# Meet Me At The Stage Door

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## Summary

Theatre geek Nezumi doesn't think he'll enjoy watching ballet. Boy, is he wrong.

## Notes

Look at me starting a new fic when I have two unfinished ones I never update.

See the end of the work for more [notes](http://archiveofourown.org/works/7697269).
“C’mon Nezumi, you owe me.”

“What?” Nezumi snarked, swapping out his shoes for his school slippers, “Since when?”

“Since you dragged me to all those concerts and plays and shit.” Inukashi deadpanned, remembering all the bad screamo they’d had to endure, “And I don’t know why you’re complaining, I thought a dance performance would be right up your alley.”

Nezumi sighed. He’d lost count of the amount of times he’d had to explain that he liked theatre not all that prancing around in tutus shit. He didn’t understand why Inukashi needed him to come anyway; or, for that matter, why they even wanted to be there. Inukashi got bored going to Nezumi’s performances, and he was their best friend.

“Why are you even going anyway?” Nezumi asked, begrudgingly making his way to class, “My science tutor is in it.” Inukashi waved their hand dismissively, “And I want you to go so I don’t have to go by myself.”

“Inukashi,” Nezumi sighed dramatically, “it’s not really my thing.”

“There’s boys in tights.” Inukashi smirked, “That’s exactly your thing.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Nezumi laughed, “Fine. When is it?”

There were indeed boys in tights.

Boys in tights with nice legs and even nicer butts. There were girls in tights too; but boys in tights were a rarer thing, and therefore more interesting. Especially the boy who appeared to be the star of the show, the boy with shimmering white hair and a red mark on his cheek. Nezumi was surprised by how much he was enjoying himself, even though he was sure ballet wasn’t supposed to be as erotic as he was making it. He could think of many better uses for the dancer’s flexible legs than just doing the splits. One of which involved the boy having his shapely thighs straddled over Nezumi’s face. As the silver haired boy elegantly pirouetted across the stage — so light on his feet that he looked like he barely touched the ground — Nezumi realised he had grossly underestimated ballet. I should come to these things more often.

“Enjoying yourself there, Nezumi?”

Inukashi’s hushed voice pulled him out of his fantasy.

“It’s okay,” Nezumi lied, “I guess.”

Inukashi smiled to themselves. ‘Okay’ my arse. Nezumi was practically drooling, which would give Inukashi something to tease Nezumi over relentlessly for the next few weeks. Or months.

When the show was over, Inukashi pulled Nezumi towards the entrance to back stage, where a lot of parents were heading, holding bouquets and wearing proud smiles. Scanning the room, Nezumi
spied the beautiful white-haired dancer standing with a woman in her late 40s, probably his mother.

“So which one’s your science guy?” Nezumi asked, feigning disinterest. Thank God for his acting skills.

“Uhh…” Inukashi took a cursory glance around the room, “Oh, there he is. Shion! Over here!”

The boy with silver hair turned his head towards them. No way. He waved at Inukashi. No. No way is this happening. The boy said something to his mother and weaved through the crowd towards them. No. Fucking. Way.

“Inukashi!” The boy, Shion, beamed at them, “Thanks for coming.”

Now Nezumi could see him up close; ballet boy, Shion, didn’t just have a nice arse, he was fucking pretty. All long eyelashes and full lips; pale hair sticking to his forehead with sweat and cheeks flushed red from exhaustion but he was glowing, smiling like he was unbelievably delighted that they’d even shown up. Holy fucking shit, how is he real?

“No way. Fucking. Way.”

“Nezumi, this is Shion.” Inukashi said, “Shion, this loser is my friend Nezumi.”

“You’re the actor?” It took Nezumi a moment to realise Shion was talking to him, “You do Shakespeare?”

“Yeah,” Nezumi replied, somehow casually, “I mostly do Shakespeare. Some other Jacobean era plays too.”

Shion looked at Nezumi like this was the most amazing thing he’d ever heard, “Wow, that’s so cool!”


Nezumi and Shion were still chatting when most of the dancers had gone into the changing rooms. Amazingly, Shion seemed genuinely interested in Nezumi’s acting. Maybe Nezumi shouldn’t have been so surprised; Shion was an honour student, so maybe it wasn’t that weird for him to have an interest in pre-1900 English Literature. Inukashi looked bored half to death by the whole conversation, but Nezumi didn’t really give a fuck, because a very pretty boy was asking him about his biggest passion in life.

“Are you doing a play right now?”

“I’m in rehearsals for A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” Nezumi answered, “As Lysander.”

“Yeah,” Inukashi added, more amused than concerned, “and you’re going to totally fuck up your maths resit because of it.”

Nezumi glared at his friend, because why the fuck would you mention that now, you dipshit, and tried to think of a way to convince Shion that he wasn’t completely stupid, just not mathematically gifted. But his thoughts were interrupted by Shion opening his pretty mouth.

“Well, uh, I could tutor you, if you like?” The boy was a Saint, “If you aren’t too busy with rehearsals.”
Holy fucking shit. Nezumi had no idea why, but apparently the God of hot ballet dancers had decided to bless him with a miracle. Maybe he ought to start praying.

“Uh, yeah.” Nezumi replied, once his thoughts had stopped buffering, “I mean. Yes. I’d like you to, uh, tutor me. Thank you.”

Shion giggled shyly, and his laugh was like the fucking sun. “No problem. I’m free tomorrow morning, if, um, if you want to start then? Your place?”

“Uh, yeah, tomorrow morning is great. Around seven?”

After a few moments of exchanging information, in which Nezumi was far too happy about getting the other boy’s number, Shion said goodbye to the both of them and went to change out of his tights. The image of Shion without his tights gave Nezumi enough fantasy fuel to last him for a very long time.

“Very smooth, Romeo.” Inukashi teased as Shion walked away, but Nezumi wasn't listening. He just watched as a girl ran up to Shion and hugged him tightly, crushing the tiny bit of hope he’d allowed himself.

Fuck.
Resit of a Resit

Chapter Summary

Nezumi is very bad at maths, and maybe he should stop assuming things. Also, Inukashi is a bit of an accidental match-maker.

Chapter Notes

EDIT: I added something to the end of chapter one to help with the pacing. If you've read chapter one before chapter two was added, please go and read chapter one from the last page break. Sorry for the inconvenience but it doesn't make sense otherwise...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shion flopped down on his bed as soon as he got home. The night had been both physically and emotionally exhausting, and he had a pile of homework to do. He called Safu instead.

“I’m dying,” he said by way of a greeting, “I am going to die.”

“I saw you literally five minutes ago,” Safu said on the other end of the line, “what could have possibly happened in the last five minutes?”

It wasn’t that anything had happened, it was just that Shion’s mother and Safu’s grandmother were no longer within earshot.

“He’s so hot.” Shion sighed, “I’m gonna die tomorrow.”

“Who is? That guy you’re tutoring?” Safu sighed too, more out of exasperation.

“Nozumi.”

Safu stifled a laugh, “Nezumi? Seriously? Who the hell names their child ‘rat’?”

Shion ignored her, “He acts in Shakespeare plays, Safu! He has a ponytail!”

“We’ve been friends for our entire lives, and somehow you still baffle me.” Safu mused, “Anyway, you should get some sleep. Don’t want to be late for your study date tomorrow.”

“Uuuuuugh! I hate you!” Shion whined, and Safu burst out laughing.

“Night, Shion.”

Shion’s first thought when he stepped off the train was ‘I need coffee’. Despite Safu’s suggestion,
Shion had not gotten much sleep. He had been too anxious about going to Nezumi’s to do anything but stare at the ceiling regretting his decisions. Inukashi bringing their friend along to his performance had been a blessing and a curse. A blessing because said friend was very attractive and exactly his type; a curse because now the other boy’s first impression of Shion was a sweaty, panting, red-faced version of him who was giddy on adrenaline and asked too many questions. Oh God, he must think I’m so annoying. What if he hates me and just said yes out of pity?

Shion’s prayers where answered when he left the train station and found himself face to face with a Starbucks. Taking a quick look through the window, Shion found that it was mostly empty (thank God), save for a few business men and a girl who was either taking a photo of the counter or playing Pokémon Go. Shion voted Pokémon Go. He walked up to the counter, past the girl who had apparently caught a Venomoth, and looked over the menu. I should probably get Nezumi something too. Shion typed, deleted, retyped, re-deleted and then re-retyped a text before sending it.

Hi I’m at Starbucks near the train station do u want anything? :)

“Read at 6:41” his phone said. He waited. Nezumi typed.

Vanilla latte w/ extra espresso pls

Shion smiled at his phone, because for some reason he found Nezumi’s answer very endearing. The barista giggled and he flushed bright red, pretending to look over the menu again as he rehearsed the order in his head and willed his gay ass to calm down.

“Uh, can I get a chai latte with an espresso shot, and a vanilla latte with an extra espresso shot, please?” Shion asked. “Um, both tall, please.”

Shion paid with his loyalty card and waited for the barista to make the coffee. When she was done, Shion thanked her and collected the cups and began the short walk to Nezumi’s flat. Nezumi lived in flat number 6 in a building that looked like it had seen better days. The paint on the door was peeling a little, and the number had fallen off, leaving the rusted ghost of a six in the middle of the door. Shion tried not to judge.

It’s not like I live in a palace either.

He struggled with the cups for a few moments before managing to ring the door bell without spilling coffee all over himself. He took a sip of his drink as he waited.

Nezumi answered the door in black sweatpants and a t-shirt that had been tie-dyed pink, yellow and blue. His hair was down, silky black tresses falling to a little past his shoulders. And now Shion was really freaking out, because now he knew the attractive, exactly-his-type boy he was tutoring also had beautiful hair.

Shit.

“Vanilla latte with extra espresso.” Shion held out the cup and Nezumi took it, their fingers touching for a blissful half a second.

“Thanks.” Nezumi stepped aside to let Shion through the door.

Beautiful ballet boy was in his house. Beautiful ballet boy had bought him coffee. Beautiful ballet boy smelled delicious, like fresh pastries and vanilla. Beautiful ballet boy has a girlfriend, Nezumi reminded himself. He took a sip of his coffee.

“Sorry for the intrusion.” Shion called into the apartment, neatly placing his shoes next to the disorganised pile of combat boots and converse in the entry way.

“You don’t have to do that. I live by myself.” Nezumi explained.

Shion gave him a sort of sad look before fiddling with the strap of his school bag, “I, um, brought my
revision notes… But they’re kinda tailored to how I learn, so, uh, they might not be very helpful.”

“I’m sure they’ll help better than mine.” Nezumi laughed, “Shall we start?”

The flat had two rooms: the bedroom/living room/kitchen and the bathroom. This made Shion feel a little strange, that he was looking at Nezumi’s entire house at the same time. It was cluttered in a way that was charming rather than messy; Nezumi had a lot of stuff, but it was all in it’s proper place. The bed — double bed —was tucked into a little alcove and was surrounded by posters for bands Shion had never heard of and hand written quotes from plays he had never seen or books he had never read.

Shion settled himself down under the kotatsu in the middle of the room, thankful for the warmth, and got out his notes. He asked Nezumi to show him his own revision notes, and to go through the topic list and highlight anything he found particularly difficult. After a few minutes, Shion brought up something he’d been thinking about since that morning.

“Nezumi?” The other boy looked up, “I’ve been wondering about something. Didn’t all the resits happen yesterday morning?”

Nezumi sighed. He’d been dreading having to explain this. “Yeah. And I failed mine. So I’m, ugh… I’m doing a second resit.”

“A resit of a resit?” Shion gasped, “I thought those were just an urban myth.”

“Ha.” Nezumi laughed dryly.

Shion giggled a little, and Nezumi swore it warmed up the room (but that could have just been the blood rushing to his cheeks), “When’s your resit resit?”

“Saturday before winter break starts.”

That gave them two weeks to get Nezumi’s F to a C. They had their work cut out for them. The two of them worked solidly until lunch, fuelled by overpriced coffee and sheer willpower, and with Nezumi finally getting the hang of trigonometry, they decided to call it a day. Shion had dance practice in the afternoon, and Nezumi needed to learn his lines, so it was just as well they were making progress. As Shion packed away his notes into his school bag, Nezumi got out his wallet.

He held out a note and a few coins to Shion, “What’s this for?”

“You’re tutoring me for free,” Nezumi shrugged, “the least I can do is buy you a chai latte.”

“Oh, um, thank you.” Shion took the money and put it away before heading to the entry way to put on his shoes.

As he laced up his boots, Shion noticed the pink, yellow and blue badge on Nezumi’s school bag. It matched Nezumi’s t-shirt and the heart-shaped magnet on the fridge, so Shion figured it couldn’t be a coincidence.

“I, um,” Shion started, not sure how to ask about it and not sure he even should, “I like your t-shirt by the way. You’re pansexual?”
“Uh, yeah.” Nezumi was leaning casually against the wall again, tucking his long hair behind his ear on one side, showing off his piercings. *How much hotter can he get?*

“How, cool. So is my friend Safu,” Shion continued, pointlessly. *Stop babbling, this was going so well!*

“Friend?” Nezumi was genuinely surprised, and cursed himself for feeling a little hopeful, “The one who hugged you at your dance thing?”

Shion nodded. He had no idea where this was going.

“So she’s not your girlfriend?” Nezumi asked flatly.

Shion snorted. “What? No, no, no. We’ve been friends since we were toddlers, she’s practically my sister. Besides, she’s *really* not my type.”

“How so?” Nezumi smiled a little, fiddling with the bottom of his hair.

“Um,” Shion let out a little nervous laugh, “She’s a girl. I’m, um, I’m gay.”

Nezumi was going to scream. “Oh, cool.” He said instead. *Holy. Fucking. Shit.*

Chapter End Notes

I totally forgot to write anything that said this was set in winter until near the end there. Welp.

And I made Nezumi’s hair longer than it is in canon because this is an AU and who’s gonna stop me.
Fast and Hard

Chapter Summary

Nezumi does not get crushes on people.

Chapter Notes

Don't be fooled by the chapter title there's still no sex.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nezumi reviewed the facts: Shion was pretty, and smart, and had nice legs, and was interested in Shakespeare, and — as had been revealed at the end of their study session — Shion was gay. All good facts. Nezumi also reminded himself that Shion being gay didn’t equal Shion wanting to date him. A less-good fact. Despite knowing this, he was having a hard time being his cynical, pessimistic self, and was getting way too excited about spending his lunches studying with Shion in the library. Half of him was sure he was setting himself up to be disappointed; the other half of him didn’t care about that because Shion was really hot.

Shion was already getting settled when Nezumi entered the library, his mop of white hair sticking out like a sore thumb. A silky, beautiful sore thumb. Shion had brought more of his notes, and was busy straightening out a stack of flashcards when Nezumi sat down.

“Hey,” Shion said, and his hushed voice sounded far more erotic than it should have, “ready to tackle algebra?”

Nezumi tried not to think about Shion whispering dirty things into his ear, but wasn’t very successful. He didn’t feel at all ready to tackle algebra but very ready to tackle Shion to the ground and make out with him in the biography section. Which wasn’t why they were here. Maths, they were here to study maths.

“Yeah, I suppose.” Nezumi lied. He needed to get that image of Shion out of his head. School libraries were no place for erections.

After Shion tested him on some algebra basics, they moved on to simultaneous equations, which were Nezumi’s worst nightmare. Shion already knew he was failing maths, but Nezumi was still embarrassed by how spectacularly bad he was. And Shion was being so helpful and patient, explaining things repeatedly and leaning over the table to walk him through it step by step. Then Nezumi made another mistake and — like a bad movie — they both reached for the eraser at the same time, fingers brushing for a fraction of a second before pulling away.

“Sorry.” Shion laughed breathily, nervously, and his face flushed.

Oh my fucking god he’s beautiful. Nezumi quickly grabbed the eraser and rubbed out his mistake, feeling his face warm and hoping to hell that Shion didn’t notice.
Shion did not, in fact, notice Nezumi’s flushed face because he was too busy worrying about his own. He cursed his pale complexion. Shion tried to calm down as he gave Nezumi some more equations to work through, taking the other boy’s attention off him for a while. With Nezumi focusing on the work, Shion allowed himself to stare. Nezumi’s dark eyebrows furrowed as he concentrated, creasing the middle of his forehead. Long eyelashes fanned beautifully over the boy’s cheeks, drawing Shion’s gaze to the sharp edge of a cheekbone and down to the smooth line of Nezumi’s jaw. Most of the boy’s dark hair was pulled into a stylishly messy bun, but a few navy tresses had been left down to frame the actor’s face — or maybe to hide his non-dress-code piercings. *He’s so fucking pretty.*

Shion knew he had it bad. He’d only known Nezumi for three days and already he was stealing glances and having less than appropriate daydreams. And it wasn’t just his looks; Nezumi was funny, and passionate, and whenever they were together something clicked into place like they’d known each other for a lot longer than they had. He was falling fast and hard (too fast, too hard) and he fucking loved it.

“Hey, I’ve been meaning to ask you something,” Nezumi’s voice dragged Shion out of his thoughts, “what’s an honour student like you doing bleaching your hair?”

Shion’s fingers brushed his fringe self-consciously, “Um, I don’t bleach it? I, uh, I have albinism so it just kinda grows like this.”

“Seriously?” A curious smile tugged at Nezumi’s lips, “That’s fucking cool.”

Shion tried not to sound bitter when he said, “You wouldn’t say that if you had my shitty eyesight and had to smother yourself in suncream from April to September.”

“Oh, uh, sorry. Was that insensitive?” So much for not sounding bitter. *Fuck.*

Shion sighed, “It’s fine, I just get that a lot. Don’t worry about it.”

“For the record, though? I, uh,” Nezumi scratched the side of his face, “I think your hair is really pretty.”

Shion felt the blood rush to his face, “T-thank you.”

Hiding his face in his hands, Shion grinned. Then plucked up the courage to say, “Yours too.”

“Huh?” Nezumi looked a little confused.

Shion took a breath and moved his hands away from his face, “I-I think your hair is really pretty too.”

“Thanks.” Nezumi forced out, sounding a little more high pitched than usual and a hint of scarlet rising in his cheeks.

“Safu help.” Shion whined, “Safu I’m so gay.”

“Yeah, I know. And you’re supposed to be helping me stretch.” Safu complained, stretching her arms towards her toes as Shion weakly pushed against her back.
PE wasn’t usually co-ed, but the school field was so flooded that they could probably ice-skate on it if it got any colder, which meant the boys had to join the girls for gymnastics. There was a lot of complaining, but Shion and Safu were happy to have a class together where they could just talk the whole time. Even if Safu was getting a little pissed off at Shion’s whining.

“So you studied with him at lunch, and now you’re having a crisis.” Safu said. It wasn’t a question.

“He said my hair was pretty, Safu! Pretty!” Shion got up and sat down in front of his friend so she could help him stretch too.

Safu was much better at talking and stretching at the same time. “Okay, so he thinks your hair is pretty. That’s good right?”

“Yeah! I guess!” Shion lowered his voice so only Safu — and possibly the girls next to them — could hear, “But now I can’t stop fantasising about him pulling my hair while I suck him off.”

“Christ, Shion, you’re like my brother, I don’t wanna hear that!”

Apparently the girls next to them didn’t want to hear it either.

Jesus fucking christ. Nezumi had been restless from the moment he got home from school, and after pacing around his small apartment for what seemed like hours, he pulled on a leather jacket and went for a walk. Then it started chucking it down. Fucking typical. It wasn’t even worth running for shelter, so Nezumi continued his leisurely walk in the torrential downpour until he reached Inukashi’s house.

“Oh look, a drowned rat.” Inukashi smirked, leaning on the doorframe.

“Shut the fuck up. Are you gonna let me in?” Nezumi was in no mood for any of this. “Or are you just gonna stand there with that smug fucking look on your face?”

“Fine. But stay in the entryway while I get you some dry clothes.” Inukashi said as they walked back into the house, “Parents’ll be pissed if you track water into the house.”

So Nezumi shivered in the entryway until Inukashi returned with a baggy sweatshirt, a pair of sweatpants and a towel.

“Change into these.” They threw the clothes at Nezumi, “I’ll make us some tea.”

Peeling off his wet jeans in the entryway of his friend’s house wasn’t how Nezumi envisioned his evening, but, well, here he was. He just hoped Inukashi’s parents weren’t due home anytime soon, because it would be more than a little awkward for them to come home to find a half naked boy in their hallway. The clothes were a little snug, but they were warm and dry, so Nezumi wasn’t complaining. He quickly ran the towel over his jacket in an attempt to save the leather before wrapping his hair up in it and slipping into a pair of guest slippers.

When Inukashi returned from the kitchen, Nezumi had already settled himself under the kotatsu in the living room, fiddling with his box of cigarettes.

“Can I smoke in here?” Nezumi asked as Inukashi busied themselves with the tea set.
“Sure, why the fuck not. Dad smokes in here anyway.” Inukashi took a sip of their tea.

*Thank god.* Nezumi frustratedly struggled with his lighter for a while before taking a long drag on his cigarette.

“So, what brings you to my house in the middle of a rainstorm?” Nezumi gave Inukashi a look, “C’mon, I know you didn’t walk all the way here for nothin’.”

“This is your fucking fault. Forcing me to go to that dance thing.” Nezumi spat, and added a “fuck you” for good measure.

“What are you even talkin’ about?” Inukashi was in no mood for Nezumi’s bullshit, but then it clicked. “Oh my god, you have a crush on him.”

Nezumi flushed bright red, “No I don’t! I do not get *crushes* on people!”

“Oh yeah, I forgot,” Inukashi deadpanned, “that would mess with your whole ‘heartless badass who cares for no one’ persona.”

“You’re such a dick.” Nezumi blew smoke in his friend’s face, “I don’t have a crush on him.”

“Yeah, just keep tellin’ yourself that.” Inukashi smirked.

Chapter End Notes

Remember kids, smoking is bad. Don't be like Nezumi.

I got all of my information about albinism from [here](#) so if anything here or in future chapters is inaccurate blame the NHS. It's not gonna feature hugely anyway, I just wanted to explain Shion's hair.
They had complimented each other’s hair on Monday. By Friday, Shion had started openly flirting. Or, well, his best attempt at flirting; which mostly consisted of more awkward compliments and “accidentally” letting their hands brush when they walked to the library together. The more time he spent with Nezumi, the more he found to like: the crinkles around his eyes as he laughed at one of Shion’s clumsy jokes, his firm but polite correction when Shion accidentally slipped up with Inukashi’s pronouns, the way the dip of his collar bone showed since he never did up the top button of his shirt, the bite marks on his stationary from focusing on difficult equations, grey eyes the exact colour of the sky when it rained. He sighed, wistfully, staring into an endless void of that same grey as raindrops tapped the windowpane.

“Shion,” his mother’s head peaked around the door from the bakery kitchen, “if you have time to stare off into space, could you help me with this batch of cupcakes?”

Happy to have something to distract him from his thoughts for a while, Shion walked into the kitchen and grabbed his apron from the hook by the door as he passed. He tied the apron strings around his waist and set to work with the hand mixer as Karan added the ingredients.

“Who’s Nezumi?” Asked Karan, cracking two eggs into the bowl.

“Huh?”

“You kept saying ‘Nezumi’,“ she explained, smiling, “and you can’t expect me to believe you were staring out of the window and sighing over a rat.”

Shion felt himself flush, “He’s, um, he’s the guy I’m tutoring. Inukashi’s friend.”

“Ahh.” Karan smiled knowingly, adding vanilla extract to the cake mix, “Is he cute?”

“Ahh.” Shion cried, face burning. He could only imagine how red his face was. Karan just giggled while mixing the cake batter.

After Shion’s embarrassed shriek, Karan thought it best to change the subject. As the two of them continued baking, they chatted about plans for christmas and new year, and whether or not they thought it would snow soon. Shion loved helping out in his mother’s bakery: the casual chit chat, watching the ingredients come together, making something delicious for other’s to enjoy. Plus he got to eat the leftovers.

Once the cupcakes were in the oven, Shion gathered up the confidence to bring the conversation back to a certain dark haired boy who was failing maths.

“Mum, would it be okay if Nezumi came over tomorrow afternoon? I don’t want to lug my textbooks and notes and everything all the way to his house.”

“Yeah, of course.” Karan answered amiably, “But you can study down here. You know I trust you, but no cute boys in your room unless-”

“Unless you’ve met them first, I know.”
When Nezumi arrived at Shion’s house, he was sure he must have the wrong place. He stared at his phone, and sure enough, Google maps said he had reached his destination. But he wasn’t standing in front of a house. He was in front of a bakery. He was just about to call Shion when the boy emerged from the front of the shop in leggings and an oversized jumper with an apron tied around his waist.

Shion wiped his hands on the front of the apron as he spoke, “Hi, sorry, I should have told you SatNav things always bring you to the front.”

Nezumi looked at Shion and smiled.

“What?” Shion asked, looking down at himself self-consciously.

Nezumi took a step closer to Shion and pointed at the boy’s cheek, “You have icing on your face.”

Shion flushed bright red and rubbed his face, successfully smearing the icing even more.

“C’mere, I’ll get it.” Nezumi offered. Shion took a small step towards him.

He cautiously brought his hand to Shion’s cheek and wiped the icing off with his thumb, feeling his heart pound with every millisecond of contact. “I, um, got it.”

They both laughed nervously.

“T-thank you. Uh, let’s go inside.”

Shion lead him into the bakery and through the kitchen to the back room, where Shion’s mother sat drinking tea while she waited for whatever was making that delicious smell to finish baking. Shion’s text books and revision notes were stacked up on the table. The room appeared to be intended for storage but had been repurposed into a living space. There was a door that lead out to behind the building and Shion’s bike was leaned against the wall, along with some particularly muddy boots. Nezumi could see up the staircase that the real entry way was at the top of the stairs, which explained why Shion was walking around flour dusted shoes instead of slippers.

Shion’s mother looked at him as he stood at the edge of the room, and all at once Nezumi felt very conscious of his fashion choices. Shion had mentioned his mother’s rule about having boys in his room when they’d agreed to meet after school, so Nezumi had the impression that she was judging him. He fiddled with the bottom of his hair, which was plaited over his shoulder, wishing he’d done something else with it. He dreaded taking off his coat to reveal the band t-shirt underneath. He suddenly wished he’d worn jeans that didn’t have tears in them (not that he owned any). He watched her face carefully, staring without seeming like he was staring, searching for any sign of disapproval. But, surprisingly, there was none.

“You must be Nezumi. Shion’s told me a lot about you.” She smiled pleasantly, before adding, “Oh, don’t worry, all good things.”

Shion’s voice cracked in a high pitched shriek, “Mum!”

Nezumi smiled — *fucking adorable* — before bowing politely, “Nice to meet you, Mrs.”

“Please, call me Karan.” Karan smiled again, and this time Nezumi saw the faint traces of Shion’s
smile in the curve of her lips, “Will you be staying for dinner? We’re having hot pot.”

He thought about the leftover stew waiting for him at home and decided it would survive another day in the fridge, “If it’s not too much trouble.”

Shion couldn’t fucking believe this was happening. Here he was, sitting with his crush while his mother tended to some customers in the next room. He sat next to Nezumi — close enough that they could both see the textbook — and was pretty much leaning into him as he pointed at various formulas and diagrams. Nezumi chewed on the end of a pencil as he listened to Shion’s explanations, occasionally humming an affirmative when asked if he understood something. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Shion realised that the fact that Nezumi was chewing on his pencil was kind of disgusting, but he was a teenage boy with a gross crush so he couldn’t bring himself to care.

After giving Nezumi a refresher on the topic, he gave Nezumi an old exam paper to do and waited for him to finish it or ask any questions. Apart from the fact that practicing questions was good for Nezumi’s grades, it was also a good opportunity for Shion to stare at the beautiful, mathematically-challenged boy. As lovely as Nezumi’s hair looked all neatly plaited over his shoulder, Shion couldn’t help fantasising about what it would feel like to run his hands through those dark, silky tresses; what that hair would look like fanned across a pillow, Nezumi lying on the bed with Shion over him, his hands sliding over smooth skin and wow that was not a fantasy he wanted to be having right now. *Fuck, I should save that for later though…*

By the time Nezumi had finished the questions, Karan had closed the bakery and told Shion and Nezumi to finish up because she was starting to make dinner. She asked Nezumi to come and look at what she was putting in the hot pot while Shion brought his textbooks back up to his room. When Shion finished clearing up his things, he and Nezumi went to sit at the kotatsu. Ordinarily, Shion would have helped his mother cook dinner, but Karan assured him that it was fine, and besides, it would be rude to leave Nezumi to sit by himself in the living room.

Nezumi looked at Shion a little nervously. It was really the first time they had spent any length of time together that wasn’t to do with maths. Sure, they had talked about other things while studying, but those conversations usually span off something at least vaguely study-related. Now Nezumi was a little worried that they’d have nothing to say to each other.

“Uh,” Nezumi started, “how was dance practice? You had it this morning, right?”

“Yeah, it was fun.” Shion smiled like a fucking angel, “We did a sort of mini-performance for the kids in the younger class. I think we all freaked them out a little bit though.”

“How?” Nezumi asked, leaning his chin on his hand,

“Well I don’t know about the girls, but the younger boys definitely looked a little scared when we took our shoes off in the changing rooms.” Nezumi looked puzzled and Shion continued, “Pointe shoes can make your toes bleed.”

“Wow, I didn’t think ballet was so badass.” Nezumi said genuinely.

Shion giggled in that sunshine-y way that lit up the room. *I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him I do not have a crush on him*.
Nezumi could have gone on trying to convince himself that he didn’t have a crush all day, if Shion’s voice hadn’t interrupted him.

“How are rehearsals going?” Shion looked at him expectantly.

“Pretty good, I think. My first full rehearsal’s on Thursday.” Nezumi answered, “No scripts.”

“When do you do it for real?” Shion asked, going a little pink.

Nezumi thought for a second, “Uh, not until after new year, why? Do you, uh, do you want to go? Friends and family of actors can get pre-sale tickets. Inukashi’s going, too. And me and them were planning on going back to mine afterwards.”

“I’d love to go.” Shion said, just as his mother walked in with the food.

“Love to go where, Shion?” Karan asked,

Shion flushed a little, “Um, to see Nezumi’s play.”

Karan smiled, a little suspicious. She had not missed the part about ‘going back to mine’, but Nezumi seemed like a nice boy, she supposed.

Chapter End Notes

check that subtle avoidance of karan's last name because she doesn't fucking have one

I haven't done ballet since I was like 6 so idk if that pointe shoes thing was at all accurate
Stage Kisses

Chapter Summary

Things don't go to plan, but neither of them care.

Chapter Notes

HOLY SHIT THIS TOOK ME SO LONG I'M SORRY

There's a very brief mention of sexual harassment in this chapter and idk if i should tag it so i'm mentioning it here. It's very vague and mild, but if you want to avoid it, skip the rest of the paragraph when it says 'barely five o'clock'. You won't miss anything important.

Shion had had a rather awkward conversation with his mother after Nezumi left. He admitted that yes, he did like Nezumi; and yes, Nezumi did live alone; but no, nothing was going to happen when they studied at Nezumi’s house and no, mum, I am not going to take condoms with me just in case why would you even say that! Eventually Karan agreed that she was over-doing it with the whole being a Cool and Supportive™ mother thing and allowed Shion to go to his Wednesday night study session without a bag full of Durex products. Shion and Nezumi had arranged to study after school as much as possible that week, since Nezumi had his second make up text on Saturday morning. But with Nezumi’s rehearsals and Shion’s dance classes, they were a little pressed for time.

It had started snowing the night before, so when Shion set out to go to Nezumi’s Wednesday night he was wrapped up in the warmest clothes he owned: the hat, scarf and gloves Safu’s grandmother had knitted him; chocolate brown duffle coat; a sweatshirt with his dance studio’s logo on it; and he’d even put on thigh-highs under his jeans. The nice ones with lace at the top, not that anyone was going to see them. Shion wondered, briefly, what Nezumi would think if he did see them. Would he think they were cute? Sexy? Would he hook his fingers under the hem and tug them down over Shion’s thighs? Jesus Christ this is not the time!

Shion pulled on his boots and called into the bakery, “Mum, I’m going now!”

“Alright,” Karan appeared in the doorway, wiping her flour-covered hands on her apron, “make sure to text me when you get there, and I’ll pick you up from the station when you get back, okay?”

It was barely five o’clock and already almost dark, so Shion was thankful that he wouldn’t have to walk back by himself. His hair tended to attract quite a bit of unwanted attention, and he’d rather not have to get himself home after having some gross old man breathing down his neck on the train.

“Yeah, okay.” He said, “See you later. Love you.”

“Love you too, sweetheart.”
Nezumi couldn’t fucking believe it. He stared at the text from his director that had only been sent a minute ago.

*Change of plan need 2 do rehearsal 2nite instead. B at theatre at 6 sorry :) xxx*

Did she think none of them had lives outside of her under-18s theatre group? Nezumi had plans tonight. Plans with a beautiful ballerina boy who was maybe hopefully kinda into him, and was teaching him how to not suck at maths. Shion would already be on his way be now, so Nezumi couldn’t exactly cancel. He strongly considered telling his director to fuck off, but then he’d already been warned about his attitude more than once and he’d worked too hard to get himself kicked out. But he *really* wanted to spend time with Shion, and *really* needed to not fail maths.

Nezumi was pulled from his conflicted thoughts a few minutes later by a knock on the door. He opened it to find Shion bundled up in the cutest little winter outfit he’d ever seen with snowflakes in his hair and holding two cups of coffee.

“Hi!” Shion greeted and passed one of the cups to him, “No paying me back for this one, its my treat.”

“Thank you.” Nezumi said, and he *really* didn’t want to send Shion home after he came all this way and *bought him coffee*.

“Um, Shion, I’m really sorry, but my director just texted me and rescheduled rehearsal to tonight.” Nezumi began, “She literally only texted me a fucking minute ago. But, um, its an open rehearsal, so you can come watch, uh, if you want? I’d hate for you to come all the way here for nothing.”

Shion felt a little guilty, but he actually liked that idea a lot better than studying. He wouldn’t dare miss a chance to see Nezumi act.

“Yeah, I’d love to come and watch.” Shion said, cheeks red half from the cold and half because he was about to see a very cute boy *on stage*. “When do you have to be there?”

“Six, so we should probably start walking, like, now. You can leave your stuff here if you want.”

Shion hung his bag up on an empty hook in the entryway, next to Nezumi’s school bag and a few coats. Placing his coffee cup down, Nezumi pulled on a dark winter coat that was far more weather-appropriate than his usual leather jacket. He picked his cup back up, checked he had his phone and keys, and they headed out.

Nezumi lit a cigarette as they walked down the street. And his cheap disposable lighter thought this was the perfect time to act up, making him look like an idiot as he struggled to get it working.

*Fucking typical.*

“You smoke?” Shion asked, voice neutral.
“Yeah. Does it bother you?” Nezumi asked, not an accusation.

“Not particularly,” Shion took a sip of his coffee, “just don’t tell my mother. And, you know, it’s really bad for you.”

“Yeah, I should probably quit.” Nezumi took a drag and tried his best to blow the smoke away from Shion, trying to keep the smell off his clothes, “But it’s, like, really hard.”

“What’s it like?” Shion asked, “Smoking, I mean. I’ve always been curious, but Safu wants to be a doctor and she’d lecture me for days if I tried it.”

It wasn't something Shion ever really wanted to take up. Seeing one picture of a fucked up set of lungs in school was enough to deter him forever. Everyone was shown that picture of gross, tar-filled lungs though, so Shion figured there must be something about smoking that made people want to do it, and keep doing it despite the risks.

“Um, it’s kind of hard to explain.” Nezumi said, and held the cigarette towards Shion in a silent offer. He wouldn’t push if Shion didn’t take it.

Shion reached his hand out and took it, fingers brushing Nezumi’s for longer than they had before. He considered the foreign thing in his hand; watched the thin trail of smoke from the tip.

“If anyone asks, this didn’t happen.” Shion said, and took a drag.

As soon as the smoke hit his lungs, Shion erupted into coughs and splutters; but he laughed as he violently coughed out the smoke.

“That’s vile.” Shion exclaimed, looking up at Nezumi and smiling like he hadn’t been choking a second ago, “Why do you do this?”

Nezumi took the cigarette back, and Shion’s laugh was contagious, “I honestly don’t know.”

Bringing the cigarette half way to his lips, Nezumi’s hand stilled.

Fortunately, depending on how you looked at it, Nezumi’s director had a cigarette of her own when she greeted them, which at least gave Shion a technically-true reason as to why his clothes might smell like smoke. The director seemed like a nice enough woman: she smiled pleasantly when Shion walked in, and apologised profusely for the inconvenience. Nezumi wanted to tell him that it was all a trick, that she was actually strict and a pain in the arse, but he wouldn’t dare say it with her in earshot. She was a good director, all things considered. Nezumi just wished she’d give them more than half an hour’s notice for changing the dates of rehearsals.

There were a few other people dotted around watching the rehearsal, but few enough that Shion had the row almost to himself. He sat himself down in the middle seat and watched Nezumi and his co-stars run through the play. Shion knew the story well enough to appreciate the director’s decisions about staging and tweaks to the script; well enough to recognise the scene he’d sort of been dreading. The scene where director’s usually added in a kiss. Shion knew he shouldn’t be jealous — he had no right to be, it wasn’t like he and Nezumi were dating — kissing another actor was probably nothing to Nezumi anyway. It probably happened every other week. It didn’t mean anything… probably.
Stop being stupid. But the girl playing Hermia was pretty and Shion couldn’t help but feel a pang of jealousy. Over a stupid fucking kiss. Which turned out to be several stupid fucking kisses, by the end of the play.

It wasn’t a dress rehearsal, so it didn’t take any time at all for everyone to get their things and leave. Before they knew it, Shion, Nezumi and the director were the last people in the theatre. The director saw Shion and Nezumi’s exchange of looks.

“Hey, Nezumi, you and your boyfriend here can stay a little longer if you want.” She teased, but the offer was genuine, “You know where the spare key is. Remember to lock up. Oh and for gods sake, don’t make a mess.”

With that she left, leaving Nezumi mortified and Shion’s face rivalling a tomato.

Once Nezumi calmed down, he pushed himself up to sit on the edge of the stage, swinging his legs absentmindedly. Shion shortly joined him, so they sat side by side, rows upon rows of empty seats in front of them. Nezumi looked down to where his and Shion’s hands rested beside their respective thighs, pinky fingers barely a centimetre apart. He was going to break the silence, but Shion beat him to it.

“Is it awkward, having to kiss someone for a part?” Shion asked, trying not to let his envy tint his voice.

Nezumi thought for a second, “Uh, not really. I’m pretty good friends with most of the people I work with, so we just kinda laugh about it. And, you know, it’s not like its a real kiss.”

“What?” Shion was so confused.

He’d watched it happen in front of his own eyes. Several times. Of course it was a real kiss.

“It’s just a stage kiss.” Nezumi explained, “And the audience is far away enough that you can’t tell.”

“Stage kiss?”

“Yeah, uh, you kinda put your thumb like… uh…” Nezumi struggled to convey what he meant with hand gestures and just gave up, “It’s probably easier if I just show you. Can I?”

“Y-yeah.”

Holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy f—

Nezumi willed his hand not to tremble as he brought it up to Shion’s cheek. The other boy was so warm and alive against him, it didn’t even feel real. Fucking hell, am I doing this? Breath ghosted his skin as Nezumi moved his thumb to rest over Shion’s lips; his soft, pink lips that Nezumi now realised were covered in some kind of lip balm.

“You, uh, put your thumb over the other persons lips like… like this,” Nezumi tried again, and started leaning in, “and then, uh…”

He closed the gap between them, and kissed against his own thumb. The only thing separating their lips.

It was over as soon as it started, Nezumi pulling back, face flushed from a stage kiss like he was twelve again. Neither of them looked at the other, choosing instead to look out on the empty audience.

“You—” Shion began, finding some courage from somewhere, “You could kiss me for real… If you
want…”

What the fuck.

“Are you flirting with me?” Nezumi asked, because he honestly didn’t what the fuck was happening.

Shion breathed out a nervous laugh, “I have been for the past week and a half but thanks for noticing.”

The hand touches. The compliments. How could he be so blind?

“I— I want to.” Nezumi forced out.

Shion turned to face him.

“I want to kiss you for real.” He repeated.

Shion’s face flushed again, all round eyes and full lips, “I want you to kiss me for real.”

A hand on Shion’s cheek. Real and solid and warm and alive. They each leaned half way in, meeting in the middle with lips a breath apart. Then Nezumi edged in the rest of the way and he was kissing Shion. Everything was chai tea and cherry chapstick and the tickle of Shion’s hair against his cheek. Everything was cigarettes and vanilla latte and the smooth of Nezumi’s thumb over Shion’s cheekbone. They each pulled away: pink cheeks, pounding hearts, foreheads pressed together.

“I like you, a lot.” Nezumi said, barely a whisper.

“I like you a lot, too.” Shion returned.

When they took a breath, they breathed the same air.

“Will you go out with me?”

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't decide who should ask who so I left it ambiguous. Enjoy the mystery.

Hmu on tumblr and twitter if you want.

End Notes

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