had been no marks at all."To be fair, I have more resources than you do. What does interest me though, are these."

He pointed a long finger at one of the red dots scattered around Russia, which happened to be the
continent closest to him at the moment.

"What exactly are the red dots for?"

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I thought I was trying to make shorter chapters? I didn't even get to the conversation I wanted to have this chapter. I'm sorry for the wait, and for the cliff hanger. But they did meet face to face! Let me know how you liked this chapter. I'm so glad that everyone is enjoying this so far. Now that they're together hopefully I'll be able to work more on their interactions-this chapter had so many people in it I feel like it got very busy.

Feedback, as always, is lovely.

-Nilah
Consider

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

—

“No one really listens to anyone else, and if you try it for a while you’ll see why.” –Mignon McLaughlin

—

“The red markings are just a theory I have.”

His perch at the desk gave L an excellent view of everyone in the room, as well as each of the monitors that were set up at their various stations. Soichiro still hadn’t seated himself, or moved from his somewhat protective position behind his son.

“We have already established that Light-kun is a valuable detective to have on the team,” L started, watching the young man’s eyes light up when Watari entered the room with coffee. It hadn’t quite been on purpose, but L did consider it a happy accident that Light hadn’t slept. The persona of extreme politeness was tiresome to watch, so he could only imagine how difficult it was to maintain. “I doubt any of his theories are ‘just’ anything.”

Watari passed by L first and he plucked up his teacup as well as one of the two containers stacked with sugar. Then the elderly man set the tray down on the coffee table so that each of them could serve themselves before leaving once more.

Ever polite (and, perhaps, not wanting to display how drained he was) Light waited for others to serve themselves first. Naomi poured herself coffee as well and Matsuda moved to do the same, but held it out for Light with a ‘you need it more than I do’ grin.

Light took it gratefully, thanking the older officer before putting a dollop of cream in it and taking a long sip. L also hadn’t slept in twenty-four hours, but he had trained for it. Despite his intelligence, Light Yagami had not been educated at Whammy’s House.

“Whenever I have the time, I look for more Kira victims, in hopes that he made some sort of mistake that might lead to his capture,” Light prefaced, and despite how pleasant his voice was on the ears, L couldn’t help but think that he must really like to hear himself talk. He certainly did it enough. “So I compiled all of the ‘freak karma deaths’, but then there was a case locally that caught my attention. It was local news, barely made the headline, but before they announced the cause of death, I thought for sure he fit the profile of a Kira victim.”

He took another sip of his coffee, which L found to be entirely unnecessary.

“But he died of natural causes,” Light took another beat, settling his coffee in both his hands for now, but not putting it too far away. “A heart attack, actually.”

“If Light-kun could,” L proposed, and then took his own sip of tea pointedly. “– get to the point?”

Matsuda hid a snicker while Aizawa rolled his eyes when he thought he couldn’t see and even
Naomi openly made a sound that said she didn’t approve of his impoliteness. Light, however, was patient and well mannered. The caffeine was apparently working for him.

“It was just a hunch. It was just six months ago that I started searching, but I’ve been combing through articles and obituaries, basically the death of anyone in the last seven years that Kira could construe as ‘corrupt’.”

L’s eyes shifted to the red dots on the maps, understanding pouring in on him before Light spelled it out. His teeth dug into his thumb, awed and slightly pissed off. “And you found them. Dozens of them, according to the maps.”

“Yes. All of them, heart attacks. Many of them had no history of heart disease or high blood pressure.”

“…It could be a coincidence.” Aizawa’s voice broken in for the first time in a handful of minutes, as he finally went to pour himself a cup of coffee.

"It is possible for a young, healthy person to succumb to a spontaneous bodily failure.” L spoke while his eyes raked over each of the markings—he hadn’t been able to devote as much time as he’d wanted to, to the Kira case. Even so, there was no excuse for him not seeing something like this.

He’d been looking for insane accidents or over-the-top suicides, not medical issues.

“Anything is possible.” Light agreed placating, taking another long sip and closing his eyes briefly. He seemed to think better of it after a moment. “I did say it was just a theory.”

“But you have to admit that it’s strange that this many people who fit the profile of a Kira victim have had heart attacks when all medical science says that they shouldn’t have.” It was Naomi this time, a tremor of excitement to her voice at the prospect of discovering something about Kira that had never been previously entertained.

L admitted, “Yes, that is…notable.”

*If Light Yagami is Kira, what is the point in him telling me this? Is it just to mislead me? But if he isn’t, and he truly came up with something that I had not myself thought of—*

“Why do you seem so dejected at the prospect?”

L pulled his eyes away from the ceiling once more to look at Light, where the young man was peering at him with a fierce intelligence, only diluted by the sheer weight of his exhaustion.

“It’s just that,” L started slowly, stirring his twelfth or thirteenth sugar cube into his tea idly. “If that’s true, then I’ve greatly miscalculated Kira’s personality and level of intelligence, as well as the lengths that his powers can go.”

“What do you mean?” Matsuda blinked, looking back and forth like a puppy between the two men who might be able to tell him.

“Let’s save the questions for after they’re done talking through it, Matsuda.” Soichiro rang in, and he finally took a seat on the couch next to Matsuda.

“Well, if he’s killing ostentatiously on the surface and then murdering others with illnesses or even more probable accidents below, then that means he’s even more cunning than I suspected,” L admitted, all the while fixing his dark eyes on the brilliant officer across the room. “It’s uncharacteristic of the Kira that I had profiled in my mind.”
It’s more like you, isn’t it? Yes, now that I’ve met you in person, you do seem like an extremely cautious individual. If what you’re bringing to my attention means what it seems to, then that only makes me suspect you more.

“Okay, but what does that mean?”

“Matsuda.”

“Right, sorry, I just—um, go on.”

Surprising L, it was Mogi who spoke up, slow and uncertain. “…It means that we may never know just how high the death count is.”

“So we might as well assume that every asshole who’s died in the last seven years a victim?” Aizawa grumbled, pulling his coffee close to him but not drinking.

“No, Kira still picks very specific victims. Those who have preyed on the week in some way—or assisted those that do in continuing to do so,” L replied after a moment, watching his suspect from his chair, never letting his eyes wander so far that he couldn’t see him in his peripheral. “And, of course, we rule out anyone who’s name and face was not released.”

He hadn’t crossed his legs, he thought suddenly. Almost every time he’d seen Light Yagami sitting down at home, relaxed, he’d had one of his long legs crossed over the other. Now they were flat on the ground, which could mean that he was being honest or that he wanted to give off the appearance of being honest.

Or was him crossing his legs a sign of comfort?

“Yeah, about that. I mean, I guess I get why you think he’d need a face,” Matsuda suddenly questioned, scooting forward until he was on the edge of the cushion. “Because news coverage is almost always available immediately prior to their deaths—but a name?

“Well,” Naomi started slowly, “Those criminals whose names were not released haven’t been killed.”

“And, I’ve noticed,” Light chimed in again, finally setting his mug down. Empty then. Interesting. He must have truly been affected by a lack of sleep. From what he’d seen, Light liked to savor his coffee. “If a name is misspelled in the media, even if they appear to fit Kira’s profile perfectly, they don’t die. At least not soon.”

“So what—“ Matsuda paused, looking at Soichiro sheepishly before he continued, “How is he doing this? How is it possible for any one man—or even an organization—to pull something like this off?”

“That’s what I’d like to know,” Aizawa grumbled.

“That part,” L started out, putting a finger up as if to make a grand revelation, “I have absolutely no idea about. Does Light-kun have any suggestions?”

L couldn’t help but enjoy the twitch that his overly saccharine put-on voice caused as he asked the question.

“As much as I don’t want to say it,” Could-Be Kira started slowly, “I don’t think it is possible to explain it based on the rules of our reality.”

“So, basically, magic.”
Aizawa was an interesting man; He was still here, still attentive and available to help them, but always reluctant to believe. L couldn’t really blame him, of course.

“I have to agree,” Naomi murmured, then looked up after she’d done so, as if she hadn’t realized that she’d spoken until she’d heard herself. “With Yagami-kun, I mean. I’m not usually one to be superstitious, but what other choice do we have? He can kill from a distance, in impossible ways.”

“Yes,” L added, watching every subtle sign of sleepiness that Light Yagami showed. There weren’t many. He wasn’t complaining—putting up a strong front for the others, no doubt. L was starting to get that he was rather good at that sort of thing. “I think it’s safe to say, until we figure it out, we should continue on assuming that he has some sort of supernatural power.”

L sipped his tea, slurping loudly just to watch the flicker of agitation that crossed Light’s otherwise attractive mask of serenity.

“Of course, I hope not. Proof would be easier to come by, if there was a physical weapon. Then, at least, we could devise some sort of counterattack.”

“You’ve really risked your life,” Naomi all but whispered, “Letting us meet you like this. You must really want to catch him.”

“I’ve devoted quote a bit of time to finding him, Naomi-san.” L set his tea down with a clank, enjoying the way harsh noises affected Light even from this distance. “I intend to win.

“One could say that Kira has already won this battle.” There was nothing particularly harsh about Light’s tone, though he did seem to be poking a sore spot purposefully. L wasn’t sure if this amused him or annoyed him, when it was spoken in such an apparently innocent fashion. Butter wouldn’t melt in his pretty mouth. Yeah, right. “Simply by allowing us to meet you in person.”

Perhaps I have. But after seven years, I don’t have much choice but to move forward. Staying in the shadows hasn’t done me much good. Even if you are Kira, you’ll still need my name.

“Yes,” L agreed after a moment of speculation, “But I will win the war. He who strikes first has the advantage—with the help of this team I’ve put together, I hope to come up with a way to strike.”

For a moment, L was sure that Light would respond with another polite jab, but instead a rather fetching smile pulled at the officer’s lips.

“I look forward to assisting you to the best of my ability, Ryuzaki.”

“…Thank you, Light-kun.”

There was a brief moment of quiet, before Matsuda broke it with an obscure, thoughtful statement. “…It must be difficult to kill people like that.”

“It should be difficult for anyone to murder another human being,” Soichiro’s voice was kind and deep but always patiently reprimanding. L was never quite sure that he was willing to do what was necessary, but he was a respected leader and a determined officer of the law. He could only be an asset to the team.

“Oh, I—yes, of course, Chief, but I meant…ah.” Matsuda paused to gather his words. “I meant that if we’re assuming that Kira is able to do these things with…magic, or ESP, or whatever, maybe it isn’t easy to use. Maybe he only does like seven or eight murders a week because it takes—effort.”

Aizawa again, with that tone that Alphas used when speaking to Omegas, many times whether they
meant to or not. “This isn’t a movie, Matsuda.”

“I know that! I’m just saying that…”

Naomi frowned, but turned her steady gaze onto him. “Go on. Tell us how it could be relevant to the case.”

Matsuda blushed at the serious attention, and took another moment to collect himself.

“Well…I mean, since L--Ryuzaki said that it was out of character for him to kill with heart attacks, and it only happens now and then…maybe it’s an accident,” Matsuda drew his shoulders up, clearly slightly uncomfortable that he had the entire rooms attention. “Maybe it happens when—I don’t know. When the dramatic stuff doesn’t work out for some reason.”

L had thought there would be another moment of contemplative silence, but Light spoke up rather quickly in response. He knew that it was uncommon for an Omega of Matsuda’s age to be unmated, let alone to get as far as he had in law enforcement. He could understand Soichiro catering to him (he did seem to be a ‘root for the underdog’ type) but L couldn’t help but be slightly surprised by Light’s indulgence.

“So you’re proposing that maybe heart attacks are the default setting of his murders?”

“If supernatural killing powers could have a default setting,” Aizawa looked at Mogi, as if looking for someone to agree with him.

Mogi scratched the back of his neck. “…There are weirder things, Aizawa.”

“We’re talking about supernatural killing powers.” Naomi offered, musing, “Nothing is off limits.”

After letting them chat for a moment, considering the possibility, L decided he was satisfied with the theory. He once more picked up his tea cup. “It would also explain how drastically out of character heart attacks are for Kira.”

“Y—Yeah?”

Soichiro patted him on the shoulder encouragingly as L watched, but Light was in the corner of his eye, still awake thanks to Watari’s visit. L should have told him to sneak decaf into the coffee pot, just to see what would happen.

“Indeed,” L conceded. “There’s no way for us to know, of course, until Kira is caught. So the idea is an interesting one, and I’ll entertain it because it supports my theory that Kira is a melodramatic child who wants his deaths to little theatre shows.”

“Ah…right.” Matsuda shuffled, unsure whether or not L’s words were praise or not.

“For now, I think I shall let you disperse to your work stations. I gave you all directions before Light-kun joined us. I would like to speak with him privately,” L let his gaze meet Yagami senior’s briefly, “Just as I did with all of you a few days ago.”

“Ryuzaki, should we let him rest first?” Soichiro began urgently, palms out, imploring.

“Dad, no, it’s okay.”

As I thought. Too proud to admit that you’re barely awake enough to function. Always so well-mannered, the ideal son in every way. It must be difficult, being you, Light Yagami.
“I’ll be fine. It’s not the first time I’ve stayed up all night.”

*But are you Kira?*

“Of course, I want to clear my name as soon as possible,” Light offered, shifting in his seat to sit up a little straighter. He was likely at that stage of tiredness when his entire body started aching for a bed. “I don’t like being suspected of murder, but just being here is enough. Don’t worry about me.”

Another dazzling smile to put his father at ease.

“Thank you, Light-kun, I’m sure this must be hard for you, but I appreciate your cooperativeness” L offered casually, more a dismissal of the rest of them than an actual expression of gratitude. Most of them caught the hint and stood, starting to move to the other side of the suite to where desks and computers were set up for each of the.

Naomi had to tap Matsuda’s shoulder to get him to take the hint, but soon he was out of the picture as well.

Light turned back to him, his eyes as bright as ever, for a moment the ache for sleep completely disappearing from his eyes. Through sheer force of will, Light was completely present once more. It was a cruel thought, but the detective couldn’t help but wonder if the younger man had any limits at all, and if he could push them just right and make this impossibly perfect façade crumble.

“Please, Ryuzaki.” Light moved to pour himself another cup of coffee, as if to prove he was in this for the long hall, making eye contact once he’d leaned back in his chair once more. “Ask me whatever you see fit.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Man, you guys have so many questions! I’ll take that as a good thing. I’m going to answer a few things here, either that I don’t think I’ll really be able to bring up in the context of the story or not for a while. Also, just to be clear, I don’t want to get too science-y with this fic. The social aspects and interesting gender issues of the Omegaverse are what interest me, not the pseudo-science.

1) A Beta is a ‘typical’ person. If you, or anyone in our world, were to be transported to the Omegaverse, they would be a beta. There are no extas. Beta men cannot carry children, but women can. All Omegas can carry children (unless there is a medical issue) and all Alphas cannot—even females. Will be expanded on in the fic when necessary, though I’m not a fan of pregnancy or mpreg being a big part of stories so, yeah.

2) Light takes one pill, in the morning, every day. He does not know what will happen if he misses one, as he never has. People don’t do what Light is doing as far as he knows, so there isn’t much research about what happens after suppressing heats for 8 years. That’s all you get (for now), because that’s all Light has.

3) An Alpha and Omega, or two betas, would be the equivalent of a ‘straight’ relationship. There is some stigma attached to any coupling that cannot produce a child.
Beta/Omega and Alpha/Beta has a little bit of stigma, but only Omega/Omega and Alpha/Alpha are the ‘gay’ relationships. This will be touched on later.

4) Omegas have their heats naturally once a month. Many working Omegas are on suppressants that make them occur less often. It’s generally agreed upon that no Omega should go more than a year without going into heat.

Alright, anyway, I hope that gets some basics out of the way. There are way too many people in the room this chapter, but next chapter it’ll be mostly Light and L. Spending three chapters for one day seems like a bit much to me, but…it’s all important stuff! Please let me know how you liked this chapter!

-Nilah
Survey

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

- “War is ninety percent information.” -Napoleon Bonaparte
- “Light-kun takes very hot showers.”

That wasn’t exactly a question. Light paused before his first sip of his second cup of coffee, peering at L from where he sat, doing his best to be still but not stiff either. He wasn’t fond of being a suspect, but he understood why he was. It wasn’t pleasant, being mistrusted so entirely by the greatest detective in the world, a man whose job was his goal in life, especially when he was so used to charming his way into the hearts of any stranger within minutes.

If that.

It was a dig, he knew. He’d always liked his showers especially warm, but he’d been fogging up the bathroom intentionally to give himself some semblance of privacy with cameras placed all over his apartment an in his restroom, of all places. L had started with this as if to say ‘I know why’.

“I suppose I do,” Light replied slowly, allowing his brow to furrow. “Why is that relevant?”

“It isn’t.” The dark-haired man answered with infuriating nonchalance. “Did you know that taking hot showers is thought to be a symptom of loneliness?”

“…I may remember something like that from a high school psychology class.”

L’s lips quirked into a small, inane grin. The subtle jibe wasn’t lost on him. “I suppose it is a bit farfetched. Still, it’s quite odd that someone with Light-kun’s social skills and physical symmetry would not have had a significant other since college.”

Physical symmetry, he’d said. What a ridiculous way for the detective to say that he was attractive without actually allowing it to be a compliment.

Not pleased with the direction of the conversation, Light feigned a laugh. “I’m too busy with work for anything serious, Ryuzaki. It isn’t that odd for someone of my age and line of work to not have anyone they’re serious about.”

“Of course. I don’t mean to pry, but it is pertinent to my profile of Kira,” L explained in a distracted monotone, “I imagine it would be difficult to maintain a romantic relationship with someone if one is busy being a megalomaniac, unless absolutely necessary.”

“I’m sure there are plenty of people who have other reasons for their lack of love life.”

Light took a moment, reflecting on L’s words before continuing.
“Is that what you think his goal is? To eventually ‘take over the world’?”

“Simply put, yes.” Dark eyes bore into him, unblinking, and from this distance there was no way to distinguish pupil from iris. “I think he knows how to be patient, how to build up his popularity. ‘Kira Kira’ and ‘Kira Karma’ are casual terms in our society now—there are mentions in TV shows, songs and movies. He’s a household name, one that is generally spoken of with admiration rather than distain.”

It was true. The one of the earliest times he’d seen it mentioned in the media was in a popular song a few years back, performed by Misa Amane. In fact, she had pretty much been the one to make the term ‘Kira Kira’ popular, seeing as it doubled as a cutesy name for the killer entity and the term for twinkling stars.

No, no, this wasn’t time to think of her. The Yoshiro case something else entirely—this was *Kira*, a mystery even L had not been able to solve and as such it had his full attention for the moment. His mind was slipping into chaos from lack of rest, rather than the neat little file system he usually had in place.

Light took L’s words, leaning back in his chair. “So you think Kira’s endgame is to ‘come out’ to the world.”

“To reveal himself and try to escape justice by changing its nature. Once he is convinced that the world will love him.” L took his teacup into his fingers again, that silly way of his. Was everything that he did, each motion and mannerism, designed to be strange? “I must find a way to act against him before he does.”

*Striking first.* It was a simplistic way to look at it, but not a philosophy that Light entirely disagreed with.

“But, enough about Kira. This talk is about you.”

Those eyes were still on him, calculating; his words lilting just so, just enough to imply that he was still convinced that they could be one and the same.

“Yes, certainly. As I said, ask me whatever you like.”

"I shall. How did Light-kun know that there were cameras?” L pressed a key on the keyboard and brought up a different screen on the nearest monitor. Light saw himself displayed there, coming home from work the first night when he had spoken to L so deliberately. “The colleague that I had plant the cameras told me there was no real security system in place. She mentioned there was a small slip of paper in the door that fell when she opened it, but that she put it back.”

Light have been expecting something of the sort, but it was hardly the most interesting answer he had to give. He’d thought up the system as a teenager, after all, when he’d had no choice but to hide his pills under a false bottom in his drawer, with a fake diary as a distraction.

The same way, while entirely legitimate in its own right, his Kira notebook was a distraction for the suppressants that lay in the back of his safe at home.

"It was mostly guesswork. As I mentioned, I was expecting you to consider me a suspect eventually, and after what happened at the sentencing hearing, I figured you'd be honing in soon.” Light took a sip when a throbbing at the back of his eyes reminded him that he hadn’t slept. “I knew someone had entered my home. I use simpler security system to see if someone has entered by home in my absence.”
L was silent, and so Light continued.

"There was a slip of paper, but if it had been someone like my landlord, he wouldn't have noticed it and put it back into place. There was also one of my hairs resting on knob, and that's not something anyone would notice unless they knew it was there."

"Light-kun is very creative."

"It's been an effective method."

"Some might say that your apparent paranoia is indicative of secrets."

"I enjoy my privacy." Light did what he could not to appear defensive, though the constant accusations were beginning to rub him the wrong way. L tilted his head at him, giving him a curious look that was so eerily guileless it was clearly designed to present the opposite.

"His longing for privacy seems to have been instilled in him from a young age." L pulled himself out of his chair and moved closer, lanky limbs moving in the same ambiguous, oddly nimble way until he was closer, seating himself on the couch, presumably to have better access to the kettle of tea. He poured himself another cup as he spoke. "I had someone do a thorough search of your childhood home. We found the false bottom in your desk drawer."

"You've gone that far?"

Light had moved out in the summer break between senior year of high school and freshman year of college. He'd been tense and hyperaware of how close he was to being found out at any given time, living with his parents and sister. Tokyo University had given him a full ride and that had included the majority of the cost of student housing. He'd worked part time in the library to pay for the rest of his needs, keeping himself busy enough to excuse himself from most social situations. It had been good for him, to keep his mind off of who he was to focus on what he was doing.

And here Ryuzaki was, dissecting his entire past with a fine tooth comb.

"As I said, I like my privacy," He brushed a stray lock of hair behind his ear, projecting embarrassment. "I kept a journal, as a teenager, to organize my thoughts."

"I wouldn't have imagined Light-kun was the type for diaries."

The wording irked Light more than he’d expected, the condescension bristling his otherwise well-crafted structure of good manners and humility.

"I’m sure it’s not the first time I’ve surprised you, Ryuzaki." His smile was bright, only his words giving it the edge that he meant for it to. "You seem to be an intelligent, adaptive man. I’m sure you’ll get used to it."

That gave the older man pause, before he brought a thumb to his mouth. Light, silently aghast, though that he might actually suck on it like some sort of toddler. He chewed on the tip of it instead, which was an unsightly habit, but far better than what had crossed his mind a moment before.

"What I find intriguing is that Light-kun doesn’t seem to have any record in either his schooling or work history that suggests that he might work outside of the system. So I find it rather interesting that he would do so in sentencing hearing, no matter what he felt the just cause was."

Light’s smile flickered.
“Outside the system? You’re mistaken, Ryuzaki,” Light brought his mug to his lips for a sip to hide his fading smile. “I think you’ll find that I have not broken a single rule.”

“My apologies.” L implored almost immediately, as if this had been just the reaction he’d been expecting. “Light-kun is correct, of course. He has followed the letter of the law perfectly.”

“Yes, I have.” Light asserted, though there was a weighted uncertainty in the pit of his stomach. Why did that statement seem back-handed? He had worked within the confines of the law. He had all of his life; there was little that was more important to him. Even so, L’s tone seemed to imply there was some sort of fault with that.

Was he trying to suggest that Light’s actions had been within the ‘letter of the law’ but not the spirit of it?

What the hell do you know?

“I understand your suspicion of me,” Light spoke up again when it seemed L was content to sip his tea in response. He leaned forward, until his elbows were on his knees. “But I assure you that I would never take the law into my own hands. I respect it too much. It’s true that I have advocated for harsher sentences when I felt like justice would not be served.”

Light’s fingers tightened marginally in his grip on the coffee mug.

“But I’m not a murderer. I’m not that kind of person.”

There was a moment of silence in which L peered at him with large, unyielding dark eyes over the rim of his teacup. The eye contact was not broken for an undetermined amount of time, a quiet standoff of doubt and truth. After that series of tense seconds had passed, L lowered his cup and spoke in his low, undisturbed voice.

“Light-kun’s sincerity and conviction are very persuasive.”

Why does it sound like you’re simply applauding my acting skills? I’m telling the truth! You have nothing in the way of evidence, so what is it about me that has you so damned suspicious?

“I can say with certainty,” L announced to him, loudly enough that those in the other room could hear. “That there is a ninety-nine percent chance that you are not Kira.”

Ninety-nine—? For the love of—

“So, what you’re saying is that there is a one percent chance that I am.” Light spelled out, covering up the spasm of irritation at how L was, in general. His fallacies were so decisively transparent, it was as though he were mocking him. “Even at one percent, I’m not actually cleared.”

“I hadn’t thought about it like that,” L said casually, taking another sip and blinking, yet again not even trying to hide the blatant lie.

“…Right.” Light let himself sigh, sitting back in his seat and taking another long sip of coffee before it went cold.

“Of course…” the detective spoke up thoughtfully, his voice taking on an airy quality as if he were coming up with the idea then and there. It was so unabashedly contrived. “…if Light-kun wants to consent to some form of short-term confinement, we could get this out of the way.

“Absolutely not.”
Not only was it offensive to suggest—because really, why would he willingly submit himself for confinement if he was not guilty? It was madness—but even if he were to entertain the idea, it was impossible. To keep his secret, he had to go home to take his daily dose of suppressants. He’d taken one before he came here, at NPA headquarters, but he would need to take another one tomorrow morning. Being locked up here without his pills was not an option.

He’d gone into his safe every day and done some simple slide of hand to retrieve his dose, as well as keeping a second emergency pill in the lining of an inside pocket. Light had pulled out his notebook, but in the same motion he’d reached into the small case he kept his pills in. From there it had been easy to slip it into his front chest pocket while retrieving his pen, and then take it while he was in transit to work, feigning a yawn.

Allowing himself to be confined would ruin everything. He could even end up going into heat, on camera, in front of everyone, and it was not acceptable, not—

The cool trickle of panic that ran down Light’s spine at the mere thought.

“No?” Inquired the detective as he dumped sugar cubes into a fresh cup of tea. “Even if it could prove to me your innocence once and for all?”

“I highly doubt that such a thing would actually prove my innocence to you, beyond a shadow of a doubt.” Light scoffed, staying as good-natured as humanly possible under this amount of distrust and sleep deprivation. “It seems to me that you’re rather set on suspecting me.”

There was the slight slant of his head again, what Light was learning was a signal of intrigue, but also of juvenile amusement.

“Besides,” Light spoke, setting his empty coffee cup down on the table. “I don’t need to prove that I’m not Kira. I’m innocent until proven guilty, not the other way around.”

“Your grasp on the justice system is astounding, Light-kun.” Those long fingers gripped the stem of his tea cup and lifted it again as he spoke, tone level yet taunting.

“You’re the world’s greatest detective, Ryuzaki.” He took that moment to push himself up, and though his body protested with every motion, he managed to be as poised as ever. “So if you just do your job, I’m sure it will become apparent that I’m not Kira. When we catch the real one.”

A beat, Light starting to turn for the door, and then—“Where is Light-kun going?”

He glanced back. “Am I wrong in assuming that this talk is over?”

“For the most part, it is, but I thought Light-kun wanted to work on the case with the rest of the task force.” L’s gaze drifted to the archway behind Light that led to where he supposed the rest of them were dutifully working. “Is he going home at such an early hour?”

“I’m afraid I won’t be much used to you if I don’t get some sleep, Ryuzaki.” Light tossed him a sheepish grin as he straightened his suit jacket. “I’ll be back later in the day, once I’ve showered and slept.”

“…I suppose Kira as waited seven years for Light-kun and I to work together, it can wait another four hours.”

“Seven hours,” Light corrected, though the positively banal words had caught him slightly off guard. The ‘woe is me’ air was almost funny, if he hadn’t been trying to guilt Light into staying at the risk of his own mental fortitude. “To be clear, I also have my duty to the Yoshiro case.”
In a low, disinterested drawl, L conceded. “That is understandable. Light-kun is quite dedicated to justice.”

Why does everything that come out of your mouth, even praise, seem like it is meant to offend?

“Also, I’d appreciate it if you took the cameras out of my home.”

“It’s already done.” L replied nonchalantly, pressing his thumb to his lips instead of his teacup this time. “I released my agent to take them out as soon as we established that you were with Watari.”

“...Thank you.” He wasn’t sure he could actually believe that; he’d have to do a sweep of the place before he felt truly safe enough to relax. Even then, he could never be sure. L had displayed his lack of reservations in these matters and while Light didn’t blame him, it was still a violation that wouldn’t be easily forgotten. “I look forward to working with you, Ryuzaki.”

“Likewise, Light-kun.”

With that, Light left the suite an allowed Watari to drive him back to his apartment for a few well-deserved hours of sleep before his work on the Kira case truly began.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I love how so many of you have asked about Light crossing his legs—It’s nothing big, but it’ll be touched on in the future, mostly in L’s point of view. Body language and facial expressions are important to me, and I like to play with them quite a bit. As a fun tidbit, maybe keep an eye on my wording when I describe how Light is moving or gesturing. Many times, I’ll use the words ‘he projected’ or otherwise ‘designing’ his own mannerisms to show exactly what he wants others to see. Or even when he’s feeling something genuine, I’ll write ‘he let that show’ or ‘allowed himself to smile’, for example. It’s something that I keep in mind quite a bit while writing him, and may give you insight on him, as a reader, that I don’t completely spell out.

As for what scent blockers are, the next chapter will actually have a LOT to do with them. A few of you have asked about them, so I figured it was worth noting here. But seriously—next chapter should have all the information you need on the subject. It’ll also talk about suppressants that Alphas use. Also, second genders in this world overarch first genders, I think. There’s probably still a little stigma in maybe very conservative people to, say, two male betas or two female betas. But for the most, that is a non-issue. I’ll be going over sexuality quite a bit though so this should all come up in some form or another.

Anyway, thank you so much for your reviews. I appreciate every single one of them. Things are still pretty tense between them, but --I hope-- fun to read. My goal is to devote the next few chapters to bonding and shenanigans, while also furthering the investigation.

-Nilah
Mission

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Virtue has a veil, vice a mask." – Victor Hugo

"Hey there, fellow Omies! Are you nearing that time of the month? Worried that special Alpha will smell it on you?"

On the screen was Misa Amane, in a short, white tennis outfit, her hair drawn up into blond pigtails.

"Well, don't even think twice about it. Omega-Fresh is guaranteed to get you through any 'strenuous activity' –tee hee—" She leaned against her co-star and (in the context of the commercial) tennis partner, Ryuga Hideki. "–and is even activated when you break a sweat!"

There was a clumsy swing of a tennis racquet. She hit the ball and winked at the camera, looking coyly at her fellow actor and touching his chest. "Keep your modesty intact. Omega-Fresh scent blockers: Stay fresh, all the time."

She delivered the tag line and leaned up to kiss Ryuga, but the logo for Omega-Fresh popped up instead.

"Sponsored by Yoshiro Corp." Finished an unknown, generic male voice.

L watched the commercial out of his peripheral, though he was observing Light watching it more than anything. It was one of a series of commercials for the new product in a line of scent blockers aimed at Omegas. It depicted the petite Omegan model, pop idol and TV drama star on a tennis court with her Alpha 'boyfriend', the equally famous Ryuuga Hideki. She'd prance around in shorts or tiny skirts with spanks, using terrible form and advocating the ostentatious baby blue packaged scent blocker. She'd dab it on her wrists, her neck, and underarms before running over to him and giggling out a double entendre.

It was only one of many products that could be used to block an Alpha or Omega's scent. While this commercial was for a deodorant of sorts, there were shampoos, conditioners, colognes and soaps that all had a similar purpose. It was considered impolite or even lewd in some cultures to stink of one's second gender too strongly, especially Omegas. Every scent was faintly different, and in some countries Alphas displayed strong scents and washed infrequently just to make it all the more potent.

In Japan, it was popular for even Alphas to use some sort of suppressant or scent blocker.

L took low-grade gummy bear suppressants, because he absolutely refused to put anything in his mouth that didn't taste good. He wasn't exactly hiding his second gender, but he didn't flaunt it either. His scent was already a rather subtle; suppressants merely took the edge off of it and made it so that he was less susceptible to Omegan scents. He was fairly sure that Matsuda an Aizawa had smelled him after all this time in his proximity, but it hadn't been their first impression of him.
"Oh, man, Misa Misa is so cute." Matsuda's voice took on a higher pitch, drawing L's eyes to him.

The advertisement in question was relevant to the Yoshiro case that the younger man had been working on for the better part of a month now. The news had been on in the background while the task force worked for the better part of an hour, on low, as there was a prominent trial of a corrupt senator to be broadcast soon and they were all waiting to see if Kira was watching.

Well, most of them. Soichiro had gone home for a few hours at the request of his daughter, who was apparently questioning him about a past case for a report she had due. L had allowed it; the last two weeks had brought very little new evidence to light.

His lip quirked against his thumb at the phrase. There were so many sayings he could do that with, and after half a month of working with Light, he'd voiced every play on his name he could think of just to watch the flicker of exasperation in Light's eyes.

It was the one of the moments closest to genuine human emotion that Light Yagami would let him see.

As far as the case went, all they'd done was get organized—which wasn't exactly a complete loss—and figure out that Matsuda's idea might very well be correct. Many of the victims had exuded strange behavior prior to their heart attacks which seemed to indicate that they were being controlled in the way that Kira was known for. Light had corroborated this by describing the dead look on the face of the judge who had been killed in front of him.

Even so, that wasn't much to go on. Naomi was the one working on drudging up heat attack victims, and she was quite focused in her corner of the room. She hadn't looked up from her reading to look at the commercial like Light, L and Matsuda had, and unlike Mogi and Aizawa (who had noticed the commercial but hadn't looked up) she didn't actually seem to notice that the television was on.

"Don't you think so, Light?"

"Don't be queer, Matsuda," Aizawa muttered, making Matsuda blush and sputter. There really wasn't a filter on the Omega at all, which could be amusing, but also irritating. More than once it had incurred deeps sighs and rolled eyes. "We're trying to work. No one here is on the Yoshiro case except for Light, so it isn't relevant."

Light raised his eyebrows and glanced over at Aizawa, and even from his limited view still facing the computer he could tell that the comment didn't sit well with him. He was going to speak up soon, L was certain.

From what he could tell, Light had a martyr complex of some sort, which only fit the Kira profile all the more.

"We've all been working quite hard, I think," Light pointedly turned away from his computer and stretched, as if to make a show of taking a break. His arms above his head, his back arched, his profile was even more lean and elegant than usual.

"Yeah, we have—sorry about that, Matsuda, it just feels like we're getting nowhere." Aizawa apologized, though he seemed slightly uncomfortable about doing so. "And since this stuff seems so far-fetched to begin with..."

"It's alright, Aizawa! I think it's been a frustrating couple of weeks for everyone." Matsuda grinned, irritantly good-natured as always, though the red in his cheeks remained. He turned his attention back to Light, something slightly conspiratorial in his gaze. "You're going to meet her soon, aren't
you? For the case? That's going to be amazing!"

Light nodded slowly, picking up his half-finished coffee. "I've met her before, actually."

"You have!? When? How? That's so cool!"

L spun in his seat, quicker than Light had, so suddenly that his chair squeaked and drew Naomi and Mogi's attention away from their work. "Is Light-kun a fan of Misa Misa?"

"...I'm not really interested in pop culture," Light denied smoothly, then had the decency to let them see a bit of hesitancy. L already knew why, and could imagine what would come out of Light's mouth next. "I met her at the second sentencing hearing that I attended. She was going into a different hearing, but we spoke a little while we waited. Her parents were murdered by a burglar, so she was there to testify at his appeal, to make sure he was not released."

Matsuda's expression was instantly horrified. "That poor girl! I had no idea. You'd never know, with how cheerful she is..."

Mogi frowned as he looked up, his eyes tired from staring at screens. Now that the conversation had turned in an appropriate direction, he felt like it was safe to speak up.

"Did he get out?"

"Huh?" Matsuda blurted out, looking at the man in confusion.

"Her parent's murderer." Mogi clarified easily, "Did he get the appeal?"

"Yes, I'm afraid. She was pretty distraught," Light sighed, his voice softening slightly, but there was a tightness in his jaw that L couldn't help but notice. He was more outraged than sympathetic.

L twirled his chair back around, typing his name into the database of Kira victims that had been built for purposes such as these. "Apparently, he died only a few days later by known car thieves who stabbed him in the street."

"Wait..." Matsuda's mouth seemed to unhinge. "Does that make Misa Misa a suspect!?"

L blinked and swiveled the chair once more, doing a full spiral while he shrugged. "We'd have to suspect every victim of every criminal that Kira's killed, if that were the case."

Matsuda was an idiot, most of the time, but there were glimmers of logic that he seemed to stumble upon almost without meaning to. He'd looked into Misa Amane before, though she was one of many. It was why L knew her story, had thought to look up the hearing and then cross referenced it with the several that Light had attended.

Misa Misa wasn't quite a suspect, but she could easily become one. That silly Kira Kira song was enough to make L think so, even if it was dreadfully tacky self-promotion.

"Yes, that would be pretty impractical." Mogi agreed while Aizawa staunchly looked down at his the laptop perched on his knees.

"Besides," Light veered the conversation gently. L had found he was quite good at that. "She may be a key witness in the Yoshiro case; we don't want to overwhelm her. I'll be talking to her tomorrow, when she's filming the next installment of this commercial series."

"Isn't a little cold to be outside playing tennis?"
"The commercials are shot in the Hariake Tokyo Tennis Arena, Matsuda. They have private, indoor courts. Besides, my goal isn't really to play."

"How are you going to get in there?" Matsuda asked, eyes wide. "It's sort of elite, isn't it?"

"Especially while a shoot is being done," Mogi added, "It's sort of a 'members only' place..."

Light nodded amiably as he explained. "Well, I did belong to the association once. Besides, they have the pictures of all the junior champions on the wall, which is sure work in my favor."

"Light-kun was a junior tennis champion?"

He hoped his mock awe would be enough to make Light twitch.

"Don't pretend you didn't know that, Ryuzaki." The reply was calm, nearly amused. L suppressed a sigh. "It's one of first articles that pops up if you search my name."

"Light-kun is very clever."

Which was true, of course. Even so, L couldn't help but enjoy saying even the most accurate things in an ambiguous way. He was amused by his own insolence, and how it affected the seemingly imperturbable Light Yagami.

"Thank you, Ruzaki. You flatter me."

No, I don't.

L let the silence linger for a bit, allowed Light to take a sip of his coffee, but before anyone started to get back to work, he spoke once again.

"I think I'll come with Light-kun tomorrow," L professed. "I'd be interested in playing with him, especially on such a prestigious field."

Light's eyes met his for the first time since the commercial played, shock tainting his features.

"You play?"

"Quite well," L assured him, pressing his teeth to his thumbnail and holding those infuriatingly brown eyes, refusing to break away. Light seemed to have a similar resolve.

"...I'm not sure that's the best idea, Ryuzaki."

"That's quite alright. I am."

"It's not about playing tennis, it's about observing the shoot and getting in contact with Amane. We really don't have time to be messing around." Light took a moment, then laid out what L was sure was a very subtle blackmail. "If you want me to have time to work on both cases."

"Nevertheless, I intend to play a game of tennis with Light-kun tomorrow. Unless he's afraid of losing?"

There was that sigh, that 'You're too stubborn to argue with about something so minor' exhale, though L thought he detected a note of satisfaction in the tone as well.

"Well, I suppose it has been a while since I've had a good competition."
"…If he thinks he can successfully get us into the arena, that is." L sent out the insinuation before taking a large bite of white cake with an even more generous helping of frosting, never breaking eye contact.

Light was not a huge fan of sugar, and L had perhaps taken advantage of the officer's distaste more than once, sometimes having Watari bring more than he really wanted just to see the look on Yagami's face when he inevitably ate it all. Of course, the younger man was too mild-mannered to say anything that might give away the flash of disgust in his gaze, though he had asked him once out of 'concern for his health' whether or not he was going to eat any 'real food'.

Despite L's intentions, the taunt did nothing but make Light give a melodic little laugh, one that seemed manufactured to be appealing, bringing his mug to his lips for a sip before cementing his promise. "I'll certainly try my best."

L noticed that Light finally moved his gaze away from where they had been locked before, and L considered that a point to the tally mark system in his head. He finished chewing the wad of cake in his mouth and swallowed.

"Light-kun is quite confident."

Once again those bright eyes were on him as he lowered the coffee cup from his lips, another smile forming on his lips as he responded cordially. "I'm optimistic."

"Optimism is a nothing more than a polite guise for arrogance." L made sure his own voice was low and without spite, as if he were simply quoting someone else with an opinion he found especially relevant.

He wasn't at all disappointed in Light's quick retort.

"And cynics like to call themselves 'realists' to feel superior to those who work for positive results."

He felt a smile tugging at his lips. Though not toothy or disarming as Light's, L's smiles were given freely, if infrequently, and very rarely contrived.

"Touché, Light-kun." L spun back to his computer, though he did not immediately get back to work. Instead, rose his voice just slightly to an appropriate 'announcement' level for those of the team who were hard at work. "Considering Light-kun and I will be gone for a significant part of the day tomorrow, please feel free to do as you please for the day.

Even with his back turned, he could sense the general relief in the room. Matsuda was the first to speak up, as was usual.

"Thanks, Ryuzaki! I really think we could use a day off."

"I didn't think I was holding anyone captive, Matsuda." He was much too easy of a target. L knew that, despite the man's lack of mental refinery, he was an asset to the team for his experience and practical skills. Not everyone was a Light Yagami—in fact, L was quite sure that no one was—and after spending so much time with the brilliant officer's mask, whatever it was for, it was nice break to have someone who could not hide themselves even if they tried.

"Oh, I know, I didn't quite mean…um. Well, thank you anyway!"

"It'll be good for me to get back to the family."

Aizawa agreed with Mogi, finally looking up from his papers to stretch. "My wife will like that.
She's been complaining that I'm never home."

L’s gaze shifted to Light, who had not commented on the little holiday. Of course, for him it wasn't. In fact, according to his records, Light Yagami had not taken a single day off work in the three years that he had been in the NPA's employ. It seemed that even on his days off, the young man found cases to look into, working when no one else was and taking notes about the Kira case.

Desperation to relieve a boredom that was common in truly brilliant people. L could certainly understand that, but it was one of very few things about the other man's mind that was not an enigma.

"I think I'll stay here, if that's alright, Ryuzaki?"

His gaze pulled away from Yagami and drifted over to the other end of the room, where Misora had spoken up finally.

"Of course, Naomi-san."

Matsuda made an astonished sound. "Ah, don't you have someone to visit, Naomi-san? Like a—boyfriend, or someone?"

L directed his attention back at the screen, intending to keep out of this conversation. He'd known Naomi for a decade now, had known her before she’d ever encountered Raye Penber and had been quietly disappointed in her choice. It had never been any of his business, of course, but he’d been annoyed that she’d been pressured to leave a prestigious position in the FBI in order to become his wife.

"—I'm divorced, actually."

Her tone was casual, but it had only been a year since their separation and only a few months since the papers had been officially signed. Though L had not pried, it was quite obvious to him why the relationship had not worked out.

Although it was not at all uncommon and Alpha to marry a Beta, it was much less likely for them to conceive than two Betas or an Alpha and Omega coupling. Naomi and Raye had been married for five years, but had no children. It could have been chalked up to a lack of desire for them, but considering that the Alpha FBI agent was already remarried and mated to an expecting Omega, L was rather certain this was not the case.

"Oh, I'm sorry." Matsuda's tone was strained with guilt.

"It's alright, it wasn't meant to be. My parents live in the countryside in Japan where I grew up, but that's a little too far to travel for one day. Besides, I'm on a roll here. I'd rather keep my focus."

"You're really dedicated, Misora-san."

The conversation slowed after that, each person chattering away about something or other before they gradually went back to work. They were only again distracted by the media's coverage on the outcome of the trial. Apparently, he'd thrown a colleague under the bus and had come away with very few legal repercussions.

L's eyes were not on the screen. Once again, they were on Light as he watched a man that had ruined the lives of thousands of employees with his greed shake hands with his attorney and walk away. He was so very careful, but with every else's attention on the television, L saw the line of his jaw clench, the tightening of his grip on the arm of his chair. He'd doubted himself in the last couple
weeks a few times, but L knew that his suspicions of the seemingly dutiful young man were not entirely unfounded.

Later that night, the senator fell asleep in his indoor hot tub and slowly boiled to death.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I'm really hoping to bring most of the characters we love from the second arc into play in this story, at some point or another. It's going to be a bit, because there are a few things that have to go down before all that. Also, as a warning, this story will get very sexually explicit at some point. Some of you have been waiting anxiously for that, but others might not be so keen, so I'll warn you in the chapter previous.

I've answered a lot of questions about scent blockers in this chapter. I haven't explained how Light gets away with using them without L finding them, but that will be breached probably within the next few chapters. There was also a bit about Alpha/Beta (and therein Beta/Omega) relations in this chapter, but here's a little more because it was brought up a couple times in the reviews:

Historically, Omegas of all first genders were treated worse than Beta Women, parallel to the real world. However, Omega Civil Rights are about 10-20 years behind Beta Women (approximately). Beta Women were considered better than Omegas (a good parallel would be how society has treated white women as opposed to women of color) but also in the past less desirable as a spouse. So, even though in 2010, when this story is set at the moment, most women have college educations and careers outside of family in reality, it's still pretty common for Omegas to mate and breed early. It's just not 'politically correct' to say as much (more like late 1980s/early 1990s when women were still openly expected to emulate men to be successful) like it would have been in our 1950s/1960s.

I hope that helps a little bit? I'll go more into genetics at some point in an A/N, but for now it isn't pertinent and this one is hella long already. Also, as for what happens when Light goes off his suppressants, I'm afraid you'll have to wait and see! [insert evil laugh] I'm glad you guys are so curious about the world. This chapter has a lot of information and set up for the next chapter, but I hope you found it entertaining. L and Light are both little shits.

As always, feedback feeds the muse. Thanks so much for your ongoing support. :) 

-Nilah
Light arrived an hour before the shoot was planned and found that there was quite the crowd of fans outside, of every gender, held at bay by several security officers. He’d shyly informed them that he was an extra and that he wasn’t at all sure where he was supposed to enter. They’d directed him to the back door without questioning, and then he’d immediately disappeared into the bathroom to change into an outfit more appropriate for physical activity.

When he emerged, he was dressed in a pristine white tennis polo and navy blue shorts with a stripe of white down either side. He looked sharp, like he belonged there, with a tennis bag slung over his shoulder almost regally, which was why no one questioned him when approached the front desk.

The girl there started to just glance up and then look away, but she blinked after catching his eye and peered back up at him with more interest, posture straightening. She greeted him sweetly, reciting her usual script of welcome.

“I was hoping that I could reserve a tennis court, just for a couple hours.” Light smiled at her charmingly, then rubbed the back of his neck as a show of contrition. “I’m sure that you’re a bit busy with all the commercial fuss going on, but…”

“Ah, well.” She looked around and then leaned in, whispering conspiratorially. “Actually, we aren’t. None of the regulars wanted to come with all this going on. Believe it or not, most people that come here aren’t huge pop idol fans.”

Light laughed his most disarming laugh. “No, I imagine not.”

“Can I see your membership card?”

“You see, that’s where I’m a bit at a loss…” From there, it was easy. She seemed impressed by his achievements when she found his picture on the wall among a few dozen other preteens. All he had to do was pay a non-membership fee for the time allotted and give her his I.D., as was protocol for the more unconventional situations such as this one. She apologized for having to do it, but he assured her that it was quite alright.

“So are you waiting on your date to show up?” Akira, her name was printed boldly on her name tag, pried.

“Yes. Well, a friend, he should be here soon, though I may have to look out for him—I’m not sure he’ll be able to get passed the crowd outside.”

“Well, what name should I put down for him?”

Light hesitated for a moment, before deciding to just go ahead with L’s usual alias.
“Ryu—“

“Ryuga Hideki.” The low voice interrupting him was a surprise. Light turned his head, eyebrows raising as he saw L there in his standard clothes—though thankfully wearing shoes this time.

…*What the hell? Ryuga Hideki?*

Light wanted to cover his face with his hands in sheer embarrassment or just walk out on merit. Surely the man realized that the real Ryuga Hideki was here? While he understood the logic behind it, he couldn’t have thought of a less conspicuous alias? At least of a celebrity that was *not in this very building?*

“Um, I’m sorry?” Akira stammered.

“It’s a complete coincidence I assure you.” L drawled, shrugging and shoving his hands deep into his pocket. Light gave the girl another sheepish smile, and though she hesitated, she wrote down the name, eyeing Ryuzaki even as she did so.

Once she’d given them a tennis ball and the key to their court, Light bid her farewell and started to lead the way to the wide hallway that was lined with large windows so that the games being played could be looked in on. There were curtains to be drawn, if one didn’t want to be watched but at the moment there were only a few games going on. One of the courts at the end of the hall pointedly had a ‘Do Not Enter: Crew Only’ sign on the door.

“How exactly did you get in here? Surely they didn’t believe your name was *actually* Ryuga Hideki?”

“Of course they did,” L replied, blinking as if he had never heard a sillier thing in his life. “I showed them my I.D. The security officer did mumble something about how actors never look as good in person, but he let me through.”

Light scoffed, but figured it didn’t really matter, however embarrassing it was. He didn’t plan to interact with the real Ryuga Hideki, just his costar, so other than being tacky, there was no harm done.

“It seems like they’re still setting up.”

They passed a large circular terrarium, glass floor to ceiling with well-maintained plants inside, a house for an impressive array of greenery. Large leaves and elegant vines covered the inside of it, bushes of several varieties set up carefully around a small pond in the center, which was filled with small, colorful fish. The glass garden gave the otherwise sterile place an air of nature and health. The entire display had a wrap-around bench for tired tennis players to rest, except for a small gap for the door, so that an observer could step inside and enjoy scenery without being too far from air conditioning.

Light stretched an arm over his chest, holding his shoulder with the opposite hand as he paused by the entrance to their court. “We should have enough time for a quick game. Two out of three?”

“That should suite us nicely,” L agreed.

They unlocked the door and entered. What lay before them was a large room, the size of a tennis court and larger still, giving about six feet outside of each line. There was a bench by the door, and Light took out two racquets and two water bottles, setting them out methodically.

Light had organized well for today, bringing an extra racquet because L wasn’t fond of **carrying***
Of course, he’d prepared in even more important ways. Nowadays, his suppressants and scent blockers were high grade, made by some anonymous savior in Europe who he’d found in his third year of hiding his gender. No more keeping his head down in random clinics. It was a brilliant mixture, and it came in all the usual forms but—at his request—without the packaging. While most suppressants were meant to take the edge off of biology, these were meant to shut it down to the fullest extent that was possible.

Of course, it still wasn’t meant to be used as a means of completely denying one’s gender either.

In any case, one would have to do actual chemical testing on his conditioner to figure out that it was meant to neutralize scent completely. The deodorant that Light had applied generously, along with the ‘cologne’ he dabbed behind his ears and at the hollow of his neck to keep the most potent source at bay. He had layers of reassurances and back up plans on to assure that even if he sweated through his deodorant, no one would ever be able to smell him.

Secure in his own precautions, Light allowed himself to relax and enjoy the first tennis match he’d played in a decade.

“If Light-kun does not object, I will serve first.”

“Go on ahead,” Light replied easily, following the baseline around to the back of center, holding his racquet firmly with both hands and crouching.

He surprised himself by how in his element he was, how eager he was to play. He’d risen to the top quickly as a young teen and had quickly grown bored with the sport once he’d mastered it. This though—L said he was good, and Light couldn’t help but trust him in that. Despite the man’s misgivings, he had never failed to challenge him.

Not a single damned time. Even when he should have left well enough alone.

L bounced the ball once against the concrete before backing over the serve line, and pausing to taken Light in from across the court. He bounced it again, his grip on the racquet slack until he was ready to whip his arm back and then up.

Smack.

He very nearly cut the net, that’s how close he was, and Light had to back up to receive it. He was forced to dash backwards and he felt lucky he hadn’t stumbled over his own feet. He backed up enough to catch it on its way down, arching his arm back and swinging forward.

Light barely returned it over the net, and each pass that followed was just as testing as the one previous. This was difficult. More difficult that Light had expected, which was surprising, because he hadn’t been underestimating the detective. He’d just been unaware.

He had to race across the court and dive again, catching it and sending it over the net and to the opposite side of the court.

Just like that, the first point of the game was L’s. Light quietly glared at him from beneath the shadow of his bangs before he retrieved the ball from where it had bounced. He scooped it up with his racquet and returned to the baseline, licking his lips and lowering his shoulders. It had been a good hit, but Light learned from his mistakes.

“I’m impressed.”

“Light-kun should save his breath.”
“I don’t need to save it, I have plenty enough to win.”

Several rebounds later, it was Light’s turn to serve and soon he was throwing the ball into the air and snapping it over the neck, driving it into the ground with the force of it. He had never claimed to not be a sore loser. But he hadn’t lost yet, and he would make damn sure he wouldn’t.

He attacked, never content to let the ball fly without a purpose, without a destination in mind. Light lost himself to the intricacies involved in luring L in one direction and then planting the ball in the other. But L kept up, he always did, testing him in return rather than just gasping to keep up.

In return, every hit L gave him was an assault. School boys had no true motivation; their competition spurred from a desire to have fun, to feel the joy of winning. L was much more determined. Light adapted through the next couple passes, though they were not merely passes, they were harsh blows that slammed the ground and sliced through the air. He tried to calculate, tried to not let himself be drawn too far to one side of the court, keeping it even, and when he couldn’t help it, he readied himself to dive.

His feet stayed steady and his shoulders relaxed until L swung, before tensing for the next hit. Light ran forward, catching a ball early, and giving a backspin that bounced awkwardly away from L. Light watched the neon ball intensely, just in case—there was a tug of his lips as it hit the ground a second time.

“Point,” He said aloud, because for the first time in quite some time he felt as though he’d earned it.

“Mhm.” L made an acknowledging sound in the back of his throat, but refused to give him more than that. The back and forth of the ball was never boring, but for several minutes of play there was nothing truly at risk. L was waiting for an opportunity, he could tell, but Light was keeping himself alert.

All of a sudden he took it, finally, leaving Light in the wrong corner as he spiraled the ball into the right one. The ball rolled and Light went to retrieve it, realizing with amazement that he was out of breath.

How long had they been playing? The score had flown up on both their ends and Light was keeping up, but it was a battle every step of the way. He had to fight to keep this and that was… It was actually fucking amazing.

It was something he had never happened before; this wasn’t easy. L was merciless and Light was equally so, each of them bringing their mind as well as their body to the play, step for step and hit for hit.

Light retrieved the ball and it began again.

He served. It flew and bounced and on the sharp return Light’s racquet connected with the ball. A harsh thwack echoed through the enclosed court. The ball hissed back and forth. Light's breath was heavy and his chest burned and it was brilliant.

He wanted to see the man scramble back, almost more eager to see how L would match him than to score his point (though winning was not at the back of his mind either). This was fun, and Light couldn’t even remember the last time he’d actually had fun with another person—

They moved with one another, leapt and caught, Light trying to keep his breathlessness under control. It wouldn’t do to pant just yet, even if he could tell that L was also breaking a sweat even from across the court.
He pushed harder, catching the falling blur after working L closer to the net and in the split second that his connection hit, Light knew he’d won. L rushed back and reached but the ball rebounded off of the edge of his racquet and ended up out of bounds.

The ball rolled once more, ending up against the wall and trembling to a stop there climatically.

For a long moment, they stayed across the court from one another, each in view of the other, letting the stillness settle in the room. Light’s blood was still buzzing through his ears, running hotly through him, his heartbeat somewhere in his throat and resounding in his head.

Then, suddenly, the quiet was broken by the thud thud thud of someone pounding on the glass.

Light turned his head to the origin of the site and found Misa Amane standing there, accompanied by the person Ryuzaki had stolen an alias from and two security guards.

“It seems we have admirer.” L drawled with a slightly strained tone that told Light that he was hiding his own labored breathing. It was more satisfying than he’d expected it to be. Light waved at her and started over to the bench to take a long drink of his water.

Once she’d been acknowledged, Misa helped herself in, squealing in delight.

“Oh my god, Light! I thought that was you. I saw you playing as we passed by and you were amazing!” She rushed forward to hug him tightly while the actor hovered near the door and the large security guards stood nearby, eyeing Misa carefully, obviously distrusting a stranger but reluctant to interfere.

“It’s certainly been a while, Amane-san,” Light said politely, still flushed and focused on keeping his breathing steady. The hug was a little more contact than he wanted at the moment, when his skin was still heated by the thrill in his blood, but didn’t want to put himself out of the girl’s good graces either. “I’m surprised you recognized me.”

She finally let go of him and giggled sweetly, though she kept a hand on his sleeve. “Oh, please, Light! You were so sweet to me when we met.”

“We should have kept in touch. You’ve done great work since we last met, Amane-san. I admire you,” Light complimented her with as much sincerity as he could muster. As usual, that was quiet enough, and Misa blushed brightly, eyes surprised and pleased.

“Amane-san, we’re going to be late.” The voice was softer than Light would have expected for an actor. He glanced in male idol’s direction for a moment apologetically, before turning his attention back to Misa.

“Oh—Ryuga! He’s such a stickler sometimes?” She dug a pen with a ball of fluff out of her purse. “It was such a lovely surprise running into you today, Light. Let’s catch up some time, promise?”

Light designed a disarming smile just for her. “Of course. I promise.”

“Introduce me to your friend next time—“ She gave a little wave across the court where L was still standing. It was smart. As obstinate as it had been to come in with the alias he had, it would be even more ridiculous to call himself Ryuga Hideki in front of the star himself. It would be too silly, too memorable. “Sorry, I don’t mean to be rude. Bye-bye!”

She trotted out of the room, her slender legs kicking up lightly behind her, practically skipping.

To be fair, he wasn’t expecting things to go that well. She’d stumbled upon him even before he’d
gone looking for her, and had initiated contact with him herself. Everything had been going smoothly, even for him. Once the door had closed behind them, L revealed that he had been thinking along the same lines.

“It seems that many things come quite easily when one has a face like Light-kun’s.”

Light blinked, and turned back to the man, raising his eyebrows. Whatever magic the tennis match had cast, the interruption had apparently broken it. The dance was over, at least the physical one, and it was back to insults disguised as commendations and calculating frowns.

Light took that moment sit down, back to the glass that separated him and the hallway. “Perhaps. That went better than I expected it to.”

“Light-kun makes an impression on everyone he meets.”

This couldn’t be going anywhere good. Light started packing the racquets into his bag as he replied idly.

“I suppose.”

“It does make me wonder, however.” That stupid thumb was at his mouth again. “Misa Misa is rather openly for Kira Kira—she praises him in her song after all—and Light-kun met her while promoting for capital punishment…”

A sigh fell out of him and he peered up at the older man. “You don’t understand anything. I wasn’t advocating for death, I was advocating for justice. There’s a difference.”

“I know that quite well, but does Light-kun?”

“Of course I do,” Light’s voice had more of an edge to it than he’d meant for it to, and he blamed it on how his body ached from the intense game. “However, for certain crimes, I believe that the death penalty is the only way to ensure the safety of future victims.”

“Even though it has been proven that the death penalty has never lowered crime rates?”

“It’s not about lowering crime rates. It’s about a person forfeiting their life when they ruin it for others. It’s about making sure that individual is no longer a threat.”

“I see.” L paused, gnawing at his thumbnail and looking up at the ceiling in the way he did right before he was going to say something confrontational. “Has Light-kun ever considered what he’d do if he were given the power that Kira has?”

“…You mean assuming I’m not Kira?”

“That’s given.”

Light took long pause, zipping up the bag once everything was inside. “I try not to think hypothetically.”

“Yet here we are.”

“I would never murder anyone.”

“That’s a contrived diplomatic answer and Light-kun knows it—“

“...I would never murder anyone.” Light prefixed, proceeding to stand up and sling the bag over his
shoulder, thinking over his wording carefully. “I don’t know how Kira kills, but I have to imagine that he stumbled across a power like this rather than just ‘discovering he had it all along’. If that’s the case, would he have even known he was going to kill someone the first time?”

Of course, he’d thought this through before. Ever since he’d realized as a teenager that Kira was almost certainly a person, or people, he’d lingered occasionally on his own morality. Kira was a monster, that much was for certain, but how far apart were monsters and saints? They were both unobtainable titles for humans, both ‘others’ that were placed on pedestals so that common folk could gawk in awe at their achievements, good or bad, but equally great.

He doubted that it would ease Ryuzaki’s suspicions of him, but then, he doubted anything would at this juncture. Nothing, other than catching the real culprit. The man seemed content in his little suspicions.

“…And a thought process one might extrapolate is... if he’s already damned for that murder, why not go further? Why not, if his soul is already lost anyway, try to –save the world?”

“Light-kun thinks that Kira is saving the world?”

“I think,” Light rolled his aching shoulders back and took a breath. “That’s what he thinks he’s doing.”

“Light-kun is somehow simultaneously naïve and cruel in his philosophies,” L stated, watching him as he tended to do from beneath the fall of his fringe. “I am reminded why he is a suspect.”

Light gave a derisive scoff. “I think you’re focusing on me because I’m your only suspect.”

“But even Light-kun thought that I might hone in on him at some point. He’s said so before.” L stood on one foot, scratching his calf with the raised one. He seemed uncomfortable in his shoes. “In any case, he’s hardly my only suspect.”

“Oh?” Light raised a delicate eyebrow.

“Mhm.”

“Any hints?”

“Matsuda.”

The laugh that echoed through the room was so sudden and unexpected that it look Light’s breath away for the moment after it ended. The very notion of someone like Matsuda being Kira –someone so empathetic and kind yet rather weak-willed –was so positively ridiculous that it drew a genuine laugh from him that came from the pit of his stomach. He ducked his head into it, however short-lived it was.

“Oh, please. He’s a horrible liar. That’s quite possibly the last person in the world –“

“No, Light-kun, I mean, Matsuda.”

At the new tone, Light looked up at the detective’s face and found that the man was looking over his shoulder rather than directly at him. The residual smile faded and he turned his head, the amusement in his chest fading as he saw what Matsuda was indeed in the hallway, trying to sneak by.

“Did he come here just to meet Misa Amane?” L muttered, biting his thumb as he watch as Matsuda caught sight of someone and ducked around the far side of the terrarium and out of sight.
“No,” Light answered, adjusting the bag on his shoulder and peering out, watching as a few security guards pass. Presumably the ones Matsuda was hiding from. “He’s wanted to be on the Yoshiro case.”

“…He’s done something wrong. Messed up somehow,” L told him, with a hint of irritation to his tone.

“It would appear so.” Light replied, almost too pleasantly, because he was quite aware of how annoying that could be when L was trying to share his complaint with someone. He deserved it, after bringing up Kira in such a way when they’d been having an otherwise enjoyable time. “Why else would he be ducking away from guards like that?”

“The guards must be around still, out of our sight. He hasn’t emerged from behind.”

“Do you think he’s inside?”

“…Likely.”

“Well then.”

“Indeed.”

“Let’s go rescue him, I suppose.” Light inhaled and pushed the door open, strolling out casually. The security guards turned to look at them and he offered them a grin and a polite wave as he locked the door. One of them grunted and turned away and the other just nodded at him from the opposite end of the hall. L followed him around to the far side of the terrarium, to the little door that led to the inside of the mass of greenery.

“I don’t see him,” Light murmured, but even as he said so, a bush shifted. He exhaled slowly, starting to get truly irked by the idea that Matsuda could possibly gotten himself in some kind of trouble. It wasn’t the first reckless thing he’d done, even if was to help.

Light didn’t waste any more time, instead pulling up the glass door and stepping inside. It was like a miniature forest. Thick bushels of leaves splayed this way and that of every shape, size and texture. It was heated and uncomfortable, all of the plants together creating a stuffy, unpleasant smell.

“…They’re doing another round.” L suddenly warned him, and true enough, through a wall of vines Light saw the guards heading back their way. On cue, Matsuda’s hand emerged from the cover he’d taken in between four or five different plants and pulled Light in with him.

He stumbled over a rock and very nearly ended up colliding with Matsuda, only managing to catch himself by gripping the Omega’s shoulder. L followed him quickly into the brush and they all stilled as the guards passed by. Gritting his teeth, Light shifted in an attempt to get comfortable while leaves and branches scratching at him. If the man didn’t have something to offer for all of this trouble, Light was going to leave him there.

“Oh god, Light, I was just trying to help,” whispered the older officer frantically. “I’m so sorry.”

“Matsuda,” Light murmured gently, perhaps too much so to seem truly unperturbed. “What did you do?”

“I…uh. I took something.”

“Matsuda-san could stand to be more specific.” L muttered under his breath, and directly into Light’s ear. A prickling warmth crept up from the base of his spine at the sound.
It was confirmed then.

L was an Alpha. He’d certainly considered the notion. Of course, his suppressants had dulled his olfaction to practically that of a Beta’s, so he couldn’t have been sure. It would explain why he had no problem meeting Aizawa’s eyes no matter how gruff the man became. It fit, in an odd way, and wasn’t altogether all that surprising.

But here, now? They were all touching, squeezed together while they watched through the cracks in the leaves as the guards passed by, and when the man even whispered his tone was just enough to stroke a part of him that nearly leapt at the attention after years of sobriety.

“Well, I—I was snooping in Misa’s dressing room. I snuck in when no one was looking, since they wouldn’t let me in otherwise. I—saw her head out with Ryuga Hideki and a few guards and she left her phone on the dresser.”

“…And?” Light prompted, growing increasingly impatient the more L’s breath tickled his ear.

“Well, I accidentally brushed it while I was looking around and I saw that her screen saver was this kind of fancy, gothic script of the word ‘Kira’. I almost didn’t recognize it, because the font so swoopy and curvy, but because I’ve been doing so much research on Kira fan sites, I’d seen things like it before. So I was obviously interested.”

“Obviously.” L’s voice sarcastically drawing out the word was enough to make the dormant Omega in him tilt it’s head and that was so unfair he wanted the punch him just for existing.

Light took a tight hold of his control. “She didn’t have it locked?”

“Well, yeah, but it was just a four digit code. I got it on the first try. It just spelled out ‘Kira’.” Matsuda seemed quite proud of himself for it. “But the first thing that was on the screen was a picture of a letter. I wasn’t going to dig too far or anything, I swear! It’s…well, it was a love letter.”

“Idols get them all the time.”

“Yes, Light, but this was signed ‘Love, your Kira Kira’.”

Light and L glanced in each other’s direction for a beat, but Light quickly turned his own away. He was higher strung than he wanted to be at the moment but less tense than he rather thought he should have been. He absolutely hated this, and he wanted to curse Matsuda aloud for forcing him into this situation.

“…Is this true?” L responded after a moment’s pause.

“You can see for yourself once we get out of here.”

“…You stole the phone.” Light didn’t know why he was startled. Matsuda had come sneaking around for the Yoshiro case, but had ended up finding something that quite possibly proved that Misa was somehow in cahoots with Kira. Or, possibly, was so obsessed with that man that she’d taken the time to scribe out fake love letters to herself and then take pictures of them as keepsakes.

That somehow seemed much less likely.

“Um.”

“They’ve turned the corner.” L observed. “We should leave now, before they come back around. We can look into the phone you’ve taken when we return to the hotel.”
“Yes, let’s,” Light replied curtly.

It took them a moment to untangle themselves from the sea of vines and leaves and twigs, but soon they were out of the terrarium and doing what they could to pass for normal on their way back to the front desk. Matsuda glanced at both of them sheepishly, biting his lip as they walked along.

“I’m sorry I went behind your back. Are you guys mad?”

Light took a breath, considerably more at ease now.

“It’s alright, Matsuda-san. It was ill-advised, but you made it work.”

“Certainly not. Matsuda-san has once again stumbled upon his own usefulness,” L added easily, and Matsuda positively beamed. Light retrieved his I.D. from Akira at the front and then they exited, immediately fading in with the crowd of cooing fans that were still waiting outside for a glimpse.

“I was about to make it out of the building entirely without being seen,” Matsuda seemed intent now to explain why his brilliant intentions had been foiled. “— but then everyone got on high alert all of a sudden! They started freaking out about some weirdo going around claiming to be Ryuga Hideki.”

Light’s eyes flickered to L, but the man was pointedly looking elsewhere.

A smirk tugged at his lips as he replied in feigned shock. “Yes, that is rather bizarre.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Alright, so I broke 5K. Jeez. A lot happened in this chapter and I wanted to make sure it wasn’t too convoluted. Cute shit happened, right? Are you pleased? Also, interesting things! More information! Yay! No, to answer some questions.

1) Any coupling of genders can produce any second gender. It’s generally considered much more likely for the child to follow one of the parents, however. How this is decided will be speculated on by characters themselves in future chapters. The Nature vs. Nurture discussion will happen at some point.
2) There is Omega Birth control, and then there is Beta Female birth control. Technically, they’re the same thing but Omegas have a higher dose, as they are generally more fertile. Light’s birth control is included in the tablet that has his suppressants.
3) In case I wasn’t clear before, there will be no major Mpreg. It’s just not my thing. But yes, it does in fact exist in this universe.

That should be it for this chapter. Wooo. The next chapter is going to be fun for you guys, and then after that shit is going down. Which will also be fun. As always, I’d love to hear your opinions on the chapter. The next one will be able to focus on Misa more. I wanted her in here longer but I just didn’t have the time.

-Nilah
News

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


“Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.” –Will Durant

“Is Light-kun sure he doesn’t want to order anything more than coffee?”

He was really only asking to agitate the younger man, because he was quite aware at this point that Light Yagami rarely indulged in sweets. He preferred bitter or salted foods, or the occasional tart fruit—he had taken strawberries when offered a time or two—but cakes of any kind were never an option. L been pleased when he’d overheard Light and Misa’s phone call and learned that their meeting was going to be set in a quaint little pastry café.

Light hadn’t objected and L had felt vaguely triumphant for no real reason.

Which wasn’t quite fair, as the last week and a half had been rather hard on the officer. After a month of gathering evidence for the Yoshiro case, a reporter had leaked out information about the main suspect in the paper. A few days later, said man drunkenly stumbled into traffic naked after being mugged and stabbed repeated. Yet another fitting death by Kira, for a man who had allegedly drugged and raped various Omega employees.

It wasn’t an interesting enough case for L to worry about, but Light had been furious. His time wasted and his spotless record marred by Kira—but L couldn’t help but think that the case had been taking an awful long time. That perhaps Light had decided it would be easier to murder the perpetrator.

It was out of character for Light to be so reckless.

But what if that was what the brilliant young man wanted him to think?

“No, thank you, Ryuzaki. I ate lunch at the hotel only an hour ago,” Light replied, glancing down at the two large slabs of cake—one carrot cake, one strawberry—and L was taking bites of each. Sometimes back and forth, sometimes he focused more on one than the other. Other times, he scooped up one large bite with half of either flavor, which made Light’s impassive face flicker in disgust.

“Then surely he has plenty of room for desert?” L prodded, his spoon hanging out of his mouth awkwardly.

“I’m quite alright without.”

There was nothing else to do while they waited for Misa to arrive, after all, and bothering Light was quickly becoming one of L’s favorite pastimes. “He doesn’t even want a tiny bite off mine?”

This time, Light paused, releasing an exasperated breath. “If I take a bite, will you get off of my case?”
L scooped up some of the carrot cake on his utensil, dangling it half way across the table. “If by ‘your case’ you mean the Kira case, then I’m afraid he’s out of luck.”

Light rolled his eyes, “Obviously not, Ryuzaki. Must you turn everything into a debate about whether or not I’m Kira?”

“Kira?”

The feminine voice broke their argument and Light was the first to tear his attention away, though they were both a bit surprised that they hadn’t noticed her approach. The NPA officer’s face brightened in that tawdry way that it did when he was forcing it for the sake of someone else.

L took Misa Amane in, the small girl he’d seen only from a distance at the tennis arena and in magazines after to get more familiar with her job and how she might have come into contact with Kira. She was even more attractive in person, if possible, confidence in every hip motion and every flip of her long blond hair.

“Are you guys sharing? That’s so cute.” Misa declared, eyeing L’s hand, which still held the outstretched fork with a small portion of abandoned carrot cake.

“Ah,” Light’s mouth smiled but his eyes didn’t quite keep up this time, a speck of uncertainty flashing in them. “No, we aren’t, but Ryuzaki here was certainly trying.”

Misa pulled her white trench coat off her shoulders and draped it around the back of her chair with a flourish before seating herself in the seat beside Light. “Ryuzaki-san, is it? I’m sorry I didn’t have time to introduce myself the other day.”

“That’s quite alright,” L finally took the bite that Light no longer seemed interested. “Misa Misa needs no introduction.”

His flattery resulted in a saccharine giggle.

“Our friend is so charming, Light,” Misa grinned at both of them and L took pleasure in the unconvinced look on Light’s face. “I can see you found someone who compliments you well, if that tennis match is anything to go by.”

Taking a large bite of cake, L let Light handle that one, watching amusedly from beneath the safety of his hair. There was a moment’s hesitation, likely where Light considered denying her assumption. Instead, he seemed to think that there was no use in real use in taking the time to confirm or deny anything.

“That tennis match was certainly something,” Light humored instead.

There was no use in Light pretending to be interested in Misa romantically. If the letter on her phone was anything to go by, then she was in a fairly committed relationship with Kira. There were curious lines littered throughout, however, that made the nature of the relationship confusing.

Soon, my love, I will reveal to you who I am, once my victory has been cemented.

You will remember, and then you will understand the need for all of this secrecy.

“Now, what were you saying about Kira?” She asked casually as she waved over a waiter, but when L looked up he saw a sudden fierceness in her eyes that her tone of voice did not give away in the slightest.
L didn’t know what to make of half of Kira’s note, except that whoever the person was on the other end of the pen seemed to love Misa quite ardently. Or, at the very least, was good at pretending to.

Even the handwriting analysis was inconclusive. Somehow it changed over the course of the page, from the exact markings of someone who might fit Light’s description, then to sharper lines of someone more severe, then to larger strokes and cutesy curls, like that of a teenage girl.

“Ryuuzaki and I were just talking about Kira Kira,” Light explained, using the Misa-patented cutesy name for the entity. “He doesn’t think it’s anything unnatural, but I’m of the opinion it’s got to be someone out there with supernatural powers. We get in that argument a lot.”

So that’s how they were playing. Alright, L could take on his role.

“Light-kun insists that super powers exist,” L drawled disbelievingly.

“Oh, you must be one of those people that doesn’t believe in anything he can’t see.” Misa winked at him, and when the waiter approached she ordered a doctored coffee drink with extra whipped cream and a slice of ice cream cake. “I’m going to have to agree with Light on this one though. I definitely believe Kira Kira exists.”

“I gathered as much.” L scooped up part of his strawberry confection. “I hope she takes no offence to my objections.”

“Of course not!” Misa pulled her hair to one side, and without meaning it, L’s eyes were drawn to the line of her neck. Amane was an Omega after all and showing one’s neck like that was pretty close to flirtation, and if she was on suppressants, it certainly didn’t smell like it. She definitely was wearing some sort of scent blocker, but she still smelled blatantly like her second gender, just with a flowery overtone. “Everyone has a right to be wrong, after all.”

“Ryuzaki takes his rights very seriously,” Light said with mock severity. A joke. He was rarely playful, and L couldn’t help but think it suited him, even if it was an act.

Misa laughed again, the ruffles on her dress shifting as she all but danced in her seat. Beside her, Light brushed a lock of hair behind his ear and tilted his head to look at her better as he took a sip of his coffee. The motion caught L’s attention as well, something in his mind nudging him, but he couldn’t for the life of him figure out what it was in that instant.

“It’s so good seeing you again, Light.” Misa propped her chin up on her hand, every part of her seemingly present and interested in the interaction. Once again the waiter came by, this time to deliver Misa’s coffee and cake. Once he was no longer in earshot, she lowered her voice. “I’m sorry I didn’t try to get in touch with you sooner— after everything that happened that day, I was pretty distraught.”

His dark eyes followed Light’s hand when it rested on Misa’s arm in a show of sympathy. “That’s quite understandable, Amane-san.”

“Please, call me Misa! And ‘chan’ is totally fine! Please don’t remind me that I’m older than you are.”

“Ah, Misa-chan it is then.”

“There we go.” She swung her hair back around and took her first bite. She smiled around her spoon and then plucked it out of her mouth once she’d swallowed. “You too, Ryuuzaki-san! There’s plenty of time to grow into being a mature, sophisticated woman, but for now I think this works.”
“Misa-chan is quite wise.”

“Oh, stop,” Misa snickered sweetly. “You’re going to make me blush.”

“I suppose I should stop then,” L replied with a dejected sigh, which only served to amuse the idol more. “I wouldn’t want someone like Ryuga Hideki to get jealous.”

This made her blink, grinning wryly. “Ryuga? You don’t think we’re together, do you?”

“I assumed he rushed Misa-chan out the other day because he wasn’t fond of the way you were hugging Light-kun,” L prompted in his way. Light’s gaze turned to him as well, cocking an eyebrow at him from across the table. L had been too far away to actually see if there was any envy on the actor’s part, but it was a good way to shift the conversation back in the direction of Kira.

“Oh, no! He really does just hate to be late, that’s all.” She waved it off. “It’s common misconception. Ryuga is super sweet to me, and we did a romantic crime-thriller movie together that was super big, so now everyone sort of thinks we belong together. And believe me, for a little while I tried — I mean, have you seen him?”

“Yes, I have,” L replied blandly, even though he knew the question was rhetorical.

“—-but I have a boyfriend.” Misa leaned forward as if whispering a secret, winking at him once more. “It’s long distance.”

“Is it really? That must be difficult for you,” Light said, the faux sympathy never ending. L couldn’t help but think that if Light was Kira, and these two were in some sort of relationship, then they were both brilliant liars.

“Oh, well, a bit,” Misa admitted, licking her spoon and sighing. “But we’re both busy with our careers right now, so it’s really for the best.”

“What does he do?” Light asked conversationally, taking a sip of his coffee.

“He’s a writer.” Misa told him, but didn’t elucidate any more than that. L found himself wondering if she even knew much more than that about Kira, considering how vague the letter was about him as a person. Mostly it was waxing poetic about Misa’s loveliness, and making proud claims about his plans for the world and his ‘friends’ that would help him change society for the better. “He travels a lot, but he says he’ll be able to see me in person soon.”

Suddenly, her face screwed up as if remembering something important.

“You know, some weird fan actually managed to steal my phone at the tennis shoot the other day!” She pouted, and L couldn’t help but attempt to meet Light’s eyes from across the table. As expected, Light did not allow the contact.

“That awful.”

“I can’t imagine why anyone would go so far, can you, Light-kun?”

“I certainly can’t, Ryuzaki,” Light’s voice was subtly mocking. Misa shrugged her shoulders and took another bite of her sliver of ice cream.

“Oh well. The nerve of some people, right? I’ve been so busy getting ready for the East West Music Festival, I’ve been so frazzled already, without having to start over with a new phone.” She gave a dramatic sigh. “It’s such a big event, and it goes on for hours. Rehearsal has been a nightmare.”
“Isn’t that the one that happens on New Years Eve?” Light inquired with as much interest as L was sure he could manage. He knew the man had next to no interest, but he conveyed it well just the same.

That was when L’s text tone suddenly went off. Misa didn’t blink her eye, but L saw Light twitch with interest even while he attempted to feign curiosity. It was L’s work phone, after all, and the task force didn’t text him unless it was important.

“What—you mean you’ve never gone?” Misa asked him, surprised and even somewhat appalled. “But it’s so fun! I mean, for me it’s work, but you and Ryuzaki could come and have sooo much fun. There’s music and dancing and cute little stands where private vendors sell trinkets…”

L glanced down during her description to read the paragraph that Naomi had sent him.

Heart attack with a suicide note, from just a few days ago. Says ‘I will make my debut at year’s end in the place where angels sing’. No one else has left a note before. It must be meant for you. What do you think it means?

“I’ve been going even before I became an idol. My mom used to take me every year, you know. I could definitely get you two tickets if you wanted to go.”

“Well, Misa-chan, I think I’m going to be pretty busy with a big case I’m working on. I don’t really have a lot of time for festivals.”

“You’re too serious, Light. You should really—lighten up.”

Light laughed politely, and L decided he like Misa Amane quite a bit. “Even so, I really don’t think we can. I don’t want you to go through the trouble of getting us tickets—“

“It’s no trouble at all, you know that. Besides, it’ll be good to get you out of your head for once.” Misa paused and turned her eyes on him. There was more intelligence there than L had previously noted. She was a manipulative little thing, wasn’t she? “Don’t you think so, Ryuuzaki-san?”

“…Yes, actually.” L stated, rather firmly, and Misa pumped her fist triumphantly.

The younger man turned his gaze on him, trying to hide the fact that he’d been riled. L was getting good at detecting it.

“Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“Really. You want to go to the East West Music Festival.”

“More than anything in the world, Light-kun,” L deadpanned, taking another large bite of his cake and turning a little smile up in Misa’s direction.

“It’s settled then! I’ll email you the tickets soon, and you if you want, I’ll send you some T-shirts for the bands that are going to be there, since I know that you’re not super into the music scene…”

It was only when they were leaving the shop an hour later that L decided to explain himself to Light. Watari picked them up as usual and as they pulled away, L plucked his phone out of his pocket and showed Light the text that Naomi had sent him. It was fairly fascinating, watching Light’s mind work from behind his eyes.
As L expected, it took him no time at all to come to the same conclusion that L had before.

“The years end…where angels sing? It sounds like a euphemism for heaven, but—“ There it was. That victorious little light behind those eyes as it clicked. “The East West Music Festival. So that’s why you said we’d go.”

“Quite.”

“If Kira’s starting sending you messages, that means he’s getting serious,” Light mused, crossing one leg over the other as he thought. L couldn’t help but be somewhat distracted by the motion.

After all, he had come to the conclusion that Light only crossed his legs in that fashion when he was comfortable. That generally mean when he was unaccompanied, or when the thought no one was watching. He’d never done so before while in L’s lone company.

“And ‘Misa-chan’ was very insistent that we attend, don’t you think?”

“So you really think that she’s cooperating with him somehow?”

“I find it to be very likely,” L thought aloud, pulling his gaze away from Light and out the window. “Either way, I think the festival will be quite illuminating.”

The next several hours at the hotel were full of hard work and endless research. Naomi showed them the news article that she’d found of the man who had written a suicide note and then mysteriously died of a heart attack, and they looked other suicides that might have similar hidden notes. Mogi and Matsuda researched the festival, and they spoke about who would attend it and who would stay behind.

It was decided that Light, Naomi, Matsuda and L would all go to the festival. Watari, as usual, would act as their driver for a quick getaway if things when wrong and Aizawa and Mogi would stay behind, monitoring the bugs and hidden cameras that that would be attached to each of them them so that they could view the ‘debut’ with the rest of them, if it happened at all.

It took half the night, but eventually the excitement died down. Mogi was the first to excuse himself and Aizawa came next. Matsuda finally took a bed in one of the adjacent rooms, as did Naomi not even an hour later. Sunrise was inching its way closer, finding only L and Light awake and diligently working.

Then, at the crack of dawn, L saw Light curled over the desk with his head in his arms, eyes closed and looking more at ease than he’d ever seen him awake.

“Light-kun.”

L spoke softly, expecting Light to be a light sleeper and amusing himself with the thought. It turned out not to be true, of course, and so he said his name again, louder.

No such luck.

He heaved a breath as he stood up, silently lamenting Light’s refusal to wake as he closed the distance between them.

“Light-kun,” L said again, reaching out to shake him awake. He put his hand on the young man’s shoulder, but Light was apparently exhausted. He squeezed slightly and tried to nudge him into reality, his knuckles brushing his cheek as he did so. “Light-kun can take the couch if he’d prefer to…”
Somewhere over the span of seconds that it had taken him to form the offer, Light had pressed his cheek more firmly against the back of L’s fingers. The detective felt himself still at the sight. The usually composed and distant man was practically nuzzling into the back of L’s hand and chasing the touch even when L started to shift his hand away.

The sound that came out of the slumbering’s man mouth was a low little whine of discontent in the back of his throat and it ripped straight through to L's baser instincts.

There was nothing L wanted to do more in that moment than slide his hand back, to run the pad of his thumb over his cheekbone and ease the discomfort that seemed to suddenly be etched on Light’s face when he’d started to take his hand back—

Oh.

He wouldn’t have admitted to anyone that such a simple exclamation was what sprung to mind when he first realized that Light Yagami was an Omega. He would have liked for it to have been at least a full cohesive word like ‘Eureka’ if it couldn’t be a full phrase of understanding.

Instead, it was the fifteenth letter of the English alphabet, a resounding, singular sound that seemed to shut him down for an extended moment of incredulity.

Little things that he’d thought nothing of suddenly flashed in his head, along with things he’d thought meant Light could be Kira. The way he constantly spoke up on Matsuda’s behalf, and how he outright refused to spend more than a day or so at the hotel even though there were plenty of rooms attached. His suppressant pills were probably what truly lie in the depths of his lock box. His P.O. Box, god, his stupid P.O. Box—

He probably had them shipped over. Of course! Bulbs seemed to turn on one by one in L’s head. Who did he know that had access to high grade suppressants? Who did he know that had chemically altered a medication for their own purposes?

Even just the way he had, earlier that day, tilted his head to the side to expose the line of his slender throat. It had been subtler than Misa’s but he’d likely responded to her motion without thinking. He hadn’t flipped his hair like she had, but he’d brushed it aside as if to give a better view, the dormant part of him unable to help but compete in the presence of an unmated Alpha.

What a thought.

The secret that Light was keeping, the mask that he wore, it was all because he was an Omega? It seemed ridiculous that anyone would go to such extents to stifle a completely natural part of themselves, but after over a month of getting to know the man he found he could conceive it.

Though L knew better than anyone that Omegas could be as brilliant as any Alpha or Beta, most societies did not share that opinion. Light Yagami cared about how people saw him, he cared about propriety and honor and justice and had likely never been looked down upon in all of his life.

Was this all he’d been hiding? Was this what L had seen when he’d thought he’d found Kira—this desperation to keep a part of himself hidden away at all costs?

…He had never considered the idea that Kira could be an Omega.

They were the least likely to be murderers, and even when they were it was usually an abusive mate that they killed in passion. Sometimes the ones who had been abandoned by their mates would go
mad and kill their children and then themselves. Mass murder was rarely on their agenda, though he knew statistics could lie and often did. He knew more than one Omega quite well, and none of them fit the mold of what most societies might consider typical.

But, for Omegas, all Omegas, being touched was practically a biological imperative. They craved it, even when it was not from an Alpha, and Light had reached for it in his sleep like he’d been deprived. L thought back to what he knew of Light Yagami, how he had never missed a class, or a day of work and wondered when he’d had the time to—

He hadn’t.

Hell, he hadn’t. That was the only answer that made sense. Adult heats tended to last a week, and Light had never gone missing for a full week during his time at To-Oh or at work. It was possible he’d taken advantage of his winter break and summer breaks, but somehow it seemed unlikely. Even if that were the case, he had no such breaks during his time at the NPA.

It was inadvisable at best and insane at worse. He’d had enough experience with the Omegas at Whammy’s House to know what was healthy.

Brilliance did come in Alphas and Omega more often than in Betas, that was Watari had found in his abundant experience caring for gifted children, so in truth it shouldn’t have been all that surprising. Unfortunately, Light Yagami had not been born into a society that was conducive to Omegas, like his successors had. Even they—

Abruptly, L felt an overwhelming urge to approach the younger man about it. To inform him that he knew, and it was fine, that it didn’t even matter in the grand scheme of things, that it didn’t change anything—

But that would be a lie. It already was one, considering he’d entertained the idea just for the sake of comfort. An oppressive weight settled in his chest as he considered the exhausted face of the sleeping man.

Light Yagami, have you ever in your life shown your true self? It must be a tiresome, lonely existence.

After another moment of contemplation, L cured back into his seat, deciding that he would allow the man his secrecy a while longer. He was curious what Light would do when faced with discovery, but that was a cruelty had no basis for at the moment.

Especially when the chances of Light being Kira had taken on a logarithmic curve.

It was still possible, of course, but it was a glimmer of what it once had been. It was almost disappointing, he found, that he would not be battling Light in this game of wits. The thought was suddenly, overbearingly depressing.

It meant that someone else was currently winning this war.

L took a deep breath, picked up his teacup, and then released it, letting it shatter on the floor. Predictably, the sound of glass splitting on tile woke Light out of his slumber, jerking him awake rather sharply with a gasping sound. His hair was disheveled, his eyes only half open, and it took him a moment to push himself up from where he was draped over the table, clearly more tired than he would have let on if he hadn’t been half asleep.

“Ah, my apologies, Light-kun. My fingers slipped.” The groggy, irritated look on Light’s face was much more endearing than it had any right to be. “While Light-kun is awake though, he may want to
go to bed.”

Light blinked hard to wake himself up before nodding and standing to do just that. He mumbled ‘Good night, Ryuzaki’, and the detective returned the sentiment in a more alert tone. L could see his reflection in one of the darkened screens as he left. No, L told himself firmly, Light Yagami was definitely not adorable.

Omega or otherwise, he could still be a dangerous enemy or inscrutable ally.

And wasn’t that something?

Chapter End Notes

A/N: So, kind of the moment you guys have been waiting for, hm? Well, part of it. I’ve been dying to write this. Light has been discovered, but he doesn’t know it! Dun dun dun. And on we go:

1) Alphas have ‘ruts’ that are triggered when they smell an Omega’s heat. Suppressants can lessen the affects or —stronger ones— can stop it almost completely. A rut is basically a short-lived heat in which the Alpha feels the need to mate. This is also the only time that their knot forms.

2) How do female Alphas and male Omegas work? This gets a little graphic, so beware. I don’t know how every other fic does it, but in mine, everyone starts off as physically Beta. Before presenting (basically puberty) even doctors are unable to tell which one a child will become. Omegas present with heat, but Alphas don’t typically have an ‘event’ of presentation, though sometimes smelling heat will trigger a rut and that will inform the otherwise prepubescent kid what’s going on with their body. Over the course of their presenting period (which lasts between 2-5 years) the body undergoes the changes necessary to be an Alpha or Omega. For Male Alphas and Female Omegas, this is pretty straight forward. The main difference is the formation of scent glands in the neck, wrists, thighs and groin (which every Alpha and Omega has). For male Omegas, they undergo changes that result in them being able to carry children, forming ovaries, creating eggs rather than sperm, blah, blah, blah, etc. Female Alphas go through similar changes, and produce sperm rather than eggs. Their clitoris enlarges and becomes a penis over the course of their presenting period. This generally takes longer than Omega puberty for obvious reasons, which is why most female Alphas present relatively early.

[takes a deep breath] Alright, science corner is over for now. I hope that helps. That is just the way it makes the most sense to me, but again, this probably will not come up more than in passing during the fic. But it gives you guys some back ground.

What was your favorite part of this chapter? Was Misa cute? Was Light? Was L’s discovery what you thought it would be? What do you think this Kira has planned? Am I asking too many questions?

As usual, I’d love to hear what you think!

-Nilah
Contact

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“The problem in defense is how far you can go without destroying from within what you are trying to defend from without.” –Dwight D. Eisenhower

The crowd at the festival moved as a giant swarm, each body a single cell in what was one breathing organism. One giant, sweaty, chaotic, drunken organism.

While Light was not fond of crowds, he could blend in with them well enough and pretend to be at ease. He found that if he lifted his chin and walked in a determined straight line, people would generally move out of his way. L did not seem as comfortable, hands in his pockets and seemingly sulking for no reason in particular.

Well, Light decided, it wasn’t no reason. He probably wasn’t overly fond of the fact he had to wear clothes like a normal human being. They’d decided to go with the shirts that Misa had given them when they’d met to get the tickets from her, though they were cut decidedly close. Light liked his clothes to fit him, tailored and well formed, but L clearly preferred loose clothes to obscure his lanky form. He wore a baggie sweater so that he could have at least some form of comfort and his jeans were the same that he usually wore.

He looked like an eccentric literature professor, Light had thought upon seeing him in the costume. Especially with the glasses that he wore, with the camera hidden in the top right corner of the frame. His perpetually messy dark hair certainly didn’t help wipe the image away.

They all were doctored up with a earbud and glasses for the sake of keeping those that waited back at the hotel informed at all times as to what was happening. Light’s glasses were larger and more thickly rimmed than Ryuzaki’s rectangular ones, Matsuda’s were oval and Naomi’s were red. Matsuda wore a hoodie in an attempt to look younger and Naomi kept her long hair in two low pigtails as a young woman who idolized Misa Amane might.

Light had chosen jeans along with the obscure band shirt, though he’d opted for a long-sleeved shirt beneath it because it was snowing outside. He’d also gone with a dark gray beanie, as he was aware of the way that it pushed his hair down to curl around his jaw to give him a rounder, more youthful appearance.

Looking like they did, no one suspected they were not simply fans. There were all sorts at the concert, so they might not have bothered, but safety and anonymity fueled paranoia and so no one complained about the getups.

The line took almost an hour even though they had arrived early, and by the time they were allowed into the main music hall Light could tell L was agitated by the material of the shirt. He kept tugging at the hem of it in an attempt to stretch it out, pulling at the collar that rested too high against his neck.
It was actually rather satisfying to see the usually expressionless detective irritated about something so menial.

“Do you guys want something to drink?” Matsuda asked as one of the early bands played, people still piling into the pit below the stage. There was seating up close, but most of the area was standing room only. Vendors were stacked around the outer rim, selling food and shirts and various glowing objects for people to wear in the dark.

“Matsuda-san is free to do as he likes.”

“I’m fine, thank you.” Light had already decided he wasn’t going to drink anything while he was here. He didn’t want to have to venture all the way back into the crowded halls when Kira could make his ‘debut’ at any moment.

“I’d like something, actually,” Naomi offered, though Light was fairly sure she was just saying that so that Matsuda wouldn’t be going off on his own.

“It’s probably better if we split up, anyway,” Light added, “That way we see as much of this place as possible. We don’t know what Kira’s going to do.”

His father’s voice on the mic in his ear vaguely startled him, "Stay in pairs, at least. You don’t want to get too separated, if things go wrong."

Matsuda jumped at the voice, then flushed and gave an apologetic look in Naomi’s direction, so the camera in her glasses would pick it up.

“You’re going to have to get used to us talking in your ear at some point, Matsuda.” Aizawa’s voice came next, prodding at the officer gently.

Matsuda gave a sheepish smile before Naomi took him by the arm and led him away toward one of the many vendors selling soft drinks and alcohol. From the smell of the place, most people were choosing the latter.

Light felt a small yank coming from the edge of his sleeve.

He looked down and found that L’s thumb and forefinger had pinched the fabric at his wrist, pulling just enough to get his attention. Light raised his eyes to the dark ones behind the crisp frames that awaited him.

“Let’s head over to that end of the stage. We’ll be able to see all the exits from that vantage point.”

Nodding, Light began to lead the way over to the far end of the stage where the first official headliner was sure to march out at any moment. A group of girls in the front row of seats were practically bouncing with excitement as they passed.

The crowd grew thicker and movement became more difficult. L consistently lagged behind and Light had to keep looking back to be sure he hadn’t lost the man. With his posture and general lack of presence, he kept fading into the crowd and disappearing on him every few minutes. At some point L’s hand came out from the darkness that the collection of bodies and grasped Light around the wrist so that they didn’t lose one another for what was left of the journey.

The feel of the man’s thumb pressing firmly to the inside of his wrist had Light’s heart leaping into his throat, but he turned ahead and kept himself collected.

They made it to the far side of the stadium just as the first pop band started playing a hit that Light
had been hearing overhead in stores for the last month or so. It was painfully catchy, the base making the lyrics fall into a rhythm that was accented by English words, as it was popular for pop songs to do.

Light turned his head to avoid a tall man who smelled of alcohol, nose wrinkling with distaste as they settled into their corner of the festival, just displaced enough to have some room to breathe for now. Still more people were piling in every moment however, and as the first hour of the performance ticked on, the more disoriented with alcohol the crowd became.

“…I’m having a hard time believing that people actually do this for fun.”

“Likewise,” L said, though Light could hardly hear him. The lights of the stage illuminated them in harsh blues and purples, giving them just enough lighting to read one another’s lips. “Light-kun has never been to a concert before?”

It was only when Ryuzaki’s thumb made a broad, circular stroke over the tender inside of his wrist did Light realize that the man had never quite released him. The motion made a shiver rake down his spine, a warmth spiraling through him that he couldn’t refute but that was also making him extremely aware of parts of himself he’d rather keep tucked away.

Light smoothly pried his arm away and then crossed them over his chest. L released him without a fight; perhaps he hadn’t even realized what he’d been doing. Even touching Betas affected Light at times; it wasn’t all that surprising that it might be the same for someone like L. Certain things could not be helped.

“I’ve been to a few orchestra performances,” Light replied, shifting one of his hands up to slide the plastic frames up the bridge of his nose. The feel of them was starting to grate on his nerves. He was suddenly quite glad that he had perfect vision. “Never anything like this.”

“No, I imagine not.” L seemed almost amused by the prospect. He looked over Light after a moment, his gaze lingering longer than normal.

“What?” Light demanded, feeling self-conscious at the scrutiny though he knew he had no reason to. L seemed to look right through him some days, and it was disconcerting on a level that he didn’t quite know how to prepare himself for.

“I was just thinking that Light-kun looks like a pretentious art school student, that’s all. Especially saying something like that while pushing his glasses up.”

Light blinked, and was about to respond when the next song’s first note blared suddenly. The clash of drums was almost painful. This band was more rock than pop and while the lyrics were more substantial than the other songs that had played thus far, the instruments nearly drowned them out.

“Is that so? Well, I thought you looked like a college Lit. Professor when I first saw you dressed like this.” Light looked at the ground briefly as a smile tugged at his lips, then glanced upward, pulling slightly at his beanie. “This probably cements the student image even more, doesn’t it?”

“It suits you.”

*You.* It was so casually said that Light almost didn’t catch that Ryuzaki had said ‘you’ rather than ‘him’ or ‘Light-kun’. His eyebrows raised at the compliment.

“Do you think so?”

“Most things do tend to suit Light-kun, however.”
And there it was again. Perhaps he’d heard him wrong after all. He’d always suspected that the way that L spoke was put on, but he couldn’t be sure. He could be certain of very little when it came to Ryuzaki—which he supposed was the secretive man’s intention.

“The backhanded compliments are starting to get old, you realize,” Light told him.

The older man’s head tilted, and Light had to watch the man’s mouth to catch all of his words as the music blared. “Not quite backhanded. Light-kun must hear these things all the time. It seems silly to say it too earnestly, considering.”

“Then you really needn’t bother.”

“But I’m quite fond of bothering Light-kun.”

“You admit to that then.”

L gave one of his rare little grins. “I don’t think I’ve ever denied it.”

Their conversation became more sporadic as the larger bands started playing and the crowd grew more intoxicated and hectic. A boyband started dancing and the lighter music would have made it easier to speak to one another if it hadn’t been for the incessant screaming. They tried to keep out of the way of the masses, but when a girl came along and vomited into the trash can a few feet away, they decided to shift their locations.

This time Light felt L’s long fingers wrap around his wrist before they began the trek. His first instinct was to glance down, but he stopped himself from doing so for the sake of the camera. Not that there was anything remotely suggestive about the way L was holding his arm like that. Even Light’s father had warned them not to get separated from one another, but it seemed strange to let the men watching through the cameras see the display.

They made their way to another spot, closer to one of the vendor stations, but that ended up being a mistake as well. L had released him for a barely a minute before there was a drunken brawl not ten feet away from them. It seemed like the only cause was someone attempting to skip in line. Light watched distastefully as the two males, one Alpha and one Beta, punched and kicked drunkenly, both of them showing a distinct lack of form or restraint as a loud chorus resounded in his ears from the stage.

It was a ridiculous, almost comical display of machismo. The Alpha felt entitled and the Beta was trying to prove himself in front of his clearly Omegan girlfriend. A crowd began to form around the two men, as they often did, the cheerful pop music an amusing backdrop to the violence.

“—t-kun.”

He only caught the last bit of his name in a moment between the thumping bass.

Distracted by the call of his name, he turned toward Ryuzaki and barely had time to register the two large security guards storming toward him in an attempt to get to the scuffling men behind him. He hardly would have been trampled, but they were already pushing people that refused to get out of their path, annoyance and exasperation in their features growing with every heavy step they took.

Light found he couldn’t blame them. People were animals.

He felt the hands on his hips before he registered where they’d come from, why they were there and who they belonged to. L grasped him and easily pulled him to the side just a foot or so, letting the guards pass by without any foul. Light gripped the detective’s forearms to keep his balance, not at all
used to just being moved.

“...I said Light-kun’s name twice,” L offered, by way of explanation, but for a long moment his hands did not move to release him. Light was caught by the intensity in those dark eyes for a suspended series of seconds, his hands not moving either as an uncertainty in that hung in his chest, dangled there and threatened to fall.

During the motion of being tugged, or at least he assumed so, Light’s shirt had ridden up just so and L’s thumbs had slipped beneath slightly. They pressed against his hip bones and for a second, Light’s entire brain seemed to short circuit at the suggestive skin contact. His breath caught in his chest, his vision seemed to slide out of focus and it took a great deal of willpower to keep the heat that threatened to creep into his ears at bay.

The older man was looking at him, curiosity along with something warmer than usual in his dark gaze. Light thought he felt the thumbs squeeze, press against the line of his hip just slightly. His own hands faltered in their grip, and almost as if in response he was abruptly released.

Light gathered himself, pulling the hem of his shirt down to right his appearance and to give himself a reason to tear his eyes away from where L had them locked.

“I didn’t hear you.”

“I gathered as much.” L replied, glancing up at the ceiling for a moment and then away toward the array of vendors. “That booth is selling funnel cake. I’ll be right back.”

With that, L was gone, moving around the guards that were breaking up the fight. The people that had accumulated began to disperse again now that there was nothing to see.

Misa’s first act came and went. She performed a cute, upbeat song, dancing and walking around the stage with enough energy to exhaust him just by watching. By the time L returned, the song after hers was already over.

Then next two hours passed by in a blur of one band after another and passersby spouting comments that were often ridiculous or rude. Though Light was relatively confident when it came to being in large groups of people, he was reminded of why he didn’t love being surrounded.

“—This place is a drag. I only came because the ticket was free. I’m gonna see if that slut over there is ready to go—“

“Ugh, who even cares? Just leave her there. It’s her fault for drinking too much—“

“...I can still feel my face so I’m not drunk enough yet! Don’t worry, I’ll be good to drive in like an hour.”

He was reminded of the existential crises he’d gone through as a child and teen, when all the world seemed to be filled with lazy, crude people and monotonous days full of the same dull affairs. He did what he could to tune it out, he always had, but it scratched at the underside of his mind at times like this.

At some point, even with Light’s impeccable memory, he wasn’t able to tell certain bands apart. His ears were ringing and he felt a headache coming on. More than once he’d seen people pass out from drinking too much, only to be dragged away by either friends or security officers because they were obscuring a walkway. They found seats a half an hour in toward the back

At some point L initiated a game of tic-tac-toe on a role of receipt paper that he seemed to have
nicked from one of the vendors. He’d been surprised when the man passed him the little hashtag with an ‘x’ in the upper right hand corner, but Light was bored enough not to snub his nose at children’s games. It was better than staring at his phone in the dark while his headache grew behind his eyes.

They moved onto hangman at some point and then it devolved into full on battleship, each drawing a grid on a slip of paper for posterity’s sake. They could have played it in their heads, but giving themselves something for their hands to do seemed to take their mind away from the tedium of the evening.

Misa did sing ‘Kira Kira’, and it was her last song, but it wasn’t the finale of the night.

Every now and then someone would make a comment into the earbud, but there was nothing relevant, mostly comments about what Matsuda was doing or if someone looked especially suspicious. When midnight came, they brought all the bands to the stage and counted down. Many people kissed at the chime of the new year while L worked at destroying Light’s last ‘ship’ in their game.

The performance seemed to be coming to an end, with no sign of Kira whatsoever.

“—Thank you so much for coming, everyone! Now, for our Gold Ticket holders, we’ll be having an after-hours performance!” Misa declared excitedly into the microphone.

Light glanced at L, intrigued by the prospect, as such a thing had not been announced previously.

Perhaps this was what they’d been waiting for?

“Everyone else, please make your way out through the doors you came in. Security officers will be coming around to make sure everyone left has a Golden Ticket!” She waved at the horde of people that were being fed out of the area through five sets of large double doors. “There should be a little gold symbol in the bottom right hand corner of your ticket. Please have them out for security!”

Light and L both took out their tickets simultaneously. The golden symbol was there, on both of theirs.

“All of our gold tickets were given out freely, so if you paid for yours then you’ll know you don’t belong at the VIP aftershow!”

“Matsuda and Misora—“

“Yes, they’ll have been ushered out already.” L agreed, watching the girl on stage with increasing interest.

“Confirmed,” Light’s father said in his ear, “Matsuda and Misora-san are out in the halls with the rest of the crowd. Light, I don’t like this.”

“Something is definitely going down,” Aizawa’s gruff voice said. “Matsuda, you might as well head out to where Watari is waiting. They’re not going to let you back in.”

A security officer came around, looking nervous as he checked their tickets.

“The look on his face, he definitely knows something.” That was Mogi’s voice, soft and resolute in his ear.

“Do you think Kira is blackmailing them into participating, Ryuzaki?”
L didn’t respond to Light’s father this time, his eyes too intense, on high alert as the guards went around and checked each of the people in the room. There wasn’t even a tenth of the initial crowd left at this point, even with the stragglers that were still being rushed out. Perhaps three or four hundred people remained, most of them standing near the stage or lounging in the chairs waiting for the final performance.

It was ten minutes later when resounding thuds echoed through the room, each of the double doors being closed and—from what Light could see—latched immediately after.

“Take off your shirt!” A rough, crude voice in the crowd shouted at the idol as the last of the doors was shut.

There was a pause from Misa, seemingly reigning in her temper. She laughed delicately, “This isn’t that kind of show, darling.”

A general groan echoed throughout parts of the crowd, while other parts remained eerily silent, a tension starting in the room than Light didn’t quite understand. Once more he found himself looking to L, who was biting his thumb, eyes vigilant. Their paper game was abandoned on the ground.

Nearby, in one of the folding chairs, Light recognized the Alpha that had tried to skip in line and subsequently ended up in a fight with a Beta. Then, as he took in the rest of the room he saw a familiar face toward the back. Immediately, he turned around to face the front, pulling his beanie down further so that he wouldn’t be recognized.

“…Teru Mikami is here.”

L glanced back, but didn’t seem all that phased. “I see. That is something.”

“Alright! Thank you all for attending our special performance!” Misa announced, waving her arm as a large screen was lowered behind her. It had been used in a few of the shows, but was reeled back up whenever it wasn’t needed. “Now, please enjoy!”

With that, she was all but skipping backstage.

There was a long pause, each of them on the edge of their seats with anticipation. Most of the crowd was talking, bored while they waited for music to start, the darkened screen reminding everyone of how little stimulation there was and how absurd it seemed for there to be a secret performance with so little of an audience.

Then, the screen brightened, turning blank white. Another moment later, the word ‘Kira’ faded up in black script.

“My beloved citizens of Japan. Speaking to you now is your adoring Kira.”

His eyes widened and he felt the hair on the back of his neck stand up. It was that simple? He was just coming out now? Light’s brain tore through the mountains of information he’d been gathering for over a month now, trying to figure out what could have been the catalyst—or had he been planning this all along?

There were gasps coming from the crowd, and several whispers, along with many disbelieving guffaws.

“Those who have believed in me have shown astounding faith, and those who have not may now sleep easier, knowing that I am real, I am peace, and I am here to protect you.”
“Dear god, he’s real.” That was Aizawa again, his voice trembling. “He is, isn’t he? No, this…this could be a stupid prank.”

“So far, I have failed you.”

Light realized that a few people had made their way to the doors, backing up and trying to get out, but the guards wouldn’t let them.

“I want to apologize to you. I have not announced my existence out of fear, fear that you would not love me the way that I love you.”

It was so painfully sappy in the strangest way possible. Was this truly the terrifyingly powerful man that had killed thousands of people, speaking of forgiveness and love?

“He’s mad,” his father whispered into the earbud.

Light’s eyes continued to scan the area, and his eyes drawn to the sides of the stage where the cameras that had previously been filming the musical performances before had now turned upon the audience.

Why would he be filming us?

“Even now, revealing my face is not something I can safely do, for I am hunted by a figure who cares more for puzzles than the safety of the general public. I’m sure many of you saw his failed broadcast many years ago, when he attempted to provoke me into killing him on live television. As you know, my people, I do not kill innocents. It turns out, in the end, that he was a surrogate the entire time. A criminal with whom L made a deal.”

“Why does it sound like he’s addressing more than Japan?” Mogi’s voice muttered into his ear.

“Mogi, Aizawa, our contacts outside of Japan on the phone. We have to figure out if he’s broadcasting this elsewhere!”

“In fact, though L is my adversary, I do not wish to kill him.”

That part made Light frown, as it seemed a strange idea to him. If he were Kira, that would probably be on the top of his list— was this Kira really so confident? Or was he just an idiot?

“It is my wish to ruin him.”

Light felt the tension coming from his companion’s body. His gaze flickered to watch L’s shoulders draw up slightly, a visible tension in his jaw from where he gnawed on his thumb.

“As for you, my one true love—you know who you are—I was so pleased to see you again in the early days of December. When am finally able show my face to the world, secure in your wellbeing, it will be a glorious reunion.”

Misa. Of course he was talking about Misa. But what was the point in bringing this up here? Was he trying to humanize himself to the masses somehow? Why couldn’t he have just put that in a letter? Was it just to appeal to her sense of grand romance?

“We need to take her into custody as soon as possible”— Light barely registered the voices in his ear, though it did sound like Mogi was making a plan to hunt Misa Amane down and take her into custody.
“But I digress, as men of passion often do. To the good people of the word—rejoice!—for I am yours. I act in your interests alone. I was bestowed this gift not to bring death, but security and happiness to those who do no wrong. The innocent, the weak. I will continue to do so, exposing the cruelties of humanity and righting wrongs.”

This part was what Light had expected. Rhetoric and platitudes about truth and justice, but it wasn’t exact as he’d been expecting. Whoever Kira was, he clearly had a mind for poetry, not cold law.

“Those of you that were chosen to attend this performance are the angels and demons of society. Half of you, I want to cordially invite to my cause, to be the first to witness my debut…and the other half are the cruel and corrupt, the dregs of society that I am working to stamp out.”

Light looked at the people around them, many of them had started toward the doors again but others were either too drunk or too obstinate to take this seriously.

“But which is which?”

L suddenly stood as if realizing something important. A moment later, Light followed his lead, only to be grasped by the wrist for the third time that evening. This time, L started to pull him along instead, no more of his hesitance or lack of presence in his gate as he started to drag Light along.

“It’ll be rather easy to tell very soon, from who is standing and who is not.”

Light turned his head at the words, the epiphany hitting him seconds after L. His chest grew tight and he stopped walking, much to L’s annoyance.

“We have to do something, to warn them—“

“Light-kun, we need to go,” L told him, his voice taking on an edge to it that it never had before. It struck him rather soundly with its insistence. “What he’s about to do— we can’t stop it.”

“In three…”

Obviously, Light knew he was right. However Kira killed, it couldn’t be stopped by their presence. L started walking again and this time Light didn’t fight it.

“They’re not going to let us just leave. We’re not the only one’s trying.”

“…two…”

“They will. This is almost over.” It was said with so much certainty that it chilled him. Light wanted to protest as they started down the aisle, making their way passed the occupants who were still standing around. The looks of their faces varied a great deal –eagerness, amusement, skepticism and fear repeated itself fairly often.

“One.”

Simultaneously, a dozen people clutched their chests, a plethora of cries echoing through the large room.

Then, seconds later another ten or fifteen did the same, just as the first were falling to the ground. Over the course of the next twenty seconds or so, people dropped all around him. A few screamed as people fell at their feet, the ‘angels’ in the group left to witness the deaths of the ‘demons’. There was abject horror on several faces but many of them watched in silence, almost reverently.
Teru Mikami was among those, falling to his knees in worship and smiling at the screen.

Light had to step over more than one figure as they made their way to the doors. They were already open and the guards were clearing a path, pulling the dead out of the way. They were allowed into the hall, the first through their respective door; they were outside in mere minutes.

Watari was, as always, where he was meant to be. They climbed into the back of the limo with Naomi and Matsuda, who questioned them eagerly when they arrived. Without cameras to watch the show on, they had been left with whatever the rest of the task force was shouting into their ear. L explained to them the gist of what had occurred, but refused to go into detail. Light figured he found no use in story time when they’d be able to watch the recording themselves well enough.

It was only when they were at the second stoplight did Light realize that L hadn’t let go of his wrist, and that the tender circular motion of his thumb against the sensitive flesh was back.

The man had been calming him subconsciously and Light, in his terror, had responded to it in a textbook fashion. He’d been soothed, despite himself, lulled into a secure place that was warm and calm and where hundreds of people had not just dropped dead before his eyes. Time had ticked by quickly, with a softness that it rarely had, easing him through the shock of the display.

He pulled his arm away after a moment, but it took more effort than it should have.

Traffic made the trip take twice as long as usual but they did eventually arrive at the hotel, where Soichiro was waiting for them. He confirmed to them that the broadcast had made it to major cities like NYC and London, despite the time differences and that it was already being posted on social media for those that had missed it. Mogi and Aizawa had gone to track down Misa Amane, as a suspect thought to be aiding Kira in the investigation.

At this point, most governments would be getting slightly worried. Plenty of them would consider it a horrible, elaborate hoax, but several would start coming to L for answers. Their support could be a good thing, or it could possibly undermine all of the work they’d achieved outside of the bounds of the law. They all started on their research, trying to figure out who had been responsible for allowing the videos to air, if they had been controlled or blackmailed or if it was possible that Kira considered them an ‘ally’. He did seemed to be fond of the idea of inviting others to his side, so it was something that Light could not rule out.

It was an hour into the intense investigation that L excused himself for a phone call. Light’s gaze followed him curiously for a moment, wondering what could bring him to hide the conversation. It certainly wasn’t so that he wouldn’t be a distraction to them while they worked—Ryuzaki didn’t care about things like that.

Not fifteen minutes later, the man returned, pausing in the archway that separated the main room from the room where they all generally ended up working.

“Light-kun, please accompany me to the sitting area for a moment.”

Light looked up and frowned, hesitating for a moment before nodding. He excused himself from the work room and followed L, though he saw his father’s head turn toward them as they left curiously.

“Kira stated that he saw Misa Amane early December,” L reminded him, pulling up several screens to show various items of evidence, which had not been exposed until this instant. Light remembered that tidbit, of course, and it unsettled his stomach. “Mogi and Aizawa have brought Misa Amane into our custody and I have secured a place which we can confine her until she tells us what she knows. I’ve had my associate search her house and she has found several things of interest.”
“The letters?” Light inquired. He could only hope this wasn’t going where he thought it was going.

“Yes.” L’s gaze was square, his voice low and factual. “Amane has also recently purchased your records off of the internet and your fingerprints were found on the most recent letter from Kira.”

It would be comical if it weren’t so horrifying. Light had to stop himself from laughing at the absurdity of it.

Why would Kira frame him? It didn’t make any sense whatsoever, not with the information they knew now. How would the man even know that he was a suspect? He didn’t understand at all, but one thing was for certain—L couldn’t actually think he would have made such a careless mistake.

Outraged, Light said as much. “You really think I would be that stupid?”

“…No. I don’t,” L admitted, though he seemed rather reluctant to do so. “In fact, the chance that you’re Kira is less than it has ever been. But the facts remain.”

He knew where this was headed; a path that Ryuzaki had suggested once before as a method of proving that he was not Kira for good. One that was completely out of the question.

“I’m not going to be confined, Ryuzaki.”

“I’m afraid we don’t have much choice in the matter,” L told him, holding his gaze firmly. “After this announcement, governments will start pitching in to catch Kira. It’ll take some time for them to come around to the idea—I’ll be speaking with the ICPO later this week most likely. But if they find this evidence, they might not give you the chance of proving your innocence with confinement, Light-kun. You’ll be in the news. You’d go to jail to await a trial.”

Going to jail wasn’t an option, clearly. Suppressants were given in prison as medical necessity, but one had to admit to needing them first. If that happened, there would be no hiding anymore.

But wasn’t this way almost as bad?

Light’s entire mind seemed to curl in on itself, the resulting panic slowly pulling at his facial features until he was sure he couldn’t be hiding it well anymore.

“I can’t. This is ridiculous,” His voice rose. “I’m not Kira!”

In an instant, L was stepping close, shifting his head to the side so that his breath brushed Light’s ear. One of his hands came up to graze Light’s wrist again, just a ghost of a touch. Then, low and smooth, in a tone that had the Omega in him perking its ears, L spoke again.

“I’ll help prove it, but to do that, I need Light-kun to cooperate with me.”

There was a pause, heavy and grim and curling coldly in Light’s stomach at the shock of the situation and the fact that he could not allow himself to be confined—

“I’ll have Watari bring you your suppressants in secret. No one else needs to know.”

Light’s heart seemed to fall through the floor, stupefied with disbelief and humiliation.

The bastard knew. He knew, and suddenly the way he’d been touching him all night made a hell of a lot more sense. God, just now L had used that tone with him, the one that shamed him to no end, and he’d done it consciously.

His fear turned to ash in his stomach, only to spark anew as rage fueled by the shame of someone—
anyone, but especially L—knowing what he had worked for the better part of a decade to conceal. Eerily serene save for his tremors of restraint, Light took a step back and away from L.

Then –*bam*- he landed a right hook across the detective’s cheek hard enough to send him stumbling away.

“*Fine.*” Light positively snarled, watching L regain his balance and rub at his face soothingly. He summoned as much contempt as he could muster as the others ran into the room to see what the commotion was. “Lock me up.”

Chapter End Notes


On with a little bit of science corner:

1) Male omegas do not develop a vagina during puberty. They are impregnated anally, however when one becomes pregnant, they do develop a sort of makeshift vagina through which they could deliver a child at their perineum. Because this is literally a new orifice forming however, there are usually complications, and C-sections are considered the safer and less painful choice. I find pregnancy a little gross in reality, which is a big part of why there will be little mention of it in the fic, but in case you guys were wondering about ‘rectal babies’ (um…) here’s your answer.

This chapter is so exciting to me. Did you enjoy the image of Hipster!L and Hipster!Light? Did all the little touches please you? Did Kira fuck up all your shit? What did you think of your first glimpse of Kira? What was your favorite line of dialogue? Line in general? Favorite touch?

Thank you so much for all your support!

-Nilah
Snare

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"What is morality in any given time or place? It is what the majority then and there happen to like, and immorality is what they dislike." -Alfred North Whitehead

His jaw was still aching.

This was the least of L’s worries, that was certain, but the fact remained that Light had punched him hard and a bruise had formed in a place that made the tender skin twinge with every motion of his mouth. Considering that absolute cluster of mayhem that the day before had been, he had been required to do much more talking than he was generally comfortable with. The damage in that particular place made it even less enjoyable, which he was sure the other man would have liked to know.

It also made it impossible to forget that he had, in fact, been punched by the Omega. The image of Light glowering at him after striking him was entirely too distracting. He’d never seen the man with such a pure emotion on his face, and though it was clearly created from fury, L couldn’t help but find it more charming than any polite display he’d had put on previously.

The look was a good one.

L was rarely attacked physically, and never by an Omega (typically considered the meekest and most passive of second genders, even if he knew that to be fundamentally false) but he couldn’t deny that it had been rather thrilling. From Light’s view, he’d been manipulated in a way that was particularly disgraceful and though L didn’t understand why, he knew he’d deserved Light’s outrage.

Even though he was fully cognizant of the reasoning, that didn’t mean he regretted his actions.

“You can’t just do this, you know!”
The two main screens before him showed both of their captives in identical bonds. Straightjackets, secured to metal contraptions and blindfolded. Considering L could not be positive whether or not Misa was Kira herself or just associating with him, it was the safest course of action. Either of the two could be Kira and the other their accomplice.

If he was to clear Light of suspicion, he would need to be able to submit proof that they were given the same treatment while in confinement. It had to be done properly, or else it was for naught.

Alternatively, if Light was Kira (the possibility was slim but still present), he was taking every precaution possible to keep him from murdering anyone else.

“It’s…it’s unethical. I mean, isn’t it? Can’t you at least take the blindfold off?”

“After the East West Massacre, we found there were several criminals who had evaded the system due to having false identities. Their tickets were under incorrect names. Their IDs were fake. Yet still, these people died even though there was no conceivable way that Kira could have known their names.”

“So what?”

“Meaning that Kira has either gained the power to kill with only a face, or he’s had it all along and been hiding it from us. Either way, letting you take the blindfold off is not an option.”

“Ughhh.”

“Light-kun complains far less than Amane-chan.”

He would eat those words one day, he could feel it.

“Wait…Light? Light’s here too, like me?”

“Yes, he is also under suspicion of being Kira, thanks to you.” L figured it was best to ask straight out, even if he knew she wasn’t likely to confess that easily. “Is he Kira, Amane-chan?”
“I don’t know. We write letters, that’s all! That’s all we’ve done for two years! I’ve been trying to figure out who he is, but I still haven’t.”

“Then why did you purchase Light Yagami’s information on the internet after running into him at the Tokyo Tennis Arena?”

“I…thought he might be. I mean, I hoped. I remember how kind he was when we met at the hearing, how he seemed to feel the same way as I do!”

“That criminals need to be eliminated, correct?”

“Well, yes! But I wasn’t able to prove anything, and besides, if Light was in love with me like Kira is then why would he be so close to you?” There was a pout to her tone of voice.

“Huh?” Aizawa’s eyes narrowed and Naomi shifted, one of her eyebrows perking.

“My relationship with Light-kun is currently quite platonic, Amane-chan, and highly irrelevant to this line of questioning.”

“Platonic? What about the pastry shop? It didn’t seem—“

“Amane-chan,” L sighed, rolling his eyes up to the ceiling. “Please refrain from asking any further questions. You are the one under interrogation.”

“As far as I’m aware, being in love with Kira isn’t a crime!”

Matsuda made a sound in the back of his throat, as if suddenly realizing that she was correct.

“Withholding information in order to obstruct justice is, however.”

The man seemed reassured at this, and despite his gullibility and general demeanor of cluelessness, L
couldn’t help but be amused by it. He certainly lifted the otherwise tense mood.

“*I don’t have any* information! *I’m* trying to find out who he is, the same as you! Well, not the same, I’m not going to *execute* him…”

“If not Light Yagami, then who? You must have some idea.”

If she did, she was talented at faking ignorance.

On the other screen, Light was sitting in silence. It was hard to tell what emotion he was feeling at the best of times, but with his eyes covered it was next to impossible.

Even so, L had a hunch that he was quietly fuming.

The touches he’d given the officer the night before had not been out of his control completely – almost nothing was— but he’d found himself taking them further than he had initially intended.

Sadistically, he’d wanted to taunt the man, to see what his reaction would be after years without, if any at all. He’d taken his wrist the first time with this intention, purposefully falling behind in the crowd to make it seem a necessity.

But the little motions of his thumb had come completely out of nowhere. He’d noticed he was doing it only seconds before Light had, only just able to note when the almost sweet serenity in those eyes right before they had flickered with realization and shame.

The same thing had happened when he’d had those narrow hips in his hands. Light was softer than L, but not by much, and he’d fit so well against the curl of his fingers that for a moment he’d been unable to look away. He felt his nature climbing up from the depths of him, out of whatever cave it sojourned in when it wasn’t needed and he hadn’t wanted to let go.

He hadn’t quite planned on that part, and he’d left quickly to suffocate that little beast with deep fried sugar.

L had found in his most recent observations that Light’s most earnest smiles were directed at the
ground, as though even when they escaped his first instinct was to smother them in shadow. He’d also discovered he rather enjoyed those smiles, those little precious moments of sincerity that even the best actor couldn’t disguise. They were lovely (though all of Light’s smiles tended to be, even the fake ones) but also strangely melancholy because he felt the need to obscure them. The man was, for some unknowable reason, uncomfortable in his own skin and so he had designed and adopted another.

What had happened to make the man feel like he had to hide in such a fashion? To solve, to understand Light Yagami was a feat that was likely troublesome and elusive.

But that, L thought, was what great detectives were for.

“Light-kun, it’s been a week. Are you alright?”

A week of darkness, of restraint, of accusations. Even his father had stopped speaking to him through the intercom. For the most part, all he heard was Ryuzaki’s voice on the speaker—though luckily he was spared the annoying robotic voice. He didn’t envy Misa, having to listen to that, especially after the days without sight to sensitize the ears.

Every time he heard L say anything at all, it grated horribly on his nerves. He’d only spoken to him when absolutely necessary, still angry beyond anything he’d felt before. L knew, he didn’t know how and he didn’t care to ask at the moment (asking favors seemed like admitting defeat or forgiveness). It didn’t matter at the moment. All that mattered was the knowledge, that which he had kept close and tucked away had been exposed and L had used it against him. Every touch that the man had given him at the concert seemed a cruel mockery of what it had been at the time. It had been seemingly innocent, nuanced little traces of their genders that neither of them could help.

It felt like betrayal in its purest form that L had used it against him knowingly.

That wasn’t even the worst of his problems, either. The damned killings had stopped; not a single victim of freak irony had been reported for all seven days of his confinement.

It made him doubt everything. It had to be someone who knew, didn’t it? But the task force was elite, he knew most of them personally. Not Misora, so perhaps she—? No, Light didn’t think he could be such a horrible judge of character. He’d known her for over a month and she had proven herself surprisingly clever, more than most of the other officers at times.
Then how? What does Kira hope to gain by doing this?

All he had in this place was the echo of his thoughts, L’s voice – Watari rarely spoke to him, though his words were gentle things when he did – and the music that was played for him at night. Sleeping in this position wasn’t easy, the silence enough to make his ears throb at times, and so he had requested classical music be played so that he could manage some sort of peace.

Light let the man think he was asleep for over a minute, before he shifted in his binds, ignoring the aches in his joints from being held in this position for days on end.

“What do you think? I can’t move. I haven’t been able to move or see for a week. An elderly man supervises me when I use the toilet and I’m being set up by Kira for some inexplicable reason.”

“I’m sure this isn’t easy for you. Just so you’re aware, I’m the only one surveying you for the moment. It’s three in the morning. If you need a break, I can have Watari come supervise a—”

“I don’t need anything from you,” Light hissed, pressing his forehead against the slat that kept his head from drooping too far forward.

“Light-kun is being quite disagreeable. It isn’t like him.” Light rolled his eyes, though L wasn’t able to see it. “Or rather, it shouldn’t be, but I’m well aware that he’s an accomplished liar. I’m not sure I would know if he was being himself or not.”

The dig made him tense enough that he felt the soreness in his arms intensely. The pain only made the resentment in his voice all the more palpable.

“Go to hell.”

There was a rather long pause, in which Light hoped the man had taken his advice.

“I have to say, I quite prefer the hostility.” The man’s voice finally sounded against from the At least it’s honest, unlike this fake mask of etiquette he’s been wearing.”
“All etiquette is fake, Ryuzaki.” Light had signed on for confinement, not for the man to ridicule his entire way of being. Not everyone had the luxury of being so embarrassingly weird at all times. “They are rules created by society to form a sense civilization. I’m just following the rules.”

L didn’t miss a beat this time. “Rules are quite important to Light-kun.”

“As they should be. Clearly you’re not burdened by such things,” Light’s voice was somewhat taut as he said this. Even as angry as he was at the man, there was a certain arch tone to even the words that he snarled. He’d lost his temper the night of the festival, something he didn’t think had ever happened before. He didn’t intend to ever show that side of himself again, if possible.

Why L was the one who could provoke that in him, he didn’t care to linger on. It wasn’t worth it, not now.

Light broke the silence after another minute or so. “Have you spoken to ICPO?”

“I’ve put it off, for your sake.”

Light gave as scoff. “Right.”

“How would it be if I told them that the moment I confined two Kira suspects, the killings stopped?” Inquired the voice lightly. “They must be suspicious, but they’re in panic mode, scrambling to collect the evidence that you and I have been collecting for years. I’ve refused to talk to them as of yet until I confirm your guilt for certain.”

For some reason, the wording set him off.

“Oh, yes, big strong Alpha, protecting little old me.”

The beat of silence after that was strangely satisfying.

“Light-kun must know that isn’t what I meant. Does he hold a grudge against Alphas?”
“No, just you.”

“I suspect that I have earned Light-kun’s contempt somehow.”

“Absolutely brilliant. Top notch detective work there, Ryuzaki.” Light found himself drawling. He’d earned the sarcasm, he thought, considering the state of his life at the moment. “You mean other than locking me up like a violent mental patient?”

“Obviously.”

Light didn’t want to go into the fact that he felt deceived, because it felt ridiculous to admit it. To confess that he’d expected more from the detective, that when he’d touched him the night before it had seemed so guileless. They’d shared their pretension and mutual contempt for the crowd, they’d played childish games to pass the time, and L had seemed so genuinely absentminded with every little touch. Light had never suspected that he knew, that L was using those touches deliberately, to play with him, taunt him into reacting like the Omega he was.

Betrayal would mean admitting that he’d been tricked, because it implied that he had hopes of some kind. It made him feel like an absolute imbecile. What had he been expecting? Better yet, why had he had any expectations in the first place?

Instead, Light snapped, “You’re unbelievable. I should have never trusted you to do this.”

“That’s not quite fair. Light-kun must understand the implications of the Kira killings halting the day that we put him in confinement.”

“What I understand is that I’m being framed.”

“…I haven’t ruled that out as a possibility.” That was a relief, of course, but not a good one. Hearing that the killings had stopped had been a horrible moment. He couldn’t even imagine what his father was going through either. He wondered what kind of excuse had been given for his absence. Misa could be ‘away shooting a foreign film’ but Light didn’t have that luxury. What did the NPA think this absence was for?

“Kira must know that you have me confined.”
“Perhaps,” L agreed. And then, just to spite him, added, “Or perhaps you really are Kira.”

“I’m not,” Light insisted, getting tired of repeating himself. He would, though, he absolutely had to. If he didn’t defend himself, there would be no one on his side. “I’m not Kira. How many times must I say it until you understand? I thought all of this was to prove that!”

“It was initially, but considering there have been no murders in the last week, it’s starting to prove the opposite.”

Light took a deep, withering breath and rolled his shoulders to bring some of the life back into his arms. It didn’t help. He was good at keeping time, but he’d been sleeping more while in confinement to make the time go by faster. It thought it had been about eight hours since his last session. Only four more until he go out of these binds.

It was also about time for his pill. He’d told L the combination to his lock so that he could receive them. He had plenty in stock, enough for at least a few months. Hopefully this wouldn’t last that long. Kira had to start killing again soon, didn’t he? He wanted to save the world. His entire goal wasn’t just to frame Light—he had to have some sort of big picture, but why couldn’t he figure out what it was?

He released his breath, slow and deliberate. “I don’t want to talk to you again for a while.”

“…Light-kun is being childish.”

*Is that any different than how you act daily?*

“Did he really dislike me touching him that intensely?”

There he went, bringing that up again. He absolutely refused to discuss it with the man. L knew, and that was bad enough without him bringing it up. He’d probably seen the way that he’d reacted to every little touch he’d given him. The way he’d touched his hips, dug his fingers just so, made hate race up his spine and his heart leap into his throat; it had all been for his amusement. A test, perhaps, to see if his theory was correct. At the very least, it was the Alpha in L flirting with the Omega in Light, and that wasn’t at all what he wanted.
Once again, his voice came out harsher than he thought he’d ever heard himself. “What, you thought I’d enjoy it because of our genders?”

“No.”

The answer was quick, precise. But the continuation was more hesitant, enough so that Light found himself momentarily swayed.

“…Not only because of that.”

This made Light pause, made the resentment in him grow cold and quiet in his stomach. Was he trying to say that the flirtation was more than just Alpha to Omega? It was true that there had been something happening here, something coyly stirring between them in these last few weeks, but Light had been perfectly content where it was. He’d had to be.

Their minds clawed at one another, eager for the challenge, the comradery. He’d noticed it, of course he had, it was a relationship that he had never been able to have with another person because he’d never had anyone that was so very much his equal. Even when the man was accusing him of being Kira, he left every interaction feeling more mentally stimulated. He was sure Ryuzaki felt the same, but when their genders were thrown into the mix, Light didn’t think he could stand it. It made him too aware of himself, reminded him what he was and what that meant and what it would mean for any relationship he attempted to pursue.

It wouldn’t work. The way he was wouldn’t allow for it, but there was nothing to be done. He’d made his peace with solitude some time ago; it hadn’t been a difficult conclusion to come to. There was no use in lingering on it.

“Just …shut up, Ryuzaki.”

For the rest of the night, he did.

“Amanechan looks distressed. Is there anything we can do?”

“I’ve been in here...for weeks...tied up like this, I can barely feel my arms anymore, and you’re asking me if I’m—distressed? There’d be something wrong with me if I was alright after all of this.”
“I understand it must be difficult.”

“Let me go. Kira’s probably written to me again…he’d probably so worried that I’m not responding… how long are you going to keep me here? Kira… Kira…” She started to sob quietly yet again and Matsuda turned away from the screen while Aizawa’s tension only grew, while Mogi lay a reassuring hand on his shoulder. Naomi didn’t move, but her stillness was enough in and of itself.

His words were merely platitudes and L was getting tired of repeating himself. After nearly a month, Kira had begun killing once more. It didn’t make any sense, but none of this did. Initially, he’d expected the murders to go on, but they had stopped. And now, suddenly they restarted again? There seemed to be little rhyme or reason to Kira’s actions, but still somehow he was beating him. If it was indeed Light Yagami (his percentage fluctuated more often than anyone L had ever suspected before) then what was the point of having the killings stop?

And how could anyone kill under these circumstances?

It was frustrating in a fashion that L was not at all accustomed to. He was the one that was mysterious, he was the ghost of this world, the detective in the shadows, and yet somehow Kira had managed to elude him for seven years. At first it was purely because of how subtle he was with his killings, but after announcing himself publicly to the world, that excuse wouldn’t work for much longer.

For three weeks and four days, there had been no killings—every piece of evidence pointed to Light Yagami and Misa Amane, but neither of them had given him an ounce of useful information.

Misa seemed to have forgotten, and that was also what Kira's letters seemed to allude to as well, but Light had not once given up on his assertion that he was not, never had been, Kira.

The young man’s shoulders had slumped as the weeks went on, his hair growing until certain layers brushed the line of his jaw. His skin had grown a bit sallow, the line of his collarbone more prominent than before, and it was starting to unsettle the protective instinct in him whenever he saw it.

Being an Alpha had its own annoying biological needs as well, and seeing Omegas in distress was something that both he and Aizawa had been quietly struggling with. L was much more subtle about it, keeping it entirely bottled up, while Aizawa paced, his arms crossed firmly over his chest, whenever Misa cried. Light’s deterioration was much more subtle and therefore, in L’s view, more profound, the way he refused to complain for fear of showing weakness, refusing to be made more vulnerable than was absolutely necessary.

L wasn’t allowing their muscles to completely atrophy; there was no use in that. They were allowed an hour of physical therapy with Watari every twelve hours, but they would still need more when they were released.

When the killings started again, karmic and dramatic as ever, L was faced with less and less justification for his actions. Even Aizawa was beginning to cut glances at him. He’d been the first to agree with him when the killings had stopped, had all but decided to believe that Light was Kira, but now L was incurring glances of doubt from them all. Matsuda looked mostly troubled and sorrowful, and Naomi was keeping up a tough front, but he could feel them all judging him the longer he kept them imprisoned and unaware of the fact the murders had started up again.

But what could he do?

How could he prove once and for all that neither of them had anything to do with the murders? Misa
Amane was clearly in some sort of strange long distance love affair with Kira, but being in love with a murderer did not make one an accomplice. All he truly had her on was that she had helped with the Golden Tickets, but she still claimed to have no knowledge of what would occur there, just that Kira would be making some sort of coming out.

Officially, all of the security officers had been hired had a history of violence or some sort of criminal record. Kira had, as far as L could tell, started controlling them at some point during the show. They’d died after being arrested, each of them hanging themselves with their sheets in their holding cells.

The man that had been responsible for hiring them had a history of drunk driving, and while he had been arrested several times for it, he had always managed use his influence to get out of it.

The fact the remained that Kira was more powerful and more terrifying than ever. He could kill without a name now, with just a face it seemed, although he seemed to prefer sticking to those who were reported in the media. L didn’t know why this was the case. There was so very much he did not know or understand about this case, even after all this time.

Despite his stoic demeanor, L could not help but be afraid. He had to be careful, or he would die.

He had been in that stadium along with the rest of the criminals that had been murderer –many with fake names on public record— and so it was obvious that Kira could have killed him as well if he’d known who he was.

“He just told me to invite people that I thought might sympathize with his cause! I didn’t know he was going to kill anyone there. I wasn't responsible for inviting any of the bad guys...” Misa had admitted to him over the course of the first week.

And yet, L recalled the almost serious way she’d said to one of the men who had later been counted among the dead—

“This isn't going to be that kind of show, darling."

There was no proof, but in hindsight the tone of voice eluded to knowledge of the following events. Yet the Misa that stood in front of him seemed to be telling the truth—at least the truth as she knew it.

So did that mean after she had disappeared back stage, she’d somehow 'forgotten' again?

How could that be? But then, how could any of it?

It seemed that Mikami and Light had been chosen, along with the rest of the socalled 'angels', because they promoted justice in one way or another.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys, activists, charity workers, teachers known for their altruism, and one or two officers of the law, like Light. But there had also been veritable nobodies; a girl who's only claim to fame was that she was YouTube famous for filming bullies and outing them on the internet as the “scum they are”, telling their parents and ultimately having them incur real consequences. A man who had made it in the papers a few years back after talking a teenager off of the ledge of a building. A group of young women who started a support group for sexual assault survivors. A couple in their thirties who adopted primarily children with mental disabilities and spent the rest of their time working in homes for those who did not yet have families. There were also many there that they’d later found were simply very enthusiastic Kira Karma internet bloggers.
Misa told him that she'd only included Light's friend because it didn't seem like Light would go without him.

Kira inviting L to the performance had been a mistake. He'd threatened to 'ruin him', so of course he figured the broadcast would get to L somehow, but he'd had no way of knowing that L himself would actually attend the East West Festival.

Right?

And did Kira truly think that killing over a hundred people in such a way, in front of those that he was inviting to his cause was a way to get them to trust him? The event had blown up worldwide. Governments had contacted him and he'd informed him he was working on a solution that very moment, but had not yet mobilized anyone. While official papers were calling it the 'Incident at the East West Festival' there were two sides forming on the internet; those that were on L’s side that called it ‘The East West Massacre’ while the other half called it ‘The East West Deliverance’.

A few of those that were the chosen survivors, the witnesses, had spoken out. Many of them had rightly been terrified and disgusted, but others had found the display moving and powerful, having trusted that Kira would only kill those that were cruel or corrupt.

Mikami had spoken up fiercely, in an articulate way that seemed to fuel several other positive responses. He’d called Kira ‘God’ openly, and it was becoming increasingly more popular for his followers to do so.

L was used to looking at pictures of the dead but seeing so many people killed before his eyes had shaken him up somewhat, just as it had Light. To the point where he’d found himself comforting him without meaning to, in order to soothe himself. The instinct went both ways and L was as immune as Light was—meaning, reluctantly, not at all.

“Is Light-kun awake?”

“Mhm.”

No, then.

“Good. I’d like to ask him once more if he would please confess to being Kira.” Same old rigmarole.

“No, thank you, I don’t think I will.”

“I thought not.”

He pressed the button yet again and sighed, his fingers squeezing his knees as he tried to think of what he should do next. He couldn’t keep them locked up much longer. Perhaps just a couple more weeks, to make sure that he was doing everything in his power to be certain.

“This is cruel, Ryuzaki,” Aizawa spoke up, not for the first time. L could practically hear his jaw tightening in the way that it did when he was reeling in his temper. “You still haven’t told them about the murders starting up again…”

“Yeah, it really seems like they’re getting to their limit,” Matsuda said quietly, fidgeting as he watched the two exhausted figures on the camera.

“Why are we still confining them? The fingerprints are one thing, but considering we don’t have
much else, and the murders have stopped, it really doesn’t make sense to keep them here like this!”
Aizawa declared, stepping forward. “If you just let them go, the Chief will come out too. We know
that they couldn’t be killing criminals that are currently being released.”

“No,” L disagreed calmly, “All we know is that Misa has an unnaturally strong devotion toward
Kira. Light’s fingerprints are on a love letter, and that she has openly admitted to thinking that Light
is Kira herself.”

L thought he could feel the furrow of Aizawa’s brow even from behind him.

“Ryuzaki, this is making me think that you’re only keeping them confined because you don’t want to
admit you were wrong.”
There it is.

“Yes, I thought you might say something like that.”

“Shouldn’t we be thinking of ways to catch the real Kira?” Aizawa continued to challenge him.
“He’s out there and he’s still killing.”

For a long moment, L paused, but he knew that the man was correct. Even more so than that, he
knew that he would continue to lose the respect of his task force if he didn’t come up with something
else soon.

“I understand. I will come up with a way to get them out of confinement as soon as possible. I want
to be sure, or else all of this will have been for nothing—I don’t want that for any of them.”

L was already beginning to formulate his plan, it just needed some fine turning, and Soichiro
Yagami’s consent. He rather thought the man would be open to it, if it meant the end of their
confinement, but he had to leave no loopholes, no escapes.

His phone rang. It was Quillish, so he picked up immediately.

“Yes?”

“Ryuzaki, turn on the television to Sakura TV immediately.”

“Matsuda, turn the television to Sakura TV. You know the station, don’t you?” L’s voice was
demanding, as Watari’s was. The man rarely spoke in such a crisp, unyielding fashion; something
was happening and it wasn’t good.

Matsuda fumbled with the remote, but soon the channel was on.

For a moment, L’s thought Kira had gotten to him, his heart seized with such extreme panic at the
sight. His eyes went wide, and it took extreme effort to keep himself upright.

Because what was on the television station, broadcasting for all of Japan (if not the world) was
exactly what was on the live feed of his personal monitors. No, not exactly. They front view photos,
one of each of them, not video, but they were recent, judging by the state of Light and Misa in them.
Tied up, looking pitiful and fragile, and everyone in the world could see it for themselves how far L
had gone to capture Kira.

“Holy shit,” Aizawa breathed.

The curse snapped L out of his shock. “Watari! How did he manage this?”
“He hacked the system. I don’t know how. No, I do, he’s just…better than I am. I’m sorry, I—“ L didn’t have any use for apologies, but it was certainly no fault of Watari’s. The man was brilliant with computers. He’d taught classes on hacking at Whammy’s. L could manage, but it wasn’t his forte. “I’ve fixed it. I’ve put safeguards up, but somehow— how could he do this?”

Kira was not a brilliant hacker. Nothing to date had ever supported such a claim. If he could hack into L’s system, why not the governments? Why didn’t he kill criminals who were too high profile for public release?

This was impossible. Impossible. How the hell? How the—

“We need Matt.”

He was the only person alive that might be better with computers that Watari. He’d learned from the elderly man and then surpassed him beyond expectations. He hadn’t planned to bring in any of his successors on the case, even considering what he suspected about Light’s suppressants, but it looked like he didn’t have much of a choice for the moment.

“I’ve already contacted him.”

“Thank you. When can—“

L stopped talking when Kira started, hanging up the phone and setting his eyes on the screen hard.

“This is what ‘the other side’ does, my good citizens of the world.”

“They need to stop this broadcast.” Aizawa snarled, starting for his keys.

“I’ll go,” Naomi stood, stopping him in his tracks. “I’ll get there faster on my bike.”

“Don’t take off your helmet when you get there,” L told her in a low, firm voice, eyes never leaving the screen. “We don’t know what he’s capable of.”

“I would also like to apologize for those that I’ve hurt; namely, the suspects that L has put through this heinous, unlawful incarceration. These suspects are those worthy of my power and my respect. They already consign to the ways of the just, the fair and kind.”

Naomi was gone, and the rest listened, looking at the two side by side pictures of the restrained suspects. The world would see this. Somehow, someone had hacked into his system. Just long enough to get a clip of this sensitive material.

“It was necessary to show you what he’s capable of. I think you have a much clearer picture now of the type of person he is. Not a beacon of law and order, but a lone man who subscribes to only his own rules for the sake of being right in his own mind.”

The killings had stopped, and now L understood why.

“It is my wish to ruin him.”

“People of the world— the lines have been drawn. The world is in your hands, and I am your tool. Will you stay faithful to the governments that have failed to bring you change, or side with a man who would torture these two innocents for the sake of ‘the greater good’?”

L’s fingers curled into his jeans, white knuckled and trembling furiously as he stared.

“Or, will you support me in this campaign for a new world, one that we choose for ourselves?”
The screen went dark.

“It’s your choice.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I hope this chapter gives you more insight on L's touches. It was mostly an introspective chapter, with more shit going down at the end. Lots of canon parallels, but I felt it was important for Light to be confined the same was as Misa, since in this verse there's not a 'Kira 1 and Kira 2' thing going on like there was in canon. I also never really understood the significant the distinctions in how they were tied up anyway, other than the blindfold. I'm trying to show an equality in their confinement this time, considering the lack of information L has this time around.

I've added a few tags, but I'm going to tell you here that I'm going to be having more gender issues than just what Light's dysphoria is bringing up. I'm planning on exploring Agender, Gender Fluid, Transgender characters as well as most sexualities (including pan, bi, ace & demi). Considering gender is such a big thing in this world, I think that's important. It'll be a little funky, considering the differences I've established, but it should be a fun ride. The general focus will still be L and Light but I wanted to let you know this was something I have in mind.

Did Kira once again surprise you and fuck up all your shit? Favorite line? Favorite moment? Favorite line of dialogue? Please tell me your thoughts!

Thank you all so much! You've really helped the writing process along with your awesome reviews. :)

-Nilah
Blame

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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“There is a luxury in self-reproach. When we blame ourselves, we feel that no one else has a right to blame us. It is the confession, not the priest, that gives us absolution.” —Oscar Wilde

—
—
—

“You fucked up.”

“…Matt.”

“What, did I not say that right? My Japanese is pretty rusty. You really fucked up.”

Matsuda had his hand over his mouth, trying not to laugh out loud. He shouldn’t have put Matt on speaker, but he’d allowed it because that was what Matt had asked for. There was nothing to hide, in truth, but his sense of humor –especially when it related to L’s failings—could truly grate on his nerves.

“I’m very aware of how rusty your Japanese is, Matt. I think even Matsuda-san can tell which street in London you were raised on.”

“We all have our talents, Ryuzaki. I never claimed to be a linguist.”

“That’s apparent.”

“Mine just happens to be making sure shit like what happened a few hours ago doesn’t ever happen.”

L curled over his knees, sulking unabashedly. He was correct, after all, and he felt thoroughly admonished. Matsuda was enjoying their banter, taking the light hearted moments where he could, considering what they were about to witness on the screen. Mogi and Aizawa were gone, playing their parts in the drama that was about to unfold.

“Kira as good as told us that he set them up, didn’t he?” Matsuda had asked desperately, when he’d informed them what was going to happen within hours and how it would, in the end, make things run more smoothly.

“We don’t take a mass murderer’s word over evidence. If we don’t prove without a shadow of a doubt that Light is not Kira, then he’ll just be locked up again, but without my supervision.”

“But wouldn’t they at least consult you first?” He’d blathered on, unaware of how much salt was being rubbed in L’s currently very open wound.
L had glowered silently at the computer screen, hoping Matt would tune in and free him from the Omega’s questions, which only beat Kira’s broadcast more firmly over his head. Naomi had come to the rescue, allowing him to go without elucidating for Matsuda what was painfully obvious to him.

“After the broadcast, his support is wavering. The US, Japan, Germany have all spoken out against the confinement that he’s put Amane and Light through—they don’t know who the mystery suspects are, of course. It’s hard to tell with the eye covers over half their face, and their hair obscured even more. No one has said they won’t work with him, but at this point it’s not accurate to assume they’ll trust his judgment on the matter.”

So there they were.

Awaiting the show, and L couldn’t help but have qualms as he watched Watari ready Light for release. Soichiro was driving there, but it would be another hour until he arrived. In that time, Watari given him enough physical therapy to be able to walk comfortably, fed him and slipped him his suppressant pill one last time. Anyone who saw this tape would be convinced that Light and Misa were powerless, even if they were technically in league with Kira.

He’d discussed the scenario at length with Soichiro, let the man shower and dress and otherwise pretend he had not spent the last month in confinement, for the sake of the act. He knew it would be a difficult trial for all three of them, but for the sake of them all it was the best course of action. It wasn’t like keeping them in confinement was an option anymore after Kira’s stunt, and that had been quickly going nowhere anyway.

This way, Soichiro would be able to rest easy knowing that his son was not a murderer and Light would be safe from the accusations of the law when the decided to get more involved.

As an added perk, L could stop doubting himself every time the young man tugged at his mind in more than just a friendly manner.

“Fuck, you didn’t need to go and give me the silent treatment.”

“I’m thinking.” L defended himself, worrying his thumbnail more than he usually did the closer that Soichiro got to Light’s place of confinement. Misa was already in the car now, looking around with bright eyes, though she was far from fully recovered. The shower and new clothes had done wonders for her demeanor, but her eyes were more sunken than they should have been; her hair was lank and lifeless and her dark roots had started to show.
L’s chest was tighter than it should have been. The events that he himself had planned ran through his head, a projection of the future, should everything go accordingly. It made logical sense, he kept telling himself. There was no other way, however traumatizing it might be for the time being.

“Why do you have our hands and feet tied up, if you’re planning to let me go?”

“Please, be quiet,” Soichiro murmured gruffly. He came off as stoic, but L could see that he was preparing himself for what was to come, his eyes hard and his brow furrowed as they continued to drive.

“Matt, how long do you think it will take for you to have a new system up and running?”

“Give me at least few hours. I’ve already repaired what this guy took away, but if you want it to be strong enough that no one will ever be able to break in again without you knowing, it’ll take some time.”

“I understand.”

Naomi and Matsuda passed the time anxiously, each of them trying to concentrate on their work to no avail. Matsuda was a long term friend of Light’s, and Naomi had grown attached to him even in the short time she’d known him. The tension in the room was palpable, even the jokes they told seemed to float thickly through the air, their chuckles forced and guilt ridden.

But, if Light was Kira—

L knew he was very likely kidding himself. He wanted Light to be Kira, because he would be an enemy worth his time, worth all these years of frustration and the most current defamation. He would be someone that he could understand winning against him.

To think otherwise, to admit that someone other than the incredibly intelligent Light Yagami was defeating him and debasing the name of L, was so very disappointing.

“Hey, so—you realize this hack is like Whammy pro level, right?”
“Is that an English expression?” Matsuda stage whispered to the former FBI agent with interest. He’d been relying on her English skills to get him through the nuances that were lost in the language gap between Matt and himself.

“Not one that I’m aware of,” Naomi commented, raising her eyebrows curiously.

“There are plenty of talented hackers that have nothing to do with us,” L told him, his voice a little tighter than he meant for it to be. Soichiro Yagami was only fifteen minutes from where Light was resting, being guarded by Aizawa. He was able to rest for the first time without binds and he was stretched out over a bed, gently repeating the motions of his physical therapy to get himself ready for the outside.

He didn’t suspect a thing. Or did he? He didn’t seem to, and L rather hoped that wasn’t the case. To catch him off guard with what he had planned seemed yet another slight against him, and he hadn’t even recovered from the last.

L hardened his eyes, set his jaw and bit his thumb harder.

“I’m aware of that, but I mean—there aren’t that many that are this good. I’m pretty much the best, no shame, and this guy is better than Watari, who is only like, slightly below me in skill.”

“I’m not sure what you’re trying to get at, Matt.”

“Of course you do. Haven’t you considered, y’know?”

“It’s crossed my mind,” L admitted, but he’d looked through the profiles of every current and graduated Whammy student hand had found no one that seemed to fit the profile. Clearly Kira had some sort of vendetta against him—though this did seem like a fairly new development. It could have more to do with taking away a ‘side’, making it clear that choosing L was the wrong choice, but it certainly felt intimate.

The only person he could think of who might want to ruin him on a personal level had been rotting away in prison with 70% of his body scarred beyond recognition for the last decade. Besides, L had looked into Beyond Birthday just recently and found that he’d died in prison a few months previously after getting into a brutal fight with another prisoner.
He’d been cremated. L couldn’t bring himself to be amused by the idea.

“And I’ve crossed it out.”

“Fine, fine.”

“Also, tell Mello that I told him about that case in confidence.”

“Pfft. Right.”

“I have better things to do than banter. Please call me when it’s done.”

With that, L disconnected the line just as Soichiro Yagami pulled up to the compound and L watched through the cameras as Light was escorted to the car with his arms secured behind his back. He looked relatively at ease, his eyes brightening when he was allowed into the car, seeking out his father’s gaze in the rearview mirror.

“Dad? What’s going on? I’m finally being released—is there new evidence?”

Misa gasped sharply, looking at the elder Yagami with surprised, wide eyes. “Wait, this is your dad?”

“I was starting to think I’d never get out of there.” Light sighed, his shoulders fitting back against the seat with a relief that L rarely saw in him. He was out of sort, relaxed and eager to be free, not to mention not at all threatened by his current company. Now that L knew the secret he was keeping, he remembered a distinct difference in the way that he held himself when he was around those he considered potential threats and those he did not. “It feels good to finally be cleared.”

“No.”

The flicker of shock and uncertainty in those tired eyes was enough to make L want to squirm. His long toes curled around the edge of his seat and he could practically feel Naomi and Matsuda stiffen
behind him.

“You two are being taken to your execution.” The incredulous expression on Light’s face quickly morphed from doubt to fear. “I wanted to be the one to escort you to the execution site. It was built secretly in an underground facility far from here.”

“No!” Misa shouted reflexively, her knees hiking up in a sudden protective posture.

“Execution?” Light demanded, a horrible edge to his voice that was excruciating to listen to. “What—what the hell are you talking about!?”

Soichiro’s eyes were hard and set on the road ahead of him as Misa looked between the two Yagami’s, disbelief creasing her face. Light looked younger after over a month without a trim, even with the lines of stress under his eyes, his eyes growing wider with indignation.

“L is convinced that you are Kira,” the chief said, voice firm and unyielding. L couldn’t help but applaud his acting skills; those skills seemed to run in the family. “He is convinced that the only way we can stop the murders is to execute you.”

“I don’t understand—“ The truth rung out in his voice, loud and clear. He didn’t know they’d resumed. He couldn’t know, and the weight of his own lies sunk low in L’s stomach. “The killings have already stopped!”

He truly believed it. He’d believed it since the beginning and it had been tearing him up. Light had said he wasn’t Kira in so many ways, yelled it, hissed it, whispered it to himself in the quiet of his cell late at night. Each time it had been true.

“No, they never stopped.”

“They never…” Those eyes flashed with the same hurt that they had when L had dropped the truth on him the night of the festival. “That—isn’t what he told me. He was lying about that?”

Yes. That’s what I do. It’s how I get things done. Even recent events with Kira cannot completely convince me that these methods are useless, not with as many criminals as I’ve put away.
The tip of his nail snapped off in his teeth.

*Stop making that expression, Light Yagami.*

“He was trying to get a confession out of you, Light,” Soichiro recited his script immaculately. L had guessed the man would react in this way if he were to find out his son were Kira, and the officer had admitted it himself during the first days of Light’s confinement. If Light was Kira—

If Light had been Kira, Soichiro would have wanted to kill his own son and then himself rather than live with the dishonor of raising someone who could do what Kira did. The little drama they’d crafted hit that nail on the head, which was why despite all of Light’s mind power, he could not see through the act.

“He would have said anything. At this point, that isn’t the issue.” Soichiro continued as Misa cowered, tears filling her eyes. “It’s political now. His proposition that that the killings would stop if he killed you was unanimously accepted by top officials in the UN and the Japanese Government. They want Kira to disappear. No trial, no publicity. He believes that you are the only one capable of being the mastermind behind this and that without you, the accomplices Kira have on the outside will either fade away or slip up and be caught.”

It was not something that governments were above. How many people had they made disappear over the years because a trial would be too much trouble, too much money, too much liability?

Yet another thing that rang just true enough for even Light to buy into. His only response was a breathless exclaim:

“I’m not Kira!”

“This is your own son you’re talking about!” Misa cried out, pulling at the seatbelt and shaking her head, horrified at the implications. She was even more easily deceived. “Are you insane!”

“L made this decision, not me. His word is absolute.” Another pause, a deep breath as he turned down a long stretch of isolated highway. “He’s never been wrong before.”

“He’s been wrong *consistently* when it comes to Kira!” Light disagreed, leaning forward, earnestness in every fiber, every motion. He was well and truly terrified. No wonder Aizawa had volunteered to
go to the site instead of staying here to watch. He would have reacted just as strongly as L was, perhaps more so, and instead to the site of Misa’s fear alone. L’s entire body seemed to tense, ready for action, as though he could somehow protect Light from what he himself had designed to happen. “Do you really trust him more than you trust me?”

The line of Soichiro’s jaw bulged. That had affected him, but he channeled into anger instead of guilt.

“He went so far as to stake his life on this theory. If the killings don’t stop, then he will be executed as well.”

“L said that?” Came that voice, aghast and tremulous, but that brain of his was still working wonders even under this sort of pressure. It was partly survival instinct, L was sure, trying to find a way out of his predicament, but the fact that he could be so coherent at a time like this was impressive. “What is he thinking? I know that given the material evidence this may seem like the only logical solution. But he’s making a mistake!”

_I am. I’m making a mistake. I’ve made several, and this is probably the worst of them yet. L’s thoughts raced in time with Light’s as he watched through the hidden camera. What choice did I have? He’ll never forgive me for this._

_Why does that matter? It shouldn’t matter._

“How could L come to this conclusion?” Light closed his eyes, shaking his head. Denial. But also something more—profound understanding of who L was, perhaps, more than L had expected even from someone as intelligent as him. “Something isn’t right here. I can’t— this isn’t like L at all! The L I know would rely on hard evidence, _not_ circumstantial.”

Soichiro was silent. He didn’t have anything to say to that. Light thought it was true, _wanted_ it to be true, but L knew that he had not been honest enough with the younger man to form any true loyalty. Light thought he understood L (_and the worst part was, he did, better than most, and better than anyone in such a short time_) but he could never be sure.

The doubt was eating him up. Light pulled at his bonds, pressed his head to the seat in front of him to gather himself with his hair draped over his face for a quick moment of collectiveness.
“That’s just who he is. He has to have the truth!” His eyes searched for his father’s in the rearview mirror when he finally lifted his head. “He can’t—is he really trying to end it like this?”

Misa’s breath was shaky in the seat next to him. When Soichiro didn’t respond immediately, she started to plead with him once more, but a harsh turn of the car cut her off. They were off road now, the tires hitting pebbles and pits in the sand as they headed to a large overpass.

“We’re almost there,” Soichiro told them in that callous tone, and for a moment all that could be heard was the sound of the breaks being pumped until the car pulled to a stop. Each of the captives looked on the window and L found himself holding his breath, completely ignoring Naomi and Matsuda for the time being. The last time he’d tuned in, Naomi had her arms crossed and Matsuda had been wringing his hands.

He was dealing with his own turmoil at the moment. L wasn’t used to that; he couldn’t handle theirs as well.

“Where are we?” Light asked, swallowing thickly. His own outlook only grew more grim, while Misa’s shoulders sagged with relief. “Why did you bring us out to the middle of nowhere? What is this?”

“He brought us here to let you go—let us go.” She told Light, truly believing it, but Light was still seeking his father’s gaze desperately. He knew enough of the chief’s personality to know that was not the case; the foreboding had settled in on him, but the hope that he was wrong was still there.

This time, Soichiro’s eyes shifted to meet Light’s and the young man pressed himself back against the seat in response.

“This will do. Nobody around to see us out here.” The elder Yagami turned himself around and met his son’s eyes anew, face to face as he gun his gun out. “I decided it would be better if I brought you here instead of the execution cite.”

Though the notion seemed to have crossed Light’s mind seconds before, seeing the gun being pulled out still. He suddenly looked his age, despite the softness of his features and the length of his hair that had previously taken years off of his age. No, older even, the fear turning him pale. Misa shrieked at the sight of the gun, pulling at the seatbelt desperately.

“Listen to me. I’m going to kill you here, and then myself.”
L’s toes curled harshly into the seat, his fingers digging into his knees. This had to be done. The abject terror on the Omega’s face could not be allowed to sway him in such a way.

“What are you talking about, Dad!? You can’t—this is crazy!”

“You’d kill your only son for this?” Misa was equally horrified, and L was affected by her as well. He knew her story, after all, knew her parents had been murdered right in front of her. Her hair was everywhere as she pulled against the cuffs. “You’re deranged! Just for a—a theory? If you want to die so badly, you should just kill yourself.”

Her words ripped out of her with a severity that was shocking.

“If you do this, you’re no different than Kira!”

“I am nothing like Kira,” Soichiro countered, clicking the safety off the gun. “I am bound by my responsibilities as a parent, and as Chief of the NPA.”

“Dad, she’s right.” Light was still trying to talk his way out of it. He was good at that, L knew, that mouth was a large part of how he’d made it this far with his sanity. His pretty lies had saved him time and time again, but the idea that they might not this time was ruining. “Think about it. If we die here, the truth will never be revealed! That’s what we’ve been working toward all this time. Please, Dad, you have to let us—“

“Either way, you’ll be executed.” The man cut him off. “At least this way, I’ll be the one to do it.”

L felt sick to his stomach. He knew he had no right to feel that way; this was his fault. He was the one who was holding that firearm, it was he that had made Lights face contort with such unadulterated fright.

“Please, stop! I’m not Kira!” That one broke somewhere in the middle. L’s chest tightened. “If I die here, Kira wins! Don’t you see?”

“Amane, we die here, but I have no reason to kill you. It’ll only be a matter of time before the police locate this car. They haven’t decided what to do with you yet, but there’s no evidence that you
assisted with the murders, so you'll likely be let go after this.”

She closed her eyes and drew closer to the door, curling in on herself but never quite giving up her struggle against the bonds.

“Oh god…Please no. Please.”

The gun repositioned, aimed directly at the center of his forehead, barely an inch away. The young man pressed himself back so far into the seat it as if he was trying to sink through it, turning his head as if the distance would save him from the impact.

“Light, my son. From one murderer to another—I’ll see you in hell.”

“No! Dad, please—“ Tears formed in those eyes, clung to long lashes and for a moment in time, L wanted to strangle the man responsible for them. Fortunately or unfortunately, self-asphyxiation was not an easy task.

“Stop this—no—!”

The gun fired. Misa screamed and Light recoiled, squeezing his eyes shut as death took on his father’s face.

Silence followed, thick and still in both the car and the hotel room. L had goosebumps and his shoulders had ridden up as he fought down his protective drive and the self-loathing that both the logical and instinctive parts of his mind were enforcing on him.

“You …used a blank…?”

Light’s tremulous voice broke through the haze of his vision.

_I can’t allow myself to think that way. This proves it once and for all. It’s possible that he figured it out toward the end, but it’s enough to convince anyone that watches it that he couldn’t possibly have Kira’s power._
“Thank God!”

“What’s going on? I—I don’t understand.” That wasn’t quite true. L could see the connections forming behind his eyes, but it was clogged by the aftermath of his dread.

Soichiro put the gun down as quickly as he could in the passenger seat and heaved a deep breath, rubbing the bridge of his nose as Light crumbled from the reprieve in his seat. “Please forgive me. I know this was hard for you both but it was the only way to get you both out of that prison. You must understand. I only agreed to do this because I believe in your innocence, Light.”

These words seemed to spark some life back into the young officer and he shifted in his seat, swallowing hard as he worked to bring his front in place. The shade didn’t seem to be coming down as easily as it usually did.

“Are you watching, Ryuzaki? I did exactly as you said. As you can see, I’m still alive.”

_Exactly as I said; that isn’t going to win me any points. There’s that look again. Light Yagami, what gives you the right? Were you put on this earth to make me doubt myself?_

_You may not be Kira, but you’re no angel either. Even if you look like one._

“It was a convincing performance.” Was that really all he had to say on the matter? L raked his teeth over the pad of his thumb. “I doubt the Kira I know would be above killing his father to save himself. I think this is enough to clear you even with the forged evidence.”

_There, that’s better, isn’t it? It’s over. You can stop making that face now._

“Thank goodness. That’s great news, isn’t it, Light?” Misa murmured, a smile twitching onto her features, trying to pull herself together as well, though the tremors hadn’t completely left her.

“Yeah,” Light agreed. He swallowed again. The pallor of face didn’t get any better, the stress still not erased entirely from his otherwise smooth features. He ducked his head and closed his eyes and L’s eyes narrowed as he did so, confused. “Now we can… concentrate on catching Kira together.”

L paused. Although clearly the younger man was trying to recover, there was a quality to his voice that he couldn’t quite place. “Light-kun, are you alright?”

“…I need to get out of here.”
Soichiro’s brow furrowed. “What is it, Light?”

“You okay, Light?” Misa inquired softly, but Naomi was the first to come forward with anything useful.

“Tell his father to let him out of the car. He looks –”

“— I think I’m going to be sick.”

Soichiro scrambled out of the car quickly, and Light was as still as his father was mobile. The chief mad his way around, because even if he undid the child lock Light wouldn’t be able open it with his hands tied. He helped pull Light to his feet, but after that the man yanked himself away stumbled a few feet away, out of the camera’s view.

As selfish as it was, L was glad he couldn’t see Light empty the contents of his stomach onto the ground.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I’m so sorry. This is actually one of my favorite parts of the manga and it’s always been in the plan to have it around. I know it’s sad. It’s fucked up. I love it. A little Matt thrown in there, with some lines and the ending changed up somewhat. It’s from L’s point of view, so you get to see him struggling with this decision. I hope this chapter wasn’t boring for you.

Several people asked if Light could be considered transgender in the reviews. Here are my thoughts on the matter: I imagine that if he were to accept himself fully, he would technically identify as Omega, but this will probably never be explicitly stated because I don’t think it needs to be. To me, he has extreme issues with internalized sexism—we know what he was like in canon—as well as a superiority complex that doesn’t allow himself to deal with the issues healthily. Light's problems with his gender are based on not wanting to be an Omega, not because of any biological disposition that makes him not feel like he is one. I hope that makes sense.

I didn’t get a change to reply to most reviews this time since I’ve mostly been writing, and I wanted to post. It’s my birthday and I have a lot going on this weekend so I’m not sure if the next update will be as quick as usual. So this one is faster. :)

As usual, feedback is the best. I’d love to hear what you think. Lots of hints and set up for the chapters coming up.

-Nilah
His heartbeat would eventually have to quiet down, of that Light was sure. It couldn’t go on like this forever, even if it had been two full hours since he’d climbed back into the vehicle and they’d started their trek back to headquarters.

Usually, it didn’t take this much effort to keep himself to *himself.*

But for the moment, either due to trauma or exhaustion, he was taking a fair about of his concentration.

Misa tried to speak to him, leaning in and whispering, but he refused to concern himself with her for the time being. He’d cut her off coldly and she’d flushed and scooted away, abashed. She’d glanced at him nervously several times, seeming like she wanted to say something, but each time she thought better of it. When she wasn’t casting Light worried looks, she was glaring at the back of the chief’s seat, not having forgiven his transgression just yet.

He was glad when they met Mogi at a gas station near the hotel and put Misa in a different car. When they stopped, his father bought him a bottle of water to rinse the sour taste of vomit out of his mouth. He wanted to curse L for this, wanted to throw things at him, possibly punch him again if he could get away with it after such an atrocious display. He hadn’t been able to keep his food down and his stomach was still upset in the aftermath, every part of him struggling to conceal what roiled through him, a disaster of pent up emotions tearing at his insides.

Meeting his father’s eyes at this point wasn’t an option, especially because it would require him to look in the direction of the mirror, and he obstinately refused to let L see his eyes at the moment. He hid under the fall of his too-long hair and concentrated on breathing. Reminded himself that he was no Kira, and now everyone should believe as much. It would be better now. He could get back to work rather than wasting away in that cell with nothing to put his mind to other than whatever
conversation he deigned to allow the detective.

The storm was coming to a close and he just had to relax.

The final word was an internal command, but his body remained unresponsive, his pulse still loud and echoing ruthlessly through his mind.

He closed his eyes; even just the streetlights were giving him a headache after a month of blindness, the movement of the car making him feel dizzy and out of sorts. For a while he stretched his arms to work the circulation back into them, but after some time he gave up. It would be at least a few days before they ceased aching completely and longer than that still until they were at their usual capacity.

The rest of the ride was short and silent. At least his father knew enough to leave it alone. He spoke of work, of what had occurred in his absence, of Sayu and his mother, how much they missed him and how happy they would be to see him after all of this time. The topics were frivolous, an attempt at normalcy. His tone was heavy but his words made it seem like he’d been away on vacation rather than falsely imprisoned.

Light was sure he would forgive him; he practically already had, but if he tried to say so now it would turn bitter on his tongue in a way that water could not wash away. The chief knew not to push.

The streets of Japan seemed foreign to him, stirring a sense of listlessness rather than nostalgia. For weeks he’d wanted to go home, but now that the option was presented to him it seemed an impossible goal.

As much as the idea of sleeping in his own bed appealed to him, returning there seemed a lonely confinement in and of itself, especially since L likely hadn’t removed all of the cameras. How could he have faith in anything L told him? The man had proved himself a liar, and Light couldn’t abide by fallacies unless they were the ones that were the foundation of his life.

He could always stay at his parents' house for a few days. But then, looking as bad as he was sure he must would just make his mother and sister worry. He didn’t think he had the strength to reassure anyone as to his wellbeing for a while. If L asked him one more time if he was alright he might punch the man again.

It wasn’t much longer before they pulled to a stop. The click of the keys turning was the only sound;
if L was tuned in still, he hadn’t been so bold as to strike up conversation. The car settled beneath him and the quiet of the early morning only made his heartbeat seem louder even than it had before.

His father glanced back at him a few times, but for several moments they sat in the quiet while Light concentrated on sewing the scraps of his face together before facing Matsuda and the others.

The man had never seen him like this before. How could he? No one had.

How could Light have let him?

Anyone would be reacting this way to such an upsetting display, worse even, but it still felt wholly unnatural to have reacted so honestly.

It was another minute before the smile came to his face in the easy, practiced way that it usually did. He still felt outside of himself, but he was sure it would settle at some point, and there was no use sitting here any longer, while his legs ached to stretch. The relief in his father’s gaze was palpable as they finally got out of the car.

Aizawa had already made it back to the hotel, a different one than the last time Light had been in the task force. He was sitting in an armchair, brooding with his chin propped up on a fist but he looked ultimately relieved that the whole ordeal was done with. Naomi greeted him with a bow, but she also took his hand for a brief moment that might have been a handshake if it had not been so gentle. Her hands were smooth, manicured and cold to the touch. It was more comforting than it should have been and Light promptly ignored the notion, pulling his hand away as rapidly as he could without being impolite.

Matsuda was across the room for the time being, at the table that had become their constant source of caffeine: a machine that could make coffee, tea and espresso along with an assortment of sugars and flavorings. They went through quite a few caffeinated beverages in a day. Watari could not be all places at all times and was actually quite important to other facets of L’s process.

“I’m getting you a cup, Light! One sec!” Matsuda called to him, grinning over his shoulder. He doctored up his coffee enough over the years that Light trusted him with the task. “Oh man, have we got stuff to show you. You’ll never believe it—“

God, coffee. He’d spent the first week of confinement craving it. He could smell it from here as if it were directly beneath his nose.
“Light-kun.”

L had appeared out of nowhere, it seemed, though knew that was not quite true. Light had seen him out of the corner of his eye when he’d entered the room, but the man was light footed and swift. This hotel was more spacious even than the last suite without as many angles in the floor plan, meaning that even standing at the entrance meant he had a fair view of everyone nearby.

“Please, come with me.”

The urgent tone had a shiver raking through him, but it right now only served to piss Light off.

“I think I’ve taken enough of your advice for today,” Light told him without preamble, but the moment he turned his head to catch L’s eyes he felt something twist in the pit of his stomach.

“It is imperative that Light-kun comes with me now.”

“Give him a moment to breathe, Ryuzaki,” Naomi snapped at him, her voice lowering at his name as if she were talking to a small child.

Light started to turn away, and was caught off guard when L’s hand closed around his wrist without warning.

“If Light-kun could just—“

The warmth of the hand on his skin, that same place the man had touched the night of the festival multiple times, this time was enough to have his breath freezing in his chest. No, freezing wasn’t the word, because the sensation and what it inspired was warm, so warm, yet utterly paralyzing.

*Please touch me.*

His mind shrunk away from the thought as quickly as it came and he snatched his wrist away from L sharply.
“Don’t fucking touch me.”

The swear had Aizawa looking up from his seat, his father’s breath hitching in shock, had Matsuda pausing in his trek, carefully balancing a tray stacked with several cups of coffee and a single teacup. Light refused to look at L, keeping himself turned away from the figure, the current object of his antipathy. He closed his eyes and drew in a long, steadying breath through his nose in an attempt to calm himself.

*He’s not worth it. Just apologize for snapping and make an excuse about being tired. After everything that’s happened, they won’t think twice.*

“I’m—“.

*I’m—what?*

He blinked hard and tried to recover his train of thought. Matsuda still hadn’t continued walking, and Light could tell the man was off balance, about to spill the tray entirely (it wouldn’t be the first time) but for some reason even Aizawa seemed to be falling over in his chair.

No, wait.

No, that wasn’t it. Even his father and Naomi seemed to be off kilter, slowly but surely sliding from upright positions into abnormal angles. The lighting in the room appeared to dim with every passing moment, but not in the way that lighting should, all at once. Instead, it faded at the edges of his vision, distorted and darkened until—

The floor tilted beneath him.

“Someone—“

*Light--!*
“Ah—“

“He’s—“

The last thing that he saw was the ceiling before his sight blurred to nothing.

Darkness and quiet fell upon him, along with warmth that was very nearly suffocating (but nice, 
good, safe, perfect). He didn’t know how long he’d been unconscious, but he was aware enough of 
himself to know that was in fact what had occurred.

His ears tuned back in before his mind had truly managed it, hearing the words as if he were 
underwater. Each voice bled into the other. They were words he knew he must know, but he 
couldn’t quite remember what significance they had.

“Light, Light, wake up, what’s wrong--?”

“…call an ambulance!”

“That won’t be necessary, Naomi-san.”

Seconds.

It was only seconds later. He’d probably been jerked to alertness by the impact of hitting the ground. 
That made sense. It didn’t feel like he was on the ground, however. It was much too warm, much too 
secure; whatever held him was not the unforgiving flatness of the hotel carpet, but something that 
gave, something that allotted for the contours of his form and breathed.

His eyes still didn’t quite want to open just yet, but every passing second came with a smidgeon 
more clarity.

“…I—I see.”

“What’s wrong with him?”
“Guys, I—Ryuzaki’s right. I mean, you can’t smell it. We can.”

“God, Chief, you didn’t know? Did you know, Matsuda?”

“No, I never—I…Light.”

“Smell what? What are you two talking about?”

“He didn’t tell you—of course he didn’t, god damn.”

“I—look, I can’t smell anything either, Yagami-san, but…just look at him for a moment.”

“What am I supposed to be…?”

In that moment, Light could see himself as his father did when he trailed off. As all of them could, even with his eyes shut, he understood his position and what he must look like.

He hadn’t hit the ground, he realized, this time with lucidity. His head was cradled in the crook of an elbow, a hand clutching his shoulder.

The most wonderful smell had enveloped him. His first truly coherent thought was about how calming it was, how perfect, how he wanted more than anything to taste something that tasted the way that smelled. A deep, rich honeyed fragrance that every part of him was drawn toward. He could lie there and breathe it in forever and might have, if he had been anyone else.

In an instant, he felt everything—the fistful of cotton in his hand, the strong limb that encircled his shoulders, the weakness of his own limbs and the twinges of discomfort in his abdomen.

He was awake, and it was appalling.

Oh, God.
A frantic tendril raced up his spine and the hand that had at some point clutched at the fabric to draw that stupid, incredible, perfect scent closer unclenched. It flattened, fell against the hard plane beneath the material and shoved forcibly, with as much power as he could manage after weeks without the use of his limbs.

The thud L made as he fell back onto the ground was particularly rewarding.

Light rolled over even as his sore body protested, catching himself on his hands and knees, ending up in seiza save for the way he was hunched over, palms splayed out on the carpet and his head ducked. He let the curtain of his hair hide him, panic bubbling up from down in the core of him, spreading through his chest, cold and toxic as someone laughed.

No, no. That was him.

He was laughing, a cold little cackle that resonated in the back of his throat. It felt like sand on his tongue.

Light didn’t quite know why he was laughing, except that it seemed the only viable option. It was either that or sobbing with frustration because he could smell them. Aizawa, Matsuda, L— which meant they could smell him too. For the first time in his life, people would look at him and see him as he truly was and the thought made him nearly manic, the notion that the secret he’d kept for this long was over, just like that. In an instant, nothing was the same, and nothing was right and nothing was fair, like it had been that evening eight years ago. It meant that everything was ruined, that everything he’d worked for was gone and he was just an Omega, just Matsuda, just, just—

“Light.”

Aizawa. Aizawa? It hardly sounded like him at all, and it took him a second to realize why.

His terrible laugh halted immediately.

“Light, it’s okay, just calm down—“

“If you say one more thing to me,” Light whispered venomously, drawing in a breath through his
mouth carefully. “—in that condescending placating tone, you’ll regret it.”

“It’s—he didn’t mean it like that—“

“Light.” His father cut Matsuda off before Light had the chance, his voice strained with shock and anguish. “How can this be true? You never told us. Not anyone? How could you survive without—Why?”

“Tell you?” This laugh was more of a scoff, short and harsh, unlike the dry, splintered one that had bordered on hysteric. “So you could all treat me like you treat Matsuda?”

Matsuda made a sharp sound. Light was glad he couldn’t see the looks on their faces; he knew that had been cruel, but in that instant he wanted nothing more than to act out. To hurt them, like this hurt, like the impending heat was going to hurt—

“Light-kun.”

“And you—“ Light lifted his head finally, cutting his eyes hard at the detective, who had not bothered to move from the position he’d been knocked into. “You’ve been wanting this from the beginning, haven’t you? Does this make you happy?”

“Clearly not,” L replied with no change of pitch whatsoever. “I think we should get Light-kun to a room before he says something he regrets. He’s not himself at the moment.”

“Oh, am I not?”

“I’m—I was about to excuse myself,” Aizawa spoke up once more, grabbing his coat and pressing his own wrist to his nose as he started toward the door.

“That’s probably for the best, Aizawa-san.” Those dark eyes were sharper than usual as they followed Aizawa until he was out of the room.

Light took that moment to straighten his posture, but the combination of weeks in confinement and the biological event that was manifesting itself in his blood was enough to make himself doubt the
strength of his legs, should he try to stand on his own.

The glisten in Matsuda’s eyes caught his attention as he raked both of his hands through his hair. He put his hands down, curling them in the fabric of his trousers at his knees.

“You should all go. Ryuzaki is right, for once.” He inhaled through his lips so that he wouldn’t get another whiff of L’s scent, which was only growing thicker by the moment. Whether it was the Alpha reacting to his Omegan scent, or just his suppressants gradually wearing down, he couldn’t be sure. “You shouldn’t be seeing me like this.”

Matsuda’s worry seemed to have reached its limit, words tumbling out of him in a rush.

“God, but Light, I’ve known you since you were in high school, I—I can’t believe I never knew, I wouldn’t have…how long has it been--?”

“I didn’t tell anyone. I worked hard to keep it from you.” For the briefest of moments, his eyes lifted to his father’s but quickly moved away.

He had worked hard. He had dedicated himself completely to this clandestine reality, and if he had been anyone else he might have felt freed of a burden, now that it was well and truly out. But he was not a usual man and instead he was faced with not only the truth of his being but also the awful normality of a life where he had no secret to keep.

It had been strangely liberating. Now that it was exposed, Light felt a weight settle in on his chest and it seemed intent on suffocating him.

If he hadn’t presented Omega, hadn’t fought so hard at all times to keep his true self at bay, he might very well have gone mad with boredom. The day to day of ordinary life, the one he’d pretended to fit into, had started growing old before he’d gotten out of primary school. The idea that every day might go on with the same, horrid routine until he died of old age had been a reoccurring nightmare, and as stressful as always concealing himself, it had also kept him sane in a way.

That was gone. His father knew, his coworkers knew, and he was going to go into heat again for the first time in eight years. He’d have to get through it again, and the thought filled him with such intense dread he felt a new wave of nausea coming over him.

He would be treated with either contempt or pomposity wherever he went. He would be asked why he wasn’t mated yet, when he planned on having children, his father would get overbearing and his
mother might expect him settle down with a 'nice Alpha'.

“I just…don’t understand why you couldn’t trust me with this. Your own family.” Soichiro rubbed his hands over his face, looking worse for the wear as he stood there. The culpability curdled in his stomach. He had nothing to say to defend himself.

He could have never told them. Regret was useless because he knew himself entirely and knew he would have never been able to handle it any other way.

“It’s…I understand, Light,” Matsuda broke in, stepping forward, but then thinking better of it. “You’ve seen—I mean, I know. You know? It’s okay. I…want you to be healthy, of course, but I get it.”

The overwhelming sensation of gratitude spread through Light’s chest, though he swallowed it down hard. It was a momentary relief from the mind numbing fear of what his body would be going through soon.

The door opened and Watari stepped inside, a formal air about him even now. Nothing about the scene before him seemed to faze him; he’d likely been watching it on the cameras. Seeing him approach was a relief, though Light it might be left over from his time in confinement, where Watari’s visits were the highlight of his day.

“Perhaps we should leave now,” Naomi murmured, taking a step toward Matsuda and therefore closer to where L was still seated on the ground.

He hadn’t gotten up, Light noted through the fall of his hair, and even if it was some benevolent gestured meant to equalize them, Light loathed him in this moment. For everything he’d done. For figuring out his second gender, for suspecting him, for putting his father up to the fake murder, for smelling goddamned perfect—

“Leave?” Soichiro repeated, his gaze following the elderly man as he made his way over to Light, his shoulders drawing up with tension. “I’m not going anywhere without my son.”

“Yagami-san,” Watari said smoothly, pausing beside Light and looking back at the chief of police. “At this stage, your son has no option but to find a room in which to spend the duration of his heat. There’s nothing you can do for him.”
“I—that isn’t…” His father sputtered.

“Dad,” Light interrupted in an undertone. “It’s really…best if you don’t see me like this.”

_I’m barely holding it together. I need a dark room and a locked door. I’m not sure how much longer I can stand to just sit here like this. I can’t let them see what this does to me, no one can, I need to GET OUT OF HERE—_

His entire body ached, deeper than that of the soreness that had been induced by his confinement. He could control himself for the time being; of course he could, for as long as it took to get himself alone so he could properly devolve into the mess that he’d become all those years ago. He could feel it building in him, the heat and the terror both, scaling up from the depths of him with sharp nails.

Light’s fingers curled into the fabric at his knees harder.

_Out, out, out, he had to get OUT._

His hands quaked in their grip.

“See you like this? You keep saying that, as if that matters to me at all. That’s hardly the—”

“Please, Yagami-san,” L finally spoke up again. However much the man seemed to enjoy spouting out comforting words or guilt trips, he was still reeling, and appeared to take to the reprieve of being interrupted. “Watari has quite a bit of experience caring for young Omegas in heat.”

As he spoke, Watari held out a wrinkled hand to him.

_L continued, his voice soft, low and attractive; it was probably the most irritating thing Light had ever heard. “Not to mention, having dealt with hundreds of his own over the years.”_

The only one that didn’t seem surprised by this was Matsuda. Watari was too old to have much of a scent at this point. The way his nose was now, and as close as the elderly man was to him in this moment, he could smell what was left of his Omegan aroma without much trouble.
“Wait a moment, you expect me to just leave him here with you? It’s not that I don’t trust you, Ryuzaki, but from what Matsuda tells me, you’re an Alpha. Well, aren’t you? The way you were looking at Aizawa—no, you must be. I’m not about to leave my son here with you.”

Even from where he sat, Light could see the flicker of agitation in L’s features.

“Light, I’m sorry, but I won’t be able to kneel down to help you up.” Light tore his gaze away from the irritated detective. The creases at the sides of Watari mouth shifted as he have a small smile. “Old knees, you see.”

It took Light another moment, but finally he placed his hand in Watari’s and allowed himself to be helped cautiously to his feet. His legs felt like they might slide out from under him at any moment, or simply crumple from the weight of him. Standing made him dizzy, his vision blurring once more at the edges. He felt an arm linking with his, stronger than he expected.

“Why ever not?”

“That should be fairly obvious, Ryuzaki.”

The shared L’s irritation, though for different reasons. The insinuation that he needed protecting all of the sudden was just what he had been talking about, while it seemed to be dually offensive to the Alpha detective.

“Yagami-san trusted me with his son’s innocence before, quite recently in fact, and I didn’t fail him then. Surely he feels no differently now—“

What the hell?

The play on words was uncouth, not to mention mortifying. Fury, among other emotions and bodily functions that were surfacing, had his vision tunneling momentarily. Light was about to lunge at L, but before he could get his treacherous body to move, there was a blur of motion. For the second time that day, L hit the ground hard, and it took Light a moment to register exactly why.

She’d moved so rapidly that his brain, struggling already to keep control of himself, processed it a
second after. In a quick, sweeping motion, Misora had delivered a smooth kick to the detective’s head. He caught himself on his hands and pushed himself quickly back upright, grasping his face and peering up at the woman with casual agitation.

Light had never gotten to see the bruise his punch had left on the man. He hoped she’d kicked him hard enough so he could witness this one form.

“If people could stop assaulting me without warning, I would greatly appreciate it.”

“You could stand to be a tad more sensitive, especially considering everything you’ve put him through,” Naomi told him, straightening her shirt and rolling her shoulders back as she glowered. “If you really thought you didn’t deserve it, you’d be kicking me back. In fact, you probably could have dodged it, if you’d really wanted to.”

This time when L stood, he was more cautious, but no one moved to attack him this time. Light wanted to still for his comment but at this point, he didn’t think he could manage it.

“I’m not fighting you back, Naomi-san, because it would waste time. Time that Light-kun does not currently have.”

“So now you’re being generous,” She laughed, crossing her arms over her chest and shaking her head.

“No,” L replied, narrowing his eyes. “I’m being conscious of the situation. All three of you should be on your way.”

“I’ve already told you,” His father snapped, fists clenching at his sides. Light felt his own breath sucking in sharply, until his lungs were so full they ached. “I’m not going anywhere. There is nothing more to say—I’ll let you.”

“Dad.” He released his breath, slow and easy and the rest of them waited quietly for him to continue. “Please, leave.”

“Light, I really don’t think—“
“I’m sorry,” Light hissed, doing everything he could to stay upright, to keep his breath steady. “I really…don’t care what you think right now. I have to stay, and you …have to go.”

*Go before I cry or scream fucking pass out again. The more you’re here the more sure I’m never going to be able function like I have been for the rest of my life and can’t, I can’t—*

His father reeled back, eyes wide behind his glasses.

“But Light, it isn’t—“

“Get out!”

The force of his shout alone had another wave of dizziness passing over him, but it was enough to sink in this time. He nodded and headed for the door, though his eyes kept glancing back in an attempt to gauge Light’s solemnity. In response, he kept his face as cold as possible, not allowing any guilt to seep through.

The door shut behind them and Light felt a great deal of the strength leave his limbs. He sagged somewhat, but Watari held fast to him and for a moment he saw L start forward as if to help. Light shot him a look that *dared* him to try to touch him and the detective stopped short. After another moment, he managed to gather himself, straightening his shoulders and letting Watari guide him to the nearest bedroom attached to the suite.

He felt the first of it leaking down his leg just before they made it to the door. From the corner of his eye, he saw L deliberately turn away and press his wrist to his nose.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I lied! This chapter was just as quick because I am apparently a crazy person.

Please let me know what you think of this chapter! It's really intense, and definitely a big part of the ‘reveal’ you guys have been hoping for since day one. I know a lot of you mentioned you thought this would happen, so—did you see it coming? What was your favorite piece of dialogue? Favorite lines in general? Favorite ‘action’—do you prefer the image of Light passing out and L catching him (I imagine it being a backwards parallel of the moment L died), or Naomi kicking him in the face for being
an insensitive jerk? Did everyone react pretty much how you thought they would?

Up Next: Matt and Watari give L advice. He takes it.

-Nilah
Discourse

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Every instinct that is found in any man is in all men. The strength of the emotion may not be so overpowering, the barriers against possession not so insurmountable, the urge to accomplish the desire less keen. With some, inhibitions and urges may be neutralized by other tendencies. But with every being, the primal emotions are there.” –Clarence Darrow

“A friend. You have a friend?”

L paused in bringing his teacup to his mouth, glowering at the computer screen, though the video was not currently connected. “That was hardly the most interesting part of what I just said.”

“I dunno, it’s pretty fucking interesting.”

L sipped his tea and decided that it was too much work to roll his eyes when Matt could not get the full effect of it. It wasn’t completely out of line, he knew, as he didn’t think he’d ever had anyone that he considered a friend before. He’d gotten closer with his successors in recent years, once they’d come of age and had insisted on taking their own cases. They’d been rather persistent (one of them in particular) and while he had met them in person once or twice over the years, he preferred the safety that came with seclusion.

That was something that he and Light seemed to agree on, he’d discovered. They were both such safe, lonely men.

“But so is your ‘friend’ being some crazy Omega that’s been using our suppressants to that extent. What even is that? That’s some seriously neurotic behavior.” There was the sound of clicking keys as Matt’s fingers typed something into his laptop. “You said eight years?”

“Approximately,” L affirmed, though I was able to track down an absence in high school that seems to correlate with his initial presentation, which was eight years ago.”
“That’s longer than we’ve even been making our stuff. That’s… insane.”

“I’m aware of how ill-advised it is.”

“Didn’t anyone ever teach him to use drugs responsibly?”

L set his cup down, silently lamenting its emptiness. Light’s scent was strong enough to smell even through a closed door, which was several feet away, and L had been constantly keeping tea in his hands so that he could smell it at all times as a result.

“I doubt that was quite how the lesson you received went, if I remember anything about Roger’s lectures.”

“Was it not?” Matt chuckled, “That’s what I got out of it.”

“So I gathered.” L replied, but was too distracted to find it all that amusing. “Let’s assume that his upbringing was quite different from yours. What can you tell me about the long term effects of the drugs you designed?”

“I’m not the chemist, Near is. I just use them and market them—it’s an enterprise.”

“That isn’t what I asked.”

“They’re totally safe, in theory.” There was a deep sigh on the other end of the line. “I mean, they work a little differently for me as an Alpha, but I take a fucking break every now and again just the same.”

The suppressants they’d created were high quality, large doses meant to dull the scent glands until they were next to inactive. The result of those years of repression was that Light’s scent was stronger now than it had been previously, his body clearly desperate to attract a mate after being so tragically deprived. But L had also found over the last twenty four hours that the scent would sometimes fizzle out entirely for several minutes or an hour at a time.

Generally, suppressants weren’t prescribed to Omegas until their third or fourth heat, just to make
sure that their body’s had fully developed before stunting it. L highly doubted Light had taken such precautions.

“Does Near?”

“Huh?”

L stood up, snatching his teacup up and starting over to make himself another cup of tea. This was not one of those moments were Light’s scent was retreating at all. He couldn’t stop himself from looking at the door as he passed, his insides clenching and growing hot at the thought of who was on the other side.

As he slid over to the tea maker, he repeated himself. “You said you take a break now and again. Does Near?”

He’d banished the rest of the task force to the building that he’d built, which was mostly completed at this point, and therefore he no longer had people around to get his tea for him. Watari came around, and while he would bring tea to him now and again, he was much too busy dealing with monitoring their system and taking care of Light. The elderly man would come around with clean sheets, food and water every few hours. He’d return with the soiled sheets to get them washed, and the first time L had embarrassed himself by growling in the back of his throat at the way it smelled, he smelled, and he’d wanted to rip the fabric away from the man and bury his face in it –

Watari had paused, raising his eyebrows at him with an expression that had said loudly “Oh, grow up.”

“Oh, uh. Near’s not exactly the type to go into detail about things like that, but I imagine it’s on a strict routine of some kind—like someone with common fucking sense.” L could practically see him shrugging. “I think it’s like, every three months? He has a thing for fourths.”

L tilted his head as he pressed the button for tea on the machine and aligned his cup. “It isn’t obvious when he disappears for a week into his room?”

“He does that half the time anyway. Near isn’t a social being. I mean, I’m not really either”

“And Mello?”
“Mello is definitely better at faking being a people person than—”

“I meant,” L interjected impatiently, “About Mello’s heats.”

“You kidding? Mello doesn’t suppress heats, ever.” Matt was growing distracted with something or other, his voice growing more distant as he did so. Probably a game or program—possibly both. “Mello fucking loves them. Embraces the shit out of them.”

“…I see.”

“I guess the only time you’ve actually seen Mello in person, it was before presentation, so you wouldn’t really know that part.”

“That’s true.”

“Late bloomer.”

“Mhm.” L nodded for no particular reason, glad when his cup was mostly full and the trickle of searing fluid had come to a close.

As late as Light, actually, though they clearly have completely different views on their genders.

“What exactly are you trying to gain from—“ Matt cut himself off, realizing the real reason for L’s call perhaps. It hadn’t been entirely for medical purposes, as he knew none of the three were doctors of any sort. They couldn’t know the consequences unless they’d seen it themselves. “Oh. Are you trying to get some perspective on your friend? Trying to figure out what could possess someone to suppress their heats for such a ridiculous period of time?”

Matt could stand to be a bit less blunt at times, but he wasn’t purposefully rude about it. While he preferred technology to people, he was confident enough in himself to be decent at socializing, even if he’d rather not, and as such he was one of the more likable Whammy alumni. He hit too close to home much too often, however, and L frowned as he plopped sugar cubes into his tea.
“…That is the jist of it.”

“Why don’t you ask him? Near and Mello are special cases in and of themselves. They’re not going to give you a look in on your friend’s mind.”

All Omegas, as all people, were unique and yet fundamentally the same. He’d hoped to find something that might clue him in on Light’s thought process by inquiring about Near and Mello, but it was proving to be an uneventful conversation. He saw similarities in them, certainly, but they’d been raised with an entirely different outlook on second genders than Light had.

“He’s not going to give me that either.”

“Sounds complicated,” Matt breathed, and L almost cringed at the sound of a lighter being struck. Disgusting habit, he thought, as he put a handful more sugars into his cup, then stirred. “Listen, you could call Near, but I doubt he’ll be able to tell you much more than the chemical compounds and what it does for him when he takes it reasonably.”

“Yes, that’s what thought.”

He’d just made it back to his seat and was about to consider the call over, when Matt spoke again, his voice slightly rougher with what L assumed was smoke exiting his lungs.

“I know this is going to be really difficult for you to wrap your head around, but you don’t need to solve anything for this guy right now.” The breath released in its entirety. “Just be there. You know, as a friend, or whatever.”

L was quiet for a moment before disconnecting the call.

*I didn’t call for advice on my own actions. I wanted a way to get into his head without making yet another mistake that results in him loathing me even more.*

It was a delicate situation, and not one that was easy to wrap his head around. L was torn between feeling completely at fault for the situation for imprisoning Light and deciding he’d done nothing wrong at all, that every decision he’d made had been logical. But he knew just because one could defend one’s actions, did not make them the best course, let along the right thing to do.
He hadn’t thought that Light would vomit his suppressants, hadn’t thought that the stress would be so bad as to trigger heat as a defense mechanism. It didn’t happen exceedingly often, but enough that it was common knowledge. Alphas and Omegas were not meant to be alone on a biological level. On occasion there would be a story of an unmated Omega having a near death experience and being forced into an unexpected heat because their body had been reminded of their mortality, and in response they went into the state that was meant for reproduction, meant to call out for the protection of an Alpha.

Matt had explained to him that even the suppressants that he and Near had worked together to design, the ones that Light had been taking for about five years now, were not so strong as to suppress every urge. Although Matt was an Alpha, and the suppressants allowed him to basically assume the disposition of a Beta without fear of scents or rut at all, Omegas in distress still affected him on a level that was too basic to completely crush.

L’s own gummies were constructed out of the same suppressants, though he took a much lower dose than either of them.

When Watari left the room with a bundle of sheets a few hours later, L made sure he didn’t eye the sweet smelling fabric this time. Instead, he caught Watari’s eye as he spun in his chair. The older man glanced at him carefully, pausing just outside of the door and allowing L to speak, if that’s what he decided he wanted to do. He’d always seemed to know when someone want to say something, and also when to leave well enough alone.

L turned away, looking at the computer screen in the dim lighting and breathing in his tea. Beside him was a bowl of his gummy suppressants, which he usually took only once a day. He’d taken four, in the last twenty-four hours, just to halt the growing need that was building in him, so he could concentrate on his work rather than the thought of how lovely Light must look, flushed and writhing beyond the closed door—

_Do not think of it, of him, at all. You’re only making this worse for yourself._

His work consisted of very little on the Kira front. The man had covered his tracks to extents that were crafty and cruel. There had in fact been prints on the tapes, but the man that belonged to them had been a child molester who had died immediately after bringing them to the station. Sakura TV had been blackmailed into broadcasting the tape and there hadn’t been any word from the man since he’d ruined his reputation. He was good at finding people to control who could be disposed of. The tape had been aired in every major city, and even the ones that managed to keep it from reaching the people via television had not been able to completely erase it from the internet.
Kira had friends; that much was for sure. There were people out there, more than just those that he controlled completely before their deaths, people that were on his side and working to help spread his message.

*If he can control people and events to the extent that it seems he can, L deduced broodingly, then the scrambled voice on the tapes might not even have been his. He could have gotten the man to record the message exactly as he wanted it done. He might not have even physically involved at all.*

L took a sip of his tea and shut his eyes, breathing in and accidentally smelling more of the Omega’s scent than he had before after holding the cup too far away from his nose. Even that much seemed rude and invasive, which L usually didn’t concern himself with—he’d put cameras in his home, after all, and he’d done far ruder things in his lifetime. He’d watched two Omegas confined for over a month. But smelling the sheets drenched with his slick—somehow that seemed to cross the line?

*Ridiculous.* “How is he?”

“He is in pain.” The response was almost immediate. Quillish was annoyed with him, perhaps, and his protectiveness was almost motherly; unconditional and vicious. He’d always had a bit of a weak spot for the Omegas in his care, though he seemed to love all children in general. He was old and he was biased, as most people were.

*In pain.* The words seemed to make a fist close around his innards but he kept himself as composed as possible.

“...I imagine so.”

“Heats come in waves, as I’m sure you’re aware. Usually there is at least six hours between each spike but what he’s experiencing is more intense,” Watari explained, faltering in his clinical persona. “He seems to have less than three hours of recovery time between each peak, though that may fluctuate over time—I’ve never seen anything like it.”

“I’m not sure there has been a case quite like this,” L affirmed, keeping the teacup by his nose so that he wasn’t tempted again by the sheets that Watari held just a few yards away. “All cases I’ve found of Alphas or Omegas using disguises had the sense to make an excuse every six months to have a vacation.”

“Brilliant children are often more troubled, I’ve found.” *In my vast experience,* L supplied silently. “I
believe he felt he was sacrificing a ‘weak’, physical part of himself for the sake of his mind. It’s sensible, if anything, but not based in reality.”

It was something that L could relate to, in a way, but Light had taken his repression to an extreme. He supposed that gifted people were often extreme in one way or another, but this one had locked himself away under mild-mannered facade and had pretended so fiercely to be a version of ordinary that was acceptable to those around him.

*I suppose it’s no wonder that something slipped through the cracks eventually.*

“Is he eating?”

“The tray is always empty when I come to collect it.”

“That’s a good sign.” There was a question itching at the back of his mind, but it felt rude to even breach the subject. It wasn’t his place, but he did have a reason for asking, not just perverted curiosity. L hesitated, took another sip and then finally asked, “…Has he been using it?”

There was a pause, in which Watari regarded him without expression—which certainly meant that he disapproved, if he was inquiring purely for the imagery. Which he wasn’t. “I hardly felt that it was my place to ask.”

“Of course.” Quickly, before he started to make him feel guilty for not behaving again, he explained. “He’s just…quiet.”

Too quiet. L had been expecting to hear something, even if it was just him tossing and turning. Not that he had been listening too closely, not that he’d been wanting to hear the man moan, because it was more likely that after this long that he’d be sobbing without someone to help him through it all.

The walls were thin and L had good hearing, but still he had not heard the young man at all. If it weren’t for the scent, it would have been impossible for a passerby to know there was anyone inside.

“Yes, I’ve noticed.” Quillish shifted, disguising his worry. “There are bite marks on the sheets. Even when I enter the room during the worst of it, he makes minimal noise.”
The fist in L’s stomach tightened. “He is stubborn.”

“He is.” L could absolutely feel how loaded the tone was; Watari was not at all done with this train of thought. “But he’s also weak. There was nothing to be done for the timing, you certainly couldn’t have known, but he still hasn’t recovered from his confinement.”

This was something that L should have foreseen. He knew the consequences of being held in captivity, and knew that physically both Light and Misa would need a few weeks at before their arms and legs were back at a normal capacity. Both of them had rather physical jobs, so neither of them would have much trouble with gaining back their muscle and dexterity, but it would take time that Light had not been allowed.

The implications of that while Light was in the throes of a concentrated heat were very close to alarming.

L finally turned his gaze on Watari, ignoring the sheets that the older man still held in their entirety even though they were just a couple feet below the line of his gaze.

“Are you saying he doesn’t have the strength to –“

To use the device that he’d had purchased to make it easier. It wasn’t as though Quillish was unused to providing new Omegas with such things, however awkward he was sure it had been for Light to find it along with the water bottles and clean sheets.

But it was an odd angle even in the best of health. There were services for Omegas who needed Alphas to help them through their heats, and even some for those who preferred Betas or other Omegas. It was rare for adults to go through heats alone, in this day and age, when Omega sexuality was becoming more acceptable. It was exploited for those same reasons, of course, but it was still considered normal to arrange to spend a heat with someone casually even if one was not otherwise romantically involved.

Perhaps he’d been trying so hard not to think about Light fucking himself on a phallic toy that he’d blinded himself to the predicament.

It was only a second later that he realized that hadn’t ever finished his sentence. Watari saved him the trouble.
“I can’t say for certain. He doesn’t exactly confide in me when I check on him.” This seemed to bother the man somewhat. He’d had several orphans over the years that refused to be helped, but that did not make it any easier. “He mostly he stays curled up in a sheet so that I can’t see him.”

“He’s prideful.”

_I can remember thinking he needed be humbled somehow, but this was not what I had in mind. Heats are a natural occurrence, even if they are stigmatized and fetishized at times._

“Too much so. He’d rather endure quietly and hurt himself doing so than come off as delicate.”

_I understand this is Japan, that his culture has affected him in ways that I cannot ever fully wrap my head around—no, it's more than that. It's him, it's the way he is specifically, some ideal he has for himself, but his negligence is verging on self-harm._

“He does not consider asking for help to be a viable option.”

The wording halted his own reverie abruptly, part of him immediately understanding the implications and the other part immediately denying it as an option. He lifted his teeth his thumb, narrowing his eyes at Quillish in irritation.

“…Are you trying to say you think I should help him?”

The question was more of a grumbled accusation than he’d meant for it to be. Or perhaps not. He begrudged the man for even bringing it up (when it was not even really a possibility) as if he hadn’t been talking the Alpha part of him out of every second since Light had walked in reeking of that unadulterated sweetness—

“I’m saying you made a mistake and someone else is paying for it.” Quillish did not even blink at his lashing out. He was more Alpha today than he wanted to be, perhaps more than he’d ever been. It was infuriating himself, so he couldn’t even imagine what it was like for the elderly Omega. “You should make efforts to correct it, as I’ve taught you, and in the event you cannot, at least make the suffering more bearable.”

“You don’t think I want to?”
L pulled his thumb away briefly, giving the flesh there a momentary reprieve.

“Even if he begged me, which he very well might in his state, I couldn’t. Consent must be given prior to the onset of heat or else it is invalid—it may not be a law that is enforced the amount it should be given how difficult it can be to prove, but it’s not one that I find any fault with.”

Watari let him get that out of his system, patronizing him with his patience like he had since he was a child.

“And, in case you’ve forgotten, I was illegally detaining him less than forty-eight hours ago. What makes you think he would want my help?”

As if he hadn’t thought about it. As if being attracted to Beta Light Yagami and Kira Suspect hadn’t been difficult enough, when he’d learned of his gender even the primal part of him had turned its head. Light was beautiful, in a way that was intimidating and irritating in its flawlessness, and there had been a time where he’d found himself hoping that his suppressants failed, that Light was forced to be himself for once in his counterfeit life.

After seeing Light practically break down the day before at his discovery, he found his own former hopes unnecessarily cruel. He admitted that seeing Light’s perfection tainted in any way gave him satisfaction, like seeing the blood splatter and his hair ruffled that day at the courthouse, but to see him actually suffer? To hear that panicked laugh when he’d realized why L was trying to get him out of the room, when Aizawa had dared to say a single word to him—

“Don’t misunderstand me, L. He needs your assistance. Just smelling you up close will help ease the distress that his body is going through.”

Trick the Omega in him into thinking there’s a potential mate in the room. It’s certainly a possibility, but—

“You trust me in there with him?” L inquired, with as much nonchalance in his tone as he could manage. It bothered him that he doubted himself, but the man on the other side of the wall was as intelligent as he was beautiful, a challenging personality and a friend the likes of which L doubted he would ever have the opportunity to have again.

He’d kept his cool in the presence of Omegas in heat before. However much society liked to excuse
Alphas as beasts that could not control their own libidos, that was never truly the case. It was difficult (L was starting to have an appreciation for how very difficult it could be) but not impossible, especially when taking advantage just couldn’t morally be considered one of the viable choices.

“You’ve never allowed your biology to rule your head before.” Quillish’s voice was softer now, as were the lines around his eyes. “I trust you implicitly.”

L’s thumb was back at his mouth again, and he didn’t quite remember putting it back. He might very break the skin at some point, at this point his teeth worrying the skin there out of stress more than habit. His eyes flickered over to the door that his caretaker still stood beside.

“Light-kun does not.”

It was true, of course, how could he? L had never asked for anyone to trust him before; if Quillish considered him trustworthy it was not because L had ever asked for him to. The man simply agreed with his logic, with his methods, and possibly loved him enough to have faith in his choices.

Light did not love him, didn’t even like him currently, and he had every right not to.

The man before him tilted his head slightly, shifting his hold on the bundle of sheets that he had in his arms and then heaving a deep sigh. No doubt he was surprised and concerned with the amount of insecurity that L was showing. It wasn’t like him, but this situation was unlike anything he had ever before encountered and Light was unlike any person he had ever met.

Finally, Quillish imparted his wisdom on him with enough certainty for the both of them.

“Prove to him that he can then.”

He left directly after, leaving L to stew in the complexity of his own emotions and lament on his ordeal. He might ruin everything, even if he did everything perfectly. No doubt Light would abhor him just for being there, just for seeing him in the state he was surely in, for smelling like an Alpha alone. He had hoped, somewhere in the less often tread parts of his mind, that it was only a matter of time before something escalated. Perhaps it had been arrogant of him, but no, Light hadn’t denied it when he’d brought it up during confinement. He’d felt something, even if his issues with his second gender had not allowed him to admit it at the time.
But then, there was a blatant selfishness to the idea of letting Light stay in agony simply because even entering the room might mean the younger man would never look at him with anything but distaste again. As pretty as it had been back when he’d punched him, L wanted far more from him than his contempt.

It wasn’t the course of action that he had decided on when Light had first disappeared into the room. The idea of touching him while he was out of his mind with hormones was not one that he could stomach even under a guise of helping him and so—he wouldn’t. He’d held him in his arms for nearly a full minute and it had been lovely, especially when he’d curled into him, tried to press his face into his chest, had clutched his shirt even after he’d said moments before not to touch him.

The contrast was very close to heart wrenching, but L had to respect it; he could not just disregard Light’s desires. Even if it wasn’t healthy, even if it didn’t seem to be making him happy, it did seem to be what Light wanted.

It was another twenty minutes before L had convinced himself he was ready to attempt it. He took a handful of gummy suppressants, stuffed them in his mouth, chewed and then washed them down with the last of new cup of tea. He then proceeded to take two tissues and stuff them up his nostrils so that there was no way that even suppressants could fail in the face of that powerful scent that was meant to compel him to mate.

He talked himself logically through the actions he was about to take one more time, trying to mentally prepare himself for the sight that might lie beyond because if it was anything like the smell —

L gave himself ten more seconds to gather his wits and latch the lock on his inhibitions, then pushed the door open before he could second guess himself.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I had to split this up into two chapters, as it was getting a bit too long and I wanted to post tonight. The next one will also be in L’s POV. After that, we’ll get more of Light’s POV for a few chapters.

The next chapter will have explicit content. You’ve been warned—and teased.

Thank you so much for all of your reviews. I’m excited to hear what you think about all the reveals in this chapter (with Mello, Near and Matt). I know not much happened in this chapter, but there’s information and such, so I hope it wasn’t a letdown after how intense the last one was. There will be a lot of ‘aftermath of Light’s reveal’ stuff happening in the following chapters.
Thank you!

-Nilah
“But when one does not complain, and when one wants to master oneself with a tyrant’s grip — one’s faculties rise in revolt — and one pays for outward calm with an almost unbearable inner struggle.” - Charlotte Brontë

The silhouette of Light on the bed was only recognizable in the dark room because of the streaks of moonlight that managed to peek through the curtains. The white sheets that were pulled around his figure outlined every curve and contour of him, facing away and scrunched up beneath the fabric. He could see the fall of his hair against the pillow, the curve of his cheek, but he had his back to him now though L was fairly sure he was awake.

He breathed in deeply through his mouth when the door was shut and found that he could still think, which was definitely a plus.

The Omega before him was between peaks; that much he could see, simply because he wasn’t squirming relentlessly in the bed. It was probably for the best, as even just seeing him like this, curled up tight and hiding, made him want to gather the younger man up in his arms.

The thought was cut off when Light shifted, tilting his head back over his shoulder and glowering from beneath a curtain of long hair, disheveled and damp with perspiration. Those eyes were bright despite the darkness, picking up specs of light as it came in streams through the window, and there was exhaustion behind them, but also clarity.

The hand that had been strangling his insides seemed to release somewhat, glad to find that Light was still himself for the moment. He’d come at a good time then, before the feral part of his heat took over once again. Those eyes narrowed, seeming to hone in on L’s mouth and he was only then reminded how he must look, with the tissues stuffed into his nose to keep from smelling him.

“You… look… ridiculous.”
If Light was going for biting, it didn’t quite work for him. There was a scratch to his voice, he seemed to be breathless and strained with every word, though he seemed almost amused by his display.

It pleased L that he’d managed to thwart Light’s outrage at his entry with the absurdity of the tissues that were stuffed up his nostrils. It was for a purpose, certainly, and was visible proof that he had no intentions of scenting him, of letting the Alpha in him get too ahead of itself.

“You don’t.”

It seemed to take the man a minute to register what L meant by that, but when he did –you don’t look ridiculous—

He immediately turned his head back away so that L could once again only see the back of him, the sheets pulling tighter still against the line of his shoulder blades.

“Shut up. Don’t say things like that. Don’t look at me.”

“…I won’t then,” L agreed immediately, doing everything in his power not to question the request. It wasn’t fair of him and he knew it. He could at least make an attempt at mature behavior, even if it didn’t come naturally to him. “…if that’s what you want.”

“That’s what I want.”

L was quiet for a long moment, before taking a quiet step closer. Light hadn’t told him to get out, after all, but he was careful just the same. He rolled his shoulders, took another step and managed to draw himself close enough to the bed to press a knee to it, shifting his weight onto the knee and watching for any change in Light’s demeanor. He was clearly coherent for the time being.

There was no move to turn back around, but Light tensed visibly. The reaction made L cringe, though he understood it was justifiable. Although he had not had the opportunity to experience any prejudice himself (yet, L reminded himself in the back of his mind), Light had likely seen Alphas react to the scent of heat in numerous unpleasant ways.

“Did you come here just to make it worse?” Light demanded, only pressing his face further into the mattress. “The way you smell is messing with my head.”
A hot coal dropped into the pit of his stomach at the idea that he was affecting Light to any degree. It was idiotic, he knew, because the entire point of this was for his scent to mess with Light's head in a way that would help.

“I apologize.”

“Do you?” Light scoffed, but there was no power behind it. He didn’t have the energy to be truly fearsome at the moment, it seemed. “For that? Of all the things you have to apologize to me for?”

“For several things,” L admitted reluctantly. He did not enjoy apologizing, not in the slightest, but he wanted Light to forgive him and he supposed the best way to do that would be to ask for it. He didn’t typically make mistakes and Watari was right—Light was suffering for it. “If I decided to apologize to you for everything I am to blame for, we’d be here all night.”

“I am going to be here all night.” He sounded so tired. Light’s shoulders drooped and L wanted to wrap his arm around them at the sight. To pull that back against his chest and whisper to him through the worst of it.

“…I intend to be as well.” L informed him in a gentle voice as seated himself carefully on the edge of the bed and watched the bundle beneath the sheets stiffen even further. He’d already opened his mouth to explain, but Light’s shoulders drew back up sharply, and the apprehension he must have at the idea of L there, with him, on the bed was saddening as well as infuriating.

Just like it had when Soichiro had suggested he wasn’t safe to leave with his son. Perhaps he’d spoken out of turn, embarrassing Light unnecessarily, but he’d wanted to push back at the man’s father for bringing it up. L was sure he hadn’t been thinking straight after realizing the lengths his son had gone to keep his secret, but it had been no less aggravating, to assume that his natural state was that of an assailant, one who might lose his mind should he smell something particularly inviting.

As if he would ever—

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” There was anger in his voice, but also apprehension. While he’d never been great at soothing the former, L immediately moved to assuage the latter.

“I’m not going to touch you.”
There was a significant pause, but when Light spoke up again he was still doubtful. “…Right.”

“I will not touch you, Light-kun,” L repeated again firmly, with no hint of sway in his voice even though he could almost taste the man when he breathed through his mouth. “We’ll trick your biology into believing you have a mate. I’ll stay close, to help with anything you might need—you’re still weak.”

“Thanks to you.”

“Hardly the point.”

“What is the point?”

“That I want to help you and you need me to.” As he clarified, he shifted closer on the bed, still cautiously moving closer so that he wouldn’t upset the man. Light didn’t relax, but he didn’t tense anymore either. “Let me help.”

It took a minute before L was settled behind the man, curled up on his side, mimicking Light’s fetal position just behind him. He was a handful of inches away, his plugged nose barely a foot away from the back of Light’s neck. The sheets were pulled up further so that he couldn’t see, which L quietly appreciated. Even just looking at the expanse of smooth skin at the nape was enough to make him want to press his mouth against it.

Yes, it was probably good for him not to see something as tempting as Light’s neck. Even without the connotations of their genders and biting and mating, the younger man had a truly lovely neck.

L was quiet for a long moment before he finally asked, “Is this alright?”

“I’m not made of glass,” Light snapped, the scowl obvious in his tone even with how tired he sounded. He should sleep, but L doubted it was as easy as that with everything his body was processing.

L frowned. “It’s not like you to speak in clichés.”
“It’s not like you to treat me as if I can’t take care of myself.”

No, L agreed quietly, realizing his own bias. He had wanted to take care of him, ever since he’d realized, but that was a notion that annoyed even him. He was not a slave to his own gender, but it was difficult to tell the difference when his mind wanted to press Light to the nearest surface and the Alpha in him wanted to press Light to the nearest surface—

“I’m well aware that you can take care of yourself under usual circumstances and that you are not ‘made of glass’, Light-kun. Though you sometimes appear to be made of marble, you are flesh and blood.”

Light gave a quiet sound of derision, but before he could interrupt, L continued.

“But all things are breakable, and glass does not have a monopoly on being handled with respect.” L could practically feel the other man rolling his eyes at him.

“Is this the part where you try to respectfully fuck me?”

_That again._ L ground his teeth together and looked at the ceiling, praying for patience and take another deep breath through his mouth. The mere mention of fucking Light was more appealing than he felt entirely comfortable with for the moment, because he was so impossibly close he could feel the warmth radiating off of him.

If he could just touch him—

“I will not. ” L ground out, enunciating clearly. “Not even if you ask me to.”

He didn’t bother saying beg. It was implied, considering the state he’d be in when the next wave it him. L shuddered and mentally prepared himself for the sound of Light pleading with him, blinking hard to clear the vision from his mind. Plugging his ears and wearing a blindfold would be a little excessive.

He was safe in the privacy of his mind; he could imagine how smooth Light’s skin was, how it might taste in the crook of his neck just below his scent gland. L was allowed his fantasies, as long as he
kept them to himself and didn’t try to act on them. This wasn’t about him. It was a testimony to Light’s fatigue that he hadn’t shouted at him to leave just yet. If what Quillish had said was accurate, then he hadn’t been getting much sleep—just a couple hours at a time before he was ripped awake by the force of a need that couldn’t be satiated.

Finally, Light replied with a tentative statement, strained with tiredness. It was almost a question, but not quite; his tone went down at the end rather than up, an uncertain hopefulness there that had L’s chest aching.

“…And you won’t look.”

“You can stay in that very position.” He confirmed this quickly, quietly, afraid if he spoke too loudly Light would be reminded who he was and what he’d done. “Whatever you feel is appropriate.”

“None of this appropriate.”

And that was the root of it all, wasn’t it? Light cared more than anything about what was proper, about how he was perceived by onlookers, how he looked, which was why his stipulation was that L not even try to see him as he was, when he was like this. It was why he’d hid his involvement in the sentencing hearings from his father and coworkers despite believing wholeheartedly that he was in the right. It was why he apologized even when he had done nothing wrong, or at least felt no fault could be placed on him. It was why he smiled when he didn’t mean it, and why those true grins were hidden away.

He’d grown so comfortable in his act that anything genuine at all seemed like an invasion. What was more telling, more real, more visceral and unavoidably honest than heat?

Yet L had seen flickers of him. The flash of anger when he’d struck him and the laugh in the tennis court, in the acerbity he seemed to save for L alone. There was a certain vindictiveness to him, Light’s true self, one that he never allowed himself to show except in times of distress. Light Yagami was not a good person—not Kira, perhaps—but not a man like Soichiro or Matsuda.

No, not good, but fascinating and tragic and more beautiful than any one person should have the gall to be.

“But it’s…” His voice was fading, slurring slightly with lethargy, almost a mumble at the end. “Better than… how it’s been.”
“Light,” L spoke lowly, dropping the honorary for now. It seemed too cutesy for the moment. He doubted Light conscious enough to remember it anyway. “You should sleep.”

“Can’t, I’ve…tried, can’t relax.”

*No, that’s true. The tension in your shoulders wasn’t just put there by me, was it? Your body is torturing you.*

“Here.”

In a swift motion, L sat up and grabbed back of his shirt by the collar. He tugged it over his head and off of his arms, then tossed it unceremoniously over Light’s form.

“Go on,” he encouraged as he settled back into place. “If you breathe me in, it’ll help.”

There was a moment of indecision, but L could hear him gather the fabric and inhale in deeply, and it did something to his own nature just to hear it. He wanted Light against him, breathing in his scent from the source, but it was a ridiculous notion and he knew it even as it circulated in his head. He repeated ‘do not touch’ silently in every language that he knew, which took at least a full minute.

“Your body will think you’re being protected by an Alpha and it’ll let you get some rest.”

It was redundant to say so. Light no doubt knew how it could be beneficial, or else he wouldn’t have taken his shirt in the first place. L was speaking now more for himself, so that he didn’t grow too fond of the curve of Light’s shoulders or the fall of his hair on the pillow.

There was a final nearly inaudible mutter before the tension started to leak out of Light’s form—something that L thought might have been ‘not quite a lie, is it?’, but he wrote it off as wishful thinking.

It was nearly a half hour of simply watching the back of the other while he slept before his eyelids started growing heavy. L had been without sleep for even longer than Light, and was starting to feel the wear and tear of it himself. While he didn’t need a great deal of sleep, something he’d proven time and time again to the younger man, he was indeed a human being that required at least some
recharging time. His scent had put the officer out quickly, he’d even go so far as to say he is slumber seemed peaceful, and so L decided to attempt some sort of nap before the next wave started.

Doing so was somewhat difficult with the tissues stuffed up his nose, as he was not generally a mouth breather, but he supposed he’d gotten to sleep with a head cold before. He did manage eventually, letting himself be lulled to sleep by the shift of the sheets draped over the figure in front of him with every shallow breath that rose and fell.

He awoke to a soft whimper.

His eyelids didn’t quite want to pull apart, but when he looked at the clock he saw that four hours had passed since Light had first fallen asleep in front of him. That was longer than Quillish had said the other breaks were, so he could only assume that the scent was doing some good. Even so, the boy was only little more than a day into his heat and nothing could stop it from running its course.

Propping himself up on his elbow, L look in the frame of the other, restless and still turned stubbornly away even in sleep. Dragging his eyes down further, L’s eyes caught sight of a darkness in the sheets that could have been a shadow save for the placement.

No, not a shadow. It was pooling out from the area around Light’s hips, spreading as the other trembled and gave small groans of discomfort. L wasn’t even sure he was fully awake, but it was starting—had been starting, building, if the absolutely ungodly amount of slick that was soaking the sheets was anything to go by.

_Have mercy._

He hadn’t known it was possible to feel his eyes dilate. Even without the scent of him he felt his vision blur with the sheer force of the arousal that swept over him. Warmth was amalgamating in his hips, building there and nudging the parts of his brain that he was doing his best to keep under wraps.

The shifts grew more urgent as the minutes ticked on, until there wasn’t a minute that passed without Light making some sort of strained sound, or moving back as if to get closer to him. L was close, letting him feel his warmth and know his presence. While he wanted with everything in him to turn him around and cover him completely, he hesitated to even do so much as straighten the sheets so that they covered the sliver of leg that was beginning to peek out at him.
“Ry—nh.” The sound was pitiful and L’s entire torso seemed to contract at the sound. “Ryu—“

He couldn’t finish the alias; it ended with a hitch of breath and a delicious squirm. It wasn’t his name, not really, but for all practical purpose Light was calling for him and in an instant L was there.

At his back, his nose in his hair, pressing as close as he could manage without pressing his hips to the Omega’s backside, and wrapping an arm around his waist to fit him snug there. He couldn’t quite remember the motions that took place to get him there, but Light’s entire body seemed to meld against his front like it was good, he didn’t hate it, so he didn’t move to back away just yet.

“I’m here.” He didn’t quite recognize his own voice, even lower than normal and entirely more assured than he felt, nerves bubbling in his chest as he realized how close he was. The position, the angle of his mouth just inches away, just a shift from putting it to the side of his throat. “Alright?”

Alright in general? Alright with the way I’m holding you? Alright with anything at all, really, just talk to me—

The contact seemed to have given Light mental purchase, and he moved his own hand to pull L’s arm where he wanted it, keeping his palm against a bundle of sheets so that they had no risk of slipping inside and meeting skin. Once L was in place, he took his hand away and moved them back to wherever they were holding onto the sheets.

“Yeah, just…don’t—“ A shiver raked through him and he was pressing further back into the hard plane of his chest. L raked his teeth over his tongue hard, trying to keep his mind focused and giving himself just enough pain to do so. “Just be…don’t look, don’t—don’t touch.”

Don’t, don’t, don’t. You’re still apprehensive about it, aren’t you? I won’t do anything else, but I can’t be faulted just for holding you, can I? It makes it better, makes it hurt less, and I could certainly stand to make things easier on you for a change.

“I wouldn’t think of it,” L assured him quietly, without hesitation.

A little laugh broke to pieces in Light’s mouth and L wanted to kiss it back together.

“Are you certain of that?”
The wording could have been playful, but L wasn’t going to take any chances when everyone seemed to think he was in this to sate his own senseless biology and nothing else. His mood darkened and he leaned in, just for a moment, just enough so that his lips brushed the shell of Light’s ear, no, not even the skin, just the little peach hairs that lined the edge.

“…Let me rephrase.”

*Because apparently I have not been clear enough.*

“I wouldn’t think of it, not while you’re in this state, *not* without discussing it beforehand.”

He shouldn’t say it, he knew he shouldn’t, because he hadn’t even allowed himself to think of the profane things he wanted to do, and saying it to Light made it real and that much harder to crush. But even if he had to work harder later, it was important for him to get it through to him just what he was here for.

“Because when I fuck you, Light, I want every cell of that brilliant mind of yours awake enough to *want* me to.”

The shudder that passed through Light was gratifying, though an almost violent tremor of arousal passing through him as he felt the length of his spine bow delicately. He felt triumphant for the span of seven seconds or so before he realized how arousing Light in his already sensitive state affected him. He hadn’t verbally retorted with embarrassment or malice just yet, which meant he likely couldn’t.

The sound that came out of him was muffled in fabric and L squeeze his eyes shut in order get over the guilt at having brought the intensity up so quickly. He tightened his hold his waist to ease him closer while shifting down as well so that the curvature of Light’s backside didn’t fit quite so perfectly against his hips. L could feel himself throbbing, swelling even in the way that only occurred in Alphas when in the presence of an Omega in heat and it was uncomfortable without any pressure to put him at ease.

“*Shhh.*” It wasn’t quite a hushing sound, though it was disguised as one. It was a tone that he rarely heard in himself, as he was not very good at comfort, one meant to sooth the distraught figure in front of him. He let it fall out of him, for the moment let his own instincts work the stress out of Light’s form and bring him down after his careless digression.
The harsh panting of the young man against him was managing to slow somewhat; L could practically see him as he attempted to collect his own neurons, doing his best to string together consonants and vowels.

“…When,” Light breathed, perhaps over-annunciating somewhat to hide how difficult it was for him to keep the growing desperation at bay. “…not if, hn, arrogant bastard.”

There he is, L found himself thinking with approval. Still in there, even now.

“Not arrogant,” he corrected the other blithely, mimicking a conversation that they’d had ages ago now. “Optimistic.”

“You said optimism is just …” Somewhere along the way, Light must have lost the words. He trailed off, and L heard a small sound of effort, felt the sheets pull as those legs shifted. It wouldn’t be long now. “…a polite g—ghn…guise for arrogance.”

“You must know by now, I’m not very polite, so that can’t be true.” There was a short laugh that dissolved as quickly as it formed; his resolve was crumbling, sand in clumsy fingers.

A bead of sweat trickled over Light’s temple and L realized he’d never moved away from his ear. He wanted to taste it, wanted to follow the line it made back up to his damp hairline and then work his way back down to his neck—

Oh no, not the train of thought we want to ride when he’s pressed against you.

L ducked his head, pressed his forehead to the nape of Light’s neck and shut his eyes tightly to keep out the visions. He didn’t need to thinking about how warm he was in his arms, or how every minute that ticked by he could hear him becoming more and more nonsensical. The things that came out of his mouth were smothered by the pillow but they grew more pained, until not even L’s reassuring sounds in his ear and the tightening of his arms could help.

He was still quiet, so quiet, and L couldn’t see how he was managing that —he’d promised not to look— but it was worrisome. It also irked a vulgar part of his brain that knew that the sounds Omegas made were supposed to alert Alphas to their wellbeing and Light was hiding them like he was—
Ashamed. Well, of course he was, that was obvious. He was ashamed of it all, every part of his being, perhaps even more than the Omega was to blame for. Even if L managed to keep on his best behavior through this entire interaction, Light would always resent him for being there to witness him falling apart.

And hell, was he falling apart. His nails scratched at the sheets and his legs shifted, tried to find some modicum of comfort, but there was none.

“Light, tell me what it is. I can’t help if you don’t give me a hint.”

More space, less space, more warmth, or was it too hot?

The lean form in his hold tensed, shook and L felt the spasm that passed through him as he seized and heard the swallowed cry. It ripped at his insides.

“Talk to me,” He pressed in a whisper, pressing his mouth to the shoulder before him but only to the sheet, not the skin, not the skin, he swore he wouldn’t touch and he wouldn’t, for the love of god, he wouldn’t.

“I—“

The stammered first attempt was cut off again as Light once more dove into the safety of the pillow to hide. L could hear the subdued noise of distress in the back of his throat but he was probably biting the sheets again to keep himself from being heard any more than necessary.

It made a sadistic part of him want to take the pillow away from him, because L realized he’d be loud. God, the thought was like a fist to the stomach, and if he hadn’t been pressed so tightly to Light’s back he might have doubled over with the sheer force of the arousal at the thought.

*If you didn’t have the sheets there to stop you—*

*No, no, no. Those ideas aren’t for now. Keep your head clear and focus.*
“—hurts…”

The word pulled at his ribs, had him wanting to curl tightly around the man, make this timid spooning position tight and press his erection to the curve of his ass to show him what he was missing, how he could have filled him if he could just let himself—

L took a step back from himself. This was getting out of hand. The thoughts came too quickly, even after the suppressants, even though he couldn’t smell him.

Breathe. Don’t give him another reason to hate you.

“Where does it hurt?” L asked, mostly for himself, to wrap his head around the idea that Light was in pain and that any fantasies he had were in bad taste.

“It…f—hngh…” A puling sound cut off his attempt at expressing anything articulately.

“Inside?”

There was a long hesitation, full of heavy, stuttering breaths as he tried to cling to some semblance of his usual verbosity. There was none left in him, apparently, because instead all L received was the shifting of his hair as he nodded.

Yes, he’d figured as much. He knew enough about Omegan biology to know that there was a point when his insides would ache, when his walls would clench at nothing. He couldn’t know how the yearning must feel, but if it was causing Light to languish in such a way then it was likely insufferable. This was, after all, the boy that had grit his teeth and bore with endless hours of confinement as an innocent, had sworn he was fine even after his arms had gone numb in their restraints.

“Where is it? Have you used it at all?” He couldn’t bring himself to describe the toy, and he didn’t feel it needed description. “It will help.”

“I…can’t, I couldn’t…”
“Your arms,” L confirmed softly, and deduced that it was somewhere under the sheets. If Light’s arms had given out halfway through — he would not allow himself to picture it — then it had been abandoned nearby.

He slowly pried himself away from the unsettled figure, which only had Light making another sound of discontent, still ever so low and restrained. His reassurance that he would be right back caught in his throat when he indeed saw the toy, half hidden in a pile of sheets that had been kicked off of Light’s long legs. He was rather torn for a moment which of the two to look at, but after a moment he plucked up the device by the grip.

It was plain, slightly curved and small as far as Omega toys usually went (the sheer size of the majority of them was almost menacing, but Quillish was used to buying them for teenagers) yet long enough to have a handle so that the angle one had to hold it wasn’t too awkward. It was simple, seamless and not meant to be the true approximation of a penis, meant entirely for smooth entry — none of the fancy fake-knot additions or hyperrealism, though it did seem to have a dial that L could only assume was for the purpose of vibration.

It was still shining with slick and L was… glad the man wasn’t so proud as to not have tried it at all, he’d attempted —

Fuck, he wanted to taste.

Instead, he moved easily back into place behind the man, this time grasping the closest hand that was in the sheets, and pulling it free, only to put the toy into his palm and curl his quivering, white-knuckled fingers around the base. He took a deep breath, blinking hard to get the image out of his mind, to no avail.

“Try again,” he told Light, and was going for tame but it ended up going out deeper than he’d quite meant for it too, with an edge that was very nearly a purr. L released his hand and closed his eyes as that hand started to shift beneath the sheets and behind, in between them. He set his mind on a dozen different equations just so he didn’t actively hear the wet sound of it going in.

He only opened his eyes when he heard a sweet noise, the first one that didn’t seem to be on the cusp of panic, though it was still being hidden in the pillow.

Just as quickly as the relief seemed to come, however, it was taken away. His arm began to shake beneath the sheet that was pulled over it and a frustrated little cry was bitten into the fabric of the sheets.
“Hnhh…can’t, can’t—“

It was almost a chant, defeated and afraid it was the truth, that he couldn’t and it was over. But L couldn’t let him suffer this, not while he was here, but he also couldn’t touch him. Would not, refused to, and wanted to, absolutely.

L followed the line of his arm, watched it wobble and threaten to give out, eyes blurring over with want at the idea. He felt his tongue against his lips, heard his breathing deepen, and couldn’t quite remember the trek his hand had taken to get from where it had started at Light’s shoulder and down. His fingers slid over his wrist through the soft sheet and finally felt the slim digits where they gripped it.

“It’s alright,” He felt himself whisper, closing his grasp over the sheet’s, over Light’s and then following the angle as he pushed just so, just enough to feel flesh give way even through the barriers.

“Oh –g-ghn—!”

Yet again Light turned his face into the pillow and let his cry die there as he helped him sink the inches inside, offering whatever relief he could. His own body locked up at the feeling, desire blossoming in his hips and chest alike. Those shoulders heaved, the fingers beneath his own twitched and his hips tilted up into it, and yes, that was just perfect. All of it was, every motion and sound Light made, no matter how reserved was so entirely him in that moment; it was very nearly overwhelming to be a part of.

It was slow, so very slow, perhaps even more so than it had to be. He was slippery all the way, every inch moving without resistance; even when L felt the toy twitch with a convulsion of muscles it only seemed to be in order to draw it deeper.

L’s hand shook when he reached the hilt, his knuckles brushing the curve of his ass, the sheet absolutely drenched with his slick at this point, and he couldn’t touch or look or—

Breathe.

It took a moment for him to swallow down the rumble of sound that wanted to escape him, and he was lucky that noise Light made as loud enough to cover it. It was a whine, sharp and overwhelmed, and he felt Light shake against his chest, curling up more tightly as if he were shying away from the depth.
A pulse of uncertainty grasped him. “Does it hurt?”

Light didn’t respond, just breathed in that pitiful way of his and seemed to wind tighter over himself, a strangled noise in the back of his throat that L could not discern.

“It hurts,” L confirmed, starting to gently retract it and the sound it made was unholy, the wetness being displaced yet again as the device started to slide out. “I see, I’ll just—“

“Nuh—“

Light barely got the words out before his hips were bucking, a desperate little motion that drew the toy even deeper than before. L bit his tongue hard to stop from groaning. Again, Light’s own sweet moan outmatched him and L watched the tautness in his shoulder blades, felt his legs shift on the mattress and the sound of his pillow giving as his head hit it sharply, unable to keep still.

Ah, no, it didn’t hurt then. Not at all. The opposite, L deduced. He couldn’t bring himself to ask for it.

“…I understand.” He murmured, then made a lazy circular motion with his wrist to gradually rotate the tip of the toy over his prostate.

God, the Omega’s back arched severely and L could hear his nails on the sheets and he wanted hold him. Light’s legs trembled, squeezed together as if the pleasure was too much, and he couldn’t help but be stunned by the responses he was pulling out of him with so very little. The breath was knocked out of him, and it was probably a good thing, because when Light’s slick started to permeate the fabric and began to coat his fingers, he thought he might go blind with the intensity of his need.

There was nothing to do but ignore it and give Light the reprieve he needed, he deserved. He pulled just an inch and then pressed back in a fluid motion and savored every twitch, every muffled little cry.

He wondered if Light were not biting down so hard on the sheets, if he might beg to be knotted. And oh, that wasn’t a good thought, no, that wasn’t calming at all. L could feel his own bulging painfully at the base of his length, aching to be buried deep, but that just wasn’t meant to be. Not now, not yet, perhaps not ever.
Carefully, experimenting with every motion, L pressed it deeper and twisted it just so—

“Oh, f—ngnnn.”

One of those trembling fists hit the mattress hard and the moan that came along with it was high strung, the curse half formed and nearly a sob. Those long legs were curled up, but L could feel them as one started to straighten out reflexively as though to climb away from the sensations, and L wanted to take a hold of the upper most thigh and spread him open, show him how much better, how much deeper it could get if he just let himself go. Every muscle in the Omega before him was growing taut, warmth radiating off of him. L wanted so badly in that moment to feel how soft his skin was, wanted to trail his fingers over the sweat that formed beneath his ribcage, then his tongue—

“There?” He inquired breathlessly, as he pressed in again, memorizing the placement of his prostate, never pulling out more than an inch or two, giving him just enough friction with each movement.

His answer came in the form of the Omega’s orgasm, which seemed had him shuddering and gasping and scrambling at the sheets as if they might contain the particles of the mind he was losing.

L had barely done anything to him, just a series of soft thrusts and grinding the tip in clever, well-placed motions. Light choked on a strangled keen and L thought he saw white himself when he felt the muscles clamp on the device as he shattered before him, those hips rocking back to ride it out in the most delectable, unobtrusively needy fashion.

What he wouldn’t give to see it, to watch more than just his ears turn red, to see his brow furrow and those lovely eyes glass over. It was exquisite, every spasm and breath; it was burned into his mind.

Gingerly, L released his grip and let Light remove it as he liked, and before long he was watching the tension drain from Light’s frame yet again. The panting settled and after a moment, L thought he saw a hand curling around the shirt he’d sacrificed to him, pulling it close. Sated for now, his body seemed desperate for more sleep after approximately an hour of stress, and L distracted himself with the streaks of moonlight in his hair rather than think about how much he wanted to take his own fingers to his mouth and lick the remnants of Light’s arousal away.

L slipped out of bed to wash his own troubles away, as he ached from the constant physical and mental limitations he had put upon himself. He showered until the heat worked the stiffness away and took himself in hand before the next wave assaulted them both.
A/N: There we have it. Hopefully that didn’t disappoint any of you—I’m pretty proud of it, actually.

It's been brought to my attention that some might take the scene above as "Mild Dubious Consent". While I don't completely agree that this is dubious consent, I want to be safe and put this here as an apology to those that do. I feel as though I did everything possible to make clear that he only helped when not doing so would be pretty much negligence. However, I do understand where the logic is coming from. I meant for it to come across as a necessity, something almost clinical (despite L enjoying his reactions, he completely ignores his own arousal for the sake of procedure) and meant only for furthering Light's health.

Let me know what your favorite parts were—lines, dialogue, moments, actions?
Some moments were more vibrant than others; some passed by in horrible blurs of suffocating warmth and discomfort and others were sharp, poignant and unavoidable. The cramps in his stomach just before the onset of a new wave were bearable, those he could handle, but when his insides clamped and convulsed and punished him for not having a knot inside him, that was where the true horror lie.

He was so excruciatingly empty. It was as though his entire body was grasping at the edge of a cliff, terrified of the fall but unable to get a grip. He ached so acutely, deep into the muscle, and even though he’d never known that fullness before, his entire being knew for certain what he would need to satisfy him. It was crude and messy, slick drenching the sheets more than he remembered even the first time. The suppressants had done their job, but now that they were no longer there to protect him; his body was ravaging him with hormones to make up for years without.

All that seemed to calm him was L’s scent, when he held the shirt to his nose, telling the Omegan part of him that his Alpha was there and that it was fine, that it would all be fine—

When clarity came in those minutes between, when he managed to sleep and breath and eat freely, he wanted to scream at ever having told himself that anyone was his Alpha. The concept was one that he’d fought since the moment he’d discovered what he was, the absolute dependence that it implied, as if he might need anyone.

But then, he went back down the spiraling road and repeated the entire process anew, a blur of gasping pleas that he smothered in the pillow. He loathed how easily it came to him, everything from the way his hips worked down onto the toy, how right being opened up in that way felt, how even just L putting an arm around him had felt like fragments of a broken world falling into place.

“I’m here.”

Reality had stilled and he’d been allowed to breathe again.

Sometimes his mind was intact enough to realize how he must look, must sound, when he bucked and whimpered and did everything in his limited power to ride back onto the device as the older man held it for him. Other times, all he knew was sensation, pleasure and never ending need, only by grace of the sheets between his teeth able stop himself from begging fuck me, fuck me, please, for the love of god, I’ll die—
Hours and days passed, though he couldn’t be sure exactly how many, and it wasn’t just an endless repetition either. The first time the wave built up slowly over the course of half an hour or so, climbing until he’d finally climaxed, then dissipating almost immediately. At some point he woke up in the midst of it, full force and relentless and grinding back against the detective that held him in frenzied motions even while he clutched at the pillow.

That one hadn’t been sated after the first orgasm. He’d spilled into the sheets and had had still been hard and frantic, which the other man hadn’t been expecting. Light remembered rocking onto the toy, trying to take more, remembered it not feeling like enough, worked up for several minutes of sweaty writhing and slurred begging for those rare moments were his jaw wasn’t snapped shut.

“More, more, I need, I—can’t, so—“

They were still spoken into the fabric, the Omega part of him never quite overruling his need to obstruct his own image, but the words fell out of him just the same. Light thought L might have voiced the suggestion, but he couldn’t quite remember how that had gone, just that the word ‘yes’ had felt good on his tongue and had spilled out more times than he could count.

The vibrations on his prostate had been too much. He vaguely remembered weeping and jerking almost violently at the onslaught of pleasure, kicking in L’s hold and the sound of tearing fabric either in his teeth before it had stilled.

“Shh, bad idea, we won’t try that anymore, just –like this. Good?“

It had been, and Light had rolled his hips and whined in the back of his throat until the second one shuddered out of him, rippling warmly until he was put to sleep yet again.

From time to time Watari would come with snacks, water, mild pain pills, and clean sheets, and during those times L would excuse himself to the restroom. Light would peel himself out of the sticky sheets and wrap himself in a new one, appreciating Watari’s near-medical attitude despite how embarrassing it was otherwise. He managed a shower here and there when he wasn’t sleeping, but they were superfluous considering what within a matter of hours he was coated with sweat and slick all over again.

The time between heats seemed to be getting more reasonable, though he rarely had the clarity to check the time so he couldn’t be sure. At some point, L informed him that it had been four days since the onset, and Light had felt relief at the notion that it could be half over.

There were three more peaks before the fourth day was over. He ate, slept, and showered. Watari came and went and he slept with L at his back. He didn’t hold him until it was crucial, when Light’s mouth tried to wrap itself around his pseudonym and failed, but he was never more than a few feet from him in the bed.

He awoke one what he believed might be the sixth day feeling lethargic and feeling the very beginnings of arousal stirring in his core. Light also felt disgusting, as the last wave had been the worst of them all. He’d wanted to scream when his second climax hadn’t brought him nearly enough relief, exhaustion making his mind raw and draining his frame of energy until he was spent beyond anything he’d ever felt before. He’d though the need would consume him entirely, and for a while he felt as though who he was no longer existed, just this twisting ball of tormented desire.

The third time hadn’t even felt good on any level, he’d been so hypersensitive and overtired. He’d lost consciousness before the aftermath of his orgasm had completely left his system, listening to the string of low, stupid, perfect nothings coming out of Ryuzaki’s mouth.
Light had never seen L sleep before. He looked vaguely peaceful, younger than he usually did, smelling (good) fresh in the new clothes Watari had brought for him. His hair as still damp from his own shower, which probably hadn’t been too long ago.

He scowled, pulled the sheets around himself and made his way to the bathroom to get a good shower in before the heat took over once more.

This one approached slowly and stayed tender, giving him enough time to get back to bed, and wrap himself in a new sheet. If L was awake, he didn’t decide to make it known, and so Light got back into bed, this time on his back. Being on his side for that long was irritating and he needed a break from the position while he could manage it. He gathered the pillow against his elbow so that L wouldn’t be able to see his face even if he woke up, drawing up his knees and pressing the toy deep, managing the motions entirely by himself this time.

It was slower, softer than any of the waves before it. Almost enjoyable, at least by comparison. It was ages before he managed to finish from the feeble, languid motions, gasping into the fabric and shivering, arching off the mattress as he came against his stomach.

Sleep embraced him that time rather that knocking him out cold, and he thought he felt a hand brushing his own as his eyes slid shut yet again.

He awoke some unknowable amount of time later, with a soreness that seemed to spread down to his bones and through every limb and digit he had. Light’s entire head seemed to pound with a massive headache, he was starving and he didn’t even know if he could push himself up and out of the bed if he tried in that instant, but—

*It’s over.*

He stayed there with eyes clothes for some time as if he was afraid he was wrong, but there was no surprise jolt of heat to sneak up on him. L was still in the room, he could smell him, but he didn’t smell quite as appealing as he had hours before, when all he’d wanted to do was press his face into his neck and drink him in until there was nothing else.

Slowly, Light pushed himself up in bed, his arms still weak but more confident in their strength than they had been before. Heat was exercise in and of itself, which was why he felt like every muscle was strained in the aftermath.

Avoiding looking at the detective in the bed entirely, he pulled the abandoned robe off of the floor and around himself before disappearing into the shower. This one lasted longer than any other, no longer rushing in fear that he would end up stumbling back to bed frantically, humiliating himself all the more.

He started with his hair, running his fingers through it and lathering it with conditioner, kneading his fingers into his scalp to ease the ache that was set behind his eyes and temples. Then he worked his way down, gently scrubbing away the remains of his most recent episode, before switching off the showerhead and letting the tub fill up so that he could soak away the residual tension in his body.

It was nearly an hour before he exited the bathroom, readying himself for some sort of confrontation with L after all of that, only to find that the detective was nowhere to be found. Instead, a fresh set of clothes sat on the bed in his place, leaving Light to dress.

It was almost surreal, stepping out into the parlor of the hotel room, which was brightly lit and completely devoid of people. He entered cautiously, feeling self-conscious walking anywhere without the security of his suppressants. After a moment’s hesitation, the first thing he did was go
over to the coffee station to make himself a cup, as it had been much too long and he craved the taste of something other than water, which was all he’d had for over a month.

He was just stirring in the cream when he heard the door open, though he didn’t bother to look up when he heard it, instead patching together his self-control.

“Good morning, Light-kun.”

For the briefest of moments, Light’s shoulders started to hike up with the rigidity that he had upon L’s initial entrance into the bedroom, but he caught it in himself quickly. He closed his eyes, forced himself to relax, sliding his walls back into place and feeling much better once they were there to protection. He wasn’t himself without them.

“Good morning, Ryuzaki.” Light replied with a level tone, slowly turning around and taking a sip of his coffee once he was facing the man.

Don’t show him anything. The worst is over. Pretend it never happened until you can get alone to think this through. You can’t accomplish anything while he’s here looking at you like that.

The long black tresses were wet again (did he even bother towel drying?) as L had apparently taken to showering in one of the other adjacent rooms. He was gazing at him awkwardly from his position several yards away, hands shoved in the pockets of his jeans.

Don’t think about how he must have heard you try to call for him, or how you couldn’t stop yourself from moving back and enjoying yourself as if—

“Has there been any news on the Kira case?”

L’s brow furrowed, meeting his eyes from across the room in surprise.

“…There is much we have to discuss, actually,” the detective admitted after a pause, where he seemed to be at a loss. “There was a development while you were in confinement. Sit, I’ll show you.”

“I’ll stand, thank you,” Light replied, in an almost upbeat tone that seemed to disconcert the man. Ryuzaki was almost timid in his motions, shuffling passed Light to a computer to pull up whatever it was that Kira had been up do in the last month.

The video made him want to get sick all over again.

Somehow, Kira had known. L was not all powerful; someone had hacked into his system and outed him for the conniving bastard that he was. It might have been funny if it hadn’t been so terrifying.

His fury simmered low and hot in the base of his stomach, but it didn’t ignite anything within him. The world had seem him in that ridiculous position, and that was humiliating, but they also didn’t know who he was. It was possible that someone in the NPA had put Light’s absence together with it, but—

No, he couldn’t think about that now, or else he’d fall apart again. He needed to be rational, now that he had the mind to do so.

Another layer of irritation coated his stomach like bile.

“I see—that can’t have been good for you, or the investigation,” Light commented hollowly. “It hasn’t gotten out that it was me and Amane, has it?”
"No, we’ve gone to great lengths to keep your privacy intact. Misa is over in America somewhere shooting a new film and Kira hasn’t been heard from in a week—though the killings continue as usual. A colleague of mine rebuilt the system from scratch."

"I see—and where is everyone?" He inquired, his demeanor still eerily calm as he took another long sip.

"I had a building built for the purpose of this investigation, as I don’t imagine that it will be ending as swiftly as I’d hoped."

Swiftly? It’s been seven years. Did you really think that it would be so simple, after all this time? Or were you so certain that you’d found Kira in me?

"You had a building built?" Light found himself repeating, eyebrows raising.

L scratched the back of his neck, seemingly sheepish, but his eyes were sharp as they surveyed Light up and down. He was curious and annoyed, it seemed, but Light was quietly content with that.

"It was really no trouble, considering the magnitude of this case."

It was harder than usual, but a smile did finally push up at his cheeks. Treat him like everyone else. Don’t make an issue out of it and it won’t become one.

"That’s impressive dedication, Ryuzaki."

There was a moment of complete quiet, which Light thought seemed out of place. He was about to continue, to say something equally irrelevant and polite just to prove how fine he was.

"Stop that."

It was the most emotive thing to ever come out of L’s mouth in his presence. The only thing he’d heard that might come closer was the tinge of deeply rooted agitation that had been there when he’d told Aizawa that leaving was ‘probably for the best’. This was different, purposeful and more indignation than anger.

Light blinked and responded airily, “I’m afraid I don’t know what you mean.”

"You do," L insisted, taking a step away from the screen that still had a picture of Light and Misa tied up and looking pitiful. A nagging voice in the back of Light’s mind wanted it gone. "That. Speaking to me in that way."

“I apologize if my tone somehow offends you.” Any easy apology, another meaningless banality that would have appeased any ordinary person.

“No, you don’t,” L told him flatly. “I don’t think you ever really apologize, and I don’t want you to.”

What do you want from me? To yell at you? Hit you again? Cry? Scream? Lament about how my life is clearly over and I’m not sure how to salvage the smoking remains? So you can what, hold me and comfort me, shush me down from my hysteria like the over-emotional Omega I am?

“Then I’m not sure what you expect of me, Ryuzaki.”

“I expect you to not force a smile and pretend you don’t feel anything.” Light really didn’t understand why the prospect almost seemed to offend the man, that he might act the way he always had in his presence. “I thought we were done with this.”
“This — Light found himself declaring, opening his arms to present himself fully, “–is who I am.”

“It’s who you pretend to be,” L argued and Light found a sharp laugh falling out before he could stop it, genuine dry amusement mixed with hopeless self-doubt peeking out at the detective from behind his curtain.

“Is there a difference?”

For several beats, he was regarded coolly from beneath Ryuzaki’s dark fringe.

“There is, despite everything you want to believe. You’re angry, and you have a right to be.”

I sure as hell do. This heat has ruined everything—exposed me to my father and coworkers. No doubt someone’s told Mogi, and god, dad’s probably told mom and Sayu by now—

And I fucking begged you for it. I preached to myself for years about mind over body, but in the end I didn’t have the willpower. But you did, didn’t you?

“You’re trying to keep me at arm’s length again, but I don’t buy it.”

Light’s grit tightened on his coffee mug, his fingers burning slightly against the hot container as he did so. He immediately leapt to his own defense.

“I’m doing no such—“

“You are. That’s exactly what you’re doing.” It sounded like L was realizing in the same instant that he spoke, those dark eyes reflecting light from the window at Light’s back, both intrigued and frustrated. “Why?”

Light snapped his mouth shut, very close to done with this conversation. L had been doing this from the beginning. Mocking him, trying to set him off, to bring him out of himself either with baiting insults or touches meant to catch him off guard. It wasn’t right or fair, for him to walk into his life and do everything he’d done and expect him to be able to take this in stride. He was deconstructing everything that Light had worked for, and now he was –what?

Mad at him for being who he was? For hiding, for being polite, for treating him the way he would anyone? In truth, L was not like anyone else he had ever met, infuriated him and challenged him and amazed him in ways no other person had managed –

But it wasn’t that simple, to uproot everything that he believed, every fort he’d built around himself. He turned away and breathed deeply as he set his coffee down, but that just reminded him that L’s scent was still present, tame and not overbearing, but still sweeter and more comforting than it had any right to be.

“I would understand if you resented me for helping.” His voice was low, almost tentative. Did the man really give a damn what he thought about that? It seemed such a small thing, compared to all the rest of it—the confinement and suspicion and half-truths. “I, myself, did not know exactly where to stand in that respect. There are lines that I may have crossed that give you reason to hold me in contempt.”

It would be so much easier if that were the case. If I could hate you for something like that. Perhaps you shouldn’t have helped, but who knows what would have happened if I hadn’t gotten any relief all that time? I –

-I was falling apart on the first day before you came in. Five more days of that? I can’t imagine how
I would have gotten through it otherwise.

“But that isn’t it, is it?”

But I’m hardly going to thank you for it. This is all your fault in the first place.

“You resent me for seeing you like that at all. You resent that there was a witness, because it threatens to ruin the foundations of the fallacy you’ve told yourself for years—“

Okay, that was enough. The asshole was trying to analyze him, trying to figure him out, and wasn’t that just the most maddening idea? Light spun back around, eyes narrow and nose curled viciously as he cut L off.

“It’s over, so will you just shut up about it, already?”

What was even more aggravating was that L seemed to be pleased by this development.

“Over? Perhaps the worst of it is, but—“ The older man tilted his head in that childish way of his. “I see. You intend to just start taking your suppressants again, after all this.”

“Of course I do,” Light scoffed. There was no other option for him. “Did you expect me to suddenly embrace it because –“

Because with you it wasn’t so bad?

Light inhaled again, hands curling into fists as he glowered.

“You’re wrong. This—“ Whatever this is. Whatever you think this could be. “This isn’t going to happen. I’m not about to be your sweet little Omega boyfriend.”

The silence that followed was thick and uncomfortable, hanging there as if suspended between the two of them by a frayed rope that might snap at any moment.

Finally, L heaved a sigh and averted his eyes first.

“Light-kun does not think much of me, does he?”

Was that what this was about? Was L insulted? Hurt by the fact that Light didn’t have any expressed interest in having even the world’s greatest detective as his Alpha? Boo fucking hoo.

“I don’t know you.”

“That’s understandable.” L admitted, though he seemed a bit reluctant to do so.

He took a few steps forward and Light felt the urge to run away despite his pride. He didn’t, of course, wouldn’t allow himself to, and L stopped a few paces in front of him. Light held his breath, but didn’t move to flee or strike the man, or even hide, which seemed like his most appealing options. Briefly, Light pulled his eyes away from the man as he came closer, because he smelled good and all he wanted was to get home and take his suppressants so he could stop thinking things like that, only to look up and see the corners of that mouth pulling upward.

“I was never under the impression that Light-kun would be my ‘sweet’ anything.”

The little smile on his face was very close to ridiculous and Light had an abrupt, overwhelming desire punch his face in so that he would stop that. A hand reached out and Light’s chest constricted at the sight of it, an overbearing part of him wanting to press his face to the palm or catch it in his
own and press his wrist to his nose and breathe.

The other part of him loathed that part and tried to smother it with a pillow. L’s hand stopped short of touching him, his smile twitching away when he no doubt read the conflict in Light’s gaze.

“But, this…is something, isn’t it?”

Perhaps it was, or could be, if he let it. Light’s chest felt heavy and he wanted nothing more than to curl over to protect himself, and it was a stupid, stupid inclination that made no sense at all. He needed to get out of here before he made a fool of himself, before L made him make a fool of himself.

He caught the hand as it hovered near his cheek, his thumb digging into the palm, refusing to release it for several seconds. Light wanted to push it away and found himself hung there by the eyes that held his own as firmly as his fingers clutched the detective’s hand.

“Even if it is, it doesn’t matter.”

He started to uncurl his fingers determinately, but just as he did so, L’s fingers folded over his own, brushing his thumb and index finger and then pressing his hand back, until his knuckles brushed Light’s cheekbone. His own hand was caught now between the warmth of Ryuzaki’s palm and his own cheek. He fought every fiber of himself not to lean into it.

“You’ve never allowed anyone to touch you like this.”

Light’s eyes sharpened.

“I’m right, aren’t I?”

The words brought up every bought of resentment that he’d been holding back since the night of the festival, from L’s humiliating revelation that he knew of his gender to the confinement to the hideously rude statement he’d made to his father in the presence of everyone.

Light ripped his hand away from L’s and swung with the other with all of his might.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t as much as it would have been before confinement. Still, it made the Alpha stumble back, which was a triumph in and of itself. A malicious part of him was appeased at the sight, because if L wanted him to be angry, then fucking fine, he could be angry, he could show him how much he abhorred the idea that anyone had seen and heard the things that he’d—

Pain exploded in his jaw and he found himself flung sideways with the force of it, only distantly realizing that L had spun up from his near fall to kick him in the face. It reminded from of Misora, fondly, but that wasn’t were the fondness truly originated from, because he…hadn’t been expecting that.

After L had seen him at his worst, as a writhing Omega with next to no restraint, and smelling like he was sure he smelled, he’d still decided to return the blow, tit for tat.

The man had actually struck him back, and that was—

He crashed to the floor and despite aching more than ever, he also felt a vague sense of being thrilled, relieved, incredulous, riveted.

L was peering at him, hunched over and looking vaguely like he wanted to help him up.
Rubbing the throbbing pain in his jaw, Light slowly stood up, quietly regarding L from beneath the fall of his hair.

“You kicked me.”

“You hit me first,” L countered, giving a one shouldered shrug. “I let Light-kun go once without retribution – if I didn’t respond this time, he might make a habit of it.”

He breathed in again, slow and collective, rolling his shoulders back and deciding on his course of action.

“I don’t want to see you for a while,” Light began slowly, mind shooting out a hundred different directions, and this wasn’t even the most pertinent problem that he needed to sort through. “…I need a few days. At least. I need—”

To figure out what’s happening with my family, my career, to think about if you’re worth it. If this is something I even have to offer.

“I can’t look at you right now, so—I’m going to go. I’ll…” He raked his fingers through his hair, still slightly moist from his shower and then started over to the door, where fortunately Watari had set out his wallet, phone, coat and shoes. He quickly pulled on his coat, slipped on his shoes and pocketed the items he needed to get home.

Light considered turning around before he walked out the door, then thought better of it.

“…I’ll call you.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: So here we have the much sought after ‘aftermath’ between L and Light. I hope it was everything you hoped for! All is not sunny in paradise, but there’s a little hope, yeah?

Heats vary slightly from person to person. More detail will be given on the variations once Mello and Near enter the story. Matsuda and Misa just don’t strike me as people that are going to talk about it too openly, that’s all. It’ll definitely be touched upon though.

Why didn’t they just knock him out during the peaks of his heat? Good question! The high points of heat, the ‘waves’, are different for every Omega. On average, people have between six and eight hours between them, but there’s really no way to control that. If you were to drug someone, you’d be forcing their body into a state of rest, which is sort of what suppressants do (though more intricately, internally shutting things down rather than just shutting down the body). If they were to do this, when they inevitably woke him up, it would just end up being worse – the same reason his is so intense this time, after suppressing without breaks for years.

Anyway, let me know what you think of this chapter – favorite lines, actions, etc! Next up is a Yagami Family moment.

Nilah
“People think that a liar gains a victory over his victim. What I’ve learned is that a lie is an act of self-abdication, because one surrenders one’s reality to the person to whom one lies, making that person one’s master, condemning oneself from then on to faking the sort of reality that person’s view requires to be faked. The man who lies to the world, is the world’s slave from then on.” –Ayn Rand

"I'm sorry, son, I felt I had to tell them. They were worried about you, and when a week passed - Ruzaki came back to work, but you didn’t. I didn't know what to tell them anymore."

It was one of the few instances in his life that he’d hoped to be wrong. Light closed his eyes, resting his head against the back of his couch and wishing he’d called his father sooner. It had been two days since he’d left L’s hotel room, but he’d needed to be by himself to sort through the realities of what his exposure meant for him, not to mention getting his suppressants back in his system and reestablishing a sleep schedule.

Logically, he supposed it didn’t really matter if he or his father told the truth to his mother and sister. At least this way he wouldn't have to see the initial looks on their faces when they found out. Stunned, pitying and wounded expressions that he'd rather not responsible for.

Even so, it felt like yet another thing he hadn't been given a choice on, another thing he could not control.

"I understand, dad, it's probably for the best."

There was a long pause on the other end of the line. "Are you - feeling better?"

Light opened his eyes and looked to the ceiling, assessing how he felt. Physically, he was returning to a sense of balance and normalcy. He’d been repeating the motions of his physical therapy several times a day and he could feel himself starting to regain his normal musculature. His suppressants were back in his system, and he felt like he could stop holding his breath whenever he walked into the hall to collect his mail.

It had been overflowing when he’d first arrived, but then so had his email and text messages. He’d
sorted through them at his own pace, responding to Teru’s email about a hearing that had occurred during his absence and discarding most of the texts from Matsuda and even a couple from Naomi and Misa. He couldn’t know if Misa was aware of what had happened to him – she’d certainly been trying to catch his attention on the way back from the false execution, but for all he knew he hadn’t begun to stink of heat until later on into the car trip. She hadn’t spoken out about it, but he had still been paranoid to see her text on his phone, asking about his well-being.

To each of them, he sent a polite but curt message: **I’m feeling much better now, thank you for your concern.**

“Yeah, dad, I’m better. I’m sorry for snapping at you…before.”

“Oh, Light, it’s—“ The softness of his father’s voice was almost grating. What was it? Was it *expected* of him, because of what he was? Was his father going to anticipate emotional outbursts from him from now on? “It’s only natural. I know I didn’t take it well, either, and it isn’t because of — I was just worried.”

Of course he was. Light knew he meant nothing by it, that he was being a good father for expressing his concern, but he wanted to sink back and disappear into the cushions at the notion that his father no longer saw him as an adult man but instead as a young Omega, infantilized and helpless.

“I am worried. Have you …ah, thought about seeing a doctor?”

“I’m fine. I already saw a doctor. There’s no need to be worried, dad.” White lies came easily, especially when they were meant to keep himself safe and his family at ease.

“If you’re sure, Light, I’m still rather…baffled by it all.”

*Imagine how I felt that day then,* Light thought at him sardonically, but decided to keep it to himself.

“Sayu was – quite shocked, you know, but she admires you. She wants to join the NPA after college, to follow in our footsteps, but it’s really you she’s idolizing.”

As sweet as the thought was, Light couldn’t help the resentment that simmered in the pit of his stomach when he was faced with the idea that Sayu knew. His sister, a Beta, and her older brother, the Omega. If she did join the NPA, she would be more welcome there than Light himself was, despite his accomplishments.

“How did mom take it?”

“…I’m really not sure. She wants to see you, but she hasn’t said much of anything on the subject. She’s just been busying herself with cleaning and preparing dinner all day.”

They both happened to know that his mother got eerily quiet when she was angry.

The thought that she was, for what was surely the first time in his life, significantly cross with him was daunting. He had always been well behaved, even as a child, polite to a fault and always courteous to his mother even when he sometimes felt he didn’t need to be. She had always been good to him – expected so much from him—and it made his stomach ache just to entertain the idea that she was disappointed in him for his lies.

“I’m sure she’ll come around.”

Light wanted nothing more than to just curl up on the couch right then and there and sleep rather than head out to have a humiliating, intensive family dinner. While his father had processed the
information over the last week or so, his mother had no such time.

She would be hurt, at best, at the prospect of him lying to her all this time.

“I’m sure she will,” He agreed after a moment, then pushed himself out of his seat. “I should let you go. There are a few things I want to take care of around the apartment, before I head over. But I’ll see you at six.”

“We’ll see you then, son.”

He considered briefly if his parents would come to track him down if he decided to just not show up. That wouldn’t be the right thing to do, hiding from them and not giving them a chance to ask their no doubt abundant questions. A heavy weight that had been hovering somewhere above his head for the last couple days settled on his shoulders. He squared them and went to go make himself a cup of coffee before heading out.

It had been months since he’d been to his parents’ home – while they did have family dinners from time to time, Light had been caught up with the now-dead Yoshiro case as well as the Kira case, not to mention confinement, leaving him no time to spend with his family. There had been other priorities, even before he’d been locked up – the last time he’d seen Sayu it had been the night of their parents’ anniversary. Now, she was beginning her last semester of university.

Before he was prepared (though he wasn’t sure he would ever be completely ready) it was time for him to leave. He took the bus, the same one he’d taken for years, watching the familiar streets pass by and taking comfort in the fact that none of these strangers would ever be able to guess he was an Omega. It felt nice to be lost, or at least to be seen without that layer of expectation. To be unknown, save for his accomplishments.

He sighed when he stepped off the bus and walked down the street, the same path he’d taken to and from school since he’d been old enough for his mother to allow it. Nostalgia weighed down his stomach and his steps slowed as he grew closer to his childhood home.

When he reached the door, he hesitated with the key. Then, inhaling deep and slow, he leveled his shoulders, straightened his back, and squared his jaw before turning the lock and stepping inside.

The first thing he noticed was that the television was on Sakura TV and Sayu was curled up on the couch watching it. Despite the fact his parents were expecting him, they didn’t hear him, though he could hear the sounds of movement in the kitchen. To be fair, he was being quiet, as if hoping to go unnoticed entirely. It was a silly, childish notion – as if by closing his eyes he could will himself into nonexistence.

“Your girlfriend’s segment is about to come on.”

The words startled him out of his stupor and he frowned at the teasing words, eyes flickering to the screen. Sure enough, Takada’s face was being shown in the ‘coming next’ box and she was smiling in that attractive, composed way that she always had.

“I don’t have a girlfriend,” Light felt himself say, almost entirely out of habit.

“I guess you probably don’t,” Sayu agreed, and finally looked back over her shoulder at him, putting her arm over the back of the couch casually. “I mean – did you tell anyone? How does someone even pull something like that off?”

“No, I didn’t tell anyone,” Light informed her, approaching the couch and perching on the arm. “ – and, carefully.”
Sayu looked him up and down, tilting her head in a way that reminded him of a certain detective that he was trying very hard not to think about. One disaster at a time.

“You don’t seem any different. But I guess that was the point, right?” She heaved a breath and shifted her legs uselessly in front of her. “I’m not mad or anything, I don’t want you to think that – because I’m not. I mean, not at you.”

Light raised an eyebrow. “There’s no one else to blame, Sayu.”

“Doesn’t blame imply that someone is held accountable?” She countered, propping her chin up on her palm and peering up at him. “You aren’t accountable for anything. You didn’t tell us, and that’s a little hard to think about, but it was your choice.”

“I appreciate the sentiment,” Light said softly, a little more touched by her understanding than he wanted to be. But Sayu was young, intelligent and forward thinking – not to mention, she had always idolized him. In truth, a lot of young Beta girls romanticized the idea of being an Omega in their head, of having an Alpha biologically inclined to adore and protect them.

The idea that Sayu might think he was cool because of his second gender was a little nauseating.

“I always thought you were so perfect, you know.” Sayu continued, her eyes curious and gentle. “I can’t believe how wrong I was.”

It took work, to keep the rigidity out of his tone when he spoke this time, but he managed to keep the cold weight in his stomach from showing in his tone.

“…Is that so?”

“Don’t take that the wrong way – it’s a good thing. It’s stupid, isn’t it, to think of someone as perfect?” She seemed abashed, brushing her hair behind her ear and crossing her legs. “An actual person can’t be perfect, so it’s…kind of discrediting you to say you are. You’re kind and honorable and smart and strong, but you’re human. It wasn’t fair of me, or – or anyone think of you as some untouchable pillar of excellence.”

When she said ‘anyone’, she looked straight into his eyes, and despite the fact that eye contact had never before been intimidating, he wanted to pull his gaze away first.

He was saved when his father entered the room, allowing him to tear his eyes away without admitting defeat. Every interaction with his sister was becoming more and more revealing. She surprised him at every turn, and this time she’d spoken with a candidness and wisdom that he didn’t quite understand himself. He’d ignore it for now, but the significance was still there, and he felt younger somehow in that moment. Perhaps it was just being back home and perhaps it was the fact that his family knew him so much more intimately than he had ever planned to allow them to.

“Light, I’m so glad to see you.” His father told him immediately, coming forward to clasp his hand in his own in a two-handed grip that was almost more of an embrace than a handshake. Being this close to him had Light feeling vaguely uneasy. He remembered the look on his father's face when he’d been this close before not even a week and a half ago, pointing a gun at his head - “You’re looking well. You got your hair cut.”

Early that morning, when he was two days deep into taking his suppressants again, he’d chanced a walk outside. It had been too long since he’d been able to walk freely and he’d happened upon a barber shop. He’d needed a change – needed to feel new again, and his too-long hair only reminded him of his confinement and the way that L had whispered into it, talked him down when it was all
“Did you grow it out before or something?” Sayu asked, confused. It had been this length the last time she’d seen him. Soichiro glanced at him, and Light remembered his cover story. He’d been abroad on an intensive case, not locked up under suspicion of being Kira.

“I was trying something new, but I decided against it.”

“Wow, you with long hair?” She squinted a bit, and then blanched suddenly. “Ugh, I was just reminded of Ryuga Hideki a little bit when I pictured it.”

Light scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Are you not a fan of his anymore?”

“Of course I am, I just don’t like comparing hot guys to my brother, that’s all.” Sayu sniffed, and then gestured at the television. “No one is not a fan of Ryuga Hideki. He’s huge in America, Britain and China—and your girlfriend scored another interview with him, when he gets back from shooting his new movie—more than just a five minute segment this time!”

“I don’t have a girlfriend,” Light repeated, but this time he allowed himself to be entertained by her insolence. There she was—he was more comfortable with this Sayu, the one that chattered about multi-millionaire movie stars and didn’t make him feel like she understood him better than he did himself.

“How did everything go?” Soichiro inquired, and Light was annoyed at the prospect of ‘girlfriend’ immediately bringing to mind L in his father’s mind. “With Ryuzaki? Nothing—well, of course not, but…”

“Everything is fine, dad—nothing happened.” Light confirmed for him, though his father’s brow furrowed as if that hadn’t been exactly what he’d intended by the question.

“Who’s Ryuzaki?” Sayu asked curiously, leaning in. Hiding a grimace, Light started to open his mouth to tell her some little not-quite-lie to keep her mind occupied, but he cut himself off when he saw movement behind his dad’s shoulder.

His father noticed his line of sight and moved away, releasing Light’s hand (and distantly, it bothered him how tender it had been, because that was nothing like the way his father usually touched him) and taking a step back to turn toward his wife. She stood in the entry way, her small hands clasped together in front of her.

Why did he feel like a child who had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar before dinner?

Sayu and his father had been relatively calm about the entire thing and his mother was such a gentle, understanding woman that he couldn’t comprehend why he wanted so badly to look anywhere but at her? He’d rather look at Takada, who was on the television now speaking about some hot topic or another, than at his mother who was hovering in the doorway so hesitantly. He didn’t think he could stand to see her disappointment, or hurt, or guilt, or whatever array of emotions she might have.

Light had never let her down before. He’d always done exactly what he said he’d do, always impressed her, and astonished her even. She’d impressed the importance of manners upon him, and he’d learned quickly and used modest expressions to near excess in response. She’d taught him the importance of school, of grades and studying hard, and he’d made it his own value in turn. While his father had preached justice, duty and honor, she’d spoken of fair-mindedness and family, particularly on the nights when his father’s obligatory absences weighed down on them all.

It hadn’t been for her; it had been for himself, but she had always expressed her pride in his success.
There had been times – more often than he cared to admit – that he’d resented her for all of these things. Had thought her submissive and boring, had been irritated with her approval because it wasn’t like he needed it. Of course he was the best – expressing pride as a parent was practically redundant.

Yet right now, he felt like he needed it, if only to soothe his own ego. He’d never in his life been caught doing something wrong, and despite what Sayu had said minutes before, wasn’t lying to your family wrong?

“Mom –“

“Light –“

They both stopped after speaking in unison, pausing to let the other go, but neither of them tried again immediately. Instead, his mother dragged her gaze away from him and to his father who stood a few feet away. The expression on her face was so hard that it seemed out of place, her shoulders drawn up and her chin lifted. Sayu’s uncertainty and surprise radiated off of her, and Light knew why.

His parents rarely fought. His mother had always been a mild-mannered woman, and he could count on the fingers of one hand the amount of times he’d seen her show any sort of annoyance or anger toward his father. Here and now though, her anger was palpable and he didn’t understand what the cause of it was. It didn’t seem like his father knew either, as he shifted uncomfortably, straightening his glasses in the way he did when he was anxious or confused.

When his mother finally shifted her eyes back to Light, they softened entirely and she took several steps forward.

“Oh, sweetie, I’m so sorry,” She murmured emphatically, eyes crinkling as they welled up with tears. “Your father—he had no right to tell us.”

What is that supposed to mean? She would have rather heard it from me?

“…Sachiko?”

Sayu’s eyes flickered between their parents tentatively. “Um, mom?”

Light shifted his gaze and moved off of the arm of the couch, immediately stepping into his own levelheaded etiquette.

“I apologize.”

“You’re…you’ve always been such a proud boy.” His mother came close and put a hand to his cheek. Her skin was soft and cool. “You would have told us yourself one day.”

Light’s eyes snapped into focus, widening at the jolt of shock.

What?

His mother only smiled at him, tender and melancholy. “I’m so sorry it happened like this, before you were ready.”

“You—?”

His voice caught on a lump in his throat. Light swallowed it and tried again.
“You knew?”

“Really!” Sayu exclaimed in astonishment, and Light briefly thought on how loud she was being before realizing he probably wasn’t much better.

“Sachiko, is this true?”

Light had never heard his father seem so intensely perplexed in all of his life. It could have been hilarious, if he weren’t feeling the same way. Her hand slid away from his cheek as she turned her head to her husband once again.

“My mother was an Omega too, Soichiro, as you may recall.” She told him, turning up her nose a bit in his direction. Light could see him shrink back in response to her well-placed hostility. Light only vaguely remembered meeting his grandmother as a young child, before she’d passed away. “She used to tell us all the time about how she was terrified of being a Beta all her life, because it was important to some girls back then –and just before her sixteenth birthday –well, she thought it was the best present she’d ever received.”

For a moment, she seemed somewhat wistful, and then her face grew more solemn as she turned her eyes back on him. The idea of his heat being a gift was a laughable one, but fifty years ago being an Omega meant the likelihood of protection and security of an Alpha mate.

“–and so, when you refused to come out of your room that day, it was so unlike you—“ She averted her eyes, as if embarrassed. “Well, I suspected.”

All this time.

The absurdity of it had him leaning back against the arm of the couch once again, his eyes far away with thought. His mother had known since the beginning. Every lie he’d told in reference to his second gender over the years had been taken by her in stride. She’d never looked at him knowingly, and he’d never noticed a change in her behavior toward him.

“I didn’t know how you were doing it, of course – I figured it was suppressants, and I…of course, I was worried, but you’re resourceful.” She placed her hand on his arm. “We’re so proud of you. I wanted you to feel…I just wanted you to be happy, Light, and I figured you might come around one day –but I couldn’t bear to ruin it for you.”

It astounded him. The idea that every moment since his first heat, his mother had looked him in the eye and smiled the same smile she always had. She’d lied though omission, allowing him to believe that his false face was deceiving her –and he felt so foolish, but also oddly awe-struck.

While his father had found virtue in truth, his mother had found it in deception.

To think, there had been a time in Light’s life when he’d thought his mother and he shared absolutely no qualities.

Once again, Light straightened himself back into a standing position, before drawing his mother into an embrace. The last time he’d done so was after graduating from To-Oh but even that had been initiated by her. He didn’t know what to say –couldn’t find the words in his vocabulary to express what he was feeling for his mother in that moment. Admiration didn’t seem quite accurate and gratefulness was an understatement. He felt lighter, perhaps not weightless (because there would still be consequences) but a relief soothed his stomach and for the first time in days he could imagine that moving on from this was an option.

“Oh, Light.” She squeezed him just before he pulled back, looking up and touching his cheek again.
before pulling back entirely and wiping at her eyes. “Come, I made sukiyaki, your favorite. Let’s eat.”

“Yeah,” Light agreed softly. Sayu did so as well, though with more energy, and Light followed his mother into the dining room.

While the dinner started out with awkward pauses, over the course of the meal, it began to feel like any ordinary dinner he’d had in his childhood home. The food was delicious and it helped put him at ease, but there was still an unfortunate certainty that loomed overhead even when he laughed or Sayu chattered on about her psychology classes. His father glanced at him several times and made conversation here and there, but there was still a guilty tension in the air whenever the man tried to make eye contact with Sachiko.

However touching it had been, he still felt as though there was an unidentifiable itch that he couldn’t scratch. A nagging notion, an ominous thought that was creeping up on him as supper drew to a close. It all felt so normal, a dimly lit play that he’d seen a thousand times, and he didn’t know whether to be comforted by it or disheartened. Light supposed not knowing was an answer in and of itself.

When it came time to bid his mother farewell, he let his mother draw him into another hug, this one shorter than the one he had initiated. He’d only just made it outside when he heard the door reopen. His father stepped out with him and offered to walk him to the station, which Light graciously accepted, because it would have been discourteous to shut him down completely, no matter how much he wanted to.

For the first two blocks there was quiet, but he could tell his father was gathering his nerve.

“I’m sorry, Light—I think your mother may have a point. I was just doing what I thought was right, at the time—I didn’t consider that perhaps it wasn’t—“ He rubbed at his neck and fidgeted with the frame of his glasses.

“I don’t blame you.”

“Listen, no one has told Mogi, or anyone at the department. We discussed it while you were away and we all agreed that it wasn’t our place.” It was implied that his father hadn’t really considered that family might have the same considerations.

“That’s appreciated.” Light nodded, and stopped himself from crossing his arms over his chest defensively.

He knew his father’s mind, after all. He’d known that he would think telling his mother and sister was the proper course, and he’d known what the man would expect of him when the time came to return to the NPA.

“That being said, Light, it’s against the law for you to withhold your second gender from the NPA,” he heaved a sigh and rubbed at the bridge of his nose. “I don’t want to rush you – your leave is indefinite, so I encourage you to take your time with it, but you’ll need to inform them when you come back to work.”

There it is.

The ball dropped, and knowing how gravity worked didn’t make it any easier to catch. Still, Light could pretend as always to take it in stride, as if the idea was not everything that he’d been dreading.

“Of course.” Light held his gaze, as if he had already made plans for such a thing, rather than hoping
the subject would never be breached. “I understand the rules.”

“I’m sure they’ll understand there were extenuating circumstances – you won’t be let go,” His father assured him, planting a heavy hand on his shoulder. “I really am proud of you, Light. You know that, don’t you?”

“I know, dad.”

He stopped walking, turning to his father and offering him a smile to imply that he was fine. That he understood and agreed and that he didn’t think that doing so would potentially ruin everything he’d worked so hard to build for himself.

“I think I’ll walk myself from here, if you don’t mind.”

“Ah,” Soichiro paused, frowning as he took in Light’s calm expression. A thought seemed to flicker in his father’s eyes, but he seemed to think better of speaking his mind, whatever the sentiment had been. “Of course, Light. I’ll see you soon, at Ryuzaki’s headquarters, whenever you feel up to it.”

“I’ll see you soon.”

As Light watched his father start back to the house, his silhouette retreating into the night, his only plan of action settled firmly into his head. There was no other choice for him, after all; he’d known it ever since he’d left the hotel and had time to think about the consequences of being outed. To tell the entire NPA his second gender was not an option. It would be on his records, they would demand a physical, there would be a damned ‘O’ next to his picture on his license as well as his badge –

The prospect, despite the lie he’d told his father, was an impossibility.

That’s it, then.

Light turned away finally, trekking the last block toward the bus stop that he’d waited at hundreds of times over the years and pulling out his phone while he waited for the next one to come around.

I’ll put in my resignation on Monday.

Despite the fact that it meant that his aspirations and achievements had been completely thrown away (wouldn’t telling them that he was an Omega do effectively the same thing?) he felt an overwhelming sense of solace now that the verdict had been made. It was over –but it had been since his heat had struck. He just hadn’t come to accept it until now.

He clicked on Matsuda as a contact.

Meet me at the train station near your apartment in half an hour. I’m taking you up on your offer.

He phrased the words carefully, so as to not express distress or incite worry in the older officer. However accurate ‘I need to get out of town and I don’t want to be alone’ might have been, it sounded inane even in his own head. Many times over the last few years, Matsuda had invited him out, but Light had always politely declined. He’d never felt the need, unless it was a special occasion, and even then – he and Matsuda had very different definitions of what constituted a good time.
But this was an occasion, of a sort –the end of a chapter, perhaps. He didn’t know what it meant or what it would lead to. All he knew in that moment was that he felt much too much like himself and he needed more than anything to just stop.

He’d only just sat down on the bus when he received Matsuda’s response.

**I’ll be there.**

Chapter End Notes

A/N: This chapter was pretty intense for me writing it, and I hope you felt the same way. Family-feels are just so important to me, and despite romance being a big part of the story, I don't want to leave Light's family (or Watari, or the Whammy boys) out of it completely either. I hope I conveyed Light's solemnity and his resignation -heh - well. I hope it felt as emotional to you as it felt to me.

The next chapter will star four of our faves, and it will be ...cute. After that, shit will be going down yet again.

Please let me know your thoughts on the Yagami family reaction. Did I surprise you with Sachiko? What was your favorite line, and favorite dialogue? All that good stuff. You guys have been seriously astounding with reviews, and I really treasure your feedback.

-Nilah
The train ride took approximately an hour and a half. The entire time Matsuda was bubbling over with excitement, spewing anecdote after anecdote about every time he'd been to the beach bars in question.

Light let him ramble. He could tell it was making him feel better about everything that had happened, and it was a nice backdrop to his own thoughts. Although he only nodded here and there, or put in a few words when necessary, Matsuda didn't seem to mind. He carried the conversation completely on his own, smiling and making grand gestures with his hands. It made the time go by faster, though Light's thoughts never entirely drifted away from the decision he'd made or the consequences he would have to face even if he didn't come out to the NPA.

As he'd guessed, Matsuda was a decent distraction, and for the entire ride he didn't mention anything about Light being an Omega. To the point where it was very obviously a subject he was trying to avoid.

There was nothing to be done for that, Light was well aware, and he was just glad that he wasn't alone. While he'd mostly adjusted his sleep schedule back to normal after confinement, he'd found himself waking in the middle of the night coated with perspiration, horror squeezing his chest like hands with cold spidery fingers, unsure of where he was until reality slowly returned to him. Sleeping with the lights on made it easier to regain his composure after the fact, he'd noticed, as the first time he'd woken in pitch darkness he'd thought he was blindfolded and back in his prison. He could never quite remember the dream that caused it all, or if there was one, but he could certainly guess the event that had triggered his reactions.

He'd forgiven his father. Of course he had. The man was only doing what was best, what was right, what he thought was justifiable. His father had believed in him - in his innocence.

Knowing that, however, did not make the night terrors go away.

The train arrived at the station, which was brightly lit and busy even this late, lousy with gift shops and restaurants. Matsuda dragged him into the nearest one to take his first shot, then had the nerve to laugh at the face he'd made when he'd sipped it. It tasted like hand sanitizer and cherry medicine; neither one of those alone were palatable things, let alone combined.

"Don't giggle at me. This is disgusting," Light eyed the small glass in his hands. "Why would you
"It's not supposed to taste good, Light."

"Right," Light looked at it skeptically and then remembered his purpose for coming out here in the first place. To lose himself. Generally, he didn't drink at all. Perhaps he would agree to a glass of wine on a special occasion, but he always stopped there – he didn't like to be out of control. He liked to have his own mind exactly the way that it was supposed to be, unclouded and precise.

Light threw back his head and took the shot.

His throat burned and he forced a straight face as Matsuda whooped in excitement, paid the bill and dragged him out of the station.

It was the beginning of February, so the night was cold and dry, but even in the dark the beaches were clear stretches of pale sand and dark water climbing onto the shore in smooth, soothing motions. The sound of it was a distant purr as they made their way down a stretch of hotels and bars, people laughing and stumbling as they walked by. Light hoped that he would have the decency not to trip over himself.

"Let's go in here first – hopefully that cute bartender still works here," Matsuda told him, leading him inside.

Light's first impression of the bar was that it was dark and loud, music pulsing up from the floor and restricting him from hearing the next several things that poured out of Matsuda's mouth. Apparently the bartender that he remembered from his last visit was in fact still there, and when he waved exuberantly at her, she waved back.

Briefly, Light wondered if Matsuda even realized that she was just being polite – the vacant look in her eye said she didn't remember him at all.

Matsuda ordered them each a few more shots over the course of the next hour, each one more disgusting than the last. One of them was called 'birthday cake' and Light found himself irritated by how sweet it was – but especially how he thought of L, about how that bastard might actually like the taste.

He perched on a bar stool, keeping to his corner and only casually talking to the bartender or whoever was trying to flirt with him, until they left to find someone more receptive to their persuasions. He was cordial, but generally made it clear that he wasn't interested in buying or receiving a drink for or from them, and his aloof demeanor usually sent them away quickly.

It was clear that Matsuda was feeling tipsy at the very least, but Light was feeling mostly warm and uncomfortable, an ache behind his eyes starting up. Was this really what people did on a weekly basis and bragged about? This didn't seem pleasant at all, and he definitely hadn't forgotten about his troubles.

"Come on," Matsuda invited, grasping his arm and starting to tug on him, though he remained firmly planted on his stool. "Light, come on, let's dance."

Light scoffed, "No, definitely not."

"Aw, come on – are you embarrassed?" Matsuda wiggled his eyebrows in a way that Light did not find amusing in the least.

"No, but they should be – " Light directed his gaze pointedly at the gyrating masses. "That's not even
"Don't be a snob," Matsuda pouted, and managed to pull Light onto his feet –

-and there it was. Every shot he'd taken in the last forty-five minutes caught up with him, rushing to his brain and making the room spin. His head felt like it had suddenly been dunked under warm water and his lips tingled, seemed to disappear completely when he tried to speak.

"Matsuda." He worked the name out on his tongue carefully. It sounded correct, at least, even though it was almost foreign on his tongue. "I'm not going to dance."

"Oh, come on."

Matsuda tried and failed to convince him to come to the dance floor and decided to brave it himself. Light seated himself again and sipped on some bitter concoction that Matsuda had ordered for him, alternating between that and the water the officer had also demanded he take. When he finished that drink, and Matsuda still had not returned, he ended up ordering an Irish coffee.

It only tasted slightly of coffee, but it was better than anything else that he'd tried.

Though his vision was starting to get blurry, Light still took to observing those around him. In general, people-watching could get monotonous and it wasn't his favorite pastime – especially when he ended up seeing the same type of person over and over, as if there was some sort of manufacturing plant that only churned out the rude, the idiotic, and the plebeian.

In this moment, it was proving to be more interesting. Perhaps it was because he was amused by the way his own mind was working, with the alcohol pumping through his system. He made associations that he never would have sober; his brain dared to be incorrect and positively impractical.

A woman in heels tripped and Light found himself making up a story in his head about the tattoo on her ankle, about how it might be her dog's name rather than a regrettable tattoo she'd gotten for a boyfriend. Another woman lit up a cigarette and he wondered if she was suicidal, hoping for the day when her lungs might give out on her. A man with an awful haircut had perhaps let his aspiring stylist of a step daughter try out scissors. An Alpha in a miniskirt was dancing with three separate Omegas – they were all so blatantly their genders – and he considered that she might have low self-esteem despite her attractive appearance and feel the need to overcompensate by surrounding herself in the most overtly clingy Omegas in the room.

They were creative thoughts, and all absolutely ludicrous. They could all be accounted for just by claiming poor judgement – they were out drinking, after all. They weren't exactly upstanding citizens.

Light sipped his drink and found himself mildly entertained by his own hypocrisy as his cheeks began to go numb.

He turned his eyes to Matsuda, who was dancing in what he supposed was a fashion that others might call rhythmic. The older man was decent at it, and was attracting more than a few partners, changing from one to the next with relative ease. Light couldn't help but notice that he looked a little uncomfortable whenever an Alpha happened by. A few of them took him by the hips in an attempt to seclude him from other partners and he quickly made himself scarce, finding people that appeared to be Beta or Omega of more interest.

There was a playfulness to everything that the man did; his dancing wasn't overly suggestive even
when it was just rolling hip motions. He made his partners laugh more than once even though the music was too loud to convey words. Light had just finished with his coffee and was starting to drink water instead—hoping the cool fluid would wash away how flushed he was and bring back the feeling in his face—when Matsuda made his way over again.

"Let's get some fresh air!" Matsuda practically shouted; even so, Light just barely heard him. He nodded though, and held onto the other Omega's sleeve as they exited through the crowd.

The cool air wasn't as abrasive as it had been before, but it was just brisk enough to bring a bit of focus back to his eyes. When it did, Matsuda was grinning at him broadly.

"You're so out of it," the man assured him. "You feeling okay? Not sick or anything?"

"I'm not out of it," Light protested, and even though Matsuda nodded he could tell the man didn't believe him. "I don't feel sick, just…warm."

"Let's sit out here for a bit then, there's a bench with a good view—did you drink your water?"

"Yeah," Light found himself mumbling automatically, letting Matsuda guide him over to a bench. There wasn't much illumination other than a few streetlamps and what was coming from the clubs, so the view of the night sky and the moon reflecting off of the water was indeed a pleasant sight.

Even if the moon was blurry at the moment, and there was more than one of them when he blinked too hard.

"Feeling good?" Matsuda asked, once they'd seated themselves. They each wore jackets, and even though it was more than slightly chilly outside, Light wanted to take his off.

"Strange," Light admitted, watching the waves come in from a distance. He cupped his face in both hands, and was glad at least that he could register that much. "I'm having a hard time feeling my face. Is that normal?"

"Hahaha, yes! That's a good place to level out at. We've only really been out here an hour and a half, so we don't want you to fall out too soon."

"Hahaha, yes! That's a good place to level out at. We've only really been out here an hour and a half, so we don't want you to fall out too soon."

"Aren't you drunk too?" Light inquired, eyeing Matsuda suspiciously.

"Sure, I'm definitely buzzed, but I'm more experienced than you." He leaned over, pushing his shoulder against Light's in a friendly fashion and in turn, Light nearly fell over on the bench. He caught himself on his palm, the cold metal against his hand shocking him, and Light glared at him when he burst out laughing. "It's actually pretty awesome to see you like this, you know."

"I've always known you secretly hated me," Light replied, his mouth clumsy as he formed the words, realizing how melodramatic it sounded even as he said it.

"Of course not—you're just so intimidating and…I don't know, distant. Usually. It's nice to see you sort of…off your game. You seem like an ordinary person, like this."

Light scowled.

"It's a compliment," Matsuda insisted, doing the shoulder bump thing again, but this time Light was ready for it. "You and Ryuzaki both have this sort of—'larger than life' thing going on. It can be really intimidating, you know? I've always felt so…human, when I'm around you guys."

"Being human sucks."
It took him a moment to realize that he'd been the one to say those words. He frowned at himself, and raked his fingers over his face when Matsuda didn't respond, trying to make the friction of his palms on his cheeks wake up the numb skin there. He failed.

"So what's going on with that, anyway?"

Light didn't know how long it had been since the last sentence had been uttered between them. It could have been a few seconds or a few minutes – either way, it seemed like a complete non-sequitur.

"Going on with what?"

Being human? It's embarrassing and awful, I wouldn't recommend it.

Matsuda's dark eyes sparked as he elucidated for him – no doubt he was enjoying being on the giving end of an explanation for once.

"With, ah, you – and –" He lowered his voice to a whisper. "— Ryuzaki."

His immediate response was to turn back to the ocean and glower at the waves as they came in, painting the sand darker with every inch they touched. His head felt soft and weightless, his walls turning to fences made out of something less than solid. The image of the detective entered his head and even though he blinked to clear it away, it refused. The vision was surprisingly tangible in front of him, and for an instant he could have sworn that he felt the hand on his cheek.

But, this is…something, isn't it?

"Sorry, was I not supposed to ask about that?" Matsuda asked after some unknowable amount of time. Light realized he'd been completely silent, scowling at the dark horizon where water met sky. Matsuda confirmed his own question with a nervous laugh. "I wasn't supposed to ask about that."

"...It's fine," Light replied as he touched his fingertips to his lips. The touch felt faint. "Nothing is going on."

"That's a lie," his companion said almost immediately, and Light's eyebrows shot up. "I think. Isn't it? I mean, it should be one."

Light's eyes made their way back around to look at Matsuda, frowning deeply.

"What do you mean, it should be a lie?"

"That—well, I hope it is, anyway. Because I think you two are…" The officer was fidgeting again, and Light felt too warm all over to truly be satisfied by being handed the power to make Matsuda uncertain, even in his state. "I guess—a sort of perfect together?"

Perfect together? The idea made his brain recoil, it was such a foreign idea. Not just because Ryuzaki was weird — in fact, that was one of his more interesting qualities, how bizarre and unlike anyone else he was — but because the idea of someone being perfect for him went against everything he'd dictated for himself. Even before he'd known that he was an Omega, falling in love seemed a distant goal. He'd never met anyone that seemed interesting enough to entertain the idea of sharing a life with. Let alone an Alpha, someone who by their very nature could never allow him to forget what he was.

'Perfect together.' 'This is…something, isn't it?' 'An actual person can't be perfect.'
It seemed such a childish idea. There was no such thing as a soulmate; that was a stupid thing that Omegas were told in movies and TV shows, a romantic notion that had no basis in reality.

"We aren't perfect –" His mouth felt uncertain with his own words, his tongue loose in his mouth.

"Not because you're an Omega! I swear," Matsuda planted his hand on his own chest to express how much he meant his words. "I just mean that…even when I thought you were Beta, it seemed like something was happening there. I could be wrong, but you guys bickered all the time."

"Isn't that a better argument against it?" Light inquired, his gaze once again finding the waves ahead of him.

It was all preposterous. And why was he suddenly being made to think about one of the things he did not want to think about? One of the things that had been pleasantly voided out from his mind once the alcohol had started to take?

He'd said he'd call L, but the idea was unnerving. Was it a position of power, to make that first move, or one of weakness, showing his own interest first? Not that there was any interest. He hadn't thought about it. He'd refused to, but here Matsuda was, bringing it all up to the surface –

Oh, he was still talking.

"Not with you. You never fight with anyone. I—I mean, I like to think we're sort of friends, but you never seem like you're really all here, when you're with me." Matsuda sniggered at him. "Like now."

"I'm drunk, Matsuda."

"Yeah, but you usually aren't. You always seemed so detached." There was a deep, satisfied sigh. "With Ryuzaki, you were just so...present. Your eyes lit up, even when he was just pissing you off or calling you Kira."

"I think," Light's jaw worked over the words. "...you're delusional."

Another laugh that he couldn't help but feel was directed at him, at how affected he was.

"Hmmm, maybe."

"Definitely."

There was hardly another beat before Matsuda was bringing the conversation back around, almost gushing his next words out of him like they'd been building up. "But when he caught you that day, when you fainted –he looked so worried."

"That was just the Alpha part of him, Matsuda, it didn't mean anything."

The officer's mouth pulled up slightly in distaste. "I don't think so."

"You just said you're delusional," Light dismissed him effortlessly with a wave of his hand.

"I said maybe."

"You're also drunk."

"You're drunk. You just said so."

"The fact that I'm drunk doesn't cancel out the fact that you are also drunk," Light reasoned, which
only made Matsuda laugh loudly into the night.

"If I'm drunk and you're drunk, then who's flying the plane?"

Light looked at him with a scrutinizing expression. "…We aren't on a plane, Matsuda."

"It's a joke.

"Did you make it up yourself?"

"You're no fun," Matsuda groaned with an exaggerated air of defeat.

"Thanks," Light retorted dryly, leaning back to look at the sky. The stars blurred together from time to time when his vision slipped out of focus, but he could tell there was some sort of cognition returning to him. He bit his lip and he could feel it, though not with as much clarity as he should have been able to.

"But like, Ryuzaki made you laugh a few times."

Light released a heavy, irritated breath. "We're back on that?"

"We weren't really off of it –you're just good at distracting me."

"You're easily distracted."

"Probably true," Matsuda conceded easily, then announced immediately after, "But not this time."

"Will you stop already?" Light sighed. He turned his head away and raked his fingers through his hair, scratching his nails over his scalp, hoping the sharp touch would wake him up a bit. "Part of the reason I came here tonight is because I didn't want to think about him."

"What? Really?"

"…Part of the reason," Light restated.

"Sure, whatever," Matsuda nodded disbelievingly. "What do you mean, you don't want to think about him? If you need to get your mind off of him, that mean that it's on him, isn't it?"

"You're reading too much into it."

"Oh, man, I knew I was right."

Light scowled, his mood growing sour. "I didn't say you were right."

"You didn't say I was wrong."

"Those are precisely the words that came out of my mouth, actually." Light informed him coolly, starting to feel the chill as the warmth of liquor started to fade.

"I don't recall."

"That's because you're drunk."

"You're drunk."

Light shook his head to clear it. "I'm pretty sure we've been here before."
"Here? I have, but you haven't. You said you haven't."

"No, I mean…" It took Light another moment to remember where he was going with the sentence. "…with the conversation."

Matsuda's eyebrow crinkled with thought. "What were we talking about?"

"I don't know."

It was then that Light's companion stood up to stretch, and he decided to follow him, though his form felt loose enough without stretching. They'd only just started walking away from the bench and back toward the line of bars and clubs when Matsuda seemed to remember something. He turned to Light triumphantly, grinning a toothy grin that was even goofier than his usual smile.

"Wait, *you* don't know something?"

Light narrowed his eyes at the man. "What do you mean?"

"You said 'I don't know'. *You* said that." God, the man was absolutely giddy.

"Don't get used to it."

"I wouldn't dream of it," Matsuda did that thing again where he let his shoulder knock against Light's as they walked this time. Light let him, and a minute later Matsuda was dragging him by the sleeve into another bar. "Oh, let's go in here! They had this great drink the last time I was here – you'll like it. It doesn't taste like alcohol at all."

Surprisingly, Light did like the drink. He wasn't sure if that was a testimony to how dull his taste buds were or not, just like he couldn't tell if this bar was actually more tolerable than the last or if he was just too drunk this time around to care. He was betting on the latter, because two of those blue concoctions later, the room was spinning and the music didn't seem to grate on his nerves nearly as much as it had an hour before.

Matsuda still hadn't managed to talk him into dancing though, and he seemed to have the attention of a cute girl in a lavender dress for some time. It was getting so ridiculously hot inside the crowd that he thought he might suffocate if he didn't move, didn't get outside and breathe air that wasn't drenched with smoke and alcohol and sweat. He caught Matsuda's eye and pointed in the direction of the door, hoping the man would get the hint that he was stepping out – he nodded and gave him a thumbs up, so Light could only assume he'd understood.

Pressing his back to the wall just outside, Light drew in a deep breath through his nose. The brisk air felt good in his lungs, seemed to wake him up and make him feel more alert, even though at his core he just wanted to lie down. For a brief moment, he realized that bench wasn't even a hundred yards away, before his propriety reminded him that sleeping on a bench was something that homeless people did. Not NPA agents.

…Former NPA agents.

Retrieving his phone from his pocket took more effort than he would have ever admitted to. His fingers weren't nearly as responsive as they should have been and he felt ridiculous, especially when he typed his password incorrectly the first time.

The second time he was victorious, but he realized once he was in that he hadn't actually needed to sign in to see the time at all. It was in bold, glowing letters right in front of him.
It was only just midnight; he'd only left his mother's house four hours previous, which meant they'd only been out together for a little more than two hours. It seemed like so much longer than that. Time was slow and slippery, just like his mind had been for at least the last hour, ever since those first few shots hit him.

_No wonder I've never done this before. I feel like an idiot._

Just to avoid looking like he was doing nothing while in view of passersby, Light looked at his phone for something to occupy himself with. He ignored an email alert that he'd received from Teru, then tried to focus on some news article on Takada's interview next week, on Valentine's Day. He remembered his sister speaking about it, vaguely, but it seemed like he was viewing the memory from under water.

The symbols refused to come together in any coherent fashion. They swam before his eyes, connected here and there and then were lost all over again. He gave up, starting to close his screen when he accidentally hit his contact list.

Ryuzaki's emergency number glared at him from the screen.

**Bastard. Even now, you won't shut up.**

"Light-kun?"

Light blinked hard down at his phone and realized with a horrible certainty that he had _called_ the man at some point. He couldn't quite remember pressing the button to dial the number, but his fingers were clumsy and it might have been a mistake entirely, or –

"Light-kun, that is you, correct?" The voice was a little harder this time, as though L was concerned that it might not be him at all. An abductor? Or Kira, perhaps, somehow getting ahold of Light's phone? Somehow Light wouldn't have put it past him, after hacking into L's database.

"...Yeah, it's me."

There was a pause, and L's voice came easier this time. "It's rather late for you to be awake."

"As if you care about my sleep..." Light searched for the word that had suddenly fled from him. "...schedule."

"True." There was another pause; the tone of this one was curious, and Light knew he wasn't doing a good job at faking sobriety. "Did Light-kun forget the word 'schedule' just now?"

"No," Light answered immediately, then reconsidered defensively. "...Probably. Why did you call?"

"Light-kun called _me._"

The grimace on his face must have been unsightly. He might as well hang up now. This wasn't going well. Whatever this was –what had he expected from this? He couldn't even remember hitting the damned button.

"Oh," Light muttered, leaning more heavily against the wall. "I guess I did."

"Light-kun is intoxicated."

"Greatest detective in the world _my ass,_" Light snorted, far too pleased with himself, as if that were the greatest insult in the world.
"Was that an insult or an introduction?"

The way such a casual statement made his ears grow hot was in no way acceptable. He blamed it on his own drunkenness for making it impossible to keep the flush at bay.

"…I'm going to hang up on you now."

"Was that too far?"

"I don't know," he heard himself admitting, for the second time that night. It seemed such a lame thing to say. "It seems like it should be."

"Fair enough," The detective sounded reluctant. He could hear him chewing on his thumbnail over the line. "Light-kun did call me, however, so I thought I might have some leeway."

Light rolled his eyes. "For crude jokes?"

"For flirtation."

Drawing a hand through his hair, Light pulled at the tresses as if it might bring his mind back one follicle at a time. It didn't help.

"Don't flirt with me."

"…Alright." Another beat, in which Light could almost hear Ryuzaki moping. "Why not?"

"Because I'm drunk and you're an asshole."

"I don't see how either of those things are related. In fact, I'm finding that Light-kun is far more receptive to my flirtations when he's under the influence."

"Yeah, because I'm not thinking like I should be," Light's words had no real bite to it, but it was an empirical truth that neither of them could ignore. "Again."

There was a halt in L's previously confident flow of words.

"…This does seem to be a continuous issue between us."

"Yeah, it is," Light mumbled, rubbing at his eyes in an effort to bring alertness back to them. It worked to an extent, but he only felt more awake, not any less drunk. "So… don't try to talk when I'm drunk."

"Light-kun called me, yet I'm not allowed to talk to him?"

"I realize how that sounds." It seemed childish, but also entirely logical at the same time. There had been too much of a power shift between them at every turn. L was his boss, he was L's suspect, his prisoner; even after all that seemed a distant memory, there was his heat. No, not even just his heat, but the fact that he had them at all. That there would always be that layer of authority to their relationship, and that he was on the less powerful end of it. "Even so, wait until I'm sober, or else I… I don't know."

The words fell flat on his tongue yet again.

Part of him was sure that he could have told L to get out of the room at any moment, if he'd been so inclined. But he'd been told from all directions his whole life that Omegas had next to no coherency during heat, the same way that Alphas had nearly none during rut—though that did not seem to be the
case in either respect. Laws were in place to keep Alphas from taking advantage, simply because so many throughout history had.

He just… didn't know where his own agency was, didn't know if he truly had a firm grasp on it or if he just wanted to so badly that he managed to convince himself in the aftermath that he had. Had he ever really had power over anything? Wasn't hiding himself just proof that the world controlled him in a way?

Perhaps that was his reasoning for tonight. Not to 'get away', not really, but to have final say over his own loss of control, for once.

Heat was a wild beast and he didn't know if he could tame it, had no interest in trying to. His father was a man driven purely by duty; he couldn't change the mind of someone who believed whole heartedly his decision was best. He usually admired the quality in his father; he'd aspired to be that sort of man, but right now it was making him want to disappear.

"…Or."

He'd forgotten that L was still on the phone with him. He completely blanked on what they'd been discussing. Something about alcohol. That seemed accurate, considering the situation.

"Or what?"

"Where are you right now, Light-kun?"

The answer tumbled out of him before he could even consider lying or withholding.

"I'm in… Enishoma."

"Alone?"

"Matsuda's here." Why did he feel the need to keep going? Oh well, here he went. "He's dancing. Or whatever it's called."

"You're with Matsuda." Hadn't he just said that? Maybe he hadn't. Light couldn't be entirely sure. "I assume he's also inebriated."

"You would be correct."

"I see. That settles it then." Light was about to ask what exactly had been settled. He'd already forgotten the direction of the argument. If it even was an argument. Knowing Ryuzaki, it probably was, but - "We'll see you soon."

"Yeah, okay." Light mumbled, and then his brain caught up with what that meant. "Wait, what -?"

L hung up on him and Light was very close to calling him back just to hang up on him in return – maybe say something rude and witty – but Matsuda burst out the doors and headed over to him before he could.

"Hey, you ready to go to the next place?" He asked, sliding an arm around Light's shoulders and leaning a good deal of weight on him. In response, Light almost lost his balance but managed to plant his feet, forcing himself into a fully standing position as he pocketed his phone.

"Alright – how late do these places close, anyway?"

"Some of them stay open until… umm, like six in the morning?" Matsuda asked as he led the way
down the rows of bars. "We probably won't make it that long though."

"No kidding," Light scoffed, gritting his teeth when his companion had the audacity to ruffle his hair. He patted it down and hopefully into place, but he couldn't be sure that his clumsy fingers had been as adept as they usually were.

"You're great, you know that, Light?" Matsuda asked him suddenly, pulling him along. "You probably do, but then again, you might not. 'Cause sometimes you're... just so sad, you know?"

"I'm not sad," Light informed him, trying to keep his posture despite the older man's hold on him.

"Not tonight," Matsuda agreed with a smile, and finally moved his arm, only to grasp Light by the sleeve and pull him into the nearest bar.

Luckily, this one was not quite as loud as the two before it. It had a chic vibe to it, and while the music was still loud, it had a classical, jazzy quality to it that set it apart. There were couches, candles and a pianist in a collared shirt in the corner. Even the patrons seemed well dressed, though they were likely just as intoxicated as anyone else that was still awake and in a bar at this hour; they seemed to have a better grip on how to present themselves.

It was also much more expensive than the other places, for the courtesy of having such an atmosphere.

First, they ordered waters, both of them aware of the state they were in, especially when Matsuda made a show of collapsing onto the couch. One of the waitresses in a black dress had immediately come over to ask him politely not to lie down on the couches, and in order to save face, Light had ordered a bottle of champagne. It was a cool, tart white wine his father had brought home one night after solving an especially difficult case. Light had been allowed a taste as a teenager and he'd been pleasantly surprised.

The first glass of it was disappointing, but the second almost touched his past self's expectations.

Time was slipping away from him, in the way two people were dancing expertly a few yards away, in the movement of the pianist's fingers and Matsuda's laughter. At some point he felt sick to his stomach, but after sipping on water for a while he was feeling better, even though everything felt stuffy and seemed to move either too slow or too fast.

"Matsuda...let's go," Light's mouth didn't quite want to cooperate, yet again. "... outside for a bit."

"What?" Matsuda asked too loudly, leaning in to hear him.

"Outside." Light repeated, enunciating more clearly and then moving to stand. Although he managed to maintain some sort of grace in the motion, he felt foolish the entire time, having to work extra hard to keep his movements in check.

The older officer understood this time and they made their way out. Only when they were back in the cool night air did Light see that Matsuda had taken his half-finished bottle of wine with them.

It sloshed in the bottle as they strolled toward the beach, to a long stretch of boardwalk that rose up over the water. The ground turned from cement to sand and then to panels of wood. Matsuda hadn't stopped talking, but Light's mind couldn't quite hang onto the words, only acknowledging where he felt like he had to. It was all nonsense anyway – the man didn't like silence and felt the need to fill it. That had always been the case and Light couldn't bring himself to be annoyed by it, especially when the alcohol had dulled his senses.
They paused about halfway down and they carefully seated themselves on the edge, their legs hanging off the side a few inches above the water. Light supported himself on his palms as he leaned back to take in the stars. They were more entrancing than they usually were, the cold of the night almost entirely lost on him now. He could feel it in his hands as they touched the cool wood, but the rest of him was flushed with the warmth of intoxication.

It seemed like only minutes after they'd settled in when Light's phone went off, giving a short buzz in his pocket.

"Who's that?"

"It's …Misora-san?"

"Misora-san is awesome," Matsuda hiccupped agreeably, tilting the wine back and taking a swig of it straight from the bottle. Light frowned at the sight but didn't comment. Instead he tried to focus on the words.

**Where are you guys?**

It seemed to be a weird question, but Light answered to the best of his ability, which meant he had to backspace more times than he cared to admit.

**Enishoma boardwalk near train station.**

That seemed to be enough information, though he couldn't imagine for the life of him why she would suddenly text him at two in the morning to ask him something like that.

"What did she want?"

"To know where I was."

"That's sort of weird, isn't it?"

"A bit," he agreed, but Matsuda just shrugged and took another long drink. Inebriation had made him unconcerned, and no doubt the text had slipped his mind seconds later.

Light pocketed his phone once again and leaned back, crossing his arms behind his head as he relaxed, letting his mind drift blankly along the coast beneath him. The sounds and smells of the ocean were calming; they occupied his limited thoughts for the moment and he was lulled to sleep by it.

It wasn't a deep slumber – every time Matsuda spoke about something or other, he stirred toward wakefulness.

"Here they are."

It took Light a moment to realize that the voice was not Matsuda's, nor did it sound anything like the man at all. To be fair, every sound seemed like it was being fed to him through a filter of some kind.

"Is Light-kun asleep?"

"M'not asleep." Light mumbled, then moved to sit up, forgetting where he was. He felt like he might lose his balance entirely for a moment, even sitting down. He scraped his teeth over his bottom lip in order to force some sensation into it before trying again. "I'm not asleep."
Then, he realized what had actually been said just a moment ago and looked past Matsuda, to where
L and Naomi stood on the boardwalk just behind them.

What is he doing here? Oh, right, I called him, I think, but that doesn't... I guess I said 'okay'. Didn't
I? I think I did. Naomi must have been working late on the Kira case and decided to accompany
him?

"Whoa, you guys – what are you doing here?" Matsuda asked, starting to stand and then thinking
better of it.

"Light-kun called me."

Matsuda's eyes widened. "You did? When?"

Light ignored the question, only partly because he couldn't remember the answer. Ryuzaki lifted one
foot to scratch his leg with the other – Light noticed that he actually had shoes on – only to sway
dangerously and put his foot back down.

His eyes narrowed at the display, looking over L curiously. There was a flush to his cheeks that
wasn't usually there, in addition to the loss of balance. While the detective's posture left much to be
desired, he had never been terribly inelegant.

"You're drunk."

"He is?" Matsuda's hair bristled with the movement as he spun to look at Light, and then back again
to L. "You are!?!"

"I am," L agreed, then padded closer to plop down on the space between him and Matsuda, and
immediately losing one of his shoes to the ocean. The detective looked at it with a forlorn expression.
"...I suppose I should have expected that."

"If you wore them correctly," Light muttered, rolling his eyes at him and watching as Naomi
snickered along with Matsuda beside them. She seemed completely sober – at least as far as Light's
currently limited deduction skills could figure. "...Why are you drunk?"

"Because," L started, then was silent for a long moment, staring down at the shoe that had fallen into
the ocean and had now drifted further toward the shore.

Agitated, Light demanded, "Because why?"

"Because –" L started again, as if he hadn't completely lost his train of thought a minute before.
"Because Light-kun expressed that he didn't like the shift of power between us, and thought that I
should wait until he was sober before approaching him. It could take several hours for Light-kun to
be completely sober, so I decided to speed it up a bit."

...Seriously?

"He was very tight-lipped about it, at first," Naomi informed him. "Until ...well, later. Then, he felt
the need to explain his logic to me. Over and over again."

Reluctantly, Light found this hilarious.

He covered his mouth with his hand while Matsuda laughed heartily out loud and up into the night.
For some reason, L grasped his hand to pull it away and Light swatted at him – he wasn't going to
hold the bastard's hand. The older man had the nerve to pout at him, but he kept his hands to himself.
"How much has he had to drink?" Light inquired, looking him over from head to toe.

"We bought him some sort of sweet wine at a liquor store," Naomi replied, glancing at Ryuzaki as if he were an unusually large child. "… and he drank the entire thing himself on the way over."

"It tasted like apple pie," L confirmed sagely.

After a moment of observation, he found it odd that L wasn't as slouched as he normally was, though he supposed that was due to the fact that he didn't need that forty percent that came with being in an upright fetal position. Still, it was a strange look on him, especially when he wasn't chewing on his thumb or licking spoons in the ungainly manner he usually did.

He realized that he was looking at L's shoulders for an amount of time that wasn't at all acceptable and quickly turned away.

"You might be the most absurd man I've ever met." Light told him out of the blue. The words seemed to come from nowhere in particular and were spoken out into the sky, as if directed at the same place.

And then, not even a second later, he was struck in the shoulder with Ryuzaki's head. He might have thought it was on purpose, if not for the fact that the detective seemed just as surprised as he was, to have apparently passed out then and there. No doubt he was running on next to no sleep, and he probably hadn't eaten anything substantial before consuming whole bottle what had probably been some sort of hard cider.

It caught them both off balance – Light grasped at the detective's shoulders to steady himself, but L wasn't exactly a pillar of balance either, his hands trying to grasp at Light's arm in hopes of finding purchase there. They made a mess of it, each giving off sounds of annoyance when nothing seemed to steady them, then –

Splash.

Light found himself surrounded by water. Freezing cold salt water that seemed to sober him up immediately. L was tangled with him beneath the water and it took them a second to catch their bearings, but when they both resurfaced, they did so just in time to hear –

"I'll save you –!"

"Matsuda, no –"

And yet another ominous splash as Matsuda joined them in the water.

Now that he had the clarity that only being dunked under the glacial tides could bring him, Light realized how bizarre they must look.

Matsuda surfaced, sputtering a bit and then realizing that he could stand up in the water – that's how shallow it was – and he grinned sheepishly.

"I guess that was kind of stupid?"

"Yes," both L and Light agreed in unison.

"You all look like idiots from up here," Naomi told them, sighing as she stood up and nodded back toward civilization. "There's a gas station with a gift shop in it near the train that should still be open – let's get you fools dry, hm?"
It was easy enough to trek through the shallow water and back to the beach, although every moment that they were outside it seemed to get colder. They shivered as she purchased beach towels, brightly colored hoodies, board shorts and swim shoes; they were the only articles of clothing that the place had to offer and it was better than being drenched and shaking. It was still more than a little bit chilly once they'd changed, but it helped when they used their towels as blankets as they made their journey back to the station.

Naomi corralled them into the train, and though Light tried to stay sitting up like a decent human being, it seemed Matsuda and L had no qualms. They ended up using him as their pillow; L's head was on his shoulder and one of his arms was curled around him to keep him close, while Matsuda disregarded posture entirely and laid his head in Light's lap. As the ice seeped out of his veins, his body seemed to remember that there was a great deal of alcohol still in his system, and it made itself known once more.

He didn't have the strength to shoo them away, but he complained to Naomi about them both—though she seemed more entertained than sympathizing. Light couldn't be sure how articulate his criticisms even were, or if he'd truly managed to vocalize them with any coherency whatsoever.

It was only when Light woke up as the train pulled into Tokyo Station that he realized he'd dozed off at some point, his own head resting on L crop of damp hair.

Watari was there to pick them up from the station, opening the door to the car and then watching them stoically as they each climbed into the back. Naomi took the passenger seat and eyed them from it as they squeezed in together, each a tangle of long limbs. Light had managed to get the seat by the door so that he wouldn't end up between the two obviously clingy drunks again—but even so, the two dark haired men gravitated toward him in any way they could, slumped over one another and clutching at whatever limb they were closest to.

Looking back, Light would remember being awoken by Naomi's laughter at some point, the cold air hitting him as they stepped out of the car, the way the elevator made his stomach fall to his ankles and how good the warm bathrobe felt against his skin after he'd peeled himself out of the tourist clothes. Other than that, walking into and through Ryuzaki's building was blur of motion, of barely-there touches and the sound of someone giggling from time to time.

So he wasn't entirely certain how he'd come to wake up in a strange bed with L's face pressed into his stomach, buried in the fluffy white fabric of the robe Light wore as morning light crept through the curtain. The world was still muggy and soft for the moment, alcohol still buzzing through his veins, but comfortably so; it was too easy to succumb to the warmth, curl closer and fall back to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: This chapter is long and fun, with touches of serious times when Light is lamenting about his life. But mostly cute/funny stuff, right?

Hopefully you enjoyed the break in drama, because shit will be going down yet again very shortly.

Please let me know your thoughts on this chapter - was your favorite part the Matsuda stuff? Light's general snobbery when faced with real world things? Or him finally loosening up a bit? The drunk phone call or perhaps when they fell in the water?
Perhaps the way it ended? Of course, favorite lines and dialogue is appreciated. :) I'd like to know if anything actually made you laugh.

Nilah

P.S. Also thanks to Artemesia for fixing the horrible errors in this chapter!
“Losing is a much more powerful teacher than winning.” – Orson Scott Card

It took Light several long moments after first returning to consciousness to pry his eyes open. When he did, he found that the detective beside him was no longer pressed against him. He was turned away now and his face was pressed into a pillow instead, dressed in a soft white bathrobe identical to the one that Light was currently draped in as well. His tongue felt acidic, his throat was raw, his eyes were bleary and his body ached all over – though after confinement and heat, that was starting to be its constant state.

Searching his mind, Light realized that he hadn’t really forgotten anything about the night before. The transitions were gone – he couldn’t quite remember walking up to the elevator or the walk from the car to the building – but each place where he’d stayed still was a landmark in his mind. Naomi had driven off on her bike after they arrived at L’s tower, and then Watari had led them to one of the floors specifically designed to be living quarters. He’d offered them robes, but Matsuda had collapsed on the nearest couch in the tourist clothes without bothering. Light remembered methodically undressing, before starting over to the nearest bed. Ryuzaki had tried to say something to him in protest, but had ended up crumpling onto the bed just after Light had. Watari had been decent enough to pick up the clothes they’d discarded and close the door behind them.

He remembered everything that had happened with Matsuda at the beach, calling Ryuzaki on a drunken whim, falling in the water, the entirely too affectionate train ride home – and, of course, how the man had made a fool of himself by showing up drunk as some sort of childish peace offering.

Looking at the back of L’s head, Light did feel peaceful, so he supposed, in a way…

…L’s plan it had worked.

He couldn’t help but feel endeared by it, however imbecilic the notion had been, because the thought process behind it came from a place of acceptance. It meant that L understood, and was even receptive to the idea, that he could imagine that Light would hate more than anything to be out of his head in L’s presence again –

God, why was that so -?

What the hell gave L the right to just -? To just waltz in like this and break down every part of him that had reconciled with the notion of being alone?

Who said you could make me feel like this? How dare you make me want to kiss you so badly?

That was probably what the man had been going for. He’d thought ahead in ways Light hadn’t been able to at the time, had assumed that Light would come to this conclusion and be – mildly – charmed by it. Had known that it would have this effect on him, the conniving little—

It was infuriating to a degree that made him want to strangle the bastard in his sleep, because he
really didn’t want that at all. The contradiction had burrowed itself, arrow-like, into his chest, its teeth sinking and refusing to release; he was so tired of the confusion, he just wanted to make sense of himself.

Light gingerly pushed himself up into a sitting position, his eyes and temples throbbing as he did so. The more awake he became, the more aware of his body he was, each tender place making itself known.

It wasn’t as bad as most people made it out to be, Light decided, but that could have been him thinking to the last month and a half of relative torture.

His eyes searched for the time, and landed on a digital clock that read just passed ten in the morning. Beside the clock was a large glass of water and two pills, no doubt left for him by their enigmatic caretaker. A glance over his shoulder told him that a similar set up was on L’s bedside table as well.

It had been about seven or eight hours since his last drink, so he was well and truly sober, but he didn’t feel like himself just yet. Light could still smell the salt water on his skin and the alcohol on his breath, could feel the specks of sand here and there that still clung to his legs after wading through the tide.

Light gathered himself up and stood slowly, not ready to face the still sleeping detective just yet (if he wasn’t faking just to avoid him for the same reason ), then made his way into the bathroom for a shower.

Looking in the mirror was a mistake – his eyes were slightly bloodshot and he still appeared to be horribly tired, his hair matted from drying without conditioning of any sort. Splashing his face with cold water brushing his teeth and combing his hair did wonders, but he still didn’t look his best. Walking into the task force looking this was not an option; Too many of the people he respected would be working diligently and he had no desire to show himself to them in such a state.

He turned the shower on hot and letting it run for a while, hoping the steam would clear his head. He took off his watch and set it on the counter carefully, not too close to the edge or the bowl. It was mostly water proof, and hadn’t seemed to have stopped working, which he was relieved to see. He’d forgotten to take it off before falling asleep the night before—unsurprisingly –and it had made indentations on the smooth skin of his left wrist.

The fingertips of his right hand traced over the indentations, and Ryuzaki’s face came to mind for no real reason at all.

No reason whatsoever for an Omega to think of an Alpha while touching their wrist.

Not a damn one.

For the next several minutes, Light sat on the edge of the tub as the water beat against the tiled walls and the smooth bottom of the tub, pattering hollowly against the bathmat. He wanted to shower, but he also felt a strange distance to the idea - part of his mind was still in the next room. Ryuzaki was a mystery –L wasn’t even his true name – and not knowing anything about him was maddening as well as intriguing.

Perhaps that’s all this was. Light finally taking interest in something that challenged him; it didn’t have to be anything else. That’s what he’d been telling himself, for the last couple days, for the last couple months. They didn’t have to be ‘perfect together’ or soulmates or anything more than a fascinating partnership, and yet -
And yet, thinking back on L’s voice in his ear was physically arousing. There was no delicate way to skirt around the issue. He was undeniably attracted to Ryuzaki in a way he’d never really experienced before. There may have been moments with Takada, glimmers of something, but he hadn’t allowed himself to entertain the idea back then. His second gender had been terrifying and romance unimportant in general when he looked at the larger picture, of work, of justice, of just passing the time before he choked on monotony.

He could blame it on biology, that was true, but if that were the case, certainly there would have been others. He was surrounded by Alphas in his field. Was he just attracted to L’s mind then? Well, his mind and his voice?

And perhaps occasionally the way his hands moved, elegant in an odd way, long fingers and smooth palms. Occasionally, Light’s eyes were also drawn to his shoulders despite his hideous posture, his prominent collarbones leading up the line of his neck. It wasn’t a bad face, either, except for the startlingly large, black eyes –

Perhaps a few things other than L’s mind then.

Fine. Fine, he could deal with that. He was attracted to L and that was just a fact of life now, wasn’t it? It might have been easy to leave it at that, to accept that it was what it was, and to just move on. There was no need to complicate matters, no need to reassert how lost in his own body he was.

But L was on the other side of that door right now, and he’d never quite given him an answer. He’d called him, but all they’d done was bicker and flirt awkwardly.

He didn’t owe Ryuzaki anything. Perhaps though –and it seemed such a outlandish thing to be tormented about after all this time –but perhaps –

There was a knock on the bathroom door, two quick raps of hard knuckles on wood.

“Light-kun has been in the bathroom with the water running for fifteen minutes, but he has yet to actually get in the water. Is something the matter?”

“You’re rich, what do you care?” was Light’s immediate response, speaking over the water. He rubbed at his eyes, then paused, looking up at the door. “How did you know I wasn’t – ah, the sound.”

“Yes,” the voice agreed. “Next time, Light-kun may want to opt for a bath if he intends on running up the water bill unnecessarily. It’s much more difficult to tell that way.”

“Noted.”

There was silence after that, and instead of getting into the shower, Light reached in and turned the water off. He couldn’t explain his aversion at the moment, couldn’t quite understand why he didn’t just jump in and wash away everything that had occurred the night before.

He stood up and made his way to the door. It opened inward, so he let it fall open the rest of the way, only realizing how warm it had become in the bathroom as he did so. L was still standing there, which was somehow not a shock, and for some reason it was almost as hard to meet his eyes as it had been the day after his heat. All they’d done was slept in the same bed, but somehow that was just almost as intimate.

As always, he managed it, no matter how uncomfortable it was. Light straightened the bathrobe around himself, then crossed his arms and leaned in the doorway, taking the man in.
Ryuzaki looked the same as he always did – he’d even dressed in his signature ensemble already. The only difference was that his hair was more matted and his eyes more tired than usual.

"My phone is ruined, thanks to you,” Light told him, and while he wasn’t sure why that was the first thing that came to mind, it was the truth. His phone had been in his pocket when they’d fallen into the water. It was likely unsalvageable.

"Light-kun called my emergency number. We would have had to destroy it anyway,” L replied flippantly, shoving his hands into his pockets. “I'll buy him a new one.”

Light’s eyebrow twitched upward. "You will, will you?"

"Yes,” L confirmed, then looked up at the ceiling. “Rather, I'll have Watari purchase one."

“Right.”

“It should also be noted that Watari is the wealthy one, technically.”

This nugget of information was more than he’d expected and it had come out of the blue, for no real reason in particular. L stood there in front of him, not looking at him, close enough to seem engaged in this interaction without being so close as to trap him in the doorway.

The body language was subtle but Light knew what to look for, knew how to read the signs of someone treading lightly around him. His father had been doing it, though without as much delicacy. Despite L’s apparently unsophisticated appearance, he always seemed completely aware of himself in the same way Light did – always knew exactly how to hold himself to garner the desired response from those around him.

It was irritating that the man felt the need to consciously consider his actions, his proximity, to make Light feel at ease in his presence – but what was ever more irritating was that it seemed to be working.

Decide. Yes or no. Maybe leaves you open, leaves you thinking too hard, doing stupid things like last night.

Light’s crossed arms loosened, though they did not unfold completely as he considered what to say next. Clearly, this was where they were supposed to have a discussion of some kind. He considered opening with some sort of preface – “Let’s sit down” perhaps, or “we should talk” but they both seemed elementary and predictable.

So, he decided to start off with a demand.

"I want you to be honest with me. As honest as someone like you can be.” He shifted his shoulder against the doorframe, and when L looked at him, he caught his eye firmly. “I'll try to do the same.”

If Ryuzaki was caught off guard, he didn’t show it. He looked at him passively for a moment, before turning on his heel and going back to the bed. The detective seated himself on the bed, surprising Light when he didn’t pull his legs up to his chest right off the bat. His shoulders seemed to be falling, overall posture straightening, though it was still nowhere near what it should have been. It was veering in the direction of someone who simply spent a lot of time on computers, rather than someone that was part ape.

Light’s eyes narrowed at him, feeling his skin prickling slightly at the sight.

“I can’t make any promises, but I’ll certainly do my best,” L informed him, pressing his thumb to the
corner of his lip. “If you do, of course.”

Is this you trying to be honest with me? A lot more has been asked of me that it has been of you – it’s only fair for you to give something up for me in return. Your safety net. I want you as unprotected as I am when I’m with you.

It took a moment for him to think of where to start – how to redefine, to redraw the lines that had been skewed by their personas. Neither of them were ever entirely themselves while in the company of others.

"Do you still think I’m Kira?” Light finally asked, outright. “Even a percentage point counts, so don’t try it.”

L had the audacity to hesitate before replying, somewhat reluctantly. “”No, not anymore. We wouldn’t be having this conversation if I still suspected you.”

"No, we wouldn't,” Light agreed, “But you think I could be. You think I have it in me."

"I think many people have it in them,” L started in that almost detached way; the way he might have spoken to his father on the subject. He seemed to catch himself, his mouth pulling tighter into a frown. “But yes, I do think that you in particular have the intelligence, the twisted moral compass and the ...tenacity."

Tenacity. The drive to murder, and murder, and murder again for a noble cause. Somehow it was both compliment and offence.

“'You wanted me to be Kira, didn’t you?” Light questioned, gaze hardening again.

He wasn’t sure what he’d anticipated might be the answer – perhaps that L would say something rude and sulky and that Light would want to hit him again. Maybe L would lie to him outright, tell him that he had been completely objective in his suspicions of him, and Light would know that it was a lie and want to hit him again.

But he’d expected a little more than the calm, quick, unwavering “Yes.” that Ryuzaki gave him.

"Is this usually how you seduce someone? Tell them you think them capable of murder – tell them you wanted them to be your ... supernatural to-the-death nemesis of some kind?"

The prospect was laughable, but then, he supposed (considering Kira and all of the things he could somehow do) not all that invalid. That thumb was at L’s mouth and he was tilting his head, a small smile tugging at his lips.

"Is it working?"

Flirting again already? Honestly. Light would be the one to dictate when and if the flirting would begin. He was trying to set things straight in his head, he couldn’t proceed with his decision – if he had even decided – until he lay a few things out on the table.

"No. Kira is an abomination, even if I do understand the basis of his actions. He deserves to die.”

L peered at him quietly for a moment after his grin had faded, and though his face barely twitched, Light had a feeling he was thinking reproachful things.

"That thought pattern is only proving my point."
"I know; I don't care, it's the truth," Light gave a slight waving gesture with his hand. He was being a bit – abrasive. More aggressive with his wording that he usually was outwardly. This was a subject he could be frank about without too much difficulty, when it wasn’t his father or …co-workers. “Execution might be too good for him, actually. He’d probably go down as a martyr at this rate.”

"Yes, that's an unfortunate reality." L commented, but his eyes took on a disinterested quality. He didn’t like thinking about the current hopelessness of the Kira case – it depressed him. Light was briefly aggravated by the sulking and it only spurred his next question on.

"If I had been Kira, would you have executed me?"

L hesitated, blinking, "I thought you didn't like to think hypothetically."

Light ignored the evasion. "You said in your broadcast - well, Lind L. Tailor said it, but I'm sure you dictated his words - that you would ensure his execution."

"That was a long time ago."

Another evasion. L wasn’t playing by the rules.

"You're not answering my question," Light snapped, brow creasing.

"Fine.‖ L sighed, leaning back on the bed, which only stretched his long torso out more, pulling one leg up to brace his heel on the mattress. “Yes. I did briefly considered how I might present a case for capital punishment against an Omega - I don't know if most world governments would go for it. You must realize how few Omegas are put on Death Row – and those that have are still in prison awaiting execution; it simply hasn’t happened. Why are we talking about this?"

"When did you figure it out?‖ The questions were coming easier now, as were L’s answers.

"That you were an Omega," L clarified.

"Obviously," Light tucked his arms a little closer to himself. L’s dark eyes flickered to them briefly before raising back to his eyes. “Did you manage to get into my safe somehow - have you known from the beginning?"

"No, I figured it out one night - it was nothing you did or didn't do –“There was a poignant beat that Light didn’t miss, a breath where it didn’t belong. “Consciously. Your disguise was very well crafted."

"Consciously," Light felt himself bristle at the thought that he’d done something overtly Omegan in L’s presence without thinking about it – that he’d done anything without thinking about it. “Are you implying there was something I did subconsciously?"

"Unconsciously."

What? When I was unconscious – asleep? When was the last time that I was asleep in his presence, that isn’t exactly a common thing, despite last night. Of course, when I fainted, and there was that night I fell asleep on the desk and L actually broke a teacup on purpose just to grate on my –
"...When you dropped the teacup." Light realized, moving a bit to change positions against the door way. Staying still too long still made him stiff. He needed to stay active, after confinement, and he hadn’t done his physical therapy routine since the night before.

"Indeed."

The idea was more mortifying than he cared to display. Light restrained the cringe that wanted to tug at his features, glancing down at his fingernails in a fashion meant to look idle. "What did I do?"

"I went to wake you up, and you leaned into my touch."

"Perfect. So you breaking the teacup was a professional courtesy."

"An unprofessional courtesy."

His stomach curdled and he scowled, "Because you were suddenly interested."

"I was already interested."

Light’s unpleasant facial expression faltered, not entirely sure what to say to that. It wasn’t that farfetched – plenty of people had been interested in him as a Beta, but it was also so much easier to place the blame on his gender. He hesitated for a moment, gaze leaving L’s for a fleeting moment.

He considered just going for it, for whatever, it wasn’t like L would stop him – obviously, he was wanted. L wanted him. He could draw this out or cut it off, and either way L would still be there, treating him the way he always had. Perhaps, though, with a new layer, new touches, a new side to them both that was as thrilling as it was alarming.

Instead, to keep leading the conversation, he changed the subject again.

"You tortured me."

"A means to an end," L didn’t even seem offended by this, though he scratched the back of his head. Was he uncomfortable with the attack? Well, it was about time he was the one on the defensive. "Surely you, of all people, can understand that."

He could. Of course, he could, but it had been necessary to get that out. To let it stretch out in the air between them as an assertion that he knew, he remembered, that it was still in his head to an extent. It
would be there for a while, he was sure, talons in the back of his head, but he wouldn’t allow it to change him. It had been to further the case with Kira, and Light could understand every choice L had made, even if that murderous bastard Kira had basically invalidated it with his broadcast.

Light pushed himself away from the wall, his lowering to his sides. His eyes were firmly on L again, glowering at him as if the man were responsible for what he was about to do entirely. He wasn’t though, this was Light’s resolution, independent of any outside factors like instinct, meddling detectives and magic killers.

For fucking once.

It only took a few steps to close the distance between them, to put his hand on the man’s knee and push it down, then plant his own knees on either side of the man to straddle him. The entire time he’d approached, L’s face had been mostly blank, but this had those dark eyes widening.

“This doesn’t mean I forgive you,” Light asserted, then lowered his head to kiss him.

It was neither timid nor heated; it was firm and curious as he took in the feel of L’s mouth against his own. There were hands on his waist, pulling him gently closer and Light let them as he flicked his tongue against the man’s bottom lip. He’d kissed before, and he’d found the act mildly enjoyable, though he’d never loved the prospect of wet tongues flailing against each other. He had no interest in climbing down anyone’s throat or vice versa, the way their mouths gave against one another was a soft kind of intimacy that seemed natural, seemed right.

Light broke the kiss, but didn’t open his eyes; he wasn’t entire sure when he’d closed them. There was a span of quiet, one that consisted of nothing but their breaths, before Light felt L’s forehead brushing against his own.

"We're probably bad for each other."

"Maybe we are.” L didn’t bother to disagree, just drew him in and kissed him again, lingering. His lips brushed against Light as he continued, hands never still, tracing the line of Light’s hips with his thumbs through the robe. “I’m quite willing to take that chance.”

"You've been speaking normally, this whole time.” Light’s fingers slid experimentally in the thick dark hair, leaning back for a moment to meet L’s eyes. “No third person, no ‘Light-kun’."

"You asked me to be honest,” replied the detective, giving a one shouldered shrug.

Light kissed him again then, harder this time, and L responded in time. There was still something soft about the older man’s mouth, the way it gave and pressed and pried. The little wisps of tongue here and there were not overbearing and when the teeth dragged over his lip it was in little nips and scratches, even when L’s hands all but clawed at him to bring him closer. Light’s hands wound in the thick tresses, fingers tightening; the groan the reverberated against his mouth was rewarding. Even someone like L could make sounds like that - it was good to know.

The dark tresses his own fingers were wound in still smelled of the salt water they’d fallen into. When L’s hands dropped, slid down his sides and over his thighs Light felt warmth pool suddenly in the pit of his stomach.
He couldn’t remember the last time he’d been physically aroused in someone’s presence; outside of heat, it was a nonissue. He didn’t have time, couldn’t care less, didn’t have the interest, but L’s hands
*dragged down his legs over the cotton of his robe and that was –*

Once again, Light moved away, this time without his breath entirely intact. One of his hands slipped out of L’s hair as he did so, then lowered to tug at the tie of his robe until it unfastened and fell open.

Dark eyes were on him, trailing over the line of the new skin that had been exposed and then yanking up to the ceiling. The hands tightened and for a second, L pursed his faintly kiss-swollen lips.

"Light-kun must think I’m a saint."

"Kind of hoping you aren’t, actually,” Light countered, grasping one of L’s wrists to pull his hand away from where it was on his waist, only to put it in almost exactly the same spot – this time beneath the fabric.

“That’s –“

L didn’t finish, just pressed his hands flat to the line of him, had his other hand join it and grabbed, hauled Light further into his lap and proceeded to caress every indentation with his palms and fingertips. The places he touched were left warm in the wake of his skin, first up his ribs to brush over the darker circles of skin fleetingly and then back to trace over his shoulder blades. They reconnected the kiss as his hands dragged downward, the touch lighter as he moved over the curve of Light’s backside, then down a bit, between his thighs to ease them open further.

Breath hitching, Light broke the kiss again and rolled his shoulders, until the robe fell away. He watched the flicker of L’s eyes, and was pleased that he’d surprised the man. Light helped L remove his shirt as well, the man’s hands leaving him reluctantly only to return immediately. No, not quiet immediately. They moved forward to claim the skin again, then hesitated for a moment, before pressing smoothly back to the skin of Light’s sides.

*You looked surprised - did you not expect me to take it this far?*

“I’m not sure how it will be, with my suppressants.” Light told him quietly, as vague as possible. He’d avoided sex in part because he hadn’t been how the suppressants would work during intercourse. If he true aroused and a person saw him self-lubricating, then it would be a dead giveaway – now, however, he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to produce enough slick even if they tried.

Light pressed kisses over L’s jaw to disguise the fact that he was planning on hiding by the man’s neck as this progressed. If L saw through it, he didn’t complain, and Light enjoyed the shudder he managed to pull out of him. There was power in this too, he was finding, pressing his hands over the visible ribs and but the nearly gaunt chest, then his shoulders.

One of those hands left his hip and L suddenly leaned over to the bedside table, pulled open a draw and plucked a container of lubricant.

It was only Light’s raised eyebrow that made the man explain himself.
“Despite my sometimes childish demeanor, I am a grown man with an average libido. It’s not such an odd thing to have.”

*True. I suppose it’s difficult to imagine you in here masturbating so regularly.*

“Do you happen to have a condom in there?” Light inquired, remembering that such a thing was the general protocol for casual sex – if that was even what this was. It didn’t seem casual, it seemed… intense in a way that all of their interactions were; even their flirtations seemed almost deliberate at times.

For several seconds, Light could almost feel the beast of an Omega tearing his way out of him. Yes, yes, yes, it chanted from the depths of his primal self. The prospect of L inside him, all smooth skin and heat, was enough to make his stomach coil hotly. Light licked the back of his teeth and prepared himself to offer it, strangling the eager part of him and hoping he sounded fucking practical and not like the prospect of L coming inside him was perfect, *perfect* –

“I’m on birth control.” The wording felt graceless on his tongue. It annoyed him, that he had to say these things out loud, but he’d fucking *decided* on this, damn it, and of course neither of them had exactly planned this, but – “…I’m clean.”

*Obviously.*

Ryuzai paused beneath him for a long moment, but Light could see his hand tightening on the bottle of lubricant. If it had been opened, no doubt it would have leaked all down his hand – no doubt the Alpha in him was fond of the idea as well.

“…There’s no reason I need to fuck you right this moment,” L swallowed hard; Light watched his Adams apple dip. “There are many other things we can do.”

With that, Light was kissing him to shut him up and also to calm his own nerves. He was aroused and nude across L’s knees, his heart in his ears as he dragged L closer once again by the hands in his hair. Hands were back on him for a moment, slipping between his thighs to brush against the delicate skin and smooth over the hardening length of him, just tender teasing touches before L pressed away to spread the lubricant on his fingers.

Light once again hid in the crook of the man’s neck, distracting himself with kisses as one of L’s hands slid up and down his side, memorizing every line. The other dipped between his cheeks and pressed against the pucker of muscle there, fingers slippery and delicate but sure.

The man spent an obnoxious amount of time circling the flesh there, kneading at his entrance in soothing repetitive motions that were much too pleasant for how simple they were. Light was about to reiterate – get on with it – when L pressed a long finger inside, smooth and deep. Light’s breath stuttered in his chest and his fingers tightened in L’s hair.

“Alright?” L breathed, pressing his mouth hotly just below his ear.

“Yeah – *ah* –” Light shuddered bodily as he pressed the finger deeper, bent it at the knuckle and oh –
L remembered where his prostate was and that wasn’t a shock, but how very sensitive it was even now without the heat in his veins was. He felt his hips twitch of their own accord and he bit his lip to quiet himself as L pressed in and out in shallow motions, again and again. The tip of his finger dragged again and again over the bundle of nerves within him and when one finger turned to two – which was uncomfortable, he found, though he didn’t bother voicing it – Light ducked his head and gasped against the skin of L’s shoulder.

It didn’t take long for Light to realize he needn’t have been concerned for the state of his body. The lubricant had eased the way, but his body was now doing the rest, growing more and more wet with every pass of those fingers.

A third joined the first two and that hurt, fuck, that hurt, but Light just panted against the line of L’s throat and made himself tilt his hips as if it wasn’t an unpleasant sensation. Damn it, wasn’t this what his body was made for? Why was that stretch so painful? L’s mouth was on his throat, kissing warm lines up and down and nipping at his ear and he just – fuck, he didn’t to get the pain over with and at this rate it was going to take ages –

Light reached down and undid the zipper of L’s jeans, murmuring against the shell of the detective’s ear. “I’m good, let’s just get you out of these.”

The growl in his ear was almost enough to make him forget the horrible ache inside him. The fingers slid out, and in a frenzy of motions L was pulling himself free and coating himself generously with slick. Light secured his arms around those shoulders to keep himself steady, and it made him feel a bit better to see L’s hands quivering before they pressed to his hips and guided him into place.

He didn’t push Light down, just let the tip of him position again Light’s opening. From there, Light let himself sink, but if three fingers had hurt this was – worse. This didn’t ache, it seared, split him open and made his legs shake as he attempted to lower himself.

_Just do it, fuck, it doesn’t matter, it’ll get better once you get used to it, just get it over with—_

Arms tightened around L’s shoulders and his breath choked in the back of his throat as he kept the pain in to the best of his ability. His eyes stung as he managed to take in another in but even with the lubricant and slick combined there was resistance causing acute pain to spread up his spine. L’s hands slid up and down his sides and then halted when they reached Light’s legs, feeling them quake beneath his fingers no doubt.

“Does it hurt?”

What do you think?

“It’s –hnh, fine,” Light managed, and L’s entire body seemed to wind up.

“That isn’t an answer.” He grasped Light’s legs a little more firmly. “Does. It. Hurt?”

“I said it’s _fi—ne_.” Even as Light tried to force annoyance into his voice, the assertion that he was fine cracked sharply when he tried to take in more.

“It isn’t fine,” muttered the detective, and Light felt the unpleasant pull of his walls as he started to leave. The outward motion was even more uncomfortable than the inward. Even though Light bit his lip, a strained sound pulsed in his throat, which no doubt reaffirmed L in his decision. “I’m pulling out.”

“Wait -for the love of God –“ Light started breathlessly, but before he knew it L’s cock had left him entirely and he was left to catch his breath. “I didn’t say you had to do that.”
“You didn’t tell me I shouldn’t,” L stated coolly, leaning back to take in Light’s face.

Light didn’t like being scrutinized. He bit out, “I’m not going to beg.”

“Apparently, you aren’t going to complain either, even when you should,” L was actually glaring at him, as if he’d done something wrong. “Here I thought we’d decided to try honesty, for once.”

“No, that wasn’t—” Light huffed, drawing back and averting his eyes. “Fine, it hurt. A lot. I was trying to bear with it. What do you want from me?”

“I want you to tell me how I can make it better.” L’s voice lowered with frustration. “This is going to be better than before. You’re not going to suffer this.”

Light narrowed his eyes at the man, opened his mouth to respond and then shut it when he felt the fingers back, tracing down the cleft of his cheeks. Light’s eyes flickered back open with surprise.

“So you’re still going, just not—?”

“You were alright with two, weren’t you?” L murmured, leaning in to press his mouth to Light’s collarbone. “We’ll go back to that, for now.”

Light released a breath, pretending it was a chore, irritated by the tenderness but also secretly relieved.

“Alright.”

Instead of immediately sinking the fingers back in, L was grasping his hips and turning them both, lying Light on his back. For several seconds, L was above him and Light’s vision was of lean lines and strong arms and dark hair.

“If you can’t tell me when I’m hurting you, I want to watch your face the whole time,” L informed him, eyes focused and penetrating him. Light’s stomach twisted uncomfortably at the idea. “I know you don’t want that. I am attempting to do this on your terms, but that is my condition.”

Light rolled his eyes at the absurdity of it. “Fine—whatever, I’ll tell you if it hurts. Happy?”

“Delighted,” L drawled, then put a hand on Light’s hip, pushing a bit to lead him into position. “Now, turn on your side. We’re going to try this like before. It’s easier.”

*Like before.* That was another thing that stroked the baser parts of him for no real reason in particular. Light swallowed and turned onto his side and L slid into place behind him, but unlike before he pressed a leg in between Light’s to keep them slightly parted as his fingers pushed back into place.

They slid deep, just the two of them and that felt **good.** Light’s back arched and he pressed cheek to the sheets, his fingers curling in the fabric to steady himself.

“Does this feel good?” God, that voice in his ear was going to absolutely ruin him.

“Yeah—*ahh*—” Light breathed out the answer and was cut off as the tips of those fingers pressed against his spot and ground there, leaving his lungs without oxygen and his vision without focus.

“Good, just…*there,* is this alright?”

“Yes, I said yes, just—oh, fuck—*knhn*…” Light turned his face further into the fabric and inhaled sharply there as the fingers curled and moved, starting a fluid, shallow movement so that each press left him without enough air. He felt his own hips reaching toward the touch, felt the mouth at his ear,
pressing kisses to the skin just behind.

“There you go.”

There he went, a blur of warmth and pleasure as those fingers worked him open. Just that was enough when L pressed so precisely, and Light bit out his moans into the sheets just like before. The wet sounds were low and vulgar under the parade of sounds that came out of Light’s mouth and the low nonsense that came out of L’s. After a while, it felt like two fingers were no longer enough, and he managed to breath out a demanding complaint about L’s infuriating cautiousness as a way of asking for it.

Slower than before, and only after more application of lubricant, Light was accepting all three without any genuine discomfort. It took getting used to, but he was learning how to open up, and when he did – god, when he did, he was spoiled for anything else.

He felt himself rising toward completion, felt his stomach collecting heat and tension pulling taut there in preparation. L slid an arm beneath him, pulled him closer and let that hand drop to curl around Light’s erection. Light bucked and he grasped L’s arm, clenching a bit on the still effortlessly thrusting fingers.

“Ryuzaki, don’t, gnh, if you –“ He closed his eyes tightly, felt himself already growing close with just the man holding him while those digits pumped into him, and he didn’t want it to be over, but he did, but he didn’t. “I’ll – I’ll come.”

“That’s rather the point.” The reply was amused, almost a chuckle, and three or four strokes later a whine strung out between Light’s clenched teeth as he came into L’s hand. He could feel the fingers even more clearly as he convulsed around them, left gasping and shuddering as L massaged his prostate through every spasm of the aftermath.

Light felt fluid, every muscle in him seeming to release. He caught his breath just as the detective was sliding his hands away, and Light caught the one that had been around his cock to get his attention before he pulled too far away.

“Go on,” Light told him, licking his lips. He tasted salt. “I…might be able to take it now.”

There was a short hesitation. “This isn’t something we have to do this very moment –“

“I know that,” Light snapped at him, casting a sharp glance over his shoulder. “I know, you’ve made that clear, now shut up and just try it again, will you?”

He did, after once again lubricating himself to the point where Light might have called it excess, pressing the tip of himself inside.

“Slowly, slowly,” L assured him, though his voice was rough with restraint. “Not going to go any deeper than this – is this good? Try to open up for me.”

After a few disjointed thrusts, hitched breaths and groans as L controlled the speed and depth to the best of his ability. His fingers dug into Light’s hip, managing enough so that the ridge of his cock raked over the sensitive spot inside of him with every little motion. He felt himself hardening again despite having only come minutes before, aching and starting to squirm when the motions wore at the sensitive place inside.

“Come on, let me, that’s it. Do you want to try it a little deeper?”

Light managed a delirious little nod. The hand that had been on top of his hip slid down in a
purposeful motion, as if he’d thought about doing this exact thing before, grasped the underside of Light’s knee, lifted and pulled him open. Light gave a choked sound of pain at the gnawing soreness that crept up his spine as L pressed in a little further just once.

“Too much?”

“Fuck, I – yeah, I can’t –” Light admitted, tensing up a bit until the fullness retreated back to a comfortable level.

“Sh, sh, that’s fine – good,” L kissed his neck heatedly, saying ‘good’ like one might say ‘thank you’ and only pressing those few inches that Light could take in, again and again. “Go on, go on, just like this.”

Just like that, for another series of pleasure hazed minutes, rocking together in languid motions like the gentle tides of the beach they still smelled of.

“I won’t last much longer.” The voice in his ear assured him, an edge to his tone that has more attractive than it had any right to be. “You still want me to -?”

Fuck you for making me say it, you idiot, you bastard, fucking hate your stupid voice and hands and–

“God, shut up, shut up, I – yes, just –” He heard himself whisper, trying to hold onto his words as they threatened to slip away from him. The motions were shallower, quicker, never leaving him entirely, and so tip of L’s cock only worried his prostate more and more with every second the older man grew closer.

L gathered him closer, pulled him hard against his chest as his motions grew slightly more erratic, but he was never so clumsy as to take more inches than he’d been allowed. Before long, L was groaning into the nape of Light’s neck, clutching him tightly as he came inside. Though Light had not managed to come a second time, heat of L’s seed filling him in a way that was divine bliss on a visceral level that he couldn’t completely comprehend or deny.

It was several long minutes of neck and shoulder kisses before L eased himself out of him. It was yet another few before the Alpha drew him into the shower to finger him open under the translucent guise of hygiene until Light was coming again and trying even harder not to cry out now that the acoustics were so unforgiving.

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It went on like that for the next several days. Light came back to work on the Kira case, postponed his resignation with the excuse that he needed more time to recover and draft a delicately worded email to his superiors, and each of them worked later than anyone else could manage to, which was nothing new. When the last person had left –generally Naomi, who also appeared to have no social life to speak of – they retreated to L’s quarters to continue their explorations.

The second night, while Light was still annoyingly sore, they kissed and felt one another up like adolescents and then spoke about a dozen topics at length, from the ludicrous notion of brain power burning calories to the possibilities of Kira’s supernatural powers, before Light inevitably became too tired to carry on and had Watari drive him home.

Another night was full of lazy, open-mouthed kisses as they used their hands on one another, tasting every breath the other managed on their tongues. One night, they didn’t make back to bed at all; L
had him on the couch, on his back with Light’s knees hooked over his elbows as he took him slow and deep, until Light ripped the fabric of L’s cotton shirt at the shoulder while trying to keep the finishing cry quiet.

It was intimate, but it was also exhilarating, in the way that the tennis match had been. Heart racing, blood singing in his veins, Light sometimes couldn’t believe how much damned fun sex with the detective had turned out to be.

Even so, he didn’t spend the night in L’s bed at all and he wasn’t questioned about it. The question had probably crossed the man’s mind – most questions probably had, to be fair – but he allowed him to go without comment. Light needed his space, but even more than that, he needed to be able to recover from his night terrors in peace. If there was anything that could break the spell of this affair, which had been going so well, it was Ryuzaki witnessing his reaction to a nightmare that was induced by trauma L had technically caused.

On the fourth night, while coming home from Kira headquarters, Light received a call from his father at two in the morning. He hesitated to answer it, but it was so late his mind jumped to the possibility of an emergency.

“Light – you’re still up.”

“Yes,” Light confirmed, however redundant it was. “I am – it’s a bit late for you, isn’t it, dad?”

“I haven’t been sleeping well, since that day,” He could hear the breath, gruff and heavy, as it fell from his father’s chest. It was obvious what night he’d been thinking about. Light supposed it couldn’t have been easy on him either. He wondered if his father saw his face contorted in terror in the middle of the night. “I thought perhaps you might be having the same issue.”

“I’m headed home – I was working until a few minutes ago.”

Light thought he saw Watari’s eyebrow quirk in the rearview mirror, but it could have been his imagination.

“I see. Of course, you’re very dedicated, I should have known.” There was a pause on his father’s end of the line, but one that held the significance of someone who was not yet done talking. “Both you and Ryuzaki are quite diligent young men.”

He could guess what his father really wanted to ask about – it had been almost a week since their talk about the NPA. He’d been able to tell Mogi without much trouble, but that was just one unimportant person. The man had blinked at him several times and frowned, taking a while to let it sink in, before thanking Light for telling him and then getting back to work. It had been by far the most casual reaction Light had encountered.

“Listen,” Light started out, bracing himself. “I just need a little time before I tell them to get my words together. I still intend to do it.”

“This isn’t about that, Light, no – well, not really.”

Light let himself breathe for a moment. “Oh, I apologize for presuming.”

“… I have responsibility to you as a parent, but also as Chief of the NPA.” His father’s voice sounded tired. “I’ve tried to be a good father to you and to your sister, so I’m – I’m sorry, if I’ve allowed my job to get in the way of that.”

The sentiment seemed out of place. Was his father trying to say that he’d changed his mind? No, no,
of course he hadn’t but – perhaps he was trying to show some solidarity. To show that he had thought about how it would affect Light. Perhaps he even wanted Light to bring up how much he loathed the idea of coming out as Omega to the NPA.

Unfortunately, his father didn’t know his son’s mind; Light would never confess anything of the sort.

“You’re just trying to do what’s right.”

Cliché, Light though, but that was what his father’s entire mindset boiled down to.

“I know, I just feel…” His father trailed off for a moment. “I support you, Light. I’m proud of you. I count on you more than you probably count on me. I just want you to know that. As long as you’re happy, then no matter what, no matter who, inspires that in you, I just…”

“Dad, you sound really tired,” Light told him as gently as possible when his father had a break in his stream of exhausted babble. “You should really try to go back to sleep.”

“…You’re probably right.”

“Give Mom and Sayu my best when they wake up. I’ll come have dinner again soon, when I have the time.”

“Good night, son.”

“Good night, dad.”

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“It’s Valentine’s Day tomorrow,” L announced as he shifted against him, which only made one of his boney shoulders press painfully into his side. Light moved until he was comfortable again, securing his arms behind his head to prop himself up.

“Today,” Light corrected, disinterested.

“Is Light-kun going to get me chocolate?”

Light scowled at the wording. Now that he heard L so often in private without it, it grated on his nerves to no end.

“No, I’m not a girl.”

“I suppose I’ll have buy some for you then,” L informed him, propping his chin on his chest and peering up at him with wide eyes. Light moved one of his arms to swat him away, rolling his eyes and staring at the ceiling.

“I don’t like chocolate.”

“I suppose I’ll have to eat it for you.”

Light snorted in amusement. “I see. Ulterior motives.”

“That’s quite harsh,” L mumbled, thumbing his bottom lip. “Light-kun seems to be implying that I’m not romantic. I find that to be an unfair judgment.”

“Life isn’t fair,” Light said flippantly, his gaze once again pulling toward the ceiling. It had been a
week now since the dinner with his family and he still hadn’t written his resignation letter for the NPA. His father wouldn’t let it lie for much longer. From below, Ryuzaki’s head tilted to prompt him; Light supposed he wasn’t being very subtle about his mind being elsewhere. There was no harm in it at this point. "I'm going to quit the NPA."

There was a considerate interlude before L stated, "Yes, I thought you might."

"Of course you did,” Light scoffed, though he couldn’t bring himself to be startled by the revelation. “Not going to try to talk me out of it?"

"Do you want me to?"

"No."

"Besides,” L intoned, trailing a finger down to wipe away a line of perspiration. “Doing so would hardly suit my purposes."

Light’s mouth quirked. "Your purposes."

"If you're amendable."

“To what, exactly?” Light taunted, raising his eyebrows.

“I apologize – I was under the impression that Light-kun was a brilliant man,” L frowned exaggeratedly. “If he isn’t able to figure out what I’m offering, then he isn’t fit for the position.”

Light knocked L off of him, aggravated mostly in jest. “I will leave right this second –“

“But Light-kun –“ L simpered mockingly, grasping Light as he started away and pulling him closer, while Light semi-reluctantly allowed him to.

“And if you don’t stop saying ‘Light-kun’ repeatedly, I might have to punch you again.”

The work day consisted entirely of those that did not have a significant other that they had taken the time to visit. Light’s father was spending the day at home with his mother, while Mogi and Aizawa did the same with their wife and girlfriend, respectively.

Naomi was lounging on her stomach across the couch, her laptop in front of her and her legs kicked up behind her as Matsuda sat in a chair nearby with his shoes off and his headphones on. Light had to wonder if he was even doing his work – keeping up with Kira sites, blogs and any video or social media that might be relevant to the case – or if he was just paying around.

Not that Light could really blame him. While he and L both had their own projects that they were working on simultaneously, they also had a private online chess match going on in a separate tab.

After Light’s confinement and the subsequent hack that had proved Kira to be more resourceful than ever expected, the Kira case had lulled to nothing. It was nearing the end of 3PM and Light was working as much as was possible, considering the lack of new information. Kira killed people brutally now as he always had, but they were just as much at a loss for how he did it as they were
nearly three months before.

At some point, L started tracing his fingertips over the line of Light’s knuckles idly. They couldn’t be seen from this position, at least not in enough detail to draw the attention of the two across the room from them.

“We could go away, just for a bit,” L offered quietly, turning Light’s hand over and tracing the life lines on his palm, the smoothing the pad of his thumb over his wrist. Light felt a warm shiver rake down his spine and he was tempted.

“They’d probably suspect.”

“They might actually enjoy some alone time themselves,” L pronounced slowly, as he tucked his chin onto his knees and looked up at Light through the fringe of his hair.

Light raised his eyebrows and glanced over to where the two of them were sitting. Occasionally they would look up at each other and laugh, obviously communicating in some way through their computers privately the same way L and Light had been earlier that day.

“You think?” Light jerked his hand back, flustered when L pressed harder on the scent gland beneath the delicate skin of his wrist. “Perhaps there’s something, but I doubt they’ve acted on it.”

“Even so, we have and should continue to do so,” the corner of the man’s mouth pulled upward. “We could consider it a lunch break.”

“We haven’t made any progress today. We need to get some work done – we’ll have plenty of time tonight.”

Light enjoyed being withholding from time to time, even if it was something he wanted as well. Just for the sake of it, he stood fast on his position, uncrossing and crossing his legs again to draw L’s attention to them as he sulked.

A sudden shout from across the room broke them both out of their flirtation.

“Holy -Whoa, hey, I – this is crazy, guys come look at this!”

“Matsuda,” Naomi started, tone placating, “That video of the sneezing cat was very cute, but I hardly think it’s –“

“No, not that!” Matsuda hopped up, shoving his laptop down haphazardly onto the coffee table. He all but sprinted over to one of the computers with a larger monitor and typed a keyword intp the search. He pulled a video up just as Naomi joined them. It looked like a low quality video taken from a cell phone. “They’re all speaking English, and there’s no subtitles, but it’s pretty straight forward –“

“That won’t be a problem,” L said, as the shaky camera shot steadied and came into focus.

It was a simple scene; a pale, overweight police officer in what appeared to be some sort of rural U.S. area. Someone in the back seat was recording the incident on their phone as he questioned them, mostly asking the woman driving to show him her I.D., but even after she’d handed it over he didn’t say why she’d been pulled over. After she’d asked him a few times to explain what she’d done wrong, he asked her step out of the car. When she hesitated, he repeated the demand again, louder and more aggressively, which only scared the woman into staying place.

Light's English was rusty, but he caught up a few seconds after the words were spoken, translating in
his head. “Please remove yourself from the vehicle or I’ll have to – “

The rude police officer suddenly cut himself off mid-sentence, and though Light couldn’t see clearly due to the quality of the video, he had a sinking feeling he knew what that might mean. A weight dropped into his stomach and he almost flinched, wanted to look away. It seemed to be the same expression that had come over the judge, just before –

The police officer too out his gun and the woman screamed, holding up her hands in surrender, but the man didn’t point it at her. Instead, in swift mechanical motions, he put the gun in his mouth and shot himself.

“Oh my god,” Naomi breathed, closing her eyes.

“As gruesome as that was, Matsuda-san,” L droned from beside him. “I don’t see how it was relevant. It’s just another death to log into the system –“

“But this isn’t the first video I found like this – actually, if you look it up –“ Matsuda’s fingers were fast on the keys, though he mistyped a few things and had to backspace. “Officer Shoots Self in Missouri. Cop Kills Himself In Texas. Public Suicide of Police in Northern Ireland – Canada, China, Japan. I didn’t even see all of these a minute ago! I – wow, this is bigger than I thought.”

Naomi released a breath and started back over to her computer. L and Light spun back to face theirs as well, immediately starting their own research on the subject. There was a flurry of tapping keys, of new information being found almost live – it seemed that all of the deaths so far had occurred within one minute of each other, worldwide.

“Every victim seems to have some sort of history behind them – outright dirty cops, those that have abused their power, an ‘justifiable homicide’ that was questioned, even some that were just accused of beating their wives or mistreating their kids,” Light told them all once he’d looked up over a dozen of them.

Naomi chimed in with her own information then as well. “In countries where police don’t have access to guns, like in Britain and New Zealand – these corrupt cops who were never removed from the force or charged died of heart attacks instead.”

“Presumably,” L muttered, “Because they didn’t have access guns, if we’re subscribing to Matsuda’s theory that the heart attacks occur when the original method does not –

In that moment, L phone went off. He glowered at it for a moment, before putting it to his ear.

Right after that, Light’s new phone – the one that L had promised and had Watari deliver - rang as well. He pulled it out of his pocket and saw his mother’s number.

“Mom, what is it?”

“Light-kun – “ L turned to him in the same moment, the expression on his face one of pure shock, a look he didn’t think he’d ever seen so clearly on the other man before.

“Light – your father, h-he’s had a heart attack.”

There didn’t seem to be enough air in the room. The sound of his mother’s voice, racked with sobs was in his ear and he did not think that was something he could handle.

“Is he - ?” The words didn’t want to come out of him. They choked in his throat, as if his tongue were made of sandpaper.
“The ambulance came, but they said – they said it was too late,” her voice wavered and cracked and Light’s eyes stung, indignant, horrified, sorrowful, angry tears forming at the corners of his vision. His grip tightened on the phone he expected to deny it, to feel as if what his mom was about to say was impossible. Instead, absolute clarity descended on him and mind shook with the force of the idea, the awful truth of what had occurred. “Light, oh god, Light, he’s gone.”

Kira murdered my father.

Somehow Kira knew about the false execution– possibly through his apparent connection with Misa or through yet another near impossible hack– but the how didn’t matter. That was the only explanation for why; his father was an upstanding police officer and father, but if all Kira had known of him was that he’d been willing to kill his own son -

Light slammed his fist onto the desk – and it reverberated through the room loudly, ringing in his ears and what seemed like the cavity that had formed in his chest – then hid his face in his arms and silently wept.
Light Yagami is on the roof.

The news certainly was not what L had been expecting when Quillish instant messaged him at two in the morning, and at first the words in the little text box that popped up on the screen looked absurd. It seemed to be an almost comical sentence, until the meaning of it hit home.

It had been about ten hours since Light received a phone call from his mother regarding his father’s passing. Coincidentally, this had also been nearly the exact moment that Quillish had chosen to inform him that Yagami Senior had pressed his emergency belt button in what was later proved to be his last conscious moments. Light had curled over, a cry of rage and sorrow ripping out of him, before going completely quiet.

L had watched; he hadn’t known what else to do. Naomi and Matsuda had been of a similar mind, though they each had tears in their eyes as they watched the young man before them. L had wanted to hold him, but he knew that such a thing would never be appreciated.

“There are several things I need to arrange,” Light had murmured when he’d finally stood up. Though his eyes were somewhat swollen and pink from tears, there had been no other sign of distress on his features. He’d retreated behind whatever veil made him feel safe. “Please excuse me.”

He’d left then, and L hadn’t followed. He’d watched Light’s form retreat and then dismissed the other two, though all they did was get back to work, researching the new development, logging the new deaths and watching the videos that were available. It was probably for the best, even if they hadn’t been in the right mindset for it.

Total, Kira had killed eight thousand one hundred and twenty-eight police officers. Every single one of them had either shot themselves or, if they hadn’t had access to a gun, died of a heart attack at precisely 4:00PM in Japan on Valentine’s Day.

8,128.

A perfect number. How romantic.

Each victim was someone the internet was already saying the world could do without. They were the cops that used their power to their advantage; almost all of them had been accused and acquitted of crimes more than once. Some of them had been taken in for abusing their significant others, typically Omegas but some Betas, but had been released when the victim had been threatened into retracting their statements. Some of them were racists who had killed unarmed men and women, called it justified, and went without charge. Some were in cahoots with drug lords and mobs, though organized crime had dwindled quite a bit since Kira’s birth, and some had been accused of planting evidence – or destroying it entirely.
Then, there was Soichiro Yagami. A faithful, honorable, good man who’d been murdered along with the rest of them. A few dozen other Japanese policemen had been killed, most of whom were already being investigated by internal affairs, but Soichiro’s death had no doubt brought his character under suspicion.

There was no way to tell them that Soichiro was exactly the man that he had always seemed to be. No way to let the world know that he had never strayed from what was right, that he was innocent of the crime that Kira had condemned him for.

The fake crime that L had organized to prove once and for all that Light Yagami could not be Kira.

… Now, Light was on the roof, and in an instant L was abandoning his laptop on the bed and making his way up.

While L was almost certain that Light was not the sort to ever commit suicide—*that would be losing, wouldn’t it?*—it did cross his mind for a split second that Kira could be controlling him. It was out of character for the supernatural killer, as Light had not done anything wrong—to the best of L’s knowledge—and besides, having him commit suicide was such an ordinary way to kill someone. Not karmic at all.

Even so, he made it up to the roof in record time.

It seemed a cruelty in and of itself that the night was clear, the moon shining on the young man’s figure without a single cloud to obscure it. It didn't fit the tragedy that had occurred, the death sentence of an innocent man at the hands of a maniac with a God Complex and the power to make his childish vendetta a reality. The chief’s family cried, and the yet the sky would not.

The glow of the city beyond shined against Light’s silhouette, casting yellow and white hues over the fall of his hair. No doubt the last several hours had been tiresome—the eldest son was generally in charge of the arrangements in a time like this and Light was not the type to fall short of his duty.

L’s presence had not gone undetected. Light’s head turned until he could glance over his shoulder at where L stood in the doorway, still unsure whether or not he should approach.

“I wasn’t going to jump, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

*Not quite, though it did cross my mind. What are you doing up here then, Light? You came all the way back to my building but went up to the roof instead. Did you want me to come find you?*

L realized that he had instinctively fallen into his exaggerated bad posture. Perhaps it was a self-defense mechanism, or perhaps he had gotten used to taking on his character—a collective caricature of his most notable traits—whenever he went outside. It was a habit now and, even after a week of letting it drop around Light, not one that was easily broken.

"Light," L started lowly, stepping forward a few paces. He didn’t know what to say, in truth, other than to apologize. No matter how galling the prospect was, being responsible for the death of his lover’s father certainly seemed to call for some sort of contrition. “I want to .”

"Don't."

The word was quiet, but seemed to ring in L’s ears. He paused mid-step, then settled his feet down and stood a yard or so behind Light. It was cold out, especially this high up, but L ignored the weather for the moment. Light had a jacket on, hugged close around himself as the brisk wind ruffled his hair.
"What should I not do exactly?" He inquired lowly, watching Light’s jaw as it twitched in irritation.

"Don't apologize," Light replied, his tone flat as he turned again to lean forward, eyes cast over the city. "Don't make this about you."

"I'm not sure how apologizing for my part in Kira's false information regarding your father is making this about me."

"Oh, yes, it's all your fault," Light’s voice rose now, seemingly directed at the city below, perhaps even at the Kira that might reside there. "The great and powerful L controls every string in the world from behind the safety of his curtain - isn't that right?"

L hesitated at the ferocity in Light’s tone, secretly glad to hear it. "Solitude ensures survival."

There was a cold laugh on the younger man’s lips.

“Depends on what you’re running from,” Light sunk forward, arms on the railing as the wind picked up. L finally urged himself to move again, until he was at Light’s side and looking out over the streets and buildings that made up the horizon. “We’ve both been alone, but we’re powerless, even now. Don’t try to say you’re not – he’s beating us. Both of us. You haven’t been able to do a single thing to stop him.”

As if I hadn’t come up with that depressing thought all on my own. As if it hasn’t been on my mind for seven years – how little impact I’ve actually made. They used to say there wasn’t a case I couldn’t solve, then they said I was a madman for considering that Kira existed at all. I’m not sure if it’s worse this way – for them to know that he does exist for certain, but also know that I have not been able to catch him.

"I think that’s becoming increasingly obvious," L muttered blandly. His toes were starting to grow cold; he probably should have prepared himself better for standing on a rooftop in February. Instead of complaining, he simply shoved his hands deep into his pockets to conserve what little heat he could.

"You don't control anything, least of all Kira's actions. So if you fucking apologize to me for the false execution that Kira misinterpreted, because he decided that was his job --" Light sucked in a breath sharply, something intense building up inside his chest. After a moment, he seemed to reign whatever it was back in, his shoulders lowering from their high, tense position. "I will...seriously want to hurt you."

"Will you punch me again?"

"Not yet; it wouldn’t be much of a punishment," Light lifted his hands, peering down at them. "I'll get stronger first. I'll train, then attack you when you least expect it."

"Light-kun is quite devious," L found himself teasing momentarily, but even that felt heavy on his tongue. For the first time in a long while, he realized that he truly wanted to apologize. He wanted the horrible weight in his chest gone, wanted the other man to hit him again so that he could be agitated rather than feel this black, pervasive dejection. "However, I hardly think it's healthy to ignore the part that I played in the information that was."

"Healthy? You're telling me what you think is healthy?" Light snarled callously, stopping L’s words, suffocating them where they lay in his throat.

"Oh, I could blame you – "
Light went on, threading his fingers through his hair harshly, and tilting his head back up toward the sky. Even like this, tortured and exhausted, he was lovely in a way that was simply unfair. L had thought this several times over the past week, like how Light could hide in his shoulder during the throws of passion and still be the most attractive –

“I really could, and part of me wants to. It would be so easy.” L watched Light pull his hands out of his hair and press his face into them as he took a long, deep breath. “But then Kira wins.”

Slowly, his face resurfaced and his eyes opened; the reflection of the moon was shining in them. Light continued for L could contribute any further.

“That’s just another fucking thing that Kira has ruined, another thing he’s taken away from me and I can’t stand that.”

That was it, wasn’t it? L was expecting Kira to take Light away from him. This tentative thing that they’d built, however, lovely, felt uncertain. As bright as it burned, it was also volatile, even fragile in a way. L had been expecting something to snap, perhaps been hoping for it so that he could blame Kira, could stew in his rage rather than drown in the tremendous shame.

It was a childish idea, but he had never claimed to be anything less. He wanted to shove his own culpability down where it couldn’t be anything more corrosive, wanted Light to be angry with him so he could be defensive.

But Light had not misdirected his anger, and so L had to deal with it. Had to remember every detail of his own mistakes whenever he looked at that lovely face and remembered that he was indirectly to blame. Even if he stood by his decisions, could defend the logic to the last breath, that would never erase the consequences.

It would be selfish of him to expect Light to yell, to throw things or attack him, just to assuage his own guilt.

"…You're right."

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear that,” Light blinked in an over-the-top fashion that L could appreciate, but also that bothered him immensely, given the subject matter. “Could you repeat yourself, please?"

"I most certainly will not,” L groused. The cold weather was already harsh enough, making him raw and sensitive to Light’s taunts. Not that he didn’t deserve to give them – he had more of an excuse than he’d ever had. “We should go inside – you must be freezing.”

This time, Light’s expression was more genuinely confused, as if the prospect hadn’t really occurred to him. L supposed that was to be expected. L could not imagine what he might not notice, if Kira managed to kill Watari. Light was already so forcibly detached from his emotions, it was a wonder that he’d managed to cry the way that he had – it had been a sudden onslaught of emotion. It had burst out of him like a break in a dam, but he’d been able to patch the breach up with a quickness that was terrifying and heartbreaking.

“I suppose I am,” Light admitted, frowning. “I hadn’t noticed.”

“Come in – Watari likely will have left us some blankets already.”

The man was quiet intuitive and well prepared. It was no surprise to find that there were two blankets, apparently fresh from the dryer, folded neatly just inside the door. L stooped and picked them both up, and resisted the urge to wrap Light’s around his shoulders first. However tender it might have been to someone else, he doubted Light would appreciate being babied, even – especially
– after a blow like this.

They made their way down the stairs that led to the top floor; it was an empty place with harsh corners, large windows and long beams that cast menacing shadows in the moonlight. L was just starting to warm up, when an unanswered question came to mind.

“What were you doing up on the roof?” He asked, turning his head to peer at the Omega who looked much too sweet wrapped in the blanket in such a way. L refused to think about it, but it was funny how little thoughts like that buried into his head and wouldn’t ever leave.

Light stopped behind him, higher up on the steps. L stopped as well and tugged his blanket around his shoulders a little more tightly, stopping a few steps below and turning toward him. Above, Light seemed to consider his answer, looking through one of the large windows as though considering

“I wasn’t going to jump,” Light reasserted quietly. He’d decided to be honest with him apparently; L could see the choice as he made it, Light’s features softening to an expression close to wistful “But sometimes I like to come up someplace high and thing about it. Just to show myself how easy it would be - to jump the rail and have it be over. To remind myself how delicate it all is, and how easy it would be to lose it.”

One of Light’s hands slid up to grasp the railing, leaning against it tiredly.

“Then I think - what about the pedestrian who happens upon me? What about the man who has to scrape me off the ground? What about my mother, my sister, what about every criminal I might catch in my nonexistent future, and every victim who might not have been one? What about every person who has ever looked up to me? I was the top student in Japan; I had a good family; nothing bad has ever really happened to me.”

His lip curled, “If he can’t make it through this world, then who the hell can?”

That last sentence was almost mocking, though L couldn’t quite tell if it was contempt for the nonexistent person saying it or the subject, himself. L had a strange relationship with narcissism and self-loathing. L could relate. Sometimes he wondered if the two were inseparable siblings, or perhaps star-crossed lovers, but then he remembered that he was not a poet.

“Suicide isn't cowardice, but it is selfishness.”

You say that with such a callous finality, Light. Much the same way you speak of capital punishment, in fact, without allowance or compassion. I've see the traces of it, I know I have. You aren't without feeling. Have you beaten it out of yourself?

“Unless you go and just disappear. Leave a note to tell them not to bother looking… I don't have it in me to vanish. I've always wanted to make some sort of positive impact on society. That isn't unique; plenty of people want that.” His tone turned sardonic – this time L was sure he was making fun of himself, his younger self that had dared to have such a common dream.. “To change the world. But I wasn't driven by any actual sense of altruism.”

No, you wouldn't be. You've done good things, but not for the sake of doing good things. Like me, it's the mystery that makes it all worth it. Solve the puzzle, win the game.

“It was because if I didn't, if I didn't have a purpose, if I didn't actually manage to do something that meant something, I might actually be bored out of my mind. That sounds like a hyperbole, but it isn't. I could feel it gnawing at my consciousness since I was a child. I could feel it eating away at all of the genuine, good parts of me.”
L watched him speak from below – and he did like to go on, didn’t he? Pretty words and grand speeches were part of his personality – and couldn’t help but notice that his voice had grown a little deeper over the course of his sermon. It was a distinction that L had taken into account when they’d started trying honesty; the voice that Light put on for the world was slightly higher, softer, more controlled. It was meant to put those around him at ease. He came off as aloof, but never quite impolite, and it was largely due to the way he presented himself.

“It's all useless anyway, isn't it?” Light murmured, frustration beginning to wear at the otherwise gentle tone. “I used to want to change things too, because this world is –“

The younger man didn’t have to say it – the disgusted expression on his face said enough. Whatever adjective he’d been planning to use, it had inspired a glimmer of pure repulsion on that otherwise flawless face.

“…No matter what Kira intends, can one man actually ever change anything?” It was a question that L had asked himself more than once – he’d decided at long time ago that the answer was ‘no’. “Crime and war have decreased ever since he started, and even more so since the East West Festival, but it'll all go back to the way it was, once we catch him, won’t it?”

Though he assumed that Light was being rhetorical, L contributed anyway, “Yes.”

Light’s nose curled with the force of his scowl, his fingers curling into fists. For a moment, lines creased his features, and L thought that - for a split second – he was very close to ugly. But even at his most hideous, his most vicious, L could not help but be enraptured by the sight he was allowed to see, this wondrous secret Light that no one else had been exposed to.

“I'm going to make sure Kira dies for all he's done, no matter what."  

I thought you’d say something like that. I’m hardly a beacon of maturity, but even I can see how young you sound when you say things like that. I've sounded like that before, but I can look objectively at myself and realize my own failings – I can wear them with pride or compensate for them, because I do not fear them.

You do, though. Your own faults terrify you and you bury them in hopes no one will see, but they fester there instead.

"You,” L murmured, taking the few steps up to close the distance between them, enraptured by the fierce expression on his face. He’d looked almost wild in that instant, those eyes alive and shining with malice, and L felt nearly overwhelmed by the desire to touch him. L started to extend a hand toward him. “…are such a hypocrite."

Let them breathe, Light, at least with me.

Light’s eyes flashed and he swatted L’s reaching hand away with an outraged sneer.

"You're one to fucking talk."

"Yet even knowing that, I think – “ L turned over the phrase in his mind, retracting his hand for the moment, his voice airy and thoughtful even when Light tried to elevate it. It was a juvenile notion, but one that had crossed his mind nonetheless. No, ‘cross’ implied that it had been there and was now gone; this idea came without warning, then rooted itself in his brain without reprieve and made itself his truth. “…No, in fact, I'm positive.”

Light’s lip only curled further, eyes burning vividly, so very ready to retaliate.
"Positive about what, exactly?"

L pointed a long finger up at the ceiling, perhaps hoping that putting on a comedic air would soften
the impact of the words that came out.

"I am in love with you."

L watched the lines of Light’s face soften in shock, the petulant spite there wiped clean. He looked
absolutely taken aback; it appeared to be the last thing he’d expected L to say. To be fair, L hadn’t
quite expected to say it either, but he’d always been one to wear his shortcomings openly. There was
no use in hiding or trying to change.

"You're - ?" Light stumbled over his words, which was rather pleasing to watch. He caught himself
quickly, his brow dropping to furrow into an annoyed expression. Even that, however, was
uncertain, as if he wasn’t sure if L was telling the truth. “Don't be stupid."

"But I am,” L informed him without delay, reaching up again and drawing Light close when he
wasn’t pushed away this time. “I'm so stupid."

The other man had said it before, that they were bad for one another, but it was still a chance L was
willing to take, one that he would never be satisfied to cast aside. Loving Light Yagami despite
(because of, especially for) his imperfections would likely prove to be a fatal flaw. But every person
had to die somehow. He’d risked his life trying to catch Kira – it only seemed right to do the same
for Light.

He kissed him there, long and slow, and at first Light seemed reluctant, as if he wanted to talk about
what he’d just said. L’s fingers slid behind his ears, his thumbs brushing his cheekbones, mouth
coercing tenderly until Light gave up and kissed him back.

Before long, L was tugging him down the stairs, then to the elevator, by his sleeve. They paused in
corners to breathe one another in, pressed close in the elevator in a flurry of shallow, warm kisses.

When they made it to his bedroom, L drew back to allow them both room to calm down. He seated
himself on the bed, but before he could do more than that, Light was beside him and pulling at L’s
collar to bring him into another kiss.

Light was putting his mouth on L’s jaw again, working his way up to his ear in the way he did when
he was planning on hiding – L had allowed it thus far, the way Light ducked into his shoulder or into
the sheets and did everything in his power to muffle his cries.

“Fuck me,” Light murmured into his ear, and L felt the heat he’d been trying to calm in his stomach
smolder. It was lewd and honest and L wanted nothing more than to do it, to press him into the bed
and press into him all over again. To make a night out of it, because they would have to, because
Light had to be worked up to taking all of him, he’d learned that the night on the couch –

What exactly are you trying to do to me, saying things like that? Trying to earn back your control by
making me lose mine? I’m afraid that isn’t going to work.

“You should sleep,” L told him quietly, putting a hand on Light’s chest and pushing to meet his eye.
Light was irritated with him, but clearly not ready to back down.

“I don’t want to sleep.” Light informed him coolly, and then his mouth pulled tight, ridiculing him.
“And you love me, don’t you?"

I did ask for your honesty, didn’t I? Even the cruel side of you is preferable to the fallacy that you
show the world.

L frowned, “I didn’t say that so you could use it against me.”

“But you must have known I would,” Light countered, and kissed him again, deeper this time, gripping his hair to keep him close. He pulled L toward him and started leaning back, but L planted his palms on the mattress and spoke against his lips rather than kissing back.

“You need sleep.”

It was then that Light sighed, but not out of exasperation like L had been expecting. He didn’t let go of L’s hair, just slid to the side again and put his forehead to L’s shoulder. He was exhausted, L was sure, physically and emotionally.

“…I’m not sure I can.”

While L could not be entirely certain why—though he could deduce that sleep didn’t come easily after traumatic experiences—he didn’t need to be aware of every aspect of Light’s mind.

“I’ll put you to sleep then,” L agreed, and then proceeded to undo the buttons of Light’s shirt.

L had him on his stomach before long, his fingers keeping his cheeks apart while he used his mouth to draw the slick out of him. Light had been hesitant at first, but now the pillow was crumpling in his scrambling fingers, his knees digging into the mattress as he tilted up into the motion of L’s tongue. While Light usually didn’t have a scent due to the suppressants in his system, his lubrication did and L could have spent the whole night there tasting him if he had a mind to.

Instead, he used his fingers once Light was wet enough, prepared him and had him coming so that he could loosen up before they tried the next part. When L deemed him ready, he smothered Light between himself and the sheets, flattening him to the bed and murmuring into his shoulder as he worked in slowly. The younger man was not accustomed to this yet, and he could feel his walls twitching down on him despite how wet and open he was. He had to get Light to relax before he could press in all the way, and L was more than happy to give him the practice, but this wasn’t like it had been on the couch. They’d had all the time in the world then, and L had fucked him languidly for ages before he’d gotten used to it, until he’d been able to take him to the hilt.

Light was still sore from that night; he could tell when he eased deeper. He was barely moving, just restrained little circular motions even when he managed to press in all the way.

“You don’t have to be so nice about it,” Light told him from below when he’d paused to let him catch his breath, coming up from where he’d been biting into the fabric before to taunt him.

So insistent that I hurt you, yet again. I don’t think you’re a masochist. Do you think it relieves you of your shame if it’s not all good? I’m not going to absolve you, Light. You’re going to enjoy it when I touch you.

“Alright,” L muttered, but all he did was take a handful of Light’s hair at the nape of his neck and pull, until his head was tilted back far enough so that closing his mouth was—while not impossible—incredibly uncomfortable. Then he slid his hand around, cupped his chin and hooked his thumb over the bottom row of his teeth to keep it ajar.

Then he ground against his prostate again, drawing a clear, finally unobstructed noise of pleasure out of Light’s open mouth. Light panicked then, reaching to grip L’s forearms. L could see the flush in his ears, because he was already so close to his second orgasm, and Light knew he’d asked for it, though it wasn’t what he’d expected. L didn’t let up, though his motions were no harsher than they
had been minutes before, barely moving at all. He rolled his hips, giving just enough so that the friction worried at Light’s spot endlessly and to actually hear him react was lovely, beautiful in its vulgarity.

L held his hair firmly, just enough to keep his head tilted back, groaning deep in his chest as Light cried out toward the headboard. He was keening sharply as he got closer, his body quaking and writhing under him in the most delicious fashion, strangled shouts echoing through L’s chest as surely as they did in his cock. Light didn’t have the mind to protest the new exposure for long, instead clutching at the sheets as he all but sobbed out the ecstasy that he wasn’t allowed to hide from this time around.

God, it was no wonder Light bit into anything available to stifle himself, because the poor thing could not shut up.

“That’s it, Light.” Every sound Light made had the strings of L’s own arousal pulling tight and though he doubted he could come with so little movement, that voice was certainly testing the limits. L’s own voice was lower, gravel in it as he spoke quietly into the Omega’s ear, encouraging him as he ground the tip of himself in little circles against Light’s prostate. “Is it good?”

L moved his hand away from his chin so that he could tell him if it was too much, if it hurt at all, and although Light couldn’t quite manage a nod, or even a coherent yes, he did reach back to bury a fist into L’s hair and pull him close.

“Ahn—ghh, a-ahh —!”

“That’s it, let it out. Go on.”

He came like that for the second time, with L at his shoulder reassuring him in hushed tones, and when he felt those tired muscles clenching on him, it was very close to the end of him as well. Not quite, however, as he had a bit more stamina than all that and he hadn’t actually done much moving, but soon all of the tension was falling out of Light’s body yet again, his breath growing shallow beneath him.

He was exhausted, and L had done what he’d set out to do. He slid out, slowly, and the sound the slick made as he did so was obscene in a way that yet again was very close to bringing him over the edge. He rolled over beside Light and started to take himself in hand, as it wouldn’t take much to just —

“I’m still awake, you idiot.”

Light barely looked awake from where he lay on his stomach. L looked at him in the dark and half expected him to be angry with the stunt he’d pulled – Light did enjoy lying to himself, and being so loud had left him unable to do so – but instead he just looked aggravatingly adorable; he was heavy-eyed and tranquil beside him even as he twisted around to lie on his side, facing L.

He slid a long leg over L’s hip to draw him closer, whispering, “You haven’t finished yet.”

“You’re sore.”

*And clearly exhausted. Why are you fighting it?*

“Mhm,” Light mumbled, not bothering to argue, just drawing L closer between his legs. L was struck by that expression, soft and sleepy and unrefined. He could fall asleep to that face, or wake up to it, and he didn’t think he’d ever tire of either.
“Is Light-kun attempting to be benevolent?” L bit back a groan as Light took him between his legs and curled closer, tried to tease him back inside as he pressed his face to L’s collar drowsily. Perhaps he’d thought reverting to third person would help him keep his head about him, but Light his next words had L unraveling entirely.

“Selfish, actually,” Light corrected and this time L couldn’t stop the deep moan that resonated in his chest as he realized what was being asked of him, again, and for the love of –

L led the tip of himself back inside, then finished himself off with a few quick strokes of his wrist. L closed his eyes as his vision went pale and blurry, tucking Light’s head under his chin as he held him tight, fingers digging into his thighs. Even when Light couldn’t carry on with actual thrusting, the Omega still wanted this, and it was such a pure, personal thing, one that spoke to their primitive sides with an honesty that neither of them was usually secure with.

“Deep?” L asked, feverish and senseless as the first wave escaped.

“Ynh, yeah –“ Light gave a quiet little gasp against his neck and clung to him as he rode up smoothly and finished there, L shaking with euphoria as he held the man close. He thought he might have babbled something into Light’s hair as his orgasm overtook him, possibly said again that he loved him, but the world had lost all focus and reason. He filled Light, but he was the one that felt flooded, emotion swelling inside him as he clutched him desperately, apologizing physically in the way that Light had never allowed him to verbalize.

His sight came back to him first and his mind followed, but by the time he felt fully in control of his faculties again, Light was fast asleep.

It took a few moments of consideration, but eventually L decided he might as well sleep too, while he could. There were only a few hours left before the young man would have to be up and he didn’t want risk waiting the soundly sleeping man by moving.

Morning came too soon.

It felt as though he’d blinked and it had arrived. Waking up felt like the end of something more than just sleep.

The mechanics of sliding out of the younger man when they were finally both awake, then out of bed, then into the shower seemed to pass by like the scenes in a silent film. Even the shower, while full of lazy kisses and soft, intimate touches, seemed to happen as if in a dream rather than in reality.

L didn’t attend the wake, he didn’t want to have to explain what he was doing there even if the Alpha in him didn’t want to leave Light’s side, but he rode in the limo to drop Light off.

It was a ritual, as all funerals were. He’d been to a few over the years – too many, always too many.

It was all part of the job; he’d always known that. He’d chosen this life for himself, and he’d never failed so horribly. Kira had killed more people in one minute than he had in the last seven years the evening before. It wasn’t a mistake. He was calling attention to his cause, he was planning something even bigger than this. This was a statement, a pronouncement of his cause more clearly than anything else had.

Kira’s slow Karma had been clever patience, burrowing in the heart, mind and lives of society. The festival had been a show of his power, a demonstration.

The slaughter of over eight thousand corrupt officers had been a declaration of cause, proof (in Kira’s mind) that he’d been listening to the cries of the people to punish those who abused when they
swore to protect. This had been his way of saying ‘Trust me alone; I am the only one that can truly defend you’.

But how?

*Over eight thousand people in a minute? He’s truly that powerful – has he gained more power, or has he been that way this whole time?*

A sense of foreboding crept into L’s mind as he waited for the memorial service. While the wake and cremation were generally an affair for family and very close friends alone, the memorial was where his coworkers and friends would show their respects. It was just after nine in the morning when Quillish deemed it an appropriate time to arrive at the Yagami house. There were already several others arriving, already a good deal inside from what he could tell, each of them clad in dark colors.

He and L entered together, and though Watari was in his customary black suit and didn’t look at all out of place – L had opted out of it. He’d consulted Light on the matter, and the younger man had rolled his eyes and said ‘wear what you want’. So he had, even if he was the only one wearing white so casually.

Sayu Yagami stood beside her brother with her chin high as they greeted each person who entered, bowing almost in unison at times.

“Thank you for coming,” they each greeted, playing their roles with stoic perfection.

When it was L’s turn to be greeted, he felt awkward about the eyes that were trained on him as he shuffled up to the two of them. Sayu looked like her brother in a way – though her hair and eyes were darker, the shape of their eyes was nearly identical and their noses looked very close to the same. She was smaller, but just as long-legged proportionally, willowy, and almost regal even in comparison to the man beside her.

L couldn’t help but wonder how much of that was her, and how much of that was her channeling her brother, who looked even more princely than ever in his dark suit. No wonder he almost never wore black – he looked much too fetching for a funeral.

“Light-kun,” L said quietly when he reached him, holding out his hand. He didn’t bother with the usual ‘my condolences’ either; it seemed so contrived

“Ryuzaki-san,” Light murmured in return, taking his hand firmly. L thought he saw his sister blink, eyebrows raising. Light released and bowed, “Thank you very much for coming.”

“Yagami-san,” L greeted the young woman, giving a little bow of his own.

“Ryuzaki-san?” She peered at him with interest, tilting her head before offering her hand. L took it briefly, feeling her eyes on him with more weight than it had any right to have. “My father spoke of you from time to time.”

He thought she might be surprised by his appearance, but before he could linger on the thought, she was smiling at him just as disarmingly as Light ever had.

“He would have been happy that you came. Thank you very much.”

*The Yagami family has not one but two potential threats to my sanity I see – what kind of woman is Sayu Yagami, I wonder? She grew up with Light as a role model, which I imagine is both good and bad.*
L shuffled to the side after she bowed to him, letting Quillish take his turn. He started over to the dining room, where Sachiko Yagami stood near an impressive display of snacks.

*She cooks when she’s troubled,* L thought, picking up one of the little fish-shaped cookies. Quillish had arranged for a platter to be delivered, which was not far away, but L stuck to the homemade foods. They were mostly bite-sized confections, which he could get behind. Most of the other guests at taken little plates politely, but appeared to be holding them just for show.

L had no such qualms. He took two of almost everything and then shifted into the corner to munch on his meal while several people – most of them NPA associates – regarded him with frowns.

He noticed that Sachiko went from curious, to surprised, to appraising with impressive speed. She seemed pleased that he was eating her food, so once Watari joined him, he went to get seconds.

It was a dull affair.

Vaguely, L felt guilty for thinking it, but there was nothing to be done. It was a room full of people reciting the same platitudes, or worse, whispers about why Soichiro had been killed by Kira if he was such an upstanding officer. It lasted the better part of two hours, people trickling in and out, offering their meaningless words and their polite company until almost everyone had finally filed out.

Quillish took charge of cleaning up the platters, sealing them in saran wrap and putting them neatly in the fridge even when Sachiko insisted modestly that he needn’t do such a thing.

“I’ll wait in the car,” the elderly Omega informed him, bowing once more to each of the members of the Yagami family before walking out brusquely. He almost didn’t give L a chance to leave with him, and he stood uncertainly in the entryway, wondering if he should make himself scarce.

Sayu Yagami came to his rescue, brushing her hair behind her ear and starting to cross to the living room.

“I’m going to watch the Ryuga Hideki interview now, if you’re interested – I’ve been planning on it all week, and I could really use a breather after all that,” She paused and looked over her shoulder at L. He was once again made slightly uncomfortable by her dark eyes. “Come and sit down, if you like.”

“I thought that interview was on Valentine’s Day,”

“They decided to do it in Los Angeles instead of Tokyo,” Sayu informed him as she seated herself on the right most cushion, crossing her legs and straightening out her black dress. “It’s about to be 8PM there, on February 14th, so it’s still Valentine’s Day for them.”

“Would you like some coffee if you’re staying for a while, Ryuzaki-san?” Sachiko asked, touching her son’s arm. “I’m sure you could use some, Light.”

“That would be lovely, Yagami-san.”

“Thank you, mom. That would be great.”

With that, Sachiko was making herself busy in the kitchen, but it was really just an excuse to put her hands to work. She did seem that sort – he thought it might run in the family, actually. Light did seem particularly at ease when he was working methodically with his hands.

“It is being broadcast worldwide – it’s kind of huge,” Sayu informed them as she led the way over to the couch. “He never does long interviews like this, talking about his personal life and views. Your girlfriend really scored, Light.”
“Girlfriend?” L muttered, and Light gave a long-suffering sigh as Sayu turned the television on, and brought up the correct channel. They were showing a preview, Takada’s smiling face flashing on the screen.

“I dated Kiyomi Takada for a little while in university,” Light elucidated and L felt his brow twitch despite himself as he watched the Alpha on the screen in all her elegant beauty. He hadn’t thought much of it, until Sayu chuckled and peered back at them from beneath a curtain of dark bangs.

“Wow, real subtle, guys,” She shook her head, the corner of her mouth twitching into a smirk that was becoming an all too familiar expression, just on a different face. “If you want to hide this from our mom, Ryuzaki-san, you might want to try not letting that little jealousy tick get the better of you. I hadn’t taken you for an Alpha, really –but you are, aren’t you?”

…Is that why she even bothered saying ‘girlfriend’ in the first place? Was she baiting me? I’m sure her father must have spoken about me from time to time, but her guessing my relationship with Light like this -?

“I do not know what Sayu-san means,” L stated, but didn’t bother trying to be convincing about it. Emotional intelligence is a terrifying thing.

“Right,” She smiled and settled back into the couch smugly. Light seemed incredibly reluctant to sit next to his sister for a long moment, possibly stewing in his own embarrassment.

He did seat himself after that hesitation, putting himself between L and Sayu, as if hoping she wouldn’t look too long at the way L was sitting. His sister did look, though she seemed more amused than offended, while Light’s sensibilities made him eye L’s sitting style with distaste. Now that his sister had stated she suspected their relationship blatantly, Light seemed more concerned with how L was presenting himself.

“Is it really appropriate to watch this nonsense on a day like this?” Light grumbled, all but glowering at the television.

“It is for me,” Sayu informed him quietly, and L could tell by Light’s silence that he regretted his words. She was handling this in her own way – watching the interview would give her a sense of normalcy. She could pretend that she was just a young woman enjoying a show that she would have on any other day, not a victim of Kira, not a girl that had just lost her father.

“Alright, we can watch it,” Light muttered, as if he had any say in the matter. “I’m just not sure why a movie star is getting international coverage.”

Especially in light of what Kira did just under sixteen hours ago, L provided for him silently.

“Have you ever actually seen any of his movies?” Sayu inquired, frowning. “He’s amazing – they say he’s a method actor. Like, they actually call him by the name of the character he’s playing on the set of his movies.”

Light’s brow creased. “Why was someone like that doing deodorant commercials then?”

“Publicity?” Sayu offered. “He’s really good at keeping a good public image – he’s never once been part of a scandal. Usually even the best celebrities will be caught doing or saying something out of line.”

“I suppose that’s impressive enough on it’s own, even if –“
“Hush, it’s starting.”

It was entirely too amusing to see Light interact with his sibling in such a manner, L decided from his place beside the scene. It was humanizing, just like seeing him drunk, or hearing him moan, but this was such a simple, innocent thing. Light huffed as Takada’s face appeared on the screen, as he had never enjoyed being interrupted or told to stop talking.

L could definitely get used to having Sayu Yagami around.

The interview proceeded like any other did, and L tuned it out with a large part of his mind. He accepted the coffee gratefully when Sachiko came to give it to them, then added cream and sugar until it was ready to consume. She stayed and watched for a while, as they chatted on about Ryuga’s latest superhero film, about what his next project might be. Soon Light’s mother excused herself to take a nap, kissing each of her children on the head as she retreated in a grief-stricken haze.

“Most people are dying to know how your Valentine’s Day went here in Los Angeles, and if you’d like to talk about your love life at all.”

“As you know, I’ve been very preoccupied with my work…but, yes, there is someone. I gave her a gift on Valentine’s Day.”

“How was it received?”

“I’m afraid I don’t think she knows I exist,” Ryuga laughed modestly, and Takada joined him. How absurd, their laughs said, that anyone would not know that he existed. L fought the urge to roll his eyes. “But I have a friend who often gives me love advice – he’s blind actually, and a perpetual bachelor, which makes it pretty funny to take his word when it comes to romance. Love is blind, as they say, haha!”

Takada had a distant quality to her, despite how clever she appeared to be, and sometimes she glanced back at the curtain behind her uncertainly. They were small things, but L noticed them just the same; he didn’t have much else to do but dissect what was in front of him.

While entertaining in its own frivolous way, L was quickly becoming bored and he could tell that Light was too. Ryuga was a handsome man and Takada was a beautiful woman, though there was a tension between them that he couldn’t help but pick up on. He excused this as the general friction that two powerful Alphas could incur in one another, even when they weren’t exactly competing for anything. Even that conflict wasn’t enough to make the interview entertaining.

L decided he didn’t like either of them – Takada was snooty and Ryuga was overtly friendly in a way that many celebrities were. It was fake, and his smile grated on L’s nerves the longer he watched it.

“It’s not just me on the set of those movies. Movies are about teamwork; the director is as important as the actor, the actor is as important as the stylist, or the writer or the guy that goes and gets the coffee – “ He chuckled, lifted his glass and turned his head to look back stage. “Thank you, by the way, Emilio!”

The camera panned to a crewman in a black shirt, who blushed, waved and shuffled his feet. It pandered to the live audience; they laughed and cooed and probably swooned, judging by the sounds they made.

It was all very well put together – Takada didn’t seem the type to let her interviews lull or become gauche in any way, shape or form – but it was nothing all too surprising either. It was a nice
distraction from the day, from the heavy weight of the certainty of death.

“Hideki-san, a lot of people have been wondering why you agreed to do this interview at all – while you’ve been a beloved actor and idol for going on a decade now, you’ve always politely refused to comment on the political state of the world.”

“I think it is very easy for a celebrity to say the wrong thing at the wrong time,” Ryuga replied diplomatically. “I’ve always tried my best to keep out of politics – not because I don’t care, but because I care immensely.”

Takada nodded encouragingly.

“In light of what occurred earlier today – at exactly midnight here, actually – “ Ryuga took a deep breath, “I would like to express my condolences to the families –“

That wasn’t a particularly surprising development. They would be remiss not to at least mention what had occurred.

“ – of those who were betrayed by the officers of the law. I do not consider what occurred to be a tragedy. The fact that those men were allowed to betray the trust of the citizens they swore to protect – that is the real tragedy.”

…That was not quite as predictable. He saw Sayu and Light both tense beside them at the words; they hadn’t expected it either.

It was becoming a fad for celebrities to support Kira now – most of them were progressive in some way or another, and in general, the younger generation found Kira very appealing as they grew more and more disenchanted with the way of the world.

However, equally, there were plenty of staunch conservatives that were pleased that someone was taking it into their own hands. Kira’s message appealed to an array of people, but perhaps the most vocal supporters were those who truly felt he was reestablishing the status quo – youths who saw through the faulty laws that protected police officers who had murdered, raped, and abused.

Ryuga Hideki was only a little older than Light, but they couldn’t expect much depth from a spoiled actor.

“I think many people would agree with you,” Takada commented, which had L’s eyebrows raising. Light’s jaw twitched as he clenched his teeth.

You dated a Kira supporter, Light. That’s quite an interesting turn of events. I wonder if you bonded over your similar views on justice at all – funny how close you were, to being on the other side.

“Actually, we’re going to bring out our special visitor now, if you don’t mind too terribly.” The hostess told the audience, and they cheered her on despite the darker tone that the interview had taken on. “Please welcome our surprise guest to the stage - the lovely Misa Amane.”

From behind the curtain, the Omega pranced onto the stage, waving at the audience excitedly. Ryuga and Takada stood at the same time to greet her, and she paused at the interviewer for a moment and kissed her on the cheek. It was a rather normal thing, but even that chaste gesture seemed to catch the Alpha off guard somewhat.

“Great to see you again, Takada-san!”

“Always a pleasure, Amane-san.”
Misa smiled and started to make her way over to where Ryuga stood center stage, by the couch.

“Ryuga-san! You really surprised me with that – you’ve never really spoken out about your support of Kira one way or another.” She paused when she got close to him, apparently teasing. “You’re usually so reserved about your views – you were so open tonight!”

“Oh, that’s because,” Ryuga Hideki gave the camera a disarming grin and L prepared himself for the actor to say something trite and immature -

“I am Kira.”

With that, he pulled the shocked girl to his side firmly, though he never looked anywhere but at the camera. Misa gasped sharply, for a moment appearing to be in pain, but settled against him an instant later. The way she did so was no longer simple friendliness, like she’d been expressing moments before. She sunk entirely toward him, eyes narrowing and her fingers curling in the fabric of his shirt as she peered up at the man.

His words didn’t seem to astonish her anymore, and even Kiyomi was regarding him coolly, as if he hadn’t just said -

L thought he might have gone deaf in that instant – perhaps developed some sort of disorder that warped the words he heard as they entered his brain. The audience went quiet, but then erupted into a collection of gasps and murmurs as the cameraman zoomed in on the two of them.

I’m asleep. I’ve been drugged. This is not real, this cannot possibly be real.

That was when Kiyomi moved, gracefully striding up to stand next to the other two, though she crossed to stand on the other side of Amane rather than putting Ryuga – Kira? – between them both. Misa’s gaze was directed adoringly up at the actor, and Takada’s was mostly on the camera as well, though her dark eyes flickered occasionally down at the young blond woman at her side.

“Wait – I,” Sayu stammered, and L saw her turning toward them both, grasping Light’s shoulder harshly. “I don’t understand. Is this some sort of joke? What’s going on –? You - you must know something.”

“I –“

Light’s voice was removed from itself, his throat tight as he stared at the television.

“Ryuzaki?” He murmured, hollow, horrified, confused, like they all were, and L’s entire chest seized with the lost expression that was directed at him, as if he could give answers.

But I can’t. I don’t know anything more than anyone. If this is a prank – god, no, it doesn’t feel like one -

“But I am not the only one,” Ryuga continued, drawing their attention back to the television. His amber eyes seemed to glow as he peered into the camera, giving the illusion that he was making eye contact with them all. “Join me in this fight to reclaim our society. This isn’t about catching me, no matter what L wants you to believe. This is about the system. I know I am not the only one that feels there needs to be an overhaul.”

He exists, and now he has a face, one that the masses already adore. This is him striking first. This is him winning.

“This is about us, the people. I am Kira, but so are you – the downtrodden, the oppressed, the
innocent! We are the same. We will fight for a new world, together.”

The idol stretched out his free hand toward the camera, smiling warmly at the audience, at the world.

“We are Kira.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: ‘Part Two’ starts next chapter. I didn’t have an author’s not in the last chapter, partly because I thought it might take some impact away, but also because I knew this one would be hella long.

Whammy Kids will have a lot more to do with the fic now that shit has hit the fan; this isn’t a mystery anymore (it honestly never really was, L and Light just didn’t know it). There are still several things to discuss about how and why things happened, but this has now shown its true nature as a …political/social revolution (rebellion?) story. L and Light lost the mystery part, and Ryuga has just shoved that in their faces.

I’ve been dropping hints about Ryuga since, most notably, the Tennis Chapter. However, I wasn’t really trying to make you be able to guess who he was – L and Light couldn’t even do that much, after all.

I did want you to be able to go back and reread certain things and be like ‘oh, shit, that’s why she mentioned that!’ though.

Timeline:

Kira cut Light and Misa’s confinement short, in comparison to canon. They were only in there for a month. A month after the first of the year, another 6 days for Light’s heat, 2 days until the drunk night, then another 6 days after that, Kira’s second deliverance/massacre, which includes Light’s dad. I’m pretty sure it says somewhere in the confinement chapter that it was only a month – but if I mistyped something, please let me know where.

Also, form what I can tell, noon in Japan on Feb. 15th would be 8PM in Los Angeles on Feb. 14th. Please correct me if I’m wrong though. Time zones are hard, especially when I am in neither of them.

However, if you find anything you think might be a plot hole, please let me know. I make mistakes! Also, if it’s just something you don’t understand, I’ll be able to bring it up in a chapter – or an author’s note – to explain.

Lastly, in Japan usually the wake and the memorial/funeral are not on the same day. However, for the sake of the timeline – it sort of needed to be Valentine’s Day still in America - and considering the fact that Light made these arrangements and probably doesn’t want to spend days that could be spent trying to catch Kira, I thought this was appropriate.
Ryuga Hideki:

Basically, I'm drawing his entire personality from what we see of him in canon, and then expanding on it based on symbolism (as well as my own personal experience as a theatre person). We’ve all seen the parallels they draw between Ryuga and Light -and even Ryuga and L – and so I took a lot of aspects of Light’s personality into making him, but then just…dramatized them. He’s a similar Kira, after all, just even more melodramatic.

Key differences are – he’s patient, and he knows how to play the field. He knows how becoming popular works and he’s used the last seven years to his advantage. He is aware of his own weaknesses – he hasn’t made it this far because he’s a genius (though he is clever); he’s made it this far because he knows he’s not as smart as L and so he has to be twice as careful because of it. He didn’t kill Lind L. Tailor or any FBI agents, he doesn’t kill the same way every time, he’s killed only about 5-7 people a week and made sure that he was a household name/legend before he ever revealed himself. He’s rich as fuck, and has a huge fan base in very powerful countries as Ryuga Hideki.

He also allows himself to rely on people. Light had pawns, and only those he absolutely had to trust, otherwise he did things alone – Ryuga has a plethora of colleagues who respect him, including, but not limited to, Misa and Takada (many of you guessed she was Kira, and you weren’t entirely wrong!). He also is a bit firmer than Light with his whole ‘kill only bad people’ thing and the fact that he allows the justice system (prisons) to do their job and only kills people that are actually (believed) threats so society. This makes him even more sympathetic than Light’s Kira was.

Obviously, he also plays up the worth of other people – the whole ‘we are Kira’ thing is his way of not only equalizing responsibility, but also making Kira Kira a movement rather than a lone murderer.

How, exactly, the Death Note fell into his hands will be discussed in the fic thoroughly, of course.

Next Chapter:

Whammy Kids enter the arena.

Please let me know what you think. Of Kira, of the chapter, of the L word, of the sex, the reveal, Sayu, the funeral – your favorite lines? When did you realize what was going to happen at the interview, if you did at all?

Seriously, you guys are great to me. I adore your feedback.

See you in Part Two.

-Nilah
P.S. Thank you, Andra, for Beta’ing this chapter for me. It would have been littered with typos without you. ;)}
"Most things, even the greatest moments on earth, have their beginnings in something small. An earthquake that shatters a city might begin with a tremor, a tremble, a breath. Music begins with a vibration." - Lauren Oliver

"You better have a damn good reason for calling me. I'm so deep undercover, like balls-fucking-deep, Matt. You can't just hack into my phone in such a sensitive situation - "

"You're aware I don't know Russian, right?"

Mello dragged a hand over the center of his face. It was below freezing out and the grass in the park was covered in six inches of snow, but it had been the best place to go when Matt tried to call, to ensure no one was nearby listening. Mello groaned as he pulled the thick scarf further up so that his face was mostly submerged and adjusted his earpiece, then pointedly switched to English.

"How the fuck do you think you can succeed L if you don't speak at least the top five languages in the world?"

"Technology," came Matt's answer and Mello let out a derisive snort. "There's a program for everything now. The answer is always technology."

"Pretty sure there isn't a chip you can implant in your skull that allows you to know foreign languages."

"Not yet."

"Right, of course."

"Besides, pretty sure I'm not in the running anymore." Mello could practically hear the shrug in Matt's voice. "I'll probably end up as Watari – which, I mean, I'm honestly more suited for."

Mello scowled into the woolen scarf. "Sounds like a loser mentality."

"I'll have a title way before you do." Matt laughed carelessly as Mello tugged his leather gloves further up onto his wrists and shoved them deep into the pockets of his trench coat. "Get to handle the guns and computers – yeah, that sounds like me."

"Whatever, Matt, can you get to the point of this? I have shit to do."

"I'm sure you do – what's it like, being an undercover errand boy?"

"Errand girl," Mellow corrected with a sigh, looking down at the high heeled boots, tights and skirt he was currently dressed in. Snow was falling lightly, constantly, and had powdered the black leather. The fact that he'd braced through the sludge in heels just to take Matt's call was a testimony
to how he much he valued their friendship.

"Although," Mello continued, frowning. "I haven't been feeling much like a girl all this week. Marina is a pretty feminine character, so it's been – ughh. I'm still a 'he' today, to you."

"Yes, sir," Matt agreed without skipping a beat, though there was grin in his tone. "They really buy it, huh?"

"Of course – pretty blond girls get away with a lot in Russian government. It helps that a good portion of the time I actually am a girl. Days like today are trickier, but," a grin stretched over his dark red lips. "I'm an excellent actor."

"I hope so, or else I'll have to take your place, and no one wants to see me in a skirt."

"I wouldn't say that," his laugh felt loud in the park, the crisp air almost acting as walls for his voice to resound upon. It was getting too friendly – which was good and bad. He wasn't quite sure he'd forgiven Matt. He wasn't even sure that there was anything to forgive, but he was still angry, still hurt when he thought about it too hard.

Mello redirected him. "You still haven't told me why I should be talking to you in the first place."

"We haven't spoken in a while – is it a crime that I want to catch up?"

Yes. No. Fuck you, seriously. What an asshole, calling me and making small talk and wanting to 'catch up'. I've been freezing my ass off and throwing myself into work and trying not to think about you, and you want to talk to me like nothing ever happened?

No, not going to happen, not unless I fucking say so. This is going to be about work, until I say it isn't. God damn, I missed your stupid voice -

"No, but considering recent events with a certain celebrity douchebag, I assume this is something important."

Mello crossed his arms over his chest, partially for defense and partially to protect himself against a gust of wind that chilled him to the bone. He was a trained professional; he wasn't going to let the weather rule him entirely.

"Fine, no small talk then." Matt's tone was a bit strained, which Mello took a bit too much pleasure in.

"...You're kidding."

"Nope."

"So," Mello drawled, feeling his body drawing up proudly despite himself. "L wants me to abandon my current undercover mission and come to Japan?"

"That was the jist of it."

"Are you already there?"

"Yeah, I'm looking at him right now." There was a wry tone already in Matt's voice that told Mello he was about to try to say something funny. "He's uglier than I remember."

Mello gave a short, bitter laugh. "Well, it has been five years."
"Oh, don't sound so irritated about it. He's admitting that he needs us – Kira's fucked up all of his shit." There was a pause. "Killed one of the members of his task force too."

Mello's brow furrowed, "What, the dirty cops?"

"Supposedly dirty."

"I saw the news coverage, but not the interview." Mello admitted slowly, rewinding his memory to think back on it. Russia was largely anti-Kira, which was refreshing, and they were not overly fond of the Japanese Idol in the first place. It wasn't until the international news had started displaying the interview that Mello had found out about it, and he'd been dealing with the backlash ever since. "Did they really just sit down again after he confessed and continue talking about his … master fucking plan?"

"Yeah, but they called it his 'political agenda.'" Matt had the nerve to chuckle in that way of his right into Mello's ear. "We'll have you watch the whole thing once you get here. It's freaky. He… he's really well spoken. Like, it's fucked up, but he's – really convincing."

"Shut your whore mouth, Matt."

"I'm not saying I was convinced," Matt muttered defensively. "Hell no, just that – he's got a lot pretty words, Mello. That's all. I can understand why so many people are falling for it."

"I know." This was a truth that no one had been able to ignore. At its core, Kira's intentions were something that most people could relate to. "He's sort of hitting on an appealing topic for a lot of people. A lot of big issues are being addressed."

"People are tired of being walked on," Matt agreed, letting out a long breath. "And the walked-on far outnumber the walkers, so it's not really a good sign for our cause."

"We'll win either way, good odds or not. Especially with me there." Mello stated firmly, fists curling in the deep pockets. "I streamed the arrest. The police officers were terrified. Their hands were shaking when they put him in cuffs."

"He didn't kill them though."

"No, that would have hurt his reputation." Mello looked up at the sky. "How does he do it?"

"Hell if I know. He must think pretty highly of himself, having a real-life superpower."

"They took the other two Kiras into custody too, didn't they?" Mello's eyes traced a white cloud as it faded into the pale blue sky, quietly scrutinizing. "Amane and Takada, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, but after they were booked they got bail, walked down the steps like fucking royalty, to just –" Matt whistled, long and slow. "One of the biggest crowds I've ever seen, like just blocks of people cheering. I mean, Los Angeles is huge and has one of the most corrupt police forces in the U.S. so I guess that might be part of it, but there were probably a hundred thousand people that gathered around the precinct."

"I saw the footage of that," Mello growled, "Fucking touching their hands as he walked passed like he was some sort of – of –"

"God?"

"...I was going to say 'rock star' but yeah. I'm surprised he didn't crowd surf back to his fucking
"mansion."

"He did."

"What?"

"I'm kidding."

"Christ, Matt. That shouldn't be a fucking joke – he's killed a lot of people," Mello's voice deepened with what was meant to be annoyance, but he was really trying not to laugh. "That's not funny."

"What if they dropped him?"

Mello couldn't hold it in any longer, picturing Ryuga Hideki's pretty face contorting with pain, confusion and rage as he was dumped onto the concrete. He burst out with a harsh little snigger. Matt joined him with his own laugh, and it felt nice to hear it – pleasant nostalgia rather than melancholy.

"He'd probably kill them all for assault or some bullshit."

"Oh man – it's been great talking to you, Mello."

Mello's chest constricted and instead of getting sad again – he was fucking done with that – he decided he'd channel that emotional energy into aggression. He didn't know how to act around Matt anymore, and that was the most frustrating part of all.

"Mhm," he acknowledged, but did not return the sentiment out of spite, or perhaps because he felt like the words would be much too true.

"Er, right, so." There was the telltale sound of Matt's pack of cigarettes tapping against his palm. "Your plane leaves at midnight. You'll have time to sleep on the flight, so it should go quickly."

The tone was becoming dismissive, as if Matt planned on getting off the phone soon. Despite how irritated he'd worked himself up to be, Mello wasn't ready to let the other boy go.

"Wait, wait, wait," he intoned, deciding to start walking a bit. If he was going to make this phone call even longer, then he'd need to move his legs; it was only getting colder by the second. "You're being awfully tight-lipped about all this."

"Am I? I don't think I am," Matt said innocently, which only piqued his suspicions more.

"You are." Mello had only been trying to stir on the conversation, but now he realized he'd struck a chord. "You always do that when –"

Pretty much any time you're tiptoeing around the subject of a certain pale cretin and your alliance with him. I'm not sure if I should be amused that you still do that, or insulted that you think I still actively hate him after practically five years of not seeing his stupid little face –

"Oh, I see," Mello drawled as he started across the field, trudging through the snow as he did so and silently cursing every person who was responsible for him doing so.

"'Oh, I see', what? 'Oh' nothing. There's nothing to 'oh' about."

"You're a damned liar." Mello scoffed and roughly pulled his scarf back up, as the motion of his mouth had slowly worked it back down to his chin. "Near's there, isn't he?"
There was a pause, where Matt considered lying to him no doubt, then thought better of it. "Well... no."

"Sure he isn't."

"He isn't, but he will be," Matt confessed, and there was the sound of him tapping his cigarettes yet again. He was jonesing, and Mello was more than content to let him suffer a while. "He's in the U.S. and he wants someone to travel with him, so we sent a guy."

Mello rolled his eyes and snorted loudly. "Of course you did. I'm not saying I'm bothered, because I'm not, but why exactly is he necessary? I understand why this case might require my set of skills, but Near just sits there."

"Dude. He can't walk half the time, that's pretty —"

"I didn't mean it like that!" Mello hissed, flushing a bit despite himself. "I mean, I work best in the field, doing things. L's only got a few guys like that, and Wedy and Aiber are underlings, not successors—I don't understand why he'd need another person who holes up behind a computer."

"You mean like me?"

His grin was wicked, and he made sure it showed in his tone, "Did I stutter, Matt?"

"You're more hostile than I remember."

"Well, we haven't had an actual conversation in a while; memory isn't your strongest suit."

"...Yeah, I thought that might be what this is about."

"It's not about anything!" Mello shot back, a little too loudly. He quieted back to a jeer. "You haven't answered my question."

"L wants an elite team now. In his mind, well, in a lot of ways — Kira's won. He needs us." Matt was probably rubbing the bridge of his nose now beneath his goggles, as he often did when he made that particular noise. "Near's been working with the FBI on a huge internal affairs case for over a month now, but two of his main suspects were murdered on Valentine's Day, so it's pretty much over."

Mello gnashed his teeth and suddenly wanted chocolate to wash the sour taste out of his mouth.

"He must have loads of free time then."

"He's worked on a lot of white collar and civil rights cases for the FBI and CIA over the last few years – considering the U.S. is one of the countries with the highest Kira support ratings, his connections will be helpful."

Matt was over explaining a bit, trying to fill the empty space. He wanted to be smoking, and since he probably wasn't allowed to do so in L's vicinity, he was overly loquacious. Mello's temper was mildly sated by the idea that Near's investigation had been foiled, though it seemed a hollow victory - because Kira had been the victor. As infuriating as the albino brat could be, Kira was worse than a shit stain on the underside of his boot.

"You're assuming that Near makes connections."

"I don't assume, I know." Mello's mouth twisted a he kicked a lump of snow. Matt had never liked when he insulted Near – he'd acted as a mediator for practically their entire childhood. "Just
"because you never made an effort doesn't mean Near's a machine."

"I'll believe that when I see it," Mello muttered, crushing a particularly crunchy clump of snow under his sharp heel.

Matt's voice was a little more curt than Mello was typically content with when he replied, "Maybe you should try looking for once."

There was a long pause while Mello took stock of the conversation and how he might redirect it back in his favor. He didn't want to talk about Near, of all people, not when he finally had Matt's attention back. The hacker was waiting for him, after all, still on the other end of the line. He hadn't hung up on him even when Mello tested his patience, as he often did.

Mello drew in a deliberate breath, then asked, "Why are we arguing again?"

"You started it."

The childishness of that statement was reassuring, and Mello felt his wicked grin start to pull at the corners of his mouth again. Matt wasn't completely set on keeping this serious tone then – that was promising at least.

"That's kind of a pattern with me."

"Yeah, it kind of is," Matt agreed musingly. There were two thuds from his end of the line, and Mello could imagine him putting his boots up on whatever surface lie before him. A coffee table, or a desk perhaps. No doubt L had made some sort of accommodation for such a large case.

No, not case. This wasn't really a case anymore. This was them against the world – against Kira and the hypocritical hell that he wanted to turn the world into. His premise had promise but he had killed over ten thousand people at this point; he was escalating, showing off and demonstrating the extent of his power to incur shock, awe and fear. He was the worst sort of politician.

He broadcasted his opponent's weaknesses for the world to see to make the apparent alternative seem worse.

"...You're seriously not even going to make a joke about Near working white collar crime? I feel like I set that up perfectly and you just let that shit fall," Matt broke the silence, lightening the mood.

Reluctantly, Mello's lips tugged up at the corners again and he swallowed the laugh that started to rise.

"I'm surprised you stayed on the call this long," Mello ventured as he found the asphalt again, glad for the more solid ground underfoot. "I'm sure L needs your expertise, after all that's happened."

Matt hummed on the other end of the line agreeably. "He does. I'm very important."

"I don't doubt it." Mello let sarcasm lace his tone for effect. "You managed to repair the system after Kira hacked into it. Quickly too, I imagine."

"I rebuilt it from scratch, pretty much. It took longer than usual, because I was putting in more precautions than usual – code on top of code on top of code. But yeah, it's safe as can be. I can't imagine anyone getting into it now."

I couldn't imagine anyone getting into it before. It's ludicrous – that anyone could best him, humiliate him in that way, as if he's a common criminal himself.
Mello paused and halted in his trek, tapping each heel on the sidewalk so that some of the snow fell away from his leather boots. After a few of these succinct motions, they were looking almost black again.

"Is L really thinking that Ryuga Hideki has the brain to hack into his system?" he asked dubiously. It seemed like one of the more ridiculous parts of the entire debacle.

"We considered Takada," Matt informed him, "But then ruled her out. She's not a computer whiz. One of the guys here knew her personally, it seems."

"Kira has other friends," Mello's mouth pulled tight and he leaned up against the nearest tree, brushing some snow off of his sleeve. "He practically said as much, and he can't have pulled off half the things he has without others in the media being on his side."

"Definitely – none of the Big Three could pull that hack off. But then, almost no one in the world could."

There was a deafening pause between them, a knowing string of quiet that connected their notion.

"Have you considered - ?"

Matt cut him off excitedly. "Yes, I have – but I tried to bring it up, and he shut me down before I could start."

"Just like L, to convince himself the past is buried because it's easier for him to handle," Mello's voice grew a little more gruff in annoyance. It wasn't a subject that L particularly liked to talk about, even though he'd dragged out the true tale years before. "Like people can't fake their own deaths? Please, it's part of the job; I've done it twice in the last year."

"Not from prison."

"No, but I didn't have the help of some super villain wanna-be-messiah either."

Matt couldn't argue with that. If anyone could do it, Beyond Birthday had the brains, the tenacity and the fact that he had very little left to lose going for him. He'd lost a lot, perhaps even his life, but if he had somehow found Kira and was on his side – L was in trouble. Hell, they were all in trouble anyway.

This wasn't even life or death; this was the fate of the whole goddamned world. It was pretty fucking exciting – to be honest, midnight seemed too far away.

"Anyone from Whammy's on Kira's side is big trouble. Especially the crazy type - especially the 'ruin L's life' type of crazy."

It was true enough. If Ryuga Hideki's influence extended to those that had been trained in the way that Mello had been, they could be in for a rough time. Already he had defeated L in more ways than one.

And if Mello's presence helped catch him –

"We should look into it, Matt, as a side project," he suggested with a secret smile as he looked up into the branches of the tree. "Come up with something that will be impossible for L to dismiss. He can't reject hard evidence."

His friend made a considering sound in the back of his throat. "Aaaaand if we find out he's really
dead, then we didn't make a fool of ourselves."

Mello raised his eyebrows and pushed himself away from the tree, starting toward the exit of the park. He needed to head back to his apartment to pack his things before leaving. He'd kept Matt on the phone for some time, and while he was reluctant to let him go after all this time, he had several arrangements to make and associations to wrap up before he disappeared entirely.

"Yeah. Yeah, okay, I'll do what I can on my end to research his death," Matt's voice smiled at him. "I'm glad you don't think I'm crazy."

"You kidding me?" Mello balanced on a curb for a few yards as he walked. "If you're the crazy one, then we're all fucked."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you again, Andra, for Beta'ing this over for me on such short notice. :) This chapter is sort of the equivalent of Chapter One "Karma”. It sets a lot of things up. It's short though and mostly conversation, but I like the way it flows. In case it wasn't obvious, Mello is Gender Fluid. As such, the pronouns I use to describe Mello will change from he/his to she/her and back. In chapter 16, Beyond was mentioned briefly, and here he is again. Direction or misdirection? I suppose we shall see.

I know this was mostly talk, but hopefully it was fun to read. We got a lot of interaction and information. I enjoyed thinking about what they might be doing with their lives - I doubt they just sit around waiting to be L's replacement. Also, it's interesting because Mello, Matt and Near all have a history - they aren't just meeting like L and Light were in the beginning - they've had conversations we've never seen before. Especially Mello and Matt, who know one another well. I like to say things without saying them in writing, and hopefully that came across here. I'm sure you're confused about the tension between them and what it alludes to but - fear not. All in due time.

Also, I'm sorry I haven't been responding to reviews the last few chapters - I'll probably be doing so tomorrow. Thanks for hanging in their either way.

Please let me know what you think. :) The usual stuff. You guys rock!

-Nilah
“Some people think only intellect counts: knowing how to solve problems, knowing how to get by, knowing how to identify an advantage and seize it. But the functions of intellect are insufficient without courage, love, friendship, compassion, and empathy.” — Dean Koontz

Under the right circumstances, Near could enjoy travelling. There was something about large airports that he quite liked; perhaps it was that no one wanted to talk to anyone else, so he was never expected to converse, or the fact that everything was wheelchair accessible.

Or perhaps it was the overabundance of level floor space, which he could imagine building extensive card towers without any trouble.

Whatever it was, he usually felt at ease in the wide hallways – no matter how many people there were, it never seemed crowded, and most people were in too much of a hurry to make eye contact, let alone expect an interaction from him. His associate, Anthony Carter, had delivered him to the gate an hour ahead of time, and he’d also made all of the travel arrangements after Matt had contacted him about coming to Japan. Near wasn’t overly fond of pushing himself in his chair if he couldn’t find someone else to do it, and Carter had always been rather accommodating when it came to assisting him.

On another day, he might have been able to walk in himself, but his left leg was being particularly uncooperative today; he could feel the tremors passing through the muscles even as he hugged it to his chest.

Near lifted the toy in his hand, bending its knees and elbows as it prepared for flight. He considered digging in his carryon bag for one of the others he’d brought along. He was getting bored of this one, but the cost of actually hoisting the bag onto his lap so he could dig through it was –

“Excuse me, I think you may be waiting for me.”

The English was uncertain but not incomprehensible, the gruff voice pulling him out of his dilemma.

Near peered up through the curl of his pale fringe and taking in the sturdy, scruffy Japanese man in front of him. He couldn’t smell the stranger from this distance (as his suppressants dulled his olfaction radically), but he thought might be an Alpha.

He nodded, speaking quietly. “Yes, I believe so.”

“I am Shuichi Aizawa,” the man introduced himself, already moving to lift Near’s carryon off of the floor. “Ryuzaki sent me to escort you.”
“I know,” Near replied easily, twisting a finger into his hair as he regarded the man, not ever quite looking at him in the eyes. He paused, then switched to Japanese. “I believe we’ll be boarding soon.”

Though the man wasn’t dramatic about it, Near could tell he was relieved.

“Yes, ah, please let me know if there’s anything you need from me.” There was an awkward moment, and Near shifted one of his legs, which seemed to catch the other off guard. “I’m sorry to be intrusive, but – is there anything I should know about your condition? I thought, well, no, they didn’t tell me much. Just that you’d be in a wheelchair.”

He felt each individual strand against his finger, pressed the digits close together with the lock trapped tightly in between. He could have counted them, if he’d wanted.

“That’s fine,” Near gave a one-shouldered shrug, looking at the wall closest to him. “I have a mild physical condition called dystonia. That won’t mean much to you.”

His gaze flickered up to the man briefly, and concluded that no, it didn’t. The severe-looking man put him at ease, which was unexpected – he reminded him of Carter. He wasn’t overly fond of meeting new people, especially once he’d gotten used to the old ones, but he knew it wasn’t practical for his line of work. While he’d hidden his face from everyone else while working with the FBI, he’d eventually needed an inside man and assistant. Carter was one of the only people whose innocence he had been 100% certain of, so he’d trusted him with the task. Straight-forward men like him – and, he thought, Aizawa-san – were his favorite type of person.

Rude, perhaps, but Near was not easily offended.

“It means that I have intermittent muscle spasms and sometimes contortions, predominantly in my left leg, but sometimes in both or my torso region; it varies depending on the day.” Near was rather clinical about it. He’d had to describe this numerous times to a variety of people over the years, which was another reason why meeting new people irked him. Near supposed it couldn’t be helped. “Today is not a ‘good day’ so you may have to help me in and out of my chair.”

He didn’t bother going into the pain aspect of it, which was sometimes present and sometimes wasn’t – Aizawa wouldn’t need to know any of that. His was not an overly severe case, but it did inhibit him from walking comfortably most days.

“Right,” Aizawa nodded without pause, then looked up when an announcement was made over the intercom. “Looks like we’re boarding. Are you ready?”

“Actually, no,” Near stated almost absently, holding out the toy he’d been playing with moments before. “There should be a Buzz Lightyear toy in my bag. Please retrieve that for me and put this one back.”

The man’s dark eyes stared at him for a beat, then he went on to do just that. Once he had the new toy in his hands, he let Aizawa push him onto the plane. He managed to get into his seat without much help, and was satisfied with his toy for the better part of an hour before he asked the man to switch them out again.

The plane ride was mostly uneventful; Near didn’t attempt to engage the man in conversation, and Aizawa seemed content with this. The man had brought a book of some kind, which seemed to be some sort of historical romance novel by the cover and title. Near deduced – by the ring on his finger and what he knew of the Kira case in general – that his wife had insisted they read the same book so that they had something to bond over. That either meant his marriage was an especially close one, or an especially distant one that he was attempting to repair. His profession, the fact that he’d
volunteered to be the one to take a cumbersome journey to America, and the bags under his eyes told Near that it was the latter.

He cycled through a couple more toys before taking a nap against the window, curled up against pillow as someone toward the back of their section snored. He put on his headphones to keep himself at ease – he was used to flying by now, but that didn’t mean he didn’t have to work at it. Near found the almost-deafness that came over him when his ears popped too much very difficult to stand, and any turbulence at all jerked him back to wakefulness. The soothing tones coming from his headphones was a special, soothing music that could put him in a good place under most circumstances.

About seven hours into the flight, Near had to use the bathroom. They were in first class, so they had their own bathroom toward the front of the plane, which they were relatively close to. He tapped on Aizawa’s shoulder and informed him of the situation. Of course, he wouldn’t be able to be pushed in his chair, as the aisles were too narrow, so the officer would have to carry him.

“Uh,” Aizawa paused, brow furrowing as he stood in the aisle, clearly at a loss. “How do you want to do this?”

Near lifted his arms into the air and averted his eyes, answering dispassionately, “I prefer piggy back.”

“…Yeah, alright,” muttered the man, then knelt in an almost practiced way, grasping Near’s wrists to guide them around his neck. *He has children*, Near thought offhandedly as Aizawa lifted him smoothly and he was dragged upright, his feet dangling about a foot off the ground, the left one at an unnatural angle. This close to the scent gland in the older man’s neck, Near could just faintly smell the scent of Alpha – ah, so he’d been correct.

He felt Aizawa tense when the officer felt Near’s chest against his back, and his hands pausing for a moment. It was no matter. Near was very light, and could easily hold himself up around Aizawa’s shoulders without the extra support of the man’s hands.

“I –“ The deep voice faltered, hesitating in his shock. “…you’re a girl.”

“Incorrect,” Near’s response was automatic and without much emphasis. It was barely noticeable at all, actually, which was why Aizawa continued to barrel on through for a moment, before realizing the other had spoken.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to…well, I was pretty sure they said ‘he’ –“ Aizawa tried to peer over his shoulder as though to look at Near, though that was quite impossible. “Wait, what do you mean incorrect?”

“I mean that you are wrong,” Near’s bladder ached a bit, but it wasn’t an emergency. He looked up at the smooth lines of the airplane ceiling, imagining his many miniature airplanes as he did so. “Did I mix up the Japanese word for it?”

“I mean that you are wrong;” Near’s bladder ached a bit, but it wasn’t an emergency. He looked up at the smooth lines of the airplane ceiling, imagining his many miniature airplanes as he did so. “Did I mix up the Japanese word for it?”

He was well aware that he had not.

“…I just – I guess I don’t understand.” Aizawa admitted lowly, even as he reached around to help support Near needlessly. He made his way down the hall.

“I understand how it may seem incongruous,” Near drawled as they moved. He was a little amused when his blunt words made the man shift beneath him uncomfortably. It was true, however; the moment he’d been lifted, though he was not particularly well endowed, his breasts had been pressed
against the flat of Aizawa’s back. There was no hiding it. He had no interest in binding them flat, and there was only so much that baggy clothes could hide.

“Are you playing a joke on me?” The man groused, starting to grow irritated. “Just – are you a girl or a boy?”

“No,” Near rolled his eyes, glad that they seemed to be getting close to the stall.

“No?”

“No, I am neither boy nor girl.” confirmed Near easily and without delay. “If there is a medical emergency, you may note that I have two X chromosomes. If there is not a medical emergency however, kindly piss off.”

He felt Aizawa’s shoulder muscles go taught, perhaps at the disrespectful words no matter how flatly they were delivered, but the man did not respond. He helped him into the small bathroom, but Near could take care of the rest himself.

The tiny stall was just his size. It was easy enough to maneuver himself without having to put too much weight on his stubbornly crooked leg – it liked to shake when he did so – and luckily the twinges of pain that had been present earlier in the day seemed to have gone. Near washed his hands, dried them and then unlocked the door only when he was fully clothed again.

Dutifully, Aizawa ducked in and helped maneuver Near onto his back again.

“Sorry about before,” The older man grunted lowly. “I was confused, but – I guess it doesn’t really matter, which you are, or… that you are at all.”

After a moment, he set Near down in his seat again. Near took his time getting comfortable and pulling up the toy that had been abandoned nearby to hand over to Aizawa.

“Apology accepted, Aizawa-san. Please hand me Optimus Prime.”

There were several more hours to go, and it wasn’t long before the officer decided to doze off. His book was tucked into the pocket on the back of the seat in front of him and his tie was loosened as he leaned his head back. Near needed a little more comfort than that to nap, so he had one of the flight attendants bring him a small pillow blanket, then closed the shade on the small circular window.

He dozed off and on for the next few hours, more sleep than he was used to getting. It left him groggy, which he wasn’t fond of, but once morning came the flight attendant came around with coffee. He took it with milk, enough so that it was almost half and half. He was fully awake around the time the seatbelt sign lit up to signal that the plane was going to land soon. Aizawa woke up to the turbulence, which Near was grateful for, as he promptly handed him the toy that he’d been stuck with while the man slept, and asked for another.

The airport in Japan was decidedly more crowded than the one in the US, and, he realized, so were the streets. Near set his mind on other things to distract himself from the crowd. Though the toys he’d brought with him had been cycled through once and were beginning to bore him at this stage – he longed to be stationary, to be able to sprawl on the floor and build something meticulously – they were a far better option than the bustling people around him. He could think best when he had something to do with his hands; manual distractions acted a lightning rod with which to focus the powerful, singular force of his mind.

Soon, he was being helped into the car, bucking up, and being driven off toward whatever headquarters L had arranged. Someplace large and central, Near suspected, that he’d disguised as a
large corporation. It was no use following Ryuga to Los Angeles, as he owned homes in most major cities, and those were only the places that were on record. No, it was far better to stick to Japan, where he’d gotten his start, in a building that everyday people would pass each day but think nothing of. They were in the middle of the battlefield.

This was made increasingly obvious as they drove further into the city. Near had no real interest in the sights to be seen, partly because he’d been to Tokyo before a few years prior for an embezzlement case and partly because he often grew motion sick staring out the window. While he looked down at his transformer, neatly folding the parts into place and then back out again, his companion was staring out the window in a brooding manner.

*He’s a rather somber individual. That’s fair enough, considering the loss he just endured. Kira has certainly toppled over quite a few already precarious mechanics – it can’t be easy. I’m surprised that he’s still on the case. I would have considered it a safer task to disband the current task force. Especially with police forces everywhere ducking back into their shells.*

Aizawa’s growl next to him broke him out of his thoughts, Near glanced up at the clenched jaw curiously. Looking out the window, it was clear what the source of his agitation was.

In the distance, far above the swarms of pedestrians, he saw a huge advertisement on one of the tall buildings. It was a tasteful picture of Hideki Ryuga, in a fitted suit with a gentle, entreating smile. It had likely been there before his confession, but the fact that it had not been taken down said wonders for the state of his reputation.

*It’s no wonder the masses adore him – conventionally good-looking, wealthy Alphas have gotten away with crimes that are far less ‘righteous’. Hopefully Matt is already looking into his previous interviews and history to see what sort of person we’re dealing with.*

A half an hour later, Aizawa dropped him off in the elevator. He hit the floor button, swiped his security card, bid him farewell with a bow and then sent him up. The doors opened up directly into the main interrogation room, parting and opening up to a clean, simple room with high ceilings and tile floors.

Reluctantly, Near rolled himself in just enough so that the doors did not close on him, and the motion caught the attention of the nearest person, a young man lounging on a nearby couch, his laptop perched on his knees. Near could not quite see the eyes behind his goggles from this distance.

“Near! Hey, you made it,” Matt grinned at him, pulling his headphones down off of his head and moving to stand up. He stretched as he did so, his lanky form stretching into even leaner lines.

Averting his eyes, Near pressed a hand back into his curls to grasp the one that tended to spiral a little more tightly than the rest.

“Was there ever a doubt that I would?” Near inquired, only half serious.

Matt laughed as he approached him, and without bothering to ask, steered Near’s wheelchair around a staircase and closer to the seating area. This was not a totally unusual thing; Matt had been control of his chair more than once before. He knew that Near was not overly fond of doing things for himself, especially repetitive, monotonous tasks. Near was content to allow it, though his leg hadn’t bothered him for a few hours.

“No, but there was a matter of *when*. Mello wanted to be the one to arrive fashionably late,” Matt informed him, and Near could hear the smirk in his voice.
“It may be the only time I am fashionable in anything,” Near commented, earning a chuckle as he was steered deeper into the room.

Sitting at one of the desks was the man that Near remembered as L; though he was slightly older, his hair just an inch or two longer, he otherwise held up the same guise as usual. Beside him, were two women, one of whom had long dark hair that draped down to her mid back. Near had never seen her before in his life, but she greeted him with a smile and nod. The other was a familiar face, one that he had seen wear several semblances before.

“Mello,” Near greeted first, when those dark blue eyes turned to him first, hard beneath a curtain of silky yellow. L swiveled in his chair a moment later, and Near greeted him next. “L.”

“Near,” L nodded, glancing at the dark haired woman. “This is Naomi Misora.”

“Pleased to meet you,” she said gently. Though he knew she probably didn’t even know it, her tone was a tad patronizing in it’s tenderness; plenty of people mistook him for younger than he was. He was quite small, especially curled over himself as he was, and even taking his biological sex into account.

…He supposed the fact he was still clutching Buzz Lightyear was probably not helping matters.

“Likewise, Naomi-san,” Near inclined his head, and then slowly eased his way out of his chair.

He flexed his legs, stood carefully and waited a moment before making his way toward the group. He noticed that Matt was just behind him at all times – they had a bit of a history. Matt had assisted him in times of need many times, the same way that Aizawa had on the trip here and in others too. The older boy had always been rather cool tempered, always in need of some sort of stimulation to calm his overactive mind, which Near could related to.

Even though Near seemed to set Mello off no matter what he did (though, to be fair, half of the time his goal was to set him off) Matt had always stayed calm by his side. He’d never taken Mello’s side unless he was truly in the right, although Mello had succeeded in stealing his attention, for the most part.

It did not escape his notice that Mello’s eyes flashed, then followed Matt as Near made his way over.

“Is Watari bringing my luggage up?” Near inquired, as he moved to seat himself on the floor. His left leg wobbled as he did so, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw Matt hovering closer, just in case.

“What, do you need to change into a different set of white silk pajamas?” Mello’s voice spoke up, eyes glittering.

Near blinked, managing to ease himself on the floor all on his own, without Matt’s assistance. He didn’t always sit on the floor, but sometimes sitting in a chair all day was tiresome; considering that standing was often not an option, he had taken to sprawling out across the floor. In any case, the surface was a more expansive base for the methodical projects that he worked most hours of the day.

“No, of course not - that’s where all my toys are, Mello,” Near informed her blandly. “Have your days undercover softened your deduction techniques?”

Mello straightened up aggressively, her hair dancing around her face as she did so. Near was not a master of body language; he would never be able to go undercover the way that Mello could. Many times, subtle social signals were lost on him, but that was part of the reason Mello’s presence was reassuring. Despite Mello’s affinity for adapting a disguise and her attention to detail when it came to psychology as well as physicality, when Mello was herself (or himself, for that matter), she was
herself entirely.

He had always been able to read Mello rather well; Near was usually able to decipher with relative ease when she was a girl and when he was a boy. Just as easily as he could read her anger or jealousy or triumph. It was actually rather comforting, which was why he sometimes went out of his way to bait. Just a bit.

“Not at all,” Mello retorted, leaning forward and sneering, “Pretty mouthy for someone who sits safely behind a desk while the world falls apart.”

Near blinked again, this time pointedly. “Is that not what you’re doing right now?”

He watched the reddening of Mello’s neck, pleased, but unfortunately whatever the blond was going to say was cut off preemptively. Too bad. The way her teeth were showing, it was likely to have been a good one.

“So why are you here?” Near asked.

“Now, now, children,” Matt interrupted, and even though he couldn’t see it behind his goggles and due to his position on the floor, Near was rather certain he was rolling his eyes. Ah, well, not everyone could appreciate the subtle art of their childish bickering. “You’ve barely been in the same room for five minutes.”

“And yet,” Mello just waved his hand in Near’s general direction, as if that explained his entire point.

And yet, even now, Mello is very attractive. Even contempt is preferable to indifference, and he wears it well. He can never ignore me, can never stop competing, even when we’re supposed to be teaming up.

The corners of Near’s mouth quirked, but he set his gaze on Buzz instead, which he was holding up as if it were in flight. He hid the upward tug of his lips behind a curtain of pale hair.

“Yes, as amusing as this is,” L spoke from his seat, dark eyes watching from beneath a fringe. “There is work to be done. We have much to catch you three up on – Matt has been here the last couple days doing research.”

“Mostly watching interviews that Hideki has done over the years,” Matt groaned, dragging his fingers through his auburn hair and plopping down in one of the free computer chairs. He fell with such force that it rolled back a few inches. “Naomi and I have been…uh.”

He frowned for a moment, searching for the words. Mello gave an amused scoff from behind them, as if this was something that happened with relative frequency.

“‘We’ve been watching dozens and dozens of them, trying to find hints about how he kills,’” Naomi chimed in helpfully, “‘But he’s been famous for over a decade now. Some of the interviews were shown live, or just don’t have records.’”

Yes, that will prove to be a difficulty. Ryuga Hideki is likely a stage name; he’s had ten years of celebrity status, with people hired to make sure his life incredibly private. We know very little about him - what has Matt managed to scrounge up, I wonder?

She paused sheepishly, “You know, we could all switch to English, if it’s easier for you, Matt.”

“No, he could use the practice,” L informed her without delay, though Matt seemed eager to jump on the chance. “Ryuga Hideki wants attention, so at the moment, we’re giving it to him. He does seem the sort to leave clues behind in past interviews, for us to peruse once he came out.”
“It’s been taking a while,” Matt groaned, his head rolling back. At this angle, in this part of the room, the sunlight shown through the windows against the strands of his long hair, making them glisten slightly red.

“Is this the entirety of our team?” Near asked after a moment’s consideration, scanning each of them. “I thought you had members of the NPA working with you.”

“They were dismissed,” L told him, gnawing on his thumb and curling his toes. Just as I suspected, Near thought idly. “Japan has issued a statement that they are not actively going to work against Kira. It was best to allow them to keep their jobs, especially considering the recent loss.”

Considering you can’t protect them, Near filled in, and it sounded ominous as it resounded in his head. We can’t really protect anyone from Kira, if we don’t know how he kills. Figuring that out should be our first priority.

“It may prove useful to have inside men in the future,” Naomi added helpfully.

“If this is all of us,” Mello stretched back, reclining in her chair. Her tight pants shifted snugly against her hips and her shirt rode up as she did so, though no one else seemed to notice. “Then maybe we should start with the debriefing?”

Near caught Matt muffling a chuckle, though he wasn’t quite sure why.

“We have one more joining us shortly.” L’s voice was without emphasis, his fingers starting to glide over the keys before they’d even finished coming out.

Matt spun in his chair, doing more than a couple 360 degree turns. “I thought Near was the last.”

“It’s about that time – he shouldn’t be long,” Naomi elucidated, brushing her hair back over her shoulder. “He’s only just getting off work.”

“Work?” Mello frowned, tilting her head as her brow furrowed. “This is work. I thought you said you let the NPA members go.”

“I didn’t fire them,” L replied lowly, still not facing them, which Near found particularly odd. He was the one who tended to avoid eye contact if he could help it – if anything, L’s eyes would pin an intense gaze on something or someone and linger until it became unsettling. “One of them was adamant about staying on the task force. He agreed to return to work, but he is still going to join us afterwards.”

Matt whistled, “Sounds like a lot of work.”

“Sounds like waste,” Mello rolled her eyes and cast another glance down to the floor, where Near was starting to stretch out on his stomach. “I think we have too many as it is. It’ll get cluttered.”

“I disagree,” L stated. Mello seemed to shrink just a bit; he’d been expecting Near to respond to his jibe, not for L to cut down his words so heedlessly. “Each asset at this juncture is indispensable.”

This one L considers an asset, as opposed to the others. Perhaps he has insight that the others could not offer. Matt mentioned that L considers someone a friend – perhaps there are also sentimental reasons at the core of these decisions.

“Indispensable?” Mello muttered distastefully, glancing in Matt’s direction. The other shrugged like he hadn’t the slightest clue or interest, but – as always – Mello’s eyes were intrigued, alert and vaguely offended.
It was then that the elevator doors sounded again, a far off ‘ding’ that had Near’s head perking up from where it had been ducked. Mello casually turned her chair, while L pushed off of his desk once more and spun all the way back around to face the approaching intruder.

A tall man came into view, his shoes making clicking sounds that Near couldn’t help but be a bit irritated by. Repetitive sounds irked him, and the sound of dress shoes or heels on tile was particularly unappealing.

Near took in a list of details as the figure drew closer; his posture was tall and confident, his hair smooth and well tamed, his nails trimmed and his suit tailored to his measurements exactly. He appeared to be Beta and he looked only a few years older than the three newest members of the task force; his face was particularly youthful, but his stern expression and fitted suit projected a maturity that Near had never cared to fake. In fact, looking too professional was something that was discouraged in the presentation curriculum at Whammy’s.

A polite smile flickered onto the man’s face and he bowed in greeting.

“You must be the boys Ryuzaki has told me so much about,” He looked over each of them, his face unreadable. “Light Yagami. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Uh oh, Near thought, silent and apparently disinterested but amused by what he knew must be coming. Mello won’t let that slide. It’s Yagami’s fault anyway, for saying ‘boys’. Was that his way of drawing attention to our age? Perhaps he is of a mind that we are unnecessary, the same way Mello feels about him.

“Girl.”

The voice came without preamble, hard and quick. It caught the man off guard, and his lashes fluttered for a moment before his gaze settled on the origin of the voice. Mello lounged in her chair, swaying back and forth in a fashion that was nearly feline.

A hint of irritation and uncertainty flitted across Light Yagami’s face. “Excuse me?”

“You said boys. I’m a girl,” Mello brushed her hair out of her eyes with a distinctly feminine flourish, but did nothing to disguise the depth of her voice, to make a point. “Right this moment I am, anyway.”

 “…I’m sorry, I’m afraid I don’t understand,” the man named Light looked genuinely taken aback, glancing at L in an almost accusatory fashion. L looked at a far wall, and scratched the back of his head absently. Beside him, Naomi’s brow furrowed into an expression of confusion too, but she kept quiet. “You aren’t making sense to me. What do you mean, ‘right this moment’? Are you a girl, or aren’t you?”

A playful yet menacing grin stretched across Mello’s features, “Yes, sometimes.”

“I see,” Yagami frowned, but didn’t seem to be the sort to argue over what he considered a triviality. Mello wasn’t making it particularly easy for him, but Near was aware that Mello felt no obligation to do so of any kind.

“Sorry if I’m blowing your mind,” Mello intoned, much too pleased with herself. For a moment, Near was uneasy, wondering if Mello would feel the need to expand on her dispute. He was quietly relieved when she did not. “That’s right, my gender is fluid; sometimes I’m a boy, sometimes I’m a girl. On occasion, I’m neither. If you aren’t astute enough to figure out which pronouns I prefer on a given day, I have no problem correcting you.”
A tension curled through the Japanese man’s shoulders, proof that he didn’t enjoy being spoken to in such a way. However, instead of puffing up in defense or dismissing the statement as absolute nonsense, a second later it was as though the agitation and misperception had been wiped away completely.

“I apologize for the interruption and for any offense I might have caused. However, there is a matter that of importance that I’d like to discuss with Ryuzaki.” the man named Light inclined his head in a mild-mannered fashion, but his voice did not seem overly-apologetic. He was reciting a script – Near could tell, because he often did so himself, in order to fake his way through social interactions, though he thought the man was more convincing than he ever managed to be. There was just the slightest turn of his head toward the stairs that led to a common area above. “Can I have a word?”

“Ah,” L only paused for a moment before standing up and shoving his hands into his pockets deeply. “Yes, that’s fine. Please excuse us.”

The nod that Light gave was curt, and all of Mello’s superiority seemed to drain out of her as she watched L follow the stranger up the stairs. Mello’s face turned pensive, the lines of outrage fading to nothing. She seemed like she wanted to say something, and Matt adjusted himself in his seat as if anticipating this too, as Near observed from the curtain of his hair.

But then it was Naomi who spoke first, surprising him, and only when they heard the footsteps of the other two fade away, then the sound of a door behind shut. Even so, she kept her voice low and conspiratorial as she leaned forward.

“So,” her brown eyes were bright, her expression serious. “Am I correct in assuming you’ve all met Beyond Birthday?”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Next chapter picks up where this one leaves off, just with a different point of view. Light's, I think, but it may switch off to someone else too. We got the very tip of their first interactions here, but there will be more to come.

So, yes, Near is agender. I thought it was pretty fitting, and I really like playing up his and Mello's differences and similarities. Mello is all (first) genders and Near is none. I don't know, I think that's just a cute little tidbit.

I set up the scene with Aizawa to give you a bit more information on Near's gender but it's difficult to get certain things across without blatantly stating it. Which can seem forced. Hopefully you'll gain more insight gradually – I'm only going to say it here if I think I've hinted at it adequately in the chapter. That being said, there is a reason that Near uses 'he' pronouns. I think I'll be able to go into that next chapter.

So, yeah, Light's back in the NPA. We went a little into the reason why here, but we'll get more of that to come. Also, I though Near riding Aizawa piggyback was adorable. He's a 40-year-old man, stubborn in his ways, but I don't think he's a horrible person.

Let me know how you enjoyed this chapter. :) I'd love to know what you thought of Near's POV, your favorite lines and dialogue over all, Mello and Matt, and Light in Near's POV. All that good stuff.
"It often seems to me that's all detective work is, wiping out your false starts and beginning again." – Agatha Christie

"Those are children."

Light didn't bother reining it in once they were behind closed doors. He'd had another reason for wanting to drag L away, but seeing the three new members of the task force had shuffled his priorities.

It had been like walking in on high school detention. Naomi sat the computer, well put together and calm, with three little miscreants surrounding her. Literally, surrounding her. The dark-haired one had been on her right, the blond on her left and the small albino one had been in front of her, not far from her feet with a toy.

You thought the same of L when you first saw him, his mind chided him, but he ignored it. L was the best detective in the world; he'd earned his oddities. These boys had not earned respect – they were smug little cretins, no matter what 'special orphanage' they came from.

"You dismissed three experienced, loyal agents for three children?" Light spun on him once he'd made his way about halfway down the hallway just outside of the spacious common area.

"They are all legal adults," L disagreed, stretching. His back cracked loudly and Light grimaced at the sound. "And quite experienced in their fields. They're trained for this."

"Ah, yes, Whammy's." Light mutters, crossing his arms over his chest, doing his best to look unimpressed. He was quite good at it. "If they're really so perfect for the job, then why haven't they been here since the beginning?"

"They're my successors," L replied without fail, rolling his shoulders up a bit, but not straightening entirely. Light took note of it; it meant that L was aware that someone walking in seeing L standing almost vertically would ruin his entire image. This meant he hadn't quite exposed this non-affected L to even his successors. "There's a certain sense of competition. Asking for help has never been an option before."

Light wasn't appeased, but he knew that there was logic in it. Of course there was, it was L; there was a reason for everything he did. Including asking him to stay with the NPA. The excuses, however practical, were still frustrating when he considered the implications. When he thought about his father openly telling him that he should come out as Omega to the force, staying on the force without doing so felt dishonest to his memory. He'd returned from his leave, but had done nothing to shed any light on his second gender. Aizawa,
Mogi and Matsuda had all promised not to tell; they'd agreed it was no one's business. But they hadn't known what his father had asked of him, hadn't been there that night, and so couldn't possibly understand.

"I've always been able to solve the case," L continued when Light was silent. "I never imagined I'd need to bring them here."

He didn't look overjoyed at the prospect, which made Light feel a little better about it.

"So you inviting them here is admitting defeat then," Light spelled out, raising his eyebrows at the man. "I thought as much. You did the same thing when you found out I wasn't Kira. How did you make it this far, being this sore of a loser?"


Light snorted and the man moved closer, leaning against the wall and pouting. L's facial expressions were either next to nonexistent or exaggerated, meant for comic effect. This was the former, but the turn his mouth had taken had a distinctly petulant quality to it that would have been lost on most.

"What would you call what happened, if not a defeat?"

"A set back."

"...A set back."

"Alright, a humiliating setback," Light amended, his lip curling at the sight of L drooping physically and -most likely- mentally, "Sulking about it doesn't help anyone."

"I'm not sulking."

"However average Matsuda, Aizawa and Mogi were, we've worked together for a long time, there was a harmony in the way we worked with one another." Light's brow furrowed, eyes flickering to the door, toward Mello beyond it. "The blond one is already breeding dissension."

This time, L had the audacity to roll his eyes. "Mello was harsh, admittedly. You responded well, so it's likely she won't be overly ambitious again." A beat. "Or else, she'll try to provoke you again. I'm sure Mello is accustomed to some friction when it comes to her gender fluidity."

Light's brow furrowed at the apparent absurdity of it. He'd never heard of it – it seemed like it should be nonsense, and yet there...had been something distinctly feminine in Mello's demeanor. He could chalk that up to being an Omega without the restraint of suppressants, however. L had prepared him for that much.

"You actually buy that?"

"Of course," L said, tilting his head at him as though Light was the one being irrational.

*I suppose there are odder things. Most would find the notion of an Omega hiding their gender from the world for almost a decade complete nonsense too. Light could admit that much. Still, being corrected grated on his nerves horribly, and it made him want to dismiss the idea as frivolous just for the sake of it."

"...It just seems ridiculous. He'd never heard of anything like it, and the way she'd just thrown it at him like that, he was having a difficult time registering the idea. "For someone to feel like a different gender – he –she certainly seems pleased with herself."
"She's comfortable with herself," L shrugged in return, taking a step closer and reaching out for Light's sleeve. Aggravated, Light yanked it back out of his reach, but didn't bother moving away entirely. "Self-acceptance is difficult to achieve."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be so difficult if she didn't flaunt it," Light retorted coolly.

"No, that would only help others accept her," L tilted his head at him and gave him a soft look that made his stomach twist the same guilt that had been there whenever he thought Matsuda should try to be more passable. "For some reason I thought you and Mello -and Near, for that matter - might be able to relate to one another."

Light's stomach curled back the other way, soured as he took in those words.

"What, because we're Omegas?"

"No," responded L, not skipping a beat, as though he'd been expecting the defensive remark. The man was getting too damn familiar with him, and at times it was more than a little bit unnerving. "Of course it's not just because you're Omegas."

What then? I don't think I have anything in common with little Omegan orphans who worship you.

Light raised his eye brow to get this across, but L just released a breath, puffing out his cheeks briefly before stepping closer once more, sliding his shoulder along the wall.

"I suppose," L started slowly, reaching again for Light's sleeve. "I may have miscalculated."

Manipulative bastard. As much as I like it when you admit you're wrong, that doesn't mean I approve of these new circumstances. It doesn't mean I'll like them. Light thought vehemently, but he let L take a hold of his sleeve just the same. L seemed a bit too triumphant as he pulled Light's hand closer.

One of L's thumbs brushed over the inside of his wrist, and Light felt his nerves prickle, like goosebumps sprouting all of a sudden all over. It was an affectionate gesture, brimming with sentiment, not unlike the words L had blurted out the night his father was murdered.

You are such a hypocrite, L had told him, pointing his index finger toward the ceiling comically. Yet even knowing that, I think – no, in fact, I'm positive; I am in love with you.

It had seemed to come completely out of nowhere, and he still wasn't entirely sure what had inspired the man to say it. Light had been in the process of distracting himself with anger, insulted and outraged that the man had the nerve to call him a hypocrite after everything L had done in the name of justice –

L had completely floored him instead, had him almost stammering because he hadn't expected. It had been the farthest thought from his mind; he'd underestimated L's ability and willingness to make a fool of himself with corny phrases like that. His immediate reaction had been shock, and then irritation that L thought he was stupid enough to fall for such a trivial statement.

Yet again, Light found that even though he could see L's attempts to charm him for the persuasion tactics they were, it didn't mean he was immune. Especially when L seemed to express his reverence with such acts. He'd been irritated, had acted out against him, and more than once since that day maliciously taunted him about it. L had mostly likely been attempting to distract him from his overbearing grief, but that hadn't stopped Light from enjoying the idea, in the abstract.

L loving him. What kind of person, even if the notion had wormed its way inside in a moment of
weakness, would be fool enough to admit it? He'd given Light all of the power in that moment, and Light had proven to him minutes later just what that meant.

Love was a childish notion, and L was a fucking child for spouting such ignorance at him.

Light had been shocked and appalled by the obnoxious admission; his stomach had fluttered, his chest had swelled, heat had crept up his neck. Saccharine, juvenile idiocy that he hadn't thought L capable of. It made him sick just thinking about it.

"You certainly did," Light turned his wrist just slightly to give L better access, averting his eyes. "I don't have anything in common with them."

"No," L looked up, his head lower than Light's for the moment, still partly hunched over. "You wouldn't understand the feeling of being out of tune with your own body, would you?"

The words struck him and Light almost snatched his hand away. He knew how telling that would be, however, so he let L keep his wrist and glowered at him to show his dissatisfaction.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"We're getting off topic," He stated, ignoring the shudder that crept through him, vibrating down his spine and settling warmly in the pit of his stomach when the pad of L's thumb circled the tender skin smoothly.

"Yes, we are," L agreed idly.

Light's own fingers prodded L's wrist in return to distract himself from the soothing motion. Warmth seemed to radiating up his arm, reaching toward his chest. He had been extremely irritated a moment ago, hadn't he?

"I didn't call you away to argue, believe it or not."

"I don't believe it one bit," L informed him seriously.

"This isn't a joke."

"I'm not joking; Light-kun is very obstinate."

"Will you just —" Light huffed, sufficiently riled, and finally did pry his hand away. He'd allowed it for a time but he wasn't going to let L to control this interaction with his stupid little touches. "I didn't drag you out here so you could flirt with me."

"That is disappointing," L replied, glancing down at Light's wrist like he'd just taken away a cherished toy. The analogy made Light think of Near, with his little action figure. What kind of grown human being —?

"You may actually be the worst person I've ever met," decided Light, rubbing at his wrist without thinking, as if trying to erase L's touch from the area.

Scent glands could be particularly sensitive, in some places more than others. While L's neck tended to be his pressure point, L had come to find that Light's wrists were susceptible in quite the same way. Sometimes Light could still feel the echo of his fingers there hours after they'd left him.

"Light-kun's pick-up lines leave much to be desired," L sighed at him dramatically, keeping up the third person just to vex him. "I suppose he can't be good at everything."
"Can't you be serious for a moment?" Light's voice took on an edge that was no longer playful.

"If I must."

"You must."

"Then I suppose it shall be," L's dark eyes flickered down to Light's wrist again, and Light dropped his hands down to his sides in response. It wouldn't due to let L know he was still trying to recover from such a simple touch. "For how long?"

"Until I say otherwise," Light answered brusquely, and then started in immediately now that he had L's attention. "I returned to the NPA under your advisement, because you said it might be useful. Because I'm already on Kira's radar, and he's inviting people into his ranks...Do you remember?"

"Of course I do," L replied flatly, holding his gaze. "I have a perfect memory."

"Oh, good," Light jumped on that, a little vindictively. "Then can you please tell me again what you called me in relation to this request?"

L stared for a moment, then looked up at the ceiling. "I forget."

Cursing the corner of his mouth for twitching, Light forced himself to be serious, even if L seemed determined not to be. He pulled his phone out of his pocket as he spoke.

"You said that I could be useful bait."

"Ah," L tilted his head in that way of his, widening his eyes in an attempt to look blameless, "Bait? Did I really use that word? That doesn't seem like me."

Scoffing, Light continued, thumbing his password in with ease. "Yes, you did, and it's exactly like you. You also said that Mikami was likely one of those that Kira invited to join him and that it was possible that he was in contact with Kira already, or conceivably could be in the future."

In an instant, the eyes were sharper, no longer playing the coy game he had been for the last handful of minutes.

"I assume there is a point to this."

"Yes," Light let himself smirk at the sudden interest, and then handed his phone over, "If I'm the bait, this may be the hook. Mikami has asked me out for coffee to discuss the latest hearing in person."

L plucked the phone from his fingers in his usual way, thumb and index finger with the rest of digits fanned out, and Light must have made some sort of face in response. Even while his eyes scanned the email, L spoke.

"Don't look at me like that. If you held objects like this, it would have been more difficult for Kira to get your fingerprint in order to frame you."

Light didn't bother restraining his scowl this time. "I didn't criticize you."

"Not out loud," L replied, then handed the phone back when he was done reading. "So you assume that he has a Kira-related agenda for wanting to meet you for coffee."

"I can't imagine why else he would want to meet in person," Light replied, slipping the device back into his pocket. "We've only ever communicated through email before. If it's not, then I've just wasted an hour or two of my time. If it is though, then we may have our way in."
Attacking him through the media is just going to backfire. While there are still plenty of people that
don't support him, the fact that he's so well-known and loved has cowed some of the otherwise vocal
protesters into silence. We need to attack him from the inside – we need to figure out how he kills.
How he does any of it.

L nodded slowly. "You may be on to something. At the very least, it's an avenue we should look
into."

"Teru seems to worship Kira," Light surmised critically, "And even though you ruled him out as a
suspect before, that was ages ago. Kira has done a lot in the last couple months."

"He has," L's thumb ended up in his mouth yet again, eyes narrowing with thought. "Arrange the
meeting then."

"I'll make it for this weekend," Light confirmed, then gave a short bob of his head in the direction
of the door that would lead back to the work room. "Shall we head back? The sooner we catch them
up on everything that's happened, the sooner they can get to work rather than throwing tantrums."

"Mello is brilliant, and has many skills that will be useful," L told him mildly. "If our plan is to rely
espionage, she has the most experience."

Light leveled a stare at him, frowning. "Mello was acting out. I could care less what gender she is at
any given time, as long as she does her work; I don't need teenagers that are here to waste time.
We're not here to socialize."

"No," L confirmed with mock severity, then stepped in, closing the distance between them. "No
socializing allowed whatsoever."

Light sighed to express his exasperation, then met him halfway.

The looks she'd received from the three new members of the task force made asking the question
worth it. Naomi had been debating on whether or not telling them her suspicions was a good idea.
They hadn't been expecting her to come out and say something like that – what, did they not know
who she was?

Not that she was anyone particularly important in the big picture, and certainly not to these strange
little prodigies, but she did know stuff. She wasn't completely out of the loop. In fact, she was pretty
sure she was a definite part of the loop.

Unlike the rest of the task force, she didn't currently have a job to go back to. She assumed that was
the reason L had kept her around, but also hoped there was more to it than that. He had said that he
respected her judgement and character, but he always gave compliments in such a way that it was
impossible to tell if he was being serious.

The small one, Near, hesitated for a moment, glancing up from beneath his silvery curls, then gave a
short nod.

"Yes, that is correct."

"Wait, Naomi-san, how do you know about him?" asked Matt as spun in his chair to face her,
switching to English as he did so, because Naomi had offered before. "L barely talks to anyone
about that – I only know because of Mello."

"You're the agent, aren't you?" Mello's brown furrowed, looking at Naomi. She was a little taken aback by the intensity in those eyes, especially this close. She should have been used to it, given the amount of time she spent with L, but coming from such a pretty, young face it was somehow even odder. "The one that helped L catch B, back then?"

"Yes," Naomi agreed, though she did so more deliberately – she couldn't switch to English with quite as much ease as they did, but she managed. Matt breathed a long breath out beside her. "B? I haven't heard that, but I guess it makes sense. I knew him as Rue Ryuzaki – it was only once he was in prison later that I found out about what he considers his real name to be."

"Wait, what?" Matt's brow furrowed. "I mean, you're where that information came from? How?"

"You visited him in prison," Near said quietly, and Naomi looked down at him, feeling sheepish to hear it put so plainly. "Am I correct?"

"...Yes," She admitted, feeling like there was no use lying about it. While Naomi was fairly certain she hadn't given too much away in her reaction – she had, at some point, been trained to lie effectively after all – there was no point. She'd brought this up with the intention of sharing her information with them, so there was no use lying.

"Didn't he like, set himself on fire in front of you?" Matt asked. Even behind the tint of his goggles, she could tell his eyes were wide. "You sure make friends in weird ways."

"Well, he didn't set himself on fire in front of me specifically. I just happened to find him after – "

Naomi shook her head. "That's not the point. Yes, I visited him in prison a few times while I lived in Los Angeles. It's been a couple years since I last saw him though.

"More than once?" Mello's eyebrows raised. "That's pretty surprising."

"I know," Naomi sighed, rubbing the back of her neck while she found the words. "I felt bad for him. He had third degree burns on over seventy percent of his body and –"

She paused, and then released a breath.

At the time, she'd resigned from the FBI and was spending all her time cooking, cleaning, trying to get pregnant and find purpose in a life without work. Raye had been a rather good husband, if a bit curt and set in his ways, but otherwise a good man. She'd spent two years being a housewife, finding little projects to occupy herself with, making friends with other women in the same position. Many of them seemed perfectly happy with her position, completely fulfilled by their children, or channeling their free time into some sort of passion or hobby.

Finding a letter in her mailbox, addressed to her in a clean, neat kanji from California State Prison, had been the most exciting event in her life since waking up to find L had hacked her computer. She'd ignored it for days, pretended to be irritated by the audacity, then later told herself she only responded out of pity, but in truth –

"...I was bored," she confessed, feeling herself flush. It seemed like the lamest excuse ever. "I went to visit him because I was bored. He told me so himself when I was there, and it's true."

There was a moment where the blond stared at her, the corner of her mouth twitching.

"Alright," Mello gave a casual stretch, looking up and away. "That's very interesting, Misora-san, truly, but why bring him up?"
"Come on," Naomi scoffed, though she was losing confidence in her theory. "Kira wants to ruin L. Why would he want to do something like that? It seems like an oddly specific goal. Even in prison, B said he regretted not winning."

"That was all he regretted?" Matt asked incredulously. "Not the setting-himself-on-fire part?"

"He couldn't have won without it," Near stated, kicking his small sock-clad feet up behind him. "He probably regrets not using more kerosene."

Mello actually gave a harsh laugh, and Near looked back at the floor.

"Ha!" Mello didn't seem the sort to restrain herself. Her laughs were unbridled, like the rest of her. She'd only met Mello a few hours before, and Matt a few days ago, but she was getting the hang of them. She was pretty sure nothing could surprise her like meeting L for the first time, realizing that she'd kicked him down a flight of stairs — "Okay, okay, but seriously. Why do you ask about B, Misora?"

"You're really going to make me spell it out?"

Come on, boys — and girl — you obviously know what I'm getting at here. Are you teasing me? Is this the genius squad initiation or something?

"It seems so," Matt confirmed wryly, flashing his teeth, which are whiter than she'd expected. She'd seen him smoking a few times over, so she hadn't expected that. Her own teeth were probably duller than his just due to coffee.

"I mean, I understand exactly what you're getting at," Mello told Naomi, pressing a hand to her flat chest. Her dark red nails glinted as she did so. "But Near, here, he's a little behind. He'll need you to explain."

"He was older than us by seven or eight years," Near said as if agreeing with Mello. He rested his chin on his arms in front of himself, setting the toy aside. "I spoke to him once, or twice. Mello was more social, however, he may have encountered B more than me."

"That's right," Mello leaned back in her chair. "I was still just a kid, but I felt like Beyond and I had a lot in common for a long time. Still do, actually."

It was interesting to Naomi, after being told about her gender fluidity, that she found herself noting the parts of Mello's movements that were distinct. Some of her motions were feminine, specifically the way she moved her hips when she walked, while the way she sat with her legs open was quite masculine. Not all of her could be quantified in such simple terms, but there was a duality there that Naomi found objectively fascinating. If she was really so adept at lying with her body language that she had literally been acting as a 'Russian Spy' of some sort, then she must know how open her movements were. She wasn't hiding any part of herself here when she spoke or moved, every motion vibrant and almost loud.

There was a stark contrast to the pale boy dressed all in white on the floor; he spoke only in quiet, level tones and moved in soft, simple motions. No wonder they seemed to clash. She'd only just met Near, but he seemed older than she'd initially estimated — he'd confirmed as much.

"Hopefully Mello never feels the need to bathe in flammable liquid and light a match." Near mused, crossing his ankles behind him. His left leg was noticeably less flexible than the right, even though he'd managed to walk to his spot atop the tiles with relative ease.

"I could pull off a scar," retorted Mello, lifting her chin.
"If you guys could stop bickering for like, three consecutive minutes," Matt sighed, leaning forward and putting his elbows to his knees so that he was halfway between Mello and Near's level. "Maybe we wouldn't have wasted this much time. They'll be back in here any second."

"Only three minutes?" Mello raised his eyebrows challengingly.

"Telling Mello not to do something only increases the likelihood it happening." Near muttered. Naomi peered down at him, at the grey eyes and how they were poised on Mello. "However, I would very much like to hear Naomi's thoughts on B faking his death and subsequently working for Kira, so perhaps Mello could manage for a short period of time."

Matt's mouth dropped open, then snapped shut. He scoffed at himself, "Why am I surprised?"

Naomi watched the corner of Near's mouth twitch as Mello tossed his head back, giving a long groan of irritation in response.

"I knew you knew," Mello hissed through his teeth, then lifted his head. "Have you done any actual research into it yet?"

Naomi felt a swell of relief in her chest; not only had the boys not laughed in her face for proposing the idea – though she hadn't really gotten a chance to state it plainly – they had already thought it up themselves. Of course, that only made her even more frustrated with L and his refusal to acknowledge the possibility. She had not asked him about it, but there had been times when she thought it should be at least mentioned that there was someone that (though technically dead) had a vendetta against him.

In prison, Beyond had been far more subdued than she remembered. Though he hadn't apologized for his atrocities, he didn't seem brag about them either. In fact, most of their conversations had been about some book or another they both had read, or one of his passing philosophical thoughts, or – strangely – her motorcycle. She chalked that up to a sore pride about losing.

To her recollection, unless she brought it up herself, Beyond didn't mention L at all. But that didn't mean that he wouldn't jump on a chance to 'ruin' L if it presented itself. Which, if he was alive, free, and this theory had any weight whatsoever – he had found in Kira.

"Okay, but let's just say for a moment that he is alive somehow," Matt offered, raking his fingers through his hair and ruffling it up in the process. "How in the hell would he have faked his death – accomplices?"

"That would have had to be it," Mello agrees, frowning. "He was sort of charming, but I can't imagine him being that convincing with that ugly mug of his."

"Charming?" Naomi giggled, remembering her first impression of the weird man. Strangely enough, he'd seemed much more normal behind bars, even as scarred as he was. Now that she knew of L, she could see that he had been imitating him – or was L imitating Beyond? It was likely she would never be privilege to such information.

"He was cool," Matt recalled, stretching his arms up behind his head. "A freak, sort of creepy, and totally troubled, but insane like most think. Whammy's isn't good for everyone."

Children from troubled back grounds could be a handful. So could extremely bright children. On their own, they were difficult, but a place that combined the two and then

"No, I can't imagine so," Naomi sighed, brushing a lock of hair behind her ear.
"He's practically a ghost story at Whammy's," Mello elucidated, then taunted. "And he could actually be a ghost. Why do you think he could be alive?"

"I'm more interested in how he would have come to know Ryuga Hideki."

Near small fingers twisted a lock of hair as he spoke up, twisting in a repetitive motion that had her realizing all at once that he was very likely on the autistic spectrum. She couldn't know for sure, explained a few other nuances she'd picked about him as well. She'd wondered about it regarding L from time to time, though she'd never had any reason to bring it up. If it was necessary for her to know, it would be mentioned.

"I haven't been able to do much research on Beyond – I've had my hands full with Hideki, Takada, and Amane," Matt sighs, turning to a set up of three screens side by side, which had been his work area since he'd arrived. "It's been a rough couple of days. Mello and I discussed B, but I haven't been able to act on anything."

She abruptly found herself wishing that Matsuda were still on the task force – he had always responded to her ideas with such uninhibited enthusiasm. Commenting, gasping, asking questions (often too many) and otherwise being earnestly engaged in her thoughts.

Naomi understood why he had been released, but the way the team was now, she thought she might be at a bit of a disadvantage. Matt wasn't so bad alone; he was actually a pretty amiable, considerate person when he took his headphones off for long enough to make conversation, but combined with Near and Mello, getting a word in edgewise was becoming a chore.

These two especially are both combative in their own ways. It's as though everything that comes out of one's mouth is meant specifically for the others' ears. It was a strange place to be in. She felt left out, thought being a 'fourth wheel' didn't really make sense metaphorically.

And Matt seems to be able to enable or defuse it according to his preference at the time. I feel like there are inside jokes; not just that, but inside conflicts that are occurring beneath the outside one they're constantly having.

"The entire theory is dependent on the idea that B is alive. I'm sure that sufficient research will be able to enlighten us, if that is the case." Near continued, "But if we're speculating based on the idea that he is alive, then the most pertinent question is how he came into contact with Kira, months ago."

"There are a dozen ways that could have happened," Mello argued. "We have no idea how he does what he does."

Near shrugged and reached for his toy again. "That doesn't make the question any less important."

"Uh, guys," Matt spun back around, getting their attention. "We have a breach."

"What do you mean?" Mello rolled closer to get a look at the monitor, her attention diverted immediately. "Is Kira trying to hack into the system again?"

"No, there's just some girl standing at the elevator, looking at the camera and saying – uh, yeah, I don't know. I can't read lips in Japanese."

Naomi eased closer in her chair as Mello said, "She's saying 'Let me up'."

"Huh," Matt considered absently. "She's sort of cute."

"Is she now?" Mello inquired, her voice taking on a slightly hard quality. "I thought you didn't care
"What, faces?" snaps Matt under his breath. "I can tell perfectly well that she's cute, just like anyone with eyes can."

Mello's lips formed a tight line for a moment, just as Naomi caught her first glimpse of the girl that they spoke of. She recognized the intruder immediately, eyes widening at the sight of the familiar face. It seemed incongruent, that she would be here, in the lobby of a building that was supposed to be a big, bad secret headquarters.

She cut off Mello's retort off with her observation.

"That," Naomi gave an amused exhale that was nearly a laugh, impressed by the boldness of the young woman. She'd only met Sayu briefly at Soichiro's funeral, but if she was at all like Light, then letting her come up might actually prove useful. "...Is Sayu Yagami."

How did she manage - ?

"You guys let her up. If she's found this place, there's really no use. Ryuzaki and her brother can handle her after that." Naomi told them as she stood up, placing a hand on her hip. "I'll go let them know what's going on."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Sorry for the delay in this chapter. There's a lot of set up, a lot of information, and I'm trying to prepare for the political impact that Kira is having so I'm reading and researching and getting overwhelmed with information, then taking a break...blah. Once the more action/character/romance-based chapters come up, I'm sure I'll be faster – there's still plenty of that to come. Information-heavy sequences don't come as naturally to me. The next chapter might be the same.

So, yes. Sayu is at Headquarters, there was a long conversation about Beyond AND Naomi's POV. Pretty fun new stuff. Also some cute stuff between L and Light even they were talking about work/arguing through part of it. Hopefully you guys enjoyed the chapter even though it was mostly dialogue! Part Two is going to start with build up chapters just like the first part did.

Next Chapter: Sayu and the gang. Also, we talk about the Kira case. Light's POV, but may be split POV like this chapter was.

Feedback is always appreciated. :) Favorite lines/dialogue/moments/actions. All that good stuff!

-Nilah
"In a democracy, someone who fails to get elected to office can always console himself with the thought that there was something not quite fair about it." — Thucydides

Seeing Sayu when they made their way back down the stairs and to the work room was almost surreal. Two parts of his life that he'd never thought would cross over were suddenly tossed into the same room. She'd only just made it through the elevator doors when he came to stand on the final step. She paused just outside the metallic doors, straightening her cardigan and brushing a dark lock of hair behind her ear as though strapping her armor into place, before walking toward them with wide, confident steps.

Although Naomi had informed them of the situation — luckily they'd heard her approach, giving them time to pull their mouths and hands off of one another — it had been difficult to comprehend the idea that his sister had somehow tracked them to this building. It seemed as though she had been copy-pasted out of one department of his life and into this one.

"Sayu," Light started, somewhat sternly as she approached. "How exactly did you find this place?"

"Sorry?" Sayu sauntered passed him unapologetically, spinning around when she got to a chair, her flouncy skirt fluttering around her as she did so. "Were you guys trying to hide it?"

Beside him, L looked irritated and reluctantly amused. No doubt he was getting tired of people thwarting his plans, but he couldn't help but enjoy Sayu's attitude and was likely impressed. Light was feeling similar emotions on the subject, but he felt a trickle of anxiety join in the mix.

How did she get here? If a college student can find her way to this place, then what does that mean for security against Kira and his associates?

"I think it's obvious," Mello piped up as she eyed Sayu, frowning. "Mr. Indispensable here got himself followed by his little sister. Who does that?"

She's probably right — you've had a lot on your mind lately. If you hadn't been paying attention when you left home —

"Maybe you should let my sister answer for herself," Light answered flatly, but didn't even glance at Mello as he did so. Instead, his eyebrows fell into a straight line as he peered at his sister, still in awe at her very existence, in this place, with him. It was almost fitting, considering she was probably
older than most of his new team members.

That was still grating on him, but quietly so, in the back of his mind. There were more important matters to attend to; he would save his complaints for after he'd seen them do their work. Matt apparently had some sort of presentation, so he'd be able to evaluate him soon enough. The other two remained unknown variables.

"God, you look like dad when you make that face," Sayu said instead, then furrowed her brow to mimic him. Beside him, L's mouth twitched and Light wanted to swat at him for being amiable when she had clearly crossed the line by tracing them back here.

"Yagami-san," L started more seriously, perhaps having noticed Light's glance. Briefly, Light wondered when he'd decided to go with 'Yagami-san' in relation to his sister, but he didn't linger on it. "Kira breached our system not even a month ago; that is how he received the sensitive photos of suspects in confinement. Therefore, it is imperative that we know how you found the information regarding our location."

Sayu blew air out through her cheeks and then leaned back more fully in her chair.

"Okay. I followed you."

"I knew it," hissed Mello, casting Light an accusing look.

"No, I followed you, Ryuzaki," Sayu corrected, shooting a grin at the detective as she swayed in her seat slightly. "After my dad's funeral, you know, right after Ryuga confessed – you left with Light in that swanky car, and I followed him on my bike. I said I was going up to my room to cry, but I sneaked out right after."

"Wait, what?" Mello groused, crossing her arms over her chest and glowering at L as if she were disappointed. "So – it was all three of you?"

L paused, then scratched his head, "We had other things to worry about."

He didn't bother making excuses, and Light was sure he knew why. After the funeral and Kira's confession, they had both been furious with themselves and the idol for humiliating them in such a way. The ride back had been one even more intimate than that of the return from the East West Festival. They'd started kissing angrily behind the divide, so that Watari couldn't glance into the rearview and see them, clawing one another closer and getting out their mutual pent up rage because it was easier than screaming.

It had dissolved eventually into languid touches, brushing lips and fingers over every exposed scent gland until their muscles and psyches shivered with relief. It had been a wordless exchange, and they'd gotten to work immediately upon arrival to headquarters, but apparently that escapade had made it possible for Sayu to follow them.

That might not be true. It's possible that even if we'd been on alert, she would have successfully followed us. Light balked at his own thoughts. Why am I defending this to myself? If we hadn't been so wrapped up in one another, it's very likely we would have noticed. We were reckless. Our own failings had just been presented in front of us, in front of the world, and yet we immediately let our guards down again?

"What about Watari?" Matt asked, frowning, though he didn't look all that put out by the idea of Sayu stalking them. "He's usually on point."

"That does seem strange," Naomi granted, looking over to where L and Light stood by the staircase.
"It's possible he allowed her to follow us," L muttered, dark eyes flickering to the corner of the room, where one of the cameras were, as though hoping Watari would see it and note his disapproval.

"That would explain why he was driving slowly and taking easy routes– he wasn't trying to lose me at all." Sayu added thoughtfully, then gave a broad, disarming smile that Light was actually rather impressed with. "I guess he agreed with me."

"Agreed with you on what?" Mello demanded, sitting up a little straighter. Light's mind had already jumped to the awful conclusion, was already spinning for reasons that it would be a horrible idea.

"That I should be on the team," answered Sayu easily.

Naomi looked around the room, cringing. "This team?"

"This one."

"This one, right here?" Matt humored, his goggles shifting upward as if he were raising his eyebrows. He pointed at the floor. "In this room?"

"The very same."

"Oh, boy," Naomi sighed, bringing her fingers through her hair as she set her sights on Light. She seemed unsure and sympathetic, not wanting to cross any boundaries, but no doubt she had qualms when it came to accepting people as young and inexperienced as Sayu onto the team.

Not to mention, the son of a Kira victim. I'm already on this case. I can think of a dozen reasons why this is a bad idea. Why couldn't you prefer school and shopping for shoes like you normally would? It'd be safer for you and easier for me.

"Sayu," Light said her name slowly, deliberately, and finally seating himself in the computer chair that was closest to his sister and not occupied. "I'm sorry, but that's not going to happen."

"Light," She retorted in the same tone. "I'm sorry, but it totally is. Isn't it, Ryuzaki?"

Light gave L a sharp look, but L was already droning out a dismissive statement. "Yagami-san, as much as I appreciate your initiative, we are currently fully staffed –"

"I want to help," Sayu interrupted, leaning forward in her chair. "I can help."

L looked up to the ceiling then moved to take a seat as well, sighing. "Yagami-san has a personal investment in the case."

"So does Light," she shot back. "Next."

"...You aren't qualified," L told her, but even Light could see he was grasping at straws. Even though she looks up to me, she's not going to listen to me, Light thought agitatedly. Come on, L, think of something to get her out of here.

"I graduate with a degree in psychology in two months," Sayu responded without delay, as though she'd accounted for this accusation. "Besides, Light's been helping with cases since he was fifteen years old, and that was on official police work, not this...big-league private detective thing you have going. You have a special team, and I want to be a part of it."

"If you're coming up on the end of your final year, surely you're too busy for frivolous pursuits."

"This isn't frivolous. He killed my dad." Sayu's voice a little harsher this time, cracking at L's
excuses. "Light has his job, but he's still here working with you whenever he has the time. That's what I'll do. I'll come and assist you whenever I can."

L was faltering in his resolve and Sayu wasn't going easy on him. His gaze flickered to Light, as if asking 'What do you want me to do with this? She has a point'. Light looked to the others in the room, from Near who as toying with his action figure disinterestedly, to Mello and Matt who looked equal parts amused and suspicious, to Naomi, who looked just as won over as L did.

"Sayu, I'm going to catch Kira," Light insisted coolly, meeting her eyes. "There's no reason for you to do this. Think of mom, after all she's gone through –"

"You aren't going to guilt trip me out of this, Light," Sayu told him, leaning forward in much the same way he was and holding his gaze. "I'm doing this for mom, and dad's memory, but I'm also doing this for me. I've already made up my mind."

L's hands settled on his knees, thumbs pressing into his kneecaps. "Perhaps Yagami-san should –"

"No. You owe this to me, Ryuuzaki. You're in charge, aren't you?" She paused, then glanced over to the woman beside her curiously. "Or is Naomi?"

L frowned. "Yes, I'm technically the lead detective on –"

"Then that means you're responsible for my dad's death."

This was a shock to most in the room. Even Light was taken aback, though he understood the logic behind that conclusion. Light let his eyes flicker to L, before leaning back in his seat with a soft exhale. Mello, however, did not react with as much poise.

"Hey there, Yagami, you can cool it right fucking there –"

"Mello," Matt groaned. "Can't you calm down?"

"Near may be able to sit back and observe like a statue, but I sure as hell won't."

"I'm not assigning blame, I'm just stating the facts," Sayu informed her, rolling her eyes and pulling out her phone. This put L on edge, had his toes curling just slightly, and only his faith in the Yagami family as a whole kept him from snatching it away. He didn't like unauthorized phones in private groups; it would be much too easy to take a photo of him with it and send it off to anyone that might benefit from the information.

Sayu held out the phone and continued, showing the screen to each of them. Light hid a scowl at the display. It was the picture that had been released by Kira of his and Misa's incarceration. This one was just him, just his lank, shaggy hair and his slumped form in the restraints. Sayu continued.

"I was looking at the pictures that Kira broadcast from L's 'inhumane incarceration of innocents' and at first I didn't realize it but...it's you, in one of those pictures, Light. The timeline for your sudden inexplicable urge to travel makes sense too." She set her phone aside now that she was done. "Now that she's confessed, everyone figures the girl in the other photo is Misa. L got that one right, but he also had you locked up in there."

Light drew his lips tight for a moment, ignoring the aghast look Mello was exchanging with Matt.

"How could you know that?"

"Your hair," Sayu smiled humorlessly. "Dad mentioned you'd only just got it cut, when you came by
that night. You said you were trying something new, but you've had the same hairstyle since grade six."

*If Sayu's figured this out, then it's only a matter of time until someone in the NPA does. No, they're not looking into the Kira case anymore, they've refused, there's no reason for anyone there to be looking further into this, but if they wanted to, the information is out there.*

Light closed his eyes briefly, then reopened them. "Sayu -"

"No, let me finish," She told him, crossing her legs in a smooth motion, seized with self-assurance at the reaction to her deduction. "Ryuzaki *owes* me. L *owes* me this, too, so make a call if you have to get approval from the big boss. He accused you of being Kira, locked you away in those conditions for a month, and then – what? Is that why Kira thought dad was corrupt?"

Then she looked at Light hopefully, and he realized she wasn't sure about this part of the analysis. She was silently begging him to tell her that their father had not truly been a dirty cop, like many assumed. If there was anything that they had both grown up believing, it was in their father's honor and integrity.

"…Something like that," Light admitted, for her sake and that of his father's memory. He could see a deep reprieve settle onto her features, as well as an even more solid resolve.

"Wait, okay, let's go back a moment," Matt cut them off. "You were a suspect?"

"This is getting better and better," drawled Mello, peering around the room. Her gaze finally settled on Light.

"He was cleared of all charges," Naomi defended. "Kira admitted to framing him himself."

"It's still weird to have someone working on a case who was once the suspected perpetrator of the crimes in question. I'd like to know why you suspected him." Mello turned to L expectantly.

"It's not that odd," Near argued, speaking up quietly from where he'd been looking on. Though he'd said next to nothing, Light couldn't help but note that his eyes were alert, his finger twisting nonstop in his hair. Gears were still turning beneath that mop of silvery hair. "Yagami-san is, as Ryuzaki said before, an asset. He does not become less of one simply because he is, or was, a suspect."

"Of course, the one time you decide to speak up, it's in order to contradict me."

"You're right on all counts," L spoke up once more, peering between all of them, before returning his gaze to the ceiling, looking put out. "Light-kun was indeed a suspect for a few months, and there was evidence planted that was connected to him that allowed me to justify his confinement. As you know, the murders stopped for two weeks, but then restarted, and after Kira hacked our system and broadcast it for the world. L had to release him."

"L made a mistake," Sayu said unabashedly.

"…Yes." Light got a quiet delight from watching the man admit it. Almost as if sensing this enthusiasm, L shot him a sharp look, which only pleased Light even more.

"So get him to make up for it."

"I will, but not by allowing you to contribute to the case. All of the members are highly skilled individuals –"
"Right, and I suppose you've all seen every interview that Ryuga's ever done."

There was a moment where L actually seemed to consider this, much to Light's disapproval. He cast an irritated glance in L's direction in return as Sayu went on. Are you really considering this?

"*Of course* you've seen every movie, TV show, miniseries, podcast, cameo - oh, and I'm sure at least one of you attended his concerts, of which there are no high-quality recordings available.* Sayu leaned back in her chair at the lack of responses around her.

Even Matt, who'd had the most time to do research, had barely made a dent in the star's recorded portfolio. Light could feel his molars bearing down; surely this wasn't going to be the way it ended. Sayu on the Kira task force, risking her life alongside them. Aside from their father, Kira did not make a habit of killing innocent people even if they were in his way – but the prospect still did not bode well with him.

"I've only been to eleven of his concerts, of course," Sayu continued with an air of nonchalance. "But I also have several friends that were even bigger fans - people I've kept up with online and across the world who collectively have been to a good portion of all of his public performances."

Light could tell by the ensuing silence that everyone in the room was finding it difficult to argue with her. He was having a hard time coming up with any further reasoning as well – it was true. They could hack into his past, watch all of his movies and interviews and concerts, but it might end up being a monumental waste of time. Having Sayu on the team might actually give them insight into him that they might not get otherwise.

"I've spent the last ten years of my life following Kira's career. I've spent money on his merchandise, and now he's killed my dad. I want to catch him as much as any of you."

"Despite the unorthodoxy of this request," L started, and Light suppressed a groan. He was relenting; of course he was. Sayu hadn't really given them much of a choice. "...we cannot delay the debriefing any longer. Although I will suspend my decision regarding future meetings, Yagami-san has successfully bullied her way into this one."

Sayu beamed. "That's all I ever wanted."

"We've really put this off long enough," Matt sighed, turning back toward his computer and starting to pull up the files he needed for the debriefing.

"No kidding," Mello scoffed her agreement.

"Let's start with his confession," L gestured toward one of the screens, which pulled up a screen shot of Misa, Kyomi and Ryuga all standing together, Kira's hand stretched out at the screen. It had become an iconic image, and was featured in newspapers, magazines, posters, and every Pro-Kira website imaginable. "It appears that the studio heads and camera men are all claiming that they had no idea what was going to occur. They knew that Misa Amane was going to be the guest star, but they had no idea why Ryuga requested it. They assumed that Hideki was going to announce their relationship."

"Yeah, that's what I thought too when I saw her come out," Sayu interjected eagerly.

"Even his agent and PR manager are claiming they didn't know," Matt added, clearing the screen and pulling up a clip of her. "They both released official statements. This is his PR manager, Yo Kishida."

"Yeah, but she's totally lying."
"What makes Yagami-san think so?" L inquired interestedly. Light watched Sayu perk up at the attention, but before she could reply, Mello was putting her own comment forward.

"There weren't any prominent signs of lying on her features – but the clip I saw was pretty bad quality."

"I don't have to see that to know," Sayu pointed at her crimson trench coat and rouged lips. "She's done tons of press vids for Ryuga because he tries not to be in the media unless it's an official interview. It's kind of a running joke on the forums that she wears red whenever she's lying – we think it gives her confidence so she can lie better."

"Assuming that's correct," L muttered slowly, bringing his thumb to his lips, "it means she may be in league with Kira. It may behoove us to keep an eye on her as well. Perhaps she can lead us to other cohorts."

"Yeah, yeah," Mello waved a hand dismissively. "We can talk about leads later, but what do we actually know about Hideki?"

"Well, the answer is - not much," Matt's voice was frustrated as he pulled up a few pages on multiple monitors, giving them each a view of bank statements and bills.

"What do you mean?" Sayu asked, her brow furrowing. Even Near's head tilted up with interest at that. Light figured that if the successor that was useful for his hacking skills couldn't find anything, there wasn't much hope for the rest of them.

"I mean that I was able to hack into his bank records, his medical history, all of his social media accounts – but the earliest I've found any trace of him is back in 2000."

"No trace," Mello repeated. "How is that possible?"

"A lot of ways. Whammy is one way, but plenty of people drop off the grid, especially as a kid. The fact is, before ten years ago, Ryuga Hideki didn't exist." Matt shrugged. "I'd be surprised if that was his real name. There are dozens of sites with his official backstory, but I can't find any parents, siblings, friends from before he became famous – no one knows where he came from. It says he was raised by a single mother after his father died in an accident, there isn't any person who can corroborate that."

"So we have nothing on him other than what we can gather ourselves though watching videos," Mello exhaled, then shook her head. "Alright, whatever, we'll deal with it. What about Misa Amane and Kiyomi Takada?"

"They were easy – not a whole lot to go on. Amane witnessed the death of her parents during a robbery at eighteen. She's pretty transparent. I was able to hack into her phone and find a picture of a few of her letters to Kira, but they're all just...sweet stuff," Matt rubbed the back of his neck as though embarrassed, and shrugged. "I couldn't find any code or anything. It just seems like Kira's in love with Amane. Or good at faking it."

"He is an actor," Sayu commented, then looked away darkly.

*It's not easy for her. Ryuga was someone that she admired for some time.* Light watched her from the corner of his eye, then dragged his attention away. *Damn it. This is exactly why her being here is a bad idea. L is already enough of a distraction; if I'm worried about my sister all the time too, it'll be that much more difficult to focus.*

"Do we have any idea what the weapon is?" Near's voice drifted up from the floor, and Light found
that the young man's eyes were on him. They were a lighter shade of grey than L’s, but just as intense.

"We don't know how he kills," Light replied, realizing he'd been quiet for some time as well. "Or how it's related to the way he controls his victims prior to their deaths, which appears to be a form of mind control. He also seems to be able to take away Misa's memories of her participation in his cause – how someone can do something like that is beyond our understanding for the moment. But our top priority is to find out."

"Until then, there's nothing for us to do but speculate, unfortunately," Naomi lamented, frowning. She'd been among the task force during Misa's confinement, and Light had watched a good portion of the recordings from it in order to catch up. It had truly seemed that Misa was innocent, and the false execution had seemed to secure that assertion.

*If Misa is really in league with Kira, she must not have the same power that he does, or else surely she would have killed my father before he could kill me. Or maybe we're just underestimating her? She's an Omega though, usually their tolerance for stress is low – could she really be that conniving?*

"We can speculate all we want later," Mello then dictated. "We need to line up our national support - we're based in pretty much the worst country."

"Yeah, I've been working on that. I think I've got a fair view of our prospects." Matt nodded, and then with a few taps of the keys, he brought up a map of the world and rows of graphs and statistics. "So let's look at the world."

Naomi shifted in her seat, then gestured to one of the screens and began.

"We already knew the biggest support Kira has is coming from China, Japan, and the US. North America has large factions who support him. Kira's stunt with the police officers went over especially well with people in US and Mexico."

He'd only killed a small portion of the corrupt officers; as a result, in the last week there had been next to zero reports of shootings by police or abuse of authority. Light had expected as much, and while part of him thought it was exactly what the world needed, his guilt and grief mottled together to coat his tongue with bitterness.

Matt zoomed in on Europe. "There are pockets of the UK that are extremely against him – but there are others that are just as loudly for him. We're lucky that he's not as popular an idol in Europe. The largest supporter there is Belarus, but Finland's support is rising too."

"I did a lot of research on South America," Naomi explained, and Matt adjusted the screen back over and down to the continent in question. "They're mostly against Kira, but while Brazil spoke out against Kira after the East West Festival, now that there are faces that represent the Kira Kira movement, they seem like they're changing their tune. We can probably dissuade them. France is the opposite –" The Europe screen appeared on a separate monitor entirely. "Now that Ryuga has come out, they went from being half and half to being slightly more against."

When the screen moved to Russia, Light recalled what L had told him about Mello. She was apparently what L had childishly deemed 'master of disguise'; she was a spy, and had been assigned to infiltrate the Russian government to figure out the source of an information leak.

"Russia in general claims that Kira and everything he stands for is an abomination, but the people are actually becoming sympathetic to his cause, though most of them won't admit it." Mello nodded in
approval of this statement, and Matt shot her a grin. "The internet has a lot of polls when it comes to
public support of Kira, which are geared toward the common citizen. It seems like Russia is more on
the fence. That would be a dangerous power to have against us."

"You know it," Mello nodded, propping up her head on a fist. "If they ever become aggressively
pro-Kira, it'll get messy for us."

"South Africa in particular seems to be torn as well," Naomi started, pulling from the information that
Light had researched in depth over the past few days. He'd been busy helping his mother with her
affairs and the banalities of returning to work, but he'd still managed. "Light knows a little more
about it than I do though."

Graciously, Light took over, though he didn't bother with the screens. Even so, Matt zoomed in on
the continent of Africa. "South Africa abolished capital punishment over a decade ago, so their
instinct is to be against him, but they also can't deny the fact that over the last seven years, war and
crime in the less developed countries has been on a huge decline. Over the last seven years, Kira
killed so many notable warlords that most are scared to take up the mantel again. He killed well-
known advocates of female genital mutilation, basically making the act culturally frowned upon
before it was officially made illegal. They're among those countries that are remaining neutral in an
attempt to protect their reputation."

"Other countries within Africa are being pretty withholding about their opinion on him, and it's
difficult to find statistics on the tribes without technology," Matt moved along. "Now Germany on
the other hand – completely against it. Harks a little too much toward genocide for their tastes."

"Germany will be a good nation to go to for support," L mused, tilting his head as though he'd only
just thought of it, though Light was well aware this was not the case.

"I know people in the government there," Mello said, perhaps a little too eagerly. Light looked her
over, frowning. She certainly likes L's attention and jumps at it whenever there's so much as a
comment. Is that just because she looks up to L, or because she's an Omega? Either way, it's a bit
much."

"Canada is also overwhelmingly Anti-Kira from what I can tell," Naomi stated, brushing her hair
back behind her ear. "The movies he's made for Hollywood have made him a big name there too, but
it seems like they're against capital punishment enough that it doesn't matter. From what I've
gathered, about sixty-seven percent of the common people are against him. Australia is showing
similar numbers."

"I have worked with the CSIS," Near offered dispassionately, which seemed to irk Mello, who
bristled slightly in her seat. "That may be of use."

"Are they competing right now? Light thought snidely. What's the purpose of that – L isn't going to
die any time soon, you idiots. You might as well get used to your roles here."

"What about India?" Sayu asked, and it was a good question. Light had been wondering along the
same lines, as it was a large and powerful country, almost on par with China. If they were on Kira's
side, it was about as devastating as Russia would be. "They still have the death penalty in place
there, don't they?"

"Yes, and India is also split, but a little more in our favor," Matt tapped his fingers on his boot, which
was resting on the opposite knee. "There are parts of the country that are extremely supportive; Kira
has killed many corrupt officials throughout the Middle East and Asia in general – terrorism, hate
crimes, bombings, and rapes there have fizzled out quite a bit. In fact, a lot of the deaths there have
resulted in pretty profound steps in the Omega Rights movement. That's upset a lot of people, but made just as many grateful – even so, most people there say they don't support Kira's methods. The government fears him, so they aren't speaking out."

"That said," Naomi remarked. "I think they'll cave to Hideki if he becomes even more of a threat to them. For now they're kind of all just… quietly disagreeing."

"So at the moment, we need to focus on getting Germany, Australia and Canada's expressed support, and stop India and Russia from tilting more toward Kira in the coming months." Mello surmised, then added thoughtfully. "I'd like to know more about what you said about Omega-Rights."

Light twitched, but kept his voice level as he asked, "How is that relevant?"

"Uh, only a lot," Mello scowled, then rolled her eyes at him. Sayu raised her eyebrows and met Light's eye with a stifled smile, seemingly pleased by the disrespect. "It's common knowledge that Alphas and Beta Men commit between eighty and eighty-eight percent of all crime depending on the country – so do we have a graph when it comes to the support he has across the second genders?"

"It's true," Matt said after a moment, keying in a few words quickly. "Kira doesn't kill people in prison who are doing their time or that are not currently a known threat to society – it's not just criminals, or else Caucasian Alphas and Beta Males would be those most likely to support him according to pre-Kira statistics."

"Yes – he murders those who perpetuate corruption," Light agreed, remembering the judge that had been killed right before his eyes. He'd been swayed by political and financial reasons, like many other officials. "Not just the violent offenders themselves."

"Which makes him a hit with those who are oppressed in most countries– namely, Omegas, Female Betas, people of color, especially Omegas of color."

"So by those standards," L murmured, catching Light's attention when he looked toward him. "The average Kira supporter is an Asian Omega between the ages of fifteen and thirty."

"The point is that there are Kira supporters coming up from all sides," Matt threw up his hands and then leaned back in his seat, twisting back around to face all of them emphatically. "We only have a few avenues of possible support, but the world isn't overly fond of L either. It's not enough to catch Kira now, because he's representing an overhaul of the status quo. We can't just arrest him, or confine him until he confesses to the location of the murder weapon – "

"If there even is such a thing," Mello grumbled as she peeled away foil from a chocolate bar that she'd just fished from her bag. "Are all of them obsessed with sweets?"

"Right!" Matt heaved a deep breath and shook his head. "This isn't straight up detective work anymore."
"No, it isn't," L confirmed, bringing his attention back to the group as a whole. "Kira's trying to make this a revolution; he came out as Kira the way he did not because he thinks he's above the law, but because he believes that according to the new laws of the world – what he's done all these years isn't wrong."

"But is it?"

All eyes were on Sayu, some more accusing than others. Light was startled, but a bit appreciative by what the question said about her insight. He still wasn't overly fond of the idea of her inserting herself into the case, but he supposed it couldn't be all bad; she'd already proven herself more than once.

"I mean, is what he's trying to do that wrong?" Sayu restated when no one volunteered an answer.

Mello's mouth contorted into a sneer. "Is this really a question?"

"I'm not saying I support him – obviously! I wasn't even for Kira before he killed my father." She told Mello defensively, then pulled back, brushing her hair back over her shoulder and calming herself. "I'm just saying that he's actually done a lot of good for the world. Justice is subjective. We're fighting against the perception people have of him, but also of justice in general."

*If we defeat him, he is evil. If he defeats us, then we will go down in history as the evil renegades that the hero managed to stamp out.* Something about this idea turned Light's stomach.

"There have been rallies in his honor over the past week," Sayu elucidated. "Protests too, but there just aren't that many people that are that outspoken."

"It's hard to openly admit that you think these people have a right to live," Naomi spoke up in Sayu's favor slowly, raking her teeth over her bottom lip and sitting up. "Most of the people that he kills are those that have done things that are near impossible to prove, violent offenders who were recently released and those whose financial status keeps them from being convicted."

"No offence, Ryuzaki," Sayu started, meeting the detective's eyes head on. "...but was L actually doing anything to make the world better?"

L met her gaze stoically, but he didn't have time to respond before Mello piped up once more.

"This is what we're up against. People don't like the way the world is and they're being offered change by this guy with a pretty face and *motherfucking superpowers.*"

"That's going to be the hardest part," Matt agreed, suddenly smiling triumphantly. "The media is largely on Kira's side, but what I propose is that we give the people a valid alternative."

Light regarded Matt with interest, "You want people to choose sides."

"People love choosing sides," Mello gave Light a wicked grin, and then looked him up and down without warning, as though intrigued without apparent cause. For a moment, Light was overly aware of himself, of where he was sitting and how, and if he'd looked at L too long the last time he'd peeked in his direction –

*It's not as if hiding my second gender is all that important when it comes to these three, I suppose. But I'd rather not let them think they have anything in common with me, or that I'm only here because of L. It won't take long for them to put two and two together if they find out my second gender, and Mello's already proved she likes the drama.* Light fixed his eyes on the computer screen as Matt went on, ignoring the blond.
"The most obvious choice would have been to make it L versus Kira, but considering Ryuga has basically run a smear campaign – if we can really call this bullshit a campaign - that's not really an option."

"L did come out and call him evil in the beginning; perhaps that's why he's so set on proving L is," Naomi prompted, though she didn't seem all that convinced of the premise herself.

"Maybe so. We'll have to ask him when we beat his ass." Matt shrugged, then finally pulled up a site, which Light read as . "So, while we're trying to track down Hideki's accomplices and secure political support of the nations that are against Kira's brand of society, this site is going to be planted in the minds of the masses."

Matt leaned back in his seat as everyone took in the homepage of the site. A crescent moon made up the side of a woman's face, and her hair and the shape of her was made in the swirls of what looked like the Milky Way Galaxy. It was clever, smooth, and radiant; it was more elegant than most of Kira's tacky websites, Light decided.

"Did Linda draw that?" Near inquired from below once again.

"Yeah, you can tell? She was able to pull it through pretty quickly for me." Matt laughed good-naturedly before going on with his explanation. "Astrea, Goddess of Justice – also like, a star-maiden. I thought it was fitting, since all the Kira Kira sites have a shitload of stars everywhere."

At least there's another option. Hideki is offering them significant change – if our stance is it just to stand for keeping things the same, we'll get no support whatsoever. Light let his eyes drift over to L, who gnawed at his thumb with his teeth, quietly displeased with the whole ordeal. There was a reason he'd become a detective rather than a politician. It felt as though Kira had hijacked their entire purpose.

"A galactic battle of good and evil," Near murmured, fiddling around with his astronaut toy. It earned a few chuckles from Matt, a scoff from Mello, a smile from Naomi, and a giggle from Sayu. It was childish simplification of what was happening, and Light could tell none of them took it seriously.

But Mello is right. People love choosing sides and cutting ideas down to the roots. We'll see how Astrea works on top of all the other avenues we're taking advantage of. The worst thing it could do is flop.

"It seems as though we've prepared ourselves," Light said, speaking mostly to move the conversation along so that the real work could begin. "Are there any other items on the agenda to discuss?"

"It seems as though we are all caught up on our affairs, though there is still plenty of information to attain and secure in our favor," L pried his thumb away from his mouth and pushed off from the desk, rolling over to his station slowly. Each of the people in the room watched him as he rolled to a stop in front of his computer, stilling with an awkward finality. "Let's get to work."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Okay, so this chapter isn't nearly as late as the last one! Hooray! It was a pretty info heavy chapter, and I'm pretty sure the next one won't be. It'll probably be more characters interaction, now that I've given you a basic idea of what is happening with
the Kira case as it stands.

I did a lot of research into different countries and had to figure out how I thought they might feel about Kira - I'm sorry if anyone disagrees, is offended, or feels left out if their country wasn't explicitly mentioned. I tried to generalize a bit, but also give each of them their own personality, while also being objective.

There were so many people talking in this chapter. Ughhhh. Seven people should never be talking all together in the same room when it comes to fiction. Way too difficult. Had to happen though.

As usual, I'd love to know what you thought! Let me know if anything surprised you, or impressed you, what your favorite line was, what you thought of Sayu and everyone's interaction with her, or Light's thoughts on everything that was happening. You guys rock, per always.

-Nilah
Light looked up at him from where he’d been lounging on the bed, his tie undone and shoes off but otherwise fully clothed. His shirt would end up wrinkled no doubt, but the disheveled look worked for him, perhaps to an even greater extent than the neat one did, if that were possible.

“We’ve gone over this before,” Light turned over, and rested his chin on L’s knee and raising his brows. “While I highly doubt that anything will happen in a popular coffee shop on a Saturday afternoon, the camera you had Watari install should be more than enough.”

“I agree it will likely be enough, but I also don’t like it,” L replied simply, shifting his laptop away as he peered down at the face resting against his leg. Light picked a piece of lint away from the denim idly.

“It’s all set up. I’ll get there early to make sure that we get a booth in clear view of camera. Hasn’t Watari bugged the booth?” Light seemed irritated with him, and L knew the protectiveness was misdirected – Light was an NPA agent and a full grown man, but it stroked a disobedient, baser part of him. He shoved the Alpha instinct down hard and answered grudgingly.

“Yes.”

“Right. Besides, I highly doubt he’s going to whip out the murder weapon in a crowded place,” Light waved his hand dismissively. “You’re being stupid. I have a good memory. If there’s anything the cameras or bugs don’t pick up, I’ll remember it verbatim.”
“I’m well aware of that,” L relented, but only slightly. “It still doesn’t sit well with me.”

“I think illegal surveillance is a self-defense mechanism for you,” Light rolled his eyes and then shifted back around, up off of L’s knee to look back at the ceiling.

“It’s kept me alive. I would remise if I didn’t use it as defense,” L defended calmly, “Most people don’t expect the world’s greatest detective to have a professional cat burglar install cameras in their home.”

“I saw through it immediately, if you recall.”

L was enamored with the way Light’s smile came easily and honestly to him for a second, before he transformed it into a smirk. Being wry and self-satisfied was safer than being genuine, but there were little glimpses that L found himself savoring.

“I do,” the corner of his mouth quirked and he shifted closer, cautiously lifting a hand and brushing a strand of hair from Light’s face. The younger man’s gaze flickered in his direction, then away again, but he didn’t move or show any sign of discomfort. “I also recall another relevant fact.”

The shift of his fingers was judicious, almost sneaky as his digits lightly combed through the strands of hair.

“Well, if it’s relevant, do tell.” Light released a scoff, and though he didn’t express either approval or distaste for the hand sifting through his locks, L thought he saw the slightest bend toward the touch. The only illumination in the room now that L had shut his computer down came from the light in the bathroom through the door left half ajar, so it could have been his eyes playing tricks on him.

“Light-kun’s Birthday is the day after tomorrow.”

Light frowned at his childish tone. “How is that related at all to what we were talking about?”

“Light-kun is alive and his birth was the catalyst for that. The celebratory date of said birth is less than forty-eight hours from now. I’m not sure how it could be any more relevant than that.” L answered with a comical, over-the-top justification and Light rolled his eyes in return.
“I’m having dinner with my mother and sister Sunday evening, but that’s all I have planned. That’s all I’ve really ever done.”

The statement was followed by a catch of air in the back of Light’s throat when L raked his fingers more boldly through the silken tresses. Yes, there it was, just a little more of that throat than usual as he pressed back into the palm to press into the touch. It was a subtle twitch of motion, but L was actively seeking it.

“I’ll have something prepared for the occasion.”

Light’s lashes had started to flutter closed, but they opened again abruptly. He glanced up at L as he scowled.

“There’s no need for anything like that.”

“Don’t lie,” L insisted, tightening his fingers together a bit as he sifted them through again, making the strands pull snugly. He thought he saw Light’s eyes flash with something other than irritation. “I think you secretly like it when I dote on you.”

“I certainly do not,” Light rebutted indignantly, but L was certain he enjoyed the attention, even if he couldn’t allow himself to. “If that’s so, then it’s a secret even to me.”

Not entirely inaccurate, he thought, amused with Light’s unconscious truth. L didn’t bait any further, not wanting to test his limits when this gentle moment strung between them so effortlessly.

Rather, L decided on an open invitation. “Stay the night.”

“On my birthday?”

“Tonight.”

Light paused. “I don’t have any clothes.”
“I can have Watari go to your home and bring you anything you need,” L countered without delay, having come up with a negation for every possible excuse. He knew Light was hesitant, for reasons that L could infer based on his knowledge and experience with psychological trauma, but he also wanted to assure him that it wasn’t something that he needed to conceal.

Easier said than done, of course. Hiding was Light Yagami’s expertise; no doubt he found his own human susceptibility to stress shameful.

“Why is breaking into my apartment your solution to everything?” Light griped, then started to sit up, pulling away from the hand petting his hair. L allowed it, however much the divorcing contact made hand and wrist ache, the ghostly throb of a severed limb. “It’s not a good idea.”

“I disagree.”

Another pause, where Light scrounged for a new justification. “There are other things to take care of…”

“Then let me,” L cut him off, grasping him by his sleeve and attempting to draw him closer. L was almost certain Light found it endearing, though he’d never been told as much and likely never would be. The touch was still quite close to his wrist, and therefore hinted at intimacy and authority that grabbing any Omega’s wrist might, but with a layer of material in between. It was a security blanket of sorts for Light, but L wasn’t insulted by the need for it, as long as he was allowed beneath on occasion.

“Why is it this a big deal?” Light asked, appearing irked.

“It isn’t. I’d just like you to stay,” L told him, unblinking. “But if you’d rather not, there is no need to rationalize it.”

A spark of triumph echoed in L’s chest when he saw the peeved expression on Light’s face soften marginally.

“…Maybe,” Light muttered, then moved in to kiss him as a distraction.
It was pure manipulation, and L was completely aware of that, but fell for it anyway. He suspected that Light was purposefully carving away an alcove within him, creating a weakness that his former self would have never allowed. He had once prized his isolation, partly for his own protection, in more ways than just the danger that came with his career. He’d even lorded it above the common folk who didn’t have the mental and emotional fortitude for it.

*It’s official. I’ve become a complete sap.* L’s brain told him, but the scathing nature of the insult was lost in translation when Light’s tongue brushed his lower lip. He leaned forward, moved his hands to slide up either side of Light’s neck, thumbing the glands on either side and luxuriating in the shiver the touch elicited.

It had been almost a week since he’d had Light last. While L’s sex drive could probably be considered low in comparison to the average male Alpha, statistically, it hadn’t felt that way since they’d consummated. It wasn’t even about his own release either, which would have made more sense – no doubt the Alpha in him was galvanized by the proximity of a beautiful, compatible Omega – but it wasn’t entirely selfless either.

It was invigorating to watch Light’s shroud flicker and fade beneath L’s hands, or – more recently – his mouth. That in itself had been a gorgeous, enlivening event. Light had curled over L’s head as he tasted him, clutching at his hair and shaking in an effort not buck down L’s throat.

L felt Light’s hand starting to tug at the button of his jeans, which woke him from the reverie that the kisses had lulled him into. Arousal spiked through him as Light’s fingers brushed close and he licked his lips as he started to undo the buttons on Light’s shirt.

“Are you still sore?”

“No.”

“Are you certain?”

“L, yes, I’m fine,” Light huffed, and L forgot what the question had been when his hand slid into his underwear to curl around his hardening girth. “I’m fine. I’m not sore because you did anything wrong. Despite my body’s apparent predisposition, it takes getting used to. *You* should try being on the receiving end of it some time.”

The thought was not as abhorrent as expected it to be, and so after only the briefest of moments, L nodded and leaned in for another kiss as he responded – “Alright.”
“That’s what I…” Light trailed off, recoiling. The fingers around L’s shaft loosened in what he could only assume was a symptom of Light’s bewilderment. “You - sorry, what?”

“You said I should try it some time,” L sighed in disappointment at the refused kiss. “and I responded ‘alright’.”

“Alright?” Light slid his hand free of L’s trousers and looked at him suspiciously, brow creasing in the center. L wanted to kiss the indention of skin all of a sudden. “You’re saying you would consider…?”

“No.”

“No?” Light repeats L again, his confusion turning to displeasure. “Then what -?”

“No, I’m not saying I would consider it,” L clarified calmly. “I have considered it – just a few seconds ago, in fact, and concluded that I would, definitively, ‘try to be on the receiving end’ should you be so inclined.”

L’s gazed fixed on him with a dubiety he didn’t bother disguising. Are you waiting for the punchline? It isn’t in my nature, as an Alpha or otherwise, but neither is –apparently - denying you. I likely won’t have it in me to make myself submit, and I don’t think you’d want me to, were you sincere with yourself about your true disposition.

“…You’d let me fuck you.”

“I can think of no reason why not,” L shrugged, “Admittedly, it’s not something I’ve considered before, but when you suggested it in jest, I thought long and hard about it –“

“It took you five seconds,” Light countered, searching L’s face incredulously.

“I’m an exceedingly intelligent man, Light. Most simple conclusions such as this take one or two - “
Light towed him forward by the collar of his shirt and kissed him without restraint, with a passion L had yet to encounter. This was neither the haughty bluffs of a secretly anxious Light who didn’t know how to express himself, or the heat that had been born of frustration and fury which they had both exuded in the back of the limonene after Kira’s confession. This was new and shining and precious, and it made L entertain the flitting thought that Light might actually adore him in return. The kiss was fierce and heavy, his mouth melding to his own in ardent motions until they were both left panting through swollen lips.

“You seem amendable to my proposition,” L swallowed down the depth of his voice as he spoke against Light’s lips, the Alpha in him trying to gnaw its way out. He slid to the side and trailed his mouth down Light’s throat to taunt him. “I take that as a yes?”

“Yes,” Light murmured, leaning away to catch L’s eye once more. L thought he saw a certain need there, yes, an almost-devotion in the gleam of Light’s brown eyes, before the warmth dialed up to something incandescent. “Yes, but not…now, not tonight.”

“No?” L inquired, relatively surprised by his offer being postponed.

“No, there’s time for that later.” Light said, then leaned back to prop himself up on his hand, peering at him from beneath his lashes with the most impossibly attractive expression imaginable. He was teasing, almost coy, but L thought there was a smidgeon of truth in that demure mask. “I’d rather you to fuck me tonight.”

Oh, L’s mind supplied him with vivid imagery of the act that Light spoke of and everything else in his head started to fade away. Perhaps L should have been weary of the sheer magnitude of Light’s effect on him, but he was not one to worry about the inevitable. What was done was done; no amount of fretting would change how he felt, or do anything to impede Light’s influence.

…I am equally amendable to this proposition,” L informed him, his voice deepening half way through to a half-restrained growl as he grasped Light’s knees and drew him close, knocking him flat onto his back with the motion.

The clothes between them could have disintegrated for all L cared; how they’d managed to strip each article away was immaterial – what mattered was that soon there was skin, but somehow never quite enough of it. The flurry of touches and preparation was misplaced somewhere in the moist sound of lost fingers and erratic breaths captured in the caverns of their mouths. It wasn’t long before Light was accepting three digits and pressing his hips onto them when L bent them at the knuckle just so. L caught the first few moans in his mouth before pressing hot lines down to Light’s throat and dragging a hand down the length of his quavering frame.
Both hands then, one still coated with the remnants of Light’s slick as he fit his thumbs against those hipbones and lined their bodies up. Between, against, inside, slow and steady and invasive, working in easy motions until the walls parted for him. L felt his breath catch when he felt his hips brush skin, and tightened his grip as Light arched, tilting his hips toward the pressure rather than shying away.

“You’ve learned to open up so well.” Words spilled out of his mouth as he drew Light closer, he wasn’t entirely sure where they came from, couldn’t recall coming up with them while he was relishing the tight wet walls that hugged his cock. The response to his words was a vibration of muscle, of tension tightening in Light’s form and then releasing in a timid palpitation.

Though he was pretty sure Light told him to shut his mouth in reply, when L started moving he found that he couldn’t manage it for long. He was inspired by the contours of Light’s body and how they fit against his own, left with a prolific slew of nothings, whispered into Light’s ear, shoulder and neck.

“How’s this?” L rolled his hips back in, deep, and Light’s entire body quaked at the smooth motion as it dragged over his prostate.

Feeling the wriggle of Light’s limbs around him was an achievement, but not as much so as the sweet noise that fell against his shoulder, his own traitorous flesh obscuring it. “Nghnnn—“

“C’mon, Light, tell me.” L coaxed the answer out of him, driven on by the quiver of Light’s legs as he ground into him. Perhaps if Light had never told him to go on despite the pain the first time, this constant verbal affirmation would have never been necessary, and so he didn’t feel guilty for it. “Is it too much?”

“Nn, no, it’s…” A breath caught in the back of Light’s throat and L wanted to taste the pleasure that had caused it, no matter how fanciful the notion was. “…’s fine, it doesn’t hurt.”

L’s ears sung at the slur in those words, because he could never quiet pinpoint when Light lost himself, but he always did no matter how desperately he grasped for the ties of his self-control.

He felt more words clambering up from somewhere in his stomach rather than his mind, where he knew they must come from. You let me see a little more of you every day. Every time I figure out part of you, I find another part to unfold, and never grow bored of the parts of you that I have managed to unveil.
Instead, he asked against the shell of Light’s ear. “Do you want to try it faster?”

He felt a pulsing clench around his cock that told of the Omega’s approval. Light muttered with as much composure as he could bring himself to fake - “Hnh, yeah.”

So L did, removing himself and then shoving back home, and it made Light’s head fall back amongst the pillows as he cried out. L managed to catch a glimpse of Light’s expression, brow furrowed, flushed, mouth agape.

“Alright?” L inquired quietly, following up the rougher thrust with a several smooth shallow ones. Those had Light squirming, his jaw snapping shut again to quiet himself. L watched the muscles twist in the stomach beneath him, tensing as if ready to draw Light up again at the slightest provocation.

*Light arching backwards and open is new. He usually curls over himself when he’s getting overwhelmed.* L wanted to keep him there, to put a hand on his shoulder and watch from above, make him fall to pieces as he worked into him, see his usually hidden features crease and blush.

He did not, because that was not a part of Light that had been volunteered. There was a great deal of L that wanted to just take it, wanted to know every part of him as quickly as he could, to consume every fiber he could expose by any means necessary.

*But that would be cheating.* L pressed his mouth against Light’s collar, closed his eyes, and let Light reach for him as he snapped his hips up sharply again. This time his vision blurred and paled as Light jerked in return. He tightened his knees on L’s hips and propelled himself down with a needy little motion, as if he couldn’t get deep enough, and dear lord, how had L ever stood a chance?

“Oh —fu—hn!” Light clutched at him and L shifted his hands on his hips, up higher, grabbing at him and securing him closer, closer, L didn’t think he could never be close enough -

“When you bucked down onto me like that, it made me think you liked it,” He groaned against Light’s neck and kissed a hot line over his collar, scraping the teeth over the curve of his shoulder. “Was I …hn, correct in this assumption?”

He rolled his hips again, circling the prostate and Light quivered, hit his head on the mattress again and drew out a long, keening curse.
“Fuck, nnhn –“ His hands were growing slippery on L’s shoulder blades from the thin layer of perspiration as L plunged deep and quick again, only to follow up with a series of slower pressing motions. His nails dug instead then, burned harsh lines into L’s back and had a feral part of him trying to crush his inhibitions at the sensation.

“That’s right,” L whispered below his ear, his voice growing deeper and less refined with every pass. “Like this. Tell me, is it good?”

“God, god, I can’t–“ Light’s voice wavered and devolved into a barely contained whimper.

There he goes, L heard himself think as Light curled over himself as he’d predicted, giving a raw little cry into L’s shoulder as he hid in the crook once again. L’s thoughts were a roar in his own ears, possessive, enraptured with every movement and gasp Light let him experience. Hiding again, but that’s alright, you’re so sensitive, so close.

“Not yet, Light,” L enticed, his voice low and soothing, encouraging. “Try not to come just yet, hold back for me.”

The whine in his ear had his vision darkening, narrowing, because that was –submission, intuitive obedience, he could hear it – an assent to his request, one he hadn’t even expected to make. L might reflect later on whether or not it was Light choosing to obey him out of a biological imperative or because he had truly managed to earn it, but for now it was just glorious. He could bask in the idea that Light trusted him, was allowing him to control this.

L didn’t relent for several seconds, delivering an onslaught of fluid, quick, solid thrusts; he felt Light writhe, heard him gasp and smelled the sweet scent of his slick as his arousal began to peak.

“Oh god, ah, ah, I – it’s so, I’m –“ Light gave a strangled sound, exerting himself, shaking with the strain.

“I know, I know.” L was panting, coming back to himself after the momentary lapse. His arms slide under Light, holding him closer as he rocked deep again, this time in a milder, deliberate fashion. “I’ve got you.”

“Hahh, I–, I ca—“ Light’s nails were going to break skin. He was scrambling for some sort of physical hold, as if in hopes it might correlate to his willpower. He was trembling beneath him with the exertion, his voice growing sharper when he pushed deep again, again, convulsing on L’s cock.
"You’re so good."

The words rode out on a rumbling exhale – the instant those words had left his mouth, Light failed to hold himself back. Light tightened around him in every way, his legs and arms clinging, his nails digging, and passage clamping. Rippling spasms brought L ever closer as Light’s body bore down, constricting as though to draw him in further impossibly.

“Oh- gn…ahnn…!” Light shuddered bodily, stiffening and moaning nonsensical half-formed nothings into L’s shoulder, as far gone as it was possible to be.

“You liked that, didn’t you?" I can still feel you convulsing around me. You were holding back so well; my words were the only anomaly. Light, you liked what I said, you lost yourself to me from something so simple - I won’t forget. “How can you be so – “


Hands clambered for a grip on long legs, snaring them both and pressing them up and back for the last several passes. L lost his head somewhere in the middle of it all. He wasn’t sure if he lasted another few or another dozen thrusts into the heat Light offered, but it didn’t seem like the other man hadn’t even finished riding the tides of his orgasm back to sanity when L spent himself. He pressed in to the hilt, gyrating in little motions, biting his own groan into Light’s shoulder. He felt Light arch beneath him, his body eagerly accepting and even tremulously working himself back onto L. Light had never been cognizant enough this far in that he could pretend he wasn’t fond of this part, had even gone so far as to demand it.

As they shuddered and gasped into one another’s space, L heard himself muttering what he thought was ‘I’ve got you, I’ve got you’ again and again under his breath, deep and muddled in with the depth of his moan. It started as a reassurance for Light, but somewhere along the way transcended the original meaning and morphed into personal assertion.

I’ve got you, his mind focused on the line of Light’s jaw and then down to the hollow of his throat. He had Light. There were an assortment of nuances to the phrase, ranging from Light’s security in letting himself go, to L’s state of mind and body. Looking back on his life of solitude, while he hadn’t been particularly lonely at the time, held no nostalgia in particular.
Rather, the very notion of this man’s existence emboldened L with a wistfulness that was oddly chimerical; he found himself retroactively missing Light for his past self, who had never entertained the idea such a person might be real, and for him.

Seconds upon seconds rolled by in the wake of L’s infantile sentimentalities. That’s what Light would dismiss them as, if I were ever able to come up with more words to describe this happy, willful idiocy.

“What was…” Light broke through the quiet, still catching his breath. “What was that?”

“Which part?” He hadn’t expected Light to admit that being told he was good had driven him over the edge into climax – he found it unlikely that Light could be honest enough with himself to comprehend his own reaction.

“Don’t pretend you don’t know. You told me not to –“ An irritated, flustered look crossed Light’s face. I told you not to on a whim, and you instinctively tried not to. “Was that some sort of test to see how accommodating I am when I don’t have the mind to fend off my ‘submissive nature’?”

“No,” L took a breath and took that moment to slid free of the confines of Light. The motion was much too pleasant, the wet sound much too tempting, but he managed to extract himself without issue. “It wasn’t planned.”

“Then what was it about?” Light tried to sound commanding even though his breath hitched in an alluring fashion when L’s length exited, no doubt grazing his prostate on the way.

L considered this a moment, attempting to scrutinize his own logical process while he’d been in the throes of bliss and devotion.

“I wanted to come with you.”

“…Why?” Light appeared genuinely confused by the prospect, shifting beneath him to get comfortable once again. “That’s important to you?”

“I suppose not,” admitted L, watching the rise and fall of Light’s chest. He still hadn’t caught his breath just yet and it made L feel rather smug. “But it’s generally considered to the ideal scenario.”
“You feel guilty about continuing when I’ve already finished, is that it?” Light inquired, shifting onto his side, which L took as an invitation to slide up behind him.

“That’s part of it.” L pressed a kiss to the back of Light’s shoulder as he slid his arms around him, feeling Light shudder against him as his hand brushed his half hardness. “But then, I have no problem bringing you to a second. Perhaps we could try the toy, that would make things – “

“I don’t like that thing,” Light cut him off, and L suddenly recalled the way he’d tensed up during his heat when they’d tried the vibration setting on the toy.

Light had been overwhelmed in the extreme, but L had attributed that to the hypersensitive state the young man had been in. But even now, outside of heat, after years without allowing himself touch, the Omega’s body was reactive in a way that always left Light exhausted. While Light’s stamina was increasing already with experience, his senses were still tightly-wound to the extent that too much pleasure actually seemed to alarm him.

While being the cause of such stunning reactions was a gratifying, arousing endeavor, L was aware there would be limits. Light wasn’t entirely aware of his own, which allowed L to explore at his leisure for the most part, but the mention of using the vibrator had earned an immediate, solid refusal.

“That’s unlikely,” L commented slowly, fishing for the truth of the matter. “It gets straight to the point, doesn’t it?”

“It ruins the point,” Light bit out in return and L realized that he was only agitating him more. That had not been his goal – seeing Light spent, sleepy, and unarmored after being thoroughly fucked was probably L’s favorite part of the evening. Though, to be fair, almost everything about sexual intercourse with Light was his favorite part.

“I don’t understand.”

L listened to Light heave a sleepy, frustrated breath. “I’d be fine if I didn’t come at all, let alone a second time. I orgasm because there’s stimuli, but that isn’t the point.”

It wasn’t as though L couldn’t understand Light’s lack of sexual motivation, but the idea that he enjoyed this for the contact alone was incredible. If he were to take this for what it seemed to be, it meant that Light enjoyed sex only for the intimacy that it allowed him – specifically, intimacy with L.
That was the part that seemed unbelievable. *It seems laughable, but …no, it must be me. I’m the point.*

“Stay the night,” L said again instead of probing further, pulling his hands away from where they’d been hovering near Light’s hips, debating on whether or not he should bring him to a second orgasm. After this, he shifted his hands to rest against Light’s chest, capturing him against the plane of L’s torso.

Light didn’t accept the invitation in the manner it had been presented to him, but he didn’t move either; perhaps he hoped it would look like a coincidence that sleep found him before he could extract himself from L’s bed. He sunk back into the hold that L offered when unconsciousness took him and for more than an hour L did nothing but listen to the sound of his shallow breaths as they resonated gently into the dark.

When L awoke in the middle of the night to the feel of Light jerking sharply, sweaty, trembling, and begging for his father to believe him – L pretended to sleep, held him close, and said nothing of it the following morning.

Chapter End Notes

Pretty much just character interaction this chapter. Basically, as fluffy as it could get while maintaining characters, and …smut. Very little plot above. This wasn't meant to be it's own chapter, but I got carried away. Hopefully that's not too disappointing to you guys. :P Next chapter should be onto the meeting with Teru.

I'd love to know what your favorite moment/line/dialogue was as usual. Thanks for all your support. :) 

-Nilah
“It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom.” – Edgar Allen Poe

Mello was a field agent above all else; she was not meant to be cooped up.

She hated research, but she loved planning. It was quite the dilemma. Matt was better at details, while Mello excelled at the big picture, such as coming up with tactics and then executing them with confidence and precision. Even ideas that were ‘just crazy enough to work’ could wind up a masterpiece in the hands of someone who knew how to follow through.

As thrilled as Mello had originally been to be called onto the case to work with L, she found that endless hours of staring at a screen in the dark was boring her to death. Mello, unlike either Near or Matt, thrived on human interaction and did her best work when she had another person to wile, manipulate or otherwise consort with. Naomi was an interesting woman, and while Mello had enjoyed her conversations with the former FBI agent, she wasn’t around all of the time- she didn’t live in the building and didn’t stay up late unless there was a reason to. She’d figured out that Naomi was dating someone as well, which meant she had a life outside of work too.

Even L wasn’t in the work room as much as Mello had hoped he’d be. He kept disappearing to some unknown part of the building at night to continue working alone, usually after Yagami had already retired to bed on another floor.

Ugh, Yagami. Hewasn’t even an option, when it came to conversation. He was intelligent, that much Mello could tell, but he was an uptight prick with no evident personality to speak of. He was boring as hell, and even if he wasn’t, Mello had no interest in someone L himself had thought could be Kira. Enough so that he had been confined to a cell for a month. What the fuck was someone like that even still doing here? The undercover operation happening later on that day was going to be a flop, Mello could just feel it.
L, Yagami, and Misora were all out of the picture. That left two other task force members to associate with before she lost her mind to cold plastic screens, and Matt was –

Well. Matt was fucking awesome, and that was sort of part of the problem.

Mello still had a hard time looking him in the eye for too long, and that was pretty discouraging. Matt was easy-going, straightforward and funny, and Mello had always felt comfortable in his presence. He had never given a fuck about Mello’s gender, and always did his best to switch pronouns when asked. If she couldn’t talk to her best friend in the whole fucking world without feeling an odd mix of guilt and hurt, then who the hell could she talk to?

Fortunately or not, there was an obvious answer to that question, and he was sitting on the floor, stacking matches as if they were Lincoln Logs.

It was early afternoon, and L still had not emerged from his quarters to join them, which was irritating. Now that she was here, working with L, being useful and brilliant, the bastard couldn’t manage to pay her a little attention after almost a decade of indifference.

The camera in the coffee shop was already up and running, one of the larger computer monitors showing a live stream of the morning rush. It was just playing in the background, as Yagami wasn’t set to meet Mikami there for another couple of hours. Matt was coding, tightening up an algorithm he was working on that would hopefully help narrow down Kira conspirators and benefactors. No doubt a celebrity like Ryuga Hideki had more than his fair share of cash, but it was finite; he’d need donors, rich idiots who supported his cause.

*No doubt in exchange for immunity for their white collar trespasses,* Mello sneered in her head, resting her chin on her fist and souring. *That’s always how it goes. You can’t kill everyone that’s done illegal or corrupt things for their fortune, can you? Where will you compromise? You aren’t as virtuous as you let on. You’ll slip up, and when you do, we’ll be there to exploit it.*

The traffic on Astrea’s site had picked up over the last few days, and while Naomi was the one monitoring the comments, Mello found herself playing around on there as well, writing her own little essays on the forums to spark debates and inspire some of the leaders of the Anti-Kira movement to speak up. Sometimes she’d even pretend to be a pro-Kira mole, spouting nonsense just to incite a textual riot. It was unfortunate, however, that a great deal of the Anti-Kira bloggers were just as much sycophants of Astrea as Pro-Kira idiots were followers of Hideki.
Bitches, all of them.

From a few feet to her left there came a deep sigh as Matt stretched, his fingers twitching in that telltale fashion. Mello knew it well. She glanced his way, already knowing what was going to come next.

“I’m gonna go take a smoke break,” Matt announced as he stood up, then stretched out his stiff back. He’d only made it a few steps when a quiet voice rose from behind a matchstick tower.

“Matt,” Near spoke clearly, seriously, though his hesitation was clearer than Mello was used to hearing from the boy. Was he especially uncertain about what he was going to say, or had Mello simply honed her observation skills since the last time she’d tried to gauge Near on anything? Or maybe I’m just overreacting and there was nothing there at all. I’m bored enough for that to be reasonable.

“Near,” Matt said in return, copying his austere tone, though he grinned as he did so.

“I was hoping to discuss something with you privately,” Near replied as he stacked another match carefully, peaking Mello’s interest. “Perhaps when you get back.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah, sure. You got it,” Matt saluted and started over to the elevator.

Once the doors were shut behind him, Mello spun around in her chair, planting her bare feet on the ground and then leaning forward until her elbows were on her knees. This brought her down closer to Near’s level, watching the shift of the silvery curls in small fingers. Near’s face was partially obscured behind the wall of matches.

Mello, above all, hated being ignored. Near always had a deliberate apathy to his presence, which had infuriated her as a child and now still grated on her nerves.

A flash of grey eyes met hers, then they were gone again, concentrating on the next delicate stack.

“I would appreciate it if I could be allowed to finish the tower, before Mello knocks it down.”
The voice was detached, as usual, but Mello happened to know that destroying the tower before Near grew bored of it was a sure fire way to irritate the little brat. Picking on Near had always lightened her mood. It almost felt too comfortable, too much like old times, when she’d step on Near’s toys or tip over a domino before he’d managed to set the rest of them in place. It had really been the only way to get a rise out of the boy, even if it was just a furrowed brow and a huff. Which was more than anyone else had managed, aside from Matt perhaps, who had pulled a little smile from the younger boy on occasion.

At some point in her youth, Mello had taken to calling Near an ‘android’ as an insult. While she wasn’t entirely convinced that wasn’t the case just yet, there was information that seemed to hint at the contrary. Not much, mind, but enough to make Mello question her perception of him. Near was not untouchable, that much was clear, but he was still incomprehensible for the moment (and smug, no matter how Mello tried to intimidate him).

“We’ll see about the tower,” Mello drawled, “As for that ‘private conversation’ - you aren’t very subtle, Near.”

“And Mello is purposefully vague in an attempt to throw me off guard by making me feel ignorant,” Near muttered airily, gently setting a match into place. “If we’re stating the obvious.”

“Ha ha,” Mello rolled her eyes and steered the conversation away from the purposeful antagonism, even if she really, really wanted to take the bait. She raised her head and rolled her chair closer to Near’s tower, mostly to get a better view of his face. “Don’t think I don’t know what that was about.”

She didn’t know, at least not with any certainty. Her one suspicion was a bit of a long shot, but considering what she knew of Near, there was nowhere else for her mind to jump.

“I don’t presume Mello knows anything.”

Mello showed her teeth at the words, watching Near’s soft face stare back at her blandly.

“You little –“ Her temper flared but she forced it down quickly, gnawing her molars for a moment before calming herself. He’s doing it on purpose. Trying to rile you so that you’ll change the subject. That means he’s…uncomfortable? I can work with that. “No, no, no, that’s not going to work.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know what Mello means,” said Near casually, moving down further behind the match wall.
Near was running, in his way, so that meant that Mello was onto him. *Good, almost too easy.*

“I mean that you’re going to ask Matt to join you for your heat,” Mello told him bluntly, deciding to let the shock fluster him (even if a flustered Near generally meant a twitch of the eyebrow at most). Most normal people would have blushed or balked or frowned, but Near did none of those things. Instead, he was quiet and entirely unreactive – almost *too* still, for several seconds – before reaching for another match as if entirely unaffected.

“Mello’s assumption is entirely baseless.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t deny it,” she smirked, “Four times a year, right? Knowing you, it’s probably the fourth month, fourth week. Unless you’ve changed it up. But you don’t like to do that sort of thing.”

“I didn’t realized Mello kept such an intensive log of my cycle.”

*Was that a hint of annoyance I detected? Alright, maybe this will be fun.*

“I’m observant. Kind of a thing I have,” Mello tapped the side of her head sardonically. “Besides, you took my best friend away from me on multiple occasions, so it was pretty easy familiarize myself without too much effort.”

*If that’s his goal, why is he asking now, almost two full months ahead of time? Does he really think Omegas can’t make their own decisions on who to fuck when they’re in heat –? Honestly, what a crock.*

Near hesitated for a long moment, then gave a small sigh. “Matt was assisting me through my heats before he and Mello were involved romantically. Before you had even presented. I didn’t steal him.”

“As if you could,” Mello replied flippantly, not overly fond of the thought of Matt’s relationship – if one could really call it that – with her rival. “I’m just giving you a fair warning – you shouldn’t ask him.”

*Has he not said anything to you? I thought you two were on better terms nowadays than he is with*
me. It’s only been a year since he told me and ended our – fuck, no, let’s not veer into that territory. Let’s not go there, because thinking about how you didn’t notice your own fucking Alpha boyfriend wasn’t into sex is just too fucked up. Perhaps he hasn’t shared it with anyone else.

“Didn’t he tell you?” Mello pried, when her caution was met with silence.

“…Tell me what?”

“That he doesn’t do that sort of thing anymore. He doesn’t like it. He’s not -” Matt doesn’t want me. Maybe he never did. Maybe I was pushing him into it every time, fuck, what if – “…He just doesn’t do sex, even during Heat.”

“Oh, that.” Near said, shrugging a shoulder and opening up a new box of matches. “Yes, Matt informed me of his sexuality, or lack thereof. Not long after he told Mello, I believe.”

Mello’s lip curled, rolling her chair closer. “Then you should know better.”

“Mello is the one that should know better,” Near murmured without inflection. “Matt’s assistance during my Heats has always been just that. Assistance.”

“Wait – what?” Mello spat, standing up from her chair so quickly that it rolled back several feet with the force of the motion. Is he trying to tell me that he and Matt spent those heats together without fucking? I mean, it happens, but they both led me to believe otherwise! “That’s idiotic! You expect me to believe that?”

“I don’t expect anything from Mello.” Near gave her another brief flash of grey eyes from beneath the curl of his pale fringe. He tapped his chin with a match as if deciding where to put the first one in relation to the other tall stacks. “However, that is the truth.”

“If that’s the case, why wouldn’t he tell me?” Mello insisted, moving closer as her mind spun through her own interactions with Matt before they’d started dating. How much her competitive streak with Near had been exacerbated by resentment and jealousy.

“Likely to prevent a violation of my privacy.”
“By saying he didn’t fuck you?”

It seemed completely absurd, and not just because Matt was hot as hell and the best person anyone had the good fortune to know. She’d left Near mostly alone in their early years, with occasional exceptions, quietly despising him for his priggish attitude while respecting him reluctantly for his scores, but somewhere around Christmas, not long after Mello’s fourteenth birthday, Near had presented as Omega.

It hadn’t seemed fair. It hadn’t even seemed fitting, and even now Mello had a hard time imagining there were times when Near felt as beautiful and wanton and free as Mello did when her heat came along.

Presentation had its own unique connotations within Whammy’s culture—most people hoped to present, because being a Beta was boring and statistically meant the possibility of lower intelligence. Outside of that, the increased sense of smell was an asset that was difficult to compete with. There was also the factor that most of the teenagers there did end up presenting at some point or another, because Alpha and Omega parents were more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy and give the child away.

Being a Beta was being an outcast. It was bad enough being runner up—no doubt that was how B had felt, no wonder he’d gone bat shit—and so she’d been horribly jealous of Near’s early presentation at the time. Mello had to spend the next two and a half years thinking she’d be stuck as a Beta.

She’d run through the halls screaming with joy when her first heat came, banging on doors and making sure that every person present was well aware that Mello was, in fact, Omega. Most of the kids had taken bets on what she would present as, if at all, because her nature tended to hint at Alpha.

“No, I don’t think so,” Near had predicted way back when, putting his allowance down in the betting pool, surprising quite a few kids with his participation. “Mello will most likely present as Omega.”

*He probably bought a shit load of toys with his winnings on that one,* a snarky voice in Mello’s head told her, looking down at the matches and crossing her arms over her chest. She peered down her nose at Near expectantly, tapping her foot as a way of expressing impatience and also reminding him of the impending threat to his tower.

“We agreed that everything that happened in my bedroom was to stay there,” Near explained after a moment, shifting his bad leg a bit. “Speaking of it in any context would have been betraying that
“He was helping you long before he realized that he was asexual or whatever,” Mello contradicted, because if the little bastard was lying to her, so help her – “So why wouldn’t he have fucked you?”

“I was twelve.”

“Oh, shut up, you weren’t always twelve. He was disappearing to ‘assist’ with your heats until we got together – you would have been like, sixteen.” Mello only gave himself a beat. “Are you asexual too?”

Near was silent for a moment, raising his gaze to match Mello’s briefly, then looking away.

“No.”

He offered no elaboration and Mello released a sharp, irritated breath. *That’s actually a bit surprising. The idea of Near having an active sexuality is – well. Weird. Although the idea of him and Matt having a history bugged me for years, I never actually pictured what it might look like. It’d be a like fucking a wall, wouldn’t it? Sometimes it seems like I’m talking to one.*

“Okay,” Mello huffed, “so humor me.”

Near tilted his head as if to consider it, before apparently deciding he liked the progress that he was making on his matchstick wall. “We had settled on arrangement at the time, which did not include sex. He was not interested in me sexually; it should be obvious why at this point.”

“Yeah,” Mello scoffed, shifting the arms over her chest. “Join the fucking club.”

The corner of Near’s mouth flickered up into a smirk. “Is something still a club when its members consist of everyone?”

“Not a very elite one, no,” Mello found herself sniggering in agreement, which was eerie enough in and of itself. To laugh because of a joke that Near was responsible for. She cut herself off abruptly when she realized it. “Whatever. So you’re set on asking him to help you then.”
“Yes,” Near set a match down carefully. “Mello is the one who broke up with Matt, so surely Mello has no objections?”

“I didn’t – “ Mello started to defend herself, but thinking back on when Matt had told her about his disinterest in sex, it wasn’t really clear who had ended it.

But it had felt over, and Mello had left that night for Russia, because how the hell was she supposed to look at Matt when she knew she had no chance? Worse than that, she’d forced her own active libido onto him. Every heat, every time outside of heat, had Matt felt disgusted? Had he technically been unwilling even? There had certainly been times when Matt had been more interested in his video game, or sleep, or just holding her, when she’d pushed.

He’d been taking suppressants for years, pretty much since Near had invented a formula, but she’d always thought it was because he didn’t like the distraction. Or even because he didn’t like smelling other Omegas. The truth was much too difficult.

Yes, Mello supposed it had been her that broke it off, though the terms had never been explicitly stated. They’d tried to be friends since coming to Japan, but things still ended up awkward from time to time. When it wasn’t, it was only because they’d managed to busy themselves enough to forget.

“Whether I broke it off or not, and even if he just assists,” Mello started slowly, “…I’m not going to say that I like it.”

“Is this where Mello tells me to ‘go fuck myself’?”

Mello stared, her mouth twitching at the nonchalant double entendre. She transformed her gaze quickly into a glare and forced her mouth into a scowl, irritated with herself. Since when has the little brat been this amusing? To be fair, we haven’t actually had a conversation for any length of time before. I’m trying to be intimidating here. Am I just weak because my heat is coming up?

“Good one,” Mello admitted, raising her brows. Near’s hand stilled in the air, a match poised in between his thumb and index finger. “I mean, yeah, figuratively I guess you can go fuck yourself, but literally? Do what you want.”

Near paused, set the match into place, then nodded. “I will.”
The words had barely left his mouth when the elevator dinged, and Matt returned looking looser than before and smelling of smoke. Mello had learned to miss the smell of smoke, and after her talk with Near she couldn’t help but resent the scent. Her olfaction was extremely sensitive without the use of suppressants, and considering she was days away from her heat, it latched onto the familiar aroma almost too quickly.

Easing away from Near’s tower when Matt shot her a disapproving look, Mello cast another glance back at Near. For a few seconds, she was struck by the realization that their conversation had been relatively peaceful, though they each offered their own array of aggressive wording. It had certainly alleviated her boredom for the time being and put her in a better mood; not only had she secured valuable information and caught Near off guard with her line of questioning, she had also successfully recharged enough to get back to work. Maybe she could resume some of her Beyond research; if L wasn’t going to join them until the last possible minute, she didn’t feel guilty about it.

“What the fuck – guys, were you even paying attention to this?” Matt suddenly declared from the computer station, causing Near to lift his head and Mello to spin sharply toward the screen.

Up on the screen was their view of the coffee shop, and the prosecutor was already seated at a booth a few meters away from the one they had wired for espionage.

“Mikami’s already there!”

“It’s like an hour and a half until Yagami’s supposed to meet him,” Mello protested, rushing forward to zoom in, as if not entirely convinced it was Mikami at all. “Yagami was going to get there half an hour early to secure the booth – he got the waitress there to reserve it so no one else could usurp it, but now…”

“That isn’t the booth that was rigged,” Near sighed.

“No shit, Sherlock,” Mello muttered gruffly, rubbing her temples. “Fuck, it’s not like Yagami can just ask him to move to another booth. This is a crap fest.”

“The camera still has a pretty good view of the booth though – that’s something.” Matt offered optimistically as they regarded Mikami, who had brought his laptop and appeared to be working while he waited.
“Yeah, but where Mikami’s sitting, we’ll get the back of Yagami’s head,” Mello insisted, planting a knee in the seat of her computer chair and rolling closer to the screen sitting backwards. “He’ll block most of our view of Mikami.”

“He knows where the camera is,” Matt waved a hand flippantly. “He’ll shift over.”

“Maybe,” Mello said, standing up again and straightening her shirt. “I’ll go find L. If Yagami hasn’t left yet, we might have time to put a wire on him to fix this.”

In the end, Mello did find L and was informed that Yagami had already gone off to his apartment for some reason or another. There was no use, and Mello was quietly simmering throughout the entire interaction.

The good news – if she could even call it that – was that it was just about the most boring undercover operation that Mello had ever been part of. Yagami came early, but only by fifteen minutes, and only after Matt had texted him that Mikami beat them to the punch. Even if it was inadvertently, which they weren’t certain about. Mikami was, L had said, an anal individual who was never late to anything, so him being over an hour early to a meeting was not entirely out of character.

There was a moment when Mikami seemed to lean forward, as though to touch the officer, but he was only sliding over what appeared to be a case file. Yagami’s posture tensed (did he think he was going to be touched too? Mello had noticed he wasn’t overly fond of unwarranted contact) and Mello thought something interesting was about to go down, but…

L worried at his thumbnail, the clicking sound of teeth on hard protein starting to grate on Mello’s nerves, though she didn’t dare say anything about it. Yagami’s posture relaxed after a minute and, in another five, the meeting was over. Mikami packed away his files and laptop, Yagami finished his coffee, and then they shook hands and parted ways. Even with just the visuals to go on, it was clearly an uneventful affair.

“What a fucking bore,” Mello groaned, slouching in her seat. *What a waste of time and worry. I knew this whole thing was going to be a bust.* “We got all worked up over diddly fucking squat.”
“I’ve told you, nothing happened - it was boring. I kept waiting for him to bring up something other than his next hearing. Apparently the only reason he wanted to have the meeting in person was to give his condolences about my father.”

“It’s still rather suspicious.” L muttered behind him, as Light toed his shoes off by the door.

“That he arrived early?” Light raised his eyebrow, pulling his tie lose and stretching his arms above his head. “I thought so too. I was on my guard, but he didn’t even bring Kira up.”

*It was a waste of energy, but there’s nothing to be done for it.* Light exhaled heavily then looked over his shoulder, noticing that L hadn’t straightened up just yet, even though they were alone together.

After returning to headquarters, the work day had passed on like any other, though Mello seemed particularly irritated with the happenings of the day. Light was frustrated about it as well, as it had seemed to be the only real lead they’d gotten in ages. While Ryuga Hideki was out there letting his reputation speak for itself and likely campaigning behind the scenes, the days were passing them by.

They’d started contacting government agencies around the world like planned, and Astrea was going as well as to be expected, but it still felt like they weren’t getting anywhere. Teru had been a glimmer of hope for a path inside the walls of the Kira fortress, but it had ended up being nothing more than a business meeting between colleagues.

Light drew his fingers through his own hair and turned, leaning against the bedframe and watching L stand awkwardly a few yards away. His hands were shoved deep into his pockets and he wasn’t even *looking* in Light’s direction.

“What is wrong with –”

L quickly pulled a hand out of his pocket and held up a finger to quiet him. Light was irked, and followed his line of sight to the clock by the bed, which glowed with the time in bright green.

11:59

*Is that what this is about? How childish can you get?*
“You know I wasn’t actually born until eleven in the morning.” Light rolled his eyes, and L gave a long suffering sigh and pulled his eyes away, just as the minute turned over.

“Happy Birthday, Light,” L drew his other hand from the depths of his jeans and started to close the gap between them, lamenting, “Though, you rather spoiled the effect I was going for.”

“That was definitely my goal,” Light told him coolly, but let L approach him and lean in to give him a kiss.

He half expected L to retort in some way or another, but L gave him a gentle and relatively short kiss on the mouth rather than being snarky right back at him. The kiss didn’t beckon deeper, just idled there with their lips barely brushing until L retreated and nodded his head toward the closet.

“You have presents.”

Light raised his eyebrows, gaze flickering to what he knew to be an enormous walk-in closet. There was very little in it, of course, because L refused to have taste in clothes.

“More than one?” He inquired, brushing a dark stray hair off of L’s shoulder and then slipping away, toward the door that his gifts were hiding behind.

“…Yes.”

The hesitation made Light pause with his hand on the door, looking back over his shoulder at L, who was still hunched suspiciously. Light’s eyes narrowed.

“More than two?”

“I may have gone overboard,” L confessed, scratching his left ankle with the toes on his right foot. “Fair warning.”

“Is it a fair warning if I had to drag it out of you?” Light muttered, clicking his tongue and pulling the
door open, and leaning in to flip the light switch on.

He stared at the contents of the closet, then turned to face L again, blinking several times. He drew a breath and glanced back at the gifts once more before releasing the air in a huff.

“You bought *all* of this?”

“Clearly.”

“This is too much,” Light put his hand out in the direction of the closet. “All of - this is *ridiculous.*”

“I’m aware of that,” L agreed, looking up at the ceiling and scratching the back of his head. “Yesterday I became increasingly aware of the fact that I had no idea what to buy you for your birthday, so I had to do some research.”

“You didn’t have to get me anything – “ Light began to insist.

“That’s inconsequential now,” L shrugged emphatically, shoving his hands once again into his pockets. *What, are you getting self-conscious about this overindulgence now?* “I went onto a variety of websites designed specifically for the purpose of helping people in my position, and I found a great deal of suggestions, but I still wasn’t able to narrow it down –”

“So you bought everything.”

“Not *everything,*” L argued, then went quiet for a long second. “But...yes, quite a bit. You can sort through the items as you like and anything you don’t want you can set aside.”

It was the most obtuse thing Light had heard in his entire life, and so he wasn’t sure why his mouth hurt from trying not to smile. He turned back toward the closet and stepped inside, taking inventory of the array of merchandise.

The newest Xbox along with a myriad of games, a crisp leather wallet, an iPad, an aftershave and cologne that –Light noticed – were also scent blockers. To the left, there were several suits hanging up, in navy blue, grey, charcoal, and black. Most of them were expensive for the average layman but
practical, certainly the kind he could wear to work. Then there were two at the back, one light grey and modern, and the other pitch black, sleek and classic. It was only when he checked the label that he realized how expensive they must have been.

On one of the shelves, there were two boxes, and Light picked them up, turning toward the doorway where L was now standing

“…Was all this really necessary?” he inquired, raising his brows even as his fingers brush over the smooth, luxury fabric.

“I don’t often have the opportunity to spend money, and choosing gifts is not my forte.” L shrugged, looking up at the ceiling. “Watari has now taken the privilege away from me because of my irresponsibility, so don’t expect this on your next birthday.”

My next birthday. The idea coiled around his ribs and tightened there, the notion that this could last until then, and perhaps the next, and the next, and the-

“Chocolate,” Light prompted, cutting off his own thoughts because that was not a train of thought he needed to ride right now. Not when just this much felt like asphyxiation, this meaningless, saccharine show of wealth. He held out the rather large box of assorted chocolate (which was, thankfully, not heart-shaped).

“I worked very hard to arrange all of this. That’s my reward,” L explained to him unabashedly.

Light scoffed, set that box down and picked up a significantly smaller one. It looked distinctly like a jewelry box, and if L had actually bought him diamonds or something equally useless and arbitrary, he was going to be too peeved to enjoy the rest of the night.

“–Keys?” Light said, holding up two sleek matching car keys on a ring with a key remote.

“As I said,” L mumbled. “I may have gone overboard.”

“You didn’t.”
“I did.”

“…We definitely have to return that,” Light told him, but couldn’t completely smother the grin that stretched at his lips. “I want to drive it at least once though.”

L’s eyes brightened and his own mouth curled into one of his little smiles. This isn’t flattering. You just threw money at me, you idiot, why did you think this would please me? – Why the hell is it working? Don’t smile at me like that, asshole.

“I’d be disappointed otherwise,” L told him, leaning against the doorframe. “I didn’t expect you to keep it, though you are certainly welcome to.”

Light set the keys back in the box, and placed it on the shelf as he approached L.

“I don’t need a car. Especially not a luxury car; some people spend their money on sensible things.”

“Light-kun also does not need a suit that is more expensive than most used, practical cars either, but I don’t see him complaining about that – “ L had the gall to say, provoking him. Light grabbed the front of his shirt and kissed him, rather than hear the idiot taunt him.

L’s hands slipped around his waist as Light pulled away, looking L in the eye.

“I haven’t played video games in years, by the way.”

“Is that so?” L tilted his head. “When Wedy broke into your home, she found evidence to the contrary –“

“Fine, but rarely,” Light growled, glowering. “Will you stop using information that you obtained illegally against me?”

L’s brow furrowed. “Obviously not.”

“You are so terrible at this,” Light sighed, but kissed L again anyway, tugging him closer by the
collar of his shirt yet again.

“I won’t disagree with you,” murmured L against his mouth, and tilted his head to deepen the kiss, drawing Light in and taking his bottom lip between his teeth. One of his hands moved up from Light’s hips, over his shoulder and then down his arm, fingers curling around his wrist gently.

The teeth made his breath hitch, and the thumb starting to knead against the inside of his wrist -

“Ow,” Light recoiled with a hiss, yanking his wrist away from L and looking at the origin of the twinge. “What the hell – ?”

L’s mouth twisted into a frown and he moved closer to look at Light’s wrist. “What is that?”

There was a tiny, barely noticeable line of red on his wrist. It was a sliver of a cut, maybe half an inch long, and it would have meant nothing to him if it weren’t for the location.

“It looks like a paper cut,” Light mused, looking it over. It was too thin to be anything else.

“On your wrist? That’s an odd place to get a paper cut.”

Light nodded slowly, and admitted, “I don’t know when I would have gotten it.”

Moving his dark eyes up from the cut, L narrowed his eyes at him. “You don’t know.”

“…No, I don’t,” Light repeated, realizing as he said it how improbable it sounded. I’m extremely conscious of myself and my surroundings at all times, and besides, it’s the skin directly above my scent glad. Could I really have gotten this cut without noticing? It’s not even a likely place for an accidental paper cut – what is going on?

“I had your wrist in my hand this morning just like I did a second ago, and there was nothing there,” L informed him, his voice dropping into a more clinical tone, putting his proverbial detective cap on. “So you had to have received it today.”
“That makes sense, but –“ Light shook his head, stepping past L so that they weren’t having this conversation in a closet, of all places. “Alright, perhaps the meeting with Mikami? That’s really the only time I handled paper today, when he passed me his files. But I don’t remember –“

Light stopped a few feet away, holding his own wrist in the opposite hand as if it did not belong to him.

“Light?”

“I don’t remember getting this cut, L,” Light turned around to face him, feeling as though the floor had turned soft and unstable under his feet. “I don’t remember.”

“Light,” L was in front of him then, and Light didn’t remember seeing the steps he’d taken to get there. He realized that his voice must not have made him seem all there. He was angry, but more than anything, he was horrified that his mind – the most precious part of himself – had been tampered with. “Light, we must focus. Wondering how they managed it doesn’t help us here. What we know is that something was revealed to you, and then they took the memory of that information away.”

“So they must have known there were wires somehow – him arriving early to secure a different booth was on purpose,“ Light said, swallowing and doing what he could to get back in the game. My own memory has betrayed me. “Whether or not he knows that I was in on it, he must have figured you knew about the meeting.”

“You must have deliberately given yourself this paper cut in this particular place because you knew I would touch you here eventually.” L’s fingers brushed over his wrist again and Light didn’t move away, but neither did the detective pursue a firmer touch there.

“To bring attention to the fact I couldn’t remember the events surrounding it.” So Mikami must have
explained to me what was going to happen. I left a clue for myself, because there was nothing else I could do.

“Yes, but it’s all speculation if we try to examine it further than that,” L murmured, taking the opposite unmarred wrist in hand instead and rubbing soothing circles with his thumb until Light felt as though a breeze of calm had washed over him. Light allowed it, and let his head fall forward to rest his cheek on L’s shoulder until the world became solid again.

“At least we know that today’s operation wasn’t completely useless.”

“That’s true,” L agreed quietly, not sounding relieved. “We know that Mikami has Kira’s power to take away memories, and that whatever they shared with you was important enough to make sure you could tell no one.”

“But,” The smooth circular motions against his wrist were proving much too effective. Light breathed comfortably into the fabric of L’s shirt, his voice taking on a drowsy quality. “I found a way to tell you.”

“Yes,” L pressed his mouth to Light’s shoulder in turn. “Yes, you did.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so we got some more information about Mello, Near and Matt and how all that's working out. We had the Light/Teru confrontation, which I got around actually showing you, for obvious mystery reasons. ;) And then we got some cute stuff between L and Light, even if it was interrupted a little by plot things. The image of him on a computer clicking 'buy' for everything that seemed like a good idea at the time on pure impulse was just...right, to me. He panicked a bit, because he's a loser. But it worked for him.

I really wanted the Asexual character to be someone that people wouldn't assume was Asexual. Matt is funny and functional and laid back - he's not the stereotypical 'cold, unfeeling ace' that a lot of people go for. I was pretty nervous/excited about revealing that.

Also...I really don't know how long this story will be. I'm going to guess about 50 chapters in all. I'm not going to rush anything though - there are specific developments I want to happen with the characters that are just as important to me as the plot.

Thank you again for all your support and patience. I'd love to know if you had any lines that stuck out to you in particular, favorite moments, dialogue, etc.
“And I say also this. I do not think the forest would be so bright, nor the water so warm, nor love so sweet, if there were no danger in the lakes.” — C.S. Lewis

“You’re learning quickly.”

Naomi’s heel had missed Light’s chin by an inch, maybe two; he’d spun out of the way a moment sooner than he would have the day before. The timer chimed just as he was about to turn into his next kick but he stopped himself, pleased when his muscles obeyed him instantly despite his fatigue.

The progress had been irritatingly slowly in the beginning, but now he could see himself growing stronger and more precise. The line of his hips was becoming more pronounced, his arms and legs returning to and even surpassing their previous muscle tone.

“Thank you,” He nodded, straightening up and flexing his hands.

“Are your arms mostly back to normal?” Naomi regarded him with equal parts curiosity and concern.

She’d watched his development over the week with bright eyes, which had flashed with surprise whenever he’d made an unexpected advancement. Light enjoyed showing off his inevitable aptitude for anything he decided to put his mind to, but it was hardly the reason he’d decided to train with Naomi.
“Yes, almost entirely,” Light answered, though he couldn’t help but notice he was more out of breath than Naomi was. *How annoying. She’s better at this than I anticipated.*

The fighting style was more intense than it looked, and he was throwing around more weight than she was. He stretched his arms across his chest and the muscles there burned pleasantly.

“Meeting with you in the morning to train has been helping quite,” he continued graciously.

“I’m glad I could help. I don’t approve of what was done to you, and I don’t take it lightly. It’s true that Amane ended up being guilty of the crimes in question, but L’s actions were…well, I didn’t agree with him.” Naomi told him, and then paused, her brow furrowing.

For a moment, she looked like she wanted to say more – as if that didn’t really sum up the extent of her disapproval – but she appeared to decide against it, then turned to grab both of their towels and water bottles.

Her hair was pulled back into a high, elegant ponytail and she was dressed entirely in sleek, fitting workout clothes. When she turned her back to Light, he saw the lines of a tattoo peeking out from beneath her tank top, creeping elegantly along her shoulders. He couldn’t make out what it was, and he wasn’t interested or blunt enough to ask.

“It’s in the past,” Light replied casually, stepping closer to her and accepting his water bottle gratefully. He took a few long sips, feeling noticeably cooler once he’d downed half of it. "I'm feeling like myself again."

"I'm glad,” Naomi looked him over, hesitating for only a moment. “It must be difficult to move on from a false imprisonment when you're still physically recovering from the effects of it."

"That's true,” Light commented, taking another sip of his water, cutting her prompting statement short as politely as possible.

"But then, you seem to have healed rather quickly.” Light thought he saw her lip quirk, and her dark eyes seemed to shine yet again, but not with fascination this time. “Emotionally, that is." Light wiped the back of his neck and frowned at the words. The phrasing was loaded, and the subtext didn’t make itself clear to him immediately. He was enjoying the routine of working out with Naomi in the mornings– the martial arts style wasn’t entirely to his tastes, too much like *dancing*, but – he figured that learning a unique fighting style like capoeira couldn’t hurt. It might even be useful one day.
L used this style to kick me, so if Naomi ends up getting too boring, I can always spar him instead. It can’t be a coincidence that they both know this style – did she learn it with L? I know they go way back, but surely they aren’t that close.

She did so like to chit chat with him, though generally only after they were done working out. First thing in the morning, she acted grumpier than Light felt. Delaying his morning shower always left him feeling vaguely foul, and it was rather therapeutic to get to hit someone who knew how to fight and was just as agitated as he was. She’d come in, grunting and sighing rather than actually forming words like a human being, her eyes not even fully open until they were finished with the warm up stretches.

"It's easier to be emotionally and mentally healthy through something like that when you know you're innocent," Light responded, rolling his aching shoulders back and regarding her carefully.

"Oh, of course,” She agreed, as she sat on one of the low, padded tables meant for stretching and proceeded to do just that. She extended her slim, powerful legs straight out in front of her and then leaned forward to touch her toes. “But I meant more about - well, Ryuzaki."

Light blinked pointedly to let her know he hadn’t the faintest idea what she was taking about. He reeled in a twinge of anger. L’s known her for years, but surely he wouldn’t divulge our relationship purely based on that?

“What about Ryuzaki?”


The familiar irritation started to creep back, and Light felt his jaw tighten slightly. For a moment, he considered denying it, but the certainty on her features made him sure she wasn’t just taking a lucky guess. She was present that night at the beach, so she may have just inferred that the tension had been acted upon. Even so, to be confident enough to bring it up like this – what exactly is her angle?

"…I see."

"I'm sorry, I know it's sort of supposed to be a secret.” Naomi paused, and then glanced him over. “You should really stretch. Capoeira is really hard on your legs and core if you don’t.”
I’m well aware of that! You’re the one that brought that up and threw me off.

Light grudgingly seated himself on a nearby table and started following Naomi’s stretching routine. He extended his long legs in the same way and curled his fingers around the balls of his feet until his heels lifted off the mat and his calves burned.

It was different than the physical therapy he’d done with Watari during confinement and afterwards on his own. Even now, when he was irritated with her for bringing up his relationship with L so flippantly, he was aware that she knew best when it came to this. He had no interest in pulling a muscle or being physically out of commission in any way, after he’d finally gotten his body back on track.

Part of him wanted to send his glower in L’s direction, and for a moment his eyes flickered to his left, as if he expected L to be there. He quickly set his glare on his toes instead.

“If it makes you feel better, it's not that obvious,” Naomi told him with a deliberate tone to her voice, soft and careful, as if she realized that she’d upset him. I’m not upset, I’m annoyed. I’m trying to figure out where she’s going with this, and what she intends to do with the information.

“Did Ryuzaki tell you?” He inquired with as much nonchalance as he could muster, grabbing the toes of his sneakers and gingerly pulling until his heels lifted off the mat.

She isn’t a threat, and I’m sure she can keep it to herself if she so chooses. But what does she think of it? That it’s a conflict of interest, that I have Stockholm syndrome after the confinement, that I’ve been sleeping my way to privileges on the task force – that our relationship is the entire reason L decided to keep me around?

“No, of course not,” Naomi scoffed, spreading her legs and then curling over toward the center. Light’s brow furrowed as he followed suit. “Ryuzaki confides some things to me, but never anything truly personal. I don’t think he likes that I know as much as I do know. Which…isn’t much.”

A weird spasm of pride snuck up on Light and he quickly shoved it down.

"Then how did you know exactly?" He demanded mildly.
It didn’t help his mood that this stretch was his least favorite. His legs were limber enough, but when it came to shifting his hips for this stretch, he’d barely made any progress. Naomi could almost touch he nose to the mat when she leaned forward, while Light struggled to put his elbows on the surface. While he’d made excellent progress in the last week or so working with Naomi (as he had expected he would) he still had yet to beat her consistently. There had been a few times here and there where he managed it, and once even twice in a row. He was gaining on her in all areas, as was his way, and he projected that he’d outmatch her within the month.

He held back the huff he wanted to release and pulled out of the stretch early, reminding himself to practice it on his own – worse than failing was having a witness to the failure.

"Matsuda told me,” She sighed, shaking her head in fond admonishment of his actions. “Sometimes he won’t shut up about it. I’d already suspected a bit of course, after L got drunk and wouldn’t shut up about you.”

Matsuda knows? I know he was betting on it happening, but he couldn’t possibly know that we’ve actually – did he smell me one day? If that’s the case, then Aizawa might know too.

The thought of anyone being aware of their relationship before Light was ready to reveal it did not bode well with him. Matsuda was harmless. Naomi and Aizawa were trustworthy (they had nothing to get out of betraying his trust, rather) but this was already a tumultuous coupling –

"He won’t stop talking about Ryuzaki and I?" Light grit his teeth momentarily, then pried them apart again. “In what capacity?”

She’s been associating with Matsuda outside work, in her free time. He didn’t like the idea. Not that he cared about Matsuda’s love life (though part of him did wonder if Naomi was out of his league), but it meant that two of the people that knew of his second gender were now socializing to an extent that allowed them to have conversations about it.

“Not to anyone but me, of course,” Noami assured him, sitting up and trying to smooth over her words. She seemed to understand she’d touched an unexpectedly raw nerve. “He’s just – he was really rooting for you two.”

The prospect was so sweet and stupid, Light was momentarily nauseated. Rooting for us? Matsuda is even cheesier than L, which isn’t that surprising. Have we really been that transparent?

Have I?
The worst part was that he thought he’d been completely professional when in view of the others, and so if he’d been slipping up, it wasn’t consciously. Even looking back on it now, he couldn’t figure out where he’d gone wrong. Had he touched his wrist without thinking again, had his eyes lingered too long, had people known just looking at him somehow?

“How did he figure it out?” Light inquired, pulling his legs back together. He let them fall off the side of the table, his feet pressing to the gym floor.

“Oh, I don’t think he knows,” Naomi laughed in an attempt to ease his nerves. “But he’ll always talk about how you to look when you’re together, scheming or deducing or arguing. Sometimes you two will bicker, or just share a look and it’s just – I don’t know. Special, somehow. Like you’ve known each other longer than I know you have.”

Light bristled and turned away, scowling as heat creeped up his neck.

“We’re together, in a way, but there’s nothing special about it. We’re adults.” Light pulled his fingers through his hair, which was damp with sweat at the roots. “Was there a reason you brought this up, Naomi-san?”

Naomi was smiling at him pleasantly when he chanced a glance back at her. “Not really. I just wanted to tell you I’m happy for you – both of you.”

Light sighed and shook his head, “I appreciate the gesture, but there’s nothing to celebrate.”

Naomi snorted, eyes glittering. “You should tell that to your face.”

Light turned away again to conceal the nasty look he wanted to shoot her way, snatching up his water bottle from where he’d set it on the table.

“You’ve been spending too much time with Matsuda.”

“Just enough time, I think.” She corrected, then chuckled at herself as she stood up. “That did sound like him. Doesn’t make it any less true though.”
“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” muttered Light, starting toward the exit that led to the hall. *Is she trying to tease me? Is she really joking about my relationship with L as if we’re friends – or is she trying to embarrass me?*

Naomi caught up to him and they rode the elevator together, pressing the buttons for their respective floors. “You’ve been – well, you two become more engaged with the world in general when you’re together. You really bring something out in each other.”

Light glanced down the papercut, which was now a barely noticeable pink line. *I found a way to tell you,* he’d said to L, but neither of them had found a way to tell anyone else. It was currently useless information, which would end up divulging more truth about Light than about Kira. For now, like many aspects of one another, the cut belonged to L and Light alone.

“Matsuda said something along those lines too. Your blessing is appreciated, but hardly necessary. It’s really not that big of a deal.” Light told her with a guarded, neutral expression, though the idea that other people could see whatever magnetism there was between them was a stressful one.

The elevator chimed again, and the door opened to his floor. Light stepped off quickly, on the floor that was technically his own but which he never actually slept in, then granted Naomi a curt farewell nod.

“I’ll see you upstairs in an hour or so, Naomi-san.”

“See you then.” Naomi agreed genially. She gave a little bob of a bow, her eyes still smiling at him even though she kept a straight face until the doors shut and hid her from view.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry for the wait, guys. I decided to post this shorter chapter to get some momentum back and so that you would all know that I do intend to continue. I've had a lot going on in real life - nothing bad, I've just been busy and stressed and annoyed without time to recharge.

Anyway - I hope you enjoyed the chapter, however short. I liked writing some Light/Naomi bonding, even if Light was tense the whole time. I like depicting Light's slow descent into admitting that he and L are a thing. I also like the idea of him and
Naomi sort of being friends.

Next chapter will be some Matt and Near stuff, as well as a message from your friendly neighborhood murderous vigilante.

As always, I appreciate your feedback! Favorite moments, lines, dialogue - all that good stuff! It means a lot. :)

-Nilah
There was a tug on Matt’s sleeve.

It might have been an anchor, the way that it pulled him solidly out of the pensive state that his coding and research had lulled him into. Okay, that wasn’t entirely honest - coding, research and the blaring techno music in his noise-cancelling headphones, so loud he was almost certain Near had been able to hear it from where he lay on the floor several yards away.

Mello would probably have nagged him about it, if she were there. But Matt would just tell her again how he was the master of his bad habits – perhaps go on for a bit about how he was a benevolent master who lorded over them graciously, which was why they were so abundant and prosperous - then go off to smoke a cigarette on the roof pointedly.

After all, Mello was one to talk, considering the sheer amount of chocolate she consumed on a daily basis. Mello would eat just about anything, if it were coated in chocolate.

As it was, Mello had gotten a suite in a lavish Heat Hotel a few days before and had hired an assortment of prostitutes for the occasion. She was both practical and unabashed about her heats, and she always had been. However loud Mello could be, however harsh and seemingly brash – she had
always been the reasonable one in their relationship.

That was how they’d gotten together in the first place. Mello had been sexually active before she’d presented; she slept with girls and boys, but had never really dated any of them with any consistency. While Matt’s crush on Mello had spawned in their childhood, his lack of sexual pull toward her had made it difficult for him to realize. All Matt had known was that Mello was a sun, one whose warmth and brilliance and fire could illuminate a room; she could inspire growth, or she could burn, according to her whim.

He’d wanted to kiss her – or him, depending on the day – to hold her, to feel her close. When Mello had sat on his lap one evening and told him that they should really both stop being stupid about this and be together already, Matt had been elated and eager and nervous.

The sex that had come after that had left him feeling displaced. He’d felt wrong somehow, guilty and confused, and it had taken some time for him to figure out why.

Why did he not want Mello? Beautiful, vibrant Mello who had never done anything half way, or regretted her decisions, or laid in bed after making love feeling disembodied (underwhelmed, yet overwhelmed all at once)? It hadn’t made sense, and it had continued not to for some time, and even now sometimes he felt broken, like there was a switch that could be flipped that he just had to find.

But you can’t reprogram an entire person, Matt had found himself thinking forlornly after Mello had left for Russia. Not without, like, torture and shit, anyway.

Matt slid his earphones off and paused his music quickly, looking at Near through the vaguely blue tint of today’s pair of goggles. Near’s pale complexion and clothes picked up the blue tint as well, leaving him even more washed out and almost ghost-like beside him. Matt’s lips tugged upward into a smile.

“‘Sup?” He inquired, glancing briefly at the clock. It was after three in the morning and they were currently the only two in the work room. L and Yagami had retired for the evening

Matt scoffed mentally. Ha, yeah. ‘Retired’.

“Matt,” Near began, though he needn’t have started with his name. It was his way, however, and Matt had often wondered if he used names as some sort of secret formula for socialization. “Could we speak for a moment?”
“Aren’t we already?” Matt grinned.

Near peered at him blankly. Well, not entirely. While Matt could understand why Mello and most other people thought Near was expressionless, in truth, he was far from it. Mello, for all his skills, had blinded himself to Near’s humanity with impressive obstinacy. Even now, the ‘blank’ expression that he was being given was not actually blank for anyone who cared to look.

Near still had tells, but they were specific to his nature. His brow furrowed slightly, he blinked slowly, and his finger curled into what Matt guessed might be the same lock of hair as always.

“I suppose.”

Chuckling, Matt leaned back in his chair. “What’s up?”

Now that I think about it, wasn’t Near going to talk to me about something before? We got pretty distracted by Mikami suddenly showing up early – wait, is he nervous? It’s hard to tell, but I think he might be.

Near looked at him, twisting at the lock of hair as he dragged his eyes away and up toward the ceiling.

“I would like for us to reinstate our previous arrangement, if Matt is amendable.” Near stated, cautiously, in a deliberately aloof monotone. “My heat is over a month away, so I understand if you need some time to agree, but considering Matt’s current relationship status, I figured asking would not be out of bounds.”

“Relationship status?” Matt repeated, realizing he’d gotten stuck at the word, but not bothering to hide how entertained he was by the phrasing.

How long did it take you to come up with that, Near? Honestly, I should have thought about it – there’s not anyone else here you’d trust enough for it. You aren’t Mello; this doesn’t come easily to you. Matt found himself suddenly curious about who else Near might have spent his heats with over the last couple years. He knew that Linda had assisted him on occasion at Whammy’s, but she had a girlfriend now. When he’d been working in the U.S., had he trusted anyone there to help him or had he gone through it alone?
Matt thought he saw Near’s mouth twitch amusedly. “Isn’t that what the kids are calling it these days?”

“Kids?” Matt snorted, “Near, you’re eighteen.”

“I don’t see your point. You also haven’t accepted or denied my proposal,” Near caught his gaze briefly, then shifted from one foot to the other. *Must be a good day, if he can support himself on his bad leg to that extent. Have I made you uncomfortable?”*

“What?” Matt reeled his mind back into the conversation, catching back up and making himself focus. “Er, no, of course not. I’ll totally help you with your heat. I wouldn’t have quit back then if – well, you know Mello.”

“I do,” Near agreed quietly, looking intently at Matt’s computer screen, though he didn’t seem to actually be reading the article that was currently pulled up. “Matt doesn’t mind?”

“You aren’t, like, a burden or anything, if that’s what you’re worried about.” Matt started to laugh, but then he realized that Near might, in fact, be worried about it. *Near is incredibly difficult to read. Mello might be able to, if she got her head out of her ass. I know Near is much more sensitive than he lets on, but only because I’ve seen him in an incredibly vulnerable state. No way. Hardly. It’s like a fucking vacation for me.*”

Near managed to meet his gaze again for a second. “If you say so.”

“You kidding?” Matt continued, leaning back as if already imagining it. “I’m allowed to just stay holed up in a bedroom for like, a week, I can play videogames while you sleep without anyone nagging me about wasting my life away, and – well, with you, you don’t expect anything from me except the usual.”

That last part was probably an overshare, but Matt figured it was only fair. Near hadn’t ever expected more than assistance during his heat, even when they were older, and he had never begged for him in an attempt to be manipulative. Even when it was clear he wanted to, the cute little bastard had just clung to him and whimpered into his shoulder until the worst of it passed. Matt recalled that Near would wrap himself around the closest object while he slept, which was usually a body pillow that was bigger than Near’s *actual* body.
When Matt would sleep over, he’d end up wrapped around Matt; it had taken Near a while to get used to waking up in that position. Matt had thought back then that Near’s desperation for touch was just the Omega in him acting up, but in hindsight that seemed to be only partially true. Perhaps it had just seemed ridiculous that someone as unsociable and distant could actually want that degree of affection.

Sort of stupid of me, Matt thought, realizing how close Near was to him, and that his other hand had not released its grip on Matt’s sleeve just yet.

“I’m glad to hear Matt isn’t entirely put out by it.”

“Besides,” Matt decided not to move his arm. He didn’t think Near had quite noticed he still had his hand there, and Matt didn’t see any reason to throw him off. “anyone that gets to see you like that is sort of privileged, yeah?”

Near’s brow furrowed slightly. “Hilarious.”

“I wasn’t joking,” Matt told him, but decided not to press it. Near had always come off as skittish, but Matt quietly wondered how much of that he had projected onto the other boy. No, wait, not boy.

Despite how familiar he was with Mello’s changeability, Matt still made mistakes from time to time. He did whatever he could to correct himself in his mind long before something came out wrong. As a child, Near had only known that he was not a girl. Natasha had become Nate without much trouble at all, as Near had been even more androgynous then. It was only later, in his preteens, that Near had realized that not only was he not a girl, he was also…not really a boy either.

Near was open about it when asked, but it also was not information that he volunteered. He’d maintained his pronouns, said that it would be ‘tedious’ to insist on a change, and Matt had accepted it without prying.

“It’s late,” Matt said, glancing down at the small fingers curled into his sleeve. Luckily, he doubted Near could see his eyes behind his goggles clearly. It was part of the reason he kept them on; without them, his eyes always gave away what he was thinking in one way or another. “Want to take a break for a bit and play Mario Kart?”

Although Near heaved a deep sigh to express how put out he was at the notion, he agreed. Matt felt him pull his hand away somewhat sharply, as though perhaps he’d noticed the latch, but he had
turned away and started to walk cautiously over to the couch before Matt could tell him he needn’t have bothered.

While Matt had a few specialized areas of brilliance, he’d always known there was no real chance for him as L, and he’d stopped caring about it long before most of the other kids learned to. He had very little sense of competition, while Mello’s competitive streak was verging on self-destructive, to the point where it upset her greatly when she didn’t win, even in the most trivial games. Mello flat out refused to play video games with Matt most of the time because she was endlessly frustrated when she couldn’t defeat him. Though Near didn’t throw the controller or slam doors when he lost, there was a sulkiness to the tone of his voice when he finally told Matt he was bored after an hour or two.

After that, they went back to work, but they didn’t move out of their positions to do so; Matt was still slumped into the couch now with his laptop on his knees and Near was still on the floor by his legs, curled over his own laptop as they let one of Hideki’s old interviews play in the background. Sayu had put together a folder full of links and files for them to look through, which contained movies, TV shows, interviews and low-quality phone videos of speeches Hideki had made at concerts.

So far, all they’d been able to tell was that Hideki considered himself a hero.

That was already pretty obvious just by his demeanor, with his melodramatic ‘We are Kira’ bullshit, but if one had gone through his portfolio like the task force (Matt especially) had, it was even more apparent. Every song he sang seemed to have roots in love, goodness, or fairness, while some even condemned obscure villains like cheaters and liars – it was disguised in pretty lyrics and upbeat, catchy refrains. Alone, they weren’t much different from any other popular song, but with the tint of Kira now on the words, it seemed almost conspicuous.

Every movie he was in, he played some kind of good-natured protagonist. Even in the drama where he played the brooding silent type, he ended up being the savior of the film - he’d been the good guy the whole time, damaged by a dark past that absolved him of his faults. After watching the latest movie set in the U.S., where he played a literal superhero, Matt nearly gagged.

"Bastard sure thinks a lot of himself," Matt had muttered one night, looking up from his laptop, where he’d been tweaking Astrea. "I wonder if they have to use CGI to make his head not look so fucking huge."

The next evening, Near had shown him a set of wooden dolls he’d started carving, each representing the players in this fucking up murder game. They were just the basic shapes at the time, but one of
them stood out among the rest. The spheres of their heads were all around the same shape and size, except one –

One had an especially large sphere for a head, and once Matt had understood, he’d had to bite his lip to keep himself from barking out a cackle.

“That is brilliant.”

"I'm going to have to give him big feet too, or else he’ll fall over,” Near had told him with a casual, serious tone that had left Matt with no more restraint, laughing until his ribs ached.

Though Near had offered a small smile, proving that he had meant for it to be funny, he appeared a little taken aback by how amusing Matt had found him. The glow of the large television and a dozen computer screens in the room gave off enough light to see without too much trouble, but Matt couldn't be certain if the flush creeping up the back of Near's neck was a trick of his eye.

"God, please make your Kira puppet look as stupid looking as possible, Near," Matt had asked, his laughs still vibrating in the back of his throat.

Near's head turned slightly to regard Matt then, grey eyes peering from beneath the curl of his fringe. In the mechanical lighting, his hair and silken clothes could have been made of the same soft, silvery thread.

"Okay," Near said, nodding. "However, in the future, Matt needn't call me 'God'. I'm not Kira, after all."

Matt devolved into another fit of giggles, then ruffled Near's hair playfully.

Once he'd realized where his hand was, he paused, ready to take it away but also – well, thinking maybe he didn’t have to. They hadn't discussed touches outside of Near’s heat, but it wasn’t totally out the ordinary to establish a connection, to let their respective Alpha and Omega become familiar once more.
He thought Near’s shoulders had drawn up though, thought he’d seen a curl of tension twisting up his spine – and yet, Near didn’t pull away.

There was a short, quizzical hesitation before Matt shifted his fingers experimentally and watched for physical approval, or disapproval. Near was still, almost exceedingly so, but Matt couldn’t tell if he was nervous, displeased or …interested, and just unable to express it. *You were always a cute little bugger, even when you were clearly baiting Mello in that serene, faux-indifferent way of yours. Tiny troll that you are.*

"Is this cool?" He asked, pressing his fingertips into Near’s scalp and drawing neat circles. Near’s eyes flickered over to him, silent for a long moment before he gave a shifty little nod.

"…Yes."

Matt’s lips stretched into another little smile and tried not to linger on his own affection-starved nature purring from such a small, innocent motion. He thought they’d both gone some time without it, because of similarly inaccurate assumptions about their natures. This understanding settled with them in the room like the cool lighting and the soundlessness, a comfortable and nonthreatening kind of knowing.

It became easier for Matt to slide his fingers through the soft waves, to just press the curve of his hand around the nape of Near’s neck and feel his heartbeat grow calm under his touch. It got simpler, more intuitive every time, until Matt’s fingers seemed to seek the tresses in the dark before he’d consciously decided to touch him. It hadn’t broken out into blatant cuddling yet, but Matt remembered how soft Near was, how clingy he was in his sleep, and figured it was probably only a matter of time.

A few days passed like this, with Near sitting on the floor by Matt’s legs and their subsequent little touches, until it had become routine. After an ungodly number of hours without sleep while he was in communications with an agent of the Canadian government, and only once he’d secured a significant meeting with Matt’s gentle fingertips kneading into his scalp, he’d allowed himself to pass out against the line of Matt’s leg.
The light shifted in the room as the sun rose beyond the curtain, the overcast sky washing the room with grey and silver tones. L listened to the beat of rain against the windows and contemplated actually sleeping for an hour or two rather than pulling his laptop out in bed like he usually did. On weekends, he’d shuffle his way to the work room with the others around 10AM, a good hour or so after Light had already arrived.

Today though – perhaps it was the rain – had a slow, leisurely quality to it. It was a soft and edgeless feeling, the cotton candy high that marijuana had always left him with, on the rare occasion he partook. It was nice in a way, but it didn’t motivate him to work, and he wasn’t sure he could make his foggy mind focus on text – let alone the *drivel* that was Ryuga Hideki’s life. The lines of Light’s shoulder blades and subtle rise and fall of his torso as he breathed were much easier on the eyes.

Just as L’s eyelids started to droop, Light’s alarm went off. It was a simple, quick sound, but it meant that it was time for Light to drag himself out of bed.

Light had taken to getting up early to train with Naomi, which had worked its way into his routine just as staying the night with L had. It had been over a week since the first night, and Light hadn’t bothered going back home just yet, which L considered profound in a way that could only resonate between the two of them. Sometimes they’d have sex, sometimes they’d talk, or just work quietly on their respective laptops in bed until Light could no longer keep up. Light’s mind was healing as surely as his body was, but there were still nightmares, even if they didn’t happen every night. There was still melancholic air to Light’s eyes sometimes when he didn’t realize L was looking (he often was, how could he not?), but he was recovering.

In the morning, L would watch the contours of Light as he rose from the sheets. He would observe quietly in the dark as the younger man went about his morning routine, as he washed his face, brushed his teeth, combed his hair and dressed. His silhouette was lean and lovely against the brighter places that the sun caressed, as Light trusted himself to find his way even in dim lighting.

It was in these moments, in this almost whimsical noiseless space, where there was only the sound of Light’s breath and the ruffle of cloth and his own heartbeat, he let the weight of his emotions settled upon him.

*I love you.*

Occasionally, he questioned his choice to admit the sentiment to Light aloud before he’d really thought about what it meant. He hadn’t even been sure – but no, that wasn’t quite right either. He had, somehow. He’d been certain the moment that the very concept of love reintroduced itself to him from the vast depths of his mind.
In that moment, as in these moments in the sleepy, mundane morning fuzz, he had never been more certain of anything.

There is a 100% chance that I have it bad.

There was a calmness to this truth, this humble yet categorical fact. L had always thought that the most brilliant things were succinct and easy to understand, but it was clear that was something he and Light differed on. Light thought too much (there was, indeed, such a thing, and L was a frequent offender as well) and overcomplicated ever idea his consciousness grazed. Light would use many words where few would do. The way he accepted what he was feeling – and L knew, he knew that Light was feeling something – was just as complex, cautious and tentative.

The more quiet and ancient his own certainty became, the more chaotic and agitated Light's became. L's love was breath and dust; somehow it managed to be both a living, pulsing creature and a fossil within him, pressed into the fiber of his being as if from the dawn of everything.

It gave him a sense of peace, as he imagined religion might to a believer. L had accepted a higher power, in a way, and even if he'd wanted to fight somehow, it would be pointless. Light's face lived inside his heart; that seemed to be the most obvious and finite truth that he held within himself.

Nothing ever actually touches anything; atoms get in the way. L mused lazily as he watched Light pull his shirt over his head, then the lines of his body lengthening as he stretched the sleep aches away. Despite the assertion that he remembered the basics of physics, it felt like he’d actually touched Light Yagami and been touched in turn. He’d defied reality somehow –Light’s reality, at least.

“Voyeur,” Light muttered in that disdainful yet fond way L had learned to appreciate.

Light left then, leaving L alone in the dark with his languid thoughts until he let sleep think it had snuck up on him.

He awoke sharply what felt like a minute later.

Thunder like a gunshot had startled him out of his sleep, and a few seconds after lightning brightened the room briefly. L glanced the time glaring at him, and realized that it had been over an hour since he’d closed his eyes. The rain thudded against the windows in fat, solid drops like little drums as L
pulled himself out from beneath the covers. He was sore, in both pleasant ways and not-so-pleasant ways, and when he stretched he heard his spine and neck crack.

After a quick shower – if Light was not joining him, he allowed himself less than five minutes – L let his hair air dry while he caught up on the events of the day. He skimmed the headlines, speed reading through anything that seemed even remotely promising.

_We have to attack soon, but without the backing of a serious superpower, anything I do will be taken badly by the public. While I don’t really care about my reputation, if I don’t have legal protection, I could end up arrested, or worse. Ryuga had, after all, seen his face at the tennis court what was now approximately three months before. He suspected that Kira had extracted Light’s fingerprint off of his Driver’s license when he’d left it at the front desk. While L didn’t think there was any way the man could have known he was L at the time, he had underestimated Kira’s powers too many times._

He felt paranoid, felt lost in the face of insurmountable odds and a plethora of failures. While Light seemed driven and angrier than ever, L felt like staying his bed and drowning his sorrows in angel food cake.

The headlines were mostly more about the crime rate dropping, with the occasional inquiry into what the police thought they could do about Kira, if anything. There were pro-Kira rallies and anti-Kira activists getting more and more involved with the world through blogs and videos. The internet had created a hotbed of conversation, of arguments and polls. Overwhelmingly, the odds were tilting in Kira’s favor – even those who did not completely support his ways generally amended their derision with statements like ‘but you have to admit, he gets results, and maybe that’s what the world wants right now’.

L was even more depressed than he had been before after twenty minutes of this. It wasn’t all bad news though; Mello had apparently made some headway with his affiliates in the Russian government, but they seemed reluctant to speak out openly against Kira, considering the less than lawful meanderings of their president. No government wanted their leader murdered by Kira, and many met the qualifications to be one of the victims. Without making any more threats (other than the mass murder of thousands of police officers) Hideki had effectively held world governments at gunpoint.

The television turned on abruptly. It made a familiar mechanical sound before light flooded the room unexpectedly, jolting L’s eyes up from the smaller screen of his laptop.

The remote lay untouched on Light’s bedside table.
“Watari, was that you?” L inquired suspiciously, his mind immediately jumping to another possible hack. *If he can manage it while I have Matt in the building, then we’re in even bigger trouble than I had previously assumed.*

“Yes, Ryuzaki, I turned on your television,” Watari’s voice allowed L to relax. “Matt created an algorithm. He’s alerted whenever anything relevant regarding Kira comes onto the web. It’s still being fine-tuned, he told me, but it’s intact enough to have found this quickly.”

The television screen seemed paler that it should have been, washing the two men on screen out eerily. One was the handsome superstar and murderous megalomaniac, Ryuga Hideki, and the fellow beside him was a popular television personality named Adrian Craw. A thin smile stretched onto Craw’s face as his eyes darted to the cameras, then back to Hideki as his theme song played, the camera slowly panning out.

“I didn’t want to chance that you’d miss any of it, or be delayed.”

“No, thank you, Watari,” L nodded, pulling his legs up and pulling forward, away from the headboard he’d been leaning against before. “You’ve done well. I’ll watch here, then go downstairs to the workroom. They’re all seeing this room, correct?”

“Correct.”

“I suppose there’s no chance for us to get this off the air?” L’s eyes flickered to the word ‘LIVE’ in solid block letters in the lower right hand corner of the screen. *He’s controlling the media, so he’s controlling the public’s perception of him. There’s someone he’s controlling making sure he gets screen time. If we stop this one, it will only delay him, and I’ll look like the pro-establishment bastard that’s censoring information.*

“Matt is looking into it, but he’s in Los Angeles. Even if we could take him off the air now –“

*There’s always another studio next door. No, there’s nothing that we can do for this. Perhaps there’s something to be learned this time, a weakness to exploit or a chance to act.*

"Thank you for having me on today,” Ryuga’s warm voice cut off their communications, and L’s attention tapered at the corners until the screen was all he could see.
"You're welcome!" grinned Craw congenially. "I've never had an outlaw on the show before! Hahaha."

Ryuga laughed, and then winked conspiratorially. "That you know of."

Craw blinked, paused, and then laughed it off forcefully. "...That's true, ha ha!"

He quickly changed the subject, trying and failing to appear conversational. L typed in the name of the host quickly, and after a moment had a solid impression of the man. He had not blatantly said anything anti-Kira, but he had said pro-Kira things in a distinctly sarcastic way, bringing light to the hypocrisy of Hideki’s methods. Yet it was his show that he’d apparently hijacked for his own purposes. Once more, Hideki was finding a way to intimidate people into working with him while coming off as innocent and peaceful.

“So tell me, Hideki-san, what exactly is your plan for us? There's so much speculation on the ‘interwebs’, but I'm sure the world would like to hear it from you.”

“I’m so glad you asked, Craw,” Kira laced his long fingers and leaned back, lounging in the arm chair despite his tense jaw and bright eyes. "My goal is to eliminate crime and inequality.”

“Isn’t everyone’s?” Craw quipped, making the audience titter with laughter, but it died out quickly.

“No, actually,” Ryuga smiled humorlessly. “This world is sick with it, and the people who control things are comfortable because they are almost never the ones suffering.”

Craw twitched. “Ah, right. Please tell us how you plan to make that happen then.”

“Gladly.” There was no real coldness to the idol’s voice or eyes, even in the face of Craw’s patronizing tone. He was laid back, almost cheerful even, as though he felt above everything that was happening. The problem for L and his team was that – he looked it, too. The general consensus, even from those people on the fence about his methods, was that Ryuga Hideki looked the part. It didn’t help that his biggest naysayers were not held in high regard by the public.

“My plan is to make my power a part of the global system of justice,” Hideki continued. “Ideally, there will be a tribunal appointed to approve the penalties - although, as you may have noticed, truly serious crimes are few and far between these days. I expect within the next decade we could phase
out capital punishment almost entirely."

"But you also kill what you deem 'corrupt' but technically lawful individuals - how do you explain that?" inquired Craw, a sharpness to his eyes,

"Easily," Hideki said without skipping a beat, his eyes intense but not scornful, like Craw’s. *He’s chosen his host well. This guy is easy to dislike. He’s making Kira look like the reasonable one.*

“What you and most of the people currently in power call 'laws' are geared toward protecting the rich and powerful."

"Interesting, coming from one of the rich and powerful,” Craw shot back.

L thought he saw the lines of Hideki’s neck tighten for a split second, but a second later he was leaning forward, eyes burning

"I wasn’t born into wealth. I created myself out of nothing and I owe it all to the support of the people – it’s my turn to support them,” Ryuga looked into the camera in what L supposed was supposed to be a profound way. “I think it is clear that I am using my power and influence for the well-being of those who are left unheard in our world."

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind,” quoted Craw, a dubious expression on his face. “Don’t you think?"

"Oh, no. You see, that assumes that humanity doesn't learn, and I have much more faith in the people than that,” Hideki replied, clasping his hands together and giving a boyish shrug. “Sooner or later, people will stop gauging out eyes."

The audience clapped ferociously and Craw adjusted himself in his seat uncomfortably.

“In fact, I think my success over the years has proven that.

"Your support is immense, but there are plenty of other groups rising against you too. They call you a terrorist.”

“I don’t like the connotations,” Ryuga responded quietly, once again making it look as if he were the
one taking the high road. Next to him, Craw looked like a belligerent imbecile throwing out thinly veiled accusations. “But let’s not get overly nuanced. It’s true – I murder murderers. I terrorize terrorists. I give people back what they have given to others. If you want to call me a terrorist, then I will accept the title, if it means that the innocent will one day be able to live without fear.”

Perhaps what the world needs is a little terror, is that it? L scowled around his thumb, beginning to gnaw at the nail there. You’re putting it in their head that they need you, and because of your flare for presentation, a good deal of people are buying it. Those that aren’t are too scared to speak out against you.

Craw seemed to break character for a moment, huffing out a breath of frustration.

"How do you do it?"

Ryuga turned his dark brown eyes on Craw, and gave him a serene, almost kind smile. "I was given a gift, and I thought it was only right to share it with the world."

Craw swallowed, and looked offstage somewhere as if in hopes they would go to a commercial soon, or someone would tap him out of the situation entirely. He opened his mouth to say something, but Ryuga spoke again before he could.

“But enough about me, me, me – I’d really like to get to the reason I came on this show today.” Kira sat up straighter in his seat. I don’t want to hide anymore, because what I’m doing isn’t wrong. Unlike some individuals, who will remain nameless, “Ryuga stressed the word and L might have rolled his eyes, if they weren’t so focused on the screen. “I don’t want to hide behind a screen.”

“No more cloak and dagger,” Ryuga reached into the inside pocket of his coat and pulled out a card a little smaller than the average greeting card. It was black, but in silver writing on the front. All it said was ‘Ryuga Hideki’ in smooth, sweeping strokes. “Instead, I’m thinking…black tie.”

Hideki gave a presentational wave of his hand. It’s a show, it’s all a show. Is there any part of him that isn’t crafted to get exactly the response he wants? It’s actually impressive, in the most annoying way possible.

“Today, around two hundred people should have received an invitation to the gala that I am hosting. While my announcement at the East West festival allowed me to make a few new friends, this will be a much more formal and enlightening affair for everyone involved. People from all over the world that are interested even marginally in my movement will be in attendance.” Ryuga explained
graciously. “There will be food, drinks, dancing and live music. It’s a classy gathering, so please
dress accordingly, and don’t forget to bring your invitation with you. Coming to this event doesn’t
solidify your association with me in any way – so please don’t feel that it should. Enjoy my
hospitality and then go on your merry way, if you’d prefer.”

Craw’s lips pursed and he shot someone off to the side of the camera a sharp look.

“I also hope that it will be one of many gatherings to come. I think it’s important that like-minded
people have the chance to meet, and also that the world knows that I, for one, am not ashamed of my
cause.” Ryuga looked into the camera yet again, his gaze piercing and playful. “Your move.”

The talk show’s logo popped up unexpectedly and there was an awkward, quick transition into a
breath mint commercial.

L didn’t bother turning the television off. He shut his laptop and dressed quickly, starting toward the
work room quickly. Mello had gotten back the day before, which mean they were back to a full team
(although she’d gotten a surprising amount of work done even while she was away) and they needed
to formulate their next course of action. Ryuga was making all the plays, and they would never win
if it kept on like this.

*We need to get our hands on an invitation, an then figure out a way to infiltrate the party and get
close to one of the Kiras. Takada is probably the easiest target; there seems to be a tension between
her and Hideki we may be able to exploit if we can get someone to talk to her. The world is going to
hell and Kira is throwing a fancy ball like it’s nothing -*

L was in the elevator and on his way up when his phone went off. He glanced at his phone and
answered quickly when he saw the familiar number pop up on his phone.

“Light-kun,” L greeted pleasantly. “I can’t imagine what this call could be regarding.”

“That isn’t funny,” Light muttered, clearly attempting to keep his voice down. *He’s still in the
workroom then. He’ll have seen it with Matt and the rest, so at least we don’t have to worry about
catching anyone up.*

“Did you watch it?”
“Obviously,” Light hissed lowly, his voice taut and decidedly higher than it should have been. “Are you almost here?”

“I’m on my way up now,” L paused, the tone scratching at his instincts. He couldn’t leave it alone when Light’s voice sounded like that, even if they would be face to face soon enough. “Something is wrong.”

“…A lot of things are wrong.”

“What happened?” L insisted, even as the elevator started slowing to a stop at the floor Light was on.

“Sayu sent me a text just a minute ago. She’s on her way here, with –” Light broke off, and L heard him drawing in a deep breath on the other end. “With an invitation. He sent one to my mother’s house, with my name on it.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like this story is written more like a TV show than a book, but I'm okay with that. I like how the character development is progressing this way, and I hope you are too. Thanks for bearing with me through my less than inspirational moments.

This chapter is kind of mushy. Like, so much cute/sweet thoughts and then also some plot stuff going down. Villains have balls. By balls, I mean fancy parties. It was very important to me that there be at least one fancy party.

Next up: We find out more about the invitation/gala and Light recovers something that was lost. Also, Matt, Mello and Near have bonding moments.

Please let me know how you liked the chapter. I'm actually pretty proud of several lines in this one, so it would make me feel awesome if you told me your favorites. Thanks again for sticking around and being so supportive!

-Nilah

P.S. Please let me know if anyone is interested in Beta'ing. I need someone who's pretty regularly available and will let me talk through my ideas. It's more about me working through the shape of my story than fixing spelling errors (though that would be a part of it). Thanks. :)
"I've always liked the moonless night best. It's easier to say things in the dark. It's easier to be yourself." —Patrick Rothfuss

"Matt, you smell like weed," Mello groused, curling her nose as she perched on the arm of the couch. After waiting half an hour to get there, they were all together in the work room. Light was antsy and unable to sit down, and it appeared that Naomi and Sayu were much the same way.

"Well, excuse me for thinking that nothing serious was going to go down at 10AM, Mello."

Near gave a little snort from below and Mello's mouth curled into a slight smile. Even Sayu gave a little giggle, though Light wasn't amused.

"Don't worry," Matt leaned back in his chair and put his hands behind head. "I hacked into the Pentagon while I was high. I'm up for anything."

"Right," Sayu scoffed.

"You did?" Naomi started, interested, and Matt seemed a bit too excited to answer. Light decided to nip it in the bud before they got off track.

"Are we ready?"

Matt and Naomi turned back toward him, both looking a little sheepish.

"Go on and open it then."

After glancing sharply up at Mello's commanding, impatient tone of voice, Light ran his finger over the seal on the black envelope, tracing the kanji for his name in the white lines. He kept his eyes trained on it as he broke the seal carefully, feeling as if something might jump out at him from the crease when he unfolded it.

Nothing did. There was no confetti, or music, or anthrax.

He refused to read it out loud for them, and instead passed it around once he was done with it. He handed it over to L as he reflected on the words, who passed it on to Sayu when he was finished scanning it and looking it over for any immediate evidence.
The associates of the Kira Kira Movement would like to cordially invite you, Yagami Light, to attend a formal gala at my estate in California. Festivities will begin at 7PM on the 8th of June.

We can arrange for a private jet or helicopter to escort you to the premises. Please RSVP by responding to this letter and let us know if this is a service you will need. Apologies, but there is no plus one system, for security purposes. Thank you for understanding.

We look forward to hosting you and hope our friendship is a long one.

Let's save the world together.

Kira

P.S. I feel dreadful having waited so long to return something I borrowed from you. Please touch the K in my signature above to retrieve it.

It had all been in Japanese, save for Hideki's signature, which was embossed in English letters. The referenced 'K' was decorative, made of several thin, curling lines. It seemed to be carved out of the black paper, entirely made up of a silvery paper that lie beneath.

" – There's a Facebook event for this thing already," Matt suddenly informed them all once he'd finished and looked up the trending information on Kira's announcement.

On the floor not far away, Near gave another little sound of subdued, wry amusement. The youngest of the three passed it on to Naomi when he was finished scanning the words.

"Why am I not surprised?" Sayu muttered disdainfully, peeking over Matt's shoulder to take a look.

Naomi sighed and shook her head as she read through it last. "Okay, that P.S. is definitely strange. What does it mean?"

"Yeah, what kind of cryptic nonsense is that?" Mello demanded, as Naomi finally finished with the invitation and started to hand it back to Light.

She stopped with her arm out, then pulled it back close to her.

"Return what to you?" She asked, just as confused as Light was. Like the rest of them were, no doubt, by the mysterious postscript. Hideki is a show off. I wonder who else got a message like this.

I'm just another NPA agent in his eyes, albeit one who was romantically involved with one of his secondary Kira's, and incarcerated with the second.

"You've never met him before have you, Light?" Sayu asked, frowning.

"In a fashion," Light confessed, holding out his hand as politely as possible in Naomi's direction. He'd wanted to immediately follow the instructions, as his mind was itching for new information, but had decided it would be better to wait until everyone knew the contents of the letter. "I've only met Hideki once, at that tennis arena in December. Ryuzaki was there too – we didn't exactly interact."

"He seems to think you did," Mello commented, her eyes narrow.

"Hideki is grade 'A' bat shit though," Matt threw in as a mediation technique, yet again smoothing over Mello's accusatory words. "He could mean…uh, anything. Or he could just be fucking with us."
"Hideki should not be aware that Light-kun is engaged with this task force," L disputed casually. "As far as we know, he believes he did the world a service by killing Soichiro Yagami. He should have no reason to 'fuck with' Light-kun in particular."

The phrasing made Sayu tense. They were both still grieving the loss of their father, but as usual, Sayu was taking it the hardest. She had a broader scope of emotion than Light felt he did, and so the toll was becoming increasingly heavier on her, especially because she still lived with their mother.

She'd thrown herself into school, and the Kira case in her free time. Light helped as much as he could, and they'd already visited their father's grave a few times with their mother – but it was a busy, difficult time. He preferred to avoid conversation regarding his father entirely, and it seemed he and Sayu were in agreement about that. It couldn't be avoided when they were with their mother, who told them fond anecdotes almost constantly. The wind would blow a leaf down the sidewalk, and she would be reminded of a sweet time in the autumn when her husband had taken her for a walk in the park. It would almost always end with her choking back tears and excusing herself, leaving Light and Sayu feeling dejected and awkward.

They met eyes across the room for a short moment, before drawing back into the issue at hand.

"Yeah, exactly," Mello confirmed, eyes still on Light, unblinking.

"But Kira seems to take pride in being ominous." Near agreed, bringing his hand up to his hair and wincing a bit as he shifted on the floor, easing one of his legs into what seemed to be a more comfortable position. Light thought he saw Matt twitch in his seat, just a bit closer, but was too distracted to linger on it. "Perhaps Yagami-san should follow the instructions. There doesn't seem to be anything dangerous about the paper itself. There is no residue, nothing to trigger."

"It could be dangerous," Sayu said, an echo to the projection of her that Light had in his mind. He'd known she would say something like that.

L was still standing, eyes hawkish and his teeth showing from behind his thumb. Though he didn't show it as clearly as Sayu did (or rather, at all), Light could tell his hesitation was rooted in the same concern.

"I agree," L finally gave a short nod. "Light-kun should do as the letter says."

There are no better circumstances and he knows it. We need to do this.

"Misora-san, please," Light prompted softly, and after another moment's hesitation, she handed the invitation over to him. He was pleased he didn't have to ask anything further. Naomi was worried too; he found all of it frivolous and irritating.

They'd already put so much at stake for this case. Their reputations, their jobs, their lives – his father's life. There was no alternative – he had to do as the instructions dictated, or else, what? They burn the paper and lose the only lead they had?

No, absolutely not. This had gone on for long enough.

Light brought the paper in close, then brushed his thumb over - "The paper you just took out of the envelope is special, Yagami-san."

"I don't understand. It's blank. It's just regular lined paper. Is this a joke?"

"I'm sorry for this, but that sheet of paper will allow us to ensure that this conversation stays between us."
"Why would I talk to anyone about this conversation?" And how could this paper assure that?

Mikami smiles thinly and steeples his fingers, continuing in his smooth, controlled voice. "I am in contact with Kira. I've told him about you."

Of course you have. Misa has too – that's why my father died. How long have you been in contact with him? Since the East West Festival?

"About me?" Light prompted, taking a sip of his coffee.

"Yes. You see, he's been gathering like-minded people. Takada-san has been helping him find those that may hold similar ideals. I have a bit of a reputation, as you know, for requesting harsher sentencing for violent crimes and being successful in many cases – so he found me."

Takada always had a way with research and words, so it doesn't surprise me she's the one working.

"I assume there's a reason you're telling me this."

Mikami nodded, but was still, his eyes more intense than the calmness in his tone would suggest he was capable of.

"I told him of your assistance – that you're just as vehement about justice, of ridding the world of evil, as I am. Amane-san vouched for you as well."

That idiot is the reason my father is dead! No, calm down, this is your chance.

Light lowered his cup slowly. "Kiyomi-san didn't think so?"

"She was surprised to hear that you might not be on the side of the police. But Misa explained your situation, of L's imprisonment of you." His eyes lowered for a moment to express that he knew about Light's father but was too polite to say so. "Because it was not unanimous, he sent me here, to ask you in person."

This is it. This is the opportunity that we've been waiting for. I can't blow it or our only chance to get close to Kira will be gone. I have to play this right.

"Mikami-san," Light started quietly, making sure to project uncertainty and caution rather than eagerness. "You must have an idea of my views when it comes to the state of the world, but I also can't openly express my leanings. My father's corruption has been a blow to my reputation as an officer."

There was another light in Mikami's eyes, a glimmer of excitement behind his glasses.

"That's all I needed to know, Yagami-san."

"He's done? He just wanted me to confirm an interest? I was expecting something more explicitly villainous. For him to make me swear my loyalty and secrecy."

"I just need to ask you to do one thing for me, Yagami-san, before I leave."

"I'll do what I can to oblige you, Mikami-san."

"I need you to say that you relinquish ownership."

Confusion bloomed in him suddenly and Light's brow furrowed. "Wait – I'm sorry, ownership of what?"
"The paper that I handed you," Teru looked sympathetic and politely abashed. "I'm sorry, I can't explain now, but this way, you won't have any memory of this conversation. There's no other way."

Light hesitated and considered refusing the obscure request, but decided there was no point. He didn't like it, didn't trust it, but he couldn't see any other way. If he didn't, then it would mean giving up this opportunity, but if somehow they could really make him forget what had happened here today then – no, there was a way.

His mind supplied the idea quickly under the pressure. He knew what he had to do. He had to make sure that he knew something had happened here today, and perhaps give himself a hint at the power that this paper supposedly held. It was almost embarrassing how suddenly the notion came to him, to put it on his wrist so that it wouldn't be mistaken for just any paper cut, and so L would notice it even if he didn't -

He felt the sting as he slid the paper over his wrist, hiding the motion behind the folder. Mikami reached forward once he set it back down and plucked up the folder, tucking the half exposed paper back into the folder, then pushing it into his briefcase.

"...I relinquish ownership." And for an instant just before he finished the last syllable, Light saw something in the reflection of Teru's glasses, an impossibly tall, spindly silhouette hovering just behind him –

It came back to him like a bullet to his brain. It lodged itself there in one cruel swoop, and before Light knew it he was drawing in a sharp breath as if he'd just taken a blow to the stomach –

The letter slipped from his fingers.

Light blinked.

"Light! Are you okay?" Sayu was beside him, grasping his arm and searching his face.

He blinked again, and realized that L was standing and was a few feet closer to him than he had been before as well, his brow furrowed and his eyes more intense than he usually allowed in public. Why are you looking at me like that?

If he thought about it long enough, he could remember L standing and his sister rushing over to him. But why did it take so much effort to recall a memory that had only just happened? Why did his head start to ache when he tried thinking about why they had made such a sudden rush over to him? His mind seemed to switch gears all on its own, replacing his curiosity with irritation.

It only took him another second to realize that all eyes were on him intensely. An eerie sensation started crawling up his spine, then settled heavily on his shoulders.

"What?" Light snapped, glancing down at the paper on the ground. So he'd dropped it. Alright, that was --well, unlike himself to say the least, but was it really necessary to stare at him like he was an alien? "What's wrong with all of you?"

Sayu's hand dropped from his arm and she looked over her shoulder at the others with an expression of bewilderment.

"What do you mean? We should be asking you that, Light."

There were shared glances among them. Naomi shifted from one foot to the other, looking uncomfortable, while Near stared quietly, Mello's jaw clenched and Matt leaned forward in his seat. Light was getting more than slightly disconcerted by their silence even after only a couple seconds.
He didn't release the huff that wanted to fall out of him, he had too much class for that, no matter how frustrated he was, but he did stoop to retrieve the invitation that had slipped from his fingers.

"I'll just –"

"Don't touch it again," L moved forward and grasped Light's forearm, just below the elbow rather than at the wrist, ever conscious of the contact he was allowed to display while in company.

"What's your problem?" Light snarled, pulling his arm away. As if I need you touching me in front of anyone. As much as I'm sure it would calm me, I don't want to be calm, I want to know what's going on.

"You screamed, Yagami," Mello's voice finally broke the tension, and Light watched as she stood up abruptly. No, that wasn't right. When Light looked at Mello properly, he could tell that it wasn't a... 'she' day, so to speak. "You touched the 'K' in Kira like the letter instructs and then you cried out as if it fucking bit you."

The depth of voice and breadth of stance only confirmed it. Light was starting to pick up on the subtle shift of demeanor and style when it came to pronouns - though he still wasn't sure what purpose this served. Mello still wore leather, still spoke harshly, still swaggered when he walked, but there were nuances in the fall of his hair, the cock of his hip and the timbre of his voice, that made it clear just what he felt like on this particular occasion. Almost without noticing, Light had corrected himself (there were rules, after all) - even though he still didn't understand the purpose of such technicalities.

What the hell are you talking about? I wouldn't scream in front of you.

"I'm certain I didn't scream," Light shot back at him, doing what he could to appear calm and sure of himself. He would remember something like that. But then, didn't his throat feel a little rough -?

"There was an …uh, exclamation," Matt corroborated.

Light's eyes darted to L, but the detective's face was blank. You're biting on your thumb – that means something has you intrigued, but it could just be the letter in general.

"Not really a scream, but you definitely seemed to –" Naomi's eyes were wide as she looked from him to L, looking for some sort of confirmation in the same way Light had. "You really don't remember?"

"If this is some sort of prank –" Light started to hiss, but was fed up before the idea had even fully formed. This wasn't the time for jokes (but then, why would they play such a random, idiotic trick on him?). That's what it had to be; there was no other reasonable explanation, but that wasn't what it felt like. He had to remind himself that clenching his fists would be too telling, but he wanted more and more as his frustration and anxiety escalated. "I think I would remember shouting in any capacity."

"Yes," L spoke quietly, and when Light faced him again he was gnawing on his thumb. "I think Light-kun would as well. However, it occurred just seconds ago and he doesn't remember."

Light wanted to hit him for – for playing along with whatever this was, because for several seconds his brain absolutely refused to believe that this could be happening. Even with all he knew of Kira, the supernatural murderer, his mind's first instinct was to refuse, to balk.

Experiencing the impossible up close like this made the logical part of him want to attack, or cower, but instead Light drew in a deep breath and allowed himself to accept it. He struggled with the
prospect of just a terrible power (to remove his memories, to mess with his mind) existing and shoved the truth into his head. He didn't have time for human obstacles like denial, not when it could mean the difference between winning and losing.

It was the most absurd kind of culture shock imaginable, but they would never survive this if they got hung up on technicalities, and so Light compelled himself adapt.

"...We know he can manipulate memories," Light finally admitted, glancing suspiciously down at the paper that still lie on the floor. "We just don't know how."

"A clue," L stated somewhat childishly, creeping a little closer to the fallen invitation.

"I'd like to analyze its physical properties." Near commented after quite a while. Mello frowned, glancing at Near and sighing.

"That's probably a good idea," Mello admitted reluctantly, tapping his fingers against his chin. "But first we need to figure out – Ryuzaki, what the fuck?"

Light had seen the detective stooping, as if to pick up the card off the floor, and it turned out that was exactly what he was doing. A certain anxiety crept up through his chest at the sight of L handling something that had apparently made him scream, but he locked away the thought as soon as it appeared.

"Does Mello have more commentary?"

"We have no idea what this is – you don't know what that will do to you!" hissed Mello, fists clenching at his sides.

"Perhaps we should wait," Naomi offered, her shoulders pulling up higher as she took a step closer to L, observing cautiously.

L looked at Mello with a deadpan expression and touched the tip of his index finger to the ornate 'K' in Kira's name. There was a silly kind of defiance in his gesture, one that Light found absolutely ridiculous given the seriousness of the situation – but, considering it was directed at Mello, he forgave it.

Each eye in the room watched the two points meet, waiting for L to cry out in the same manner Light had.

Nothing happened.

There was no shout, no gasp, not even a flinch. Light's brow furrowed as he leaned in to make sure L had touched the correct place. There was a stillness in the room, a quiet apprehension from each member of the task force as they tried to come to terms with the idea that this paper might hold something supernatural within it.

Not to mention, it's the first lead that we've had in some time. It's physical proof, in a way. Is he taunting us? No, Kira can't know that I'm on this task force. He meant it for me in particular.

"I'm going to try it again," Light informed them after the silence had stretched on for long enough, and proceeded to pluck the invitation out of L's hands. He held it more securely this time, reading it all through once more before pressing the pad of his right thumb to the 'K' once again.

The air was ripped out of his lungs as a forgotten fragment of his life snapped back into place.
"The paper you just took out of the envelope is special, Yagami-san." "I don't understand. It's blank." "I'm sorry for this, but that sheet of paper will allow us to ensure that this conversation stays between us." "Why would I talk to anyone about this conversation?" "I am in contact with Kira. I've told him about you." "About me?" "I assume there's a reason you're telling me this." "I told him of your assistance — that you're just as vehement about justice, of ridding the world of evil, as I am. Amane-san vouched for you as well." "Because it was not unanimous, he sent me here, to ask you in person." "Yes. You see, he's been gathering like-minded people. Takada-san has been helping him find those that may hold similar ideals. I have a bit of a reputation, as you know, for requesting harsher sentencing for violent crimes and being successful in many cases — so he found me." "You must have an idea of my views when it comes to the state of the world, but I also can't openly express my leanings. My father's corruption has been a blow to my reputation as an officer." "That's all I needed to know, Yagami-san." "I just need to ask you to do one thing for me, Yagami-san, before I leave." "I'll do what I can to oblige you, Mikami-san." "I need you to say that you relinquish ownership." "Wait — I'm sorry, ownership of what?" "I'm sorry, I can't explain now, but this way, you won't have any memory of this conversation. There's no other way." "...I relinquish ownership."

This time, Light did not drop the letter, even though his breath drew in sharply and his hands shook minutely at the shock of what he had suspected, and he now knew. Ryuga had toyed with his precious mind, but now he'd given it back. Somehow.

How is something like this possible?

He tightened his hold on the paper so that it wouldn't fall from his grip again, because somehow it was the contact that gave him back his memories of that conversation.

"Well?"

Mello's voice broke through, and for once it didn't irk him. It was a bright light that pulled him out of his fog of disbelief, of fear. Light's eyes focused on Mello and he came to a decision then, his hands steadying as the resolve struck him.

It was the only course of action. There couldn't be any more withholding if they were going to catch Kira together, and like it or not, they were part of the team. Keeping secrets from them would do the case a disservice, and catching Kira was the top priority. Kira had backed him into a corner with this revelation, and it pissed him off — but not as much as the thought that somehow the bastard had gotten into his head.

Besides, he might as well be the one to tell them.

"I've lied to you," Light informed them all coolly, letting his eyes glance over each of the occupants of the room, from his sister all the way around to Mello, full circle. "Rather, I haven't told you the full truth about what happened with Teru Mikami at our meeting."

"Wait," Sayu shook her head, uncomprehending. "You did what?"

"The fuck?" Mello snarled before he'd even finished, his blue eyes growing bright and harsh. "You lied to us about something this important — about the case?"

Sayu's expression was both stern and worried, in a way that reminded him of their father.

"So — what? You — you withheld evidence from us?" Mello demanded, "What the fuck?"

"It isn't that big of a deal," Light answered in clipped tones, attempting to usurp control of the conversation once again. "What's more important is that — "

"Yes, Yagami, it is a big deal. A big fucking deal."
"Mello," Naomi started slowly, her voice smooth. "Let's hear the whole story."

Matt's brow furrowed and he looked between all of them. "But...that's not possible though, right? We watched it. If something really went down, we would have suspected something."

"I don't know," Mello crossed his arms over his chest. "Yagami seems like a damned good liar from what I can tell, if none of us suspected anything when he described in detail what happened that day."

"If Yagami-san has an explanation," Near started calmly, though his eyes were just as sharp from beneath his hair, more calculating than outraged. "I would like to hear it."

Naomi looked at him uncertainly, biting her lip a moment as if holding back a similar exclamation, before settling for - "Please tell us what's going on."

Beside him, L shifted from one foot to the other, and then had the gall to open his mouth as if he were trying to come to Light's rescue. However, Light had already come to terms with what had to be done while each of them absorbed his deception in their own way.

Before he could think any longer on the matter, he told them in crisp tones, trying to make it seem easy, though it was an admission he'd only made himself once before – to Mogi, in fact. This, he told himself, is no different than that. Easier, even, because I have some degree of respect for Mogi – "I'm an Omega."

Mello was the first to react, but it seemed like he had jumped into an emotion before the words had sunk in. His mouth parted widely, as if to release a shout, only to snap shut a moment later. His blue eyes were wide and clear as he drew back, deflated and without words (for once, Light's mind added snidely).

Matt frowned, but otherwise didn't react, enough so that Light had to wonder if he'd already figured it out somehow. Or perhaps it was a product of how little he cared. Near twitched, glancing up from where he'd been playing with his dolls (or whatever he was doing with them) and glancing up and down Light without hesitation. He paused after he'd finished, then shrugged indifferently. Near didn't strike Light as the type to take much stock in second genders, even if – as L had informed him one night, to Light's chagrin – he had developed a popular brand of high grade suppressants, which Light used to this day.

Naomi's shoulders slumped slightly, and she peered at him with a subtle mix of compassion and puzzlement, while Sayu's expression remained entirely the latter. 'Why are you telling them this?' that expression said, brow furrowed and mouth set.

Light didn't look at L beside him; he was being too quiet and it set him a little on edge, though he was sure the detective was just attempting to give him space. A fleeting little thought whispered to him, told him L's hand wrapped around his wrist would be a comfort, but he detached himself from the notion before it had even completed itself.

"I'm telling you this," Light began, barely giving the words time to set in. "So that what I'm about to tell you makes sense."

"Fine, whatever." Mello bit out, intrigued but unassuaged, "Explain, then."

"Thank you," Light replied tightly, with a tone that held no gratefulness whatsoever.

Then, he did. He explained to them he'd been telling the truth just after coming back from his
meeting with Teru, told them that he'd discovered a papercut on his wrist later that night. He left out
that it had been his birthday, and that he'd been with L, of course, and left them to think the only
thing special about the placement was the Omegan sensitivity it held. Mello looked dubious through
the entire story, his arms crossed over his chest as he regarded Light, looking him up and down more
than once, while Near and Matt barely moved; the only difference was that Matt actually looked at
him while he was speaking.

There was quiet when he was finished explaining, and although Sayu opened her mouth to say
something first – a reprimand, by the expression on her face – Mello spun toward L and cut her off.

"Why exactly are we trusting this guy?" Mello asked vehemently, his hair falling wildly around his
face as he moved in jerky motions, gesturing to Light with an open palm. "You suspected him of
being a murderer. A mass murderer."

"Hey!" Sayu cried out. "Light lied, but that part is not relevant."

"I was proven innocent."

"I'm not saying you're Kira, but just now you proved you can't be trusted!" Mello turned back
toward him, growing increasingly frustrated. "I don't give a fuck about your second gender, Yagami,
or that you hid it, for whatever reason. I care that you lied to us, to all of us -"

"Incorrect."

The voice was soft and simple, but loud enough to interrupt Mello effectively. He turned on Near
this time, growing increasingly frustrated.

"Whatam I 'incorrect' about this time, Near?"

"Mello said 'all of us'. Yagami-san did not lie to Ryuzaki."

"Incorrect."

Near tilted his head and pulled the lock of hair straight. "Am I right?"

Light shot L a look, and found the man was giving him one as well. He wasn't sure what Near had
picked up on between them to lead him to that resolution, but Light blamed L for whatever
transparency he had shown. Light held back the deep breath that wanted to pry its way out of him,
then gave a little 'go on' gesture with his hand. I suppose there's no point now.

"Near is correct," L confirmed, at the same time Mello reared back with the realization, hissing –

"Oh, gross."

"Light-kun informed me as soon as he was aware of the paper cut," L scratched one foot with the
other. "We decided to keep it from the task force because there was no relevant information, and it
would disclose Light's second gender. As he's done that now, there is no longer any use for
secretiveness."

Mello scoffed.

"Rather, you discovered it because he put it there," Naomi commented cleverly, her mouth twitching
up at the corners.

What, are you pleased that it's all out in the open now? That I've as good as admitted that L and I
are seeing each other? I really can't wait to kick that grin off your face tomorrow, Misora.

"I haven't even gotten to the best part yet," Light said, holding up the paper, but being sure to keep
his thumb planted firmly on the 'K'.

"Light, you're overdoing this," Sayu sighed exaggeratedly, and Light ignored her.

"When I touch this, the memory of that conversation with Teru comes back."

Light let the silent beat hang in the air, feeling a bit pleased with himself at the practically concussed faces that peered back at him.

"Huh?" Sayu articulated loudly, eyes wide.

"Are you shitting me right now?" Matt complimented her sound, leaning forward in his seat so far Light thought he might fall off.

"I'm not," Light told him sagely.

"That's – unbelievable," Naomi added softly, her brow furrowing and denial blossoming across her features.

Before Light could attempt to convince her further, L snatched the card away from him out of nowhere. Even as Light turned on him, he couldn't remember why he was so annoyed with the man. He blinked hard, his eyes fluttering, trying to call back his train of thought. He wasn't drunk, so why would he ever lose his train of thought? Wait, why is he holding the invitation? Why did I – wait, did I just tell L's successors that I was an Omega? Why would I initiate that?

"Ryuzaki, what happened? What the hell is - ?"

With no further preamble, L stepped in and pressed the card to his cheek.

"The paper you just took out of the envelope is special, Yagami-san." "I don't understand. It's blank." "I told him of your assistance – that you're just as vehement about justice, of ridding the world of evil, as I am. Amane-san vouched for you as well." "You must have an idea of my views when it comes to the state of the world, but I also can't openly express my leanings. My father's corruption has been a blow to my reputation as an officer." "I'm sorry, I can't explain now, but this way, you won't have any memory of this conversation. There's no other way." "...I relinquish ownership."

"Don't do that," Light snarled at L viciously, ripping the card away from his cheek, but only after he was sure that he had the correct hold on it, so as to not go through that again.

"I figured we'd save time if everyone believed you immediately," L told him simply, shrugging as he allowed Light to take it back.

"Holy mother of – shit," Matt breathed, his eyes visibly wide even behind the tint of his glasses. We've all seen the interview with Hideki, Misa and Takada multiple times – but that moment where Misa gasps as Hideki pulls her into him makes sense now. How is it that he can do these things?

"Quite," Near agreed, in unison with Mello's 'yeah'. Sayu had her hand over her mouth, and looked even more troubled than before.

"Definitely," Naomi muttered, taking a step closer and staring at Light in a way that made him feel like evidence in a plastic bag. "So you – remember it all?"

"As far as I can tell," Light told her, turning his eyes down to the letter. There was no way of
knowing if there was something being left out in the memory, not for sure, but it felt complete. "Mikami said that Kira was interested in me. This letter is further proof of that."

"So he was vetting you?" Sayu asked, hands curling into fists. "Wants you to – like, join him?"

Light hesitated, "I suppose."

"He just can't stay away from us, can he?" Sayu murmured, voice growing thicker.

"It would seem so," L pressed his thumb to his mouth yet again and redirected the conversation. "Light-kun, now that you remember what happened that day, it would be useful to have your account of it."

"Verbatim, Yagami," Mello added, gaze harsh and unsettling.

Yet again, Light did his little story time, relaying to them the memory that had just reintroduced itself to his mind for the third time. He felt a headache coming on before he'd finished, and by the end of his description, he'd realized that there was an ache behind his eyes, as if he were suddenly exhausted. It wasn't even noon yet, but he supposed that whatever the paper was, it had taken a great deal out of him.

His eye line stayed with the group most of the time, rather than on L, who attempted to hold his gaze whenever possible. Or perhaps it only seemed that way; Light couldn't be entirely sure what L's intention was, but he thought the man enjoyed catching his eye. There were times when they shared secret expressions that conveyed more than should have been conceivable. When Light was amused, or exasperated, or impressed, he could cast his eyes in L's direction and they would be there waiting for him.

But, looking at L for too long was inadvisable. L had no problem staring at Light for a ridiculous number of minutes straight, the creepy bastard, but Light – sometimes when Light lingered too long, the shape of everything L was crept up upon him. Every word he had ever said to him, every place he had kissed, everything he meant started to clear up in his head (like reaching out in the dark, Light knew he didn't want to approach that strangely tangible knowing) and he drew into himself. He thought he might be crushed under some impossible weight, like his lungs might fold inward and his knees might buckle and everything might just fail.

There was something in the space between them when he looked too long, or thought too honestly, (felt too much) which was strung like a thread tied too tightly. It vibrated when touched and threatened to fray, and above all else, it terrified him. He felt as though he were suspended by only that thread, as if this were a circus act, and he just had to balance, balance or else –

Light could not abide by such childishness. There could be nothing special about the mere act of looking at L; it was the same as it would be with anyone else. Sometimes in the darkness when they lie together, L seemed to glow a fresh silver luminance, as if at some point he'd swallowed the moon.

But that was a trick of the light, a fanciful, half-baked daydream that came to him when he was drifting in and out of sleep – it didn't actually mean anything.

Yet, Light still felt himself avoiding it, which he logically knew meant that there was something to avoid. There was a place within himself he could not, would not go, and so it was best not to think about it at all.

"So we've got to make arrangements," Mello broke in, more enthused than Light could ever
remember seeing him.

"Arrangements for what?" Sayu inquired.

"For the la de da Kira Ball," Mello replied easily, "What else, Yagami Number Two?"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Sayu held up a hand, "First of all, it's Sayu. Second of all, what makes you think he's going?"

"Nice transitional phrases, Sayu," Mello said dryly.

"Thanks, Mello." Sayu shot back in the same tone.

"Wait - was there a question about Yagami going?" Matt blinked and sat up straighter, and looked at L for the answer. "I mean, it's kinda all we have to go on right?"

Light didn't pause for reflection. "I'm definitely going."

"What?" Sayu hissed, turning on him. "It's not safe. He could kill you. He killed our dad."

"He thinks dad was —" Light's tongue briefly felt too thick for his mouth. "He's not going to kill me, Sayu. He wants me on his side. He thinks killing our 'corrupt father' was a favor."

"That's fucking up." Matt breathed.

"It is," L acknowledged, "However, putting Light-kun into immediate danger, at an event none of us can accompany him to, is not the only possibility."

"Of course it is," Light argued. Stop acting like an overprotective Alpha, you ass. "What have we been doing for the last four months? What has it changed?"

Naomi backed him up. "Ryuzaki, he's been one step ahead of us every time we try anything."

"I'm well aware," L bit out from behind his thumb.

Although he was being obstinate, Light knew L was aware, perhaps more than any of them, how badly this case had been going for them. Hideki was clever, in his way, but he also had supernatural assistance of a kind they could not begin to fathom. It was cheating - but then, it wasn't as though this game had rules.

He thought the detective might be slightly closer to him than he had a minute before, though he hadn't seen L inch toward him.

"I would like to evaluate the invitation and check for anomalies," Near stated again before their debate could continue, for once bringing his gaze up to Light's face.

He knows what he's asking then. He must know what I'm going to say.

"You want me to hand over the invitation, and therefore my memories?" His first instinct was to declare that it wasn't happening. Light knew that wasn't the best course of action - he knew they should try to gather as much evidence as possible. But giving up his memories again so that they could take the invitation away for testing didn't sit well with him.

"Light, don't be ridiculous." Sayu frowned at him, dark eyes disapproving. "Just let him - wait, sorry, it is 'him', isn't it?"
Sayu looked embarrassed, Light noticed. Near's eyes flickered over to her briefly. The question caught Light a little off guard. Near was clearly a boy. Had she gotten him and Mello mixed up, or did she know something that he didn't?

"...Yes, that's fine."

"Okay, um, good." She turned back to Light and picked up where she left off. "Just let him take it for a while, Light, you have to know it's best."

*I'm well aware I'll have to give it up at some point, but none of them know what it's like to have something missing in their mind either. It's a violation.*

"What, you're just going to walk around holding the invitation all day?" Mello asked him sardonically.

"There are ways around that," Naomi mused, turning away to type something on her keyboard distractedly. Light decided he might not aim for the face tomorrow morning after all.

"This entire room is recorded," L pointed out, much to Light's agitation. He did not want to relinquish his memories again. "We can show Light-kun the tape of the last fifteen minutes, so you'll as good as remember it."

"It's not as good as," Light countered. *It's one thing to have my memory forcibly taken, but to give it over willingly? What if Near ruins it?*

"Almost, Light-kun."

"Almost?" Light snapped, glowering at him. "You're telling me that you'd be okay with almost when it comes to your brain?"

"He has a point." Matt's voice rang out thoughtfully, and when Light glanced at him he found that he was once again spinning in the computer chair, looking up at the ceiling.

"Even so," Near stated with a light shrug. "My own point stands. It's imperative that I study the physical evidence that is now available. I should be able to do that without destroying it, for Yagami-san's sake."

"See?" Sayu prodded expectantly.

"I suppose I can let you take the invitation for a while, as long as you bring it back as soon as you can," Light conceded grudgingly, planting a hand on his hip before turning his head back to L. "As for the ball - there's no debate. Do you actually want to throw out the only chance we've gotten in seven years to take this guy down?"

"Obviously not, Light-kun," L muttered, but Light thought his tone suggested otherwise.

"This is brutal," Mello rubbed his eyes. "I can't unsee this. Ugh, can you two stop being so..." He gestured to them, then sighed. "Listen, Yagami wants to go undercover to this party, and it's the only thing that makes sense. Besides – he can pull it off."

The compliment ripped Light right out of his outrage and into surprise.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Usually I can tell a person's second gender by the way they hold themselves," Mello explained his
commendation easily enough. "I hate to admit it, but you walk like a Beta, talk like a Beta. I saw you touch your wrist one time, but I didn't think anything of it. Plenty of Beta's do that all the time."

"Really?" Matt kicked off the floor in an attempt to swivel back toward Mello, but ended up pushing too hard. He was still spinning as he asked, "I didn't know that. Isn't that the sort that want to be Alpha or Omega though?"

"Sure, there are people like that, but there are also plenty of Betas out there that have Omega or Alpha parents," Mello gave a casual shrug, "People pick up the habits of whoever they're raised by."

"I see," Light narrowed his eyes. "I don't see what this has to do with the party."

"You have a scary hold on your body language, Yagami," He said, strangely impressed as he looked Light over yet again. "A natural liar. That means you might actually succeed in going undercover."

Sayu made a noise in the back of her throat and Light decided not to look at her, or try to dissect its meaning. The three of them could figure out for themselves, if they wanted, how deep the lies about his gender went. He didn't intend to give them anymore freebees.

"We make Kira think you're really interested in being his lackey," Mello's eyes were bright, like he'd been waiting for a chance to plan something like this for some time. L did say he was working as an undercover agent before this. Perhaps that's what he does best. It's certainly not his social skills.

"It's a risky operation," L commented lowly, teeth digging into the tip of his thumb. "But it does seem to be our only opportunity, and if Light-kun is adamant about attempting this…"

"I am," Light confirmed without delay.

"The thing is, about you being an Omega, Yagami," Mello stated, putting his hands on his narrow hips. "I can't smell you at all."

"I take suppressants," Light answered simply.

"Yeah, well, I don't," Mello frowned, brow puckering. "I can smell Near right now and he's down to a three month cycle, so whatever dose you're taking, you're poisoning yourself, Yagami."

A sharp, hot anger prickled Light's neck. "And you're an expert now?"

"Light --" Sayu started, but didn't have the time to finish.

"Yeah, I actually fucking am. Gender studies up the ass, Yagami, and a good deal of medical training. I can't believe your family let you do this, even if they're Betas." Mello raked his fingers through his hair. Sayu bristled where she stood, but luckily didn't voice her dispute. "When was the last time you --?"

"I am not talking about this," Light snarled, "I only told you because it was relevant to the omission."

"Mello." Matt warned, his chair only just starting to still.

"…Right," Mello backed down, looking pensive for a long few seconds. The quiet look disappeared to be abruptly replaced with a playful, wolfish grin. "Well, damn, Yagami. This is a development. You know, I'm sort of glad."

"Glad?" Sayu prompted curiously when Light refused to take the bait.

"Well, I thought you were boring as fuck," Mello's grin faded to a smirk. "but it turns out you were
just *pretending* to be boring as fuck."

*Are you actually annoying as fuck, or are you just pretending?* Light thought mockingly, though he kept a straight face, as composed as he could possibly be even though Mello's words didn't quite make sense to him. Did Mello find the sheer fact that he was an Omega interesting, or was it that he'd hidden his second gender - and hid it well - that intrigued him?

"...If you're going to analyze the invitation, do it now before I change my mind." Light told them, and Mello shrugged again as Near gave a small nod.

"We have a little over two months to prepare," L agreed, moving toward his computer. "It will pass quickly. We should make arrangements as thoroughly as possible."

"When they get back," Naomi supplied over her shoulder, "I think I have an idea for how you can keep your memories."

"You'll have lessons with me, Yagami," Mello informed him, "I'm the expert when it comes to infiltrating enemy territory. As good as you are naturally, you haven't had Whammy training."

Light grit his teeth to hold back his scowl. "Is that necessary?"

"If you don't want to get caught," Mello answered him directly, and although he was bold as usual, he also had a certain business-like air to him now that he was in his element. "We'll set aside an hour a day to prepare you mentally and physically for it."

It was this professionalism that made Light consider that there might be something to learn from Mello after all. Light's mouth pulled into a tight line momentarily, then he finally nodded in semi-reluctant approval.

"I'm amenable to that."

Everyone saw Near falter as he attempted to stand, quickly grasping onto the arm of Matt's chair for support. Naomi started forward a few paces, but seemed to think better of it, seeing as she was too far away to get to him. Matt stood up a moment too late as if to catch Near and visibly swayed on his feet, while the smaller of the two tried to catch his balance.

"...Dizzy," Matt explained abashedly, laughing at himself. "Sorry – ah, you okay, Near?"

"Fine," Near answered, though his legs quaked clearly even beneath the baggy silk of his pants. "My chair is in my room, but it isn't that bad. I just need a moment."

"I could go get it," Sayu offered, raising her hand helpfully. Light had noticed Near's chair was absent from the room, as it had been for over a week. He supposed whatever disorder Near suffered from had been doing well for a while, if he'd felt comfortable enough to leave his wheel chair behind.

Near gave a single shake of his head, "No, it's quite al-"

"Oh my *god,*" Mello heaved a dramatic sigh and crossed over to Near, crouching down somewhat before him, facing away. "Piggyback, right?"

"If Mello is attempting to be humorous –"

"The only thing I'm attempting to do is *carry you,* idiot," Mello scowled, tilting his head to look at Near behind him. "Oh, *c'mon.* Do you want to analyze the devil script or not?"
Light caught Near's blatant hesitation, but didn't think much of it. He wouldn't want Mello to carry him anywhere either. It took only another few seconds before Mello pulled Near up onto his back with a smooth motion, securing the arms around his neck and starting off toward the elevator. Mello reached behind him to help support Near's weight as Matt trotted along after them. Mello passed Light and, without a word of warning or apology, tugged the invitation out of his fingers.

Feeling disoriented for the fourth time that night, Light watched their backs as they retreated until L gently slid his hand around Light's wrist and pulled him toward his computer.

"This way, Light-kun, there's something you need to see."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Exciting chapter, I think! Long, too. We got some good plot happening in this one, along with some character development. Progress. I really enjoyed writing the memory aspect of this chapter especially. I wanted to give it the same manic feeling we get in the anime/manga panel. There's also a lot of emotion in the chapter, though it's occurring sort of under the surface of everything else.

It's hard to write this many people talking all at once, but I'm happy with the way it flows after a lot of reworking. I'm sorry if the change in Mello's pronouns were confusing. It was Light's POV and it seemed fitting that he might realize Mello was identifying as masculine halfway through an interaction.

The next chapter will mostly be focused on Near, Matt and Mello. I thought I'd be able to get to them this chapter, but it was way more intensive than I expected.

Thank you to Hannibaland and Akyu for reading over this chapter for errors. It's getting closer to the point where the plot needs to thicken, so appreciate the opportunity to talk through it with you guys. The chapter was definitely better thanks to you.

Your reviews have been amazing as well! Please let me know your favorite parts of this chapter, dialogue, moments, actions, all that good stuff. It makes my day.

-Nilah
It had been a long, draining night. Matt had been running in several directions the last couple of weeks, with Astrea, catching up on the case, as well as trying to keep track of and predict Kira’s appearances. His project with Beyond had taken a backseat, though he had watched through the videos and attempted to find anomalies in the report of his death. So far he’d found a lot of nothing. There were intensive medical reports that he’d combed through. He’d written algorithms to find hospitals admitting treatment for patients with burn scars over 60% of their body, in case he’d gone to one for treatment after an escape. So far there had been nothing to report, and too much to plan for in regard to the Kira Gala.

"Lord Voldemort?" Matt kept a straight face as he leaned back in his chair as far as it would go, until he was peering at Mello upside down. Mello looked paler than usual, he noticed, and it took him a moment to realize that he’d taken off his goggles a few minutes before.

"Obviously," Mello snorted, "Who else?"

"Pretty sure good old HP took care of him for us," Matt sniggered.

"Right, right," Mello dismissed, sitting on Matt's desk. She leaned back, stretching back in that provocative way of her's - presentation meant a lot to Mello, and Matt figured there was a part of her attempting to entice him. "Since that's settled then, what about B?"

"I've got zilch."

"Seriously."

"He was in solitary a lot, so there isn't a lot of actual footage of him," Matt explained, rubbing his temples. He was a little sleep deprived, but that was nothing new. "I've gone through the visitor logs, hacked into his visit - he kind of looked like Voldemort, honestly. He's half bald and his nose was
kind of ...melty."
"I definitely don't need to picture that."
"The only visitor he ever had was Naomi. I've looked through them all - no audio though."
"My contact doesn't have anything either. He said that nothing particularly suspicious has happened."
Matt raised his eyebrows. "Your 'contact'."
"What? That's what he is."
"You mean the warden you're blackmailing."
"Persuading."
"Right."
"He's cheating on his wife and committing low-scale fraud. You can't make me feel bad for using him to my advantage rather than turning him in."
"No judgement; I'm not a beacon of morality myself. L has done that enough with criminals anyway."
"Criminals can be useful."
"Put that on my tombstone," Matt laughed, then turned back to his computer. "I'll keep looking. Naomi's been busy too but I want to review the videos with her at some point."
"Gotta make a movie date. Popcorn and shit."
"Not a bad idea. Maybe I'll invite that Matsuda guy she's always heading off with."
"Good idea. I looked up his record - nothing special, but he's got some serious commendations, and L trusts him. In fact, everyone who meets him trusts him. We might be able to use his eye."
"I'll put it together once the preparations calm down. Astrea is really taking off, which is great, but without an icon like Ryuga, Takada or Misa, it's going to stay cult."
"Sonofabitch."
"Yeah, I'll maintain it, and keep an eye on other social media, but I'm not sure it's going to give us any real influence. Not when Hideki's going around campaigning."
"He's got us there. It's not like we can show our faces to do the same. Might as well write 'kill me' in sharpie on our forehead while we're at it."
Matt sighed, stretching his arms above his head to work the kinks out of his shoulders.
"Oh, have you spoken to Linda? She was going to help us with Australia, right?"
"She's working on it. She's banging the Prime Minister's daughter, but I'm not sure if that will work for or against us."
"Let's say 'for'."
"Speaking of that. I may have secured a small alliance with someone in the Russian government. How did the Canada thing go this morning?"

"Why don't you ask Near yourself?" Matt asked, leaning back in his chair until the front legs of it lifted off the ground. Mello paused and looked over his shoulder at Matt, a frown settling on his mouth.

After a second Mello shrugged and turned away, heading to the door. "Maybe I will."

-T-

"Tell me a story, Yagami."

After sparring with Naomi and showering, Light had made his way to the floor that Mello stayed on, as had been requested of him. Though he had walked in easily enough, greeted Mello politely enough, and seated him casually enough in one of the chairs that were set out for them, there was still a little ball of irritation within him. It was small and tight and vibrating somewhere in the pit of his stomach as he regarded Mello.

_Tell a story._ Once the pleasantries were done, Mello had wasted no time, which Light wasn't sure he was happy about. The lack of etiquette irked him, but it also cut his time here short, so he couldn't find it in him to actually complain.

He raised an eyebrow, "Why would I do that?"

"It's a game," Mello told him, leaning back and meeting his gaze head on, a little too brightly for Light's liking.

"I didn't agree to play with you, Mello," Light responded coolly, shifting pointedly as though he intended to stand up and make his way out. "This is supposed to be for the case."

"It is, Yagami," Mello shot back quickly, raising a hand, "Humor me."

"I'm not here to humor you," Light said, brushing a stray hair out of his eyes. "There are other preparations to attend to if this isn't going to be an educational session."

Mello's brow furrowed, and only then did Light realize that he wasn't entirely sure which gender was most prominent today. As usual, Mello had a certain androgyny about him - though, didn't Near as well, in a different way? - but today she (or he, or _they?_ ) didn't seem to be as slanted in one direction or the other. It was clear that Mello must put some degree of effort into coming off as the gender that came with that particular day, but this time it wasn't so clear.

_Is it possible for Mello to be both at once, or neither, on occasion? I suppose the concept of fluidity is just that. I'll just avoid it all together. I won't be here long._

Mello leaned in, grinning secretively. "Come on, Yagami, we're alone. No one here to act all _pretty_ for. Say what you want to say to me."

_Pretty?_ Light's lip twitched into an almost-scowl, but he pulled it back quickly.

"What makes you think I haven't already?"
"Because," Mello leaned in further, until elbows met knees. "I don't think you ever tell the full truth. You're always being diplomatic; now that I know what I know - I'm certain of it."

Light was very close to being done with all this. "I'm sorry you feel that way."

"You were much sassier the other day," Mello frowned, head cocked.

"It was stress." Light held up his watch, which now had the paper which held his memories glued to the inside. It had been irritating for a while, to sleep in it and carefully bathe with it, but it was better than taking the chance at having no memory at all. "I'm better now."

"Yeah, sure, but the stress didn't cause a personality transplant," Mello gestured at him with an open palm, practically snarling. "It just revealed you."

Light withheld an eyeroll.

He decided on his blatantly-fake-but-so-obnoxiously-polite-no-one-can-say-anything-about-it apology to smooth things over so they could just get on with this already. Light cleared his features, bowing his head just so, and keeping his voice soft yet devoid of any actual remorse.

"I apologize if I've offended -"

"No, no, no, that didn't offend me," Mello groaned. "This is offensive, Yagami. Jesus Christ, don't apologize to me. I'm kind of being an asshole." Kind of?

"Kind of?" Light found himself scoffing as he averted his eyes, and Mello grinned.

"There it is. C'mon, Yagami."

"Fine," Light conceded, crossing his arms and conceding slightly. "I've given you the benefit of the doubt because Ryuzaki waxes poetic about the merit of Whammy training, but I'm still not convinced I can learn anything from you."

"What, because I'm young?" Mello looked Light over conspicuously. "You're - what, twenty-five?"

"I hold infinitely more stock in myself than you, I'm afraid," Light deadpanned, and then thought mildly that L would have enjoyed that one, had he been there to see it. Ah, well, he was probably watching on the cameras anyway, the nosy bastard.

Mello whistled. "I guess I asked for that. But yeah, alright, I can work with it."

"Oh, thank goodness you can work with it." This time Light allowed himself to roll his eyes.

Mello hissed as if he'd been burned, but his smile spoke more of amusement and interest than hurt. "Okay, okay, I think you have major trust issues, but I can respect that."

There's not an issue with trust. Trust is an issue. The safest people are those that trust no one, or a select few. I made an allowance for L, but he is the best detective in the world and has proven himself to me time and time again. What do you have to offer me?

Mello seemed to get the picture. Mello nodded, then stood up, clapping - their? - hands together with finality.

"Let me show you what I can do then, Yagami."
"How do you intend to do that?" Light asked, relaxing further into his seat.

Mello's hands planted firmly on narrow, leather-clad hips. "Tell me a story."

"That again?"

"Yes. It's basic. If you aren't impressed," Mello's head tilted thoughtfully. "Then you can stay."

*Oh, you'll let me, will you?*

"I wouldn't have had to anyway."

"Fair enough." Mello scowled this time. "Do you not have any stories, Yagami?"

Light couldn't exactly say that it seemed as if his life had only just started in November, and so he looked at Mello coldly, raising his eyebrow. It wasn't as though he wanted to regale Mello with his escapades at the tennis court, or the festival, or the night he'd been drunk at the beach. Those were his, and L's - and maybe a little bit Matsuda's and Naomi's - but mostly *his*.

"Nothing I want to share with you."

"Ugh, there must be something I can work with. Something you can tell me that I can -" Mello turned around, hair swaying and brushing the collar of the leather vest. Today it was half pulled up, a small tie loosely restraining fine golden tresses. "What about a case debriefing? Ever do any press releases?"

"No, that's generally left for the more political members of the NPA."

There was a deep, frustrated sigh. "What about presentations for college?"

"Nothing that didn't have a visual aid of some kind."

Light watched Mello's lean form pace across the room, unable to help up but notice how elegantly Mello moved. There was no sound of leather shifting, no stomping of those boots no matter how heavy they looked. However much Light didn't want to be there, he had to admit that Mello did fit the image of what he imagined a spy would look like. Agile, almost feline, with sharp, reading eyes.

For the first time, Light could see why this person was L's successor. Not nearly on L's level, of course, but sometimes Mello looked at the world, at objects, at people, the same way L did: with confidence that their mysteries would unravel before them if they looked hard enough.

"Wait!" Mello spun back toward Light, "I read that you had the top scores in Japan. Graduated with honors and all that overachiever bullshit."

Grudgingly, Light nodded. "...That's right."

"You probably had to give a speech then, didn't you? At an assembly?"

"A few, actually."

"Perfect! Show me one of them."

"Excuse me?"

"You don't have a story, so a speech will do. Act it out. You were putting on a show for all those students, right?"
"Yes, but that was a long time ago."

"It's fine if you don't remember it word for word."

"Of course I do," Light corrected quickly, not even bothering with the smidge of irritation that it sent through him. Who did Mello think he was talking to? "Besides, there's a video. I just don't see the point of this."

"You will," Mello shrugged, seeming entirely too confident. "If you don't, you can leave."

"I can leave either way," Light countered, which made Mello groan, so Light thought he'd rather done his job.

"You really aren't trying to make this easy for me."

"Why would I?"

After a beat, Mello seemed to set back into gear.

"Listen, I'm amazing at what I do, Yagami. Let me fucking show you. I'm asking for - I don't know, fifteen minutes of your precious time."

Light's mouth wanted to curl into a sneer, but instead he kept it at a taut smile. "I'll show you a portion of the speech then. Two minutes."

"Five."

"Or I could just leave."

"Okay, okay - two minutes, fuck, Yagami, you're pushy."

Wasn't that what you wanted?

Light pulled the keyboard closer, found the video on the To Oh web page, found the right place on the timebar, and pressed play.

The video started, and Light crossed his arms over his chest while he watched his younger self - just eighteen, not even two full years after he'd presented as Omega - stand, cross to the stairs, climb the stage steps and stand alone at the podium. Light watched himself bow deeply to the audience, and quietly unfold the paper that he'd prepared his speech on, then smile politely before he began.

"As we embark on this new chapter of our lives..."

Light had expected some form of commentary, but Mello surprised him by giving none. When he glanced at the blond from the corner of his eye, he saw that Mello was staring intensely at the screen, leaning forward, attention honed in. Light blinked, mildly disconcerted, then turned his gaze back to watch.

After two minutes, he let it play a little longer, until there was decent stopping point. There was no use stopping in the middle of a sentence. Or maybe there was. Light hadn't the faintest idea what this was supposed to prove about Mello's skills. It had been a boring day back then; he hadn't felt any particular satisfaction from the admiring looks, or the supposed honor of it all, and so looking back on it held no nostalgia for him.

"Noridashimasu."
The word caught him off guard, but not only because it was a non-sequitur, just the word 'embark' without rhyme or reason, but because of the way Mello had said it. Light turned, but Mello wasn't looking at him.


There was something wrong with the way that Mello was saying the word. No, wait, not quite - there was nothing wrong with the way he was saying the word, and that was the problem.

While Mello spoke fluent Japanese, there had always been a certain carelessness to the way words formed on his tongue. He didn't have much of an accent at all, but there was emphasis on certain words, a crassness to certain syllables that were distinctly not Japanese in character.

Light felt suddenly and inexplicably uneasy. What is it? What is it about the way he said that word? It's just a damned word. I should have left when he insulted me the first time, I should have never come to begin with, this is a waste of time.

"What are you doing?"

"Just watch." Mello's lip curled at him, cutting a harsh glance at him, inflections short and crude, and Light was relieved for some reason. That look, that voice, they were entirely Mello's.

What does that even mean?

Without warning, Mello kicked off the table that separated them, sending the computer chair rolling toward the other side of the room with Mello in it. When it stopped, Mello was facing away from Light, toward the obscured floor-to-ceiling windows that looked over Tokyo. Light watched skeptically as Mello undid the hairband, then redid it again, pulling the majority of the strands into a small, snug ponytail at nape level.

There was quiet, and for a long moment Mello was entirely still as far as Light could tell.

Light looked at his watch idly, and when he did there was a nuance that made itself clear to him, an observation that his subconscious must have made that abruptly clicked into place.

Even from behind, Light could see that Mello's feet were planted firmly on the floor, and it hadn't struck him as odd until he recalled that he'd never actually seen Mello sit that way. Mello's legs or ankles would always be crossed, boots up, one or both legs tucked beneath - or something. It wasn't something that Light had consciously paid attention to - he tended to ignore Mello's very existence unless it was useful at that given moment- but it had wormed it's way in and was now shoving itself into the crevasses of his knowing.

Then Mello stood, walked calmly forward, turned to the side, then turned to face Light again precisely. He bowed deeply. He mimed, taking an invisible paper from his pocket and unfolding it. He smiled politely at the audience.

He. Yes, Light realized, that suddenly Mello carried himself very distinctly as male, but not just that, not just any male, not just anyone -

"As we embark on this new chapter of our lives..."

Light's mind somehow abruptly rewound to two separate moments in unison; he was back to just a few minutes ago, watching himself listlessly; he was back in college, injecting passion and courtesy and respect into his voice as he spoke to the droning masses, impressing them with his words even though there was nothing impressive about them. They had been fake words with fake emotions
behind them, because the real horizon had been the monotony he'd known he was facing. The best school in Japan, and it had been so easy to get in. Writing the speech had been easy. Giving it had been easy. Graduating at the top had been easy.

The world was so easy.

And Mello was him, somehow Mello had captured (and Light did feel captured) the cadence of his walk, the pitch of his voice, the rhythm of his speech; it was so intensely familiar to Light that he hadn't recognized it until now. That was his Japanese, not Mello's. His intonations, his bow, his smile, and his meaningless speech full of meaningless platitudes leaving Mello's mouth the same way they had left his own seven years previously.

The speech ended at the same place Light had stopped the video, and in an instant, Mello was Mello again. Light was mildly consoled, but still on edge as he was approached.

"I know, I know, uncanny valley, right?" Mello swaggered back to the table, looking smug. "I do good work."

Light didn't reply just yet, but that was just as well - Mello wasn't quite done talking.

"Good speech, at least what I heard of it. You should be a politician. You said everything everyone expected you to say, eloquently, without putting yourself into the words at all. It's like it was almost a parody of a speech."

"Excuse me?" Light narrowed his eyes, latching onto the irritation rather than the unsettled sensation that still lingered.

"I swear to God, Yagami, it was a compliment." Mello smiled ferociously. "It's kind of perfect for the position you're in."

"Will you just explain yourself already?" Light snapped, and was more than a little agitated when Mello's grin didn't falter.

"The thing about going undercover as yourself is you can't really just be yourself, Yagami. You have to be a representation of yourself. It's a mask. It's a lie, but not enough of one that anyone can trip you up." Mello propped pulled the band out, shaking his head. "You're a natural, but you'd be better at it if you let me help."

However much Light found Mello's rendition of him eerie, the idea of denying relevant assistance in the face of an enemy as grandiose as Kira seemed ridiculous. He wasn't at all fond of the idea, but if there something he could learn from these lessons that might help him survive the gala, it would be foolish.

Whether or not Light understood Mello's gender, he had to admit that the blond had an incredible hold on body language, which would be useful if he were going into the fray so boldly. Light had never gone undercover, nothing like this anyway - he'd pretended to be a college student once, and a salesman another time to get information out of a few people. But those had been short-period cons, not an entire evening of close inspection.

If we catch Kira, he is evil. If he wins and rules the world, then he is justice. That's how I've always seen this. He's killed my father, but objectively, the point remains. He's winning. What does that mean for justice?

(For me?)
"If I don't pull this off," Light said slowly, drawing over the same line in his head that he had many times before, mostly late at night when sleep refused to come. "he wins."

"If you don't pull this off, we'll keep fighting, Yagami," Mello disagreed, shrugging as though completely unfazed by the prospect.

If it were just naivety, that would be one thing. I want to defeat him more than anyone, but why doesn't Mello flinch at all when faced with impossible odds?

"Keep fighting," Light parrotted, "For how long, exactly?"

Until we win, or we're dead? Death isn't an option. We have to win, we have to, or -

"As long as we're alive, until we get it done." Mello answered fiercely, back in the mode of persuasion. Mello leaned in, elbows on the table. "You'll have a better chance if you pick up a few techniques from an expert. I was trained for this for half my life. Even if you don't think much of me, you have to admit even the slightest advantage could potentially save your ass."

Light stood up, resigned, but also intensely agitated. Mello's very presence grated on his nerves, mostly because there was nothing inaccurate or insincere in the statement.

"Mornings," Light dictated as he straightened up, "after I'm done with Naomi."

Mello smirked and leaned back, arms crossing. "You know where to find me."

- - -

When Light's cell phone began to buzz in his pocket while he was in his office in the NPA, it was a welcome relief. Work with the NPA was not nearly as fulfilling as it had once been, though even back when the cases were larger scale and more complex he'd often been disappointed by his assignments. Hearing his voice was actually a bit of a relief.

"Ryuzaki, I'm at work."

"I'm aware of that."

"Is it important?" Light hoped it was. If something had happened, good or bad, that would give his brain something to do, give him a plan to formulate in his head while he wasted his day away.

"Aren't you bored?" L inquired, with a lazy air to his voice that said he already knew the answer.

"What would you know about it?" Light asked, leaning back in his chair and peering up at the ceiling. Though he'd only left the man in bed a few hours before, he couldn't help but enjoy hearing his voice after a day full of only the scratching of pens and his coworker's small talk.

"I hacked into the NPA's security system," L told him. "I was bored just from spying on you."

"You did not," Light scoffed, but found his eyes peering around for the cameras just the same. It wasn't completely farfetched, as far as L was concerned. He was certainly capable, but wasn't there work to do?

"No, I didn't. I didn't have to," L conceded amiably, "But of course you are. I would be."
"Obviously, I am," Light rolled his eyes, then glanced around to make sure no one was in earshot. "All there is to work on is petty crime, what do you think?"

"I think," L allowed a moment to pass, as if he truly had to consider, "you should take a half day."

Light pushed down his grin. "It's ten in the morning."

"My point stands. No one will question you; aside from your leave a couple months ago, you've had perfect attendance."

"I have," Light mused, putting his pen back into the coffee cup that held an assortment of other writing utensils, all of which Matsuda had given him over the course of the six years he'd worked with him.

"So?" L prompted, "Have I persuaded you?"

"Yes, alright," Light sighed, tilting his head to trap the phone between his ear and shoulder as he stretched. "I'll head out in a minute, I just need to let Matsuda know, or he'll blow up my phone with messages wanting to know where I went."

There was a pause before L responded, sounding much too smug. "...That was easier than I expected."

"Shut up."

"Or you'll change your mind just to spite me?"

"It's a possibility."

"Small victories." L had the indecency to chuckle in his ear. "I'll see you soon then."

"See you," Light offered, then hung up. He peered around the office at the group of officers chatting by the kitchen and the few officers scribbling their reports down on the latest little misdemeanor. The worst thing they could do was fire him, after all, and at this point that would give him more time to dedicate to real justice. Not this paper pushing job that police work had become. It was nonsense now, as most of the world was too terrified to commit any real crimes. Those that did commit crimes, once caught, now almost always gave in once they figured that their choice was prison, or possible death by Kira.

After he'd packed away his things, Light told Matsuda to let his superior know he wasn't feeling well, and ignored the exuberant grin that Matsuda gave him on the way out.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: This chapter is pretty average length, since I split the chapter I was originally writing in half. But that means that the next chapter will be coming soon. A lot of this
was set up for the next chapter.

You guys have been really patient and I appreciate it! The holidays kicked my butt, but now that they’re over hopefully it’ll be easier for me to update more frequently.

I hope the part with Light not giving Mello pronouns made sense. Mello is genderfluid, not bigender, so there are times when he/she’s not feeling like either, or both. The next chapter will have more Mello, as well as some Near, Matt and Light.

Let me know your favorite parts and such. :) You guys have been great. Thank you again!

-Nilah
Reconnect

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other.” -Charles Dickens

“It’s not that I hate him,” Mello dragged on a joint, sighing as she draped herself over the couch, long legs draped over the back languidly.

She didn’t smoke much (she couldn’t stand the smell) but the last week had been particularly difficult for her, for several reasons. Yagami was certainly intriguing, but he was also stubborn as all hell. Mello couldn’t put quite a finger on it, but the man was taxing as hell to be around. Then there was the issue with Russia. While Near had managed to make headway with Canada, and even get a few officers from America to get on board secretly, Mello’s work with Russia was hitting a dead end.

Matt’s work with Linda was also about to come through - they’d begun to faction off an Australian task force that L would be able to call upon when needed - but that was decidedly less annoying than Near’s success.

Honestly, Near was about as charismatic as a brick. Mello had done some of her best work with Russia, but they were still too hesitant to commit their allegiance to L. She may have stopped them from shifting over to the ‘dark side’ for a bit longer, but she hadn’t gained any power for their cause.

She laid back, peering up at the stars as she took another drag then passed it back to Matt. She hated smoking inside where the smell would sit and cling to her clothes, so she’d dragged Matt up to the roof to enjoy the cool, clear night and watch the stars get blurry.

“I just I don’t get him.”
Matt rolled his eyes, “That doesn’t mean there’s nothing there to get.”

Mello frowned up at the stars and stretched her arms back behind her head. *I haven’t seen any evidence of that. And if there is something to get, what does that have to do with me? We’re rivals, we always have been, why should I look any closer? We drive one another, but we also drive one another crazy, and occasionally work well with each other when it’s important. More than anything, Near is an obstacle.*

“He doesn’t try to be… he doesn’t show anything, doesn’t give anything away, *ever,*” Mello explained, searching for the words that marijuana had hidden from him. “He’s smug as fuck.”

“You just don’t pick up on the signals he does send, because they’re not what you want to see,” Matt philosophized, gesturing widely. “I mean, he *can* be smug as fuck, but what do you want him to do? Try to be more like you?”

Mello sat up abruptly, looking down her nose at Matt. “Is there something wrong with me?”

“No, but that isn’t the *point.*”

Matt sat up then as well, setting the stub of the

“You’re trying to fit a square peg into a round hole and complaining that it doesn’t fit!” Matt went on, exasperated. “Not to mention, ignoring the merits of…you know. The peg. Which is perfectly fucking awesome as it is.”

Mello was so taken aback by this, all she could say was. “That’s a horrible analogy.”

*Perfectly fucking awesome as is. That’s how you think of him?*

“Not really,” Matt shrugged, then lifted his goggles to his forehead as he leaned his head back to take in the stars. “I’m just saying, you know, like. People love in different ways or whatever.”
The pang of jealousy that had started to burn in her chest was suddenly wiped away by a cold rush of shock. Mello blinked quickly, several times, sure she’d misheard. She was high, after all.

"Wait," Mello turned on Matt, practically hissing. "Did you say love?"

"Wha?" Matt’s brow furrowed, tilting his head as though he had completely forgotten his previous train of thought. As though Mello was being ridiculous here, ugh.

"You said love."

"I did?"

"Yeah, you did," Mello spoke clearly, feeling strangely more sober than she had a few moments prior. "Are you saying you think Near loves me?"

"What? No, I didn't, well - I mean,” Matt floundered, trying to wrap his mouth around whatever silly concept he’d concocted in that head of his. "I've thought about it before and I think, maybe, I don't know."

The prospect was wild. Ludicrous, really, and Mello had the sudden urge to throw her head back and laugh in Matt’s face. Of all the things Matt could say about Near, that was the one she doubted most of all. In her youth, Near had consumed her every waking thought - he’d tainted Mello’s mood with the smallest of things, whether or not it was intentional. Mello supposed some people had likely assumed he had some sort of pigtail-pulling crush on Near. Those people were idiots, of course, but Mello could see the case for it.

But Near, having a crush on Mello? There was no doubt (okay, little doubt) that there were emotions hidden somewhere under that pale hair, but he had seemed indifferent to Mello for as long as they’d known one another. Mello couldn’t stand to be met with indifference, and so it had grated on her every moment they spent in each other’s company. Sometimes it felt like Near was even hanging around just to ignore Mello pointedly. There were several people at Whammy’s Mello could see being in love with her, but Near was not on the list.

"Did he say something?" Mello decided on, slowly, taking in Matt’s expression. Matt was always
laid back in demeanor, but he was still entirely too readable. How the hell had he made it this far as he was?

"No," Matt said quickly. Truth, Mello deduced. “If he did, would you actually want to know?"

"That's irrelevant. Did he?"

"I said no. It's not like he talks about his feelings."

"Then why did you say that?"

"It just seems like it."

"Near doesn't usually 'seem' to feel a certain way about anything,” Mello practically growled. Did you drop a bomb like this just to rile me? Well, it's not going to work. What would the point of that be anyway? You're the one that's going to spend his heat with him.

"Why don't you try looking some time? You're better at that than me, Mello, but you've got a...I don't know, a fucking wall in your head when it comes to some people."

Mello scowled, but relented. That was fair.

"Just Near."

"No," Matt disagreed, frowning. “not just him."

It wasn’t much of anything at all, but it still made Mello’s mouth go dry and her heart leap back within her ribcage. She felt suddenly sick at the insinuation, of this stupid elephant that existed just to cast shadows on their relationship.

"What's that supposed to mean?"
"Nothing, Mello."

"You can't just say something like that and then just drop it," Mello insisted, almost breathless. "We've been needing to have a proper talk for ages, Matt, so -" 

"I don't want to talk about it right now, okay?" Matt interrupted, standing up with a grunt and starting over toward the railing of the roof. "I'm in a good mood."

Mello wanted to press on. Demand, insist, every fiber of her lit up with the need to talk about this, them, for once - for goddamn once. But Matt was her first friend, her only friend, and pushing the subject was not something she was willing to try. Not when she couldn’t run off to Russia this time if things got hard. Matt’s presence kept her sane and if she couldn’t look at him, couldn’t relax with him like this, for the duration of the case -? All because she hadn’t been able to handle keeping her mouth shut?


"...Alright."

"Thanks."

"Yes. Alright," Mello repeated, softer this time, coming to her conclusion. "I will then."

"Wait, you will what?"

Mello brushed her leather skirt free of dirt and shrugged, "I’ll take your advice. I’ll try looking."

"Where are you going?" Matt turned away from the city and back toward Mello, but she was already pulling the door open to reenter the building.

"To go take a look, idiot."

“Hold up,” Matt stood up, chasing after Mello and pulling him back by the arm. “What exactly are
“I’m short on heat partners, as you well know. Professionals are hit or miss, and I’d rather my partner be into it for me.” Mello raised her eyebrows. “You seem to think he has some kind of crush on me, so I imagine he would, right?”

The real fact of the matter was that Mello couldn’t stand to be in this state of ambiguity for one more moment. She adored Matt, and that forced her into hesitancy, especially after Matt had broken up with her. She couldn’t stand another moment of questioning her every step, her every word, and at least with Near things were straightforward, they were clear. She didn’t have to worry about ruining everything, because there was nothing to ruin.

*If it’s not true, I won’t have lost anything. If it is though -*

“I never said he had a crush,” Matt caught up with her and grasped her by the arm to halt her halfway down the steps. He looked worried. For Mello or Near? For both of them?

*If it is?*

“You said he cares about what I think of him. And he said he isn’t ace like you are when I asked; so, considering I look like this,” Mello swept her hand down the length of herself. “he’d have to, wouldn’t he?”

Matt’s expression flattened. “Mello, are you saying you want to fuck Near?”

Hearing it plainly put like that, Mello hesitated. She organized her mind as well as she could manage through the fog of the high she’d spent the last hour working on.

“I’m saying it might be an enlightening experience, if he and I were to spend a heat together. You did say I should get some perspective.”

“I did,” Matt admitted, biting his lip briefly. “but you know that’s not what I was talking about.”

“Just because you don’t want to have sex with me,” Mello bit out, looking down at the hand on her
arm, then back up at Matt. “doesn’t mean other people don’t.”

The expression was marred by the goggles that had once again been lowered back into place, but even so, she could tell that Matt looked hurt. His hand slid away from where it had gripped Mello’s arm.

“Listen –“ Mello started, but Matt cut him off.

“I don’t trust you alone with Near. You don’t understand him.”

Agitation was easier than grief, and Mello latched on hard. “What, like I have everything so easy?”

Matt growled in the back of his throat, and despite herself, the Omega in Mello’s chest purred. She swatted at it, because it felt wrong to want Matt when Matt didn’t want her back, and instead channeled it into her indignation.

“No, Mello, of course not,” Matt’s tone was clipped, clearly trying to keep his voice from rising. “I know you have your own problems, but Near –“

Matt raked his hand over his face, taking a moment to his words. He’d never been as good at them as Mello was, and the marijuana didn’t help.

“He’s has – jesus, Mello, he has autism, and a physical disability, and probably bouts of gender dysphoria too. The difference is, he doesn’t have the same outlets you do,” Matt went on, “Not to mention, very likely all the same trust issues we and all the rest of the orphans at Whammy’s has. You can’t just be careless with him!”

Careless? You think I’m careless? What the – alright, fine, maybe sometimes. I hadn’t thought much about Near’s issues, but it’s not like we’re close. You said yourself he doesn’t really talk to you.

“You think I’d hurt him?”

Mello was more offended by the prospect than she’d expected to be. She’d wanted to hurt Near before in his youth – she’d wanted to hurt a lot of people, honestly.
“You might not mean to,” Matt compromised. “He’s – delicate.”

“Is he?”

It came out more thoughtful than provocative, and she looked over toward Near’s door, thinking. Delicate, is he? In almost every interaction we had, he’d bait me, even after I broke his toys to intimidate him. That doesn’t strike me as delicacy, or timidity. You’re too soft, Matt. It affects your judgement.

“Alright, fine,” Mello responded finally, shrugging. She turned on her heel and started toward Near’s room. “then you can supervise.”

“Yeah, so – wait, what? Supervise?” Matt padded along to catch up with him.

“You’re already planning on helping him through his heat in like a month, right?” Mello asked, though she already knew the answer. “How about I help out? He can name rules, and I’ll follow them.”

Matt caught Mello’s wrist this time, making her stop before she got to the door.

“He hasn’t even agreed to consider it.”

“Well,” Mello took the moment to press her wrist into the pad of Matt’s thumb, into the touch rather than away “let’s go ask him, shall we?”

“Are you serious? Whoa, wait – are you just going to walk in there and ask Near if he’d be willing to spend his next heat with you after years of you biting at each other’s throats?”

“Of course not.”

“Then – what?”
“I’m going to be much subtler than that. I’m intrigued that you think he’s infatuated but I don’t know if I agree with you, especially about the ‘fragile’ thing.” Mello opened the door and paused to look back at him. “So I’m going to figure it out for myself.”

“Mello –“

“You underestimate him,” Mello asserted, meeting Matt’s eyes once more before pushing the door open. She didn’t bother knocking, twisted the doorknob and barged through it.

Near looked up from where he was seated on the floor, surveying them both as they approached. Mello crossed the room, taking in their surroundings quickly and honing in on his course of action. Near glanced at Matt who was at Mello’s heels, his uneasy energy practically tangible.

“Mello, Matt.” Near greeted, staring at them briefly, before turning back to his current project. It appeared to be a specific city block, and Mello was sure Near had the exact blueprints for it somewhere in his head.

Mello stepped lightly over to where Near was stacking dice in neat rows.

“Er, listen,” Matt began, Mello had quickly and smoothly positioned himself behind Near, bending over him and pretending to inspect the tower.

“Has Mello decided to come here for any particular reason?”

“Actually,” Mello said slowly, as she turned over the thought in her head. She grinned broadly, turning her head down toward him just as Near looked up.

They looked at one another upside down.

“No,” Mello finally answered, though she could tell by the furrow of Near’s brow that he didn’t buy it. Matt shifted, coming to sit in front of the current building Near was working on.

“So you’ve just come to watch,” Near speculated slowly, “Mello generally finds my hobbies boring.”
“Yes, terribly dull.” Mello agreed, suddenly seating herself just behind Near, but just slightly to the right so that she could peer over his shoulder at his work. Matt tensed, glowering from behind the lenses, though he quickly wiped his expression when Near turned to look at him. “Go on.”

“Listen, Mello,” Matt gave an exasperated sigh. “Let’s just go.”

“Why should I?” Mello asked, sticking out her bottom lip at Matt vindictively and easing closer to Near, until she placed her chin on his shoulder. “I gave him a piggyback ride a few weeks ago, and this is basically the same position, reversed, isn’t it? Near doesn’t mind me watching, does he?”

There was a moment of quiet, in which Mello noticed a slow tension curling beneath his neck, which was now resting against Near’s shoulder. That doesn’t mean much. He’s always gone a little stiff when people touch him.

“...I guess not,” Near replied after a moment, “Just don’t mess me up.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it.”

“She’s high,” Matt explained, frowning at him and crossing his arms over his chest. “She never smokes so she’s just being an idiot. I can drag her out if you want.”

“Honestly, Matt, I’m a lady.” Mello gasped in mock outrage, then purposefully breathed against Near’s ear. She watched as Near twitched, fingers hesitating briefly in the familiar process.

... Alright, alright, maybe that was a little something.

“Even if you’re female at this given point in time,” Mello could feel Matt glaring daggers even through the blockage of his goggles. “You are not a lady.”

“Speaking of pronouns,” Mello drawled, turning slightly toward Near’s cheek as she did so. Matt shifted uncomfortably, seeming at every moment ready to step in if Mello crossed whatever arbitrary line he’d drawn in his head. “I’m actually curious, Near. Can you guess about what?”
Near tilted his head, and Mello didn’t think anything of it.

“Mello seems to be alluding to my pronoun choice in particular,” Near muttered, placing a small die into place carefully. “Does Mello really not know? I would have thought it obvious to someone of Mello’s mental calibur.”

“I have a brilliant deduction, yes,” Mello said, musing as she waded through the softer corners of her mind. “But it’s not because you’ve given me anything to go on.

Near gave a low scoff, started construction on a new dice tower a few inches from the first, and Mello continued.

“I know it wasn’t particularly easy to figure out my own gender.” That was the understatement of the decade, but she was hardly going to wax nostalgic about her teenage angst. Firmly and clearly, and right beneath Near’s ear, Mello went on. “I imagine as a child you knew you weren’t a girl, but you hadn’t quite realized that didn’t mean you were a boy by default.”

Matt rubbed the back of his neck, his eyes on them, wearily.

“It’s hard to imagine how difficult that would be,” Matt offered, but he was still watching her cautiously. *Are you really that worried I’m going to hurt him? This isn’t that big of a deal.*

“You still could have told people to use ‘they’ or ‘ze’,” Mello told him, idly tapping her fingers against her own leg, then moving up to Near’s shoulder.

“And change again?” Near murmured, reaching for another dice and shrugging the fingers away, though Mello only changed locations. She tapped rhythmically against the knee of Near’s bad leg. “No, thank you.”

“Why not?” Mello pried.

“It would have been tedious..”

Mello paused, blinked, and then laughed sharply.
“Yeah, that sounds about like you.”

“It wouldn’t have been a burden,” Matt spoke up suddenly, drawing Mello’s attention from watching the way her fingers contrasted to the white silk of Near’s pajamas. *Are they even technically pajamas?* “I mean, I could switch now, if wanted - seriously.”

*That sounds about like Matt too.*

“It isn’t necessary. I don’t care either way.” Near answered irritably. No, that wasn’t correct at all - Near hadn’t spoke irritably, Mello was just irritated by it.

“Predictable,” Mello huffed, digging her chin a little into Near’s collar, the watching as Near tilted his head slightly away. Whether or not it was in response to his closeness, or just his usual tick, Mello couldn’t be sure.

“C’mon, Mello,” Matt groaned, raking his fingers through his hair, tousling it attractively. “Leave him be, yeah? It’s probably time for us to get some sleep anyway.”

He looked younger then, like he had when his hair was shorter and his face was rounder back in the halls of Whammy House. She pursed her lips and ducked her head a bit, glowering at Matt from beneath the fall of her hair. She found herself somewhat grateful to have Near as a barrier between them, and so she shifted a little closer to the smaller form, until the leather on her chest brushed against the silk his back. Mello swallowed, jaw tightening as she was transported back to that place and time, to a similar interaction they’d all had.

*“Leave Near alone, Mello, he’s minding his own business.”*

*“Is he really? Because to me it seems like he decided build his lego tower in the playroom to eavesdrop on us, the nosy little bugger.”*

*“I have no reason to eavesdrop on Mello or Matt.”*

*“Are you trying to say we don’t say anything worth listening in on?”*
“Fuck, you guys, it’s time for class anyway. Mello, can I borrow a pencil again?”

Mello ground her teeth, and chased the memory away. Wasn't marijuana supposed to have a bad effect on recollection?

“Is Mello feeling alright?” The voice was low and calm, which only made Mello more intent on her plan to...what was her plan again? To prove Matt wrong?

“I don’t know, you tell me.” Mello grinned sharply, a look that was meant for Near, but was made in Matt’s direction.

With the statement, Mello reached forward and grabbed Near by the wrist before he could grab another die. Swiftly, she brought the small hand up to her forehead. Matt made a tense face, but his goggles did their job and didn't give Mello much more insight into the expression. His body language was uncertain, nervous, guilty even, which Mello didn't quite understand. Near grew stiff against the plain of Mello’s chest as she flattened his palm to the skin just beneath her hairline.

“Am I feverish?” she inquired, putting on a tone of such ostentatious innocence it came across as the opposite, which was entirely her intention.

“... No,” Near answered after a long hesitation, which made Mello’s mouth purse. No come back? Usually he’s quicker about these things.

His hand was entirely too smooth, Mello decided, but that made sense considering Near’s lifestyle. She didn’t think he’d left the building since he’d arrived. Annoyed that the thought of Near’s unblemished palms had even crossed her mind, she released his wrist and muttered ‘I guess not’, almost ready to give up on this fruitless endeavor.

Wait a minute.

When her hand was no longer steadying it, she saw that Near’s hand was trembling. The thought shot through the murkiness of Mello’s mind, a bullet of clarity.

Wait a goddamn minute. No, no, way. Matt can’t be right about this.
But now that the first inkling had broken through, a crack in the glass, Mello thought that Near was being awfully complacent, and he hadn’t been nearly as snarky as he should have been. The tension in his body had yet to relent, and it wasn’t like Near to be unconscious of such a thing. If he knew, and hadn’t corrected himself in all this time, then that had to mean that he couldn’t control it. His body was reacting to Mello’s presence, his touches, his words, without his permission. If Mello had been an Alpha, he might have thought it was a purely biological response, but they were both Omegas and so that couldn’t be the case.

Fine.

Fucking fine, maybe Matt was right.

If that was the case, then Mello might as well go for it, if she was still set. Which she was. She certainly had not been intimidated by the notion that Near was, at the very least, actively attracted to her and possibly - according to Matt - romantically interested.

This didn’t change anything. Even if she’d been expecting to prove Matt wrong, for Near to scoff at the very notion of wanting Mello. Instead he’d been distant, and perhaps his own version of timid.

Right, so Near had a crush. As strange as it was to conceive given their long standing rivalry, Mello couldn’t blame him, could she?

So go for it, idiot, wasn’t this the plan?

“Your scheduled heat is coming up. Just another - what, month and a half?” Mello wasn’t sure why her heart was speeding up the more anxious Near became. It surprised her, when she realized she might truly enjoy feeling Near against her like this, though in a different capacity.“I know you have an arrangement with Matt going on again.”

I think I’m right. No, fuck, he’s been too quiet about this - I know I am. Wait, I’m being too certain, he could be fucking with me. But would Matt be an accomplice to it? Is Near even capable of faking this degree of emotion? At some point I was pretty sure he couldn’t even feel it.

“I’m thinking you wouldn’t be opposed to me joining you,” Mello trailed her nose over the shell of Near’s ear, and yes, that was a tremor that raked through Near’s narrow shoulders. Mello reached up and, as a mockery of Near’s little habit, pulled on a lock of his hair at the nape of his neck sharply.
“Am I right?”

The response Mello received reminded her of shattering glass.

It made her start, but she realized soon after that nothing had really broken, per se. In a sweeping motion, with the hand that had been pressed to her forehead just seconds before, Near had knocked down his own city of dice.

Small white cubes scattered the floor, clicking sharply thousands of times before finally settling.

“Near, hey -” Matt started, and Mello realized rather suddenly that she’d forgotten that he was there for the last few minutes, and frowned at her own absent mindedness.

“This isn’t right.”

Near’s voice was quiet he cut Matt off and pushed forward, away from Mello and stood up with relative ease. Mello noticed his bad leg quiver, but it didn’t falter beneath his weight when he was up. The younger man was hunched over, taking a few steps and turning away from them both. Matt stood too, but Mello just watched, still in the same position, but without Near cradled in the alcove of her chest.

“This isn’t right,” Near repeated, more firmly this time, hand lifting to his hair. He curled a finger around a lock of hair and pulled more aggressively than Mello was used to seeing.

“What isn’t right about it?” Mello asked but there was a nameless growing concern spreading like a toxin throughout her. “I’m not wrong, Near. You want me.”

“Irrelevant,” Near’s voice was still low and flat and - frustrated? Mello couldn’t quite figure the nuances of the emotions blooming beneath that usually impassive countenance.

“It seems pretty fucking relevant to me,” Mello shot back.

“Mello, enough.” Matt snapped sternly, pushing his goggles up onto his forehead and moving toward Near as though to comfort him, only to stop short when Near took a step away in response.
The flicker of hurt flashed on Matt’s features, and Mello felt it in her gut.

“This -” Near started again, “This isn’t right.”

Why the hell do you keep repeating that?

“Near,” Matt said slowly, taking another step forward, more cautiously. “It’s okay, listen, it’s all okay, I’m sorry I let it get this far, I thought - well. I don’t know what I thought, but I’m -”

“Go away.”

A beat, and then,

“Both of you.”

With that, Near walked away, across the room and to a door that Mello supposed led to the bathroom. They were both still and silent as he shuffled over, and equally so for a long series of seconds after the door had closed behind him. Mello couldn’t bring herself to move from the spot, surrounded by scattered dice, unable to get the idea out of her head that she had somehow royally fucked up, more than she was equipped to understand.

Again.

Matt’s lingering look of disappointment left an anvil in Mello’s stomach for the rest of the evening, and for the next several days to come.

“I suppose I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Light glanced at his watch as he stood up, figuring it was about time to head to work, but the look
Mello gave him pause.

“No, you won’t,” Mello scowled at him, crossing his arms over his chest, though there was still a slight cock to his hip that Light found distinctly feminine. Even so, having spent the last few weeks with Mello had allowed Light more insight on how he held himself when he was female. “Can you seriously not smell me at all, Yagami? I’m going to into heat tomorrow, if not tonight.”

Again?

The thought came to Light’s mind before he could stop it. Of course, he technically knew that heats occurred naturally every month, but it had been quite some time since he’d met someone that took no suppressants whatsoever. Matsuda took a popular light Japanese suppressant that spread heats out to every two months or so, and was self-regulated so that it would occur without the user actively choosing by skipping a few doses, like Near did.

“I see,” Light nodded, unable to wonder how he hadn’t noticed that Mello was so close to heat. Still, Light supposed he wasn’t the most experienced when it came to second genders, and Mello had proven himself particularly adept at controlling his physicality. “I’ll see you when you’re done, then.”

“I’ll be working from the hotel too, so if you need anything, you can message me and I’ll answer in between waves.”

“You’ll have another before Kira’s gala in June,” Light calculated easily enough, “Matt mentioned something a while back about Near’s scheduled heat coming up around then as well.”

Something flickered in Mello’s eyes that Light didn’t recognize, but it was gone before he could manage to dissect it. If Light had learned anything about Mello in the last few weeks, it was that someone didn’t learn to perfect lying with body language if they were an intrinsically honest person. Despite his issues with Mello, Light could relate to that, which was part of the reason they’d survived this long working together.

“...Yeah, that’s right.”

“So, if Matt’s assisting Near, all three of you will be out of commision around the end of May,” Light found himself saying, for no reason he could identify. We’ll have to pick up the slack, or else make sure everything is ready. That’s only a little more than a week before the Gala, so the timing
isn’t exactly ideal.

“No.” Mello answered, surprising him.

“No?” Light prompted, and immediately regretted it. It wasn’t any of his business, and he wasn’t the least bit interested. Mello’s jaw tightened.

“No,” Mello reiterated, then hesitated, giving Light one of those long, penetrating looks that he often gave Light. It was unnerving, but Light had gotten used to it, and refused to react until Mello chose to speak again. Their interactions often consisted of such menial power plays. “Matt will be around. Near is flying someone in.”

Light frowned. I didn’t misremember. Matt definitely mentioned that he’d be away for whatever length of time Near needed him to be. Something must have changed.

“Fair enough. That’s none of my business,” Light turned away again, starting for the door. “Sometime next week then.”

“Yagami, before you go,” Mello said quickly, stopping Light in his tracks. He glanced back over his shoulder, wondering if he should bother allowing Mello to get off the subject. It was true Mello had been helpful, but Light also didn’t want him getting the idea that they were friends on any level.

Holding in a sigh, Light decided to give him a moment of his time, blaming it on pity. Mello was about to go into heat, after all, and in Light’s view that was cause for a smidgen of sympathy.

“When was the last time you had a heat?”

“That’s personal,” Light responded instantly, unable to keep the sharpness out of his tone. “And none of your business, actually.”

Mello ignored his statement, which resulted in a prickly irritation that spread across Light’s consciousness like a rash. The blonde took a step closer, a little too close for Light’s tastes, and dragged his eyes down his form appraisingly. Again.
“Matt mentioned that L asked advice about an Omega friend that was having his first heat in years.” Mello told him, and Light felt his lip curl. L had told him that he’d discussed his assistance with Matt, and while Light had not exactly been pleased at the time, he hadn’t thought it would be used like this at a later date.

“Did he now?” Light questioned quietly, controlling the tenor voice a little too much, which Mello happened to be observant enough to notice.

“It was before we knew you were Omega. He wasn’t trying to tattle,” Mello waved it off, but it didn’t placate Light in the least. Near had solidified his place as first in his favorite when it came to L’s successors, if only because he had not yet broken their silent agreement to ignore one another unless necessary. “So if your Alpha coworkers didn’t notice, and your Alpha college girlfriend didn’t notice - would it be fair to say that the heat you experienced in February was the first you’ve had since high school.”

_It bothers you that I dated Takada. Yet another tally mark next to the ‘things that link Kira and I’ list._

“As I said, it’s none of your business,” Light repeated, in even more clipped tones.

“Yeah, well your business is fucking failing, Yagami.”

“What about you?” Light found himself snarling, heat rising up from the pit of his stomach. Mello narrowed his eyes at him, and shifted his posture slightly into what Light now knew was his various of squaring himself, making himself look bigger defensively.

“What about me?” Mello demanded, blue eyes flashing brightly.

“Do you really feel comfortable going out on the street like that?” Light asked, crossing his arms. “Aren’t you worried you’ll be harassed?”

“If I am, I’ll kick their ass.”

“And if that isn’t an option?”
“There’s no situation where it wouldn’t be.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Light countered vehemently, fed up with Mello’s casual patronization, “You know what I mean. Don’t pretend like it’s not a possibility. What if you can’t control yourself? What if you set off a rut, and the rut sets off your heat, and you can’t help yourself?”

“No matter our second genders,” Mello bit out, “We can all control our actions. No matter what I might desire in that moment, I can always say no, and an Alpha can always understand the meaning of it.”

Light raised his eyebrows. “A lot of people would beg to differ.”

“That law means well,” Mello shrugged, “but it implies that Alphas have more control of their impulses than Omegas. Many countries are looking to amend their laws in regards to that.”

“Japan isn’t.” Light felt the space between his own eyebrows crease at the news. The law had been imposed in the 60s, for the protection of Omegas in practically every developed country. While the concept had received considerable critique over the years, Light had never before had a significant interest in whether or not the law was fair or sound.

“But then, he supposed, L had technically broken that law the evening after his confinement, or bent it at the very least. Light had had less control over himself than usual, but could he have told L to leave? Probably. He couldn’t remember everything clearly, but that had more to do with exhaustion than and sort of stupor. His body’s urgency Did that make L’s actions right? Light couldn’t be certain, and he didn’t have the time or interest to wax philosophic with Mello, but -

It hadn’t felt wrong.

“We aren’t animals, no matter how much our second genders resemble them biologically,” Mello tapped his temple and released a harsh breath of frustration.

“That’s why I’ve learned to overcome mine,” Light answered firmly.
“It’s not something to overcome, Yagami,” Mello gestured sharply with his hands. “Our minds and bodies can coexist. You’re….you’re smothering yourself. Have you even seen a doctor about this?”

“That isn’t for you to know.”

“This isn’t a disability, you know.”

This again? It’s a statistical fact that Alphas and Omegas are more prone to brilliance, blah, blah, fucking blah. I have no interest in hearing about your speculations. You lived in an orphanage - Alphas and Omegas are more fertile and therefore have a higher chance of unwanted pregnancy and therefore abandonment.

“I’m not sure why you’re deluded enough to think that everyone wants to be just like you, Mello,” Light shot back, out of patience. “But if I’ll be the one to break it to you, if I must. You’re wrong. I’m perfectly healthy, and more than happy with the way I’ve handled my gender.”

“Yagami -”

“And if you asked me to stay so that you could give me life advice, and can assure you that I don’t need any such thing, especially from you.”

“I fucked something up good,” Mello said, raking his fingers through his hair harshly. While he wasn’t flushed just yet, there were nuances that Light now picked up on, like that motion. Mello was subconsciously providing himself with sensory stimulation.

“Why?” was all Light could think to say. He wouldn’t be so curious as to ask what Mello had fucked up, exactly, but asking how it was relevant to him seemed safe enough.

“Oh, you know what they say,” Mello gave him a tight smile. “One should stick to one’s strengths.”

The self-deprecating statement was unlike Mello, and a little too telling for Light’s liking. He didn’t want to think about what Mello meant by that, or why there was a strangely soft (soft? Mello had never been soft in his presence) melancholy in the curve of his lips. Something that was like nostalgia but not quite grew within Light’s chest, but he didn’t like it, didn’t understand it, couldn’t control it,
and so he smothered that too.

“...I’m going to go now,” Light finally said, turning away once more before the sense of foreboding that Mello had sparked in the base of his stomach could assert itself even more.

_Pity. I just pity him because he’s about to go into heat. There’s nothing more to it than that._

“Wait.”

Light paused again when Mello spoke up, but didn’t turn back to him just yet. Mello grated on his nerves on good days, which this clearly was not. Even during their body language lesson, he’d been more talkative and more irritating than usual.

“ _What, Mello?_ ” Light said, mouth set. “I have no interest or need for your little ‘nuggets of guidance’.”

“I’m just trying to say, ” Mello answered, voice a little more under control this time. “I think we’re - sort of similar, in a way, and if -”

_Similar? You and me? I’ve never heard something so far from the truth._

“If you have something good, with L, there’s no reason for you to do this to yourself -”

“That’s enough,” Light interjected coolly, “You’re being unprofessional.”

“Damn straight, Yagami, this isn’t about our fucking _professions._ ”

“That is the only jurisdiction you have when it comes to me,” Light started deliberately for the door, and this time shut it behind him before Mello could get out anything more than “ _Yagami -_”

However inappropriate and uninvited Mello’s counsel had been that evening, it had planted an insidious seed in his head that over the next several days began to sprout. Roots sunk into his brain, making him wonder, making him consider L, to linger on him and the possibilities he presented a
little longer than he might have otherwise..

Things with L had been good.

It was nothing that he would talk to Mello about. It was hardly something that he allowed himself to admit to himself, not if he didn’t want the very presence of the man grow daunting.

It slipped into his head occasionally in the middle of the night when the glare of the laptop screen against L’s face in the middle of the night painted him blue, when the gentle tapping of his elegant fingers against the keys like rain had started to lull him to sleep.

Just...good.

Better than he could have possibly foreseen. Part of him had expected it all to blow up on his face when he’d approached him that morning, or soon after. True relationships had never been an issue before, and he suspected that with anyone else it would have never worked out. There was a reason that he had suspected for most of his life that he wasn’t made for romantic relationships, but with L it had been consistently effortless.

Even when they fought, generally over L’s defeatist attitude or Light’s (alleged) pretension, their mutual intensity made it almost fun. Anger (real anger, not the vague, diluted annoyance he felt toward the successors, or his sister or Matsuda) was exhilarating; even the worst moments with L were appealing, bright vestiges of passion and color and fun in what had always been an overcast reality.

So he gave the notion a trial period.

He took stock of his situation, of the case, evaluated every stipulation he'd made for himself and assessed his options. Every private rule had been followed, every internal ‘i’ dotted, and so there were no excuses he could logically believe. he was adept at self-deception, but for some reason - perhaps because he and L had both been practicing honesty when it came to one another - he could not manage to think of a reason not to give this a chance.

Light had given himself rules, as he was prone to do, to keep himself on track, to keep himself safe. True, he had broken the law by keeping his second gender from the government, and from the NPA in particular, but that had been entirely for himself, for his quality of life.
Besides, recent experiences had given him new insight on rule-breaking. As the days passed and not a single one of L’s kisses grew stale, he found himself wanting to break a rule, rather than doing so out of self-preservation.

The regulation he had given himself at a sixteen, for the sake of his life and his career and his self-respect.

Somehow L had wedged himself into the minute crack in Light’s resolve, and in doing so had become a unique part of it. Of him. He could keep all the things he had always been afraid to lose, and have L too. Light enjoyed his company and his touch, but more importantly, he trusted L.

Possibly with his life, but almost certainly with his dignity.

So.

...So.

Light had plenty of time to mull it over at work. Nothing magically became busier, and the more interviews Ryuga did while known criminals dropped in their usual way, the more crime seemed to drop. He spent most of his time either doing paperwork, talking to petty criminals and finding ways to pass the time with Matsuda.

The man had talked him into playing card games, then hang man and even chess on his desktop computer. To Matsuda’s merritt, he was a good sport about losing.

Too much of his day was spent clicking through news articles to keep on top of the Kira case even while he couldn’t actively be working on it. They didn’t trust the Japanese government not to monitor the computer activity, and they couldn’t risk their undercover operative getting caught doing more than that. Other than filing a few reports, for shoplifting and public indecency and a few other mild misdemeanors, Light found himself with inordinate amount of free time to think about whether or not she should go through with it.

Will there ever be a better time? If this Gala leads to catching Kira, perhaps, but is that a realistic expectation?

Light straightened the ballpoint pen that his father had given him for his twenty-first birthday so that
it was parallel to his stack of completed paperwork. He tapped his fingers idly against the desk, looking at the burner phone that he had placed on its surface.

Don’t be a coward. It probably isn’t healthy, and now that there’s L, is there a reason not to? Other than admitting that you trust him enough to consider it - but he’s admitted worse to you. You still have the upper hand.

At this point, because the decision was at the forefront of his brain, he was really just embarrassing himself. He’d made his mind up already, hadn’t he? Now there was just saying it. He was certain L wouldn’t say no; in fact, the man would probably be touched, or something.

I might as well do it over the phone. There was no need to subject himself to a visual of L giving whatever mawkish expression he might give when he asked. Calling one another while I’m at work has become pretty standard anyway. If I delay it any further, I might -

Light snatched up the phone, flipped it open, and dialed the number he’d memorized with his thumb.

It rang too loudly in his ear, and Light glanced at the door of his office, at the shuffle of other officers through the clear panes as they went about whatever work was left to do as the day closed. Another ring, and Light held it a couple inches away from his ear.

The ringing stopped, indicating that L had answered.

“Light. You called me,” L stated, then asked. “Are you drunk again?”

Light gave a short, dry laugh.

“No.”

“I thought not. Though, considering your current workload, it would probably pass the time.”

Light let the silence hang there for another moment, cursing himself as he straightened a stack of paperwork on his desk that had been slightly askew.
“...I've been thinking.”

“You are prone to that, yes.”

Light rolled his eyes. “Shut up.”

“That was a compliment, you realize.”

“I know.”

“Then why are you angry?”

“I’m not.”

“You sound angry.”

“I’m not,” Light snapped irritably. “Will you let me say what I was going to say?”

“You still sound angry.”

“I’m still not. As if this isn’t difficult enough without you being pedantic -”

“What, exactly, is difficult enough?”

“That’s what I was trying to get out, but you keep digressing.”

“I’m don’t.”
“You do,” Light rolled his eyes, looking up at the ceiling of his office and grasping at the threads of his bravery and patience. “Perhaps I’ll change my mind.”

“Don’t,” L said simply, “Tell me.”

It was so earnest that Light was a bit miffed that he hadn’t given him a reason to change his mind, or at least delay his request. *You could stand to be less accommodating.*

“...Next month Mello and Near will be taking time off around the same time for their heats.”

“We’re close to having everything ready now. We’re trying to have as many nations secured onto our side as possible, but all the serious work should be completed by then.”

“I know,” Light sighed, sure his jaw was going to ache by the end of this conversation if L kept making him gnaw his teeth. “That’s not why I brought it up.”

“Ah.” Light could practically see L giving his curious blink. “Why did you, then?”

“If half of our team is going on vacation anyway that week,” Light began slowly, treading as lightly as possible, drawing a circle around his true request. “...They won’t miss us, if we are too.”

There was a significant pause, in which Light refused to look anywhere but at his hands. His watch, specifically, though the minute hand seemed to blur when he stared too hard. The word *we* had fallen off his tongue without resistance, which left Light feeling even more out of sorts than he had while trying to work up the nerve to ask.

A silence hung there for one, two, three, f-

“Yes.”

“Yes?” Light echoed back without any particular tonality. “Did you actually -”

“Yes.” L confirmed simply and without hesitation, so uninhibitedly that Light couldn’t help but be
suspicious. Did you expect this? I haven’t given anything away. There’s no reason you should have thought I’d change my mind. “I understand what you’re alluding to, and my answer is yes.”

“I’m not alluding,” Light defended, frowning slightly. “Did you know I was going to ask?”

“I hoped you would.”

“Don’t say it like that. I’m just being practical.”

“I didn’t say anything in any particular way.” L answered lightly, in that unrepentant way that he often did when he knew he’d done something cheesy.

“You did,” Light scowled, his entire being torn between relief and anxiety. It was my idea. I wouldn’t have put up with it if it weren’t. Even so, it would have been easier to justify if I could grudgingly accept. “I want to be in my best physical condition when I go to Kira’s mansion. It’s just a fact that my body will be at its best if I’ve had a recent heat.”

“Practical as always, Light.”

“Ryuzaki.”

“Oh, look, something requires my immediate attention,” L declared suddenly, taking on a little of his Ryuzaki persona suddenly. “I must hang up now.”

“I swear to God,” Light muttered, running a hand over his face at the affected inflection.

“See you soon.”

“...See you.”

Click.
A/N: Relatively quick update! This chapter was kind of feelsy too, at least for me. I hope you enjoyed it, you know, in a suffering-type way. Next chapter will be the chapter that a lot of people have been waiting for - the one where Light goes into heat on purpose, with L. It’s definitely not going to be all sex, but that will be probably ⅓ of it or so - but the focus is going to be more on them as characters and their emotional development.

Sexuality in the Omegaverse:

Gay: Alpha/Alpha, Omega/Omega or same first gender Betas. For example, Near is almost entirely attracted to other Omegas, so even though he is Agender (which applies only to first gender, typically, and specifically in Near’s case) he would be considered gay.

Queer: Generally reserved for people who don’t quite fit in other categories fully. For example, Matsuda is attracted solely to other Omegas, or Beta Females. Some might argue that this is just gay, or just bi, but it’s mostly a blanket term for anything that isn’t straight.

Bisexual: Omegas that date Omegas, Alphas, or either binary gender in Betas, and Alphas that date either Alphas, Omegas, or either binary gender in Betas. Betas that date Alphas, Omegas or other Betas. L is Bisexual, and is attracted to Omegas and Betas (with no preference for first gender).

Straight: Alpha/Omega, Beta Female/Beta Male. Typically male/female no matter the second gender, so an Alpha Male and a Beta Female (like Raye and Naomi), or vice versa, would be considered straight, but it depends on the country. Some places classify that under Queer. For example, Naomi is straight, in that she likes only those that identify as male, but she is apathetic to second gender. Also, in this world, L/Light is considered to be a heterosexual relationship in virtually every culture.

Pan and Ace are basically the same as in our universe. Mello is Pan, and as such is attracted to all genders and all second genders. Matt is Ace, as has been discussed, but probably Panromantic or at least Biromantic. I hope this clears a few things up about my Omegaverse and gives you a little more insight into certain characters as well.

Lastly, you may have noticed that genders like Near and Mello’s only seem to apply to first genders. That’s on purpose. There are people that are born Omegas but are transAlphas, and vice versa, etc., but because they make up a very small percentage of Trans people, who make up a very small percentage of the overall population, they are even further behind first gender Transgender rights. They are generally considered attention seekers and weirdos, even within the Trans community, and in many cases people don’t even realize they exist.

The reason for this has to do with the fact that second genders kind of eclipse first genders (in some societies more than others). This is why Omega men are treated pretty much the same way Beta women are treated (or cis women in our world). Second genders are considered even more ingrained than first genders, and so it tends to be difficult for people to wrap their heads around the idea that someone who is physically Beta could be a transAlpha or transOmega (or for someone that is physically Omega to
be a transAlpha or transBeta, or vice versa)

I don’t want to go overboard here, but people have been asking a lot about gender and sexuality within the Omegaverse, so I wanted to give you guys a little of what I’ve decided on.

All that being said, I’d love to know how this chapter made you feel, what your favorite moments, thoughts, dialogue and such were. I’ve started on the next chapter already, but I’m not sure when that will be posted.

Thanks again for all your support. :)
“When you are near me, as now, it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame... I am afraid that cord of communion will be snapt; and then I've a nervous notion I should take to bleeding inwardly.” -Charlotte Bronte

“It was a good idea to keep the video games.”

“Why do you say that?” Light inquired, turning on his side to look at L straight on as they lay in bed, no longer quite breathless but still too relaxed and warm from climax to wrap his head around why L had said something so random. Though he had a feeling it had to do with the planned heat, simply because L had been spouting random ideas ever since Light had proposed it the week before.

“It will help pass the time while we’re waiting for things to start.”

As I assumed. I suppose there’s no need to complain. Some of his ideas are over the top, but ultimately useful. Light thought.

He looked over L at the refrigerator that had been delivered the day after his phone call. Useful, but I can’t help but think there was an ulterior motive. He’s going to get a great deal of use out of it that has nothing to do with my heats. He’s probably just been looking for an excuse to keep cake and other various sweets in the bedroom for easy access.

“‘Things to start’, Light snorted amusedly, “Very delicate.”
“Delicacy is my forte, as you well know.” L said with a completely straight face, and Light was annoyed at the ease in which a smile pulled at his lips.

“Of course,” Light scoffed, turning away to get comfortable. “How could I forget?”

The question reminded him of his watch, of the mysterious paper that held a part of his memory captive.

The closer the Gala came, the more often he became taken over by the idea that he would be meeting Kira face-to-face. He’d never been a fan of his movies or television shows - but then, Light had never been a lover of film - now he found himself well acquainted with Kira’s mannerisms, with his face, and voice. Sayu was preparing to finish her degree, and so she was coming to assist them less, but in general L’s headquarters had been bustling with work. This often included watching whatever interview Ryuga decided to appear in. Occasionally Misa or Takada would accompany him, but never had they all three appeared together since the initial Kira interview.

L appeared at his shoulder, and even though occasionally L’s elbows or knees would dig into him - he really was mostly sharp angles and protruding bones - Light didn’t entirely mind. The night terrors had faded to almost nothing over the past couple months. He thought it might be in part because he and L shared a bed; he’d grown used to the weight of him, to his presence, to the point where that had become his new standard for normalcy.

“What is it?” Light asked, turning his head slightly to look at the detective where he was hovering at his shoulder.

“Nothing.”

L stole a kiss and shifted in the dark; Light had learned to recognize the motion as a shrug. He was glad that he hadn’t decided to say ‘I love you’ - though he thought it might have been implied. Luckily L seemed to understand enough not to overuse the statement.

“You should have kept the car, too.”

“Good night, L.”

“It has nothing to do with your heat -”
“I know,” Light interrupted, rolling his eyes, and shrugging to make L stop digging his chin into his shoulder. “You just wanted to pout about me returning the car, again.”

“I’m not pouting, Light, when I’m pouting I make a face like this -”

“Good night.”

- - - -

There was a buzzing energy that verged on nervousness in the air when they shut themselves in their quarters that first afternoon. L didn’t dare ask if Light was nervous, because he knew he must be, and bringing it up would do him more harm than good. It might, in fact, bring up L’s own anxious energy.

He’d read quite a bit in the last few weeks about how to make a heat go smoothly, and most experts agreed that the emotions in the beginning set the tone for the entire ordeal. Both of Light’s previous heats had started out stressful, and L was determined not to let this one begin the same way.

L tapped his fingers against his knee as he watched Light set out their robes and towels for after their bath.

*He skipped his morning dose. I can’t smell him yet though. It took a few hours last time, but will it be more gradual when he’s in a safe atmosphere? Or will having an Alpha in close quarters speed it up, alternatively?*

All there was now was to wait.

The arrangements had been made. They’d secured teams in Canada, Australia, France, India and a tentative South American partnership that Matt was still working on. The arrangements for their separate flights to and from California had been made, and they’d all gone through the plan in detail to make sure it went smoothly and safely. L had flown in Wedy and Aiber so that they could all be assigned their various roles in the upcoming espionage, and they’d all gone over their parts the day before to make sure everyone was up to speed.

With only two weeks left until the Gala, there was nothing for them to do but monitor the situation until their respective heats were over with. Though their biology could be a setback, Light hadn’t been completely exaggerating when he’d mentioned an Omega was in peak health after a heat.
Mello had gone off two days before to do whatever it was Mello did each month, and Near had sequestered himself on his floor with an American Beta man that he’d flown in to assist him. Though L had done his due diligence with the man’s background check, he had otherwise opted out of whatever drama was occurring between his successors. Stephen, as Near had deemed the stranger for privacy purposes, was a colleague on their Canadian team that Near knew from his past projects. As far as L could tell, their relationship didn’t appear to be anything more than that.

*Though, L considered, I’m not sure Near would act much differently if it were. His interactions with Mello and Matt are the friendliest I’ve seen. There’s not a fair comparison for anyone else.*

Light maintained top priority in his mind, however, which was how Light seemed to like it. Even if he and Mello had worked together for the sake of the Kira Case, there was still an underlying resentment there. Matt and Near seemed content to go about their work without any guidance from him whatsoever, which was for the best.

L didn’t really have time to coddle his successors, but if he’d had the inclination, Light’s apparent jealousy (it pleased L vaguely to think of it that way) would have persuaded him. They were good at their respective jobs, but L hardly counted them as friends.

He had only one friend.

Said friend was currently sorting through the videogames that they’d never gotten around to returning, setting aside the ones that he considered interesting enough to try out later on when they got bored waiting. The only thing Light had actually returned in the end was the car, though he still commented from time to time about how ridiculous the cost of the presents had been.

It was a compliment, coming from Light. L had learned his little tricks and had found alcoves of fondness in even the harsher words. Light didn’t wear his heart on his sleeve, but L was figuring out how to unfold him carefully.

*Admittedly, I wasn’t expecting for him to want to go through heat so soon, but it’s not as though I could hesitate to agree when he did. He hasn’t appeared to second guess himself at any point - but, knowing Light, would that even be an option for him?*

“You’re seriously just going to sit there and watch me play?”

L glanced over from where he was sitting, leaning against the headboard. Light was glancing over his shoulder as he started to unbutton his shirt, signalling that a bath was soon to follow.

Part of L perked at the idea suddenly, realizing that once the scent blockers were gone, he’d be able to smell Light’s unadulterated scent for the first time in quite a while. L knew if he looked too excited at the idea, Light would withdraw so as not to please L too much, so he kept his face unreadable.

“Should I not?”

“I don’t care, particularly,” Light waved a hand dismissively. “But I would have no interest in watching other people play videogames - surely you’d rather take a turn?”
L’s lips tugged upwards at the corners.

“I’m not very good.”

Light draped his robe over his arm and frowned. *I highly doubt that,* his pursed lips seemed to say.

“You can’t amuse yourself some other way?”

“I’m sure I will be plenty amused,” L informed him flatly, shifting forward to get off the bed. His own robe was on the floor somewhere and he figured it was about time to fetch it.

“What does that mean?” Light asked him, raising his eyebrows knowingly.

“Nothing,” L said quickly, plucking up his robe from the side of the bed as he stood. It wasn’t a well-kept secret that L found the fact that Light enjoyed playing video games strangely adorable, considering how adult he tried to appear in every other aspect of his image. He didn’t have to look up to know Light was scowling.

“I can take my bath without you, you realize.”

“You can,” L agreed, “You are perfectly capable. But do you want to?”

Light turned toward the bathroom pointedly. “I think I might be able to suffer through it.”

Reading that as Light’s version of a ‘no’, L padded after him into the bathroom, and hid another grin when Light allowed it. *Still not quite predictable - I’m just getting good at calling your bluffs.*

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“If you start quoting that article again, I will get out of this bath.”

“You keep threatening that, but you seem comfortable to me.”

“I won’t be if you start reciting ‘facts about heat’ again.” Although he could only see the back of Light’s head, L could tell he was being scowled at. “Where did you learn all that nonsense anyway, *Cosmo*?”

*Can I be blamed for doing my research?* L felt another pout coming on, though he can’t help but be a little amused at Light’s frustration with him, even if he can tell it’s rooted in shame.
But, with you, Light, things often are. For once this is an area that neither of us have experience in. I suspect that was part of your reasoning when you were deciding whether or not to ask this of me.

“...Omega-centered magazines may have been in the pool of research, yes,” L admitted, running a loofa down the length of Light’s arm and over his shoulders. There was definition in his form that had not been there a couple months previously, and it did not go unnoticed.

Instead of lingering too long on the finer contours of Light’s body, which had already been top tier - L was almost certain Light was becoming more attractive just to mess with him - he moved to washing Light’s hair.

“Right, real quality source material there.” Light scoffed at him. L could practically feel his eye roll through his skull, which was now resting against the palm of L’s hand as he lathered shampoo into the tresses.

As nonchalant as Light insisted on being, L knows he likes this. He’d never allow anything he didn’t like, unless it was to make a point, and there was none to be made in the indulgence that kept L kneading his fingers into Light’s scalp.

“Some of it was useful,” L insisted, and dragged his fingers over Light’s scalp firmly, raking in smooth lines down to the nape of his neck.

It wasn’t the first time L had done such a thing, but he suspected that Light’s lack of suppressants as a buffer at the moment made the reaction worse. L could feel every muscle in Light’s back and shoulders loosen and every fissure of tension turned to silk against his chest. There was also a shift in the air that the Alpha within him latched onto, made him curl a little closer to Light, pressing his lips to his shoulder as he tightened his fingers just a bit.

A small sound formed in Light’s chest, a feral little thing that wanted to scratch it’s way free and L wanted him to let it. Light bit it back, as he was prone to do in all things.

“Good?”

“Sh- hn,” L savored the falter for as long as he could, which was approximately two seconds before Light maneuvered his elbow into L’s ribs. “Shut up.”
“Ow.” Even though the pain of the jab, L was left with an acute sense of satisfaction as he reached for the conditioner.

It wasn’t as though Light played video games all the time, or even very often, but there’s something about them that holds his attention like TV shows and movies just hadn’t. It probably had something to do with their competitive nature, because without something to personally strive for, Light really didn’t see the point. It’s not something he shared with most people, though he was sure his sister remembered their Mario Kart days during summer breaks.

After about an hour and a half of Light playing, his fingers have decided they don’t want to work properly anymore. At least not in the exacting fashion that they must to effectively shoot zombies.

Light tossed the controller to the other end of the bed and leaned more fully against the headboard. I’m certainly feeling warmer, and clearly my faculties are weakening, but it doesn’t feel the same as before. L’s scent really must be working.

L looked up from his laptop, tilting his head at him curiously.

“Do you feel it?” L inquired, assessing him shamelessly.

“Yeah,” Light confirmed, rolling his shoulders and straightening his robe over himself. He hadn’t begun to secrete slick just yet, so there was still time. “It’s not bad, but I think I should find something less interactive to do.”

“We could watch something,” L proposed, clicking his laptop shut and reaching for the remote.

“Not yet,” Light informs him, finding himself a little too interested in the lines of L’s forearms. He’s always been too skinny, and it’s become more noticeable the more toned Light becomes from his training with Naomi, but there were still firm, wiry muscles beneath L’s skin that called to him out of nowhere.

“We could...watch something,” L repeats a few minutes later, blinking at him as though he had only
just come up with the idea, “Not that shooting zombies isn’t romantic.”

Light sighed tolerantly and found himself smiling. “Perhaps the news? We should keep up with what Hideki is doing, as much as we can, so we don’t have a week’s worth of information to catch up on when we get out of here.”

“I find the promise of catching Kira to be very romantic. The news it is, then.”

“...After I beat this level.”

“Of course.”

- - -

“You’re beginning to become distracting.” Light tells him without looking up from the screen. It had been another hour since Light had presented his stipulation of ‘beating this level’ and he had long since done so. Looking up from his computer at Light to monitor him had made L well aware of the distraction they were both presenting to one another, long before Light had chosen to acknowledge it.

Light’s scent had grown stronger with every minute that passed. There was no definable aroma, exactly, something that was on the cusp of being fire, or honey, or peppermint, or -

No, it was indescribable.

All L could say for sure that it was warm and lovely and welcoming, but yet still not quite all that. It wasn’t calming him, it was igniting him, working it’s talons into every muscle in his body, every cranny of his mind.

“I see,” L pretended to mull it over. “Perhaps we should sit closer.”

Light glanced at him, then at their thighs which were already touching, then away, then sniped a few
more of his undead enemies.

“We’re right beside one another.”

“I mean you should sit here,” L told him pointedly, shifting his legs open a bit more as he did so.

“... You want me to sit in your lap?”

“No, just here.” L motioned to the space of mattress between his legs. “For now.”

“For now.” Light clarified, smirking slightly as he paused his game to, L hoped, do as he’d been told. Such fanciful things did happen on occasion. “So you do want me to sit in your lap, in the future.”

“Suffice to say,” L gave a little grin as he leaned back in invitation, his tone mostly casual, but with a hint of something lower, warmer rumbling beneath it. “I have not entirely ruled it out.”

“Your fine motor skills are starting to fail you.”

Light scowled at the observation, tightening his grip on the controller at first, though at this point he knew there was no point in denying it. What purpose would that serve? This was what he’d wanted. He was ready for it, but there were still mental tics that had him shying away from loss of control that he was about to subject himself to.

*Why are you doing this again? No, don’t bother with that, you’re just getting cold feet. There’s no use for that, not when there’s nothing you can do about it. It’s already in the process, there’s no stopping it now.*

“I’m well aware,” Light informed him, more curtly than he’d meant to. L seemed not to notice, or at
least paid it no mind, though his arms - already linked around Light’s waist - did tighten just barely.

“Perhaps we should watch something instead.”

L followed up the question by pressing hot kisses to the line of Light’s throat, easing the robe over so that he could paint a line over to the curve of his shoulder. The first uncensored thought blinked in his head, something about L’s mouth, his teeth, in proximity to his throat. Light wouldn’t let his thoughts travel to the word ‘bond’, he would chop the notion down before it had fully formed.

“Are you trying to speed it up?” Light hissed at him, shrugging his shoulder up into L’s mouth and knocking his mouth away from him. You’re the one that’s insisting we go slow, for my ‘health’, you teasing bastard.

“I’m not,” L grumbled, setting his chin on Light’s shoulder innocently.

“Right,” Light scoffed, then tossed his controller to the side as one of L’s hands slipped inside his robe, stroking the palm of his hand down the front of his chest. “You killed me, by the way.”

“You were barely keeping the controller in your hands.”

Light didn’t appreciate the exaggeration, but was consoled when he noticed that the hand on his chest followed him when he shifted back, into L’s chest, trembling and seeking skin automatically. Appeased for the time being, Light settled back against his chest and gestured with one of his own anxious hands toward the remote.

“Go on, then. Turn on the news.”

It was just a little sensation, but Light thought he felt L smile against his neck and give a low sound of approval as he reached for the remote to do just that.

- 

- 

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“L.”

“Hm?”

“... It’s starting to ache.”

“Already?” L asked, only mildly surprised. “How much slick have you - ?”

“Can you stop saying things like that?” Light hissed, moving to elbow L again for the second time that day.

This time L closed his hand around his upper arm to stop him, and slipped the other beneath Light’s robe, past his half hard erection and between his legs. His hand cupped his sac gently, making Light’s hips jolt toward the bold touch. His true reasoning was to check on just how ready his body was, curling his fingers down and around to press against his sphincter. There was only the very slightest wetness trickling from him, not nearly enough to warrant an early start.

“You’ve only just begun,” L said as delicately as he could, rubbing soothing circles around. A hot stone seemed to drop into his stomach when Light’s legs twitched open wider for him, but L grit his teeth hard to stop himself from enjoying the sight too thoroughly. “We need to be slow about this. The first wave sets the pace for the rest of them. If we go too quickly, the other waves will come more quickly-”

“What ever,” Light snapped, “There will be less recovery time. I get it, that doesn’t make it hurt any less.”

Using the word ‘hurt’ was low. The biological instinct to protect an Omega, his Omega (no, not his, not yet, not really, get your head out of your ass), made L instinctively cringe at the idea.

“Soon,” L promised, kissing the nape of Light’s neck and then resting his chin on his shoulder as the next installment of the early evening news began to play.
It was another hour before Light was cursing at L to do *something* before he crawled out of his own god damned skin entirely. A massage had helped, making out had helped, but each little distraction had only forestalled the inevitable. The ache had climbed to a throbbing need that was licking up into the core of him.

“Let me just - you don’t have to *move*, but if I don’t have *something* I’m going to -”

“Alright, hush, it’s fine - here, lift up, *up* -”

The feeling of L slowly sinking inside nearly left Light’s vision going dark, the fullness reached into the baser places in his mind, in his soul. The stretch of the invasion left him with a sensation like a sated irritation, a balm to his insides, which were growing greedier by the second.

*Oh, god. I’m done for.* The thought bolted across his mind, and he immediately crushed it. *No, you’re not, just keep grounding yourself, you’ll be you, he’ll be him, it’ll all be -*

Light sunk his nails into L’s arm as his grip tightened and a strangled moan working itself out of his mouth as a hot line of pleasure shot through him when the length of him passed over his prostate.

“Easy now-” L wasn’t entirely sure if he was speaking in response to the (*needy*) vault of Light’s hips, or his own rising animal, which was transfixed by the onslaught of sensations. Light’s precious moan, his quivering legs, the way he *smelled*, the way he was opening up for him, nice and slow and - deep, *fuck.*

It took several moments for him to help guide Light’s hips down at the right pace, angling himself so that Light could sit in his lap, fully seated. Slick already coated Light on the inside, and L was very close to giving a thrust, just one, just to *feel* him.

The muscles hugging his cock spasmed, and L felt a want so fierce rise in him that it was very nearly rage.
“You back?”

He blinked hard and narrowed in on Light’s voice, following it back to a calmer place.

“Yes,” L confirmed breathlessly, forcing his eyes to focus on the anchorwoman on the screen so that his head would clear, so that he could keep up this stalling until it was right, until it was perfect -

“You?”

“Yeah,” Light agreed, nodding and holding onto L tighter. “Don’t...don’t move. Not for a while. I’ll...I think I’ll snap if you do.”

“No moving.” L gave a small nod, and spent the next half hour silently demanding that his body loosen up, but the tension in preparation for more pleasure wouldn’t leave him so easily.

“Now?”

“Yes, I’m moving - easy,” L hissed, voice growing deeper in a fashion that nearly had Light bucking back onto him. His long fingers wrapped around Light’s hips and held tight to resist it. “Easy.”

“It’s been hours,” Light started to snarl, but it ended as a whimper instead. The ache within him had only increased, and though it seemed to be doing so at a smoother and more tolerable pace than he had experienced during his other two heats, that still didn’t make it appealing.

“You’re exaggerating, Light, just lean back against me, calm do -”
“If you tell me to calm down again, I swear to God, L -”

“What?” L muttered against his ear, wrapping his arms around Light’s chest and pulling him closer, pressing his chest to Light’s back. Light thought he was still too skinny, but right now the hard plane of his chest felt absolutely perfect. “What will you do?”

“Shu…” Light trailed off when L rolled his hips slowly, soothing the greedy throb that was driving him mad slightly. “Will you just...I want -”

“I know,” L kissed his neck languidly and spoke quietly into the skin. “But this has to be good. You can’t get frantic, or else I’ll get frantic and I’m…” There was a low, tight sound in the back of L’s throat.

“You’re what?” Light baited him.

“This feels good, doesn’t it?”

Another smooth little shift, deep and lovely and hot, but not enough. L knew it wasn’t enough, but there was a part of him that was found the idea of giving them just enough movement to sustain themselves rather appealing. It would take ages for either of them to finish, but L could have him squirming against him for ages and eventually Light’s defenses would have to wear down from pure exhaustion.

Not the most practical idea, L decided, but pressed upward again, so imperceptibly that it may have gone unnoticed if they were not both in such a state of hypersensitivity.

“Y...hn.” Light clutched L’s wrists and tried to press down into him, but the position didn’t allow him much control of his hip movement. Which had been L’s plan in the first place. While he did so adore having Light face to face so he could catch every hue of blush, every crease in his face when it scrunched -

This position was what made Light the most comfortable, and it was the most comfortable for
knotting anyway.

Knotting.

Nope. No. No, don’t let yourself get ahead. Enjoy this part too.

“Try not to think about this, watch the movie, or close your eyes and breathe,” L told him next, and Light wanted to put an elbow in his ribs.

Again.

“You close your eyes and breathe!” Light snarled, digging his nails into L’s arms. It was immature, he was well aware, but every cell in his body was straining to get closer, to move more, to just everything - more.

“Do you think it’s not difficult for me?” L demanded, tightening his hold to trap him, to keep him still, to absolutely torture him. It might as well be. His mouth was on his throat, pressing a firm kiss there and holding his lips there in a tense line. Light remembered in that instant that there were teeth behind those lips.

I wonder if he’s thinking about -

No! Of course he is, but that doesn’t mean you should think on it. He hasn’t even put his teeth to you, get a hold of yourself. He’s barely moved, he probably doesn’t even need to yet.

“Not as difficult as it is for me .” His high-strung muscles were starting to relax, given they had little choice with L practically squeezing him into place, taking away what little movement he had gained. His body relaxed instinctively under the more aggressive tactic, which irked Light, but not with near enough intensity to make the urgency that was clawing up through him fade.

“Really ,” L drawled, dragging his mouth from his shoulder, closer to Light’s neck. “Have you seen you?”
A shiver clawed its way up through him, and Light found himself tilting his head to give L more access to the scent gland on the left side of his throat. It was decidedly the more intimate side, the one that was favored when it came to mating. His neck seemed to throb, a quiet pulse of discomfort that wanted pressure, wanted teeth -

"We talked about this, he would never bite me, I don’t want it, want it, want it WANT-

Light sucked in a sharp breath, and held it until his brain restarted.

“Alright?”

“Are you going to ask that every five minutes?”

“Until the capacity leaves me,” L confirmed, a gentle rumble forming in his chest as he spoke.

Before Light could tell him to stop it with the fucking growling if he really wanted him to be still, L was pressing his hips up a little more insistently, though he reigned in the motion before it could quite be a thrust. Light’s hands fell from his forearms down at his sides to and he grasped L’s thighs, pulling at him to increase contact.

- 

“Light,” L groaned in warning.

“L,” Light bit back in an attempt at the same chastising tone he used on L when he was being difficult, but it ended up closer to a whine. His heels dug into the mattress and pushed himself back into L, deeper, again. L’s vision faded and his mind flickered in and out, but Light himself remained the trail of breadcrumbs that lead him back.

“I want to keep you.”

The words came out of him before L quite knew what they meant, but after they were out he found
that they made sense, and summed up his thoughts on the matter quite nicely.

“I’m h-- here ,” Light insisted, voice breaking under his apparent strain.

“Want to keep you, you, want… you feel so -”

“I know,” came Light’s breathless response, L’s own strain reflected back at him in that voice. “I...me too, I’m here , I’m...I’m me , I just -”

That reassurance was enough to sate L for now. Light was here, and his, and gorgeous and everything . His hips ground up against the back Light’s thighs, his fingers digging into Light’s flesh as he reached with every part of himself to get deeper, closer, just more.

Light only half understood L’s meaning. While he was sure his intentions were good, Light thought he might actually fall through L and back against the headboard at this rate. He wanted the impossible, wanted every part of L against him, and the frustration that such a thing was physically impossible was endless.

“ Nn...now?” Light heard himself manage again, still with an underlying edge of command, though it had been partly overtaken by a tone that teetered on the edge of distress. In response, L gave him another seemingly calculated roll of his hips, this one pulling back just slightly before seeking depth again.

The little monster in Light’s brain purred, and then the real Light, the one clenching on L’s cock and rolling his hips back onto him and tugging at L’s thighs to pull him inside, that one did too.

Not really a purr ( god, Light would never forgive himself), but a keen that stretched from his core up through to his throat and onto his tongue. His head fell back onto L’s shoulder he held a sweet, strained note near L’s ear.

“ - alright -”
Light didn’t catch it the first time, which was just as well, because L repeated himself, lower.

“Alright.” L’s voice seemed as though it didn’t belong to him. A rumble that was almost harsh as it echoed in L’s chest and in Light’s ears. For that instant it was almost as if there was a stranger at his back. “Yeah, alright, now, Light-”

He was shifting now, moving them up and forward, and somehow Light’s body managed to move with him in all the right ways, then -

Oh, he was falling.

Light’s chest pressed to the mattress and for a split second, disoriented from the sharp motion of being pushed forward and from the decidedly other nature of L’s voice, he felt a tendril of panic.

It ran cold through him, a branching crack in his resolve.

Oh, god, I shouldn’t have done this, I can’t control this, I can’t be better than this-

Then -

“Alright?”

The splinters receded back in on themselves.

L’s voice was all his this time, and perhaps it always had been, but he knew now for sure. L was back, at his back, pressed as close as he could conceivably be. One of L’s hands was pressed to his shoulder to keep Light’s chest down, and the other was curled around his hip to keep his lower half up, but neither hold was particularly suffocating in nature.

“Light?”

He realized then that he’d never responded, and can’t quite remember the question.
L’s hands move together, palms sliding together to Light’s hips and then smoothing down the curve of his back and to his shoulders. Light’s thoughts devolved again, hoping one of them would put pressure on his neck, hoping they wouldn’t at the same time. The reaction in the bath had been surprising, not quite overwhelming, but at this rate his brain might actually melt out of his damned ears.

Instead L’s hands stroked down his sides as he mouthed the place between Light’s shoulder blades. Again, his mind begged for the mouth to move up just a few inches, to bite, bite, please, bite me, no one else would ever be enough, and then rear back again because, God, no, how could I have even entertained the idea, idiot, idiot -


There were too many threads in the sheets against his cheek, against his chest, against his knees. There were too many threads in his head, too, in the world, in the universe. Too much, too many, too -

“ - Yeah.”

“Yeah?” L echoed him, which was the only assurance Light had that the word had actually made it out of his head and into the air.

L’s hands moved again, sliding beneath him, raking lines up and down, in motions as easy and predictable as the ocean. On the third, or fourth motion (or fifth, or sixth, Light forgot what numbers were meant to signify somewhere along the way), L’s hips moved with his hands. He dragged his cock out of Light several inches as his hands pulled down across his ribs and down to his hips. The outward movement made Light’s skin flush down to his toes, but the inward thrust made him see white, made him twitch back to meet him with a gasp.

“L -” Light started, but there was no point, not really. He was so deep, so hot, so good, so much, everything was just more than what it should have been, every pixel of his consciousness magnified beyond what it was possible for any lone person to handle.

“I know -”

“Nhhh, f...fu-- uuck - ”
“I -hnn, I know ;” L confirmed, and pushed again, harder, then again, again. Words joined numbers in the limbo of Light’s brain and he quaked, crushing the sheets in his fists.

It was as though he existed in only what his senses could make tangible. There was just the feel of L’s skin, of the heat rushing through him, of the sound of L’s words and groans in his ear, just the scent of him, which pervaded every particle in the air, every morsel of himself engulfed in a scent that was both foreign and home. The movements bled into each other, each thrust leading to another, and another, and another.

The baseline of pleasure was already so high that Light fell into an orgasm before he had time to prepare for it. It left him gasping and shuddering, but left him high, higher than he should have been and ready for another. Logically, he knew this was common for Omegas in heat, but L had stolen his capacity for reason - obvious, obvious, but no less overwhelming for being so.

Light scrambled at the sheets for purchase and found L’s hand, or L found his - he couldn’t possibly be sure. He came again just minutes after the first, surely bruising their laced fingers, with a choked cry that misfired into a whimper halfway through.

Light forgot what it had been like to ache and have nothing, because L was there, L was it, L was everything -

“Light.” The voice in his ear clears a path in his mind. “I’m close.”

Close.

“But -hnn, you haven’t -” It was like an itch, a furious one that stretched all the way up his spine and into his brain. He gave a frustrated cry into the sheets and bore down, attempting to rock back onto him because how dare he act like this wasn’t the whole goddamn point -

“Easy... easy, ” L hushed, planting a firm hand on Light’s shoulder to keep him still as he moved in broad, slow motions to work Light open even further, holding himself back with every ounce of willpower he possessed.
The swell at the base of his cock pushed at the rim of Light’s opening, coated with enough slick to make L’s vision blur. L wanted to bury himself inside entirely, wanted to drive home -

“Just...just do it...just -”

Every distressed tic of Light’s hips threatened to be the end of L’s restraint, but he just held on a littler tighter, the hand at Light’s hips pulling him into a tighter arch to keep his quivering body in place.

“I am, be still, or it’ll -” At this rate L was trembling himself with the effort not to just buck to the hilt, because Light wanted it, didn’t he? Was demanding it of him, narrow hips yanking toward the pressure, but no - neither of them have done this before and if he ruins it, God, if he ruins it -

Light gave him a frustrated snarl, “You aren’t going to tear me, you idiot -”

He stopped short when L’s teeth raked over the curve of his shoulder, breath hitching audibly as he quaked beneath him. L nearly did it again just to garner a similar delicious reaction, but managed to remember the subject at hand.

“Are you saying you’re so wet I couldn’t hurt you if I tried? ”

- 

“I - no, that’s...not -” Light starts to mutter, feeling half infuriated and half abashed. The teeth dragged a hot line over the line of his shoulder, which didn’t help Light at all. A shiver ran up his spine and a keen worked itself up and off his tongue.

“I thought not.”

“I just - I want - ”

“I know,” L interjected lowly, pressing in a little more firmly. “Me too, just let me do it right, let me -”
“Just -” Light gasped as he felt himself easing up for the rest, for the knot that would seal them together for several minutes to come. Baser thoughts were all that were left in him, just crude and mindless chanting of needy words that he hoped didn’t make it off his tongue.

“Heard we go. Open up a little more, there we go, good -” L barely finished the consonant sound at the end of the word before it melted into a groan that filled Light’s head entirely. The moment of words, whatever those were, was gone as soon as he felt L seal him up.

A rush of warmth began to spread up and through him, and that was when Light’s brain short circuited. He knew only heat inside and L’s skin on his and a precious ache that asserted in him how very whole he was in that instant. He barely comprehended the shift when L pulled them onto their sides, but the palms stroking up and down his sides, his hips, and over his stomach slowly lulled him back to reality.

The sound of his own breathing came back to him first, then the gentle pulse of L still inside him. Each new crest had L’s arms tightening around him and aftershocks of pleasure shivering down Light’s spine.

At his ear was L’s mouth, working softly over the shell of flesh, laving hot lines beneath. His teeth sunk and scratched there, teasing him yet again with their proximity to his throat. The ministrations themselves might have had him squirming anew, if sleep had not claimed him first.

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An Omegist from Britain had written a book that L had skimmed during his research for this very occasion. She didn’t believe in suppressants, at least not unless there were health issues, and in general had many of the same opinions that Mello did on the matter.

L awoke in the middle of the night, as often happened, with something she had said on the brain. He traced the lines of Light’s shoulder blades, which were rising and falling gently with his shallow breaths.

“It is my belief that our heats and ruts do not change us at all. It merely exposes who we are; our biology, it’s extreme, it’s an acid that doesn't so much destroy our minds as clear away the corrosion.
It is the truest form of honesty that exists in our world, and something everyone should have the highest regard for."

*But then, if it is the nature of the person to censor themselves beyond what is reasonable, isn't the notion of them being honest to that degree a lie in itself?*

It wasn’t something L had a mind to linger over, but it still floated at the edge of his consciousness. He breathed the scent in and closed his eyes, resolving to at least pretend to sleep until they needed each other again.

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Hours slid by, enough to give them both a decent amount of rest and a shower before the next tide fell upon them. The second was more furious than the first because Light woke up with the wave verging on full blown. He’d turned into L, curled around him, and demanded he wake *up already* while burrowing into the crook of his neck.

L, who was a light sleeper and who had been stirring the moment Light started to turn toward him, was already in the process of lining them up. That time there was less hesitancy in the both of them; L took more liberties, took less time, just *took more* and Light was more adept to handle it. He sunk his teeth into L’s shoulder and let his nails leave lines down L’s back as he clung to him with all the strength he had to keep the contours of their bodies as near as was physically possible.

In the midst of it, with his teeth in the joint of L’s shoulder as he cried out against his flesh with every push, Light felt the pain of L biting him back. It freed up his mind for a moment in the haze to be afraid of the thought, of the teeth, of the *bond*, but once he realized L had merely bitten his opposite shoulder in turn, he was able to comfortably succumb again.

The knotting period wasn’t quite as comfortable face to face, which they learned the hard way. By the time L had finished completely, his knot had shrunken down enough to slip out of Light once again, it had been fifteen minutes, and one of Light’s legs was entirely asleep.

At that point, however, they were as well. They woke just long enough to tangle into a more comfortable position, and doze off all over again.
The third wave didn’t hit until the second day, which L bragged was due to his planning and pacing. It wasn’t as though Light was going to thank him for it, but it pleased L just the same. It gave them ample time to eat and rest and even watch a documentary or the news channel in between. Light commented on his new understanding of how Mello could manage to still get work done, considering there were only really five or so hours a day, if timed well, that they were completely checked out.

He then made sure to clarify that he was *not* actually complimenting Mello, just pointing out a fact.

The fourth round was the longest and most tiring, but L knew he would look back on it as his favorite, if he could recall it with clarity.

He hoped dearly that he would.

It seemed that Light’s heat was at it’s peak intensity, which seemed too soon for midway through the second day, but even when L’s knot was sealed in tight he was still unable to stay inert, which kept L hungry even though the expenditure. He kept his mouth and hands at work because Light wasn’t done, and so he wasn’t done, and as soon as he could he slid out of him.

The wet sound as he pulled out made L’s entire gut lurch with a torrid, crude longing, because that’s *him*, that’s both of them dripping down the inside of Light’s legs and the idea is so indecent, so *perfect* it almost wasn’t fair that it existed to tempt him.

He used his mouth then, his fingers too, until Light came again whining and cursing into the pillow, but still high and desperate even though he was very near collapsing.

L forgot himself then.

He turned Light over and lifted Light’s long legs up, *up*, still quivering from orgasm, over his shoulders and held his hips in place firmly as he sunk into him again, all the way home. Thrusting into the hilt again was so easy now and Light opened for him so *well* that it takes him a moment to take stock of the view he’s been given. L is up on his knees and Light is down on his back, still breathless from fatigue but still *wanting*, and L could see everything clearly.
Fuck, how did he get this beautiful? I shouldn’t be looking at this.

Guilt was beginning to rise up in L’s chest, but it was quieted marginally when Light arched up off the bed to meet his first invading thrust. He’s flushed all the way down his neck and chest and he’s too tired to do anything but writhe and L could see the crease in his brow, the tension in his jaw, the glaze of his eyes, the sweep of his hair against the pillow and where sweat has left it clinging to his forehead and cheekbones.

Drawing his teeth hard across his bottom lip, L didn’t allow himself to move just yet.

“Is this - ?”

“Yes.” The word came out halfway between a keen and a snarl and Light used his grip on the sheets to buck onto him, which was more than L could stand.

He didn’t relent, even when at some point Light seemed to remember himself, throwing an arm over his eyes as he got closer. Instead L curled over him, bending Light over, grasping his hands and keeping them above his head. Light was flushed pink and straining to keep his reactions at a minimum, but with every motion he was losing the battle with himself.

“Ah, it’s so - fff, ngh -” Light’s head fell back, until he was gazing at the headboard, or might have been if his vision were working properly - which L highly doubted, as his own was certainly not. “I can’t -”

“You can, just like this, Light, go on, just once more.” L kissed the side of his knee and watched Light unravel, the clenching of muscles drawing another orgasm out of L as well. Light was so pliant at this juncture that there was practically no resistance when it came time to secure the bloated base of his cock inside. He pushed inside with a single, nearly effortless movement, whispering, “Good, good -”

Yet again they found themselves in a slightly impractical position for the next several minutes, which meant L was going to be awake until he could move again comfortably.

“You may need to help me gather my wits,” L told him with as much perk to his voice as he could manage while one of many surges passed through him and into Light. “They must have fallen off the bed somewhere.”
“Gnh...gather them yourself...” Light shot back, with no vehemence at all. His eyes were closed, his chest rising and falling more shallowly by the moment. He turned his head to rest his cheek into the pillow, and L resigned himself to staying awake alone until he could slip out again.

“I suppose I must suffer with my meager mind for the rest of my insipid life,” L said dramatically, heaving a loud sigh and turning his head to plant his own cheek on Light’s chest.

“Nnh, don’t be stupid...”

Before L could tell him that was quite the point of the joke, Light was mumbling something into the pillow that made L’s ears go hot and his eyes sting in a telling way that he couldn’t remember feeling since he was a child.

“...you’re the most...”

A sleepy sound that wasn’t quite a yawn escaped Light’s mouth, interrupting his words long enough for L to feel as though his heart had fallen out of his chest and onto the floor with his wits.

“...most brilliant man I’ve ever met.”

And he did mean *brilliant* in all of it’s nuances. There was a breathless quiet between them as L met his gaze in the blur of almost-sleep. L’s eyes were o dark they seemed to glisten, the surface of a lake with unknown depths.

It is was true, although said with one foot in dreamland, though the fondness in his tone was more telling than Light would like. L’s gaze was much too discerning for someone whose wits were presumably elsewhere, but Light couldn’t think enough himself at the moment to perceive what that might mean.

L kissed him then, and Light drowned in sleep before it could end.
The next wave was lazy and soft.

They were in the middle of a documentary on international case studies when it rose in Light again, and they barely move from where they’d draped themselves after their shower. Light had been lying on L, because L had designed it as such by taking up a majority of the bed while Light was still drying his hair.

He didn’t complain when Light shifted up his body, took ahold of L’s then half hardness, and guided him inside.

They didn’t bother speaking through most of it, just rocking and gasping and kissing and nipping at whatever skin they could reach. The position was the one of least conducive to knotting, so when L was close they made themselves comfortable and then connected again, to the hilt.

They awoke later and repeated themselves without changing positions, languid, drowsy fucking that had Light sighing L’s name into the sheets and rolling back onto him fluidly.

He’d lost track of the numbers again, couldn’t recall which round they were on, which day they were on even. L spoke in hushed tones against his ear, saying dumb, sweet, *dumb* things that worked on Light so well he could only conclude that he was complicit in the lovely idiocy to some degree. Maybe.

He figured he could allow it, just in these instances, when he was obviously intoxicated again, drunk on sensation and L’s voice and -

- and just-
It came to him slowly.

_Slowly_, but not effortlessly, for there was nothing lazy about the way the idea formed in him, hatching, cracking at the walls of his skull.

No.

It wasn’t an idea.

It was a fact.

A _fact_.

He knew it as if had been etched into his brain with nails. An ancient engraving made by his former self in denial.

It was was a painstaking endeavor, like running in quicksand - a swim from the bottom of the ocean, with no way of knowing how close he was to the surface until he broke through.

( _A labor of love._ )

God, how _stupid_. The thought that he’d rather have drowned crossed his mind, that it was preferable to breathing with such ease, such _reverence_ all because of -

L.
Because of L.

That wasn't fair - no, it wasn't possible.

There was no way that a person could be the best thing that had ever happened to him. It was as if there was a highlight reel of his life that played in the far corners of his mind, and surely it wasn't feasible that L was the main attraction in each scene.

He knew L, and was known by him. The truth came upon him, that L understood him more wholly than he’d ever thought anyone could understand him, than anyone should understand another person.

Right?

Right?

Light had been wrong.

He hadn’t known what would happen, how L would look at him, how L would touch him, or how Light would feel when he did.

This was not easy.

If this kind of completion was real, then it could be lost.

This knowing was sandpaper on his ribs, a terrible weight in the back of his mind, like a shadow just at the edge of his vision. It hurt. This terrible ache, this nature of his that would not allow him to hold such a pure emotion within himself and expect to survive it.

There were words that held more meaning, ideas that made more sense, memories that made his chest throb with a ghostly sort of pang that rippled in echoes throughout his being. His mind usually worked in a dozen ways at once, but now it was overcome with a universal thought.

I love him.
The words reverberated in his mind as he stared ahead in the dark. He’d awoken with dread at the edge of his mind, cold and sore.

It was over.

He didn’t know why. Light checked the date on the clock and saw that it was late into the third day, but still only the third day. Still, he was thinking precisely, the fog of his need having entirely lifted, and the more awake he became the more obvious it was.

The candor his brain had been allowed to have in the midst of something like heat, where the Omega in him was allowed to take over, had left him poisoned (absolved) with a pervasive thought.

*I love him so fucking much.*

He had, in fact, possibly for weeks. Or longer. He had never allowed the notion (the fact) to cross his mind out of it’s sheer ridiculousness. For someone to have that power over him -

His stomach twisted, a sickness spreading through him as it sunk in.

To *sink*, yes, that was an appropriate term, because he felt as though he had been tossed into the ocean, strapped to an anvil. The weight settled on his chest and crushed the air out of him, leaving Light paralyzed and petrified. The contrast between that and the bliss he'd been feeling before left him dizzy.

He knew too, in the instant, that L could not really love him back.

Not like *this*, surely. Not in this gnawing, all-consuming way, that at first left him giddy and then had him emotionally recoiling at the absurdity.

No, L could not love him like this.

If he did, he would have ended it that moment on the roof. If the act of loving in itself was a loss of
power, then loving someone more than they loved you was surely the epitome of terror, of failure -

-something to be pitied.

He trusted L with his life. He trusted L with his dignity.

But could he trust L with this?

Could he trust L with his conflict, with his sorrow, with his happiness?

It was yes, or no. It was now, or never.

And if it was no, if it was never, was it even fair to continue this if he could never give L the part of him that he surely wanted? Wasn’t it useless to continue this if there was nothing to be gained from it? Even if he could trust L with that, even if he could live with this elation of heart until he grew old -

That was nothing.

My happiness is nothing. It’s intangible and likely fleeting. What difference does my happiness make on the world? What use is that to society, to L, or even -

- to me?

L was so close to seeing him. Close, but not quite, because there were parts of Light that even he refused to acknowledge except in periods of great introspection, which did not come often.

Parts of himself that he didn’t like, parts that had aided in L’s assertion that Light was Kira months before. There were places in Light that he kept locked away, always had, those that he had fastened on his own, so much so that turning the key was akin to changing the very essence of himself.

The connection they’d shared had been dangerously close to a true sense of knowing that Light hadn’t thought existed. Even if L looked into him and liked what he saw when the thicker veils were
torn away, wasn’t that akin to being trapped inside the fabric of L’s mind? To be loved, and to love, and be known in this almost mythical fashion, it was not an accomplishment, no matter how rare it was.

In fact, it may be death to everything Light had ever planned, ever wanted, for himself.

For the world that Light knew he was destined to help create.

There. That’s it, isn’t it? Even if I were to give into this, through no fault of L’s, I would be devoured by it. What would it mean for me to sacrifice even an ounce of the good I can do, the progress only I can make, just for a chance that this - that he is where I find my happiness?

It was selfishness.

Perhaps there were men who could thrive with this burden in their heart and still achieve what they must, but those men were not Light Yagami. He had so much to offer the world, there was so much he could do that no one else could dream of, and wasn’t it his responsibility to society to attain as much as possible? A higher standard of justice, a higher standard of mind, a better world in all its facets.

If he could not do that, then what had he been given this chance for? What had he worked for all of his life?

If L were as smart as Light knew that he was, then it would be a hindrance to both of them to continue. If L had not come to this conclusion himself, then it was because he was selfish, or else -

-or else he didn’t love Light back.

Perhaps he thought he did, on the roof, and the other handful of times he’d said it. But obviously it wasn’t in this rabid fashion, this abomination of what should have been a simple sentiment (hadn’t he told his family he loved them a hundred times before? Hadn’t he meant it?) that left Light struggling to breath in the dark.

What was the best case scenario when I approached him that morning? Closure? Companionship? Certainly not this overwhelming sentiment which seems to extinguish all else.
This is a debility. This is powerlessness in its purest incarnation. This happiness is helplessness, in actuality;

I’ve been deceived by myself.

L knew so much more of him than he knew of L - his entire life was on display to the man, his past, his name - so what did it mean that he loved him more when his own knowledge was so limited?

It was clear to him;

It meant he was a fool.

Somehow despite all of his own cautions, every reservation and doubt and denial, he had allowed L to make a fool of him. He had given L that power by loving him in this all-consuming fashion, which would certainly only grow more profound and intricate and stupid, stupidSTUPID -

Each day that passed, he would love L more. The more he knew of the man, the more he would want to know, and the more L would know of him in turn. What would happen when L uncovered the hateful thoughts that he’d often had that were not all that different from Ryuga Hideki? That he had looked at the vengeful deaths over the years and often thought that it served them right, that perhaps some of them even deserved worse?

That, as racked with grief as he’d been when his father had been taken from him, he had also been relieved to be out from under the burden of his father’s fundamental goodness.

That his own sense of justice, which had once tied both he and L together, was born from some reticent need for order, and his desired recognition for succeeding in such a world.

Would L love that too?

Of course not, it would be irrational to expect it. He could likely love him despite those things, but in the end the burden would fall on Light, because - did he love L despite anything?
Were there parts of L that he had to ignore just to look him in the eye? Was there anything he’d done, or was capable of doing, that Light could not abide by or sympathize with?

There was nothing.

He just …fucking loved him.

If that were the case, which was the only version of reality that was fathomable to him, then all of this selfishness and suffering would be for nothing, and Light -

Light would have spent however many more months, years, loving him more.

Why am I capable of feeling like this? What good is this to me?

It was then that Light chose to slip out of bed while L slept and shower, having made the only decision that was available to him. The only one that made logical sense, the only one that allowed him to keep his emotions in check, to survive this nonsensical emotion that was threatening to make his chest implode.

Light gathered the outfit he’d prepared for when his heat was over, then closed the bathroom door behind himself, and showered alone. He let the steam fill the stall and then spill outside of it, until he could no longer see his reflection in the mirror across the room.

It was probably a good thing that his heat had been short, even shorter than the last. They weren’t expected to be out for at least another few days; it would give them both time alone.

It would be easier this way.

- 
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The room smelled wrong. That was the first thought that intruded L’s sleep as he awoke to the sound
of the shower running. He breathed in deeply to figure out what the source of the off scent was, but could only conclude that the room no longer smelled like heat.

The scents that lingered were hours old, stale, and did nothing to put a match to his libido.

*It’s over then. But it’s only the end of the third day. It’s too soon, isn’t it? Perhaps having an Alpha to share it with cut it short. It happens, but nothing I’ve read has supported the idea of just barely three days.*

However odd it was, what struck him more was that Light left the bed and decided to shower without him. While it wasn’t out of place on a normal day, during the last three days there had been hardly a moment where they weren’t touching in some way or another. If the heat was over, as seemed likely, L could safely assume that things were just back to normal.

But something felt off. A smell, perhaps, but he couldn’t pinpoint it. It was a sense of unease, an intuition that left the hairs on his arms standing up. It didn’t get better when the water stopped running, or the sink running while Light brushed his teeth, or the hairdryer, or the shuffle of clothing from the other side.

L had Light’s routine memorized; he’d watched him complete it with the door open dozens of times now, and usually it was a source of contentment. He sat up and pulled on the robe that he’d left at the foot of his bed.

*You’re being an idiot. It’s probably normal for an Alpha to worry for an Omega’s safety directly after they share a heat together.*

And yet -

Light opened the door fully clothed, save for his shoes, but that was just etiquette. He looked good, healthy even, but not...entirely right. L read it in his body language, in the expression on his face, and was reminded of the morning after they’d gotten wasted and Light approached him.

Similarly, Light’s posture was closed off, his arms crossed over his chest as he hovered in the doorway. Light looked healthier now, than he had back then, when he was fresh out of confinement. It had been a reasonable hour back then too - not 4AM, like his digital clock told him it was now - and he hadn’t known Light then.
For Light to be standing there, an echo of how he had regarded L months before -
-something was wrong. What was it? When had it happened? Why was Light looking at him as
though they were even less than the infatuated strangers they’d been back then?

“Where are you -?” L asked just as Light opened his mouth and started to say, “I think we should -”

Where are you going, Light?

They both fell silent without finishing, and L took that moment to express himself.

“Light,” L said calmly, standing, “Shut up.”

“What?” Light bristled, opening his mouth and then shutting it tightly, pursing his lips. “...You don’t
know what I was going to -”

“I do,” L cut him off, ignoring the weight in his stomach. “I do know what you were going to say.”

Where are you going? Why are you going there? How can I keep you?

“If you know what I was going to say,” Light straightened up, seemed to regain whatever nerve he’d
lost a moment before. L wanted him to lose it again unapologetically. “Then you know... it’s over.”

“Your heat?” L prompted flatly, not allowing his gaze to soften or move away from the figure in the
doorway. The figure that had been his just hours ago, minutes ago, even. “Or us?”

L thought he might have seen Light swallow before answering.

“Both.”

What is this? You’ve frightened yourself out of this, you’re being impulsive out of - fear, or shame, or
both.
Forcing down the heavy mass of doubt in his stomach, which wanted nothing more than to rush to Light and kiss him until he changed his mind, L demanded instead -

“Why?”

Light’s arms shifted, stiffening, becoming even more defensive.

“It’s for the best.”

“You’re lying,” L shot back, his shoulders getting high and tense. “I thought we were going to tell one another the truth. I’ve held up my end.”

Light’s eyes narrowed, his lip curling. “That is the truth.”

*Lie,* the thought was a beam of stark light in his head, almost a scream, and he forced it into silence immediately, hardening his resolve by forcing the words off his tongue and pretending they didn’t taste like loss.

“You love me.”

*I know you do, I know you, and I know this. I hear it in the things you say, no matter how irreverent. I’ve never needed you to say it, but I know it.*

*You must too.*

“I don’t,” Light bit back sharply, lowering his arms and moving to walk passed L and to the door. Out the door. Out of his *life.* The thought was an illogical one; Light was hardly going to quit the case.

But it was still a thought that darted through L’s head which made him spin around and follow Light to the door, grabbing his wrist to stop him before he could get to the doorknob.
“It’s four in the morning.” L tried to be reasonable even though his instinct was to keep Light here at all costs, to tackle him if he had to, chain their bloody wrists together - “Come back to bed. We can talk about this when we’ve rested -”

“I don’t want to talk about this.” Light didn’t pull out of the touch, but he didn’t turn back around either.“We gave this a shot and it isn’t working -”

“It was working.” L insisted, watching the line of Light’s shoulders falter. You’re not sure of this. No, you’re the opposite. “I know it was working, and it wasn’t just me, Light.”

We thought we might be bad for one another, but we never were. Perhaps if it were, this would be easier to comprehend, to handle -

“I'm sorry,” Light began to pry his wrist away, voice unnaturally bland. “I don't love you the way you want me to -”

L couldn’t stop his voice from rising this time, and felt like a damned lunatic, in every sense of the word.

“Stop lying -”

Light picks up on the change of volume, snatched his wrist away and snarled loudly.

“ I am not lying!”

It might have been vicious, if Light’s voice hadn’t given out halfway through his shout, and if in turn L had not wrapped his arms around him before he could stop himself. L pressed his forehead to Light’s shoulder and wrapped his arms around him securely, trying to calm his own furiously beating heart.

You love me. Maybe you don’t know it -

“I’m not lying,” Light repeated himself harshly, but again didn’t make to break out of L’s hold. “Let me leave .”
Oh, but you do know it, don’t you?

-  

I know.

It wasn’t as though Light had been expecting for L let him walk out without something, but he’d thought that saying directly that he did not love him would take the wind out of his sails. It would save them both pain later, if they bled it all out now, before Light allowed himself to buckle under the weight of this curse.

But L was holding him, much like he’d held him over the last three days, like weeks and weeks previous, and he was making it so difficult.

It took all of his will to keep his posture rigid when L was embracing him in such a fashion. It might just be easier to let him have his way, to stay and apologize and deal with the hurt later. It was probably a product of his biology, but there was nothing he could do about that. Perhaps it was just part of being an Omega, perhaps it was just a fact of fucking life for some people, to love more than it was conceivable to be loved in return.

How strong am I really? How many times will you ask me to stay before I cave in? It’s too much, more than any person should be able to carry.

Light felt resolution crumpling, his eyes closing, his body wavering and beginning to lean back into L’s chest.

I know, but don’t make me do this. Don’t make me. I’ll stay. There’s only so much war I can wage on myself before I can’t remain steadfast anymore.

You could have me, if you wanted, if you keep this up. I’ll fucking stay, and I’ll -

“I understand.”
The voice broke through his tirade of self-doubt, and relief flooded through him at the prospect. L’s arms slipped away, and Light straightened the front of his shirt. It would be easier for them both if he acted as he had before, if they could just...go back to when it was easy. Life before L had been, admittedly, miserable - but safely so.

It wasn’t as though they were parting ways, after all. They’d still work together on the Kira case, and possibly on other cases in the future - it was still a step up from how it had been six months before. He still had L, he just didn’t have L, and that was...

“...Good.” He was proud of how aloof he sounded. “Am I allowed to leave now?”

Light grasped the doorknob, but before he could open the door, L reached up and planted a hand against it.

“It may be too much to ask -”

Everything already is.

“...but if you can,” L murmured, “try to come back to me.”

He pulled back then. Light’s breath caught in his throat, grew into a knot there, and he slammed the door when he was finally on the other side of it.

From there he went to the floor that was technically assigned to him but which he’d never actually slept in, and kept himself calm and expressionless as he took the elevator down. It was only when he was in his new quarters, sitting at a dusty computer desk, did he allow himself to fracture, however briefly.

“...you better not be watching the cameras, L.”

He spoke coldly, hands shaking as the last of his control him. Then they shot up to his hair, digging in and pulling tightly as a guttural yell ripped from his throat. He felt like an idiot for it, but he let himself feel that way, allowed himself this moment of wild emotion before he sealed it away again.
Light couldn't help but think that L knew \textit{just} why he had done it, and how heavy the weight of his own fallacy was, how solid the curtain that he’d hung before his own eyes. Light could only assume that it \textit{was impossible} to be that perceptive, to see through his skull and chest cavity that clearly - and, just a little, hope that it wasn't.

He couldn’t decide which was worse, and barricaded that idea up along with the rest.
“Sometimes we want what we want even if we know it’s going to kill us.” - Donna Tartt

“Er, what are you doing here?”

The last thing Matt expected when he entered the game room - which, in reality, was the game floor - was L stretched out over the couch as if he didn’t have a single bone in his body.

Well, perhaps not the last thing - the last thing would have been something mythical and impossible, but this was pretty close. L was supposed to be on his floor, in rut, with Yagami. It would be the fifth day, he calculated, though he supposed it could have run short. He hadn’t the faintest idea what such unreasonable abuse of suppressants could do to a body, but that didn’t seem outside the limits of reality.

Even if it had ended early, that didn’t explain why L was on the gaming floor, which he had never been to as far as Matt knew, staring up at the ceiling as if it were the night sky. L’s head turned toward him slowly, lazily.

“I confiscated your pot.”
Matt raised his eyebrows and his goggles dug into his brow. He walked into the room rather than lingering in the doorway, glancing over at where his stash would have been lying out on the coffee table. Sure enough, it was gone.

“...By smoking it?”

“Eating it,” L corrected, gesturing to the plate of brownies, which was perched on the couch above L’s head, shadowed by one of the large throw pillows. There were still two large brownies on the plate, and Matt found himself wondering how many L had eaten. “I don’t like the way it tastes otherwise.”

“You and Mello, man,” Matt scoffed, plopping down in an armchair nearby. “Can’t you just suck it up like a normal pothead? You’re both filthy casuals.”

“You’re right,” L said, turning his head again to gaze once more at the ceiling. “But I’m afraid I generally like to keep my brain functioning at it’s full capacity.”

*Then why partake now, of all times?*

Matt leaned forward, putting his elbows on his knees and inspecting the detective carefully, taking in the lean form stretched out over the cushions carefully. He looked taller than he ever had before, probably because he wasn’t hunched over or curled up in any way, shape, or form.

Though Matt didn’t know L well - he doubted anyone really did, other than Watari and *maybe* Yagami - it was easy enough to tell that something was wrong with this picture.

L was not known to socialize, and that was what the gaming floor was *for*. Matt had designed it as such. He had every type of console, multiple huge televisions, air hockey, pinball machines, and a huge, C-shaped couch meant for get-togethers. There was a fully stocked kitchen and bar, and multiple bathrooms.

To be fair, they had only used it a few times. All three of those had been in the last six days, since
Mello and Near had been locked away for their respective heats. What else were the rest of them supposed to do while the others were getting their rocks off?

Wedy really knew how to party, and was *kind* of a bad influence. Naomi and Matsuda had come over the first time with the intention of sorting through all the information they had on Beyond Birthday, but Matsuda had invited Sayu along, who had run into Wedy and Aiber in the hall and apparently invited them on impulse.

They’d managed to watch the first surveillance video from the prison, and half of the second, before they were all tipsy enough to agree when Wedy suggested they do something a little more stimulating. Sayu had been the first to jump on board, and was charismatic enough to get Matsuda and Matt to go along with her. Naomi had been reserved at first, but after Wedy had called her a lightweight, she’d outclassed even the cat burglar by downing half a bottle of red wine all on her own.

She’d passed out just after Sayu, who was a lightweight (she’d said this several times throughout the night, with emphasis on her brother’s given name, only to burst into giggles whenever she did so). Matsuda had collapsed next to Naomi not long after.

Though he had needed to stop Matsuda from doing handstands while intoxicated, Matt could say honestly that it had been the best night he’d spent in Japan thus far - well. Perhaps it tied with the time Near had fallen asleep on him and then, when he’d carried Near back to bed, he’d refused to let go and mumbled something or other about ‘not being a princess’.

The other two times had ended up much the same, though the third night Wedy had joined the other three on the couch - though Matt couldn’t help but notice that she’d had all of her faculties in tact when she’d done so.

*Maybe we shouldn’t drink this time,* Matt mused, his thoughts floating away from him. He gathered them back up and stood, plucking a brownie off the plate for himself.

L didn’t move. Matt rubbed his neck, then decided to go for it. L’s memories would almost definitely be foggy at best; he could imagine the man didn’t do this often, and eating it was a lot different than smoking it.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Matt asked, really hoping he wouldn’t.
L blinked up at the ceiling and didn’t respond.

Then, he started, as if he’d only just been spoken too, looking at Matt again owlishly.

“...Sorry, what?”

Matt laughed out loud, “Wow, you’re baked, aren’t you?”

“Watari baked these,” L responded sagely, pointing to the lone brownie and looking back at the plate upside down.

“Yeah, you don’t seem the baking sort,” Matt humored, feeling a little out of place; this didn’t seem like something he should be looking at. The great detective, shrouded in mystery and intrigue, high out of his mind and clearly brooding about something or other.

Matt cleared his throat.

L ignored him, still peering up at the tall ceiling as though it were the most fascinating thing he’d ever seen. Then he lifted a hand as though to touch it, then got distracted with the way his fingers move. Matt had been there before.

Matt rubbed at his temples, heaving a sigh. “Hey, so…where's Yagami?”

“Oh, Los Angeles by now.”

Matt frowned, and in an instant the connection was made. He felt rather silly for not realizing it sooner - why the hell else would L being in here, of all places, instead of-

_Ah._

Well. Could have probably called that one.
“...He dumped you.”

*Wait, did Yagami dump him mid-heat? Did it end early or did they not go through with it?*

L didn't respond, kept peering up at the ceiling, though his brow did furrow. Good enough.

Matt wasn’t sure what to say to that. He wondered at first how Yagami got out of the building without him noticing, but he figures he probably waited until Matt was asleep and left on Watari’s shift. It was a simple explanation. If he’d learned anything about the man, it was that Yagami was an intensely private person. He hadn’t wanted anyone to know that he and L were together; it made sense that he wouldn’t have wanted anyone to know they no longer were.

“Well,” Matt said finally. “Welcome to the dumpee squad, then.”

L then proceeded to chuckle about the term ‘dumpee squad’ for the next several minutes before Matt was able to convince him to go to his room and sleep it off.

He was distracted four times before he made it out of the room, at which point Matt decided to walk him the rest of the way there, lest the man end up on the roof in the pouring rain, or somewhere equally absurd.

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The girl beneath her this time had hair dyed paler than Mello’s own that fell in long, gentle waves, and splayed over the pillow artfully while she fucked her. She was a Beta, Mello’s second this heat, and as such she was more versatile than the Omega she’d had over the night before. She introduced herself as Maggie when she arrived at the door of her hotel room, but Mello had very little interest in the alias. She kept it on the tip of her tongue, but put it in her short term memory, to be cast away when it wasn’t immediately needed.

Mello sent her home after a single wave. She was too small, too soft, too lovely, too -
After a shower, Mello read through some shitty article speculating about Ryuga Hideki’s childhood and then took a long nap. Then, she set about shopping for her next heat partner. An Alpha, this time, the bigger and darker and stronger the better. She could only hope that her heat would be over by the next day. Even if Kira was just picking up fucking party decorations, she didn’t want to be out of commission for long.

Mello hated motels. She’d never liked the idea of sharing a space with thousands of people. Hadn’t even liked having a roommate in Whammy’s, not even when it was Matt. Yagami and Near were lucky that they got to have their heats back at headquarters because of their choice of partners. Near’s monkey was handsome and a verifiable member of the FBI. It wasn’t like Mello would be allowed to have half a dozen strangers waltzing in and out at all hours of the night.

She smirked at her computer screen and clicked on the picture to set up the appointment for the next liaison. Her next wave was just starting to creep up inside her, but she’d done this so very often that it was easy to predict how long till she’d be too needy to think straight.

This heat was a restless one. She found herself wanting to just sleep in between waves, whereas usually she devoted her vacation to something more productive. Working, exercising, reading books, or binge watching television shows she’d been meaning to catch up on.

All of those things left her in a state of listlessness this time. She rolled around on the bed and groaned, contemplating masturbation briefly before deciding she needed to save her strength for later. If the Alpha was anything like his profile, she would need it.

Instead she ended up scrolling through her phone numbers, looking for someone to text. Matt was her first instinct, but instead of texting him outright, she reread old texts she still had saved from years before.

It’s a bad idea.

She flipped back to her contacts, glossed over L (because when had he ever given a fuck about any of them? If only Mello had figured that out sooner) and past Linda’s, Linda’s girlfriend, Marie, and few other people she didn’t particularly want to hear from. Matt, again, thanks to alphabetical
fucking order, and then, of course -

Near

The word looked out of place on her phone. She remembered putting it there, a few days after Near had arrived in Japan, along with the numbers of the rest of the people in the task force.

Even Sayu Yagami, however part time her association with them was.

Near

Her eyes caught it again, and she wondered if she should send a text. Then, she wondered if Near would even check the phone at all - she couldn’t remember seeing it on his person at any time - or if his Beta heat partner would pick up the phone instead. She wondered if she should say something condescending that she could pass off later as purely inspired by boredom, or perhaps she should apologize for her actions a few weeks previous.

After several minutes of scrolling up and down the contact list, Mello decided she was in no state to contact anyone, especially if she was honestly considering an apology when she’d done nothing wrong.

And it was purely inspired by boredom, so there.

When the Alpha arrived, he filled Mello up and hurt her in all the ways that she liked best. It was brutal, left her aching, with bruises on her hips and bite marks on her shoulders.

She dismissed him as soon as his knot deflated enough to slip out of her. The Alpha grunted in response and didn’t try to appeal to Mello for anything else, unlike Maggie, who had seemed a little hurt and over-eager to please.

That usually worked on Mello, but she found herself relieved at the Alpha’s casual disregard this time around.

“Alone at last,” She said out loud, but hearing herself talk to no one - even sardonically - was enough
to remind her of how very empty the room was.

Mello put the television on and turned up the volume loud, enough so that she could hear the voices from the shower, however muffled. It gave the illusion of company, which was close enough.

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“Is your leg okay?”

In reality, Near’s leg ached quite a bit, but no more than he was used to handling on the bad days. He ached inside more furiously, so the question actually ended up grating on his nerves. It was no fault of Stephen’s, he knew that logically; the man was a courteous assistant, and had dropped everything on his plate to come across the world to help him on relatively short notice.

Of course, the implication of that alone made Near a little uneasy. At some point in time, while working with the CSIS and FBI alike, he had thought there was a little something between him and Stephen. At least, the man had never treated him like a child - like Anthony had - or as just a superior - like Halle had.

Still Stephen had been nothing but a perfect friend for the last few days. He went only as far as Near wanted him to, only touched where Near had said was okay, and was constantly checking up on him, to the point of doting.

Perhaps it wasn’t the best idea to let him assist again. You knew he was getting attached before. Did you hope it had been long enough that it would have worn off? That isn’t how ordinary people work.

It would have been nice, if people just worked the way he expected them to. Or wanted them too.

Near was well aware of his own curse, of emotion without a medium of expression, of affection without equal reciprocation. He hadn’t been born with the knowledge; he had learned it as all children learn things. Near was a scientist, had been since before he could talk, and as such was used to trial and error.
On the subject of romance, Near had found there was a clear trend.

Linda, who had loved him as a woman loved another woman; his form but not his spirit. Oh, he was sure that she cared for his mind too, as they had been friends long before they were more, but Near was not female, and so her affections felt...misplaced. Inaccurate, even. Near had easily accepted the role of platonic companion instead.

Mello, who disliked every part of him and made it known. Mello, who had come barrelling into his life when Near had been five-years-old as if he, or she, were straight out of a cartoon, like some kind of superhero. Mello had run right past Near with scratches and bruises if his own making, yelling and laughing. Brilliant, and not just of mind.

Matt, who was as entranced by Mello as Near himself was. It seemed to be a fact of life that they were meant for one another, and Near had been content to watch that kind of attachment unfold. Matt had gotten along with him, that was true, but it all hinged on their mutual fascination with Mello. Matt was the sidekick. Near was the rival. Each thing had it’s place, and two things could not exist in the same space at once.

Perhaps there was some lesson in there about himself, about the kind of person Near was meant to fall for. Those that would always be unavailable to him, those whom he would never have to risk because they would never want him back. Those who were safe because they were unattainable, or those like Stephen who were safe because he could never truly care for them with every part of himself.

“I’m thinking you wouldn’t be opposed to me joining you.”

The idea was appealing on one level, and ludicrous on another. He had known from the beginning that Matt and Mello were meant for one another. In such a scenario he would be asserting himself as an obstacle literally, this time. Even if they were on a break, even if there was the issue of asexuality, they were their happiest in one another’s presence, they’re personalities complimented each other, they had profound chemistry -

They were real.

Near often felt as though he existed on another plain of reality entirely. As though he were watching the world around him happen through the eyes of a critic, which gave him invaluable insight as a detective, but dissociated him from everyone around him. Occasionally even himself.
So Near had flinched from the offer because of everything that it represented. They would be together again, of that he could be almost positive, and he was at peace with that fact. Happy for them, even, as an outsider looking in.

But he was selfish too; he could not open himself to both of them, see them in all of their humanity that close up, only to watch them fall in love with one another all over again, without him.

Mello, especially, would probably resent him even more after the fact. Matt would just feel guilty, which would torment the both of them.

And Near -

Near would be left in this same position, thinking these same thoughts, probably also in bed with the same wrong person - but in that instance, with the memory of the right ones imbedded in his conscious.

Perhaps it was time to stop trying.

At least, when it came to the ones that really mattered. Stephen was a good man, and seemed to care for Near, and though it was clear he didn’t quite understand his lack of gender, it was something the man was aware of and considerate about. It was difficult for him, considering he had been born with his mind and body in synq (Near often felt he had not, in more ways than just his gender), but he seemed to at least get that there were things that were outside of his realm of understanding.

Near knew that was just another way not to risk anything in himself. However, considering his limited access to samples (i.e. those few that had ever expressed an interest in him romantically) more research was clearly required. But then, considering the way he presented himself to the world, it was unlikely he would have many opportunities. He was physically disabled, on the spectrum, and was ultimately a childish person even without the other factors. He wasn't exactly most people's type.

Maybe it would end up being of great theoretical and practical importance to be with someone like Stephen, someone who could never match up to him mentally. He had not been damaged by brilliance, and so he could not ever hope to know Near with the intimacy that someone like Linda or Mello or Matt could.

“Yes,” Near said after a long delay. “My leg is fine.”
“...Are you alright then?”

Despite his own hopelessness about the situation, his own logical conclusion to just settle, Near felt the same gnawing notion at the underside of mind.

*This isn’t right.*

He’d said it to Matt and Mello before, and he’d said it then with the same vehemence that he thought it to himself now. Every truth that was known to him, Near had mulled over for himself and decided if he agreed with it or not. If he decided it was objectionable, he had good reason to believe so, and did not work outside of his own ethics for any reason. These were, obviously, not ethics that everyone agreed with, but once he had decided that there was a way something should be done, that was the way he did it, without variation.

Sharing a heat with two people who were clearly in love with one another was wrong, and so was pursuing a relationship with a person just because it was *safe*. It wasn’t right. It wasn’t the way the world *worked*, and Near had learned to accept that.

It would be nice, perhaps, if the world didn’t work the way he knew it would. If things happened just the way he wanted secretly, but knew was impossible, if the blocks aligned in just the right way and never moved unexpectedly. Knocking them over, or letting someone else knock them over, at least involved some level of choice.

“No, I’m fine,” Near shrugged and curled a pinky finger into his hair lightly. “However, if you could, I left something up on the tenth floor. Bumblebee. Could you please retrieve it for me?”

“Oh, yeah, of course,” Stephen stood, stretching briefly. He was in shape, but no doubt his arms were stiff. Betas were not quite built for the physical stress of sharing heat, especially the entire time, especially with a disabled Omega who needed even more effort, but Stephen had proven himself adaptable. “I’ll hurry back.”

Near nodded and pulled the silk sheets around himself more firmly. “Thank you, Stephen.”
“What is it with Yagami, anyway?”

The tone was not particularly derisive, but the content alone was enough to make L bristle. The world was beginning to sharpen around him, marking the slow but inevitable end of his high.

The rain had certainly helped speed up the process.

“What is ‘with’ him?” L droned back at him, forcing his successor to elaborate.

“It’s not like I hate the guy or anything, but he’s - he seems…kind of - I don’t know, cold.”

You, who have only ever loved the sun, L found himself thinking, then scowled at his own overtly artistic melancholy, which made itself known occasionally. Honestly, the sun. He wasn’t some sort of romantic poet, and Mello hardly encapsulated the most important star in their galaxy.

“You know,” Matt waved his hands around a bit. “...littered with flaws, too afraid to admit any one of them to himself?”

L’s first instinct was to protect Light’s honor, silly as that was, but he kept his mouth shut despite the annoyance that seemed to itch at the back of his neck.

“I mean, the guy hid he was an Omega for like, seven years,” Matt continued, speaking louder over the wail of the sky above them. “From his mom, his dad, his sister, from every person who ever cared for him. That’s got to be some kind of record for suppression of self, right? Like, who is this guy?”

A question, I think, even Light would have a hard time answering honestly.

“He seems,” Matt went on, “kinda...cruel.”
Not entirely inaccurate, L decided, though he could name several other people they both knew who had, at one point or another, been unimaginably cruel. L did not count himself out of that fold.

“Do you know,” L found it in himself to ask after a long moment of contemplation, “why I’m so against Kira?”

He glanced over at his companion, whose hair was drenched and matted around his streaky goggles. L was aware that the question had come out of nowhere, but he did have a point, and luckily Matt was just the type to play along. Light would have just rolled his eyes told him to get to the point already.

Suddenly, L felt a bit sick, but he pushed it away. Pot had never worked well with his stomach for some reason anyway, though he wasn’t in enough denial to think that was the only contributing factor.

Matt shrugged. “Because he’s got a fucked up god complex and is terrorising the world?”

“No,” L said, not bothering to admit that those were part of the reason. That had nothing to do with what he was getting at, after all, and even though Matt looked a little exasperated, he drudged on. “Right now, approximately half of the world is on his side, and the longer he stays in power, the more people are coming to accept it. To enjoy this crime-free world he’s created for them.”

It was difficult to read Matt’s eyes through the rain and fog, but L could tell by the twist of his mouth that he seemed to be thinking something along the lines of ‘So?’.

“Anyone that understands the world knows that we, as humans, have made the rules that we follow. Even the ones that seem to be an intrinsic part of ourselves, are learned,” L explained, looking up at the gray sky as it cried on him. It had relented since they’d first come out here (against Matt’s groaning and complaining) but it continued enough so that they didn’t get the chance to dry. “How can I, in good conscious, take that away if the majority of the population is for it?”

“Yeah,” Matt relented. “If you were a philosopher instead of a detective, that’d make sense.”

“A man can be two things at once.”

“Okay, Aristotle, so is it because if Kira wins, you’ll be out of a job?”
“Smart ass.”

“Not gonna deny it,” Matt snorted. “If that’s how you feel about it, why don’t you give up?”

L released a breath, and realized only when his stomach protested that he hadn’t eaten anything since the two pot brownies a couple hours previous. He’d have to find something sooner or later. Quillish had been enabling his brooding by bringing him meals straight to his room though, so if L didn’t manage it himself, he was sure he wouldn’t starve to death on the old man’s watch.

“I’m against Kira, and will always be against Kira,” L told him, looking down at the city over the railing. The clouds had blocked out all the stars. “Because he abhors the nature of humanity. He seeks to change it, to stunt it with his view of perfection rather than allow it to grow into a version of it’s own.”

L shoved his hands in his pockets, which took more effort than it should have, considering how drenched and heavy the fabric was.

“As a detective, I work only with what has been done; I don’t want to fix humanity - only humanity itself can do that, with time. I have accepted that. Accepted them.”

He shrugged, as if it had not been the most difficult thing to come to terms with. Kira had forced change upon the world, because he - like a child - had stomped his feet and closed his eyes to the nature of society, and likely of himself. Light was struggling with it too, this L could see clearly. Every moment of every day, this terrible knowledge of what could be, but could not be. A powerlessness that L was not quite comfortable in, but content with progress he could help accomplish, however tiny the steps.

Light had only just begun to understand how there could be happiness in helplessness, and he had run from it.

But L had decided not to linger on that, hadn’t he?

“And so, I’ve accepted that there’s improbable levels of goodness in people, and also an almost insurmountable amount of malevolence.”
“Like with the Force,” Matt supplied, and L gave a soft snort. Matt was often made uncomfortable when it came to ‘serious talk’. However much he attempted to keep out of the lives of his successors, he’d heard Mello lament more than once about the hacker’s inability to be ‘real’ for any length of time.

“Humanity is warm and cold and kind and, yes, cruel. It is fiercely intelligent, and unfathomably stupid. They are constantly trying to cover up their mistakes, or deny that they ever had any at all.

“...littered with flaws, too afraid to admit any one of them to themselves, one might say.”

“Ew,” Matt intoned. L’s mouth twitched as he trampled his own amused response.

“Light, to me, is the perfect human in this way. It’s not idolatry; he’s perfect, but not for the reasons that he thinks he is.” It isn’t his looks, or his mind, or his drive, or his status, or his sense of justice. “It’s for the parts of him that he despises most, which I can somehow see clearly, and know intimately, and love anyway.”

That is what terrifies him most, I think. Not that I might not love him for all that he is, but that I will.

But, bah, that’s all speculation.

Matt surprised him by heaving a decidedly gloomy sigh.

“Yeah, I kinda know what that’s like.” He shuffled his feet, then shivered bodily. “Now, can we get off this fucking roof? Some of us have better things to do than mope in the rain.”

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Though she knew she would probably regret it the next morning, Sayu decided to drink another glass of wine. Whatever this stuff was - some French thing Aiber had brought along with him - it was pretty tasty as far as alcohol went. He had come along to each of their gatherings, though he was more the sort to hang back and supervise rather than encourage hijinks like Wedy was, so Sayu
couldn’t get a good read on him, but he seemed to like her more when she had complimented his choice of wine.

Not that she knew much about it. She was used to drinking the cheapest, sweetest wine possible.

Wedy, she’d found, was more of a scotch person. Sayu and Matsuda had both expressed their distaste for the poison, while Naomi had taken her up on on the challenge. Wedy had ended up drinking her under the table that first night, but this time she seemed to be starting slower. She was sipping on her first glass still, lounging on the chaise part of the large sectional with her long legs crossed lazily.

She seemed so effortless in all things. Though Sayu knew Wedy and Aiber were technically criminals, she couldn’t help but be impressed when they told them about their successes and failures in their respective fields.

“Hey, shouldn’t Matt be here?” Matsuda asked, looking around the room a few times.

“He texted me,” Naomi answered, “He’s helping Ryuzaki with something. He said he should be down in a little bit.”

“I don’t want to dig around on his computer, or else I’d go ahead and put the videos on,” Matsuda said, hovering near the desk, clearly not sure if he should be getting to work without their appointed leader.

“Is there much of a point?” Wedy inquired, raising an elegant eyebrow and chuckling lowly. “Matt said himself he’d watched the videos a dozen times. This is really just for good measure.”

Naomi sighed, “I’d still like to go through them though. It’s really the only lead we have.”

“If L doesn’t think this Beyond character is part of it, shouldn’t we trust his judgement?” Aiber asked, tilting his wine glass and looking over to Naomi.

“Well,” Naomi started, stilted.
Sayu, on the other hand, laughed out loud, drawing the attention of everyone else in the room.

“Are you kidding?” She rolled her eyes, bristling. “L’s judgement got my brother locked up for a month, which ended up being exactly what Ryuga - what Kira wanted. It also ended up indirectly getting my dad killed, soooo.”

“Kira had someone hack into L’s database time get screenshots of Light Yagami and Misa Amane’s confinement,” Naomi explained, tapping her fingers on knee. “And Ryuga mentioned a ‘blind friend’ he had in an interview. Considering his ego, that might have been a clue.”

“But I have a friend who often gives me love advice – he’s blind actually, and a perpetual bachelor, which makes it pretty funny to take his word when it comes to romance. Love is blind, as they say, haha!”

Sayu had watched the interview several times over by now, but hadn’t considered the connection until Matt had explained it to her. He hadn’t told her what Beyond Birthday - which was a strangely cute codename for someone he was so worried about - had to do with L, just that he was a murderer that Naomi had helped track down.

“Oh goodness, don’t get sulky,” Wedy sighed, leaning closer to Sayu, making her already low cut dress dip lower at the angle. “He doesn’t like it when he’s wrong.”

“At this point, we could use all the help we can get.

“Right,” Aiber paused, frowning. “Forget I said anything then.”

“Sulky,” Wedy reasserted, winking at Sayu, who tried and failed to hold back a giggle.
“Well, since we have to wait for Matt to get started anyway,” Naomi stood up and stretched, lean form curving elegantly, before settling again. “I’m going to pop over to the kitchen and make something to eat.”

“Oh, me too,” Wedy gushed, “You’re such a doll.”

“Yes,” Sayu grinned, eyes flickering over to Wedy’s roguish expression. “I’m starving.”

“I could eat,” Aiber contended, though he didn’t look up from his phone.

“Oh, could you?” Naomi deadpanned.

To be fair, she had offered to cook something for everyone the time before, so Sayu didn’t feel all that bad about it. Naomi was clearly irritated, but almost playfully so. Sayu figured if they ever did this again, she might volunteer to make one of her mom’s famous dishes. Maybe Light would come too, though he wasn’t really the type to enjoy gatherings like this one.

“Me too!” Matsuda piped up and when Naomi raised her eyebrows, he raised his hand, quickly volunteering as he hopped to his feet, “Er, I mean, I’ll help you cook.”

“Thank you, Matsuda,” Naomi sighed, a smile twitching onto her face before she turned toward the kitchen. “I imagine Matt will be hungry, too, if the pattern persists.”

Matsuda all but jogged after her, beginning to ramble about something Sayu couldn’t quite make out as they went through the archway and moved out of sight.

Sayu took the gap in conversation to take a long sip of her wine, which was tasting better with every minute that passed, as it often did. Each sip slid a little easier over her tongue.

“You know.”

The voice infiltrated Sayu’s consciousness, low and smoky, stealing her attention.
Wedy leaned in, and then propped up her chin up on her hand. Sayu was suddenly struck by how
good she smelled, rich and warm and vaguely sweet.

“If you keep getting this drunk every time we hang out, I’m not going to be able to kiss you in good
conscience.”

“Eh?”

Occasionally, Sayu’s mouth and vocal chords conspired against her. She’d learned to control her
expressions better since high school, but on occasions like this she reverted back to her less refined
self. It didn’t help that the edges of her mind were beginning to fuzz, the world around her becoming
decidedly smoother.

“Sorry, ah, what?” Sayu said after a moment, when Wedy’s only response to her exclaim was a
quirk of her lip and unrepentant eye contact. Aiber scoffed from where he sat, and Sayu sent a short,
sharp glare in his direction, but he didn’t turn around to see it.

“Do you expect me to say ‘just kidding’?” Wedy tilted her head slightly to the side, a perfectly styled
lock of hair tumbling over her shoulder as she did so.

Sayu kind of did expect Wedy to say ‘just kidding’. Though there had been some mild flirtations
over the last few days between them, Sayu hadn’t chalked it up to anything more than mutual
friendliness. It was often difficult for her to tell where the line was, which was probably why she had
a hundred friends and only two ex-girlfriends.

It wasn’t just because Wedy was an Alpha and Sayu was a Beta either - that was hardly unheard of.
Sayu was going into law enforcement, and Wedy was a master thief of some kind, only spared
prison time on L’s good graces (if he actually had them). There was also the fact that she was one of
the most attractive women Sayu had ever laid eyes on; Wedy was statuesque, confident, and always
dressed as though she was some kind of celebrity.

What was it with her and her brother, becoming infatuated with outlaws whose names they didn’t
even know?

_Some kind of Yagami family curse, probably._
“A bit too forward for you, I see,” Wedy said, sitting back and taking her own glass of wine back up in her elegant, perfectly manicured fingers.

“Er, no, I was just surprised,” Sayu began to disagree, a warm flush beginning to flood her ears and neck.

“Finally!”

Matt’s voice rang clear through the room as he entered. He was in fresh clothes that he hadn’t been wearing earlier on in the day when Sayu had seen him updating Astrea, and his hair was still damp from a shower.

“What took so long?”

“Uh,” Matt crossed the room and shrugged, before plopping down in his usual choice of chair, a beanbag set close enough to an outlet so that he wouldn’t have to worry about his laptop running out of battery. “Nothing much. Just talking about, you know, stuff. The case. Catching him up on all he’s missed.”

“Are you that bad of a liar, or are you that high?” Aiber drawled.

“Both?” Matt shrugged and flipped open his laptop, before pausing and sniffing the air. “Wait, is that food?”

“Naomi has decided to grace us with her culinary skills,” Wedy explained, sipping. Whatever kind of lipstick she had on, Sayu figured it must be expensive, because it didn’t stain the glass at all. Her own gloss had long since smudged away to nothing on the rim.

“And me!” Matsuda chimed, sticking his head out from the kitchen archway and waving, before ducking back inside.

“Alright, so we’re going to start about halfway through the video collection this time, starting at the last point that I remember from the other night,” Matt informed them.
A blurry screenshot of Naomi came up on the plasma screen television with the triangle play symbol in the center. Looking at it for too long hurt Sayu’s eyes, but from what she could tell this continued to be a long shot. Matt had said he was only doing his due diligence, but Sayu figured it had more to do with distracting himself from something, or someone, or some ones.

The screen was abruptly turned off, and Sayu wasn’t sure why until she heard a new voice coming from the doorway. A tall man

“Ah, Near wanted me to come get one of her toys?” The man said and she could feel Matt’s mood immediately sour from across the room. The stranger seemed to realize his mistake, rubbing the back of his neck. “Sorry, I mean, one of his toys. Near said he left it in here?”

“The transformer is over there, if that’s what you mean.”

Baffled and sheepish, the man started forward, looking around. “He said it’s a...bumblebee?”

“Yeah, the yellow transformer, duh.” Matt all but grunted, crossing his legs, pointing to the expanse of floor that Sayu knew Near usually claimed. “While you’re out here, get his duck, too.”

Stephen blinked, pausing on his way across the room. “His duck?”

“It’s a bath toy,” Matt looked at Sayu briefly, giving his best ‘do you hear this guy?’ look. “It’s over by the little inflatable pool.”

“Oh, right,” Stephen gave a slightly nervous laugh, then went about gathering the two toys from where they had been left, scattered around with a few others. “Thanks.”

“Mhm,” Matt muttered, looking at his computer and typing something or other. It was obvious to Sayu that he was attempting to look nonchalant and to make Stephen feel unwelcome, which was the rudest thing she’d ever seen Matt do. The man shuffled out of the room with a polite goodbye.

Yeesh, how obvious can you get? Sayu found herself thinking as she finished the last of her glass of wine. She chanced a look at Wedy, who caught her gaze before she could look away.
“Shall I get you another glass?” Wedy inquired, glancing down at her empty glass.

If I don’t, will you kiss me later? Shit, don’t say that out loud, oh my god.

“Er,” Sayu found herself smiling, though she wasn’t entirely sure how she knew, because she was starting to not be able to feel her face. “Yeah, sure.”

Naomi and Matsuda reappeared with a tray of snacks and Sayu quickly lost track of how much she’d eaten. At first the finger foods grounded her, allowed her to pay more attention, but ended up just making her want to drink more to wash it down.

Each video was soundless, long, and boring. Perhaps if there had been audio available, at least it would have been fun to listen to the conversation, because from what Naomi described, this guy was one of the strangest people Sayu had ever heard of. As it was, the most interesting thing about the videos was Beyond Birthday’s face, though that was more sad than anything.

Each video looked very much like the others. A shot of Naomi walking down a long hallway. Another of her waiting outside a heavy door with nothing but a small window in it. Then the inside of the room, where she seated herself at a small metal table. The two were separated by a wall, with a window-like cutout that allowed them to see one another through a set of iron bars.

Most of the poor man’s face was covered in scars, especially above the bridge of his nose. If he had been trying to disguise his identity, it made sense that he’d poured the gasoline on his face first. Even through all the scar tissue, he had solid bone structure, olive skin, full lips, a strong nose. His hair was patchy toward the front, but it was thick enough (and messy enough) to distract from the places that hair would never grow again.

His eyes were dark, but no one would be able to tell the exact color with the horrid quality, and it wasn’t exactly an important detail. What was, though, was the glassy distance in them on occasion, which even the heavy pixelation could not entirely hide.

Naomi had informed her that, according to Beyond himself, his vision was only very partially in tact. He had to tilt his head to grasp glimpses here and there, and what he could see was still blurry. She couldn’t help but feel a little sorry for the man, before she reminded herself that he’d murdered a child. After that little fact reasserted itself, she felt better about looking at his marred face and very nearly sightless eyes.
She had to blink hard to keep herself focused after a while. Then she just distracted herself by reminding herself to blink over and over again, until they were too heavy to obey her.

Once her eyes were closed, she forgot her task entirely. At some point she remembered herself, and managed to open her eyes a smidge as though to set herself back on her task. Voices around her lulled her back down though, all of them full of food and alcohol, telling jokes and occasionally poking fun at Sayu for being knocked out so early. She thought she might have managed a comeback of some kind, but whatever it was, it only made them snicker at her more, so she gave up.

Her thoughts came full circle, and she forced her eyes open again, successful for longer this time than she had been the time before. Or the time before that. Or the one before that. How many times had she dozed off so far? Who could count? Certainly not her.

“You have such good posture, Naomi,” Sayu found herself mumbling something just before her eyes closed yet again, her head somehow ending up on Wedy’s knee. The air around her felt heavy and she wanted nothing more than to sleep through the night just like this.

“Huh?” Matsuda laughed heartily, “You really must be out of it. When she’s not doing her...Krav Maga thingy -”

“Capoeira,” Naomi corrected. Sayu could almost hear her rolling her eyes at him fondly, as she often saw the older woman do. Matsuda tended to inspire that look in everyone around him from time to time.

“Capricorn,” Matsuda conceded. “Right. When she’s not doing...wait, what was I saying again?”

“Good lord,” came Aiber’s voice. “Something about her posture. None of you know your limits, do you?”

“I know them,” Wedy told him easily enough, and Sayu almost melted through the couch when she brushed her fingers through her hair, idly, as if it was nothing at all. It should have been nothing at all, shouldn’t it? God, was she a pretty lady or what? “I just choose to push myself beyond them.”

“Oh, yeah, her posture, ” Matsuda gasped, “Sayu, you said Naomi has good posture! Unless she’s doing the capybara thing - “

“Capoeira. ”
“- right, copernicus, unless she’s doing that, she’s usually slouching, ’cause she spends all day reading, on the computer, or on her motorcycle.”

“None of those things lend themselves to exemplary posture,” Wedy agreed.

“Well,” Sayu pouted at being corrected by Matsuda, of all people. “I just meant in the video we’re watching.”

“Wait a second, Sayu, what’d you say?” Naomi’s voice broke through the sleepy, drunken fog of Sayu’s mind and she had to be prodded gently by Wedy to

“Wait, wait, rewind that,” Naomi said, eyes widening as she stumbled forward to get a better look. Matt fumbled with the controls a bit, rewinding back through the video. Sayu blinked several times, and started to sit up, only to immediately fall back onto Wedy’s thigh.

Not a bad place to be though.

“God, that’s - “

I could just fall asleep here. I was going to try to stay awake until I was clear headed enough to have her make good on her promise to kiss me buuut this isn’t exactly the worst case scenario either.

“What is it? I don’t understand,” Matt asked, his voice higher, louder.

“Are you remembering something?” That was Matsuda, sounding breathless and excited.

“Rewind it again. I have to be sure. The quality is such crap.”

Can’t you all just chill for a bit?

“- That’s not me,”
Naomi finally told them, a beacon of sobriety breaking through Sayu’s mind like sunlight through a canopy of trees. “In this last one - it’d been so long, but that’s… you can’t see my face clearly in any of them, but it’s not me in this video in particular. It’s not something I would have noticed, but Sayu said the posture and I actually looked.”

“Wait, so -”

Sayu sat up quickly and the whole room rushed around her and tilted, but it didn’t stop her from exclaiming -

“So it’s a disguise!?"

-at the same moment that Matsuda cried out -

“You were cloned!? ”

Which was how their breakthrough ended up sending everyone in the room into a fit of laughter for the next few minutes. Sayu fell back over and clutched her sides, nearly falling off the couch in the process. Luckily, a firm hand settled on her back to keep her from tumbling over the edge.

Matsuda went red and rubbed his neck when they all started to settle.

“...Yeah, that, uh, makes more sense.”

Chapter End Notes
A/N: Special thanks to Hannibaland, fourcardflush, and Kylara, who have all been a great help when it comes to betaing this fic. As this fic gets closer to the end, I have to be more careful about how everything is falling into place and they’ve been awesome about making sure the chapters are at their best before I post them for all of you.

The response to the last chapter was amazing, and better than I expected. Light’s an idiot, for sure, but I’m glad you seemed to get where he was coming from.

So, finally getting somewhere with the Beyond stuff, a bit. Something is finally starting to come together. This chapter was clearly kind of a montage. We even got Sayu’s POV. I wanted to have her in here a bit, with a little bit of her own love interest too. Wedy/Sayu is just aesthetically pleasing to me. They’re such opposites that it appeals to me. Give me a story about a girl-next-door, every day college student who wants to catch bad guys and her leather clad, motorcycle riding, master thief girlfriend any day.

Also, of course, brooding on the Matt/Mello/Near front, as well as the L/Light front. These boys and emotions, I’m telling you. This chapter marks kind of ...the end of the second arc? Next arc is kind of the Kiras Arc. More plot heavy, I think. I’m aiming to finish this at around 50 chapters, so I have to get stuff done at some point.

Please let me know what you think, favorite line/moment/scene/dialogue, all that good stuff. You’re the best. :)

Next chapter: Back to Light, and then Kira’s Gala.

-Nilah
Chapter Thirty-Five

Distance

“What if one happens to be possessed of a heart that can’t be trusted—? What if the heart, for its own unfathomable reasons, leads one willfully and in a cloud of unspeakable radiance away from health, domesticity, civic responsibility and strong social connections and all the blandly-held common virtues and instead straight towards a beautiful flare of ruin, self-immolation, disaster?” - Donna Tartt

The most difficult part of the week following Light’s departure from Japan was growing accustomed to being alone. It had been four months since he’d been released from his solitary confinement, and since then he’d felt as if there were always people around. If not L, then his sister, or Mello, or Matsuda, or Naomi - he was surrounded by people at work and at headquarters. He’d grown accustomed to talking out loud while he got ready for bed, and the weight on the mattress beside him as he slept.

The first two days after landing in Los Angeles were spent sleeping off the jet lag. The hotel bed was enormous, which made it feel even more empty, especially considering most of his dreams played out as though they were an extension of his heat with L. His suppressants were working as well as they ever had, but the Omega in him was pining for physical contact after having finally had its fill.

Light decided to suffocate it with solitude instead until it learned its place.
It was on the third day that he found it in himself to get out of bed at a decent hour. He made coffee, took his pill, and then watched the news until his stomach felt too empty to ignore. It was all speculations about Kira’s gala, and a little about the death of an American politician Kira had proudly admitted to killing the night before, a man responsible for the lead poisoning of thousands. He’d fallen into and drowned in the very river he’d sanctioned as safe three years before, despite his knowledge that it was not.

Before breakfast, he showered and was irritated by the huge, ornate mirror that lined the bathroom wall. Light still bore the marks that L had given him in the midst of heat (and vice versa, he realized; he felt a surge of pride at the idea, and then guilt directly after).

Light would not be free of L until the marks faded. There were pictures of L’s face, impressions of L’s hands, captured moments, bites of the sounds and words that had come out of L’s mouth; they lined the insides of Light’s mind like some kind of haunting insulation.

No, he’d never be free of him. Not unless falling out of love was a great deal easier than falling into it.

_He should have lied to me. Then, at least, I would have formed such an impossible attachment to someone who didn’t really exist._

Los Angeles was too hot and too big and too crowded. It had taken almost an hour to get from the airport to his hotel when he’d arrived and since then he’d noticed how spread out everything was. It would take ages to get to Hideki’s mansion, wherever it was; there would be a car coming for him, apparently, as there would be with all the rest of the guests.

Matt had been able to find a few dozen of the invited guests, people who had not been so careful as to keep quiet about it in some way or another. He’d found a text here, an email there, while other people openly tweeted about their future association with Kira on social media. Light committed them to memory without issue.

However much Light felt like he was wasting away in this city, he did find himself enjoying the beach. Once he’d managed to pry himself from the safety of his hotel room, he decided to just sit outside on the balcony and take everything in. Hotels, he decided, seemed to exist just outside of reality.

After a while, his own mind had become too loud with thoughts better left ignored. Something about
the warm colors of sunset made his mental defenses soften; the endless view of the Pacific ocean only lead him to linger on the home that lay just across it, and all he’d left behind there, so he shut himself in the room once again. Inside, where the horizon couldn’t remind him of Japan, where the shoreline couldn’t remind him of his drunken, impromptu swim with L, where nothing would remind him of no one, where the world could not touch him.

The fourth day he spent alone on a different continent, he spent walking.

He’d always enjoyed a quiet walk to himself, like he used to when he trekked to and from school for most of his childhood and teen years. Thinking about that time in his life too much reminded him of his father, however, and dwelling on that grief was not something he wanted to add onto -

Well, the whole ‘L’ thing.

After completing his morning routine, he set out in an outfit that he might have worn to play tennis on any other day. The sun beat down against his arms and legs enough throughout the day that he would have burned terribly if he hadn’t had the forethought to wear sunscreen. He considered buying sunglasses, but thought better of it. Despite his precautions, he didn’t want to take the chance to incurring strange facial tan lines a few days before he was meant to dress in a bespoke suit and attend a formal gathering at a mansion.

He stayed as close to the water as possible so that he didn’t have to deal with the gratuitous amounts of white, dry sand, and instead he padded along the compacted wet sand that was easier to walk on. The water flirted with his sneakers, and occasionally bested them when he got too lost in thought or whatever song was flooding his ears through his earbuds.

He walked until his shoes dried, until his feet ached, and then more, until even his spine was beginning to protest. He found a restaurant (there were many along the coast to choose from) and practised his English with a chubby blonde waitress for the better part of an hour. While he found the food a bit tasteless, he wasn’t sure if that was due to the restaurant quality or his own perception - even the five star hotel’s food hadn’t stood out to him, after all.

While the break in the shade gave his body time to rest, he was glad to be back on the move again.
While at first the stillness of his hotel room had been comforting (it was almost as if no time had passed at all, like perhaps he could go back if he - ) now that he’d managed to get out, the idea of staying in one place for too long verged on nauseating. His own mind might work against him, smothering him, if not for the expanse of land ahead and the music in his ears to drown out his own thoughts.

The sky was so big and blue Light wondered if it ever rained in a place like this. He found that he almost couldn’t imagine what that might look like. After lunch, he started back the way he had come, and found that the beach was populated almost at all times, perhaps even more so later on in the day. The endless beach was covered in an array of people lounging and surfing, some tourists, some locals, of all ages and sizes and colors.

Light felt a bit like he was on another planet entirely. The idea actually made the city more appealing.

Beep.

His phone rang and interrupted a crescendo of the symphony playing in his ears. A jolt of panic carved a jagged line through him when he looked at the screen and found the number flashing there labeled Unknown.

Beep.

The idea of hearing L’s voice on the other end was as appealing as it was alarming, but it would be absolutely ridiculous of him to ignore it. He could pretend he’d been indisposed, but he would always known that it was just because he was a coward.

Beep.

He stopped walking and swiped to answer, trying not to hold his breath.

“Moping over?”

Mello’s voice came from the phone, mocking and abrasive.
Light faltered. “What?”

“Are you ready to get back to work?”

The heat of the agitation that Mello inspired in him at those words cut through the gloom with surprising ease. It was exactly what Light needed, to focus on this job, on the Gala, on Kira himself. Perhaps if he occupied his mind enough, there would be less left of it for L to invade.

“...Yeah,” Light replied, a sudden relieved energy prodding his mind awake. “Let’s get to work.”

“Good. I’m getting on the plane now, so I’ll be there in the morning. I hope you’ve been practising, Yagami.”

Light rolled his eyes, hung up, then turned away from the setting sun to start his trek back to the hotel.

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“We figure your wristwatch is safe.”

Inside the confines of Light’s hotel room, Mello spoke his English in a British accent, Light noted. The younger man had asked that he come meet him for breakfast in the hotel restaurant that morning and had spoken English then in an American dialect, one that was apparently familiar enough to the waiter that he hadn’t blinked when Mello claimed to be a native to California, there to show his ‘brother-in-law’ the sights.

As blond and tan as Mello was, Light rather thought he fit in among the people that he’d seen. Even though it had been two weeks since he and Mello had met for morning lessons, somehow it wasn’t strange to see him sitting across the table from him.

Seeing him sprawled out across Light’s hotel bed, with two laptops propped open in front of him, was a little less regular. Light choose to stick to the arm chair instead, though he angled himself so that he could see the screen if it was necessary to do so.
“He probably won’t want you to be without that memory,” Mello continued. “so I think it’s very likely they won’t remove the watch at all. That means it’s the only option for some sort of communication device. If Kira knows what’s good for him, he’ll collect phones at the beginning of the evening.”

*He does seem to have a knack for knowing what's good for him,* Light found himself thinking dryly.

“What if there’s some sort of detector?” Light asked, “The watch my father gave me doesn’t have the mechanisms for recording inside it. They’ll be able to see that.”

Mello scoffed, “Ha, you’re not wearing *that* watch, Yagami.”

Light’s brow furrowed. “Excuse me?”

“You’re wearing a *smartwatch* that Matt altered,” he explained, sitting up and rifling through the same bag he’d pulled the laptops from. He withdrew a sleek black watch, obviously a brand new model, but subtle enough that it wouldn’t draw attention. Hopefully. “You’ll have to get into the watch to turn it on because we don’t want it running out of battery, or anything picking up it’s signal.”

“There won’t be a speaker,” Light pointed out.

“No, you’ll have to use this.” Next, Mello pulled out a small device that was fairly familiar to Light, though he had never had any inclination to buy one. Phone calls were a rarity for him; he hardly needed a special gadget for them. “A bluetooth mic. Loads of people use it, especially in Tokyo and other big cities, so it shouldn’t be too suspicious.”

Mello tossed it over to him.

“Shouldn’t be,” Light muttered, looking it over skeptically, forming an idea.

“You’re just going to keep it in your pocket, Yagami. This is honestly the least of your worries, when it comes to you walking straight into the fucking lion’s den.”
Light curled his lip. “Thanks.”

“I live to reassure.” Mello snorted as he typed something into one of the laptops distractedly.

“Let’s go over what we’ll be there for.”

“We?”

“Well, we won’t be there with you, at least at first,” Mello amended. “But Wedy will be following the car that takes you and sneaking in to set up cameras.”

*You’re not going to be alone for long,* L had said back when they’d been going over this in Japan. The memory of his voice was so vibrant and clear that Light had to stop himself from looking around the room, as if somehow L might be there with him.

“Who is your character?”

“Me, but a me that has been working only for the NPA after being falsely imprisoned by L.”

“And?”

Briefly, Light grit his teeth. “And what?”

“Nuances, Yagami. It’s not going to be easy, but you have to be who Kira thinks you are,” Mello sighed. “What did we decide about how he must view you?”
Light sighed. “He’s heard about me from Kiyomi, Misa, and Mikami. Each of them holds me in high regard, so it’s very likely that Kira thinks well of me.”

Mello turned and to sit on the desk.“You are invited to his orgy.”

“Don’t call it that.”

“Sorry, Princess.”

“Don’t call me that. Are we working or not?” Light snapped, earning a smirk from Mello as he swung his legs.

“Fine, what else defines the part you’re playing? It’s all in -”

“Distinctions, yeah.” Light looked to the ceiling briefly. “Me, but one who is suspected to be Anti-Kira by my coworkers. I’ve made sure to keep myself publicly neutral, in case Hideki has spies in the NPA.”

“And your father?”

“I still don’t see how that part is relevant,” Light answered tightly.

“Are you kidding me? Hideki killed him. You have to feel something about that.”

“I do.” Light grit his teeth briefly. “I just don’t understand how that’s relevant to how I’ll be interacting with Kira at this particular event. I doubt it will just come up.”

“No, I doubt he’ll apologize to you.” Mello rolled his eyes so dramatically that he tilted his head with it. “But what did we establish, Yagami?”

“Don’t talk to me like I’m a child.”
“He thinks highly of you, so if he killed your father, somewhere in that twisted head of his, he thinks he did you a favor. Right?”

“Right, so I have to pretend like I’m completely fine with it? Won’t that draw even more attention?”

“You’re better than that, Yagami.”

Light huffed and let his head roll back, frowning up at the ceiling.

_Nuances, huh? In Kira’s head, I suppose he was relieving me of my father._

_If Misa did smell me going into heat, which is pretty likely from the footage I reviewed, then she probably told Kira that I’m an Omega too._

“I’ll go in there as Beta, even though he may know I’m not. There’s no reason for him to out me,” Light began, musing out loud.

Mello’s lessons required him to think out loud, which had taken some getting used to, but now it seemed almost ingrained into him.

“Considering he almost definitely knows, it’s possible he was...trying to protect me. If he thought my father corrupt for some reason, I suppose it isn’t that much of a jump that there was some sort of parental pressure to not be an Omega.”

The made a cold, sullen fury curdle in his gut. As if that bastard could know anything about his father, could know anything about _him_. But it was counterproductive to think that way. Light turned the page back in his head.

“That’s good. You’re going to play him, Yagami, remember that. Go on.”

_Playing him. I need him to trust me, more than anything, if I’m going to find a way to the murder weapon. That’s the objective here - see him use the weapon, if at all possible. Figure out what it is so that I can return with the intel and we can form a plan to steal it._
I have to appeal to him, have to be who he wants me to be - better than, even. We know that Amane and Mikami practically worship him. Kiyomi could too; she was never one for expressing affection openly, so it’s possible. But it’s more likely that she’s the most level-headed of the three.

“In a world where that’s the truth,” Light begins, working his brain around the prospect. “...I suppose I could be grateful, but I’d still defend my father.”

“Okay, but that gratefulness is going to come with guilt,” Mello supplied. “Kira fancies himself a hero, like he plays in the movies.”

“I’m not going to be a damsel, if that’s what you’re implying.”

“Oh, fuck off, Yagami,” Mello sneered, “These people have been fucked over by the justice system, or by authority in general. Hideki may just be in this for the power, we don’t know. But I doubt Amane is. Or Mikami, for that matter. It’s possible Takada is, but from what you’ve said, it doesn’t seem so. They’re scum of the earth idiots, but they’re scum of the earth idiots that think they’re doing the right thing.”

Light supposed that wasn’t too far off from the truth.

*They think they’re doing the right thing, and half the world agrees with them. We’ve got to turn the tide. This act of mine may be our only chance to do so.*

Light received phone call in the middle of the night. His half asleep mind spiked with panic or hope or - something, at the sound. When he woke up a little more, he realized how silly that was. L would not be calling to beg for him back, not after what he’d said.

He wouldn’t have taken L back anyway, so why was that his first thought even now?
What was wrong with him that he couldn’t make it through a day without remembering something L had said to him, or thinking of what L might say if he were there with him? That he would awake aching inside, itching to be touched in a way that would have been foreign and even distasteful a few months before, and reach out for L as if by some romantic magic he’d known, and appeared?

*Idiocy.* Light snatched the phone up.

Yet again, it was Mello. Relief and disappointment fought a battle in his throat.

“*Yes?*”

“There’s been a development, Yagami.”

Mello sounded a bit rushed. The sound of metal sliding over wood was in the background, then the jingle of keys.

“A development of what kind?” Light asked as he sat up and turned on the bedside lamp.

“L just told me. Apparently Matt’s known for a few days - hell, apparently your fucking sister knew? Everyone but you, me, and L. They said they wanted to be sure, but it seems like - fuck. This might actually be the first lead we’ve gotten.”

“Are you going to tell me what it is or not?”

“And they say *I’m* impatient,” Mello grumbled. “I’m headed over to your hotel now to tell you the whole story.”

“You can’t just tell me over the phone.”

“I can’t ride a motorcycle and gab with you at the same time. It’s a long story, and it’s all a bit crazy,” There was a pause, a small laugh. “Well, he’s a bit crazy.”

Light’s frown deepened. “He?”
“See you in a minute, Yagami.”

Beyond Birthday.

Another piece in the puzzle that was L, and one that Light had never been privy to, until Mello had told him the whole story about the case that L and Naomi had worked on together. Light had known there had been a case years before, had known that L thought highly of Naomi for it, but it had never come up. Light had never thought to ask, and L had never offered up the information.

How Mello was able to recount it, Light didn’t know. Almost didn’t care to. Just listening to the entire thing turned his stomach.

_How dare you know something like this about him? I should know this. I should know everything about him._

_Should have. I suppose it doesn’t matter now, but it feels like it does._

So.

L hadn’t been entirely honest with him either, that hypocritical bastard. That absolute fucking shit. Light felt at odds with himself, as he tended to, this time in relation to L’s glaring omission. He wasn’t sure whether he should give into this fresh hurt, this anger at being left out of a part of L’s life, or relieved that he wasn’t the only one that kept a part of themselves close.

No matter how honest L claimed he was with him, there was something he’d hidden away. Perhaps, then, Light hadn’t been such an idiot to assume the love was a fallacy too. Even if it was one L had bought into himself.
“So someone who was able to hack into the prison’s cameras was also able to find someone able to impersonate Misora?” Light clarified, “And this leads you to believe that Hideki helped this Birthday person fake his death, which is why they’ve been able to hack things to the extent they have been. Because he’s helping them.”

“That’s about it,” Mello agreed, peering back at him unwaveringly.

“I don’t see how that’s relevant,” Light said after a moment, standing. “We know Kira has talented, powerful allies. It makes very little difference to the case whether or not Ryuzaki happens to have known him. Perhaps it makes it more personal, but he already said he was trying to ‘ruin’ him, as he said at the festival. This doesn’t change anything.”

The alias sounded wrong in his ears now, tasted wrong on his tongue. Now that he knew the origin of the name ‘Ryuzaki’, Light almost didn’t want to use it. This whole time, Light had been using that name to refer to L, and the meaning behind it had been kept a secret from him. He supposed he should have guessed there was some significance behind it, like there was with Eraldo Coil and Deneuve, but L had told him about *those* cases -

This one he’d never spoken about. Light had assumed that, like the Ryuga pseudonym, it had been without significance. That clearly wasn’t the case.

Part of Light wanted to never speak to L again (wasn’t that what was happening anyway, with L sending Mello to debrief him on everything?) and the other part of him wanted the man at his back. Wanted his chin on his shoulder and his hands wrapped around his waist, or pressed to his stomach like he did when he’d just filled -

“Yagami -”

“Is there more?” Light asked curtly.

Mellow stared, lips pulling tight. “Not that I can think of.”

“Then I need to get some rest,” Light pointedly made his way back to the bed, sitting down where the covers were turned over, his back to Mello.

“You do that,” was Mello’s only response before Light heard the door open and shut.
The limousine that pulled up to the hotel was even more sleek than Light had been expecting. It was long and elegantly shaped, completely black save for the handles on the doors and a thin line of silver running horizontally from the headlights to the brake lights. The windows were tinted so dark that Light doubted it was legal, and so he didn’t see the driver until he hoisted himself out of the vehicle.

He was tall and overweight, with a jolly smile that Light supposed was meant to put him at ease.

It didn’t.

“Lookin’ sharp, lookin’ sharp,” the driver said, his jowls bouncing as he did so. He pulled the door open for Light and made a grand, sweeping gesture. “Please take a seat, Mr. Yagami.”

Light would kick himself for it later, but he hesitated to step forward despite the man’s friendly prompt.

“Sorry, I thought your card said you could speak English,” bumbled the driver, wiping presumably sweaty hands on his trousers.

“I can,” Light replied, offering the man a soft and reassuring smile, before forcing himself to step forward. “Thank you. It just took me a moment to process your words.”

It hadn’t, but he didn’t want the man to report his pause. Or, if there was a possibility that Ryuga was recording this. He wished he’d been allowed a tracking device of some kind to stick to the car, but he knew the reasoning well enough against it - it would point directly to him if it was found. They could take no chances when it came to Ryuga believing that Light was on his side. He was the only one that didn’t know Light personally, and so he would be the most suspicious of Light’s loyalty.

Light knew that Wedy was nearby, but he didn’t dare look around lest he give something away. He took ahold of every motion he made, grinning in a disarming way that put the driver at ease.
“There’s an intercom system, so let me know if you need anything. After the first hour or so, there won’t be any rest stops, so be sure to tell me if you need to stop for any reason before that,” the driver told him after Light had seated himself. It was surely a script, but the man was congenial enough to pass it off as if it weren’t, almost. “There are snacks, water bottles, even some champagne. It’ll be about a two hour ride, so there’s a few things to entertain you.

“Music, crosswords, a couple magazines. There’s even a sudoku puzzle book. Sudoku is Japanese, isn’t it?”

“Ah,” Light blinked, allowing a small, polite laugh. “Yes, it is.”

“Thought so!” the man exclaimed triumphantly. “Oh, also, I’ll need to collect your phone. It will be returned to you when I drive you back to the hotel, of course.”

“Of course.” Light handed it over, making sure not to express his reluctance.

“I think we’re all set. You ready, Mr. Yagami?”

“Yes, quite ready thank you.”

“Great! I’d say ‘buckle up’ but there aren’t any seatbelts for you back here, so - just holler if you need anything.”

Light was only vaguely relieved when the door shut. As exuberant and mildly grating as the driver’s personality was, it was better than the empty seats stretched out before him. As he’d expected, the windows on the inside were blocked out as well, not allowing him a view of the roads they’d be going down.

Wedy will be following at a fair distance on her motorcycle. Don’t give me that face, Yagami, it’s tricky, but you wanted to go, didn’t you? Mello’s voice was in his head, generated entirely by Light (if Mello was his conscience, he was pretty much doomed) almost clear enough to be in his ear. Now don’t be yourself, be more than that. What the hell are you doing? Get your head in the game, bitch.

... And stop thinking about L, it spat out, jolting him briefly, before relaxing him entirely.
Light picked up one of the booklets full of games, but it reminded him suddenly, vibrantly of the night of the East West Festival, of how he and L had passed the time with little games like that. Instead, he found a decent playlist on the iPod that was provided and tried to focus his mind on the music.

He could do this.

In a way, he’d been made (had made himself) for an operation like this.

This was something he’d always been good at it; he’d been lying to people without so much as saying a word since he was sixteen (before that, if he were entirely honest, but since when was he entirely honest?). Even so - however much he loathed to admit it - Mello had sharpened his awareness, and therefore his skills. He could lie at what felt like almost a molecular level now, not just with his eyes but with his hands and his lips and the lines in his neck. Even the parts of him that were unmovable, down to the smallest grain of the smallest fiber.

Light didn’t lie through his teeth, he lied with them, in tandem with every thought and every suggestion of thought. They were part of him, just like the exposed bone; he would bare his lies at Kira, and they would buy that he was smiling.

That mistake would, with any luck, be the catalyst to end Kira’s reign of false justice.

He felt simultaneously himself and not himself in the minutes that lead up to the Gala, which was just the headspace that Mello had taught - no, encouraged him to get in. He wasn’t anyone else in particular; it was as though he were taking on a role in a play, the character he had been cast had been created in observation of him. It had his wants, his needs, his dreams, his likes and dislikes, but it was not him, exactly.

Stepping into himself, this designed self he had crafted with Mello’s very slight (almost unnecessary, really) guidance, felt the same way that putting on the bespoke (his favorite of those L had purchased for his birthday, but he’d decided not to think about that) suit had. It was perfectly fitted to his measurements, and he felt more comfortable in it than if it were his own skin.

It was, quite possibly, the most at ease he’d ever felt in his life.

It was only when he the vehicle stopped purring beneath him, signalling they’d reached their final
destination, did Light notice that at some point he had pressed his thumb to the inside of the opposite wrist, which in turn made him realize he’d been lying to himself the whole time. Perhaps his nerves had not been at peace, but instead vibrating so vehemently they had come full circle into a deceitful sense of stillness.

Well, he supposed if he could fool himself so thoroughly after all this time, Kira should be a sinch.

The door opened and Light was greeted by the driver’s dowey face and broad smile. He kept that confident thought in mind as he stepped out and onto a circular driveway. Men and women in gowns were being led to the front doors by what appeared to be the staff. There were men in plain but sharp tuxedos and women in black dresses with white colors, uniforms meant to appear classy but indistinct, so that they disappeared when they weren’t needed.

“Yagami-san.”

The voice that called to him was familiar enough to nearly startle him. Light had inaccurately assumed that he would be approached by a blank-faced stranger, but that wasn’t the case.

Before Light was a young woman that he had not seen since he had graduated from Tokyo University, standing regally in a deep red, floor length evening gown. Kiyomi Takada gave a smooth, elegant gesture with her hand, dismissing the driver. Light heard his heavy steps as he moved back to the other side of the limousine.

“I hope you don’t mind that you weren’t assigned an usher,” she spoke softly, after offering him a gracious bow. “Hideki-san thought that it might be nice if I were to escort you inside.”

*Considering our history,* Light supplied for her, noting that she didn’t seem particularly pleased by her assignment. He wondered if that was her residual resentment of him for breaking up with her, or something more - something to do with the glance she’d cast Ryuga during their interview that hadn’t seemed as respectful as she tried to appear.

“Not at all, Takada-san,” Light responded, bowing to her in kind. “It is lovely to see you again, an honor to have you walk me over the threshold into what I am sure will be a momentous event. Thank you for leaving your company to retrieve me.”

Takada turned up her chin slightly when he offered his arm, but seemed mildly appeased by his gratefulness.
“It was nothing at all,” Kyomi told him as she took his arm lightly, then guided him up the steps and through the front large, arching front door, held open by two tall men in equally unremarkable tuxedos. As Light had suspected, they passed through an entrance hall lined with what looked like the detectors that one might see in a government building or airport.

He placed his wallet and seemingly innocent bluetooth receiver in a tray and refused to hold his breath as he stepped through. A severe looking older man with a craggy complexion handed back his items without a fuss.

There was a long enough pause for Light to think Kyomi was finished speaking, but she started again as soon as they had a full view of a huge, high ceilinged ballroom already scattered with a few dozen occupants.

“I’m glad you came. We have much to discuss with you.” Kyomi’s gaze darted to him briefly. “And, as you said - it’s lovely to see you again.”

Chapter End Notes

So, a Light and Mello chapter, with a bit of Takada at the end. This was mostly a set up chapter. The next chapter will be all about the Gala, and you're going to be getting some new POVs and shit will be going down. This chapter was more about Light's mental state, explaining the setting for the Gala, a little about Beyond, and also how Mello and Light are kind of reluctant bros (though they'd never admit it).

There are several playlists for Primitive Liars, which I've posted on tumblr at some point, but here you are in case any of you don't follow me there:

L/Light focused - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVxl7FRXm6HpK_T7mu-bjlQ8hGgeFRe3L
Matt/Near/Mello focused - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVxl7FRXm6HpFjyQM2_P4Dh2RW9BHKDAq
Hideki, Takada, and Misa focused - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVxl7FRXm6HorTYrHKZt0UZnq0I7yp8F-

Please let me know what you think of this chapter. :) Your comments fuel me.

-Nilah
Chapter Thirty-Six

Action

“I love how, whenever you tell me a story, you go backwards and forwards and tell me everything else that could possibly be happening in every direction, like an explosion. Like a flower blooming.”
-Andrew Smith

The archway through which all the guests entered was well lit and accented with deep purple curtains, which parted elegantly and made for a striking entrance. Light Yagami and Kiyomi Takada made a particularly regal sight as they entered arm in arm, each holding themselves tall and poised, as they made their way further into the ballroom so as not to block the entryway.

The hall was tastefully decorated, with round tables covered with fine white tablecloths that held platters of hor d'oeuvres, champagne, and bouquets of flowers - stargazer lilies, gladiolus, and calla flowers artistically arranged in decorative vases.

Misa knew the names of each flower because she had picked them out herself, and they fit in with the color scheme that she had decided on for the evening. It looked every bit as lovely as she had imagined it, even if Kiyomi had nixed some of her more dramatic ideas, such as her solo performance. She didn’t see what the big deal was - couldn’t this be a “mature” gala and still be fun?
Has Takada ever had fun in her life? Almost definitely not. Misa thought to herself, letting out a self-satisfied sigh. She leaned on the railing on the second story of the ballroom, a perfect crescent stretch of marble looking out over the first floor where the masses gathered. A few people looked up and recognized her, to which she waved and blew kisses at them, giddy with excitement.

“That’s him, Rem.” Misa rested her cheek in her palm, frowning for a moment as she considered the picture they made, arm in arm, graceful and impeccably dressed. “They look kind of beautiful together, don’t they?”

“I suppose,” Rem agreed in her smooth, monotonous tone.

“Or,” Misa put a finger to her chin thoughtfully, “do humans look beautiful to you at all? Are we just flesh bags in your eyes, Rem?”

“Many are,” Rem replied. “Others can be, as you said, beautiful.”

“Hmmm,” Misa hummed considerately, her lips losing the quirk to them after a moment.

She wondered how Light was doing, after his confinement - it had been some time since they’d been released. Since that horrible display concocted by the terrible so-called detective in the shadows. Misa hadn’t recognized the smell at first, that sickly sweet smell in the car on the drive back, but the long ride back to the hotel had given her time to think it over. She’d thought it might be her own heat, though she’d been allowed mild suppressants while she’d been locked away.

Light had refused to look in her direction practically the entire ride, or away from the window at all. He’d hidden from both Misa and his father’s gaze, but even so, Misa had realized what the truth had to be. She didn’t know how he’d managed to hide it, and sometimes she still thought about why he felt the need to at all, and her heart ached for him. But her suspicion, while she was fairly certain of it, was far from fact. Even if it were, it wasn’t her secret to tell - at least unless it suited her needs at the time. As of yet, she had no reason to spill such a silly secret.

What use would Light’s gender be to Ryuga, after all? Still, keeping things from him made her nervous, and the best cure for the jitters was surrounding herself with other people.

Well, time to mingle then.
Misa made her way down one of the two elegant stairways that lead down to the first floor, her hand sliding down the railing gently as she did so, heels tapping lightly with every step. She caught the eye of many of their patrons, all of whom looked equal parts nervous and awed. Misa lifted her chin under their gazes and twirled as she approached her destination, showing off the delicate lines and frills of the rich purple dress she wore before stopping just in front of the pair. Kiyomi made a striking figure next to Light in her deep red floor length gown, and Misa finds herself vaguely irked at the fact Light’s tie was only a few shades brighter crimson, making it look almost planned.

A ridiculous thought, considering her own Alpha was around here somewhere. Misa grinned brilliantly at them both and leaned forward playfully.

“Light Yagami isn’t the only person at this party, you know.”

The evening began with everything in its proper place. The guests filed in, many of them whispering to one another and looking around the room with awe and uncertainty. Kiyomi couldn’t exactly blame them, even though their expressions strike against the deepest, most basic level of her displeasure.

After all, she had also entered into a partnership with Ryuga with much the same emotions roiling within her, though she would be lying if she didn’t also admit to a hint of pride at being chosen at the time. Even if those feelings were barely a shadow of what they had been a couple years prior, she remembered them clearly.

Beside her, Light Yagami gave off none of these feelings. His expression was that of casual politeness, as had always been the case, at least in Kiyomi’s experience. He surveyed the room as if he were at any other Gala of the sort - as if he made a habit of coming to such places, as if there weren’t powerful politicians, executives, musicians, actors, and journalists from all over the world occupying the grand ballroom.

They found a place not far from the base of the staircase on the left, near one of the high, round tables with a bouquet of flowers in an elaborate vase in the center. Without thinking, Kiyomi trailed slightly behind Light, watching him as he moved through what was now practically throngs of guests.
Through. Yes, he moved through them, that was the best way to describe it. She happened to know this for a fact, as she’d spent over three years observing Light Yagami, trying to know him. While she had never quite succeeded, there were still plenty of things she had picked up, and his ability to walk gracefully through a room as if no one else were there was unmatched by anyone she had ever met before.

All these years, and nothing had changed.

“I’ve been following your career,” Kiyomi began when they had settled, once Light had turned to face her. Once his attention was on her, it felt instead as if he had pulled her into his world, the one where only he existed. She knew it well, as she had sojourned there as often as she was allowed to. As important as it made a person feel to be accepted into the space of his consideration, she felt like a guest. She always had.

A waitress came by and offered them both glasses of champagne from a half empty silver tray. Light took one and Kiyomi took two, setting one down on the table while the other remained in the gentle clasp of her fingers. They nodded to the waitress as both thanks and dismissal.

“Have you?” Light answered, not even glancing down at the wine before he took another sip.

It was too sweet for his taste, Kiyomi was certain it was, as she felt mostly the same. It was Misa’s favorite, however. Ryuga didn’t drink, and as such had had no preference when it came to such things. In fact, he’d had barely any strict preferences at all on the appearance of the Gala, as long as it was aesthetically pleasing and formal enough to present the image he wanted.

“I have,” she answered easily enough, “It’s partly my job, but you know the law has always interested me. You’ve made quite an impact on the NPA since you left university.”

But then, you always knew you would. You’ve never said it, of course, but you know exactly what you are.

“I’d say the same,” Light told her in return, mouth quirking wryly, “but isn’t everyone following your career?”

“Being one of the Kiras has certainly caught the eye of the populace.” Kiyomi nodded delicately.
“I meant before that, actually,” Light flattered her, giving a very slight nod of his own that hinted more at a bow than simple affirmation. “You’ve been a rising star for years now, Takada-san.”

Kiyomi barely had time to raise an eyebrow before they were interrupted.

“Light Yagami isn’t the only person at this party, you know.”

Instead of reacting to Light’s praise, Kiyomi turned her eyes on the origin of the voice, the pixie-like figure of Misa Amane all but spinning toward them. She wore a strapless, deep purple dress that was so light and airy that if she had spun with any particular force, she might have shown the room more than she cared to. Just behind her, Rem hovered like a pale shadow, as she nearly always did.

Not, Kiyomi thought, that Misa was a particularly abashed individual.

“I’m well aware,” Kiyomi said amusedly, plucking up the extra wine glass and extending it to Misa when she was close enough to take it. “However, I would be remiss if I didn’t say hello to an old friend.”

Misa looked at the glass, a spark of surprise in her eyes, before they caught fire and lit up her entire face with a grin. She took the glass in her hand, twirling it a bit so that the liquid swayed and spun.

“More than just an old friend,” Misa pointed out playfully, and though the heavy-handedness embarrassed Kiyomi, she didn’t let it affect her much; she simply averted her eyes briefly and took a sip of her wine.

“Takada-san’s friendship was prized highly, in addition to the rest,” Light answered charmingly, his own smile coy. He bowed toward Misa. “It’s a pleasure to see you again, Amane-san.”

“Don’t be so formal,” Misa told him, shaking her head, which made her artfully curled hair bounce across her bare shoulders. “You look great, by the way. Better even, than before….you know, all that nasty stuff.”

Kiyomi looked at Light to gauge his reaction. She had met Soichiro herself on two occasions while she and Light had been dating, and she had not received the impression he was capable of what Misa
described. Light Yagami, affected in any significant way, was almost impossible to imagine. Even so, the girl’s outrage was enough to make Kiyomi doubt her own convictions on the matter.

“Thank you,” Light responded, without skipping a beat. “You do as well, of course. I’m glad you’ve been taken care of.”

“Ryuga’s been wonderful,” Misa gushed suddenly. “Always sending Kiyomi after me to make sure I’m okay. He’s so very busy, so for him to think of me at all, let alone write letters, send me flowers -”

Kiyomi took a long sip of saccharine wine and swallowed without the faintest grimace.

If Takada were not such a poised individual, it might have been awkward for her to be in the company of Light Yagami and Misa Amane simultaneously. Each a shining medal embodying her prior and current romantic inclinations, and perhaps even the flaw in her taste. They both stood before her, lovely on their own and in contrast to one another as well, similarly unreachable; it would have been entirely understandable for anyone in a similar position feel out of place between them.

As it was, Takada was not one to have a hair out of place, let alone her entire self.

Beside Kiyomi’s personal reasons, Light and Misa shared more serious similarities. These were L’s two most public former suspects and victims, although no one outside of Ryuga’s small cortege knew that Light had been the second one falsely imprisoned. Kiyomi had never wanted to frame him, but Ryuga had made a compelling case for it. It wasn’t like she could have used her past affection for Light as a serious reason not to - not when doing so had worked out so well for Kira’s reputation.

It wasn’t as if she held any real power when it came to anything of importance. Misa could decorate, and Kiyomi could draft his speeches, but Ryuga called the shots that mattered. In the end, he’d been right - the decrease in L’s standing within the NPA had caused other governments to speak out against him, and was largely the reason they’d come this far this quickly.

She hid the curl of her lip on the rim of her glass as she took another sip.

“Come on, let’s mingle, there are so many important people here we just have to meet.” Misa stepped over and secured her arm’s around Light.
For some reason, Kiyomi didn’t feel the flash of instinctual jealousy she did whenever Misa showed Ryuga physical affection. However attractive and charming Light Yagami was, she couldn’t consider him a threat - perhaps because he was a Beta, and perhaps because he clearly had no romantic interest in Misa at all.

“What about -” Light offered a polite hesitation, “I haven’t seen Hideki-san, I mean.”

“Oh, he’ll be around soon.” Mise waved a hand dismissively and eagerly. “He wants everyone to get settled first, and make sure everything starts smoothly. It’s not easy being the host, you know.”

“Arriving dramatically and fashionably late is just a bonus,” Kiyomi found herself saying, earning a flicker of Light’s gaze in her direction.

“Oh, hush ,” Misa reacted quickly, but there was a light pink to her cheeks and a wrinkle to her nose that told Kiyomi that Misa knew she was right.

“Wedy is hanging back for now,” Mello explained, “until the event is in full swing, but she has eyes on the location.”

“Has she spotted Kira yet?” L asked, the telltale crunch of some kind of cookie filling the line a moment later.

“No, her view is limited, but she believes him to be beneath the hall,” Aiber’s voice came next, his easy drawl covering the nerves that Mello knew he was feeling. The man’s gaze continued shifting uneasily toward the gun in Mello’s hands, then over to Sayu. “She saw some access points but the signal out there keeps fading.”

“Fucking mountains,” Matt snarled, mostly to himself.

“Isn’t that bad?” Sayu asked, not hiding her anxiety half as well as Aiber was.
“Matt’s handling it,” Mello answered, leaning back in his chair until it was balancing precariously on two legs.

Aiber chose that moment to drawl, “Should she really be here?”

Sayu’s eyes narrowed. “If this is safe enough for my brother, it’s safe enough for me.”

“Baby Yagami is safest with me,” Mello answered casually, shrugging and offering Sayu a smirk. She was openly anxious, tapping her knees. Her brother was going in undercover to catch the most dangerous man in the world, and the woman she’d been dancing around the concept of dating was cat burglar-ing her way into the same mass murderer’s twisted prom night.

Mello could tell Sayu was going to pace the entire time, so he’d given her the task of monitoring hotel security. It wasn’t a difficult job, and it wasn’t like they were targets, but it had given her a distraction.

“How is the hotel looking?”

“Which hotel? We’re scattered all over,” Sayu huffed, crossing both her legs and arms. Mello had a brief flash of deja vu, only it had been Light before rather than Sayu.

They’d split up between three hotels, each within a few miles of the others. L and Matt were in one, Aiber and Near were in another, while Mello and Sayu were holed up together. Though, Mello supposed, the term ‘holing up’ might not apply to five star hotel suites.

“Safer this way,” Mello told her. “Just count yourself lucky that you didn’t get paired with Aiber. I heard he gets terrible gas when he gets nervous, and he hates this whole operation. The real hero today is Near.”

“Excuse me?” Aiber hissed.

A little scoff came next on the line, and Mello could tell it was Near’s, even though he was in another location with Aiber. Mello’s only company was Sayu, who was trying her best to hide the fact that she was a bundle of nerves. Naomi was on her bike, tailing a few miles behind Wedy for
quick back up if it was necessary.

It brought a small smile to Sayu’s lips, so Mello supposed it wasn’t the worst joke imaginable. Aiber was only being kept around at this point to act as Near’s pretend guardian and assistant, if he needed help getting around. This wasn’t a con job, but they needed more hands on deck, and Aiber was nearby already.

In any case, Mello’s job would be a lot easier if Sayu stayed calm and believed this operation to be entirely normal, at least for the super detectives Sayu believed them to be, even if this was far from it.

“...which is why I told our broker that he had to be absolutely insane to think we'd agree to…”

At first, Light was afraid that he wouldn't remember enough Mandarin to understand everything the man named Lin Hung was saying. Now, he rather wished that he didn't. Takada had been kind enough to introduce them, but had been pulled away by some crisis with one of the kitchen staff. Elegant hors d'oeuvres were now being carried by the waitstaff on silver platters, but she had yet to save him from the financial small talk the stranger had dragged him into.

The only reason that Light had not excused himself was because Hung didn't seem to care when Light’s attention drifted, which allowed him to observe Ryuga from afar unnoticed.

Ryuga had joined the party over an hour ago to applause, which he'd brushed away with a gracious gesture of his hand. He'd then proceeded to mingle with, Light presumed, everyone besides him.

“Pardon. Are you Light Yagami?”

At first annoyed, the man with whom Light had been conversing (for lack of a better word) looked up at the intruder. Light didn't know him, but he was almost stunningly attractive, well-dressed, and seemed to make an impression on Hung.
“Namikawa-san, I didn't know you'd be here.”

“I'm sorry, I'm just terrible with faces,” the man named Namikawa informed Hung in a clipped yet polite tone, then turned back to Light. “I've been asked to escort you to the second floor, Yagami-san.”

Light raised his eyebrow, gaze flickering upward.

Ryuga had come from the second floor to make his entrance but only a few had gone to the second story. It loomed over the first despite being perhaps a fifth of the size, casting a sliver of a shadow on the first floor. He’d cut his hair for the occasion, not much, but enough that he looked sharper than he ever had in his interviews. He looked older as well in his navy bespoke suit, but Light had no doubt that he had contrived every part of his appearance to look respectable. As if this was a legitimate political party rather than some kool-aid drinking cult.

Perhaps he was trying to humble Light, to let him know he was just one of many possible pawn in his supernatural plan for megalomania.

However irritated the entire charade had made Light, excitement rose in him at the prospect of meeting him face to face. It was a sour feeling, but gave him the energy he needed to smile graciously at both Hung and Namikawa.

“I see.” Light bowed in Hung’s direction. “It’s been a pleasure speaking with you.”

It most certainly hadn't, but making enemies here didn't seem the wisest choice.

Wedy was pissed at Mello for letting Sayu come along. Psychology degree or not, *Yagami* or not, she was a civilian. She had no business being in as much danger as the rest of them, who were either trained detectives or trained criminals. She was a twenty-something recent college grad. She didn’t even have *work* experience yet, let alone experience in something as precarious as this.
Hell, Wedy herself wasn’t fond of this entire plan either. But drastic measures had to be taken to deal with drastic enemies sometimes. She had worked her entire life to be an outstanding burglar, and even if Sayu was smart and driven, she was also young and foolish and - well. S*flat*. She wanted so badly to be like her brother, and it wasn’t exactly Wedy’s place to tell her that might not be the highest of aspirations.

She crept through the throng of limousines, parked in almost eerily straight lines. One of the snoozing drivers woke up and coughed. She made sure she was out of sight, all the while cursing Mello’s bad judgement.

Getting into the facility and getting out unnoticed was a relative piece of cake, compared to some of the other places she’d weaseled her way into over the years. Hooking up each camera individually was more tedious than difficult; she had to climb to each position without being seen and spend a couple minutes setting up the camera at the appropriate angle. Then she had to wait to confirm with the little detective gang that she’d done it correctly, or else all the effort would be for nothing.

If there was anything more annoying than working such a dangerous yet over-involved gig, it was having to go back and correct mistakes. Treading the same ground over again was never good for effective sneaking.

“We have a visual.”

“Perfect,” Wedy replied under her breath, already turning to make her way back out through the window and to her rig. Up was always easier than down, which was counterintuitive but unfortunately true, so she’d need to take her time if she wanted to be discreet. There were only two guards at each of the entrances, which she thought to be a little bit lax. But then, this was hardly the Iranian Gold Reserves or anything, and she supposed that Kira had relied more on secrecy than brute force so far.

Even so, if Kira had really wanted to make sure this place was unhackable, there were a few essential precautions that would have made Wedy’s life harder. Like having guards pacing the hallways at unpredictable intervals, or perhaps locating the entire thing on an island of some kind.

As it was, she made it up to the roof again in record time, giving her leeway to redirect her escape path in case the guards were smarter than they looked.

Which was just about when the roof shook beneath her so hard she was nearly thrown from it.
Although Near did not know Aiber well, he was a delightful alternative to his other options. Delightful, as in, he did as Near asked and was conventionally attractive and charming enough that the hotel staff wouldn’t look too long at the eccentricities that Near presented.

His only other option might have been L, but each of them on their own drew enough attention as it was. Matt wouldn’t wait on him hand and foot like Watari, but he was decidedly more likely to have practical knowledge and a willingness to utilise it than either Near or L. Mello was not an option for obvious reasons, and luckily, he seemed to think so as well. The prospect of them partnering together while the gala took place had never been brought up.

Aiber, to his credit, was a helpful assistant, even if he wasn't subtle about how below his station he found all of this.

Near occupied himself with stacking ear swabs in neat little houses while they waited for Wedy’s voice to tell them when to activate each camera. Matt made small talk and told the occasional joke to diffuse the tension. Each camera was set up and connected until there were fifteen angles to watch the proceedings from. It took her a little under an hour, moving to each location with a clandestine poise that Near could not begin to fathom.

There were approximately seven minutes of consistent visuals, altogether. Matt was able to mine faces to confirm his version of the guest list with relative ease. When it was all done, Wedy sat tight for several minutes to make sure the ethernet lines were stable, waiting for L’s confirmation before beginning to slip her way out of the building.

Each screen gave them a different view of the venue, most of them in the main hall, but one in the hallway leading to the kitchen, which gave them a partial view of the kitchen as well. The staff was cleaning up and readying more glasses of wine and constant array of finger foods. Not much to see, but potentially important. No stone left unturned, in this case.

Camera #1: View of the limousines.

A large man exited his vehicle. He forgot to shut the door behind him.
Near glanced at the profile that Matt had provided him on the drivers. This one was a smoker. Even so, there was nothing in his posture to suggest that he intends to stop walking soon. He didn’t reach for his breast pocket, which had an obvious cigarette box shaped bulge. His intentions were not clear, but they didn’t seem to have anything to do with his nicotine habit.

Additionally, the security footage from the hotel that Light Yagami was picked up at confirmed that this was the driver that took him to the location.

**Camera #14: Sliver of the hallway connecting the kitchen and entryway.**

The large man stomped in from outside and through the detector that each of the guests had been subject to.

It went off.

Red lights flashed and periodically obscured Camera #14’s clarity, but Near figured that was the least of their problems. L commented, but it was muffled by what Near guessed was his thumb. It didn’t matter, as Near was fairly certain that all eyes were on the driver’s sudden ambiguous activity.

**Camera #3-#13: Ballroom.**

The large man ran through the throng of people, several scattering as he made a path, without any apparent thought for the party-goers. He stopped when he reached dead center, red faced and shoulders heaving.

Although the expressions of the occupants were grainy, Near could pick up on a general disconcerting in the room. The alarm must have been loud, as several of the guests were covering their ears or looking around for the source in confusion.

**Camera #6 : Ballroom angle from a vent near the second floor.**

It caught several seconds of the large man’s angry face, enough that a lip reader might be able to make something of the words. It also caught the familiar silhouettes of Light Yagami, Kiyomi Takada, Misa Amane, and Teru Mikami on the second tier of the ballroom.
They weren’t particularly close to the railing, but appeared to have a good view of the agitated large man that now seemed to be giving some sort of speech.

**Camera #3-#7: Ballroom angles with a side or frontal view of the large man.**

His arms were waving as he spoke, brow furrowing, his lip curling. Near was fairly sure he was spitting with the force of his words, and made out what might be the word ‘Kira’.

Aggression was etched into every movement he made, enough to make the occupants inch away, but it wasn’t until he pulled open his coat with a harsh tug that the crowd truly panicked.

They began to run, to push, to dive beneath tables, and then -

“Ryuzaki -”

“Fucking -”

“Oh my god -”

“He’s going to -”

It happened an instant later, an explosion without sound, as if Near were watching it happen in space. The voices that had gasped or cursed over the line fell silent.

**Camera #3-#13: Fire, smoke, debri.**

Only Camera #1 remained unobstructed, a serene view of the limousines stretched across the venue’s lawn. Wedy’s connection fell away, her name falling off of the line.

Some kind of rock formed in Near’s stomach and threatened to grow up into his throat. He pushed it down.
Aiber stood up and stumbled on his way to the bathroom, muttering an excuse that Near either ignored or didn’t hear. His mind sounded like static for several terrible seconds.

Near supposed he ought to learn the driver’s name now.

“Ryuzaki, did you lose the visual as well?”

Near knew that he must have, but he felt the need to confirm just the same. Felt the need to hear his own voice, to make sure that it didn’t crack, that was still under his control. He had to get past this, they all did, or they would waste time. That wasn’t an option now, not when lives were likely being lost every second they delayed.

“All except for Camera 14, in the lower left quadrant of the -- ” A tense pause. “Never mind.”

“The debri is blocking our view.”

“Quite.”

*This is too convenient. If we delay too long, the perpetrators could be miles away by the time the smoke fully clears. Kira himself could be long gone, more importantly.*

While they’d gotten a few minutes of footage that they might be able to mine for suspicious activity later, that was a task for another time. The stakes had just gone up. There was no way of knowing from here how big the explosion had been. Everyone inside could be dead, for all they knew now.

Near wondered if perhaps that was why L’s voice seemed so tense.

“I suppose this means -”

“Yes,” L responded, sounding as if he’s already walking away. “Watari is already on his way in Helicopter A, but it will take some time. He’s reported that Wendy's tracker is still working.”

*Whether or not she’s alive on the other hand -*
“Please wait in the lobby for Mello to pick you up. You’ll fly Helicopter B.”

Near sighed, but otherwise didn’t let the dread show on his face. There were more important things to occupy his mind with rather than the fact he’d have to face Mello. The work, the puzzle, the people, they were all more important than whatever negativity Mello might make him feel.

“Aiber, please escort me to the lobby. We’ll be trading off with Mello shortly.”

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The entire venue moved beneath Light’s feet, throwing him to the ground so hard that it felt as though gravity was holding him down even when the worst of it was over.

That was all he knew. Something had exploded, that was the only answer that made any sense. The noise, the way the ground shook, and the terrible splintering sound of solid objects being undone. That madman, his very own driver, had gone from pleasant to practically foaming at the mouth.

Light had never heard an explosion in person, so there was a split second where his mind could not fathom what he was hearing. Movies and documentaries could not do it justice.

Everything was impossibly loud.

Light had hit the floor before he had completely figured out why he should, and the impact startled him into action. Instinctively, Light had thrown himself behind a table, but it didn’t offer him optimal cover. But then, he supposed that everyone who had been on the first floor with the now certainly dead driver had even less protection.

Following, it was quiet. So quiet.

The thought pierced his mind that perhaps everyone below was already dead, but he soon realized
that the blast had likely damaged his eardrums. His head hurt terribly, throbbing as if from the core of his brain, though his current deafness was an even more terrifying notion.

But then someone shrieked, and though he was relieved that he could still hear it, he didn’t look up to find the origin – it had come from below, where the bomb had gone off, and he didn’t have time to think on which stranger might be screaming like that, as if it might tear through the air with as much force as the explosion had.

Instead, his eyes focused and darted around in search of an escape path. He was on the second floor, just a crescent sliver of landing meant to peer over the main ballroom.

He’d only come up to the second floor minutes before, escorted by Namikawa. He’d spoken with him over a glass of wine briefly while he waited for Ryuga to join them.

Who else had been up there? Light suddenly couldn’t remember. Had Takada? Had Misa? Or had they been on the floor below mingling once again with those that had not earned an invitation to the second floor?

The idea of moving toward the edge to look at the havoc that the explosion had wrecked made Light sick to his stomach. He could hear groans. Multiple groans, different voices, a variety of pitches cut with pain. People had been hurt. Possibly more than hurt. Almost definitely more than hurt; there had been so many.

His mind flashed to the East West Festival, at the people scrambling to evade the inevitable. He couldn’t hear well enough to know if there were people trying to get out of here too. If there were anyone left to try to get out.

*Stop being morbid. Focus – FOCUS.*

*Is there a way out? No, second floor, the windows are reinforced. Even if you could break it, you’re close to thirty feet up. Only worst case scenario, so what next - ?*

Hide.

Light’s eyes darted around for anything he might be able to hide behind or inside. It was only then that he saw two bodies nearby.
They were dead.

They weren't moving so they had to be dead, and that meant that there was still a chance that Light could join them, that another bomb could go off, maybe he wasn't working alone, maybe Light was more injured than he knew and the shock was just protecting him, he hadn't even checked himself over -

God, his head hurt so badly and he couldn't hear well enough to tell if anyone was coming close.

And they're dead, someone was dead nearby, someone he knew, someone he was just speaking to, and there was nothing he could do about it. His body didn’t want to listen to him, and every motion he made made him dizzy.

The figure of someone appeared in the smoke, their form mutated to Light’s eye. Their arms seemed too wide, bulkier than any human should be.

Unease filled him as he pushed himself up from the floor, preparing himself to protect himself if necessary.

The form came closer and Light just managed to realize that it was two people. One was carrying the other, who was apparently unconscious. Which seemed like the least useful thing to be in this situation, but also, he was so tired, so hell, if someone could carry him too -

A flash of blonde hair caught his eye, yellow enough to cut through the debris cloud, however briefly before -

The floor tilted beneath him.
“Hop on.”

The words didn’t quite compute. They didn’t sound like Japanese at all. Sayu and Mello had been speaking mostly in English while in the hotel together, because she needed the practise, but this was definitely Japanese.

Why didn’t it sound right to her ears? *Probably the shock. Why had he switched? Probably to make you feel better.*

Not that there was anything that could really make her feel better right now.

“Yagami, I know this sucks.” Mello took her arm and dragged her closer to the bike. “Everything fucking sucks right now. But I need you to do what I tell you.”

“But he’s dead,” Sayu whispered, pulling back against his arm. “My brother is dead, and Wedy is dead, and my dad - and Kira is probably still -”

“We don’t know that,” Mello told her firmly, blue eyes catching her’s sharply. “I’m going to get there as fast as I can, and Watari is already on the way.”

She should have never let her brother come here. She should have gone with him. She should have stayed home instead. L should have prepared for this, Mello should have known, someone should have done something -

“Everything went wrong, again. Why does this keep happening?”

Her voice sounded like her mother’s, in the quiet after her father’s funeral. Soft and filled with despair.

Sayu hated the way it sounded. *Helpless.*

The question was futile anyway and she knew it. Still, it left her mouth and filled her mind and crept down her spine coldly. This terrible foreboding that Kira had instilled in her. She wanted to cry, but she couldn’t. She wanted to vomit, but she couldn’t do that either. Everything felt as though it had
stopped.

Hadn’t it been breezy before? Why couldn’t she feel the wind?

“Yagami.”

A helmet slid into place on her head, and Mello buckled it beneath her chin. It pinched the skin there and made her wince, but it succeeded in snapping some of the fog out of her eyes.

“Near’s hotel is only a few miles away, but I’m going to speed like nothing you’ve ever seen before. He’s going to fly the helicopter, and if we can, we're going to save their lives. That’s what we’re here to do, get it?”

Mello pulled her harder, all but lifting her into place. She did the rest, hiking her leg over the seat, but the familiarity of the position struck her. Wedy had taken her for a ride on her bike just days before. Nothing could last.

“Hold on tight.”

Despite the weakness that felt like it was spreading through her limbs, she wrapped her arms around Mello’s middle as he revved the engine in warning. A second later, he took off with such force that Sayu’s fear for her own life overrode her fear for Light’s and Wedy’s, which she supposed was probably Mello’s goal.

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Think. Thoughts. Those are things you had at one time. You’re awake, so why don’t you feel awake? You must be.

Light remembered the way L said his name, the way his mouth curved when he smiled, how it moved when he smirked, remembered the exact tone of L mumbling that he loves him into his hair when he -
There were arms around him, holding him close.

*Maybe I’ll wake up in Japan. Maybe this is all a dream and I’ll wake up in our bed. Heats have been known to cause crazy dreams. It’s possible.*

L, holding him close.

That, too. He remembered that too, but the images weren’t clear. He remembered L’s hand in his own, remembered his arms pressing him tight to his chest, remembered holding him back.

He remembered a time when that had seemed like it wasn’t for him. Like it never would be, like no one ever would be. He remembered being content with that, he remembered -

*Light, wake up.*

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“Careful, don’t move. We think you might have a concussion.”

It took Light a moment to figure out who the voice belonged to, and why in the world she would be in his bed with him. Their relationship had been - well, not chaste, but verging on professional.

Kiyomi Takada. Why was she here again?

Oh, *right*. The murder gala. Murder at the gala. Murder in the ballroom with the *fucking suicide bomber* -

“Poor Light-kun, it’s okay. You’ll be okay.”
“Amane-san, can you get him some water? I’ll sit him up.”

“Don’t…”

That was Light’s own voice now. Had his lips even moved? Perhaps not. It had come out garbled, and before he knew it, his head was hitting whatever cushion it had been resting against.

A concerned voice sounded and then faded away to nothing just as abruptly.

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“Light-kun, you’ve got to stay awake!”

He came back to consciousness quickly, this time with more lucidity. There was something cold against his mouth, a glass of some kind, but the prospect of drinking anything made him nauseous.

This time his eyelids obeyed him and his blurry vision cleared. He saw low ceilings and circular windows.

“….Are we in an airplane?”

That’s what he meant to say. His voice cracked with dryness. Misa and Takada were dirty, had various scratches, and Misa’s dress was ripped. She had taken to wearing an oversized tuxedo jacket. The dark purple pocket square told Light that it belonged to Ryuga, as he’d noted earlier in the night that they had color coordinated.

“Here, drink some of this,” Takada offered, pushing the glass forward once more. He cringed at the thought of it, ready to close his eyes at the wave of dizziness that threatened to overcome him.
“Go on. It’s just water.”

The voice didn’t belong to Misa or Takada, but to one he’d only heard twice before in person. He turned his head to look and found Ryuga Hideki entering the passenger area from what Light assumed was the cockpit. His head seared with discomfort and his stomach lurched, but he took the glass from Kiyomi just the same.

He sipped just enough to let the water coat his tongue and soothe his throat. He felt better rather than worse afterward, though the nausea hadn’t entirely gone away.

Perhaps that had more to do with the company.

Ryuga rolled up the sleeves of his dress shirt and sat himself in the spot to the right of Misa. It was only then that Light’s eye was drawn away from the people immediately in front of him, to find two others seated in what looked like a dining alcove. Namikawa and Teru, the former of which appeared to be nursing his own aches, cradling his left arm with his right. Teru appeared mostly uninjured, and though his glasses were cracked in several places, Light could tell he was looking his way.

Definitely a plane. Why were they on a plane again? Light’s head throbbed, the pain leaking down into his neck. He just wanted to sleep. Why couldn’t he sleep?

“Yagami-san, I’m so sorry we didn’t get to meet earlier,” Ryuga spoke again, snapping Light’s attention back to him. There was a scratch beneath his right eye, a thin horizontal line of red that stretched over his cheekbone. “To be perfectly honest with you, I delayed meeting you in person because I was nervous.”

Light’s brow furrowed.

“I wish I hadn’t, of course,” Ryuga sighed, shoulders sinking. Misa rubbed one of his shoulders comfortingly, and Takada looked out the small window into the dark. “It appears my enemies got the better of me.”

However sluggish Light’s mind was working at the moment, he did remember the speech that the driver had shouted to them before he had blown up the place.
“We will not bow to a false god. You are evil, Kira! So is everyone here. You think the world is on your side. We are not! We will never be! There are more like me to come!”

The driver that had been so jovial earlier in the day had been a violent Anti-Kira extremist. Light couldn’t fathom it for some reason, but perhaps it was the concussion. *How did they organize this? Matt has been keeping up on the Anti-Kira movement, surely he would have heard whispers if they used technology to conspire.*

There were more immediate issues to address, however. Now that he was face to face with Ryuga for the first time since he’d come out as Kira, he had to - had to *play him.* Even if the pain in his head was more than a little bit distracting, he could likely use that to garner sympathy. He couldn’t get off course, even if nothing had gone exactly according to plan.

“Where are we…?” Light tried to ask, but his voice still didn’t want to be cooperative.

“I can’t tell you that right now,” Ryuga answered, giving a guilty expression. “I’m sorry for bringing you aboard without your permission, but I wanted you and Namikawa-san to be safe. I didn’t know if there were accomplices nearby, and I’m sure you understand why I wanted to leave before the authorities arrived.”

*Before L could get to you, rather.* Light nodded slowly, and instantly regretted it.

“Please drink up,” Ryuga gestured to the glass Light had forgotten he was holding. “I’m afraid I have some questions to ask you, before we land.”

It was then that Ryuga lifted his right hand up, revealing a small device trapped in between his thumb and index finger. The Bluetooth earpiece that Light had managed to sneak with him into the gala, but had never gotten the chance to use.

“I’m curious,” Ryuga spoke softly, “Can you tell me what you thought you’d need this for?”
Sorry for the long delay - I've had a lot of real life stuff going on, but I'm somewhat settled now and writing again. I definitely haven't abandoned this fic. I've already started the next chapter!

Special thanks to fourcardflush, Kylara, and Hannibaland for beta'ing this for me. You guys rock hard.

I hope this chapter was exciting! Be sure to let me know what you liked and didn't like, favorite lines, how things made you feel, what you're looking forward to, etc. :) I'm glad you guys are still in it with me.

-Nilah
Chapter Thirty-Seven

Forge

“I, too, remember that feeling. You are caught between all that was and all that must be. You feel lost.” — Haruki Murakami

Near held on even more tightly than Sayu had. Mello wondered if Near had ever ridden on the back of a motorcycle before. Judging by his knuckles, which were blushing with the force of his grip, it was very likely not. It was actually fairly surprising how much strength he had in those soft arms of his.

“I’m guessing you aren’t a fan of my bike,” Mello commented when they’d finally come to a stop at their destination.

They were at a hotel with a rooftop helicopter landing, where their ride to the coordinates that Matt had texted to Mello was waiting for them. Matt had received the location from Wedy when she’d been -
Well. They didn’t know anything yet about the state of Wedy or Yagami. L had given them orders and then gone silent, not sharing with anyone - as far as Mello knew - his role in the aftermath of this shit show.

The building was being renovated, so there wouldn’t be any guests or staff around to ask questions. Watari and Naomi were likely already at the scene, but they hadn’t heard anything yet to confirm that Yagami had been found alive. The signal had taken an even worse blow thanks to a high elevation and a storm in the mountains nearby, which Matt was doing his best to overcome remotely.

“I simply prefer to be surrounded by walls when I’m going thirty miles over the speed limit,” Near groused, sitting up straight and rubbing his hands together to work the stiffness away.

“I wasn’t going that fast,” Mello snorted, unable to help but be amused by the open distaste Near was showing for the experience. Usually he was much more subtle. “Besides, walls are for the weak.”

Near looked at him flatly, in clear disagreement. His curls were so windblow from the drive that Mello didn’t feel too bad about ruffling them a little more.

The action surprised them both, and Mello squared his shoulder a bit when he retracted his hand.

“Alright, let’s go. You planning to pilot?” They couldn’t have taken Near’s chair with them on the bike, after all. Mello wasn’t going to apologize for driving like they were literally living out the worst case scenario, since they were.

“Yes. I don’t want to suffer Mello’s driving skills in the air, thank you.”

Mello rolled his eyes and helped Near up into the pilot’s seat - short little bastard - and walked around to the passenger door. He grabbed the handle, pulling.

He pulled again, putting more of his weight into it. Then again, harder.

“Are you going to unlock the door?” Mello demanded, growing agitated as he hoisted himself up to peer at Near through the window.
“I presumed you’d want to be strapped to the outside,” Near said simply, his own door still open so that Mello could hear his response. “What with walls being for the weak and all.”

“What with walls being for the weak and all.”

“Really? Now? We are about to walk into the most fucked up situation imaginable and you are sassing me?”

“Sounds like the sort of thing someone without a comeback might say.”

“Open the fucking door, shit-for-brains.”

“Yes, yes, alright.”

The unlocking click sounded about as smug as Near’s face looked. Somehow the snark was comforting, considering the awkwardness that had hung between them for the last few weeks. But if Mello felt more prepared for the pile of bodies they might be walking through soon, he certainly wasn’t going to thank Near for it.

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Naomi arrived at the scene second, noting Watari’s helicopter as she parked her motorcycle near the slew of limos, screeching to a halt a few yards from a frantic group of people who she presumed were drivers. Several of them were crying, some red faced with anger and confusion, some pale with fear. They looked at her as she strode up and took her helmet off like she was someone who could give them guidance.

Aren’t I? Yes, of course I am. I’m as qualified as anyone else on the force. More so than some. Aiber would probably be better at reassuring people, but he isn’t here.

“What’s going on?” A man shouted out as she approached, and the rest of them piled their inquiries and exclamations on top of it almost instantly.

“Sammy started acting all weird and then there was an explosion -”
“Marlowe went in after him. They’re good friends. She noticed immediately when -”

“That was like fifteen minutes ago though. Do you think she -”

“No one else came out either! Holy fuck, the explosion knocked me off my feet way out here -”

“A helicopter took off from behind this place after the explosion, do you know -?”

“Is Kira okay? Was this L?”

“Who are you?” The voice of a large female driver cut through the verbal pandemonium.

Naomi knew she couldn’t tell them the real answer to that, but she also knew that these people were in a panic and she didn’t want anything bad to happen to any other innocent people.

“I’m here to help,” Naomi told them simply, lifting her chin. She was used to being underestimated, but if she thought of herself as she was rather than as she appeared, it was easier to project confidence. She wasn’t just pretty. She wasn’t just small, especially compared to Americans, and she certainly wasn’t just a woman - or just a Beta. She was Naomi Massacre, master of Capoeira and one of L’s most trusted task force members.

“Do you know -”

“We don’t know a lot. The police should arrive shortly, and they’ll have questions for you. Please wait in your cars until they arrive, for your own safety. I’ll be going inside.” She took a breath. “Don’t follow me. I’ll bring Marlowe out with me if I can.”

She walked away despite a new slew of questions. She hadn’t given them much to go on, but by the time she made it to the steps it was apparent that they had begun to take her advice. Car doors shut and the talking died down.

One problem and onto another even bigger one, she thought, holding her breath as she pushed the
door open. After assessing the home from the outside, she could better tell the extent of the explosion. She’d have to do more looking around to see the true potential hazard, but from what she could tell there wasn’t a huge risk of the entire building collapsing in on her. Or Watari, wherever he was.

There’s also Wedy. Her comm went out and she was likely on the roof when it happened. She could have fallen to her death for all we know. Naomi felt the thought sour and fall, shriveled and sickly into the pit of her stomach. Another person for the Yagami family to lose.

The dust had mostly settled. It had been a good half hour since the explosion, but the air still wasn’t entirely clear. She could see figures on the ground all around her. Someone moaned in the distance. Another voice sobbed - that one was closer, and toward the middle of the ballroom, where she was headed. Where the explosion had taken place. Her mind supplied the word piled but she felt like that was too strong of a word. At least, it felt too strong. The idea of there being piles of bodies all around her did not make her feel inclined to look, but she compartmentalized and carried on.

Naomi looked around the ballroom. A damaged chandelier swung daintily above them, and Naomi noticed beads of crystal shimmering here and there among the people.

“H...he blew himself up…”

The woman Naomi presumed was Marlowe, by her driver’s uniform, was collapsed in the center of the room where the source of the explosion had been. There was dark debris and blood stretching out from where ‘Sammy’ had clearly stood.

“Why...why did he blow himself up?” She looked up at Naomi, face crumpled with pain.

“I don’t know,” She said softly, taking a step closer. “I’m sorry. Let me get you out of here, it isn’t safe -”

“She’s useless,” came a voice from the other end of the room. “She’s been sitting there like that since I got here.”

Naomi felt part of her heart unclench inside her at the sight of a bruised and grimacing Wedy approaching out of the brown smog. She was using a stretch of wood as a walking stick, making better time than Naomi might have in her place. Her left leg was secured in a makeshift splint that Naomi presumed she gathered from the rubble. Her bodysuit was torn in several places, especially
around the legs, and the sleeves had been taken off entirely, which was what Naomi assumed secured her leg to the splint.


“What, am I just going to fall of the roof and fucking die?” She scoffed, flipping her hair as she limped up to Naomi. “I’m insulted, frankly. I am a professional burglar, Misora. Falling off high places is part of the job.”

“We didn’t know how bad the explosion was. The cameras went out, and you didn’t answer your comm—”

“It was crushed when I fell off the fucking roof,” Wedy groused, gesturing to her leg, “Along with other less important things.”

“I’m sorry,” Naomi winced, looking down at the injured limb. “Do you want me to look at it?”

“I already looked at it,” Wedy shrugged, “Now help me sort through these bodies to find the live ones. Already found a three live ones over there. The one that can walk is fetching water.”

So there were survivors at least. ‘The one that can walk’ wasn’t especially promising.

“How many have you…” Naomi started, unsure of how to end it.

“Maybe a dozen,” Wedy said. “I did a quick once over before I started poking them with this stick to see if they moved.”

Crude, but Naomi supposed she didn’t have much of a choice in her condition.

“Any sign of…”

The name hung unsaid in the air between them.
“No, darling,” Wedy answered, shifting her weight on her good leg uncomfortably. “My guess is he was on the helicopter.”

Naomi exhaled, pushing aside the worry that had started to clamber back up from her stomach and into her throat.

“Right,” She squared her shoulders and chose a direction. “I’ll start over here then. You keep working that side.”

“I didn’t know you’d take my phone. I thought you might, but I brought this with me just in case.”

Light’s eyes darted to Takada, who gazed at him with impressive impassivity. He hoped he wasn’t concussed, like Kiyomi suspected - he hardly needed to be handling this while impaired.

“It was too small to set off the metal detectors,” she said, glancing at the device coolly.

Ryuga regarded him for several long moments, but it was nothing compared to L’s piercing, all-knowing stare. Light wondered why that was disappointing. Or, perhaps not disappointing, just...wrong, somehow. Unexpected. If this was really the man that had killed thousands upon thousands of people, who had framed Light, who had just blown up a whole room full of people, shouldn’t he be more -

-impressive?

“Do you know how hard it is to get airport grade metal detectors?” Ryuga deflated suddenly, shaking his head and slumping slightly in his seat.

Light blinked slowly. What? “...Well, no.”
“You practically have to be an airport. I am many things, but even my talents don’t stretch that far.”

“You practically have to be an airport. I am many things, but even my talents don’t stretch that far.”

“Not that you were the one who made the arrangements,” Kiyomi added lightly, though Light could hear the slightest tinge of condescension in her delivery.

“Of course, thank you, Kiyomi.” Ryuga reached over and patted her shoulder in what might have been conceived as friendly, if Light didn’t know who he was. “You did your best. The party was lovely, wasn’t it?”

“Oh, yes,” Misa agreed, with an earnestness that Ryuga was mimicking very well. Light might not have been able to tell it wasn’t genuine, if he hadn’t already picked up on Kiyomi’s distaste for him. “I loved it, Kiyomi-chan. I’m sorry it got blown up.”


“Anti-Kira Activists are animals,” Teru muttered, lips tightening in a disgusted expression.

“Anti-Kira Activists are animals,” Teru muttered, lips tightening in a disgusted expression.

So they were trying to frame them. I wonder if the news will buy it.

“So they were trying to frame them. I wonder if the news will buy it.

“Yagami-san, I know we didn’t get off to a great start,” Ryuga changed the subject, his voice smooth and apologetic. “But I’ve heard high praise from three of my closest friends here, and so I’m hoping that you’re willing to hear me out.”

Light looked around the plane, feigning reluctance. If he went along with this too easily, it wouldn’t seem real. If he weren’t technically undercover, he wouldn’t have taken being kidnapped as good will.

“It’s not like I have much a choice, is there?”

“My sentiments exactly,” murmured a deep voice, touched with grogginess. Light glanced over at Namikawa, who looked worse for the wear. He had a cut on his forehead and his long hair was matted with blood.

Ryuga had the audacity to adopt a sheepish expression and rub the back of his neck. It looked like
something Matsuda would do. It was so out of place on him, yet executed so well, that it gave Light the chills. There was nothing wrong with the way he moved, per se. It was just...uncanny, something that should look entirely normal on paper but somehow wasn’t.

“I know, and I apologize with the utmost sincerity. You must understand my predicament. This is so much more important than pleasantries.”

Even his affected speech, which had seemed almost corny at times in interviews and speeches. It was giving Light the creeps. What was it about him?

“I wouldn’t call abstention from kidnapping pleasantries,” Light replied, rubbing his head.

Ryuga’s brow furrowed sympathetically.

“I was rescuing you. Our destination has my personal medic on site. She’ll be able to attend to all of our injuries.” He sighed, and Light noticed that he was favoring his left side. “Namikawa-san, please bear with me. You’re here because I think you could be a tremendous asset to us, and I think you may be sympathetic to our cause.”

Namikawa’s eyes narrowed, but he didn’t seem appalled by the idea entirely. Light couldn’t completely count him in or out as an ally, which made him an unknown. Lovely. Why not? Let’s make the situation even more difficult.

“Perhaps. The circumstances are less than ideal.” He laid his head back. “I suppose you were rescuing us, but I’ll have to decline your offer until I have treatment. As such, I’m in no condition to… well, anything, at the current moment.”

“Fair enough,” Ryuga replied, giving Namikawa a small smile, though the businessman had already closed his eyes. “Kiyomi-san, would you mind terribly fetching some aspirin for our guests?”

Her dark eyes cut sharply toward the round window, though Light could tell she wanted to direct her eyes at Ryuga instead.

Aspirin prevents blood from clotting. Are you an actual dumbass or aren’t you?
“Of course,” She answered curtly. Well, Light could tell it was curt, though her voice was purposefully gentle to hide her irritation with the task. She stood, then looked at Light, “Although I’m sure you meant Ibuprofen, unless we want him to bleed out?”

“...I vote against bleeding out,” Namikawa muttered.

“Ah,” Ryuga made a flippant gesture with a twist of his wrist. “Yes, Ibuprofen then, thank you.”

“Would you like some as well?”

“No, thank you,” Light said, inclining his head courteously. It pounded terribly, but he didn’t trust any pill that was given to him by someone in this plane. No one questioned his refusal, and Kiyomi made her way down the narrow aisle toward the front of the plane.

“We’ll be landing shortly,” Ryuga began.

“Thank goodness, I-” Misa began, but quickly quieted when Ryuga continued to speak. She put a hand on his arm. The lipstick she had been wearing at the gala had been mostly wiped away, likely due to a split in her bottom lip. Now her lips were glossed with a clear gel, likely Neosporin or something similar.

“When we land, our injuries will be taken care of, and then we can begin our discussion,” Ryuga explained, leaning forward to rest his elbows on his knees. He fiddled with Light’s earpiece in his fingers, and Light found himself glancing down at it again. He quickly redirected his gaze back upward. “But I would love to be sure that you’re trustworthy, before we land.”

There was nothing at all sinister about his tone, but Light couldn’t help but interpret it as “If I decide you aren’t, it won’t be a gentle landing”.

“T’m not sure what I’ve done to imply that I’m not,” Light replied, holding his gaze as firmly as felt it was safe to. He let his hands clench, a show of how difficult it was to maintain his composure at what he’d interpreted as a veiled threat. “You’re the one who framed me.”

“And L is the one who inhumanely locked you up after discovering clearly feigned evidence,” Ryuga replied, his docile tone doing nothing to undercut the bite to the words. “But you still work for him, don’t you?”
Light’s heart pummelled his ribs.

“You must know I’ve only been working for the NPA for months now.”

Ryuga smiled, almost warmly. “That’s what all my sources tell me, yes.”

Damn him. Light couldn’t even manage to feel relieved.

“Do you have any reason to doubt them?”

“No, but I still needed to hear it from you,” Ryuga answered, then looked down at his shoes. They were oddly clean. Light wondered where he had been during the explosion. “I did bring justice to your father. Even if he was corrupt, that’s a fairly good reason for you to loathe me.”

Rage surged through him at the words, but he managed to shut it away quickly, before it could set fire to his brain and show in his eyes. He allowed himself to look only look half as angry as he felt. The rest of that was a forged guilt that he pretended to try to conceal.

“Yes.” Light turned away, looking out into the darkness outside the jet window. “It is a good reason.”

“So you do loathe me,” Ryuga prompted, looking up at Light through the fall of his hair. Light was abruptly, eerily, reminded of himself. He felt his nausea resurface.

“I have mixed feelings on the subject of my father.” Light touched his watch, neither fondly nor bitterly.

No, not his - his was wherever Mello had taken it for safekeeping. This watch wasn’t his, but it was his potential lifeline. Wherever their destination was, he’d need to find something else to communicate with L through, if the earpiece was going to be confiscated.

“And on you.”
“That’s honest,” Ryuga chuckled, toying with the bluetooth once more, drawing Light’s attention to it. His gut tightened before the next words had left Kira’s god forsaken mouth. “I hope you’ll continue to speak the truth with me, as I’m afraid I don’t quite buy your reason for bringing this. It’s not a very trustworthy thing to do.”

Despite his contingency plan, Light’s first response to being called out on his previous lie was an acute sense of panic. *I’m going to die. I’m never going to see L again. Kira is going to win and I’m going to die.*

He hoped it didn’t show, and immediately knew that was the wrong thought to have. Hiding his fear entirely, the way he probably could if he controlled himself enough, would likely only make Kira more suspicious. Anyone in their right mind would be terrified in this situation, injured, kidnapped, and cornered by killers with unknown supernatural powers. No, it should show on his face, at least a little. He’d planned for this, although the idea made him sick to his stomach.

It would be less terrible than admitting that he was in league with L. That didn’t mean he was looking forward to this though. He’d hoped Ryuga would just fall for his first excuse, but despite his casual demeanor he was clearly not an idiot. He’d managed to evade L and Light for years, and always seemed to have the upper hand.

“Open it.”

“Pardon?”

“Open it,” Light repeated, his stomach twisting so harshly that he thought he might actually vomit. He hated throwing up, but his head hurt and he had to go through this bullshit all over again. He swallowed hard, then continued despite the dread rising in his throat. “Or let me, if you don’t think it’s safe.”

Ryuga paused, eyes flickering to the device. “What for?”

“The real reason,” Light told him, glancing down at the device in his fingers, then squared his jaw in preparation. “I wasn’t telling you the whole truth, before.”

“As I suspected,” Ryuga said, both smug and suspicious.
“But I want our associating to be based on honesty from here on out, if we’re going to be on the same team.”

There was a flash of interest in Ryuga’s eyes, and he realized in that instant how easy the words had come to him.

Light felt the seams come back together, bit by bit. He could recover this. He should have never second guessed himself. How foolish of him. He had kept his second gender a secret from everyone but his mother for eight years. He’d survived as a teenager with an unkeepable secret, in one of the countries with one of the most stringent drug regulations in the world. He’d survived L’s suspicions, the East West Massacre, his father’s death, and he would damn well survive this fresh nightmare.

He hadn’t been at his best, since leaving L. He knew that, and it made his decision to break things off even less bearable. As he regained this inch of ground, the rest of the path seemed to unwind and open before him. The surge of adrenaline made him forget how badly his head hurt.

For the first time since he’d left for America, he felt like he could accomplish something significant. He could make real headway, could even defeat Kira. He would play his cards right, of that he could be certain. He felt the pieces of himself line up, could see himself the way that Ryuga did, and would soon. More than just survival, no, he could end it - would end it.

Ryuga handed him the device, and after a moment Light had snapped the seal open. He peeled the transparent plastic cone away and slipped out the white pill inside. He held it up between his thumb and forefinger for Ryuga and Misa to see.

“...What is that?”

Misa bit her lip, eyes darting between Kiyomi - who was only just returning - and back to Ryuga, then back to Light.

_So she hasn’t told them. This could work even if she had told them, but that does bring up an interesting point. Did she not trust Ryuga with the information, or did she really care that much for my privacy? If she’s as wrapped around his finger as she seems, why would my privacy mean more to her than her loyalty to him?_

_There may be something here for me to exploit._
“It’s a suppressant.”

Light looked at Ryuga, whose forehead creased. He could see Kiyomi’s posture shift in his peripheral and he closed his eyes briefly, pretending that it was to do with his head. It did hurt, but he knew that was only an excuse.

“Why would you keep that in there?” Ryuga inquired slowly. “Why would you have that on you at all?”

Kiyomi was so terribly still now that Light could hear the absence of her movement, of her breath. Light opened his eyes and felt the weight of his embarrassment settle on him as he spoke.

“I always keep one with me, just in case.”

“You’re -”

It dawned then, the workings of Ryuga’s brain turning almost visibly. Light was suddenly struck by how elegant L’s processing was, by comparison. It wasn’t fair to compare anyone’s brain to L’s, but none of this was fair in the least, so Light let himself be inwardly vindictive.

“You’re …an Omega,” Ryuga said slowly. “If…”

He trailed off, then turned sharply toward Kiyomi, meaning Light couldn’t avoid looking at her any longer. Her eyes were wide with disbelief, the expression every bit as jarring as Light had thought it would be. He hated this, he absolutely hated this, the whole revelation sequence he’d had to go through now three times in the last several months. Every time it happened, it seemed to scratch over an already tender spot in his ego.

He was embarrassed. What was worse, he knew he should be, and so he knew he couldn’t hide it completely. He couldn’t pretend that this confession meant nothing because obviously it didn’t, and he had to come off as genuine as possible.

“She didn’t know.”
Ryuga’s lip twitched as though holding back an awful expression, eyes narrowing. “You expect me to believe that?”

“No one knew,” Light cleared his throat and looked at his fingernails. Fuck this, fuck all of this, drop dead and die, all of you. “Until recently, that is.”

“...Your confinement,” Ryuga announced as it all clicked into place. “L must have figured it out then, or before. Locking up two Omegas in such inhuman conditions- “

“Excuse me.”

The tone of Kiyomi’s voice sent a siver down Light’s spine. He stole a glance at her retreating form, but could only manage it for a moment before his head throbbed terribly. Karma, his brain supplied rudely. He clenched his fist around the pill, feeling it as it pressed into the palm of his hand.

Misa began to stand as if to follow her, “Oh, Kiyomi -”

“Leave her be, Misa.” Ryuga placed a hand on Misa’s knee and she hesitated, before falling back into place. “She needs time to process this. I can’t imagine how she must feel.”

“But what if she needs someone -”

“Then I’m sure Rem will fetch you.”

... Rem?

The first time Kiyomi had seen Light Yagami, it was like something out of a shojo manga. He’d
been walking toward the opening ceremony on the illustrious To Oh grounds, cherry blossoms tossing from the trees and floating airily down around him. He held his chin high, but not so high as to come off like most of the Alpha idiots that she’d been forced to associate with. He’d dressed appropriately, somehow managing a casual impeccableness that Kiyomi had found instantly attractive. When he’d asked her out halfway through their first year, after declining a number of lesser girls, mostly Omegas and Betas - Kiyomi had thought she would end up Yagami Kiyomi.

She’d practised her goddamn signature.

The betrayal and unrequited feelings was also familiar, but there was quite a bit more murder than any shojo manga she had ever read. Not that she had read any recently. Not since she had grown out of such childish fancies.

There had been, she’d thought, something sweet about how chaste their relationship was. They never discussed it, as they’d never discussed personal matters, not really, but Kiyomi had assumed they were waiting for the right time to grow more intimate. It was slow, but not unsatisfying. He’d held her hand on campus, and taken her to meet his family, held her close and kiss her when no one was watching. He hadn’t been ashamed of her, and hadn’t even seemed intimidated by the fact she was a female Alpha, and he certainly hadn’t sexualized it like so many did.

She’d considered it to be the epitome of a mature relationship, and as such, complaining about a lack of sex seemed inane and inconsequential. Kiyomi had adored their intellectual discussions and their soft, unassuming kisses. It had felt as though they were an old married couple. That kind of companionship was next to impossible to find, and she had been scared to ruin it.

Light, however, had not. That had become apparent, when he politely (carelessly) ended their relationship after their graduation ceremony. She had spent years wondering what she had done wrong, if anything at all. She racked her brain, wondering if it was just because she was... convenient. If he’d wanted the status of the Takada name - her father was a fairly common name in finance - or if perhaps he’d wanted the bragging rights of winning over the ‘ice queen’, as she was so often called?

(That didn’t entirely seem like Light, but what the hell did she know about him, truly?)

And now she knew for sure. She still didn’t know why her, not for certain, but she could speculate.

Why not another Omega, or Beta, if he wanted throw off the trail? Or perhaps he’d gone further and picked an Alpha just to subvert that question, if someone casually suspected? Was it because he thought she was an idiot? Thought so little of her that he felt nothing about stringing her along, then
leaving her behind? Or - and this was perhaps the worst thought - was it because he’d sensed her insecurity, her secretly, cautiously romantic nature and had picked her because she could be fooled?

She’d been there as a goddamned beard, and she had been passive enough to let it happen. She hadn’t asked enough questions. She never pushed him on the issue of physical intimacy, and perhaps he’d chosen her because he knew she wouldn’t. She’d allowed herself to be deceived so thoroughly that she now had to question her entire college existence. She’d been so happy and it had all been fake.

“Excuse me,” Kiyomi said, cursing the weakness in her voice. She was glad she had already given Namikawa his water, or else she wasn’t sure she could have refrained from dropping it - she didn’t think she could stand for this to be more theatrical than it already was.

Ryuga was giving her some contrived, mocking expression of sympathy. He loved this. Misa’s was more genuine, her eyes glittering with tears, and the guilt etched on her face made Kiyomi think she must have known. Perhaps that was in her head, just like the three year relationship had been -

And Light -

He couldn’t even look at her, and she didn’t want him to.

As calmly as she could, she walked toward the back of the plane. She tried to swallow the knot in her throat, to no avail, and when she had finally closed the bathroom door behind her she felt it unravel.

Kiyomi felt like she was going to be sick. It was not the first time that day, nor was it even the dozenth. In the two years since she’d joined Ryuga on his quest, she had felt a terrible foreboding on many occasions. She’d lie awake alone wondering if she was doing the right thing.

At some point she’d realized that whether or not it was the right thing, she was doing it. She could not stop doing it, or else the cessation itself would suggest her action’s wrongness.

She hadn’t known what Ryuga was planning, but she did think he was planning something. There were too many rich, faux-progressive socialites on the gala guest list for it to be a beacon of justice for the pro-Kira moths to gather around. Instead, as a part of her had suspected, it had been a trap.
Kiyomi had written enough names in the Death Note herself and seen the affects of its control on the victims. She knew that the driver was not speaking his own words when he declared his reasoning, seconds before he blew himself up.

Anti-Kira Activists would be framed as crime-mongering, misguided sympathists at best, terrorists and murderers at worst. The victims were largely the rich and powerful, which meant they had families and friends to advocate for justice on their behalf. Powerful people who had been neutral, reserving judgement, or even mildly Anti-Kira would have to adjust their decisions.

Hideki was a self-important, wily, cowardly little fraud, but he certainly knew how to work a room. He had more charisma than anyone Kiyomi had ever met. As much as Light, when he was really trying, but at all times.

With Misa, there was a magnetism that shone from a place deep in her gut.

Misa Amane lived her life as if she wanted everyone she met to fall in love with her, as if it was only natural that they should, and her confidence made it so. As such, Kiyomi was one of the only people she had ever started off on bad terms with.

Looking back, it had been Kiyomi’s fault. She hadn’t thought much of Misa Amane. She’d just been some seemingly dumb, bleach blonde attention whore who dressed and acted to play into Alpha’s fantasies. She read silly romance novels - and, yes, shojo - in her free time, as an adult. She wrote and performed silly love songs, music designed specifically to be catchy and danceable, to sell albums.

Of course Kiyomi had hated her on site. Of course Kiyomi had said something snotty about her dress, and music, not leaving much to the imagination. Of course Misa had been openly offended, and had treated Kiyomi with a contempt that was both playful and cutthroat for most of their early relationship.

Of course Kiyomi had given in first. She was the mature one, after all.

When Ryuga had approached her with his offer, she had taken time to consider the options carefully before agreeing to be part of it. If Ryuga had the power to take her memories, if he had a real Shinigami, if he could kill with just a name and face and wanted to do good - wasn’t that all anyone could ask for? Wasn’t that the dream, to be part of something that big? Something so important that her name would be etched into stone, so important no one could blame her success on her gender or looks.
Of all regime changes throughout history, was this not the most moral?

Perhaps that is what all crusaders think. Perhaps they all assume they are the most righteous.

Kiyomi had doubts, certainly, but she tended to them carefully. Most of them came from their glorious leader, who she had never really liked. For much the same reasons she’d disliked Misa. However, more she got to know him, the the lower her opinion seemed to get. It was never any one thing, just dozens of micro-aggressions and mildly patronizing statements that most people couldn’t see at all, or might chalk up to simple Alpha-Alpha competitive dramatics.

Master of condescension that she was, Kiyomi could spot it every time. It never failed to grate on her nerves.

A fake. Just like her entire relationship with Light Yagami.

A low voice spoke as if agreeing with her thought. Despite how unexpected it was, Kiyomi wasn’t quite surprised to hear it. After all this time, she’d become used to Rem being just behind her at any given time. Kiyomi wondered if the shinigami was worried about her. How odd.

“Light Yagami,” Rem intoned, seeming to consider her old flame through the walls of the bathroom. “Quite the talented liar, is he not?”

“...Yes,” Kiyomi agreed, dabbing her face with a paper towel and then turning toward the Shinigami. Her eyes still felt red. She refused to leave the bathroom until all signs of her tears had faded. “Talented in all things, but especially that. More so than even I knew.”

Rem looked a little ridiculous, partially fazed into the bathroom with her. It wasn’t nearly as small as a commercial plane’s bathroom, but it still wasn’t tall enough to accommodate Rem’s stature. Her head disappeared halfway into the ceiling.

“I could kill him for you, if you like,” the shinigami offered. “Though it might defeat the purpose.”

Kiyomi felt a laugh catch in her throat. “Yes, it would.”
“So he lives, I suppose.” Rem tilted her head slightly.

“Yes,” Kiyomi told her. As humiliated as she felt, Light’s death would only make her feel worse. Besides, an Alpha rage-killing an Omega was so trite. “But I appreciate the offer.”

“As you wish,” Rem conceded. There was a long pause, and then, “I don’t think you should trust him.”

“Light?” Kiyomi asked, digging through her purse for her make up pouch. “Or Ryuga?”

_Not that I have ever trusted Ryuga, even at the highest points of our relationship._

“Both of them.”

The advice was not an anomaly. Kiyomi had been reserved for quite some time in the presence of the shinigami, but after months of having her in her home, she had slowly opened up. They conversed only about Kira and the scope of her design, at first. Kiyomi found that thinking out loud gave her better ideas, and with time she learned to listen to Rem in return. She did not express concern often, but she was more bias than Ryuk was, and had not yet sabotaged her plans. Perhaps it was because she was nothing more than an observer, her thoughts on the structure of humanity had given Kiyomi insight, and with it, a semblance of peace.

Kiyomi wasn’t sure she’d ever had a friend whose opinion she respected quite as much (well, perhaps Light once, but _fuck him_). Her demeanor was always calm, the kind of collected visage that Kiyomi had attempted to project throughout her life. To Rem it was inherent, which she supposed was only right, considering she was a literal _God of Death_. She had nothing to fear, unlike lowly humans. Her quiet serenity used to give Kiyomi the creeps, but over time her presence had grown on her. She wondered now how she would ever sleep without it.

After several of their nighttime talks, Rem had told her of Jelus’ love for Misa. After several more, she had told another love story, though not in so many words; the one that existed between Rem and Misa, however unrequited.

Even gods could covet, she’d realized. It was a strangely comforting sentiment.
Sometimes she still wondered if her feelings had formed disingenuously at first. As more of a fascination with Rem’s one-sided affections, of the eerily romantic and unendingly sad ache of unattainable love. If that were the case, would that mean that Kiyomi had crafted her own bed of heartbreak?

Perhaps that was why it felt so well suited to her, so much so that the hurt was almost comfortable.

“No, perhaps not,” she agreed quietly, gently patting concealer beneath her eyes with a fingertip. “I’ll reserve judgement.”

Not that Kiyomi had ever been very good at that.

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Chapter End Notes

It's been a while. Pretty crazy family stuff going on, but I haven't given up on this fic. I hope I'm not too rusty. This chapter is a decent length, not as long as I'm sure you guys would like, but I didn't want to stress myself out too quickly.

Let me know what your favorite part/thought/dialogue was! I've found inspiration for how to end this fic, and so I'm pretty excited for the Kira Arc. It's gonna be fun, and I hope to update more often.

I'm planning on responding to all your reviews for this chapter. It's been too long since I did that. :) Miss you guys! Thank you for your patience!

-Nilah

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