Martyrdom and Paradox

by UchidaKarasu

Summary

L/Harry; past Harry/Draco. L is deep in the Kira case when suddenly a man with a fake name and a sharp intellect turns up in Japan. As L discovers what attraction is, Harry Potter fights to help L solve the case while falling in love with the detective. Yaoi/slash. Rated mature! [UchidaKarasu]

Notes

Beta credit and dedication to Sociially-Diisorientied. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

See the end of the work for more notes
L Lawliet, also known by a million and a half point two other names, was contemplating.

As he usually contemplated a minimum of twenty hours a day if not more, this was not exactly strange news at all. He was used to constantly thinking, analysing, imagining, considering, recalling, psychoanalysing, breaking down features and components, and contemplating. He was used to doing these things for the majority of his day, because a day not thinking was a day wasted, in L's very well-known and respected opinion.

Well, that and eating cake, but that was beside the point.

It was what he was contemplating as he happened to be on his way to the local sweet shop that made it so interesting and unique. At the moment, as he walked down the concrete-paved street with his stomach thinking of strawberry shortcake and the wind whipping through his hooded hair, a green apple sucker in his mouth, he was thinking about what Amane Misa had said in the interrogation room.

Usually his mind was composed of theories, imagination, sweets, and options. He thought of everything scientifically, with much deliberation and consideration, and it always had to do with a case that had a logical explanation or some type of theoretical meaning underlying. He thought about cases and criminals and never thought, even in a passing, about human emotions unless it was from a psychological and methodical point of view. Emotions and thought processes were thought about systematically, gathering the useful evidence within the stories and the ways of human beings, but the underlying cause and nature of the emotions and actions weren't really worth contemplating. He didn't think about his own emotions, as he was aloof and detached himself, and the emotions from others had no standing in L's mind because he didn't really believe it was necessary. He worked with percentages and science, not with love or hate or happiness or sadness or the rest of the bundle of human emotion. He just understood why people did the things they did; he could think like them but he couldn't let himself become consumed by it.

However, he couldn't get Misa's statement out of his head: You're a...pervert! Normally, he wouldn't think much of it, because he heard unnecessary and emotional words come out of people's mouths all the time. "You're an unemotional bastard" and "I'm going to kill you one day, you miserable, emotionless fuck" were among the most common that people would say to him over the intercom after being apprehended to be thrown into prison for life. He was definitely used to verbal insults about his strange lifestyle—he barely ever saw the sun before the Kira case had come on the table; he hated being looked at even if the people around him had no idea of who he was—and his cold methods—"Torture? Sure, have at it. I don't mind. Just don't kill him until I get my information."—but it had never really occurred to him that he could possibly be a pervert.

He knew that it was ridiculous to dwell on it, because it was probably some useless sentence that criminals blurted out of their thought processes in the heat of the moment, not really thinking about what they were saying exactly, but for some odd reason, it was really bugging him. If there was one thing that he was sure he was not, it would have to be a pervert. He was twenty-four-years-old, almost twenty-five, and had never once thought about anything revolving around himself and the same or opposite gender, or the act of copulation at all. He knew that there were beautiful women and handsome men out there, because he had seen their pictures on databases and on papers, but he knew this through a theoretical standpoint because he had never engaged in any of that sort of activity.
He recognised the act of intercourse and 'perverted' natures to be about physical and/or emotional attraction, pheromones, and other weird things that he tried not to dwell upon unless a case needed it, but he had never really understood it. It was a basic reproductive stimulus that ninety-seven percent of Homo-sapiens were compelled to in order to continue the human race. Most people couldn't suppress the urges even if they wanted to, and took part in sexual intercourse by the time they were twenty nowadays. He understood this, even if he did not have first-hand experience, and while he had questions and curiosity about what could drive people to do terrible things for useless emotions like love and attraction, he had only considered it in a scientific standpoint. He had no other use for dwelling on thoughts of such a nature.

But perverted? It was beyond L's comprehension. He had never been with a man or a woman, would never be with a man or a woman, and would be perfectly content not being with a man or a woman. He didn't care about the basic biological urges of people, because he didn't have them. His urges were composed of interesting cases, getting satisfying results, and sweets. Preferably cake. Especially strawberry cake, with white icing and a strawberry on top with a toothpick holding it all together. He definitely cared about cake. And botamochi and dango and strawberry ice cream and lollipops that tasted like cherries and cherries themselves and chocolate-covered cherries with the runny cream inside...

He forced himself to think about the Kira case as he got closer to the sweet shop. He was supposed to be at headquarters, watching the interrogation of Amane Misa and Yagami Raito. It had been expected by the famous detective that Raito would ask to be put into solitary confinement, which meant that there was something suspicious going on with the college student. Therefore, it was necessary to watch the two of them almost non-stop, to see if the killings would stop or if they would let something slip. However, as much as L hated to be outside where he could possibly be seen by everyone and their grandmothers, he knew that if he didn't get something besides green apple flavoured suckers and that watermelon in the ice box, he was going to go mad.

Quillish Wammy, known in this country as Watari, was currently dealing with Roger in Winchester, England, who was the head of the Wammy House. Wammy or one of the members of the Kira Investigation Team were usually the ones that went to the sweet shop that L loved above all others in this country, but as Wammy was off on that important business call that could take hours—Roger had a tendency to talk quite extensively about insects—and the team was mostly at home spending time with their families, he was off to get his own strawberry cake. After all, his brain function without the sugar would decrease by forty per-cent, and that just wouldn't do. He needed his brain to convict that slimy, clever little Yagami Raito, so he needed sugar. Well, something besides watermelon and green apple suckers. He needed that strawberry cake that tasted so wonderful and divine.

He could smell the sweet shop, and the Kira case, which he considered nearly ninety-four per-cent complete now that Raito and Misa were in custody, all-but left his mind. The wind was blowing with a humid, sticky scent, which didn't really bug L that much. It smelled like cookies, and chocolate, and something like rum, but the hint of strawberries made everything else go away. He lifted his head to sniff the air, giving the people walking down the street the complete and proper view of his face, but at the moment he didn't give it much thought, because he didn't believe that there was another Kira out there. Besides, with the big black sunglasses hiding his equally black eyes, he felt moderately safe even though the chills down his spine made him hide his face yet again.

So with a nice view of cracking sidewalks and the feet of passer-by, he made his way through one of the less populated areas of the city, following that wondrous scent to Sato-Mari, quite possibly the best sweet shop in Japan. His mind was on cake, and all of the rest of the yummy items that
were just waiting to be delicately handled by L's careful fingers before being devoured.

The sweet shop was flashy and colourful, standing out clearly against all of the drab greys and blacks that surrounded it. He loved this building the few times he had laid eyes on it, for he loved the multitudes of cakes and dango and cookies and anmitsu and truffles and anpan and castella and green tea ice cream and melonpan and mochi ice cream laid everywhere in the place. He was nearly dizzy just staring at it. It was the only place in Japan worth braving the crowd that was waiting in line to get some of the sweets. After all, it was one of the most popular shops in the Kantō region regardless of its location, filled with anything that could possibly satiate a sweet tooth like L’s. It was a fantastic place, in L’s opinion, and so he took a deep breath, shivered a bit despite the hot and mildly humid air, and entered the shop.

The roar of the crowd hit him like a tidal wave, causing him to pause for a second and just take it all in. It wasn't often that he allowed himself to even go outside, so being surrounded by a small mob of people was different and uncomfortable. It felt as if everyone was staring at him, which was probably true considering the clothes he was wearing—the denim trousers and the white long sleeved shirt probably wouldn't have bugged many people, but the glasses over his face was definitely enough to touch someone’s curiosity, and if they looked down at his feet that were in loose shoes without socks, they’d probably think he was nuts—but in reality, he was just regarded and then ignored just like usual. Strange visual or not, he was just another human being. Unless he smiled, that was, and then people veered away from him in fear that he would eat their livers with some fava beans or something. Apparently his smile was creepy, because ninety-eight per-cent of the time it produced the same result.

The last two per-cent were just as creepy and took it as normal behaviour.

So he stood in the back of the line, avoiding touching anyone in the store, finally finishing his green apple sucker and throwing the stick away in the litter bin by the door. It would take forever to get his order filled because the line ended practically at the door in the first place, and so he sighed almost inaudibly and pulled out another one of those suckers, practically desperate to have something sweet on his tongue. He really needed his next substantial sugar fix if he wasn't going to shrivel and die on the colourful floor beneath him.

Still hunched over with his right hand tapping restlessly against his thigh, he heard the door open and he shuffled forward a bit to allow the newcomer some room, not taking the time to look back although he was aware of them. He was very proficient in capoeira and could fight if he needed to, and he was very, very sure that the two Kira’s were currently in captivity, so he was only a little suspicious. Like one per-cent suspicious. He was one per-cent suspicious of everyone in the room, but that was because he was just naturally suspicious and wary of other people. It was one of the main reasons that he never went outside, opting instead to bury himself in a room with a computer and a microphone to solve cases. It was how he worked and thought best.

For a few moments, L just sucked on his sucker and attempted to look as if he was completely oblivious to everything around him, which was not the case of course. But if he appeared that way, the greater the chance that other people would believe it and not consider him a threat...or perhaps the greatest detective on the globe. But just looking at the people was a joke, he figured as he moved forward just as the door opened again and invited another customer. They were so obvious with everything they did, to the point that L could practically see their entire life story right before his covered eyes.

For instance, the young girl behind the cash register had a small bruise on her neck, indicating sexual activity, but she also had more make-up on the left side of her face, badly hiding a larger bruise that came from a solid hit to the cheek, indicating a fight of some sort. She had trouble moving her neck and shoulders, bruises and small cuts on the yellowish-gold, although her hair
did a nice job covering it up. Her dyed blonde locks were down, covering the sides of her face, and every once in a while she would nervously palm it to make absolutely sure that the left side of her face was covered, which guaranteed that she was embarrassed and ashamed of it. There were gloves that covered her hands, attempting to cover the wrists that so clearly had rope burns on them and failing. However, the girl looked close to tears, and was hunched over a bit in a defeated expression, which was the biggest tell-all of the entire package. So L logically confirmed that she had been raped by one cruel bastard, destroying the girl’s self-esteem and confidence, and that no one in the administration had the common decency to let the girl stay home and rest. Or maybe she was just fooling herself into thinking that everything was okay when it really wasn’t.

And then there was the kid in front of L, wearing a huge, long sleeved burgundy shirt and baggier trousers than L’s own, with a pair of beaten up shoes. L could see that the kid was standing in a self-defence posture, his arms curled around his chest and indicating the need for protection, and when he shuffled forward when the line moved, he was walking with a slight limp. By his side was a large man with a name tag that read ‘Tazuna’, who had red-rimmed eyes due to an alcohol or drug withdraw, and was practically standing over the kid. They were probably father and son, and the father was beating the hell out his son.

For a small, fleeting moment, L wondered if Kira had killed the man that had raped the cashier, and wondered why Kira hadn’t killed the man that was terrorising his child. It wasn’t over the news, that was for sure, because L didn’t recall seeing the cashier or Tazuna on the television, so perhaps that was the reason. But a girl had been raped and a boy was being traumatised, and L’s lips pressed in a hard line, his eyes closing beneath the sunglasses. It really was dreadful what was happening to the world, L knew, but it did not give Kira the right to pass judgement on people that did or didn’t need it. Yes, they were murderers, but it did not give Kira the right to be a mass murderer himself. Kira was a modern-day Adolf Hitler, and he needed to be punished for his crimes.

L sighed again, opening his eyes just as he lurched forward. The cause was the door opening and a group of teen-agers galloping in like idiots and pushing everyone in the line as they thrashed around. L allowed himself a brief moment of insanity and barrelled as hard as he possibly could into the man named Tazuna, nearly knocking the larger man off of his feet, and the detective felt the corner of his lips twitch upwards in amusement. It had been definitely worth it, even though now he had the scent of a mixture of cigarettes and sweat in his nose that didn't seem to want to go away.

A taller figure nearly did fall, but at the last moment L reached out with swiftness and grasped the person's shoulder, stopping him in his topple to the ground. Nearly as soon as it started it was over, and the taller figure straightened himself out and revealed his face, huffing with annoyance. For a second, the man fumed silently before giving out an accented "Arigatō gozaimasu" and smiling tightly.

L’s eyebrow rose slightly as the taller man returned to his place behind him. He was definitely taller, possibly around 183 centimetres, and had hair just like L’s own except a bit longer, with the same shade of jet black hair and an identical dishevelled look. His skin was darker than L’s, at a lightly golden colour that shined in the light, and his almond shaped eyes were a vivid, sharp green, framed by dark eyelashes and round glasses. He was foreign, no doubt about it, but the biggest mystery was the thin scar on his forehead. It appeared as if he had had the lightning bolt-shaped for years due to the tightness around the scar tissue, and yet the colour was still a tender brownish-pink colour, as if just only a couple of weeks old.

His clothes were normal to most people's eyes, with a short sleeved red shirt and a pair of dark denim trousers, but the jeans were loose, so loose that he had to have a black belt on to keep the fabric from falling down. To L’s eyes, the jeans were too nice to be hand-downs, and no one
would consider buying trousers that loose if they had the money to buy the jeans in the first place, and his shirt was nice and fitted like a shirt should. His shoes were simple tennis shoes, but they were surely expensive as well, and he had jewellery on that probably cost a small fortune, consisting of a golden watch, a silver band (probably titanium or platinum) on his right ring finger, and a necklace made out of silver that was tucked into his shirt. He had a black shoulder bag that was filled with books to the brim, and a knitted hat that was pushed over his messy hair. The man obviously had money, which did not explain why he was wearing those overly large jeans.

The only explanation was that this man was hiding something.

Behind his sunglasses, the detective's large black eyes narrowed with suspicion, and he combed through every single bump and crease in those trousers to find the outline of whatever he was hiding—a weapon?—although he saw nothing. So instead, he decided to speak, in English, because he was pretty sure that the stranger was from a Western country like Britain or perhaps America just by the vague accent in his Japanese words. "You're very much welcome."

Those green eyes widened and a wide smile popped up on his face as he exclaimed in an airy, melodic British timbre, "You speak English! Fantastic! I'm not good at this Japanese thing, so you're a breath of fresh air!" His features, which before were moderately attractive and more exotic than anything, brightened up considerably with the beaming grin on his face, and for a moment L was taken aback that someone would direct a smile at him.

The line moved forward a metre as L decided to reply, "That's true. I know that a different language can be difficult to get used to." His posture slumped a bit more, the shoes starting to make him very uncomfortable because he wasn't used to them. L really hated shoes, almost as much as socks, and so he felt a bit awkward and off-balance in them.

"Yeah, no kidding there. Within two years I've had to learn three different languages. It's a bit of a bummer, to tell the truth." He grinned again and then extended his right hand to shake. "I'm James. James Lupin. It's nice to meet you."

"I'm Hideki Ryuga, or vice versa." A couple of curious bystanders glanced hurriedly at L, clearly wanting to see if he actually was the famous person with the same name as they recognised it regardless of the language, but they were disappointed and went back to ignoring the two of them as they waited in line for their sweets.

With a raised eyebrow, James said, "Well, that was odd." The smile appeared again, but didn't reach those green eyes, and L could immediately tell that he was a bit nervous now. This, of course, was understandable, but now that L's own guard was up, he could practically hear James' mind whizzing around in his skull.

"Who was this man? L thought to himself silently. He had a questionable appearance and could've been hiding a weapon. He clearly wasn't a police officer, because he'd be way out of his jurisdiction, and L doubted that he was an agent for another country because he would be wearing a jacket to hide the shoulder holster. It'd be too difficult to pull a gun from his trousers because of that belt and too much of a hassle to reach down to pull one out of the leg. Therefore, he wasn't an officer of the law, because he was clearly unprepared should an attack occur.

But then again, it could've been because he was off duty, but even then, it was illegal in both England and Japan to carry a firearm while not on duty, and no police officer or agent would ever just have a gun on his or her leg. It would've been in a shoulder holster or a back guard or even in
a side case, because it was easier accessible and faster to get to.

L was pretty convinced that he wasn't a foreign mobster, because a member of the British mob in a country like Japan was near suicide. He could've been working alone, like a professional hitter or maybe even just a nutjob with a bad temper, but even that was far-fetched. From L's first glance around the place, there was no one of much importance in the sweet shop besides L himself, and no one even knew that he was L, so that was scratched off, and the usual criminals like thieves didn't laugh and joke around. Also, if a criminal had been shoved like he had been before, he would've been jumpy and trying to keep the weapon concealed.

"I have the same name as a famous musician in this country, so I tend to get a bit of attention for it," L replied in his strange accent; it was the oddest mix between a British, Russian, and Japanese accent, due to his usual employment between the three countries. However, it was more because he had been born in Japan and lived there for almost five years, transferred to an orphanage in Russia for three years after that, and then had spent the remainder of his childhood with Wammy and Roger in Winchester as he had been technically 'adopted' by Wammy when he was eight. Therefore, he was a blend between the three that confused a lot of people and just bewildered the rest.

"Ah, well that makes sense." The line moved forward once again and L was finally next in line to get his order taken, his stomach rumbling at the idea. Absently, he pulled out two green apple suckers and offered one to James, who shrugged and accepted, tentatively unwrapping it and appearing as if he was a bit cautious about eating something from a stranger. It took L practically shoving his own sucker in his mouth for a small fix of sugar, his wide eyes staring a hole in the strawberry shortcake that was displayed on the counter, for his new acquaintance to finally pop the candy in his mouth. For a couple of seconds, they stood in silence, absorbing the sounds and the view of the mountains of sweets behind the counter, before the line moved forward and L nearly pranced his way to the cashier, sighing as he remembered the girl's injuries.

She glanced at him and straightened, smiling brightly as she said in Japanese, "Well, good afternoon, Hideki-sama! It's nice to see you up and about! Do you want the usual?"

L just nodded, his head bobbing up and down in his enthusiasm. She had met him only twice since he had moved to Japan for the Kira investigation, and even though she usually received orders from Wammy, it was sort of hard to forget someone like him. His posture was apparently dreadful, the sunglasses made him look like an insect, and he usually spent more money than most people earned in a week just on sweets. It was pretty much guaranteed that she would remember him regardless of the few times they had met.

With a laugh, the blonde cashier said, "Alright then, your total is...the usual: 22,729 yen." A couple of eavesdroppers looked towards him with gaping mouths at the absurd price, and even James behind him choked a bit on his saliva. After all, most people spent around 2,000 yen, which was definitely reasonable, and so hearing such a large sum of yen was a bit of a shocker.

She gave him a receipt that was a good half a metre long, stating that he had gotten everything on the menu in his usual gigantic servings, including three strawberry cakes and more anpan than one could possibly need in a year.

Yeah right. All of it would be gone in a week.

He stood to the side, dialling his chauffeur so he could get a ride, for Wammy usually had to carry a good four bags after all of the candy and cake was bagged, and was satisfied to hear that he'd be here in ten minutes if the traffic was according. He hung up just as James finished ordering his simple serving of green tea ice cream. His receipt was tiny compared to L's own, and James quickly stepped to L's side as he waited at the pick-up counter for his multitudes of goodies.
"Well, hell, you must be feeding a small army for a month with that type of order," James joked with amusement, and L frowned slightly.

"No. I'm feeding myself. If anyone else was to touch my cake, I would probably lock them in a room with nothing to eat but onigiri for a month." L said it so bluntly that James broke out in laughter, clenching his side with the force of his chuckles. The shorter of the two stared with his thin eyebrows raised, highly confused. Had he said something that amusing? He was only stating the obvious, and he didn't see much to be amused about. It was the truth, because he definitely could get away with it. The Kira Investigation Team was at his disposal, really, considering he was paying them a salary out of his own pocket and keeping them employed when their own government wouldn't do the right thing by attempting to arrest Kira. Besides, it was an unspoken rule that no one but Wammy—and that was only on the most dire of circumstances—was allowed to eat his sweets unless L himself permitted it.

"How in the hell are you so skinny then, hm? Are you a pro-athlete or do you have an unhealthy fascination with plastic surgery?"

L cocked his head, still a bit bewildered by James and his unpredictable reaction. "The brain takes a lot of calories and energy to work properly. I can increase my brain activity by forty per-cent with the sugar I ingest."

James shot back with a grin, "The body needs physical activity and vegetables to keep healthy. You eat all of that and you're going to have a heart attack!" His ice cream was placed on the counter and he picked it up, saying brightly, "They have the best green tea ice cream here. It's not as good as chocolate custard, but it's still worth coming here. I'll see you around." He turned on his heel and walked out in his horribly loose trousers, waving once before disappearing around the corner, leaving L reeling from James mentioning him having a heart attack.

When his driver came and helped get the bags of sweets, L was still telling himself to stop worrying, because the Kira's, even the one who could kill by seeing faces, were in custody, in custody damnit, because both Amane Misa and Yagami Raito were guilty.

But his shaky self-assurances didn't stop the shiver from running down his spine.
One: Appealing

Chapter Notes

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Chapter One
Appealing

1 June 2004

It probably hadn't been smart to mention heart attacks to Hideki Ryuga.

The poor man had seemed struck speechless, which probably had to do with the simple explanation of the two Kira's terrorising Japan. Hell, terrorising the world. Kira was taking the whole globe by storm—or by heart attack, if he wanted to be perfectly frank about it—and so saying a teasing word about a myocardial infarction to anyone across the planet was definitely off-limits. Even more off-limits than going around Wizard London three or four years ago screaming, "The Dark Lord Voldemort is my bitch! Come get some!"

Harry Potter took a spoonful of ice cream from the small paper bowl and plopped it in his mouth, going over the conversation. He had noticed the odd man immediately when coming into the sweet shop for his favourite Japanese ice cream, but then again, he had noticed everyone in the shop as he had to be absolutely aware of everything and everyone around him at all times. After all, after spending a decade battling Voldemort and longer so fighting off Death Eaters, it was bound to make him a paranoid wizard. He had been, and frankly still was, their favourite spell-practise dummy, if he thought about it like that.

Even though the War was over and most of the rogue followers of Voldemort were finally in Azkaban or dead, he couldn't be any less careful. His face was known in every corner of the Wizarding world, and there were bound to be foreign wizards (as in wizards and witches in countries other than Britain) that would love to put his head on a stake just to prove they could. It would prove that they were stronger than the most well-known and famous Dark wizard in the world, and it would go straight to their egos.

So Harry was always on guard, especially now that the whole Kira case was now out in the open. He had been following it because of the immense death toll it was raking up, because if he wasn't mistaken, it had something to do with magic. He had watched that stint on Sakura TV and he had been pretty much convinced that someone with a wand or a natural branch of magic had finally decided to be some sort of god and rid the world of evil. Or something like that.

Harry was quite intrigued by the whole thing even though he kept his head down and his scar hidden as much as possible, along with keeping his name wonderfully fake. He was not completely cut off from the Wizarding world, and so he still got the occasional paper—that was filled with bullshit; now that the War was over, the Daily Prophet had nothing to talk about except the Mysterious Disappearance of the Chosen One—and received regular letters from Ron and Hermione as they lived in London. Therefore, he was absolutely certain there were no suspicious
deaths in the magical world, and both Hermione and himself were now pretty certain that Kira was a wizard living in a Muggle society, or at least some Muggle had come across a Dark object and was using it, now in a way that clearly stated, 'Hey! I can kill people that are criminals! I'm helping the world!', which was pretty egotistical and childish really. Whoever it was was an evil, deserved-to-be-punished, royal idiot. Who were they to play God?

If Hermione and Ron had been here, they all would've probably investigated Kira because it was just their thing. Hermione had mastered Legilimency, and so she would have been able to enter people's minds and extract information from their thoughts and memories where Harry most definitely could not, and she could make both a spot-on Veritaserum and Polyjuice potion, which would come in handy. Ron, while usually incapable of even doing anything remotely intelligent, could cast a mean Disillusion charm, and had a way with people that both Harry and Hermione did not have. And Harry, as reluctant as he liked to admit to even himself, could cast a very successful Imperius curse, and he was so used to sneaking and spying that it was second nature to him now. If anyone could find out whom Kira was, Harry and his two best friends could.

But Hermione was pregnant. Again. With twins. Again. It was Baby Number Five (to be named Angelica) and Baby Number Six (to be named Alexandra). She also had her eldest, Rose, then Hugo, then the two other female twins Loraine and Claudia. Harry felt kind of sorry for the poor Hugo, surrounded by all of that oestrogen and soon to be more oestrogen, but apparently the kid didn't mind. Then again, he was only one, almost two, so it didn't count. One-year-olds loved everyone.

Ron was occupied with being a father and being a Keeper for Quidditch for the Chudley Cannons, as they were training for the upcoming season that was bound to be as fantastic as last year. So they were too busy to do much other than sit at home, have lots of normal food that hadn't been swimming in an ocean an hour ago, and have loads of seemingly hot pregnancy sex, but that was Ron and Hermione talking. Harry definitely did not want to have hot pregnancy sex with anyone, considering he was proudly and so obviously homosexual and guys just didn't have babies, even in a nutty world with magic galore.

Harry had moved to Tokyo exactly nine days before the Second Kira had appeared on Sakura TV on April 18, although everyone had been unaware of that at the time. He had originally come to Japan after he had seen the figure known as L attack Kira on the telly, resulting in the death of Lind L. Taylor, and that in itself was interesting enough to warrant the move. He wasn't planning on getting involved, because while he believed Kira to be wrong, he was getting rid of some downright nasty criminals while he was at it. He had had enough trouble in his lifetime to make him avoid getting mixed in with a police investigation, but that didn't stop him from being fascinated by the case.

He was cautious enough, even without the threat of Kira, to have a fake identity while in Japan. It had been the same in France and Italy, before Kira had started killing off criminals. During the War, he had destroyed any evidence of his existence in Little Whinging, Surrey, to keep the town from being attacked and certain people from being used against him, and so even if someone like Kira wanted Harry dead, it would be near to impossible to get factual information on him. The only people who knew of Harry were witches and wizards, and most of the people in the Wizarding world were nothing but grateful to him for defeating Voldemort back in 2001 (regardless, he was still cautious and wary of being found, so he had taken even greater measures to conceal his existence, which included the alias that he was currently using: James Lupin).

That standing, the only people who currently wanted Harry dead was Death Eaters and Voldemort supporters, and they were dwindling down dramatically with the efforts of Aurors and the English Ministry of Magic under the command of Arthur Weasley, who was practically one of the only members during the Fudge and Scrimgeour reign that was still alive. And if Kira was a
wizard and a supporter of the Allied Wizards of Britain, they sure as hell wouldn't be killing off anyone. A supporter of the AWB was a member of the AWB, and he or she would immediately alert them to tell them of a new spell invented immediately because of the possibility of the Dark wizards using it against them. He or she sure as hell wasn't a Voldemort supporter, because there was no way in Merlin's name that they would kill off only Muggle criminals if he or she had the ability to kill in large numbers like Kira was. They'd be killing Harry off, and the rest of the big names in the AWB, because it was the perfect way of doing so.

Therefore, since he was still alive, he was certain that it wasn't a wizard, although that didn't keep him from hiding himself from the eyes of both the Muggle and the Wizarding world.

Truthfully, Harry was hiding from the press just as much as the Dark wizards. Those bloodsucking bastards were like stink on cheese. Or like a drug addict with a large bundle of syringes and he was the heroin. They stalked him like a bitch in heat, and for fuck's sake, he had to get away from those batshit nutjobs even if it killed him in the process.

So on 7 August 2002, Harry Potter had left the United Kingdom to live as a wayward Muggle traveller named Sirius Evans to the country of Italy, where he quickly adapted to the language while journeying across the country. He hadn't known exactly what he was looking for; his goal had been to just disappear so no one could find him, but he had a feeling that he was looking for something in his life that was bigger than that. In the end, he had eaten some great food, seen sights that took his breath away, and had a fling with a dark headed Italian that had been ridiculously fun while it had lasted. His stay in Italy extended for a year, four months, and ten days before the damned reporters had caught wind of him and had flocked the city he had been living in like flies on rotting meat.

This had happened about three weeks after the Kira case had began, and on 17 December 2003, he had uprooted himself to France, again learning the new language and eating some great food and getting into two brief sexual relationships, one steamier than the other. Under the alias of Remus Black, he had visited museums and had been swayed by the beautiful landscapes and the charming towns that dotted the countryside, and had been flattered and wooed by the music and the art that enriched the country. But this lasted for a mere four months, probably due to the fact that he was quite close to England, and he had been hard-pressed to get out of there as quickly as possibly before he was surrounded by the press and couldn't get away successfully.

On 8 April 2004, he had left France, and by the 9th, he was in a small flat in Tokyo, Japan, trying his first bite of raw fish as he walked the seaside docks in curiosity. He had been pretty grossed out by most of it, because those sushi vendors freakin' plucked the sea creatures alive from the ocean and then cut them up right in front of him, ready to serve, and it was just a bit too much to handle. Since being in Japan, he had eaten plenty of fried and sweet foods, along with the always available ramen, which had probably saved his life because it was somewhat normal and wouldn't give him some natural-born illness from eating raw fish.

He had been in Japan now for almost two months, and had been living a unique experience. Mostly it consisted of walking aimlessly around Tokyo in search of places that he had deemed edible to eat (Harry was a pretty picky eater, as he only ate what he wanted and felt like eating; living as long as he did with practically nothing but stale bread and wild plants for as long as he had was enough to make it okay to be a picky eater, because he had fucking earned it), finding interesting places to examine and explore, and watching the Kira case develop. For the first time, he wasn't hitting any clubs or having heated affairs with straight married men (like one of the wildly passionate men from France had been), but was instead shadowing people if they looked suspicious, reading books and magazine articles, watching the news with fervour. It was completely the opposite of what he was used to doing since going under the radar in the Wizarding world.
What he was interested in this country was the dreaded curiosity that had caused so many problems during his six years at Hogwarts. His curiosity had nearly gotten him killed on more occasions during his Wizarding experience than he dared to count, and so meddling in something like this was definitely going to turn out to be more trouble than it was worth. Just thinking about it, however, was enough to get his adrenalin pumping, and he knew deep in his gut that he was going to get to the bottom of it.

Life, to tell the absolute truth to himself, had gotten boring without the constant rush to find the bad guy. He hadn't liked losing people in the War, good people with lives and families and friends and a whole existence ahead of them, but the rush of it, in the heat of a confrontation, the thrill of the chase...it made it all worth it when he didn't have to think about the people around him dying. With Voldemort, he had chased the Horcruxes all across four different countries, had battled the man dozens of times, and had fought and killed. Most of his friends had died, most of the people that he considered his family had died, and that had nearly destroyed him, knowing that he could never get those loved ones back.

But the Kira case was different. It was fascinating, clearly out of the league of Muggles (although L was a damn good piece of competition for Kira), and wasn't causing the death of people he loved. If he meddled, he could very well end up having a random, unexplained heart attack just the same as the other hundreds that had died, but none of his loved ones were dying and Harry had never really had a sense of self-preservation. He liked action, confrontation, battles, and something like the Kira case, where his name and face could be camouflaged by something as simple as a Polyjuice Potion and a couple of well-spoken lies, he could be without fear that people in England that he was close to were going to perish in the fight. There was no documentation of his existence in the Muggle world, so he was practically a walking ghost, and he was so well protected by charms and public opinion that he wouldn't have anything to worry about in the Wizarding world.

Besides, wizards and witches could stop a heart attack in its tracks with just a spell, albeit a difficult spell, but it could be done. Witches and wizards were used to cheating Death. It was part of the magical job description.

He finished his ice cream and threw the empty bowl in a nearby bin, licking his lips and forcing himself to stop thinking about the Kira Investigation. He was interested, yes, and he thought that L bloke was a ballsy motherfucker, that was for sure, but he didn't want to get involved with the police. He didn't have any experience in Muggle law, much less Japanese Muggle law, and they probably wouldn't let him contact someone like L anyway, considering that it was rumoured that the National Police Agency had lost most of the forces investigating Kira because they were afraid of being murdered for trying to stop him.

He walked down the streets, still on the outskirts of Tokyo where the traffic was much thinner, and thought about that weird encounter at the sweet shop. He had noticed everyone in there immediately, and obviously the man named Hideki Ryuga had stuck out like a sore thumb. Sure, there were other people in there that looked a bit questionable, but Ryuga had been the top pick of suspicious characters in the place.

From behind, he could only make out that the man was tall, thin as a nail, had spidery fingers, didn't wear socks, and had the worst posture in mankind. His body was in a perpetual slump, almost like an L upside down. He had light, threadbare blue jean trousers and a white long sleeved shirt on that was very baggy on his skinny frame. His white tennis shoes were loose, the shoestrings untied and trailing over the floor, and through the flap in the top, Harry could see his bare feet. He definitely was a strange-looking one from the back.

But that didn't compare to what his front end looked like. That little hustle of teen-agers behind
him had pushed the entire line, and he had went flying forward despite his reflexes, but he had been stopped by a spidery hand and he had finally taken as much of a view as he could.

The man had jet black hair not unlike Harry's own, but it hung in his eyes whereas Harry brushed his own back to keep it out of his eyes. Well, in his glasses and Ryuga's sunglasses anyway. The shorter of the two had sunglasses that were huge and completely black, hiding his eyes effectively, but Harry could see the beginnings of dark bags under them, clearly stating that he was suffering from insomnia and probably had been for a while. His skin was not the same yellowish-brown colour that the native Japanese had, instead a pigmentation that didn't allude to being born in Japan at all. His skin was pale white that looked as if he hadn't seen the sun in ages, with a pallor to it that most of the people anywhere did not have unless they had been locked up in a dark, wet basement for most of his or her life. It was actually in a way sort of beautiful, very tight and youthful with no blemishes and glittering like snow in the fluorescent light of the shop. His face was narrow, as thin as he was, with a sharp chin and a v-shaped jawbone. His lips were not too thin but not very full either, and he had no shadow of facial hair, almost like he just didn't grow any at all. Whenever he had spoken, he had shown his teeth, which had been almost too white. He had slightly elongated canines that were slightly crooked, twisted a bit over their respective lateral incisors identically. And his voice was a clear indication of Ryuga's own English background, but he had the slight chop of the Japanese language in a few of his words and even the lack of an accent in some words as well. It was the strangest combination that he had heard before other than this one bloke that had been speaking French with a German accent. That had been weird, but Ryuga came in a close second, mostly because his voice was just kind of...eerie.

But regardless, he was actually good-looking in an unconventional way, and very, very mysterious, although that didn't get in Harry's way of being suspicious. He was naturally suspicious. It was ingrained in him, really.

All those sweets though! There was no way in hell that Hideki Ryuga, the skinny little fuck that he was, could go through that many sweets in a short period of time. Even Harry himself, who was pretty well-off due to his fast metabolism, would gain a million pounds even if he ate healthy, balanced meals three times a day—although Harry was used to about five, six meals a day, strange raw food and all. That much sugar really would cause Ryuga to have a heart attack if he wasn't careful.

Maybe it would've been better to not speak to the man in the first place. That was Harry's favourite place in the entire city, and he went every single day it was open at practically the exact same time, mostly for the ice cream. He should've just went back to watching him cautiously out of the corner of his eyes, without saying anything and sure as hell not exclaiming rather childishly that he was thrilled he spoke English.

And how had he known that Harry was an English speaker? Harry had picked up on the language fair enough, with the aid of magic, and had been here long enough to adapt to some of the accents that coursed through everyday Japanese speech. He was sure as hell darker than Ryuga was, that was for sure, so his green eyes and lack of tilted eyes was the only off-set thing about him. But English? That didn't make any sense. How had he determined, even if only seeing him for a few brief seconds and hearing him speak two words in Japanese, that Harry was an English speaker? He very well could've been a German-, a French-, or a fucking Arabic-speaker for all that skinny man knew. Hell, he could've been Japanese by adoption or something and had grown up here all of his life, for God's sake!

Was Hideki Ryuga proficient in Legilimency? Was he from the Wizarding world and had recognised him from the first moment? Was he a freaky stalker and had seen him speaking to someone in English? Or was he just that observant?
Somehow, Harry knew it was the last one, but he didn't let himself really think about it. He couldn't afford to think about some chance encounter with a total stranger. It would've been better if he hadn't spoken to Ryuga, but the damage was done and there was nothing that could be done about it. He had already carried a conversation with him, and as he didn't have a Time Turner nor could he get one in the near future, Harry just had to get over it. The past was the past.

And besides...in a city with fifteen million people in it, he probably wasn't going to meet Ryuga again.

Which sort of was a shame. It had been fun joking around with someone in his own language for once. Oh, and yes, even with the funny sunglasses and the lack of socks and the ridiculously horrible posture and his frail-appearing body, he was still kind of...not handsome or sexy, but appealing. And almost dangerous in a way; as soon as Harry conversed with him, he had felt that he was a force to be reckoned with, someone that didn't take shit from people because he dealt out the shit himself.

Harry had actually liked the shorter man. He had been a good laugh with all of his weirdness, and Harry hadn't laughed since arriving in Japan.

Well, except for when he went to the shopping markets at the docks the first day he had been in the country. Harry had advanced on the first stall he had seen with sushi and said in choppy Japanese, "Give me the best thing you've got, sir!"

The vendor had promptly turned to the ocean that was a metre away, pulled up on a string, and revealed a net with lots of squirming things in it. He had then plopped the net back in, then started immediately chopping the fish-squid-snake thing into pieces and pushing them on a stick, dipping it into a sauce and then putting a hand out for his money.

And being naïve as he was, he had shrugged, fought off the gag reflex—"Holy fucking shit, this was alive twenty seconds ago!"—with a laugh that said 'Hey, this is no big deal!', and took a gigantic bite after paying the man an absurd amount of yen.

Not even a second later he was losing every meal he had consumed in the past week. It was his worst moment in this country, and one that he didn't like to recall.

Mind, he definitely did not eat sushi after that.

He finally reached the building where the flat he had rented out was located. He walked in the double glass doors, giving a wave to the chap behind the counter, and then began walking up the stairs. He was on the seventh floor, but he didn't much care for elevators. There were too many bad things that happened in elevators, and from past experiences, Harry never used them because he knew that one day an elevator would be the death of him.

When he finally reached his flat, he had to shuffle in his pockets to find his keys, bypassing a bunch of shredded pieces of parchment and a few quills, conveniently ignoring the dungbombs and other assorted Weasley's Wizard Wheezes products that were mostly for diversions and escaping tight situations if the need ever arose. After a long bit, he finally found the ring of keys, sadly smiling a bit when he remembered a happy memory of Hagrid pulling out many assorted items out of his own pockets just to find Harry's Gringotts key.

He opened the door, walking in somewhat awkwardly as he tried to shut the door while attempting to pull the key out of said door. There was a bit of a trick to it, because the key always stuck in the doorknob when it was unlocked, even though the place wasn't exactly part of the slums. It was a nice place, not exactly a twenty-four room mansion, but fine in his own opinion.
Barely looking around, he took off his shoulder bag and threw it on the floor at the entrance with a loud bang, immediately going into the living area and sitting on one of the blue couches. Pulling up his right leg, he fished underneath the denim trouser leg and pulled out his folded up and shrunken Firebolt 2000, placing it on the couch beside him. He proceeded to switch legs and pull out the shrunken bag of potions and bezoars from the skin above his ankle, because he could never be without his arsenal of evasion objects and magical alchemy products. He had made that mistake in the beginning of the War and had lost some people because of it.

From underneath his right sleeve, he let a little burst of magic seep through his arm and his wand popped out immediately in his hand. It was a handy little thing, having a gadget that would let his wand be accessed in mere seconds, and he considered it one of the best investments that he had gone for. It was better than shoving the wand in a pocket and risk it breaking at the worst possible time.

He took off his belt and undid the transfiguration that he had placed on it, watching as it turned into his Invisibility Cloak right before his eyes. He laid it next to his broomstick and stood up, smirking when his jeans promptly fell down his narrow hips and pooled at his feet.

Baggy trousers were part of his life. He had gotten used to them, because frankly he just couldn't transfigure worth a shit except for certain things—he had a knack for turning his Invisibility Cloak into a belt, his glasses into a really bad Britney Spears CD, and his shoes into rubber gloves that flashed different colours—and he needed a place to put all of his equipment. He was decent at shrinking objects, but he had a tendency to shrink objects that were too small into non-existence and so he could only risk shrinking very large objects like his broomstick and his trunk, which was in his pocket as well just in case he needed to make a quick getaway.

His broomstick was too large even for his pockets, so he had it fastened to his right leg for quick, although sometimes awkward, access. The potions had been put into the purse Hermione had carried kept the books and potions during Harry's would've-been seventh year at Hogwarts, as they had hunted for the Horcruxes. But the purse had been too big for his pockets, too small to shrink, and he couldn't very well visibly carry around a lacy, sparkly blue handbag around because while homosexual, he definitely wasn't going that far.

Harry quite liked being a man who loved sports and having a dick below his waist, thank you very much, so he wasn't planning on carrying such a feminine purse like a woman any time soon.

He walked to his bedroom after picking up the ridiculously baggy trousers off the floor, throwing the jeans in a heap at the foot of his bed and opening his drawers until he found his favourite pair of pyjama bottoms. A house elf had made the bottoms on 28 March 2000, the day that the Battle of London had started (for the first time, at least) and people that he loved had died, including the leader of the Order of the Phoenix and the Allied Wizards of Britain and one of the best witches in the history of the world, namely one Minerva McGonagall.

He paused while putting on the bottoms, his stomach clenching at the thought. The subject of the War and all of the people lost, the battles fought, the blood shed...it made him sick, so fucking sick. The amusement and feeling of well-being at the strange encounter from the oddly appealing man disappeared, leaving the curling and acidic sensation in his stomach and his heart. For a long moment, he just stood there, one leg in his pyjamas and the other still raised in preparation to follow suit, one hand on his dresser for balance. He took deep breaths, trying to speed up his sluggish heart to remind himself that he was alive, that he was still there, existing when so many people had died to ensure that very fact.

Almost as if he was moving through something thick and murky, he finished dressing himself without thinking much about the process and dragged his way to the bed, not exactly tired but having a distant urge to just lay down and process. He sat on the black sheet and spread himself
out upon it, taking up as much space as possible and let his body sink into the mattress, the tension leaving his powerful shoulders and his broad back into the cool bedding below.

His emerald green eyes stared unseeingly at the ceiling, almost as if his horrible eyesight had extended even into the prescription lenses of his glasses, so he took them off, throwing them on the end table and rubbing the bridge of his nose. For a long second, he just stared and breathed, before falling into a fitful sleep full of screams and bloodshed.
Chapter Two


Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ronald Weasley, dubbed the Golden Trio by most, had broken out of Gringotts on a dragon just the day before, the fourth Horcrux in hand. They had nothing to destroy it with, so when they journeyed through Ariana Dumbledore's portrait to the Room of Requirement on their way to the battle, one of the most pressing orders of business was to find something to destroy it.

They used basilisk fangs to destroy Hufflepuff's cup, and while the battle was raging, Ravenclaw's diadem was burned in the Fiendfyre, leaving only two Horcruxes remaining. This number, however, quickly was reduced to zero, by Harry's death and Neville Longbottom's brave manoeuvre with Gryffindor's sword across the head of Nagini.

This is where it begins to get strange.

The man known as Lord Voldemort saw Harry disappear underneath the Invisibility Cloak, and aware that every Horcrux was destroyed, saw that if he stayed, he would likely be murdered. Therefore, instead of staying and potentially ending his life—permanently this time—he fled, with his loyal supporter Bellatrix Lestrange on his heels.

Fred Weasley, Colin Creevey, Remus Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, and Severus Snape were killed, among many others, leaving family and friends thirsty for revenge, and with the Battle of Hogwarts finally at a close after hours of fighting, the Great Wizarding War began.

On 4 June, the Allied Wizards of Britain was formed, with Minerva McGonagall at its head, and the planning began, Harry Potter the centre of the alliance. Thousands of people spanning over England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland joined the AWB, ready to fight, and even perhaps die, for the terror of Voldemort's reign to end.

The period of gathering wizards and witches on both sides was held until 15 December, six months of a shaky peace, before it abruptly ended, the AWB making a dramatic grasp to reclaim the Ministry of Magic from Voldemort's forces. It was very successful, as Voldemort and his more powerful supporters did not fight, and the AWB retook the Ministry, placing Kingsley Shacklebolt in the seat of the Minister.

However, this winning streak for the side of the Light ended, on 9 January 1999, when Voldemort's supporters captured Neville Longbottom and Ginny Weasley for information on Harry's whereabouts and intelligence on the AWB. Both of them refused to relate any information
in regards of the alliance, so on 11 January, Neville was murdered by beheading (barbaric, but meant to serve a higher purpose), Ginny following him on 12 January. On 13 January, their heads were sent to the telephone booth at the head entrance of the Ministry of Magic, leading to anger and fear spreading into the ranks of the AWB.

On 31 January, Voldemort made his first move, attacking Diagon Alley and leading his forces to take over the cornerstone of Wizarding London. With this, Molly Weasley, Percy Weasley, Lucius Malfoy, and Dean Thomas were killed, and Harry ordered the retreat, Voldemort emerging victorious and taking all of Southern London under his control.

After his victory, Voldemort and his army immediately began the fight to take over the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. First, he moved on Wales, resulting in the Battle of Swansea, the Muggle city where the fight took place on 19 February. Thirty wizards died, including Fleur Weasley-Delacour, Seamus Finnigan, and Charlie Weasley, along with over five hundred Muggles, and Voldemort effectively took over the Principality of Wales. He then moved towards Scotland, where many small battles for the country took place, and took control there as well.

On 2 June, the second battle of Diagon Alley began, resulting in the deaths of Dennis Creevey, Rubeus Hagrid, Aberforth Dumbledore, and Narcissa Malfoy. However, instead of defeat, the AWB celebrated their first victory in five months at the horrible price of losing comrades and began devising a new plan to take back the countries that they had lost.

On 9 September, the AWB began the first surge for Wales, leading to two months of endless fighting. It resulted in massive memory modification units to Obliviate Muggles, hundreds of deaths including Oliver Wood and Cho Chang, and widespread destruction spanning two countries. It all paid off for the AWB in the end, however, as on 18 November, the Allied Wizards of Britain regained control over the entirety of Wales.

After a month of rest, the AWB began the surge for Scotland, but it was stalled after Kingsley Shacklebolt was captured by Voldemort's supporters. As a major member of the AWB and a close friend of Harry himself, Shacklebolt was tortured mercilessly for information about Harry Potter's whereabouts. Despite the AWB's efforts to discover where the Minister was being held, he was murdered on 1 January 2000 after giving no information, and his body was found two days later by Harry and Hermione in pieces. Arthur Weasley, as one of the last original Ministry members still alive since the War had begun, was announced as the new Minister on 5 January and put under AWB protection.

After the hit on morale due to Shacklebolt's death, the surge on Scotland failed. On 17 February, Voldemort and his supporters threw the AWB out of the country and began pushing their way to take over Britain. The small battles spanned over the entire country, spread few and far between, until a huge mass of Death Eaters reached the outskirts of London, set on taking over the capital and the capital city for the AWB under their oppressing thumb.

The Battle of London, the second largest battle in the history of the War, began on 28 March 2000, and spanned over a period of four days with no cease to the fighting. Seven million people in Muggle London felt the darkness surround them, and roughly two thousand died in the crossfire. Electricity, plumbing, and satellite connections were rendered useless due to the magical interference and the memory modifications spanned in the tens of millions over the course of the battle. Furthermore, more than a thousand wizards and witches died on both sides. On the 28th, Gabrielle Delacour and Xenophilius Lovegood perished. On the 29th, George Weasley followed.

And on the 31st, Minerva McGonagall, head of the Allied Wizards of Britain and one of the three most powerful witches in centuries, was killed in a heroic battle, where she died saving Harry
Potter's life from a Killing Curse released by Lord Voldemort. With her death, the Battle of London ended, resulting in the retreat of the AWB—where Harry had been forced to retreat by Hermione and Ron—and the victory of Voldemort and his supporters. With her death, England was officially occupied by Death Eaters and the Dark Lord himself.

On 4 April, at nineteen-years-old, Harry Potter was named the new head of the AWB, and the turning point of the War began.

By the 14th of April, Harry had led hundreds of raids on multiple suspected Death Eater hideouts, a strategy that McGonagall had refused to take as it would likely cost much needed lives, and on the 15th, the AWB had taken control over every inch of land in England except London itself. Also against McGonagall's initial approach to handling the War, on 30 June, Harry appealed to neighbouring countries in a plea for aid, mainly Germany and France. Immediately, France entered as an active country in the War, out of obligation to French citizens and numerous others, including Gabrielle Delacour and Fleur Weasley-Delacour, both from prominent French families.

However, it was on Harry's twentieth birthday when the tables turned in favour of the Allied Wizards of Britain.

Draco Malfoy, who had been working with Lord Voldemort after the Battle of Hogwarts against his wishes, finally defected successfully from the Death Eater forces by faking his death and fled to Oxford, where the AWB had temporarily placed as headquarters. He was nearly killed, but was saved by Hermione, who took him for major memory stripping. Willingly, he allowed his memories and mind to be thoroughly searched, giving them useful information and many of the battle plans that he had heard first-hand from Lord Voldemort himself, and then was thrown into prison. With this new information, the AWB had an advantage, which they used in full.

On 2 November, most of the Death Eaters stationed in London moved to attempt to take over the upper part of England, in an attempt to take over Oxford and uproot the AWB yet again. However, with Draco Malfoy's information, the AWB took advantage of this lax of Voldemort's supporters in Britain. On 3 November, mere hours after Bulgaria allied with Voldemort's cause, multiple battles were fought on the riverside of the Thames in Muggle London. Draco Malfoy, at this time, had broken out of his cell due to the majority of wizards fighting instead of guarding his prison, and participated as a supporter of the AWB. Single-handedly, he brought down Fenir Greyback and Bellatrix Lestrange, two of Voldemort's strongest supporters, and saved Hermione from a Killing Curse by pushing her out of the way.

With Draco Malfoy's help in the battle plans of Lord Voldemort, and Harry Potter independently killing Antonin Dolohov plus Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestrange, the AWB took control over Southern London, including the Ministry of Magic, which was a crucial point to winning the War. However, Ron Weasley was greatly injured and was put into hiding in France, Hermione following her fiancé, leaving Harry alone with the task of dealing with Draco Malfoy. On parting words, Hermione said to the once-enemy of the AWB, "An eye for an eye, Malfoy, so I suppose we're even." Then turning to Harry, she mentioned, "Don't be too hard on him. We'd probably be dead if it wasn't for his sneaky little brain."

On 26 November 2000, Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy began a relationship in secret, composed of mostly passion and lust, but would quickly turn into love.

The last year of the War was the most defining, proving Harry's heroism and Draco's loyalty, along with hope and determination conquering all despite of years of bloodshed and death despite the country of origin.

Numerous battles took place, resulting in hundreds of deaths of wizards and Muggles in twelve
European countries that had been overshadowed by the War. The countries that had allied themselves with the AWB were Ireland, most of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Austria. The countries that sympathised and joined Voldemort were Spain, Bulgaria, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, and the Netherlands. It was solely European, with no other countries wishing to be caught in the effects of the War, and the entirety of it was centred around Southern England and London, where the leaders of both sides were stationed a mere couple of thousand kilometres away from each other.

Multiple confrontations resulted in thousands of deaths in all of Europe, and on top of that, the AWB was performing mass memory modifications and coming up with elaborate cover stories concerning the widespread death of Muggles. A special task force was created on 23 June, immediately following Ron and Hermione's return to the ranks, with Hermione at its head (although she stayed under immense protection and out of battles, due to an accidental pregnancy in May of 2000). It was in charge of hiding the War as much as possible from the Muggles, including the Muggles that had been directly affiliated with the battles. It was called the biggest cover-up in Wizarding history, due to the transfiguration of dead bodies, the allegations to the Muggle government about virus outbreaks, and the memory modifications to the Muggles still alive after the end.

In response, the Death Eaters ordered raids in London on 14 August, leading to the mass genocide of all non-magical humans. The city was quarantined from all outside forces, and the AWB began evacuating Muggles from the city and the villages surrounding at the threat of an epidemic spreading. By 1 September, most of the Muggles living in or around London had been taken to France, the battles increasing ten-fold with much more severity and brutality on both sides, and by 1 October, almost half of the opposing forces had been either killed or captured.

However, very suddenly, an anonymous cease-fire was called on both sides, and every single attack and fight in Europe ended simultaneously. All wizards able to fight, from every country involved in the War, immediately headed for London, Voldemort on the North of the Thames and the AWB on the South. It was the preparation before the final confrontation, the calm before the storm, for both parties knew in their gut that the end was to come soon, although which way it would go was still a mystery.

And on 31 October 2001, the greatest single battle of all mankind, Wizarding and Muggle alike, took place in the streets of London, England, beginning at exactly 12:00 in the morning.

The clash between both armies was momentous and like nothing ever seen before. There was no mercy, no hesitation, and no second thoughts; instead, the city of London was illuminated with the light of a thousand spells firing at once, filled with screams of the dying and the vengeful and the determined, surrounded by the scent of burning flesh and filthy, savage beasts. Bodies of both sides littered the streets. Buildings that hadn't been protected by spells before the fight began exploded into dust and burned into ash. Trees and parks were destroyed from the stomp of giants. Vehicles were thrown like rag dolls into anything and everything remotely possible. And even the deceased bodies were used as shields and distractions and bait and whatever they could be used for. Blood and fire reigned supreme in London that day, seemingly endless and full of destruction.

Among the deaths: Viktor Krum, Bill Weasley, Luna Lovegood, and Draco Malfoy, all in the protection of hope and justice and peace, in battles that would be remembered for the rest of time.

And at the end of the day, to a blazing scarlet sunset, Lord Voldemort fell, by the hand of Harry Potter at last.

3 June 2004
It was two days later when Harry decided to go back to the candy shop.

Even the possibility of running into Hideki Ryuga was not enough to keep him away from that delicious green tea ice cream, and so he geared himself up and began the mild walk to the colourful business downtown. He had waited a day, just to be sure, because he knew that making friends with someone in the Kantō region of Japan wasn't the smartest idea in the world. For all he knew, he could be talking to Kira, and while the case was interesting, he really didn't need to get involved. He knew that there was only a small chance that Ryuga was Kira, or even directly related to the case at all, but it still made him nervous.

In the back of his mind, however, his thoughts were betraying him, and a small part of his brain was hoping that the strange man would show up again. He still wasn't sure what he would do if it did happen, if he would run off like he had last time or stay and talk, maybe even sit down with the man and have a conversation...but he'd work on that if it came to it. After all, the man might've been freaked out by the heart attack statement and would now avoid the place, or avoid him entirely. It was a scary time to speak about myocardial infarction-related deaths, and joking around about it was not making it any easier to have intelligent conversations with people without chasing them off.

Knowing how frightened some of the people in Japan were, there was a small chance that the odd man would go to the police and rat on him. Thankfully, he had used an alias, and why have a wand if he wasn't proficient in using it, anyway? Besides...he had only stated the obvious. If Hideki Ryuga wasn't careful he would be dead from a heart attack regardless of the man being as thin as a twig.

The heart was definitely a funny thing...and it was also a traitorous organ to boot.

So the walk to Sato-Mari, grey and gloomy and humid as hell, was long and laborious. June in Japan was a nightmare for someone from the United Kingdom. It was the same visually, with the drab skies and the umbrellas handy just in case, but God, was it humid! It felt like he was being hit by a wall of water every time he left his flat for even a few seconds. He likened it to being hit by a sticky-wet cloud that he couldn't see, which was very different from the wet-but-cold weather from his native land. The wonders of living on an island closer to the equator...

He was dressed in his same baggy jeans, just threatening to fall off his frame if it wasn't for the transfigured Invisibility Cloak holding them up. However, today he was in a yellow t-shirt, his wand being stashed in his bag, thankfully empty except for a single book, a cell phone, and some money. After all, it was just too damn humid outside to even possibly consider wearing a long sleeved t-shirt in this weather. And anyone who did really needed a reality check.

The sweet shop was in full swing by the time Harry finally walked through the door. As he began digging in his bag for his customary Muggle wallet, his mind on that green tea ice cream, Harry saw him.

This time, he was leaving the shop, digging in one of the massive, white paper bags with attached drawstrings. Harry couldn't help but smirk when he noticed that he was wearing a long sleeved shirt, the same colour and make as last time, as well as similar-looking jeans and the same beaten sneakers with no socks. All in all, he looked exactly the same, except for the hem in the trousers was different and his hair was a bit wet and hanging heavily in his eyes. However, the sunglasses were gone, probably because of the lack of sunlight today, and his eyes caught Harry off-guard. They were large and charcoal with huge pupils, framed in dark eyelashes and dark bags. He was definitely a chronic insomniac, but that wasn't what grabbed Harry's attention. It was how guarded they were, devoid of emotion due to the heavy shield he had put over himself. In all actuality, it reminded Harry of the eyes of the AWB, after losing so many friends and family, because the
same dead and haunted look was identical to what he was used to seeing in the Wizarding world. And instead of putting Harry on his guard, it just made him curious beyond belief, and he watched as Ryuga unknowingly came closer towards him, eyes in the bag.

The shorter man pulled a truffle out of the bag with two fingers, almost as if it had germs, and plopped it in his mouth with a contented look on his face. Still walking this way, he dug in his pocket, taking out a cell phone in the same bizarre fashion and flipping it open, preparing to dial some numbers. However, he looked up and stopped dead in his tracks, his dark eyes getting impossibly wide.

For a couple of moments, they just stared at each other, emerald into charcoal, and then Harry smiled and said in English, "Well, hello Ryuga-san. Nice to see that you're carrying four bags of sweets only two days later."

Ryuga hesitated, and then said in the same language, "Well, I ran out of strawberry cake."

Harry snorted, moving out of the way for another customer, and then replied, "That is a horrible occurrence indeed. God forbid you run out of cake when you just bought three of the same cakes two days ago. Are you sure you're not being robbed by someone who really likes strawberry cake?"

Again, Ryuga hesitated, then slumped even lower and said gloomily, "You might be right. I will need to find a place to stash them so Matsuda can't sneak the few and occasional piece when I'm not looking."

"I hope this is not a desperate attempt to get me to share my sweets with you," Ryuga immediately countered, eyes narrowing a bit. His posture went a bit rigid, as if his very existence was being threatened by the mere thought of giving up with sweets.

Harry chuckled, shaking his head bewilderedly and beginning to walk up towards the counter. "Yeah, you're a lost cause," he mumbled with a grin as he passed his new acquaintance, easily taller in the face of Ryuga's horrid posture.

To his pleasure, the dark eyed man followed him, shifting the bags on his arms before shuffling forward, replying, "In this case, yes. But I will buy you ice cream to show that I am up for compromise."

"Up for compromise? Don't flatter yourself, my friend; it's not compromise, it's denial, and don't deny that either."

Ryuga was silent for a couple of moments, digging in his bag yet again before delicately holding another truffle and quickly putting it in his mouth. He chewed, his expression thoughtful, and then he swallowed and said, "I need tea."

The words were so sudden that Harry laughed out loud, covering his mouth to stifle the sound. His green eyes focussed on Ryuga, who looked confused at the sudden burst of amusement, so Harry forced himself to contain his mirth and fought down the grin.

He stepped up to the cashier, the girl who worked mornings behind the register, and said in Japanese, "Good morning, Tanaka-san. It's nice to see you again." Ryuga returned his attention to
his cell phone, holding it in his bizarre fashion and making a quick and nearly silent conversation, of which Harry ignored respectfully.

He focussed his attention on the cashier, who grinned and said with a flutter of her eyelashes, "Good morning, Lupin-san. Same goes to you. Do you want the same as usual?" At Harry's nod, she started charging up the cost of the ice cream and continued, "So I was just wondering...do you wanted to go see a movie at the theatre tonight?"

"Sorry, but you know you're not my type."

"Yeah, I know I'm not manly enough for you. But you can't blame a girl for trying." She giggled a bit and then grabbed his forearm, biting her lip. "Is Ryuga-san your boyfriend?"

Behind Harry, said man was silent, finished with his call, while the wizard rolled his eyes good-naturedly. "No, Tanaka-san. I just met him actually, but we're just friends." Harry glanced at Ryuga out of the corner of his eyes and shrugged, in which Ryuga just ate another piece of chocolate in reply.

It took a couple of moments of small talk with the blonde haired cashier before the rest of the line started grumbling, so Harry paid his cost and accepted his receipt after refusing to acknowledge the wad of yen that was being waved in front of his face by Hideki Ryuga. After huffing a bit, he moved to the side and asked his new friend in his native tongue, "So what do you have in there, hm?"

Ryuga looked up at the ceiling with a thumb to his lip in apparent thought. "Well..." he dragged out, cocking his head, "I got only two cakes this time, but I got a dozen anpan and about two dozen truffles and five sticks of dango, a few dozen chocolate chip cookies, some hard butterscotch—"

"Okay!" Harry exclaimed, shaking his head and accepting his ice cream. "I get the picture...a shitload of sugar. You are one crazy bloke, you know that? I mean honestly, that's just too much. I think I'm getting sick just thinking about it!"

They began walking to one of the few open tables in the shop, a three-seater in the back corner of the floor near the loo. Harry sat down with a grateful sigh just as Ryuga said, "Sugar increases your brain function by roughly forty per-cent, actually. It's a necessary tool for maximum brain power."

For a minute, Harry wished that he had practised Legilimency with Hermione when he had had the chance. He had an itch to just look to see what the man was thinking, how he thought with that much sugar in his bloodstream. He vaguely wondered what he would be like either angry or panicked, and made a mental note to try to push his buttons to see his potential reactions.

However, his train of thought was lost when Ryuga sat his bags either on the table or the empty chair, sat down, taking off his shoes first, and then crouching down on the chair, almost like he was in a foetal position upright. It honestly was one of the oddest things he had ever seen from a Muggle, which was really saying something. He looked like a skinny-as-a-twig frog ready to pounce on a fly to eat, or in this case, cake. After all, he was gingerly picking up the cake box with three fingers on each hand, the other four up as if he was an aristocrat or something.

So, naturally, Harry smacked his forehead on the table, rattling the bowl of ice cream and the plastic spoon along with it.

His voice slightly muffled due to his head being on the table, he asked, "Are you just that eccentric or are you high off the cane? Because if you're either, you might want to consult a
specialist. You know, they've actually proved that sugar is bad for you in large doses, with all the
diseases and disorders and obesity. I mean, look at America...” He glanced up, his glasses slightly
crooked on his nose, and then nearly choked.

Ryuga was paused in mid-lick, his index finger covered in white icing, eyes wide and blank. He
said something, full and pale lips moving slowly around the finger that was now in his mouth, but
for the life of him, Harry just couldn't concentrate on the words. How could he, when that long,
slender digit was being licked clean of white icing by an agile tongue? Especially when he pulled
on his bottom lip, his eyes rolling up to the ceiling as he spoke, because Harry was fascinated just
by staring at it...

”—upin-san?”

Harry jumped in his seat, accidentally kicking his bag under the table and hearing a loud crunch.
His emerald eyes widened and his stomach turned at the sound, and without thinking, he
practically dived under the table and searched his bag, thankfully finding his holly and phoenix
wand relatively unharmed.

His cell phone, on the other hand, was broken into three pieces.

Harry groaned quite loudly at the sight of it, and at Ryuga's "hmm, what is it?" he bypassed his
wand and pulled out the phone, almost as delicately as Ryuga with his sweets.

He dropped it on the table and complained, "Well, dammit. I swear, I drop this goddamn thing at
least twice a week, but I kick it and it breaks. This is just ridiculous. It's in pieces..." Harry rubbed
his temple with the knuckle of his thumb while Ryuga poked uselessly at the dead, busted
Sidekick.

"Looks like you're going to have to get a new one, then. Although I do find that computers are
more trustworthy and capable than cellular devices. They are so easily broken and traced."

That caught Harry's attention. "Traced, hm? And who exactly would be tracing you? I'm sure as
hell no one would be tracing me, so...logically...I'm pointing my finger at you." To emphasise his
point, Harry directed his index finger at Ryuga's hunched form, letting a ghost of a smile grace his
features. He wasn't saying it just to be sarcastic, because it was a logical question. He was very
curious about what the comment meant, although it most likely indicated that Ryuga watched a lot
of movies with plots containing cell phone traces, so he blinked, waiting for the answer.

For a very long minute, the two just stared at each other, a battle of wills being fought with a
simple gaze. But even so, Ryuga said, leaning forwards almost too close and muttered, "Actually,
I was merely stating an obvious flaw in modern communication. Cell phones are quickly tracked
and located. Computers are a safer, more reliable alternative to those abominations of the twenty-
first century."

Harry smiled, still refusing to blink. He had half the mind to reply back, 'Actually, I'd choose a
Patronus Charm or Apparation over computers and cell phones any day, my new friend', but
thankfully resisted the urge and dead-panned, "And yet you have one." Instead of letting Ryuga
rebuttal that statement, Harry continued with a smirk, "But I don't agree with the 'abomination'
part, I have to say. I mean, what if you are driving in the middle of nowhere and break down, hm?
Internet will be useless out there, so you'd need a phone of some sort, yes?"

"Correct," Ryuga replied, sitting back to a less obtrusive distance and breaking eye contact. "But
as I'm not prone to driving in the middle of nowhere, as you say, and breaking down, I don't
believe—"
Suddenly, a girl in the line said in Japanese, "Take that back, Itsuo-kun! Kira-sama is going to rid this world of evildoers! We have to support Kira-sama so we can live in a peaceful world without fear!"

"No, Yori-chan! Kira is a murderer! We have to stop him! L is the only chance we have for justice!"

The blonde girl was pink in the face with indignation, and her male friend looked just as furious as her although decidedly less red. They were squaring off in the line, hands clenched and jaws grinding, their other more passive friends trying to keep them quiet without avail. In fear, the owner of Sato-Mari was advancing on them, calling over the silent crowd, "Do not fight in the shop! And do not speak about Kira here; go outside if you want to yell about it!"

"Nice job he's doing, yelling himself...what an idiot," murmured Harry under his breath.

Meanwhile, the two in the line had stepped closer to each other and ignored the owner's words, the one called Itsuo proclaiming, "We have to support L! Kira murdered people in front of women and children! How can we accept Kira's behaviour as godly?"

"Because he's purifying the world of wicked men who have killed women and children! He's protecting all of us!" She turned to the other patrons of the sweet shop and declared, "We must support Kira-sama because he is going to make sure the world is free of men that will hurt us out of evil intention! We need to rally for Kira-sama's cause before it's too late to save us from destruction! Kira-sama is God! We must follow him without question!"

There were a few mumbles, either about how they believed that Kira was good or evil, but Harry had frankly had enough of listening to them, and he was starting to pity the owner, who looked about ready to faint. Just as Itsuo opened his mouth with a rebuttal, Harry spoke up in Japanese, "Will you both just shut it? Honestly, regardless of whether or not you believe Kira is some all-powerful being or whatever, you shouldn't be subjecting the women and children to your ridiculous ideals. So get lost or be quiet before I throw you out myself."

A few shocked laughs, and the girl stormed out of the store, muttering under her breath with a dark glare in Harry's direction. With a glance at the friends that were either rushing to console her or staying with Itsuo, he turned back to his ice cream and spooned a slightly melted scoop in his mouth as if the disturbance hadn't even occurred.

Ryuga looked just as uninterested as before, but there was a glint in those dark eyes of his that either meant something diabolical or calculating to a degree that would normally scare the shit out of him. So with a bad feeling deep in his gut, he asked in his own language, "What's that creepy look for? Cake not doing it for you any more?"

A flicker of confusion skipped across Ryuga's eyes, but just as quickly as it appeared, it was gone, and he shot back, "Are you defending Kira or his opposition?"

Harry snorted, guarded now due to the look in Ryuga's eyes. He ate another spoonful of the rapidly melting ice cream and said, "Neither. Both. Does it matter? I think it's a bunch of codswallop in my opinion."

Ryuga seemed surprised. "Are you saying that even after Kira murdered Lind L. Tailor on national television, you still don't believe in it? I thought it would be an obvious deduction to make."

"Oh, don't get me wrong, Ryuga. I know that Kira is somehow killing criminals—" Magically, Harry added internally, taking another scoop. "—but I am just sick and tired about hearing about
"So you are pro-Kira, then?"

"Actually, no. I'm not taking a side, because taking a side either gets you killed via heart attack courtesy of Kira or crucified legally by L. I'm perfectly content with staying on the sidelines, watching the rest of the world fight each other in candy shops." Harry paused, completely still as he watched Ryuga's expression shift from guarded to amused, and then laughed, smacking a hand to his forehead. "Oh, hell, Ryuga, of course I'm anti-Kira. What do you take me for? I refuse to acknowledge Kira's so-called superiority over me at all. The only thing real gods do to the world is promote discrimination towards human rights and make churches rich. Other than that, Kira is just a load of bullshit in my opinion, and he's sure as hell not a god."

Ryuga looked thoughtful, bringing his thumb to his lip in attentiveness. "Well then, that's an interesting answer, Lupin-san."

"Please, call me—" Harry. "—James. No need for that honorific stuff here."

"James," he repeated, apparently testing the word with his mellow and yet drawling voice. For a long moment, Harry sincerely thought about telling Ryuga his real name, just so he could hear how it would sound coming from those lips. He knew it was against better judgement, so he suppressed the urge, but it didn't stop him from wondering where in the hell it had come from in the first place. It would be just like any other name spoken by anyone else, so he didn't quite understand where the thought had developed from.

But he was off point, as Ryuga was speaking again.

"Honorific issue dealt with, you seem very unenthusiastic about the judicial system and the idea of a god, be it among us or not. Care to elaborate?"

Harry sighed. "You're just the same, you know, now that Kira's on your mind. But to answer your question, how can any human being in this world not be frustrated with the constant failures of the governments of nations, and yet it would be hypocritical for me to agree with churches and God. Then again, a lot of people in this world feel the same way I do, although for different reasons, even those air-headed girls who are staring at us and giggling."

Ryuga slowly turned in his chair, eyes wide and thumb still pressed gently against that full bottom lip, and blinked once as the group of five girls giggled and blushed at the attention of being caught. In all contrasts, he looked like a doe caught in headlights, the large charcoal orbs only reinforcing that comparison, caught completely off-guard by the strange and new experience of facing a car dead-on.

Harry chuckled at the idea before saying, "Oi. Earth to Ryuga!" Said man turned back, eyes on the table and lost in some thought, only coming to when Harry decided to tease him by nearly sticking his finger in the cake, near the group of strawberries clustered in the middle. That definitely got a reaction, as a series of reactions happened swiftly before they could be registered by their brains.

Mere millimetres from the icing, Ryuga's hand shot out and with surprising strength, lifted Harry's wrist away from the cake, his expression turning calculating as if it was just a puzzle to solve. In response, Harry's other hand jumped towards the bag that was still in his lap, fingers clenching the cool wood of his wand, ready just in case he had to use it.
Ryuga's dark gaze grew intense, his mask carefully in place for other observers, as his now-narrowed eyes stared at the hand that was grasping the hidden magical weapon. Just when Harry nearly decided to place a well-aimed kick towards Ryuga's thigh muscles so he could have his wrist back not broken, Ryuga let go, his body still tensed as if ready to spring. Harry put his arm, more than likely bruised by Ryuga's long fingered grip, on the bag, letting go of his wand even though it was too late to deny that he wasn't hiding something.

A fact that Ryuga decided to quickly bring to attention, by saying, "What are you hiding?"

Funny how a simple question could potentially warrant so many answers that could destroy memories (Ryuga's, from a well-spoken Obliviate Charm) and a way of life (the Wizarding world; they had experience with mass memory modification, but even so...).

Therefore, Harry decided to answer on neutral ground: "Many things, as is everyone. I could ask you the same question, my friend, and discover some very interesting facts, if I presume correctly."

"Avoiding an answer is only securing my suspicions of you being the opposite of what you claim, James Lupin."

How Ryuga said Harry's faux name sent shivers down his spine, and for the first time since seeing him again in Sato-Mari's, he was regretting sitting down with Ryuga. The tone was like Draco Malfoy when he had been in his I-Know-Something-You-Don't attitude, and a manner such as that only meant more trouble than Harry knew what to do with. Nevertheless, Harry did not reply, as he knew that if he denied it, it would only make him guiltier. Yet, not saying anything at all would only set Ryuga's suspicions in stone, but truthfully, Harry knew that there was nothing in this world a Muggle (if he really was a Muggle anyway) could possibly imagine that was more extravagant than reality. Nothing that Ryuga could dream of would be close to the truth, even if the dark eyed man suspected something along the lines of the so-called magic or divine will that Kira could accomplish.

In spite of the suspicion in his voice and actions prior, Ryuga said nothing more on the answer to his question, or spoke in that tone again, instead digging in a pocket of his jeans and pulling out a small fork, pinching it in his thumb and forefinger before poking a strawberry. As he pulled up the red fruit to eat it, he said as an afterthought, "I do not like people touching my sugar. It's mine, and I do not want the bacteria all over your skin to get on my sugar."

That startled a laugh out of Harry immediately. "What? Are you saying I'm dirty?" he choked out between the bewildered laughter, shaking his head at the seemingly random statement.

"No. But do you know how many species of bacteria are on the average human being's hands?"

"Er, I don't, but maybe along with eating an obscene amount of sugar, sitting like a frog, and being an insomniac, you have mysophobia too. Imagine that. The fear of germs. You're a psychologist's playground!"

For once, Ryuga looked annoyed. With the expression, Ryuga almost looked like a child pouting, and Harry laughed genuinely this time, picking up his spoon to take a scoop of ice cream and finding it melted. All the same, Harry kept laughing, and was thrilled when a small smile—albeit a slightly disturbing one—crept up on those pale lips in amusement of his amusement.

And out of the blue, after only sitting there with Hideki Ryuga for about fifteen minutes, an old man came up to the table in a butler's suit and a surprised look on his face.

"Oh. Hello, Wantan," said Ryuga, clearly taken off guard as if he had forgotten the man existed.
In response, all he got was the same shocked expression, and so Ryuga said, "Sorry. James Lupin, I'd like you to meet my chauffeur, Wantan."

Harry snorted, his earlier mirth affecting his mood. "Yeah...chauffeur...got it. Of course you have a chauffeur. You spend over twenty thousand yen in here a pop, so it's definitely logical to assume you have a chauffeur. And probably a goddamn mansion to boot."

The chauffeur and Ryuga shared a look that spoke volumes.

Harry sighed. "Yep. I knew it. Well, it was nice meeting you, Wantan, and maybe we could randomly bump into each other again sometime."

The emerald eyed twenty-three-year-old stood up, grabbing his bag and his liquid ice cream, preparing to leave. He threw away the rubbish in the bin on the other side of the opening that led to the bathroom and smiled at Ryuga, who was carefully avoiding the chauffeur. Said chauffeur was busy staring at Harry himself, so it was completely pointless, but as Ryuga was staring at Harry as well with a contemplating expression on his face, he didn't think much of it.

However, right as Harry started to walk away, Ryuga said softly, "Perhaps tomorrow then. After all, you never did answer my question."

Harry looked over his shoulder and grinned.

"Perhaps."
Chapter Notes

Beta credit and dedication to Sociially-Diisorientied. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Three

Ignore

June 2004

Ryuga was depressed on Monday.

His mind was clearly on something troubling, so Harry didn't want to do more than be a silent and ignorant presence for some vague sort of comfort.

After a week of knowing the man, Harry had deduced quite reasonably that Ryuga was not who he said to be, either. He had come to four conclusions: one, Hideki Ryuga was definitely not his name; two, he was most certainly not a wizard; three, he was either obsessed (in a bad way) with Kira or was working with the police to catch Kira; and four, the man was a goddamn genius.

Hideki Ryuga not being his real name was a given. The man got phone calls quite a bit, presumably from the people he worked with, and Harry's ears were as sharp as lion's even without the super-sensory charm he had placed on them before meeting with him on the fourth. And unless Ryuga's nickname was 'Ryuzaki', which he sincerely believed was not the case, Ryuga was lying. But then again, it was a smart thing, even though Kira had been conveniently absent from the death toll here of late. A name and a face, proven by the attack on Lind L. Tailor and the obviousness of the National Police Agency in Japan having something to do with it. After all, if he had to have a name and a face, then how was Kira getting the names of criminals under the radar if not by an inside source?

He was definitely not a wizard. The miniature Sneakoscope he had carried in his pocket plus the other sensory spell he had placed on his hand that detected magic immediately (by rapid burning, so Harry wasn't too upset about Ryuga not being a wizard) had assured him of that fact. Besides, most wizards would've asked for an autograph or handshake (from members of the AWB), or would've been throwing around some Killing Curses around (the few remaining supporters of Voldemort). So by process of elimination, he had determined that Ryuga was a Muggle or a Squib, and even if he was the latter, he was not a fanboy or a Death Eater. If so, he would've already either apprehended the bad guy or ran away from the fanboy. And that was all that needed to be said.

The third one was a bit tougher, and it led to the fourth deduction Harry had made about Ryuga or Ryuzaki or whatever the hell his name was. Thie days ago, when they had 'randomly bumped into each other', there had practically been a question and answer session on Kira. Actually, the first thing out of his mouth was, "Thank you for the cake, Lupin-san," and then, "So are you really are against Kira?" immediately afterwards. After that, they had fired questions relating to Kira and what the hell he was up to, spanning over breakfast and lunch, Ryuga picking the former
and Harry choosing the latter.

The American bakery within walking distance from the Tokyo subways was a new and well-liked discovery on Harry's part, and he had pretty much gorged himself on wonderful, diabetes-on-a-stick doughnuts, laughing when Ryuga licked the icing off the tops before even eating the doughnut itself (no, he hadn't stared, of course not).

Lunch had been wickedly amusing. He had decided to drag the reluctant man to McDonalds, mostly because Harry wanted a gigantic burger, but a tiny bit curious on how he would react around that many people in a slightly grubby food joint. Naturally, it had been enough to laugh uproariously about it, and he still laughed even when he had returned back to his flat about an hour after leaving Ryuga.

Anyway, the topic of Kira been rapid between them, and it was almost as if Ryuga was trying to find out if Harry was Kira. Furthermore, he had been put into these really clever simulations, like Ryuga was trying to figure out his deductive ability. By the end of it all, Ryuga and Harry had both come up with a basic outline of who Kira might be, even though Harry had only been doing so for his new friend to just get it out of his system.

Today, however, the topic of Kira was thankfully at a void in the conversation. They had intended to meet in a park close to the busy metropolis of Tokyo, but the pouring rain outside had botched that idea. As Harry didn't have Ryuga's number, and Ryuga didn't have Harry's number, he had walked into the shop across the street, an aquarium for fish that weren't going to be eaten by the locals, and had started looking around at all of the species.

It had been almost like a blue maze filled with moving angels, their flaring fins rippling around their round or thin bodies as their round eyes surveyed everything in darting glances. Gills opened and closed, mouths doing the same, testing and tasting and breathing, moving slowly around their companions. It was hypnotising, really, as the light swirled in blue highlights on his hands as they pressed against the cool glass and reflected off his round glasses.

And then Ryuga had showed up, looking as laid back as always, although he had his chauffeur in tow this time, probably as a way to get around without drowning.

So his time at the aquarium had been cut short, as they were currently in Ryuga's 2002 Nissan President, one of those black, tricked out luxury vehicles for Japanese dignitaries and those stuck-up elite businessmen. Unfortunately, there was no divider separating the front from the back, so Wantan was able to hear all of the conversations. However, as he didn't have much to hide in the Muggle world, he didn't mind...all that much, anyway.

Back to the original point, however: Ryuga was depressed.

It was pretty apparent, mostly because he wasn't as animated as he had been on Thursday and Friday. Not to be confused with being really full of life in the first place, but his disposition was significantly less vigorous than before. His chin was in the groove between both his knees, his arms wrapped tightly around his legs and his hair falling into his eyes.

Plus, he said that he was depressed within two seconds of being questioned about it.

So as Harry sat there, slightly smiling at Ryuga's expense and getting up the nerve to ask him what his real name was, the dark eyed man said, "Say you are very convinced that someone is in the wrong. You can tell that there's something suspicious about them, you can see it in their eyes, and so you hunt them, trying to find even the slightest shred of proof that your theory is correct. Everyone around you believes that you're wrong and he's a good man, but you can still feel it in your gut that he's bad."
"And then imagine that suddenly, out of the blue, it's almost as if he's a completely different person. His eyes are wide and truthful, his words ring with sincerity, and he's entirely the opposite of what you had experienced with him before. How would you react?"

*Sounds like Snape...or perhaps Draco. And I'd do what any good wizard would do: strap him into a chair and shove a vial of Veritaserum down his lying, choking windpipe.* "Ah," Harry replied. "So that's why you're all gloom-and-doom on this fine morning." Ryuga didn't deny it, his eyes staring unblinkingly at Harry's face, so he continued, "Look, honestly, there's not much you can do. He's either lying and a really good actor or he's telling you the truth. Has this person you speak of suffered from any head trauma?"

Ryuga sighed. "No, he hasn't. So no retrograde amnesia."

Harry scratched an itch behind his right ear. "And you're positive that you're not wrong about your deduction and he's really one of the good ones?"

"Eighty-nine per-cent positive."

Harry thought for a moment and said, "That's a big number. But my non-expert opinion advises for at least a moderation of trust. I mean, eventually he'll slip, and when he does, you can be right on top of it. I'd recommend constant surveillance—" *Vigilance!* Harry thought, and nearly snorted mid-word. "—if I were you though, if it's possible. There's nothing better than being with this person as much as possible, because you're bound to see something very suspicious eventually. It's only a matter of time before he trips up. Just pray to whatever's out there that you don't get caught in the crossfire."

Ryuga looked like he was mulling over something, probably thinking about different situations and the effects, but then he looked up from his bare toes and said, "You are not curious on the nature of the question?"

Harry rolled his eyes and leant back, crossing his legs at the knee. "Of course I'm curious, Ryuga, but I'm not going to sit here and talk to a brick wall about it. I know a lost cause when I see one. I do know that if you plan on telling me, you're going to tell me anyway, and no amount of begging is going to change your mind on it."

"Clever observation...and you are correct."

Harry shrugged. "It's not like it's rocket science. I'm not a genius or anything, but that's just obvious. I know that much, 'cause I knew a bloke like you once, although he preferred to eat more bitter, meaty things. Like steak."

Ryuga's face crinkled up at the nose just barely as he said, "Then he was nothing like me. Steak should be banned from production."

"So you're a vegetarian?" questioned Harry.

"Maybe," the dark eyed man said slowly.

Harry rolled his eyes a second time. "Well, that's one definitive answer. Could you be any more vague today? Seriously, Ryuga, cheer up! The weather is perfect for smiles and sunshine, so liven up before I have to take that stash of lollipops away from you and throw 'em out the window."

Ryuga glanced outside, then glanced at his four lollipops, and then glanced at Harry with a frown. "But if you threw them outside, you'd get wet."
Harry took a deep breath, stomach in knots. "Trust me, Ryuzaki; it'd be worth it."

The emerald eyed wizard saw Wantan—probably an alias too, Harry figured—tense at the use of the name. However, Ryuga just stared back blankly, charcoal grey into emerald, and said carefully, "You're smarter than you believe you are."

Harry uncrossed his legs and laid his left leg on the seat, facing his entire body towards Ryuga's crouched form. The seatbelt made it a bit uncomfortable, so he snapped it off, hoping in the back of his mind that Wantan didn't get in an accident. It wouldn't do to have to use magic and then erase both of their memories. He was growing quite fond of whatever the hell the dark eyed man was, so it would've been a shame.

"I'm not clever, just observant. Actually, compared to my friend Hermione, I'm pretty dim-witted. She's ridiculously intelligent like you, although it comes mostly out of books, and I suppose some of her smarts have rubbed off on me. However, my sharp hearing is definitely all me. I have a knack for hearing things I shouldn't be hearing, like how you are currently holding a man named Raito and a woman named Misa in solitary confinement for observation."

"Do you know why?" asked Wantan suddenly.

Harry smirked. "Nah, and frankly I don't much care. They probably deserve it. But I've known the entire weekend that you're not who you say you are, so I suppose we're even. Although I do have a question...actually two."

The crouched man with the new name of Ryuzaki narrowed those dark eyes of his and replied, "You may ask, but I may not answer truthfully."

Harry snorted. "Don't blame you. Alright, first question is for your little chauffeur up there: what's your name, hm?"

Ryuzaki picked up a new lollipop with his delicate grip and said, "Who said his name was false?"

Harry stared at him like he was an idiot, which didn't bode too lightly with Ryuzaki. He was internally amused when the shorter man said, "Don't look at me like that. It's a valid question, and I'd like to hear the answer."

Harry shook his head. "I thought it would be obvious. I mean, even the name I've been giving you is false, so why the hell wouldn't his be? You're running something covert, probably within law enforcement about the Kira case after all those questions you asked on Friday, and so going out and blurting out your name freely is not exactly advisable if it's Kira you're after."

At the mention of Harry having his own false name, Ryuzaki had a tiny, but triumphant smile on his lips (and damn, was it creepy), but by the end of Harry's reasoning, he was frowning. For a long moment, Ryuzaki said nothing, and then he said in a low voice, "You are very quick at guessing things. Very bright. You've correctly reasoned that I am currently hunting Kira, although not with the police, and you've accurately assumed that Wantan is an alias."

Harry grinned at the confirmation. "Well, it was just speculation, but I'm definitely convinced now. My second question is similar to your buddy's up there. I wanted to ask you if Ryuzaki is also a cover that you're using as well."

Ryuzaki plopped the lollipop in his mouth and said, "Correct. As Kira needs a name and a face to commit murder, I cannot give you my name at all. However, you may call me Ryuzaki and my chauffeur Watari. I do have some questions for you, however."

Harry tore his eyes off that lollipop in Ryuzaki's mouth and the tongue that was lathering it and
said, "To give another alias or not to give, that is the question. As it is, I'm leaning towards the first because it's only common courtesy. You are doing the same to me after all."

Watari chuckled and parallel parked the vehicle, stopping at another bakery, this time French in nationality. But instead of getting out, he just turned his body as much as possible and joined the conversation, the tinted windows and veil of grey rain hiding their talk to passers-by. "That might be wise," the old man reasoned.

Ryuzaki looked at him sharply, indicating otherwise.

Harry shrugged. "I wouldn't see why it would hurt, especially since you're not going to get any information on me regardless, but since Ryuzaki might suspect me of being Kira, I'm a bit wary of it. By the way, what per-cent?"

"One per-cent chance."

Harry turned thoughtful. "One per-cent, huh? Somehow, that seems worse than it sounds." Again Watari chuckled, while Ryuzaki just appeared to be in deep consideration of his words. He was definitely treading carefully with what he said and what he didn't.

"Well," Ryuzaki drawled, leaning forward on his feet a bit and getting ever closer, "I believe I already know who both Kiras are, so the chance of you being included is rather low."

Harry's eyes narrowed as a truly wild theory entered his thought process. For a second, he tried to piece the evidence together: Ryuzaki appearing to know who the two Kiras were, two people in solitary confinement, fake names, not liking the idea of being in public, being an absolute genius, having lots of money in his pocketbook at all times, working on the Kira case but not with the police...

And his emerald green eyes widened.

"You believe that this so-called Raito and this so-called Misa are the Kiras. And yet you have them under confinement, not the police. And you are not working under law enforcement." He stared, amazed and a bit intimidated, at Ryuzaki, who had a sparkle in his eyes, probably due to where his thoughts were going.

So Harry exclaimed, "Holy hell, you batshit nutjob, you could've gotten yourself killed on that damned broadcast of yours!"

"Okay! Time to go!" Ryuzaki said suddenly in an oddly chipper voice, although it was still low. He quickly slipped on his shoes and opened the door, jumping out into the pouring rain. Quickly, Harry followed, immediately getting drenched from the downpour, and made a run for the bakery with Watari on his heels.

When the three of them were inside the warm establishment, Harry and Ryuzaki (L! he thought excitedly) were soaked from head to toe. Watari had been slow, mostly due to him getting an umbrella, although it didn't do much good now.

Ryuzaki stood slightly behind Harry, glancing around the shop at the few an occasional patron—French food wasn't exactly popular in this country like American or Chinese food—but Harry rolled his eyes and shrugged out of his jacket. For one, it wasn't very cold in here, but as his shirt thankfully only a bit wet—thank Merlin for double-lined jackets!—and Ryuzaki's was dripping and sticking to his thin, pale chest, he figured that the shorter man needed it more than he did. So he draped it over his shoulders, getting a slight flinch and then a small nod from Ryuzaki, and then advanced on the counter, stomach already growling at the prospect of some bread and cheese.
The woman recognised him immediately as he had been coming in here since arriving in Japan. After all, he was a sucker for French and Italian food, as they had cooked grub instead of the barely-dead kind, since he had lived in both places for as long as he had. The Japanese food (the kind that didn't stare back at him anyway) had been growing on him as well, so he would probably scope out all the Japanese restaurants as well as the French and Italian ones when he moved on from Japan to some other country.

The woman, natively French, began speaking fast in her native language, as she already knew that he was very good at it as well, "Oh, Mr. Lupin, it's been almost a week since you last came to see me! And I see you've brought some people with you this time! How grand!"

"It's wonderful to see you again, Esmée. I've missed you dearly, and that fantastic cheese you supply me with," Harry said with a smile.

"How you flatter me so! So the same as always, dear?"

"Of course, although I'll be treating these men behind me as well." Harry turned to them and looked at their forms pointedly, and to his surprise (although maybe not; it was the famous detective L after all, and he was renowned in many countries), Ryuzaki ordered for himself and Watari in fluent French, which seemed to surprise Esmée as well. At the end of the quite extensive list of sweets and bread, Watari advanced and pulled out a credit card and handed it to her, saying in French as well, "Actually, I'll do the honour of paying, as my charge can get quite expensive."

She giggled and charged it up, while Harry and Ryuzaki headed to the back of the shop like customary after the former said a quick good-bye to Esmée. Harry let his new friend lead, like always, but instead of sitting at a three-seater, he picked a smaller booth at the back, big enough only for two people.

"I'm confused," Harry stated bluntly in English as Ryuzaki took his seat, the thigh-length jacket practically dwarfing his skinny frame. He was tall, yes, at about 177 or maybe 178 centimetres in height, but as he crouched and was as thin as a toothpick, he could very easily blanket down in the damned thing. Even standing, the coat reached his knees, as Harry was a bit taller at 184 centimetres on the dot.

"Watari's not sitting with us. He has urgent duties to attend to."

Harry shrugged and sat down on the opposite side, glancing at the old man at the counter as he spoke to Esmée to with a soft smile. Quietly, Ryuzaki said, "Watari doesn't get out much, so I'm sure he's enjoying his chat with that female."

"Chatting? I'd say he's flirting. I think it's cute."

"I'm sure that she believes that he is saying things in an attempt for some sort of physical or emotional relationship, but Watari is not one for things like that. As we are always moving between countries and living under aliases and covers, it would be pointless to attempt one."

Harry leant a bit closer across the table. "Every man is tempted by sex, or physical relationships as you have so cleverly named them. Watari is no different. He needs some companionship every once in a while, even if it's not a long-term relationship. Men have one-night stands all the time."

"Can we please stop talking about my seventy-one-year-old acquaintance's physical life?" pleaded
Ryuzaki hastily, and Harry laughed heartily. Yes, pushing Ryuzaki's buttons in a variety of ways was definitely amusing for Harry, although he finally stopped laughing in amusement when Watari showed up and began placing the trays of sweets, bread, and cheese on the table closest, pushing it so it rested against the edge of the table on the booth.

_Lovely_, thought Harry with a roll of his eyes. _An extension to our table because of Ryuzaki's multitude of sweets taking up the entire expanse by themselves. Joy._

It took Watari two trips to bring all the edible objects and another two trips to bring the coffee in a massive black pot and a wicker basket of liquid creamer packets to the table. It looked like a buffet table by the time he was done with it, and immediately, Ryuzaki poured some tea for the both of them.

Harry added some sugar, and just shook his head when the dark eyed man added spoonful after spoonful of the sugar in his own tea. But after he had added more sugar than tea and had a syrupy concoction of tea in his glass, Harry finally said, "What should I call you? All of these different names are really getting confusing, and honestly I don't have the patience to keep up with it all."

"Call me Ryuzaki. That would be fine, although many of the establishments around here know me as other names."

Harry grabbed his bread and cheese and began slicing it up. "God forbid you ever forget which name you've used. You know, the simplest way is usually the most effective. Well, unless you're battling dragons, and then the point is naught." Harry then fought the urge to flinch at his little slip up. The last time he had done something like that, he had been in Italy and had caused a bit of confusion when he said to his lover, 'Sorry, but football is not as interesting as Quidditch.'

That had been a _blast_ to fix. Note the sarcasm.

"Dragons, hm?" Ryuzaki said with a wide-eyed look, cocking his head a bit around the teacup he had delicately in his grasp. "That's a bit far-fetched, don't you think?"

Harry responded, not too quickly and not too hesitantly, "Exactly. Hence the point. Simplicity is always preferred over confusion."

Ryuzaki picked up a cookie and began tearing the chocolate off the top with his long fingers, the hand still up with the teacup poised as if about ready to take a sip of tea. Then he said, "And what do I call you? Not that it would be confusing in my head, functioning at high speeds due to the sugar feeding my brain, but it would be nice to not be in the dark completely."

Harry dead-panned, "Thanks for insulting my intelligence there."

Ryuzaki watched as Watari left the building, heading out into the downpour. "Only because your mockery needed to be dutifully matched."

Harry groaned in disbelief, yet a smile threatened to destroy his dismayed façade. "You've got to be kidding me. It was not _mockery_, it was the truth!" Then the emerald eyed wizard shook his head and thought about the name business for a second as he took some bread and cheese and ate the slice slowly.

Telling the detective L, a Muggle, his name wouldn't come up with any results if he did a background check because technically he didn't exist. He wouldn't find anything on him in the Muggle world because his life there had been completely wiped clean, nor would he be able to find his relatives as they had been Obliviated into forgetting his existence. Therefore, if Ryuzaki was to look for _Harry Potter_ anywhere, he'd come up with a whole lot of nothing. However, if
Ryuzaki had connections with other wizards, it would pose to be a problem. After all, such a large name like the L's probably garnered the attention of higher ups, that is, if they could find the ever elusive detective. Harry wouldn't have been surprised if someone from the Ministry had contacted him before, and Ryuzaki was a clever enough person and actor (from what Harry had seen thus far anyway) to hide it from showing while speaking to Harry for the past week.

Nevertheless, something in his gut told him that Ryuzaki was not a wizard or in contact with wizards (because if he was, it probably would've been noticeable regardless of who he was talking to), and since he trusted said gut, he said, "My name is Harry. And that's all you need to know, my friend."

Ryuzaki took another sip of his tea, then sat it down and began licking his fingers of the chocolate from the cookies. Harry, instead of doing something stupid like he had the other times, looked down and focussed intently on his bread, knowing that he'd stare and get distracted again by that agile tongue of his. It didn't help that Ryuzaki was completely oblivious to it, and he knew that if he asked the dark eyed man to stop licking his fingers, he probably would. However, it would be accompanied by a million questions on why Harry wanted him to stop, and truthfully, it was a little bit too personal to admit that watching Ryuzaki lick his fingers like that was doing strange things to his blood...

He took a big bite of bread and cheese to take his mind off of it.

"Harry, hm?" Ryuzaki asked slowly, causing a strange shiver to go down Harry's spine. "Somehow it seems right." At that, Harry glanced up and then hit his head on the back cushion of the booth in shock, as Ryuzaki's face had been a mere dozen centimetres from his own, dark eyes filled with something that Harry couldn't read.

"Holy shit! You don't have to get that close! That's just creepy!"

"If I was far away, I wouldn't be able to see your reaction as well. My eyes decrease in precision by eight hundredths of a per-cent with every metre I am away from the subject in question. Therefore, my deductions could be the slightest bit wrong when trying to determine the emotions in a human's face after a startling comment."

His heart still pounding with adrenaline, Harry shot back, "If I was far away, I wouldn't be able to see your reaction as well. My eyes decrease in precision by eight hundredths of a per-cent with every metre I am away from the subject in question. Therefore, my deductions could be the slightest bit wrong when trying to determine the emotions in a human's face after a startling comment."

"Eat your damned flan, and stop playing psychologist."

Neither Harry nor Ryuzaki said another word after that, opting instead to just see who would break the silence and speak first. They ate their so-called breakfast, spoke to Esmée when she came around to clear the trash as an excuse to chat a bit (mostly about that "lovely gentleman that came with you two"), and stared each other down, Harry with amusement glittering in his emerald
eyes and Ryuzaki just as blank as always.

By the time Ryuzaki had made it through most of the sweets, Watari was back, putting the rest of it in bags and toting it all in the car. Thankfully, the pounding rain was now reduced to a light drizzle, so Harry kissed Esmée's cheeks and then followed Ryuzaki on his trek to the vehicle, scratching his temple as he walked outside into the light rain.

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The biggest problem he had with broccoli was that it looked funny.

L had never been an admirer of flowers, unless they were made of sugar and tasted like cherries, and the idea of eating a green tree with flowers that hadn't bloomed wasn't his idea of good eating. The stalk was rubbery and mushy, the top had a strange texture, there weren't enough carbohydrates to satisfy a working brain, and broccoli smelled funny.

Especially with cheese.

So he had to fight the urge to grimace at the sight of Harry NoLastName scooping broccoli and cheese in his mouth, swallowing it down with a smile to counteract L’s obvious dislike of the spectacle.

He hadn't believed that he was easy to read, not exactly, but it wasn't exactly hidden knowledge that L didn't eat vegetables. Vegetables were disgusting. Especially onions and broccoli.

Vegetarian was one way of putting it. Actually, no it wasn't, because frankly vegetables were bad. He didn't eat red meat, so he wasn't a carnivore or an omnivore. Being a pescatarian was out of the question because there was no way he was eating sea bugs. Dairy products? Yes. Ice cream was very important, and eggs mixed with milk and butter was perfect in cake. But then again, if it didn't contain sugar, he wouldn't eat dairy products either.

He wasn't entirely sure if there was a word for what he was.

At the moment, he was eating the second meal in a day with Harry, at a Japanese restaurant this time, although he almost wished they had went back to the French one. Because, at the moment, L was very...repulsed.

He watched Harry tear off a chunk of grilled chicken from a wooden skewer and fought the urge to stick out his tongue with revulsion.

He himself was nursing a cup of coffee that was practically granulated with the amount of sugar he had added, and the slightly syrupy liquid was nearly white with the quantity of creamer packets he had poured into it. But it was how he liked it, so he just did his own version of antagonising. He was full aware of Harry's attempt to disgust him, so he threw it right back at him. He was currently on his third slice of cake, had gone through a good thirty packs of sugar creamer, and two slices of melon, all in the time that Harry had consumed four yakatori (the chicken skewers), nearly an entire bowl of steamed broccoli and cheese, a plate of nikujaga (meat and potatoes in a sort of stew), and some tempura (deep fried seafood).

Disgusting excuse for a meal. And very random too.

L dexterously balanced his fork between two fingers and ate a small bite of cake, licking the icing off the fork and ignoring Harry pointedly. It wouldn't do to lose his appetite when he had a silent battle of wills to win.

It sort of reminded L of the complex (game) chase that he had been having with one Yagami
Raito for almost six months before the college student's incarceration had begun. Not in the sense that L was going to end up dead if he didn't solve the mystery, but it was a riddle all the same. There were quite a few things that were strange and suspicious about Harry, although on a different level than Raito. In fact, Harry was of a different profile than what L had for Kira and Raito, so L was over ninety-nine per-cent sure that Harry NoLastName was not Kira.

The main thing that was different between Raito and Harry was their thought processes. The emerald eyed man's wit and sarcasm, for starters, was the complete opposite of Raito's careful words and general distrust of everything and everyone. Also, Harry didn't seem like the cautious, meticulous type when it came with thinking before speaking and-or acting. From Harry's actions in the week that L had known him, he had always been spontaneous and very careless, with the blurring out the first thing that popped into his mind being a tell-all sign. Whereas Raito, who was practically famous for his guarded persona that was masked with nonchalance, was a diabolical mastermind and always double checked everything he thought, said, and did (sort of like L himself).

He was pretty clever though. All of a week and the man already had put two and two together and had solved the main chunk of the puzzle, although it was far from over.

Perhaps questioning him so extensively hadn't been the greatest approach to keeping from being found out.

L hadn't affirmed or denied being "L". He didn't have to.

He had an inkling to say that he didn't want to.

"Alright, this is ridiculous," L's new companion said in a miserable voice. "I refuse to degrade myself further by encouraging this dumb act of trying to gross you out. Seriously, it's very childish. Besides, you're going to end up busting a gut or dying from a sugar overdose at the rate you're going. I do not want to be the cause of your untimely death."

Hero complex? Maybe...

"And don't go getting any ideas about that. Stop thinking so hard!"

L ignored that pointedly, putting a thumb to his lip with his eyes sharp on Harry's face. He did a sweep of his exotic features, accessing Harry's levels of exasperation and discomfort by the pinch between his dark eyebrows, the downward tilt to his eyes, and the slight grimace on his lips, all so he could gage Harry's immediate reaction to: "Harry-san is admitting defeat, marking me better than him in terms of stomach and will. I believe you owe me a lollipop."

Harry promptly did an action more commonly known as the facepalm.

The British man then stood up, straightening his lopsided glasses, and murmured while walking away, "I'll give you a lollipop, you gluttonous nutjob, and I'll shove it right up your—"

L's phone rang.

He missed exactly where the lollipop would go into his body—although he had a very good idea—because of the shrill ring, and began digging in his left pocket. He left the remaining food there (he wasn't putting a finger anywhere near that repulsive meal Harry had been eating) as he followed the still angrily muttering man, and checked the caller-ID.

*KIH*, it read simply. For the *Kira Investigation Headquarters*.

It was probably Matsuda calling with some uneventful news about Misa needing to go to the
bathroom again, a seventy-four per-cent chance actually. Twenty-one per-cent chance it was Mogi
asking if he could take some time off to spend with his family.

Well, it would still be there when he got back. He was a bit preoccupied at the moment.

He pressed *ignore* and shoved the cell back into his pocket.

Wammy would deal with it anyway.
Four: Timely

Chapter Notes

Beta credit and dedication to Sprcially-Diisoriiented. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Four

Timely

12 June 2004

"Ryuzaki?"

L looked over at Matsuda mid-bite in a piece of melon and said, "Yes? What is it?" It was spoken like a question, but he wasn't in the mood to sit in his chair in front of the monitors and listen to the man talk in his usual loud and slightly abrasive way.

The word 'spastic' came to mind, but he shook it off, focussing half-heartedly on Matsuda, even though he could think of a hundred better things he could've been doing.

"Are you okay? You seem a bit...distracted."

That made L pause. "What do you mean?" he asked quietly, the words still carefully blank even though the well-oiled gears in his head were churning.

Matsuda visibly gulped, but said in a determined voice, "Well, maybe preoccupied would be a better way of putting it. But you seem like you're not entirely here. Are you doing other cases while Misa-Misa, Raito, and the Chief are in custody? You've been gone a lot since we put them in confinement, so it must be another case, right? Your skills are probably high demand in many countries—"

"You're rambling, Matsuda," said L, a bit irritated. He turned back to the monitors, staring at Raito's sleeping form with unseeing dark eyes, and let Matsuda stew in his irrational fear that he had somehow made L angry.

L wasn't angry, though. He was contemplating.

Another case? It was true; L had already solved thirty cases in the six months since taking on the Kira case, and had tackled seven of those thirty since meeting Harry almost two weeks ago. However, the difference between 'preoccupied' and 'overworked' was that he was not overworked. With Kira on the move (although the killings had mysteriously stopped the day L had met Harry and Raito had gone into incarceration—case nearly solved...if only the murdering college student would slip on the ridiculous façade of memory loss!), the criminal activity had been at an all-time low. Cases that involved over ten murders and were worth at least a million dollars were few and far between, so he was not overworked.

During the Los Angeles BB Murder Cases, he had been working on a dozen at once, so working
seven in twelve days, like he had so far this month, was a piece of cake, emphasising on the metaphor.

He pressed the intercom button on his personal laptop and said, "Watari, do we have any more of that strawberry cake?"

Immediately, Wammy replied, "Of course. It will be up shortly."

L turned it off and went back to pondering. No, he wasn't preoccupied with cases. Cases he could handle.

Harry NoLastName, on the other hand, was something worth being preoccupied about.

Besides the obvious fact that he was hiding something immense in that British head of his, the man was actually very easy to determine and work out. He was very quick to exasperation and temper; he was also a man who loved to laugh and live in the present. However, he had those moments, the very ones that intrigued L's inquisitive side, where his face would darken and he would get distant and stony. It took a bit of time before he would knock out of his mood, but the moments where he was gloomy was enough to give L's curiosity a quick prodding by some metaphorical sugar monster living inside his skull.

He didn't know how to combat the disposition Harry went into occasionally, and it was slowly driving L into longer hours of thought. Or it was "driving him bonkers", as Harry most likely would've put it, and perhaps that wasn't exactly a bad way of describing it if L was the type to use words like that in everyday speech.

Not that he had much of an everyday speech in the first place since business talk did not count.

L turned to Matsuda and said candidly, "Oh, Matsuda? Now that it's on my mind...if I find that you've been eating my cake when I'm gone, I will ensure that you are put into incarceration yourself."

Even though L was facing away from Matsuda and not looking towards the monitor that showed the young police officer's reaction, he could very nearly feel Matsuda sweating nervously behind him.

The shame and embarrassment rolling off Matsuda in waves was interrupted by the arrival of L's cake. The plate was laid in front of him, and Wammy left with a glitter of amusement in his eyes.

L picked up the plate in his delicate grasp and spun 180 degrees, holding out the slice towards the shaking and uncomfortable Matsuda. And with that, he said in his signature dull-and-yet-mocking tone, "All you had to do was ask nicely, Matsuda."

Matsuda took the plate cautiously, as if he was afraid of it being a test. If L had been more animated (because Matsuda was right about L being distant at least), he would've done some sort of double-standard test with the sole purpose of ruffling the young police officer's feathers.

However, L just spun back around, this time focussing on Misa's sleeping form, and let his mind wander yet again.

It was almost six o'clock in the morning. L hadn't slept a blink in over twenty-four hours, which wasn't exactly uncommon for him, but it had given his roaming thoughts more time to think, which unfortunately wasn't about cases or cherries or the topic of Kira in general.

Actually, he had to be more truthful with himself than that. He had last seen Harry NoLastName (L glanced at the time on his computer) thirteen hours, forty-seven minutes, and...nine seconds ago
exactly. They were scheduled to 'randomly bump into each other' again at eleven o'clock at Shinjuku Gyoen.

It was an amusing spot, in L's opinion. Shinjuku Gyoen was a garden in Japan, famous for not only being a hit spot during Hanami (the sakura blossom viewing) but it was also a favourite for the homosexual population in Tokyo. After all, it was very close to Shinjuku ni-chome, Tokyo's best-known gay village, so it was a popular spot for homosexual men to conjugate due to its location.

It made sense that Harry knew of it. Although perhaps not solely on the fact that Harry was homosexual himself, as L had determined very quickly in their correspondence. It was a beautiful garden, and was probably very nostalgic because of the three featured gardens: one in French formal, another in English landscape, and the last one of the more traditional Japanese designs.

Harry was English, spoke French, was living in Japan, and had mentioned during the first meeting that he had learned three different languages in two years. It was safe to assume that he had lived in France and that he had stayed in another country that hadn't been acknowledged yet.

So that mixed with the homosexual factor...yes, meeting at Shinjuku Gyoen spoke for itself.

L didn't have an opinion on the setting of his meeting with Harry. He did not mind if men were kissing men, or women were kissing women, or if they were all hanging upside down in trees while doing it. As long as it didn't interfere with L's own conversation with Harry, he would turn a blind eye in that direction.

L poked another piece of the cantaloupe and plopped it in his mouth, then put down the fork and picked up his glass of tea. It was cold, but L took a sip anyway, dark eyes flicking to Raito's cell yet again. The college student was stirring, looking much younger than the eighteen he was.

L knew very well how young people could be just as smart, if not smarter, than adults, so the detective knew that eighteen wasn't too young for a person to be smart enough to be Kira. He himself had solved his first case at eight, an achievement that had baffled the authorities, and by eighteen...well, he had already attained a legendary status in law enforcement since the year previous.

Raito was Kira. L knew this without a doubt, his gut instinct and the facts only becoming more concrete as the two week mark without deaths drew closer.

L scratched his ankle with a toe and pondered about Harry's own age. He looked mature, perhaps around his mid-twenties like L himself, but that didn't account for anything. He could be deceptively older-looking, or he could've been ageing really well. Yes, L had reasons to suspect that their ages were similar, but he had no tangible evidence of it.

Perhaps that was a good opener for the conversation. Better than any he had came up with anyway. Topic: hero complexes.

It hadn't gone over too well. Harry had actually pouted.

L took another sip of his cold tea and debated adding another couple sugar cubes. He decided against it the exact second it turned six o'clock, as he suddenly stepped out of his seat and gave the half empty cup to Matsuda.

"Take very good care of this, Matsuda," said L slowly, as if talking to a child, and left the bewildered officer behind him as he began to walk out of the room.

"Where are you going?" he called after the detective, and got a quick response of, "I am going to
get some coffee. I have made sure all audio and recording devices are in working order, so you shouldn't have any trouble with that...feel free to ask Watari for help if you'd like."

"Hey Ryuzaki?" asked Matsuda right as he stepped out the door, and L stopped, slumping a bit lower and turning his head lazily.

"Yes, Matsuda?"

Said man opened his mouth once or twice before he just smiled sheepishly and said, "Nothing. Forget I said anything. Have fun on your coffee break."

L thought about questioning further, but decided that it was probably something along the word 'spastic' and he didn't want to hear it.

***

"How old are you, Harry-san?"

Ryuzaki stared in his normal creepy way, so Harry sighed and said, "I'm twenty-three. I'll be twenty-four in a couple of months, actually, in July. Satisfied?"

"Yes," Ryuzaki said simply, washing his hand vigorously for the second time. He didn't offer any information about himself, so Harry rolled his eyes and took the initiative: "And you?"

The shorter man glanced at Harry and said, "I am four years past the legal drinking age."

Again, the emerald eyed wizard rolled his eyes. "You and your damned riddles. Alright, might I ask which country you're referring to? Because you could be talking about Italy and be four-years-old. You might act four, but I doubt that you're that young in actuality. At least, hopefully not."

There was a slight upward tilt to Ryuzaki's lips at that statement, because it was true. In the privacy of his own residence, he would've been able to drink at whatever age he wanted. In response, the detective said, "Japan."

"Ah," murmured Harry with a grin. "Twenty-four, hm? That's funny. You look younger than me. It's strange to think that you're a year older than me."

"Eight months or so, actually."

Harry cocked his head, doing the mental maths. "You were born in October?"

"Yes."

The one-word answers were getting annoying. "What day?"

Ryuzaki walked towards the air dryers, in which Harry pressed the button as Ryuzaki wouldn't. He dried his hands and said, "I do not feel like telling you that."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "What? Why not?"

"Because it is irrelevant."

The wizard grinned and said, "Tell me and I'll buy you a gigantic cake."

Ryuzaki paused, considering. "Strawberry?"

"Strawberry," Harry repeated.
Ryuzaki finished and began walking out the door, Harry holding it open (he tried to tell himself it was because they'd be in the bathroom so Ryuzaki could wash his hands compulsively all day if he didn't, but in the back of his mind, he knew that it was because it made him feel...a bit more gallant in a way), and then finally replied, "I was born on the thirty-first."

Harry stopped walking.

Ryuzaki looked over his shoulder and stopped walking as well, eyes narrowing a bit at the expression on Harry's face, but the wizard couldn't really process it. Instead, Harry just whispered to himself, "You were exactly two when..."

Ryuzaki stepped closer and said, "Yes? What is it?" Maybe Harry was deluding himself, but the shorter man sounded concerned, although it was pretty likely that Harry was just imagining things.

Harry forced a smile and said, "Oh nothing. We're exactly nine months apart. I was born on the thirty-first as well. That's cool."

Ryuzaki raised his right thumb to his lips and nibbled on the nail, his mind nearly humming in thought. In haste to get away from the questions that were bound to start flying, Harry began walking hurriedly down the walkway, towards another part of the garden. Ryuzaki followed, not speaking and asking questions but being silent. Even his footfalls were quieter than normal, as he usually walked lazily and loudly.

Harry fought the urge to look over his shoulder, but he knew that he had to say something. He just didn't know what to say. He just didn't know how to say it, really. 'Oh, well, my parents were murdered on your second birthday. Funny, huh?' just wouldn't do it.

They turned onto a small pathway that was shrouded by trees, so it blocked most of the dim light that broke through the cloudy skies. Along the outsides of the paved footpath were green shrubs, and ahead was a small circle of tall, thin trees where there were benches to sit and rest.

It was also a dead end.

Harry stopped and sat down on one of the benches, putting his head in his hands, elbows digging into his slender thighs. It was pointless to pretend that there was nothing wrong because Ryuzaki was one of the smartest people Harry had ever met, and probably had picked up on the tension in a split-second. So instead of hiding it, he just tried to take his mind off it, looking up at his new friend who was standing a couple of metres away from him. His dark charcoal grey eyes were sharp, nearly picking Harry apart with his gaze, and Harry found that he couldn't take his eyes off the detective.

The shadows made his features more angular, dark hair nearly hiding that piercing gaze as it fell in those large, wide orbs. His entire figure looked so thin that it didn't seem natural, considering the insane amount of sugar and fattening pastries he ate, and it surely wasn't healthy. The clothes were nearly hanging off his shoulders, the jeans low on his hips, the beat up, untied shoes threatening to fall off with even a step.

But there was something strange about it. Because while Ryuzaki was as thin as a toothpick, there was something...beautiful about the way the dull grey light fell upon his pale face. It made his skin glow, like soft porcelain, the dark circles only enhancing his eyes. His lips were a bit pinker, the flesh soft to his eyes, and for a wild second, Harry was captivated about how...attractive Ryuzaki was.

Harry vaguely wondered what it would feel like to have his fingers buried in that dark, dishevelled mess of hair and his lips pressed against the other's, wondered what it would be like to feel the
shorter man's hands wrapped around Harry's waist...

"Harry-san?"

Harry started and shook his head, pushing that thought way down so he could focus on the now. He would ponder it later, when he wasn't right next to the man in question, and could freak out about it in the comfort of his own flat.

"I'm sorry. It was just surprising, that's all. The thirty-first of October has never been a good day for me." My parents were murdered, I had a run-in with a troll, I was picked as the fourth Triwizard Champion which not only nearly killed me in the end but alienated me again, and the Final Battle happened. So many people died on that day, people that were so important to me, including Bill and Luna and Viktor and...and Draco, so that's always been a day of mourning for me.

Ryuzaki hesitated, then came closer and sat down on the bench beside him, in his normal way. For a second, there was silence, and then Ryuzaki said in a carefully blank voice, "It hasn't been the most ideal day for me, either."

Harry let out a bitter, sardonic laugh that hurt. "Day's nothing but trouble, if you ask me."

Ryuzaki smiled slightly. "It has been rather unfortunate for both of us then." They both glanced sideways at each other, briefly, Harry feeling a twisting in his gut at the sight of that face closer than before, and then Harry said, "Well, it doesn't matter. We don't need to get all gloomy about it. Perhaps they'll be better in the future."

"Yes. Let us look at it optimistically."

Harry laughed, genuinely this time. "Whatever. You sound so devoid of emotion that it doesn't seem real. You should at least try to sound sincere."

"Ninety-four per-cent of all people who do show—"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll listen to your statistics later. Let's go get some good coffee and blow this joint before it decides to rain on us."

***

L found out many things about Harry that afternoon.

All of it was extremely important, because it explained some of his character to the detective, and it also put Harry's life into perspective for L.

Harry was quite a bit like L himself, and there were two reasons why. One: they were both picky eaters because they had both nearly starved to death at least once.

Harry had lived off of a meagre sum of vegetables, wild mushrooms, and the few and occasional egg for a long period of time in his life, and had stayed constantly hungry because of it. Therefore, he was very picky about his food, because he wanted to eat what he wanted, not what the situation demanded.

L had nearly starved to death in his homelands of Russia and Japan during a course of eight years, due to the Third World War that had been tearing the globe apart for ages, it seemed. He had never tasted sugar in his life until he had met Quillish Wammy, who, quite literally, had saved him from starving to death. And that slice of strawberry shortcake, the first cake he had ever even seen
before, had been the single most delectable thing he had ever tasted in his life. Since then, he had never eaten anything but sugared products, and he wouldn't, either.

Two: they were both orphans.

Harry had finally told L when sitting at another park (this time a free one closer to the bakery they had met at) that his parents had been murdered the day L turned two.

L had been silent. The detective's mother had died in childbirth exactly two years before Harry’s parents had died, and his father...that was a long story best buried in L's subconscious. But he didn't know how to explain it to the emerald eyed man, and for the first time in a very long time, L was bitter that he couldn't express himself like other people could.

"Did they bring the criminal to justice?" L had asked, calm and blank.

"Yes," Harry had said darkly. "He was."

And L wished with his entire mind that he was able to reach out and touch Harry's shaking shoulder.

***

Harry went to bed that night exhausted.

Physically, yes, but emotionally too. In fact, he was so worn out that he went straight through his front door of his flat, bee-lined to his bedroom, and then fell on his bed face-first without getting ready at all except throwing off his glasses.

And he fell asleep that way too.

But he didn't stay asleep very long, despite his fatigue, as he had a very different dream than he usually had. Instead of hearing the screams of his friends and family while Death Eaters cackled overhead, he saw his new friend, sitting on that park bench in Shinjuku Gyoen, his face so ridiculously attractive, and woke up hot and flushed, nearly burning in his skin.

*Lovely, Harry thought with a sigh of exasperation. I'm attracted to the most powerful and well-known detective the world has ever seen. A candy loving, childish, dorky frog man in a conflict with an egotistical killer.*

Harry sighed again.

*I sure know how to pick them, don't I?*
Five: Murder

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriented. Unbeta'd and therefore all mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Five
Murder

14 June 2004

L would've been an emotional person, he probably would've cried.

It made no logical sense. Exactly fourteen days after Raito and Misa's imprisonment and criminals had stopped dying, Kira was suddenly active and thirsty for murder. Countless criminals were dying all over the globe, just like the last time, although the deaths were more in the Japan area than before.

L had just dealt with two and a half hours of listening to Matsuda, Mogi, and Aiwaza go on a verbal rampage about how this "undoubtedly proves Raito, Misa-Misa, and the Chief innocent!" Obviously, it wasn't the most agreeable time of the day, although it didn't measure to the exasperation he was experiencing at the news that Kira was killing criminals again.

He poked a chocolate doughnut with the index finger of his right hand and realised that he wasn't in the mood for eating.

This, of course, was a rarity. However, not only was it that, but it was also a clear indication that if he stayed one more minute around these angry people—"How could you not tell Raito-kun about Kira killing criminals?"—he was going to lock them up in similar positions as Amane Misa and turn out the lights.

He picked up his cell phone with two fingers, tucked it in his pocket, and decided to leave the room. Naturally, he turned off the microphones with a light series of taps on the main keyboard, because he didn't trust the others enough not to tell Raito about Kira's activities, and took his leave with long strides. He ignored the teams' questioning and Watari's poorly hidden amusement, and stepped out.

He blinked slowly once, twice, three times before he began walking towards his own quarters, his mind running through all of the different possibilities and coming up with nothing. It was very exasperating, knowing that something was true but not having the evidence to prove it, and he went to his room in the lavish hotel with a small frown on his lips.

When he reached his personal quarters, his eyes fell on the computer lying in the centre of the floor. It was surrounded by multitudes of files, of cases meant for 'L' and his other detective codes, so he decided to sit down and work on another case for a change. There had been moments where he had mused over other cases and suddenly thought up a crazy, but usually successful idea to bring a criminal to justice.
Instead of his customary squat, he tucked a leg underneath him and left the other one pressed to his thin chest like usual, tapping a few buttons and keys to get the computer up and running. He grabbed the closest file, took a quick peek, and cocked his head. It was a German file, so the code was not as well-known as 'L', 'Eraldo Coil', and 'Deneuve'. Furthermore, it was a bit more public than the three more famous codes, although still quite secretive.

He got to work, his mind trying to focus on the details of the case instead of the cell phone that seemed to be burning a hole in his leg. It was almost mind-numbingly easy to solve, as it was nowhere near the complexity of the Kira investigation, and he worked on two more ridiculously simple files before finally giving a rare sigh and recognising a lost cause when he was sitting right in the middle of it.

The lost cause being the itch to pull out his cell phone and call a certain someone.

He finally caved and pulled out the phone with two fingers, scrolling through his contacts with a single finger. His dark, sleepless eyes scanned the names until he found *Harry NoLastName*, which he promptly clicked on. The dial tone rang for a long minute, and L was considering just hanging up when the line finally picked up.

"...'ello?" asked a sleepy British timbre.

"Turn on the news to channel four," L bluntly said, not offering any name because Harry's phone was probably insecure and because it was unnecessary.

"*How in the hell did you get my number?*" grumbled Harry, shuffling around in the background, clearly trying to find his glasses (most likely on some sort of night-stand or dresser besides his bed).

"I found it on your menu and programmed it into my phone when you weren't looking. Are you going to turn it on?"

"*Yeah, yeah, jeez, I'm goin'. Give me a minute to wake myself up...*" Harry was walking, his footsteps sounding slow and irregular even over the connection over the phone. L heard a small complaint of "*Seven o'clock in the fucking morning and I'm watchin' the telly...what a total drag*" before he switched on the television and changed the channel.

That woke him up pretty fast.

"*Kira? Kira's killing again? That doesn't make any sense. I thought you said that you—*"

"This is an unsecured connection. Do not say more than you have to," L interrupted.

"*Well then, what do you want me to say, hm? I think blank is going to blank at the blank in the blank-blank time at blankity blank spot? Don't be ridiculous.*"

"You need a new phone," thought L out loud.

"*Thanks for pointing that out, Mr. Obvious. Wait, hold on...Kira's killed twelve criminals today, this early in the morning, but some were tried for petty crimes? That doesn't make any sense. Three murderers, four rapists, one arsonist, but that's it. Two burglaries, stealing food from a convenience store, a woman who killed a family in an accidental car accident? This doesn't make sense, Ryuzaki. It's not his normal patterns. There's something off about this.*"

"Point already dully noted."
Harry made a small noise, hesitating over the phone, and then finally said hurriedly, "Are you going to be working all day?"

L cocked his head, even though he knew Harry couldn't see it. "I am not sure. Perhaps, but it is unlikely. Why do you ask?"

"I owe you a cake, actually, Mr. Halloween."

The detective's face fell with annoyance. "Call me that again and I will kick you."

"Bring it on, Mr. Halloween," Harry teased.

L fought the urge to childishly throw the phone across the barely-used room. "You should know that I am very proficient in capoeira."

Harry snorted. "Yeah, and I'm proficient in long-lost art of kicking your arse. I don't care if you decide to test you fancy martial arts by dancing around me singing the British national anthem in Portuguese; I'll still shove that cake in your face. Five o'clock at Sato-Mari?"

L smiled, a small one but a smile nonetheless. "Five o'clock."

***

"Perhaps."

"Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps," mocked Harry with a wide grin on his face. He kicked a rock that was lying on the sidewalk, swinging his arms in wide circles to stretch his shoulders.

Ryuzaki was currently eating a chocolate out of a box filled with them. Sitting on a bench, he had meticulously split each and every one of them in half, peering in the insides with his dark, rimmed eyes. He ignored the ones with coconut and practically devoured the rest, almost as if he was starving. Harry nearly laughed at that thought, because most starving people wouldn't choose chocolate snacks over something more filling.

When those were done, Ryuzaki held out the box and said, "You can have the rest, Harry-san."

Harry raised an eyebrow, but accepted the box and took a seat next to his new...er...friend after setting the oversized Sato-Mari bag between them. He didn't much care about eating what Ryuzaki had touched, because the shorter man was a germ freak and needed to wash or sanitise his hands every two seconds, and continued eating, enjoying his coconut treat. He debated on even questioning the aversion, but eventually folded and asked, "Why no coconut? It's especially good with chocolate."

"Two reasons," the shorter man said simply. For a second, Harry waited for him to go on, but then realised that it was pretty likely that he wouldn't.

Harry huffed in impatience, not missing the small tilt to Ryuzaki's lips that disappeared almost immediately. Fighting the urge to coo or something else possibly demeaning, the wizard said edgily, "Specifics, Ryuzaki. I need specifics or I'm going to go mad."

Ryuzaki sent him a blank, but still pointed, look, which Harry took as meaning 'you're already mad.' Which Harry refused to acknowledge out loud, for obvious reasons.

Eventually, Ryuzaki reached closer to Harry by plunging a tentative hand into the Sato-Mari bag between them. He pulled out one of the many other treats, this time a chocolate chip cookie, and then said, "One being that the taste, when artificially done, is bitter, and I do not like bitter things."
"Bitter's good sometimes."

"Only when it's liquid and unrecognisable in creamer and sugar" came Ryuzaki's prompt reply. Harry laughed at the reference towards Ryuzaki's love of ridiculously sweetened coffee, but then cocked his head as he waited for the next one.

For a long moment, Ryuzaki said nothing, almost as if nervous about it. But even so, the shorter man finally continued, "I am allergic to coconut."

Harry cringed. "Probably found out the hard way too, didn't you?"

Ryuzaki made no inclination otherwise, which Harry decided to take as an affirmative. For a couple of seconds, they were silent, with Harry's thoughts valiantly fighting against each other —'can't eat coconut if I'm ever going to be lucky enough to kiss him'...no, stop that ridiculous range of thinking, Harry Potter!—with no cease, and then Harry decided to continue, "I'm allergic to penicillin. About two years ago, I was given some for the first time and went into shock. Nearly killed me."

"It is the most common drug allergy on the planet, accounting for about ten per-cent. However, most alleged penicillin allergies are not actually penicillin-induced. Are you sure it was the drug?"

Harry rolled his eyes and debated on throwing the empty box at the shorter man's head. "Yes, I'm sure. And if we're going to talk about allergies being misinterpreted, are you sure you're not allergic to latex, Ryuzaki?"

It was probably the highlight of the day, watching Ryuzaki's eyes narrow and his face very slowly turn to face Harry's.

"Excuse me?"

Harry couldn't help but break out in laughter. It took him about five minutes to stop laughing enough to choke out, "Don't look at me like that. It's a valid question. A lot of people who are allergic to coconut are allergic to other foods that have the same allergens as latex. I have a friend who's allergic to latex and can't eat some foods including coconut and avocado. And I can't believe I know this but you don't."

There was a strange expression on Ryuzaki's face. "I don't believe that is the case."

"You can never be sure, huh Ryuzaki?" Harry teased. "Been wearing any latex lately?"

"I have a feeling that this conversation is going in a direction that is not appropriate."

Harry fell off the bench, he was laughing so hard.

***

Every single day Harry spent with him, it seemed as if it got worse.

By the first of July, a full month after seeing Ryuzaki for the first time, Harry Potter had nearly gone mad, and that had only increased in the days after. Not only was Ryuzaki amusing and hilarious to hang around with, due to his strange personality and bizarre ticks, but he increasingly grew to be a person worth dreaming about. Not once since that first dream of Ryuzaki's face had Harry had a nightmare, but instead had had the strangest dreams with a single person starring.

The dreams themselves were strange as well. Instead of being graphic or abstract or like other dreams he had had in the past, he would see Ryuzaki, just sitting there in his crouch. The
atmosphere would change, of course—bakeries and cafés to parks and vehicles—and the expressions would sometimes vary, but that was it. Ryuzaki just sitting in his customary crouch, his big and dark eyes staring endlessly at Harry with that familiar inquisitive spark, sometimes with that small, barely noticeable smile. Ryuzaki standing like the hunchback of Notre Dame, minus the hunchback, on a cobblestone pathway in a private park. Ryuzaki holding a cell phone with his long fingers in a delicate grip...

...Ryuzaki sucking on one of those damned lollipops.

The dreams didn't even have to be about sex or anything along that line. All Harry had to do was stare at him in those dreams and he'd wake up flushed and hot and bothered. He didn't even want to imagine what he'd feel like if he dreamt that way about the private man. He'd probably wake up as a pile of goo or something.

And that was only at night. During the days where they would meet up for tea—and one of Ryuzaki's many instances of gorging himself on sugar-based product—Harry had to force himself to keep from doing something stupid to the shorter man. Regardless of the nearly agonising need to just touch the man, even platonically, he had to keep himself in line. Ryuzaki did not like to be touched, so shamelessly jumping the man wouldn't do when keeping a friendly relationship intact.

It was also pretty clear that Ryuzaki was a bit of a dunce when it came to relationships. The man didn't have any friends, probably because he had done his own version of hiding from the world for quite a period of time—obvious, due to the reluctance to give out a true name and his aversion towards public places and being seen by others. And as he didn't have any friends (although Harry was hopeful that maybe Ryuzaki at least considered him a friend), he probably was defunct in the idea of a relationship along that nature.

Ryuzaki might've been smart, clever, and very good at reading people, but Harry had a feeling that he'd probably have a heart attack if put in that situation. No pun intended.

So yes, Harry was positive that he'd have to keep his hands to himself, no matter how painful and- or tempting it might be, but that didn't mean that it was killing him to do so.

It seemed as if the second Harry had come to terms with his attraction to the socially retarded frog-man, Ryuzaki had been trying his hardest to making it as difficult as possible for Harry to hold himself back. Clearly, Ryuzaki was pretty oblivious to it (although probably aware that Harry stared at his face a bit too much), so it couldn't be intentional...but everything Ryuzaki did was like throwing a human in a cage with a starving werewolf.

It was a bit ridiculous, really.

And very time consuming, too. He was either thinking about Ryuzaki, Kira, or Ron and Hermione in their fourth pregnancy.

Harry, sitting at the bar in his flat with a cup of hot chocolate steaming in his hands, paused from the thoughts of Ryuzaki. He really needed to call on his best friends and see how they were doing. Ron was probably still slightly moping about the Cannons losing yet again, but Hermione was probably cheering him up. Most likely the pregnancy sex.

The emerald eyed wizard cringed and took a sip of his drink.

The twins were due in early November. So four months from now, as it was currently the nineteenth of July, there'd be two more girls running around the Weasley household.

Hermione probably looked like a tank right about now.
He sighed and stood up, not bothering to take the time to clean up or finish his drink. Instead, he ran a hand through his messy hair and debated on changing out of his pyjamas, eventually coming to the logical conclusion that it didn't matter *what* he looked like. They had seen him look loads worse, after all.

With that thought, he Apparated with a loud crack.

***

Forty-nine days.

L sighed, just waiting for the others to demand the freedom of the two Yagamis and Amane Misa. It would definitely be soon. There was no evidence to convict with...

Forty-nine days since Yagami Raito's confinement, and in seven hours, it would be fifty.
Chapter Notes

Dedication to Soci ally-Diisoriiented. Unbeta'd and therefore all mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Six

Turning

20 July 2004

When Harry woke up, the first thing he noticed was that he smelled blueberries.

For one, he wasn't baking anything, and it was definitely a baking smell. Furthermore, he hadn't used his own oven since buying the place, as he wasn't exactly the best cooker in the world.

The first thing he felt was panic.

Very quickly he hopped out of bed, stubbed his toe, broke one plane on his glasses during his flailing to find them in the first place, and nearly ran face-first into his bedroom door that he didn't remember shutting. But it wasn't much of a concern right now, as he was still half asleep, a bit delirious, and full of fear that his house was burning down.

When he finally reached the conjoined living room, kitchen, and dining room, wand at the ready to blast water in every direction he could think of, the first thing he saw was a blob of grey, wrinkly flesh clad in a pair of small, threadbare trousers. The blob had big, bloodshot eyes, gigantic pointy ears, and hair sprouting from strange places on his face.

"Kreacher!" Harry roared.

Said house elf just turned around and said, "Good morning, Master. Kreacher is making you some blueberry muffins, as Kreacher knows they are Master's favourite." He continued on, muttering something under his breath that Harry didn't make out while he placed fruits more common in Britain on a big plate, the design actually quite beautiful.

Harry's stomach promptly growled at the combination of scents swirling in the room.

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Harry's stomach promptly growled at the combination of scents swirling in the room.

Of course, the fruits reminded Harry yet again of Ryuzaki, so when he sat down on a stool, he bonked his forehead on the table to get him off his mind and asked, "How did you get here? I didn't summon you here, did I?" Harry and Ron had had a few drinks before the emerald eyed wizard had left (don't try that at home, kids! Apparating while slightly intoxicated is bad!) but surely it hadn't been enough to actually knock off some of his memory.

"No, Master Harry. Kreacher followed your magical signature after you Apparated from the blood-traitor's house."

"Kreacher..." Harry warned in a low voice. Kreacher immediately apologised, but it didn't sound
very heartfelt. Old habits were hard to break, after all.

The plate of fruit was placed in front of him, along with a plate and some butter. The muffins were plopped on another plate, free for Harry to take at will. Which he did.

After over two months of living off fried food and Japanese steakhouses, it was enough to make him melt. It was almost better than sex *(not really)*.

But almost.

After practically devouring the muffins, all while taking bits of fruit from the plate and taking large gulps of his coffee—only creamer; seeing Ryuzaki put sugar in coffee was enough to break him of putting the crystals in his drinks—that Kreacher had made, he dragged his way to his private quarters, calling behind his back, "No one else knows where I'm at, do they? Not even Ron and Hermione?"

"No, Master Harry. Kreacher is not telling anyone where you are. Kreacher does not even know where he is at with Master."

Harry grinned. "I suppose that works out pretty well, not knowing where you're at in the first place."

"Kreacher suspects that it is very far from England, as it took a while for him to track Master Harry down."

The wizard snorted good-naturedly. "Yeah, I bet. I'm probably one of the only people that can Apparate at that distance, so it's a real accomplishment tracking me and making the distance yourself."

Harry disappeared into his bedroom and waved his wand around a bit, muttering various spells under his bed. He walked into his bathroom, clothes floating behind him, and continued on his morning routine. This, obviously, didn't really compose of much. Among the schedule: brush his teeth, taking a five minute shower, dry off and dress, use a spell to dry his hair, shave, and then clean his glasses. It took all of fifteen minutes for him to get ready, which was normal.

He might've been homosexual, but he didn't take hour-long showers and all that nonsense. He was more interested in proficiency, as he didn't usually care how he looked. If he did, his hair would've been tameable if it was even possible. Hell, he would've *brushed* his hair.

Which he didn't, thank you *very* much. It didn't do much good anyway, opting instead to have a mind of its own regardless. As for tangles...well, that's why wizards invented magic, wasn't it?

He chuckled to himself, strangely amused for absolutely no reason at all. Maybe it was the backlash of spending the day with his two best friends, one glowing with happiness and the other one a tank like expected, and the battalion of kids running around in diapers or completely starkers. Or maybe it was the hope that he'd see Ryuzaki later on in the day, even though the man was utterly swamped in dealing with a slightly mutinous staff (obvious, from what Harry could hear from the increasing number of phone calls from a man with a higher, more abrasive voice) and his probable stack of cases he was trying to do.

It explained the insomnia, that was for sure.

So dressed in an emerald green long-sleeved shirt, some well-fitting blue jeans this time, and a black pair of tennis shoes, he walked into his living room and began getting ready for the day. For once, he was pretty sure he wouldn't be seeing Ryuzaki that day because they hadn't made plans, and besides, he was actually a bit relieved that they weren't meeting up like that had been. He
honestly needed a moment to himself to think.

In other words: trying to lower his blood temperature significantly for the next time they met. Much more of the one-sided tension and he was going to explode.

Perhaps literally.

He had decided, quite spontaneously, that he was sick and tired of having two bulks to carry around on his two legs, so he was cleaning out his bag from the ridiculous amount of books and whatnot. He grabbed it, sat down on one of his couches, and then tipped the bag upside down, watching all of the random...things fall out. Be it books, magical stuff, his wallet, random quills, bits of rubbish from the various candies Ryuzaki needed to consume but didn't have a bin to chuck the trash in...everything was being cleaned out. He had to think of a way to stash his multitudes of products and supplies in a simple, easy-to-use manner.

Broomstick first, then Invisibility Cloak, then trunk, then Hermione's never-ending purse that was filled to the brim, and his wallet. He decided to just put a few of the commodities from Weasley's Wizard Wheezes, like Extendable Ears, Decoy Detonators, and the Darkness Powder, in his bag. There was plenty more, but he decided against the others. He just hoped that he wasn't unexpectedly attacked by one of the few remaining supporters of Voldemort. That definitely wouldn't do for a blood cooler, although it would be for a totally different reason. Ryuzaki meant bad thoughts. Voldemort supporters meant being pissed for the rest of the day and having to go to Britain to throw the idiot in prison.

Not his ideal day, to be perfectly honest.

Regardless, he decided to take a walk in the park, because he really needed a break. This was hilarious in itself, as he was currently hiding out in various countries to take a break from the crazy antics of the Wizarding world. So he shouldn't been complaining, because this world was quite simple, Kira or Ryuzaki and all, in comparison.

Ryuzaki.

It was quite hilarious actually. His first crushes had been women, and he had been so conflicted and shy about the entire thing—mostly because he wasn't really attracted to them sexually, just ideally—because of them being girls. When he had just gotten out of the Battle of Hogwarts, he had almost immediately met a bloke that had melted his bones. Honestly, he had only had sex with a woman once, and most certainly never would again. He loved women, loved their round and curved bodies and their soft, supple flesh, but only on an artistic standpoint. If he were drawing (which he certainly wouldn't be), he would love to draw women. He just wasn't sexually attracted to women, instead finding kindred with them.

Now men, on the other hand...men were sharp, angular, but beautiful all the same. The difference between women and men was that sex was much more fiery, much more passionate, and much more mutual. Men knew how to please men better because they themselves were men. It was second nature, easy to reciprocate even though every man had different tastes.

And God forbid, men and their cocks were drop dead gorgeous.

His thoughts definitely weren't in the right direction. He forced himself to shut his bag and hurry on his way, remembering to shove his cell phone in his pocket at the idea of getting an out-of-the-hat phone call from the mysterious detective. It wouldn't do to miss a call from him; even though Harry wanted him out of his thoughts, it was almost unimaginable to miss an opportunity to see him, even for a moment.
The pressing urge to spend all of his time with Ryuzaki was in reality sort of annoying. It took up too much time. The only other persons he had ever wanted to spend every waking moment with—albeit in a totally platonic way—were Ron and Hermione. But the difference between the lot of them was that Ryuzaki, while emotionally screwed up and a total dunce in the romantic standpoint, could possibly (hopefully) be Harry's lover one day.

Harry seriously doubted it, but he had hoped for far more impossible things before and had been lucky then.

He walked out the door with a vague call of goodbye to his house elf and locked the door, lost in thought. As he walked down the hallways and proceeded to go to Shinjuku Gyoen, he finally gave up and thought about the man that haunted his dreams.

Everything about Ryuzaki...about L...made him focus, made him think. With his only other love, it had been about protecting each other in war, getting as much passion in as they possibly could, living for the moment. Draco Malfoy, while admittedly an arse, was so vibrant, so ridiculously erotic that it was nearly painful to be around him. Yes, Harry had butted heads with the pompous prick for his pridelful ways, but their chemistry had been very, very brilliant. It had been so clear that it should've been noticed between them and their friends at Hogwarts, but regardless, the moments that they had spent together had been wild and lustful, eventually evolving into caring that was almost reluctant on both parts. In the end, Draco had died for Harry to live.

With Ryuzaki, however, it was different. It wasn't a mutual hatred, turned into mindless sex due to long-suppressed hormones, and eventually transforming into love. It had been mere chance, bringing two equally secretive people together, where they became friends, admired each other's reasoning and intelligence, and enjoying the other's company just because. Ryuzaki had alluded to not being happy with being around people, but the shorter man had called Harry, without being asked. He had done it because he was agitated—it had clear as day in his voice—and had needed someone to vent to, leading to their meeting. Where he had vented, also known as thinking out loud in a private park after meeting at Sato-Mari's, and asked Harry's opinion, respecting Harry's opinion.

It was more of an equal standing, more-so than himself and Draco, who had always been dominant due to his upbringing (hadn't stopped Harry from dominating him in bed more times than not, but that was besides the point). Harry knew that they were equal when balanced: both had the ability to rouse every government in their respective worlds, Ryuzaki had his superior intelligence and deductive ability whereas Harry had his magic...they balanced each other in every possible way. And honestly, it was fantastic, beautiful even.

The want had come after a while of knowing him, nearly two weeks, in fact. And the want had interfered Harry while alone, but even so, when they were together, it all-but left his mind. He was just Harry, talking to a friend...yes, a very oddly attractive detective that was currently being hunted by a sadistic mass murderer, but a friend.

And that was all Harry would be unless Ryuzaki wanted something more.

Doubtful, but there was no use bellyaching about it.

The walk was uneventful. Many people were out, having a swell time walking—swimming was more like it; the damn humidity was suffocating—about, talking loudly amongst themselves about chores and dinner and Kira. By the time he got to Shinjuku Gyoen, he had blocked out most of the surrounding noise, opting instead to just look at everything. It wasn't the only time he had visited without the distraction of Ryuzaki, but every time Harry came, he was hit with nostalgia due to all of the achingly familiar gardens.
It was a lot more peaceful this time, however. Almost like his mind had taken a small break from his conscious and was simply absorbing what was right in front of him. It was a relief, after thinking about Ryuzaki non-stop, and he soaked it up like a sponge, relishing the cool shade of the trees.

So obviously, he had to knock into someone.

The man was quite ugly, that was for sure. Well, he had nice teeth, and his dark brown hair was clean and shiny, but other than that, the man was hideous. Narrow brown eyes that seemed too long, greatly prominent cheekbones that did not suit his square face structure very well, and a receding hairline. He was probably in his mid-thirties, and most likely very desperate to get laid, if the lustful glint in his eyes was any inclination.

Harry immediately stepped back to get some space in-between them.

"Well, good morning," the man said in a deep and drawling voice. "I'm so sorry that I ran into you. Normally I'm not so careless. I am Higuchi Kyosuke, and I am pleased to make your acquaintance." The language was eloquent, the Japanese words precise and smooth, clearly pointing to a high education. Probably a high-paying job as well. And it was also ridiculously apparent that the well-bred aspect was thick as to give that illusion in the fakest way possible.

"Oh, hello," Harry replied, also in Japanese. "It's nice to meet you, and I'm sorry as well. It was probably my fault; I wasn't paying much attention to the people around me."

"No matter," Higuchi Kyosuke said. "If it was your fault, you could give me your number for compensation."

*That had to be the lamest come-on in existence,* Harry thought with an internal eye roll. But instead of letting his annoyance show (he did not come here to get hit on), he smiled brightly and said, "Well, my boyfriend might not like you asking me for my number."

For a long second, this strange, slightly odd look came over Higuchi's face. It was almost diabolical...evil, even. Like he was plotting someone's death because of Harry being *taken*.

"I didn't catch your name."

Harry didn't even pause, nor did he break that sickly-sweet smile. "I'm James."

Higuchi opened his mouth to reply back, but thankfully and perhaps mercifully, Harry's phone rang loudly.

"Please excuse me for a moment; I need to take this." Harry pulled out his phone and grinned, hoping dearly in his mind that Ryuzaki wouldn't kick him in the face over this later...

Walking a bit away for the semblance of privacy, although making it loud enough for Higuchi to hear, Harry opened his phone and said in Japanese, "Hey gorgeous. You off work yet? I'm practically desperate to see you, Ryuga-kun."

Higuchi nearly snarled as Ryuzaki hesitated and finally replied in a slow voice, "...excuse me?"

"Well, I'm at Shinjuku Gyoen, and I know you don't like me here, Ryuga-kun, but the weather is just so nice, and I had to get out of bed to take a walk in our favourite park, even though I wanted to wait for you to come home. Do you want to meet up for lunch or something? I'm starved!"

"I'm going to kick you when I see you next, Harry-san."
Harry grinned at the understandable reaction, and then called to Higuchi, "I'm sorry, Higuchi-san, but I have to go to lunch with my boyfriend. He's very impatient, you see. Perhaps I'll see you around sometime!"

Harry barely waited for Higuchi's reply of farewell before walking quickly towards the exit. When he was finally out of earshot of the man, Harry finally clarified himself in English, "Sorry, Ryuzaki. I really was at the gardens and this really creepy bloke asked me for my number and you just had perfect timing to get me out of insulting the poor chap."

"You are one of the strangest people I've ever met."

Harry snorted. "Yeah, right. Immediately after you, I reckon. Anyway, you rang?"

"Yes."

This time, Harry rolled his eyes visibly. "Well?" he asked, dragging the word out to emphasise his exasperation at his vague, one-word answer.

"I'm letting the rats go. I have no choice, and I'm being pressured to do so."

The rats? Harry thought, and then quickly smacked himself up the head for his stupidity. Rats meaning his two Kira suspects that he was holding despite Kira still committing murder. "Oh? If you think the rats are bad for the building, you shouldn't let them go, Ryuzaki. They might give everyone a heart attack, you never know."

"Like I said, I have no choice and no evidence to prove that they're frightening people, regardless of my own internal suspicions."

"This is ridiculous, Ryuzaki, talking about this on the phone. Meet as Esmée's around noon?"

"Noon is sufficient."

Harry couldn't stop the gigantic grin from popping up on his face at the affirmation. "See you then. Just don't kick me when you see me."

The emerald eyed wizard could've sworn he heard the softest laugh come from the other end.

***

L had a strange feeling in his stomach on the way to the French bakery to meet Harry.

It had nothing to do with the Kira case either, or with letting Raito out of incarceration to freely attempt to kill at will. Namely L himself.

In actuality, it almost felt like...nerves. This was completely ludicrous, because L didn't get nervous. He had no reason to be nervous.

Regardless, he was nervous. He recognised the feeling, as he had had it the first time meeting Wammy, and the first time he had ever spoken at an FBI meeting (oh yes, and when he flew in aeroplanes, but that was off-topic). However, those times had been fleeting, very forgettable and easily silenced with L's stone will.

This wasn't going away, though, and it was proving to be very distracting. The coiling in his abdomen was tight and slightly nauseating, it was so intense, and he couldn't take his mind off of it.
He just prayed that it disappeared before he got into the bakery. Frankly, he couldn't deal with it while trying to devour some of those delicious cookies that were baked fresh there.

Wammy pulled the car to the curb and smiled, one of those *I know why you're so fidgety today!* smiles. His stomach didn't stop turning, in fact getting even more twisted as he walked towards the establishment.

He opened the door and the strangest thing happened: his nervousness completely disappeared, *instantly*, the second he laid eyes on his new and only friend.

Almost in a daze, he walked towards the emerald eyed man, said man sporting a smug smile that lit up his entire face. Harry's amusement seemed to be directed at the mountain of sweets and pastries that were already waiting for him, some steaming and some freshly cold.

L sat down after kicking off his loose shoes and cocked his head in puzzlement, internally analysing his own reactions while Harry watched with that same grin. But very quickly, Harry spoke in fluent Italian for a change, "I'm sorry, Ryuzaki, about this afternoon."

Conversation starter indeed. He filed away his response to Harry's presence to ponder later, and answered in Italian as well, "You are forgiven. Although you should've just told the man the truth."

The grin promptly turned into a scowl as he replied in English, "Telling a tiny lie to avoid a potentially disastrous conversation is hardly the end of the world. You saved my skin, but if you wouldn't have called, I would've faked a call anyway. Besides, you shouldn't unnecessarily hurt someone's feelings no matter how ugly and brutish they are. I'm not a blunt, emotionless weirdo like you are. I'd like to see how you'd react in that situation, if told to be nice for once, no matter how genuine the performance."

L took a bit of cookie to avoid answering. After a moment of eating and drinking in comfortable silence, the detective finally leant a bit closer to Harry on his bare feet and began filling in the new developments of the case to his friend.

At the end, Harry leant back and crossed his arms across his chest, green eyes narrowed in thought. "Alright, so you're convinced that this Raito and Misa are the Kiras, but you have to let them go, and you're going to use Raito's own father to get the truth out of them? Honestly, the bit about his own dad pretending to blow his kid's head off in front of his girlfriend is a bit twisted, but if anything'll work, *that* would. But to ask the question you probably don't want to hear or answer...what are you going to do if they pass the test?"

For a long moment, L was silent, and then he answered, "I will not let him out of my sight. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, he will be under my own personal surveillance until I catch him in the act."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "How are you planning on doing that? Are you going to handcuff him to your arm or something?"

L paused in thought, considering the idea. Instantly, Harry said hastily, "Don't even think about it. If you end up handcuffed to that bloke, you're either going to die or you're never going to leave the cover of your headquarters for quite a long time."

"It's the most agreeable alternative. I was actually thinking about something a bit different, but handcuffs would be a satisfactory option. Thank you for the suggestion."

"Come on! You have to be kidding me! You're never going to come and randomly meet me at
Sato-Mari's any more if you're *handcuffed* to some chap that could or couldn't be Kira!"

"I'm sorry, Harry-san, but you've just given the best idea, and I'm going to take full advantage of it."

Harry muttered under his breath, "You're going to be sleeping in the same bed as Kira, and probably taking showers with the nutjob too." There was something else grumbled that sounded like "...it's not fair..." but he wasn't entirely sure. He didn't exactly want to think about it at that particular moment.

"Well," Harry finally said in a defeated, unhappy voice, "I guess I'm going to have to eat by myself and get hit on by random guys at parks because the great Ryuzaki, detective mastermind and a capoeira master, won't be there to be my excuse or personal bodyguard."

L felt the urge to smile, and allowed it to show. It was rather regrettable, but the case was important. After Kira received the death penalty, they would have plenty of time to eat cake and ice cream all around Tokyo. That is, if Harry didn't decide to leave the country any time soon.

"Harry-san, I suppose this will be the last time I see you until this case is solved."

"Bastard," Harry mumbled, putting his chin on the table and pouting.

L ignored that statement. "I should be getting on my way back to headquarters to finish the preparations."

"Please excuse me while I cry in misery."

L had a strange itch to do something horrible and throw cake at Harry's face for the exaggerated despair. It didn't make much sense anyway, as L figured he wasn't very good company with his mind always over-thinking things and the Kira investigation first in his thoughts. Harry NoLastName should've been spending his time touring the country and making friends, although not with the 'really creepy bloke'. That was unacceptable.

Harry leant his head up, a strange expression on his face. Quietly, he said, "What are you staring at? And why so intent all the sudden?"

L hadn't even comprehended the fact that he was staring at the emerald eyed man, his gut once again coiling. This time, however, it wasn't nerves, but instead something that he wasn't familiar with as he had never felt it before. He hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "Excuse me. I seemed to have gotten lost in my thoughts."

The two of them stared at each other before Harry leant forward a bit and said in a surprisingly tender voice, "Just be careful, okay? It would be a horrible birthday present if I found out that L got murdered by Kira because he was foolish enough to take a friend's advice by using handcuffs. Be careful, and watch your back, okay?"

"Do not fret; I cannot die until I solve this case, Harry-san."

A ghost of a smile fell upon Harry's lips as he laughed inaudibly, very close-close-close, "Fret? Who says 'fret' any more besides old women and their grandmothers?"

And then Harry's lips were on his.

***

Perfect, soft, and warm.
Harry almost didn't want to stop the kiss, and had to grasp the edge of the table in a death-grip to keep from taking Ryuzaki's face in his palms. His heavy eyes threatened to close, but he refused to miss even a split-second of Ryuzaki's reaction, and was successful in that at least.

And the expression was one of mildly shocked wonder. Which made sense. Ryuzaki wasn't used to it, and frankly Harry was surprised he hadn't been kicked yet for doing this. This being very stupid. Very, very, very stupid.

Harry pulled away and muttered quickly, knowing that he had to get out of there just as much as Ryuzaki did, "I've got to go. Bye." He refused to look to see the expression on Ryuzaki's face, because he couldn't look. He didn't want to look at that face and see Ryuzaki's brilliant mind calculating and contemplating, and didn't want to see a lack of expression. So he rushed away, hating himself for it but knowing that it was the right thing to do to keep his own emotional sanity intact.

It was all he could do to keep himself from running back.
Chapter Seven

Accidents

23 July 2004

"I am not doing this because I want to."

Amane Misa prattled on about "Raito being Misa's" and then brought up kissing. Kissing. Consenting lip 'action'. Possibly trading germs and saliva. Kissing.

L wasn't paying a bit of attention, replying back without really listening to his words with the dominant side of his brain. Watching that was not exactly the problem, as he didn't really expect Raito and Misa to do much kissing around him anyway; it was Harry that was the problem.

L was smart. He had never deluded himself to thinking otherwise, and was especially prideful of this fact. L was clever and knew people. Be it reactions, like lying and truth, or even potential moves that a criminal would make, L was the man to go to. He knew people.

Well, he had thought so.

L was unattractive and socially awkward. He also had never deluded himself on this fact either, and had accepted it as normal. He did not get along with people because of his childish and competitive personality. As for being attractive, there were men like Harry himself or even Raito, and women like Amane, in the world that stole hearts away. They were attractive, socially and physically. Amane had obviously taken Japan by storm because of her bodily appearance and her societal ease. Raito was handsome in a modern, boyish sense as well, with easy good looks and a smart but easygoing personality (well, when he wasn't Kira, anyway).

And then there was Harry NoLastName.

Harry was a paradox. A contradiction. Exotic. Out of the ordinary and remarkable. Who had natural green eyes like that? Who had deep black hair naturally that shined in the sunlight like his did? Who had skin that smooth and youthful, or lips that stretched in such a carefree and lovely smile? Who had such a tall, lean but strong figure like that, with a form that could shield L from anything and anybody?

And who had the ability like Harry did that made people feel safe and protected, even in the suffocating bustle of large crowds, or had the talent of making everything else go away even when
he wasn't speaking. Who had the capability of making people want to spend every moment with him, even if they had to go out of their way to do so?

Amane's voice was grating on his nerves. Now that he was officially taking Harry's advice and was handcuffed to the enemy, a murderer regardless of the circumstances, he wouldn't get much more peace to think about what was really on his mind. And it had been on his mind for the past couple of hours like a fly trying to get to his cake.

It was a relief to have a semblance of silence when Aizawa practically dragged the protesting woman to her own personal quarters. No, L was not looking forward to dates between the two, or the kissing, although...

"Raito-kun, would you care to pretend to have a relationship with Misa-san so we can find out more information about the Second Kira?"

"Ryuzaki, that goes against my moral code. I can't take advantage of a woman's emotions like that."

Nothing was going right. Absolutely nothing. He was no closer to solving this case than figuring out why Harry had kissed him in a French bakery a few minutes after noon.

He had always been under the impression that such actions were a bit disgusting. If he thought about it from his usual scrutinising and contemplative perspective, pressing a pair of lips together did not look or sound particularly appealing. Open-mouthed kissing was even worse. Breathing another person's breath that only restricted the level of oxygen that the lungs could inhale, and the germs...he always had the urge to shudder at the idea of trading saliva, almost literally spitting in someone else's mouth. There was no way he could've known where that mouth had been. He could've been eating battery acid (metaphorically) for all he knew, and that wasn't L's idea of increasing hormone activity in the blood.

Kissing had always sounded revolting, and everything else that came after it was even more repulsive in his opinion.

Yet, that kiss had been anything but horrendous.

He understood the appeal now that he had his own experiences. Softness, yes, but it was about being close to a human being. In spite of trading bodily fluids, however little, it had been...rather nice. He had been shocked, and confused (because it didn't make sense; Harry was attractive and should've been kissing someone on his level of striking features, which L Lawliet definitely was not), but it had been interesting to feel that level of closeness. It was sort of like fireworks, really, those pink and blue and silver striped ones that were on sticks and sparkled with different colours. Even the tingly sensation was similar to that.

It made him want to close his eyes, for once, which was an odd reaction. L never wanted to close his eyes.

Well, it hadn't been some huge, drawn out position either. Just their lips pressed against each other. Their mouths had been closed, so the contact had just been mostly fleshy instead of wet. But to L, it had been interesting and...pleasant all the same.

Who was he kidding, the sugar monster in his head?

It had been more than pleasant, and he couldn't skip over that either. To be perfectly honest, utterly frank, and completely straightforward with himself, it had been enjoyable. And while shocking, it had been enough to make him think about it non-stop since it happened.
Again, to be sincere with his own long-dead emotions and humanity, he actually was curious as to how it would feel opening mouths a little bit.

Or maybe a lot.

At the moment, he did have to admit that he was more intrigued about why Harry had kissed him in the first place. It had been out of the blue, but intent, as if he had been planning it or...had wanted to do it for a long time.

That in itself tied back into the 'illogical' department. He couldn't comprehend why it had happened, because Harry was fascinating with his words and his thought processes and even his appearance. Every moment was different, changed even, because there were so many sides buried underneath that calm and joking exterior. It was like scratching at the base of a growing tree, because it was smooth and normal on the outside, but when dug into, there were hundreds of different colours and multitudes of textures that emphasised the bright, growing plant.

There were so many different ways to look at him, depending on perspective and the conversation and even the lighting in the room. There were immeasurable ways to see him.

And not once, had L ever tired of looking at or speaking to him. Every single day, there was a new discovery to make, a new piece of the puzzle of Harry NoLastName's mind, another facial expression that L had not seen yet. Every moment was unique, and captivating, and why was he thinking about this while trying to enlighten the task force about the new building they'd be moving into in a couple of days?

He showed the presentation, explained the external layout of the building, and avoided the funding questions of said structure (which should've been obvious; who did they think he was? A famous detective that worked for nothing?).

Honestly. And they didn't know about his other detective codes he also got paid for...or Wammy's fortune due to his infamous inventions.

Yes. About thirty-three million pounds wasn't really much between the two of them.

And no, he wasn't being boastful. Not at all. It was just simple fact.

Harry probably would've rolled his eyes at that.

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Harry was miserable.

Even sitting in the dining room of Ron and Hermione's home with his practically-adopted family (what was left of it, anyway) joking around him, he was completely and utterly miserable.

It wasn't just Ryuzaki, either. Well, mostly it was, but not only. Being around all of these people when there should've been at least a dozen more only rutted him deeper in a black pit of emotional despair.

Technically, everyone that had died had died because of him. Instead of a gigantic mass of redheads and others mixed in, there was only a rare few that were dominated by dark hair and brown hair. Instead of Molly Weasley's fantastic cooking, they had a mix of Hermione and Andromeda's, which was good but just not the same.

When dinner was over, they all moved to the living room, sending the younger children off to their rooms to play. All that was left was Harry's only remaining family, consisting of Arthur
Weasley, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger-Weasley, Andromeda Tonks, Angelina Weasley (formerly Johnson and George's widow), Audrey Weasley (Percy's widow), and Armelle du Vey (Fleur's cousin who had taken in her three children with Bill Weasley).

And that was it.

Well, besides the twelve kids running around, most of them belonging to Ron and Hermione if he counted the ones still in her body. And that was sort of depressing in itself. There were more kids than adults, at twelve to a meagre eight, including Harry himself.

Teddy Lupin, belonging to Remus and Nymphadora Lupin, both deceased.

Molly and Lucy Weasley, belonging to Percy and Audrey Weasley, one deceased.

Victoire, Dominique, and Louis Weasley-Delacour, belonging to Bill and Fleur Weasley (-Delacour), both deceased.

Fred and Roxanne Weasley, belonging to George and Angelina Weasley, one deceased.

And then Hermione and Ron's four kids, not including the two unborn ones.

Too many dead people in his family, and he had a horrible feeling that it would increase again soon.

Everyone he had ever had feelings for, even back when he had deluded himself into liking girls, had died. Be it Cho or Ginny or Draco, they always died. Even if it wasn't serious any more, as was the case with Ginny and Cho, he had still considered both of them dear friends, Ginny a sister even, so they had been huge blows. Draco on top of that had been...devastating, to say the least.

And now there was Ryuzaki, L, to worry about, especially since it had been so long since he had seen him. Myocardial infarctions due to some evil mass murderer wouldn't be a problem to counteract. There was probably some rule to the power that the person had to die, no matter who or what interfered. The person who Kira wanted to die was going to die, whether Harry liked it or not. It was like the Killing Curse: if someone was hit, they weren't going to miraculously live because Healers saved them at the last second (there was no 'last second', really). In the Kira victims, saving a victim was unheard of. They died, and there was nothing that could be done to stop it.

Heart attacks were when blood flow to the heart was stopped and blocked, usually by a blood clot due to plaque in the arteries or some other mass. If the clot was not removed and the arteries cleared for blood to be transported again to the heart, the patient would die because of lack of oxygen in the blood.

It was only speculation on his part, but the heart attacks came on so suddenly in the Kira victims that there was no time whatsoever to even consider saving the victim. It was probably the point of Kira's power, really, causing them to die too quickly to be saved.

The only difference was that once a victim had died by Kira's power, the contract or whatever would be fulfilled. If they were dead, then the power had done its job respectively and would continue on to the next person in line.

That being said, myocardial infarctions were quite a bit different than the Avada Kedavra. When a person got hit with that spell, they died—excluding the complexity of Harry's case, in which he had survived twice—because it was magic. There were no ways to counteract it, because the Avada was quick, simple, and no one really understood how the body died as there was no evidence as to where the spell affected a person.
Heart attacks, on the other hand, were different all together.

Heart attacks were known. Everyone and their grandmothers knew what caused a heart attack, how to best prevent it, and how to save a person who was having one. And because of that, heart attacks could be counteracted in a way that the Avada Kedavra couldn't, because Muggles and wizards alike were aware and knowledgeable about them.

The thing was...heart attacks were a leading cause of death. Regardless, Muggles only saved people half the time they were having a heart attack, if it was one that was taking its own sweet time to kill the heart. Usually, the Muggle died on the way to the hospital or quickly after admittance, and there was nothing that could be done to resurrect them after a period of time. In the Muggle world, they got a heart attack and had a sixty-four per-cent chance of dying because of it.

This meant that in the Muggle world, the great detective L, Kira's greatest opponent, would most likely die, especially since his diet was rubbish.

However, in the Wizarding world...it was quite a bit different.

A witch or wizard hadn't died and stayed dead of a myocardial infarction in over two hundred years.

Because of magic.

If a wizard was having an active heart attack, there was a simple series of spells that every wizard learned in intermediate Charms classes during schooling. First, the artery cleaning spell, and second, a blood circulator if needed. Blood thinning spells could also be used.

If a wizard was already dead, having suffered from a sudden cardiac arrest before being able to do the normal spells, someone in the vicinity or even a house elf could do the same, immediate artery cleaning, then blood circulators, possibly even oxygenating and body-cooling spells, and then a sudden shock that would resurrect immediately. And without blocked arteries anywhere in the body and body circulating spells or oxygen spells running through their system, there was no failure of resurrection, nor any brain or heart muscle damage.

All-in-all, the entire process took about ten to thirty-five seconds, depending. And usually it was closer to the ten, regardless of the witch or wizard being dead or not.

Ryuzaki would be safe, even if it was necessary for the victim to die. Be it a contract or an unfailing death sentence via Kira's powers, Ryuzaki would die, yes...

...but that didn't mean Harry couldn't revive him immediately after said death.

Again, it was only speculation, but it seemed valid. And there was a very, very good chance that Ryuzaki would end up having a heart attack. It was surprising Kira hadn't already attacked him. If Kira really was that Raito bloke (and Harry trusted Ryuzaki's judgement immensely and not only because he wanted to jump the shorter man's bones) then it was quite astounding that Ryuzaki wasn't already dead.

Giving names out was deadly, even in the Wizarding world, and it was only getting more lethal with the existence of Kira.

There was one problem with possibly resurrecting Ryuzaki straight from the dead, and it was pretty much the icing on one of Ryuzaki's strawberry cakes.
Harry had to *be there* to save him.

He couldn't very well keep the detective from staying dead after his almost-certain future heart attack if he wasn't standing right on top of him with a wand at the ready. It would be important to *be there*, unless that one chap with the really loud and abrasive voice was really a wizard in disguise. Which happened to be as likely as Voldemort coming back up from the grave—*alright, bad comparison Harry*, the emerald eyed wizard thought, *because he did stuff like that all the time; don't jinx yourself!*—and doing the Cha-Cha—*that's more like it*, he added internally.

Harry *had* to do *something* to get onto the investigation team, or he was going to go mad with worry. Even if it would be a bit awkward seeing *him* after the kiss...

And now that it was up as a subject, Harry let his mind wander off the heart attack theory.

Ryuzaki most likely hated him right now, or was completely weirded out. Or he was preparing to give Harry a solid kick to the face or throw him through a round of Twenty Questions (well, probably more like Five Hundred Million Questions).

That man's inquisitive streak was damn well *annoying*—

"...arry? Earth to Harry!" came a woman's voice, startling him out of his Ryuzaki-centred thoughts.

"I didn't do it" was Harry's immediate reply.

There was some laughter, and Harry finally looked around, finding the house quieter and the guests gone.

"Guilty conscious?" asked Hermione with a beaming smile, knowing full well just like her husband that Harry was completely captivated by someone, although the emerald eyed wizard hadn't really elaborated on it much.

"A bit," Harry admitted, recalling that impromptu kiss. "When did everyone leave?"

Ron called from the kitchen, "About twenty minutes ago, mate. You said your goodbyes and all, but we could all tell you were out of it and not really paying attention. You were lost in la-la land, or up your little boyfriend's ar—"

"*Ron!*" exclaimed Harry and Hermione simultaneously.

"What's up with the mystery bloke, anyway? Have you both had hot, steamy man-sex yet?"

Hermione looked mortified, but Harry responded with a good-natured hiss of "Fuck you" before saying moodily to Hermione, "But no, we haven't. I just kissed him, that's all."

"You seem upset about that, though. Did he not want you to?" asked Hermione in a comforting voice, and Harry thought about rolling his eyes at the mothering nature of the mum of six (soon enough, anyway).

"You don't know him, Hermione. If you did, you'd think I'd gone mad."

Ron walked back in, shoving a plate of lemon tarts under his nose. "Why? Is he ugly or something? You haven't told us much about him yet, making us all curious on why you're acting like a little girl with a crush on some superstar."

*Not far from it, Ronald Weasley*, Harry wanted to say. *He might not be exactly a superstar, but he*
sure is famous. Instead, he retorted, "He's not ugly, but he's a bit...er...strange. I don't know how to explain him; you'd have to see him to understand."

Ron snorted.

In disdain, Hermione huffed and said, "I'm sure we'd love him. Draco was strange—" She ignored Ron's exclamation of "No, he was absolutely nutters!" and continued as if she hadn't been interrupted, "—but we grew to like him after quite a while of hating him. I'm sure this Ryuzaki would be easier to learn to like, as we haven't had a lifetime to harbour a hatred for him."

Harry was shaking his head before she finished. "No, guys, I'm serious. He's weird. I don't even know why I like him, but I do."

"Well, he can't be that bad..."

Ron muttered, "Not as bad as Draco anyway."

Harry shot his best friend a glare and dead-panned, "He literally doesn't eat anything but sugar and pastries. Sometimes he eats sugar cubes for a snack and drinks coffee creamer right out of their packages. But even though he eats sugar every second of every day, he's severely underweight and looks like a walking skeleton. He's a germ freak, and washes his hands about a dozen times an hour. He doesn't wear shoes, and he wears the same type of outfit every single day even if it's not the same one. He has a tendency to kick people, and he pouts. He sits like a frog, walks like an old man, holds objects like they're dirty, and hates being in public places because he doesn't like to be looked at. He suffers from a case of insomnia so severe that he has permanent black bags under his eyes, almost as if he applies eye-liner on a day-to-day basis. He looks like he has never stepped in the sun in his life. He's so clever that he makes Hermione look like Neville in potions class, but he's so weird about it that you could smack him upside the head a million times and not be satisfied. He's socially awkward, hates people, and is so childish on occasion that he could be classified as a ten-year-old. But when he's not acting like a child, he is so serious that he puts Mad-Eye Moody to shame."

Harry took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing heartbeat and slightly hysterical countenance at their utter shock at the description, and then blurted out loudly, "And he's suicidal! The bugger's going to get himself killed, being chained up to a potential murder suspect! He's going to end up dead, and I'm not going to be there to bail his arse out! Hermione, I need a calming potion before I start hyperventilating!"

True enough, just finally admitting his fear of Ryuzaki dying in the face of the Kira case to his two closest friends was causing him to panic. He had to get on the investigation team, because he had to be by Ryuzaki's side. If he died, Harry had a feeling that he would lose it, just like he had when Draco had died.

Harry didn't love the detective whose name he didn't know. Not yet, at least, but he had an inkling that much more time spent around the man was only going to cause his feelings to escalate. Harry didn't have very many people he truly cared about, but when he did, he would go to the ends of the planet to protect them.

He would protect 'L' no matter what came in his way (he tried not to think about Ryuzaki already being dead; they hadn't spoken to each other since the twenty-third of July, and it was the twenty-ninth of September now, so he could've already been dead and Harry wouldn't know it).

So when Harry had downed the calming potion, he told his two best friends everything.

And when they were finished, they got to work trying to find a lead for Harry to use as leverage to
get on the investigation team, for an excuse for Harry to get in touch after so long of no contact.

Which meant Harry would be able to stand at Ryuzaki’s side, whether as friends or the off-chance of something more.

That was where he needed to be, and where he felt like he belonged.
Chapter Notes

Dedication to **Sociially-Diisoriiented**. Beta credit to **Skylara**. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Now with fanart by **AuraBlackWolf/lawlietlover** coloured [here](#) and not coloured [here](#).

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

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**Chapter Eight**

*Alias*

2 October 2004

L started at the name on the caller-ID with concealed shock.

As he had been in the middle of explaining to the investigation team that "No, Raito-kun and I will not be fighting any more, and no, I'm not giving up on this case; I'm still just a little unmotivated, that is all," L being interrupted by the most unlikely of callers was enough to make the others question the strange expression on his sharp features.

"Ryuzaki, is something wrong?" asked Raito, obviously concerned that he had been staring at the ringing phone for longer than necessary.

"No...but I do need to take this phone call..." L replied in a curious voice, and flipped it open, standing up in his odd way to leave the area for a semblance of privacy.

"Yes?" said L in French, dragging Raito behind him absently as he made for the back and empty half of the room. It was much better to not have the rest of the investigation team hear the conversation, and since the entire room knew English, Harry's native language was out of the question.

There was a long, drawn-out sigh of relief on the other end, and then Harry NoLastName's airy and melodic timbre said, also in French, "Thank Merlin. You're not six-feet under or scattered in the ocean or chopped up in little pieces or I don't even know what, but something bad."

Instantly, his two-month-long depression evaporated at the sound of that voice, and he replied, "Yes, I'm not dead. And you have a very odd vocabulary."

"Look who's talking, weirdo. But seriously, I did call for a reason, you know, and it pertains to the Kira investigation."

There was no mistaking the word 'Kira', no matter the language, and Raito turned towards L and said, "Kira? What about Kira? Are we getting a lead?"

"Is that the criminal in question? Still chained up to him, are you?" Harry's voice sounded irked,
perhaps even bitter or acidic.

Instead of answering Harry, L turned to Raito and replied in Japanese, "Perhaps, Raito-kun, but please mind your own business or I will kick you."

Then, again in French: "Yes. I took your advice after all."

There was a bit of an awkward silence, and then Harry said, "I still don't like it. But whatever the case, I have some information that you might want pertaining to the Kira case."

"This is not a secure connection, and anyone could be listening."

"Actually, no. I can get cell phones with scrambling algorithms too, Ryuzaki, so no one but that potential murderer will be able to hear me. Happy?"

L’s eyes narrowed at the underlying idea of Harry getting such a high-tech cell phone (and the I-know-something-you-don’t tone), and said, "James-san. Can I hear the information? It will be useful, as we're at a loss down here."

"Back to the James-san bit, are we? Well, I suppose it's for the best. Anyway, I found some evidence linking the current Kira to a company called Yotsuba there in Tokyo. You've heard of it?"

"Yotsuba?" L questioned, not buying the statement.

So Harry began talking a mile a minute, to the point that L, who spoke French fluently, had to ask the British man to repeat himself twice.

In the end, L’s eyes were larger than his teacup saucers. He quickly made a beeline for the computers, nearly knocking Raito off his feet at the suddenness of the action, and then sat down at his chair like usual, putting the phone on speaker and typing like a fiend.

"Keep speaking in French, James-san, as you are now being heard by the entire investigation team."

"Yes, yes, I hear you. I'm going to speak in Italian just to annoy you. Are you looking it up?"

L brought up a graph of the stock counts, seeing the dramatic incline over a short period of time. He heard a couple of questions behind him, but he ignored them, bringing up another page with deaths benefiting Yotsuba, Inc.

An astounding number...

"But only three heart attacks, James-san. The others were accidents and diseases."

"Exactly. They were similar diseases if not the same ones, and the accidents were mostly car accidents. It has always been beneficial to Yotsuba, but only a fair few times has it been positive for rival companies. And if this is true, if Yotsuba is either funding Kira or has Kira among them, then you know what this means, right Ryuzaki?"

L's jaw dropped in a rare show of pure emotion. Kira can kill in ways other than heart attacks!

"James-san," the detective said, switching to English suddenly so the task force could join in the conversation, "The Japanese police have stopped supporting the capture of Kira. They were bribed, along with politicians, and now the NPA has pulled from this case. It would make absolute sense that Yotsuba would be using their funds to keep Kira from being caught."
"Pull up their financial records!" Harry exclaimed, taking the hearing and addressing everyone in English as well (Harry's Japanese wasn't exactly the best, so English was the best bet). L's chest had that tight feeling again, just like in the bakery before...that, and he smiled a bit to himself, feeling a strange sort of pride at Harry helping in the investigation so wonderfully.

Not taking his eyes off the screen, L called out, "Raito-kun, pull up Yotsuba's financial records and see if any major withdrawals have been taken out of their accounts. If there are, find out where the money went. If not, look up the members of Yotsuba's finances and find anything on them."

"On it!" Raito replied instantly, while Matsuda Tota said, "Are we all supposed to be speaking in English now?"

"Seems like it," mumbled Yagami Soichiro.

Within minutes, Raito was in Yotsuba's system, caramel eyes darting around the figures, and then he cried out, "They've taken almost 2.5 billion yen out of their financial department in the past two months, and none of it has a record! This could easily be the—"

"Ryuzaki?" came Wammy's voice over the speakers.

"Yes?"

"Matsukura business and financial planner, Masahiko Kida, has just contacted detective Eraldo Coil to discover L's name and whereabouts."

"What?" asked Harry loudly.

"Is that—?"

"Yes, Watari, that is James-san."

"This proves that Yotsuba and Kira have a connection!" said Raito with enthusiasm. "Are you ready to get out of your depression and catch Kira, Ryuzaki?"

Harry was complaining about Ryuzaki's impending demise by some other random detective until he questioned curiously, "You were...depressed?"

"Everyone be quiet for a moment!" L finally called out in a hard voice, interrupting the countless conversations going on all at once. For a long minute, there was just the sound of breathing and L chewing on his thumbnail, but eventually, the detective said to Harry in French, "Doing this over the phone is not advisable." He took a deep breath and continued, "I think I'd...perhaps you should be here, now that the investigation team is knowledgeable of you and the invaluable information you've given us today. Also, I'd like to hear how you came about this data."

L could sense that Harry had a grin the size of Chile on his face. He could definitely hear the beaming smile, along with the ring of triumph in his voice, when the emerald eyed man replied, "Sure. Just give me directions."

"I can arrange to have Watari pick you up whenever necessary to bring you to the location. However, I must ask if you have any form of identification with your alias of James Lupin, so it can be used to program you into the system as the security here is state-of-the-art."

"Yes. And don't ask how," he added right before L had spoken the question, with that strange I-know-something-you-don't-tone again.

"Fine. I will have Watari get you at Sato-Mari's in an hour, if this is fine with you."
Harry shuffled around and said, "What? You're not coming to give me a reception? You missed my birthday, you know!"

"I'm not dead. That is your birthday present."

"Lame! I feel so under-appreciated!" Harry complained after letting out a snort of amusement.

L fought the urge to roll his eyes. L didn't do things that childish. That was Harry's forte. "If I come, you know he will be with me, correct?"

There was a huff. "Yeah, yeah, I know. Come anyway and I'll buy a strawberry cake to give to you."

L immediately said, "I will be there."

"Coming for the cake instead of wanting to be with the coolest bloke in the world? You suck."

L picked up the phone, banged it against the table a couple of times, and then hung up, a small smile on his face that didn't go unnoticed.

His chest felt tighter.

***

L nearly had to drag Misa to her floor so she wouldn't accompany Raito and himself.

They ended up being a couple minutes late, so L was a bit disappointed about that, but his copper-haired reluctant companion sat on the other side of the limousine with a contemplative expression on his face. His arms were crossed, and those caramel eyes were narrowed on L's face. It was starting to make him uncomfortable, and he was thinking about bringing the subject up when Raito finally commented, "This guy we're meeting...who is he?"

L paused, at odds with this one. He wasn't sure who Harry was, or what he did for a living, but he knew one thing for sure: "He is the second friend I've ever had."

Which wasn't exactly true.

If L considered him a friend, Harry would've been the first friend the detective had ever had. He had told Raito that he was his first friend not even a week before meeting the emerald-eyed man for the first time, so he had to say the second friend. However, that had been a lie, because L wasn't friends with him. He could never be friends with a murderer, no matter the lack of evidence.

Truth be told, L didn't know what to consider Harry, to be honest. He turned his wide, fathomless eyes back to the window, ignoring Raito for the moment, and mulled over what he felt for the man.

It wasn't just 'friendship', really. 'Friends' spent time together, yes, and passed humorous comments between each other, but it was more than that with Harry and L. Even being away from Harry for over two months hadn't really decreased how much enjoyment they shared just talking to each other.

'Friends' didn't have two, if not more, meals a day with each other seven days a week. But Harry and L had, and had enjoyed every moment even though L had had various urges to kick Harry in exasperation.
'Friends' didn't make chests tight. And L's chest was tight, tighter than the string of a bow.

'Friends' didn't make each other strangely nervous before seeing each other. And L's stomach curled up on itself, the tension and nauseous feeling back again just like it had been before the incident at the bakery.

'Friends' didn't kiss. And Harry had kissed L.

...but L hadn't pulled away either.

Like déjà vu, the 2002 Nissan President parallel parked close to the door of Sato-Mari's, and his stomach felt just the same as last time: fluttery and nervous and nearly sickening.

However, he didn't even have to get out of the vehicle, because this time, Harry came to him.

He had a gigantic bag of sweets, which normally would've caught L's eye immediately, but things had changed. This was Harry, who looked remarkably different. His jeans, just like last time, actually fit for once, and he still was wearing a short-sleeved shirt (green this time), with the same jewellery and the same round glasses.

But it was Harry's eyes, filled to the brim with laughter and excitement, which caught L's attention and made the man look so different. He barely noticed when the strange feeling in his stomach and the tightness in his chest all-but disappeared, opting instead to focus on Harry practically skipping to the car, throwing it open, and automatically producing a bag of chocolate chip cookies in front of L's face.

"Merry Christmas!" Harry practically sang in English.

L didn't know what was more amusing: the look of poorly-concealed shock on Raito's face or Wammy's desperate attempt to prevent himself from laughing. L just took the bag hesitantly and said, "Thank you, James-san. But you promised me cake."

Harry dead-panned, "I've got your cake, Ryuzaki. Hold your horses and eat the cookies I so generously purchased for you."

He hopped in, pulled out a cup of green tea ice cream, and finally laid eyes on Raito. L was surprised to see a strange look in his eyes at the sight, but as quickly as it was there, it disappeared, and Harry said, "You must be Yagami Raito." At said teen-ager's nod, Harry continued, "Well, I'm James. James Lupin, or vice-versa, depending on your preference. And I'd recommend you get something from the bag now before Ryuzaki eats it all."

Raito shook his head and politely declined, so Harry called, "You too, Watari. Want something?"

"No thank you, James-san. I'm quite alright, and it is dangerous to eat and drive."

"Good. All mine," mumbled L, digging his hand in the bag of cookies and pulling one out in his delicate grip.

Harry turned back to Raito after snorting, glanced down at the handcuffs, and said, "I still don't approve of this, Ryuzaki."

With his mouth full of delicious chocolate, L said, "Well, you shouldn't have given me the idea, James-san."

"Stop with the honorifics, Ryuzaki!"
"I second that with enthusiasm," added Raito.

Harry shot another strange look at the copper-haired eighteen-year-old and said, "You know what? You remind me of someone I know. Mind you, he's quite a bit younger than you, but you both have similar appearances. It's kind of creepy."

That caught L's attention. "Who?"

Harry hesitated, then said, "My godson Teddy, actually." Almost immediately after that statement, the emerald eyed man laughed and said, "Well, sometimes. The kid always changes, but for the most part, he has the same youthful features as you with similar coloured hair. Although he's definitely not Japanese...but then again...he has his—er—moments. Merlin, never mind; you wouldn't understand anyway."

This statement was said almost like an inside joke, like L was missing something crucial.

"Thank you?" Raito said with a faltering smile, and Harry just snorted again and replied, "It doesn't matter. Anyway, where are we heading?"

"To headquarters," L answered, glancing up and seeing Harry look away quickly, as if embarrassed. For a second, L wondered if Harry would be daft enough to say something about their last meeting in front of Raito, but then shrugged it off, knowing that Harry had more sense than that.

"Well, that's enlightening. I guess you have some ultra-secret-kick-arse base in the Imperial Palace or at the bottom of the ocean. Or maybe you have some awesome aeroplane flying above us or wait! Maybe it's a gingerbread house out in some deep, dark forest!"

L's eyes widened at that. "Watari...is that possible?"

Harry laughed, while Raito raised an eyebrow, obviously wondering why such a strange man was riding with them to the Kira investigation headquarters.

"I'm just kidding, Ryuzaki. Besides...you'd eat the thing in a day."

"Yes, that is true. You have to be increasingly ridiculous to make up for lost time, I see."

"Apparently so. Oh, how I've missed annoying you, Ryuzaki. But really, where are we going? How do I know you're not planning on taking me to the outskirts of Tokyo and axe murdering me or something?" The sound of Harry's British tone was clearly stating 'Yeah, and fat chance of that happening...' Which was interesting, for lack of a better word.

"Don't make me kick you. And we are going to the Marunouchi district."

"He does have a mean kick," Raito said with a smile.

Harry glanced at L with a grin. "You kicked him?" Switching to Italian (mercifully), Harry said, "Bravo, you suicidal nutjob! You're just asking for this kid to kill you. And he's awfully young, don't you think?"

"Yes, but to be honest, his intelligence rivals mine even at his age. And about that statement, please observe him carefully and tell me your opinion."

Reverting back to English, Harry replied solemnly, "Yes, master."

L threw a cookie at him.
The first thing Harry noticed was Amane Misa on a set of high-tech screens.

The first thing Harry said was "No fucking way."

Ryuzaki walked past him, dragging the potential murderer behind him, and said, "Yes, James-san. That is the Misa I was referring to."

Harry felt a bit astonished; not exactly because she was one of the most famous women in Japan right now, but because the actress-model was currently painting her toenails on surveillance cameras for being the suspected Second Kira.

"Well...er...that's interesting." He glanced at the others and introduced himself quickly as to get away from the familiar-but-not staring (it was an uncomfortable reminder of the Wizarding world). "Hello. You may call me James. Please no honorifics; I have to deal with that enough, so I'd appreciate it if you'd drop them unlike someone I know."

Perhaps the reason for Yagami Raito's reaction of wide eyes, along with the rest of the (quite small) investigation team, was the fact that no one really spoke to Ryuzaki like Harry was. Everyone was unnervingly polite, including Ryuzaki's lead suspect, almost as if they had already placed the detective on a large pedestal. Even though it seemed that Ryuzaki had put Yagami at an equal status of sorts, the young man still seemed to acknowledge that Ryuzaki was still the highest man on the totem pole.

They introduced themselves, but Harry was more interested in the high-tech equipment.

And Ryuzaki, of course, but that was beside the point.

At that, Harry took a deep breath and steeled himself, ready to be part of the team that was going to catch Kira—all of them.
Chapter Nine

Misa

2 October 2004

Harry was laughing so hard he fell off the couch.

It was better to laugh than to stammer, blush, and then half-heartedly deny that no, he didn't feel that this was a double-date at all.

Misa was obviously not thrilled to have another addition to her 'date' with Raito, if her shrill "Wha?" was to account for anything. She complained about not having enough alone time with Raito until she paused and asked slowly, "Wait a minute...Ryuzaki, is this going to be a double-date? You really are a creepy pervert after all, chained up to Misa's Raito, and now this guy is here too..." Harry snorted, getting a grin from the actress-model.

"I'm not doing this because I want to," Ryuzaki said blandly, with the air of someone who had had this conversation once before. Raito looked embarrassed at the show his girlfriend-but-not-girlfriend was giving.

Harry simply fell off the couch and tried not to think about how he wished it was a double-date, and a voluntary one at that, but with another couple. Maybe Ron and Hermione, although they had a tendency to either be too sappy or too fearful that their children had burnt down the house with Daddy's wand or something.

Apparently, Ryuzaki had been an unwilling participant to the rather dull dates the two suspects were having daily. Raito seemed to be an unwilling participant as well.

Harry thought this was rather funny; hence the falling off the couch episode. By the time he had righted himself and wiped his eyes from the few tears, he was being stared at by the other three like he had suddenly sprouted a Grindylow head out of his ear, not that they knew what that was, of course.

"What?" asked Harry with a chuckle. "I was just remembering something." Then, in a mocking voice that was way too sweet to be normal, Harry chirped, "Oh, Ryuga-kun! That man just wouldn't leave me alone, asking me for my number and all! But come on, gorgeous, let's go get something to eat after you get off work! I've been waiting to see you all day!"

Misa was choking, whether from amusement or horror he didn't know (probably a mixture of both), and Raito looked between Harry and Ryuzaki as if figuring something out in his head.
Ryuzaki, on the other hand, mumbled, "I forgot to kick you for that."

Harry snorted, and then replied, "You have to admit that it was hilarious. But if you had seen the guy, you would've been just as reluctant to piss him off as I was. I mean, he looked diabolical. Anyway, you called, and did your job wonderfully Ryuzaki."

"So you and Ryuzaki are boyfriends?" asked Misa in her feminine voice.

Ryuzaki cocked his head, that speculative expression back in his eyes, and Harry knew that the detective was thinking about their last meeting together. Hastily, the wizard laughed and said, "Nah, he just called at the right time. We're...friends, I guess."

Raito's caramel eyes were intently focussed on Ryuzaki's expression, trying to decipher the thoughts running though that always-active brain of the detective's.

"Yes," Ryuzaki finally said, picking up another cherry from the bowl in the centre of the table. "We are friends."

Misa grinned, shot a glance at Raito, and said, "Well, if Misa wasn't so in love with her Raito, Misa would think you were very cute. You should work with Yoshida Productions! I know they would love to take pictures of you! You're so exotic looking! Do you have a girlfriend? I know this girl named Sa—"

"James-san is homosexual," interrupted Ryuzaki, chewing thoughtfully on a cherry.

"Wha?" shrieked Misa for the second time. "I thought you said—"

Harry shot his dark haired friend a stern look. "Yes, I am homosexual, Misa-san, but there is...Ryuzaki and I are not together like that. Especially since Ryuzaki-kun makes it sound so bad."

Ryuzaki looked over at Harry, his dark eyes glittering, and then delicately took out the newly-knotted stem from his mouth and said, "I'll give you this cherry stem if you forgive my imprudence."

_Fuck, this should be illegal_, thought Harry, suddenly miserable as the knotted stem was placed in his hand, still slightly glittering with saliva. _This is completely evil, Ryuzaki. How could you do this to me? How could you give me a cherry stem that you knotted with your tongue, you bastard...?_

"Well, I still think you are very cute, James-san!" Misa said, recovering from her mild shock with gusto. Her enthusiasm and happy-go-lucky attitude made Harry instantly like her, even though she was a bit ridiculous with the obsession with Kira and Raito both...and if Ryuzaki was correct, Kira and Raito together, rolled up into one bundle of godly sunshine.

But Misa went on. "You should think about working with Yoshida Productions, where I am currently modelling! I know they'd love you in their male campaign!"

At that, Harry nearly broke out in laughter again. Him? Yeah, and the entire Wizarding world would tease him until the day he died. Harry could picture it even as he sat there with a shocked expression on his face: _'Who cares about killing He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named! Harry Potter's half-naked, doing photo shoots in Japan!'_ Yeah, that was some potentially reputation-destroying stuff there. Witches and wizards would laugh at him even after he was dead.

"No thanks," Harry said, forcing himself to smile. "I've had enough pictures taken of me to last a lifetime." This wasn't a lie. However, most of them were while he was mostly dead on his feet,
usually covered in blood or some other foreign substance that indicated being in a long, hard, nearly-fatal battle. Either that or he was being thrown in a photo shoot, like during the Triwizard Tournament.

Yeah. No modelling jobs for him. He'd rather annoy Ryuzaki or pop in to visit Ron, Hermione, and the million kids running around the humble Weasley abode.

Misa went to speak again, but Raito interrupted her with impatience, "Shouldn't we be working on trying to find the Kira connected to Yotsuba? We're just sitting here wasting time when we have quite a bit of information to plough into. Honestly Ryuzaki, when are we going to start investigating?"

"Just sitting here wasting time? We're having a date!" Harry honestly agreed with that. Raito sure was being a total dick.

"Raito-kun, please shut Misa-san up," complained Ryuzaki, picking out another cherry and popping it in his mouth (seemed like Ryuzaki was taking Raito's side on this one...). Then with his mouth full, the detective continued, "Well, actually, I'm working on a suitable way to infiltrate Yotsuba. I've called in two specialists, Wedy and Aiber, and they're going to be the main part of the infiltration method. We just have to wait until they get here."

"What do you mean, Ryuzaki?" asked Raito.

Again, the cherry stem came out in a knot, but he put it on the table instead of giving it to Harry, which was probably merciful. "It means lots of things."

Harry sighed and absently scratched his scar with his left hand, unknowingly making both the lightning bolt shaped mark and the shiny words gouged in his hand more noticeable. For a long moment, there was silence, and Raito seemed to ignore Ryuzaki's words in favour of stating, "I must not tell lies."

Harry immediately flinched. Dolores Jane Umbridge was still active in the Ministry and very much alive, although at a stunted job. Unfortunately, the woman still attempted to make his life a living hell by reporting horrible falsehoods to one Rita Skeeter, who jumped on that like a fly on meat. There was many other diabolical things to add to her I Hate Harry Potter campaign, but at the moment, Harry said hastily, "Oh, er—yeah. It's a long story."

"What happened to your forehead?" asked Misa.

The emerald eyed wizard felt a stab of irritation, not at just Misa for bring it up but at Raito and Ryuzaki both, who were looking at the forehead and hand scars respectively. In all actuality, Harry had been quite surprised that Ryuzaki hadn't mentioned it before, because he knew that the detective had noticed it.

"Honestly, have you ever heard of tact and privacy? I'm entitled to it from all three of you. It's none of your business, thank you very much."

How exactly could he explain it, anyway? A perfect lightning bolt scar, literal words etched into his hand...it just wasn't normal, in every sense of the world. So, therefore, he wasn't going to tell lies and be caught making them later. Besides, Ryuzaki knew by Harry's facial expressions when he was lying.

Yes, it was much better to not answer at all and tell them that it was an off-limits question. Ryuzaki probably wouldn't have abided by that at all before being chained up to his Kira suspect, and most likely still wouldn't, but it held off the questions until he had an appropriate excuse that
they would buy. They happened to be a hell of a lot smarter than the Muggles who had previously asked that question. Ryuzaki and Raito would pick at it with their ridiculously clever minds and realise that he was lying somehow...

Besides, even thinking vaguely about it just depressed him. The scar on his forehead was a constant, never-changing reminder of why almost everyone close to him had died.

Harry glanced at Ryuzaki, who was still looking at him with that unfathomable look in his eyes, and shook his head softly. "Later," he mumbled, letting some of his jet-black hair fall down into his glasses. He wasn't sure if he was talking about the scars or the much-needed conversation they needed to have about what had happened in the bakery, but Ryuzaki seemed to understand, as he turned his attention towards the cherries.

Yeah. It was definitely coming up in the near future, with or without Raito present. Hopefully without.

***

L was curious.

It wasn't the usual curiousness, though. It was the kind of curiousness that tore his brain to shreds trying to figure it out to the minute detail. It was almost like the curiosity he had with the Kira case, but it was different too. With the Kira case, it was his mind battling itself, stripping every detail down only to reassemble it all again to find a connection.

With Harry NoLastName, it was his mind battling itself, along with a pressure in his chest and stomach that he had no name for. Perhaps sadness? It could've been that, only to an intense degree. Because when L thought about Harry's scars and the obvious drop in his usual happy and joking nature at the subject of them, the twenty-four-year-old detective knew that it was hurting Harry deeply. This, in itself, was what was causing that tight pressure to push on his chest, around one of the most vital organs in his body. In a way, he couldn't breathe right, and even the multitudes of sweets he was used to ingesting didn't taste as sweet and lovely as they usually did.

It could very well all boil down to the curiosity.

L fought the urge to sigh. It was actually quite ridiculous that he could analyse people better than most, and that he could discover hidden motives and emotions down to the last detail, yet he couldn't even understand the emotions that were rolling around in his own body. The detective hadn't really allowed himself to become involved emotionally with anyone except Wammy, and that was a small case. Wammy was the man that had literally saved his life when he had been filled with nothing, keeping him from becoming one of those orphans who failed in life and ended up dead before the age of twenty.

L could distantly remember having friends in Japan, during the short period of his life that he had lived there. He also recalled friends and caring handlers in the orphanages, and pretending to fish in koi ponds only to get chased off by the caretakers. That had been about four years into the War of All Wars, and yes, he remembered the shortages of food and clothes, but he vaguely recalled being happy and carefree for those few years.

Not for the first time, he felt a brief stab of hate. While Japan had been a refuge from pain, war, and the outside world, the Russian orphanages and the insane asylums there were enough to break any person.

A Russian woman that had died to give him life had nearly destroyed just that.
He forced himself back to the scars. He refused to think about his own past, and Harry NoLastName's was much more important than L's.

Scars were natural parts of life. L had them himself; he was only human, after all. However, scars that perfect were causes for concern. Even if someone could explain the lightning bolt on his forehead, it would be really hard to try to give excuses on why I must not tell lies was carved into his left hand in shiny letters.

L didn't know if Harry had done it to himself. It didn't make logical sense that someone with as big a heart as he did would intentionally carve words of that nature onto such a visible part of his body. There was a small, insignificant chance—about eight per-cent actually—that this was the case. It just didn't fit the profile that L had managed to create of Harry.

There was an even more unlikely chance that he had sat there and let it happen to him without even fighting it. And since the words were so clear and precise, in scrawled handwriting, it proved that there had been no struggle during the cutting.

Furthermore, it was sloped, curved, and quite frankly, human skin just didn't cut that smoothly. Cutting into flesh was quite choppy, with more angles and points. It was almost like carving a name or phrase into a piece of wood; overall, it would be rather alright, but even so, there would be letters that couldn't be cut unless it was more in an angle-like shape. Like the circle in an 'a' being more square than circular. Yet Harry's skin had been just like writing I must not tell lies on a sheet of paper and being transferred into the flesh.

Lasers might've given that illusion, but it wasn't a burn scar. Those words had been carved, with a pointed object, thin and delicate and perfect, meticulous in the carving...

"Ryuzaki?" came the voice of the man always in L's thoughts.

L took a deep breath. He glanced away from the computer screen he had been staring into for the past thirty minutes without comprehending, and the thoughts flew from his bustling mind when he finally stared into those emerald eyes.

"Yes?"

Harry and Raito were in L's personal room, both sitting on the edge of the unused bed. L was at the laptop, surrounded by open case files and a couple of crates full of cell phones with L's written labels on the back. They had been here for about an hour, L working on various cases that he needed to get done and talking rapidly in cell phones to government officials and the like on the cell phones. Harry and Raito had been shooting off details about the Kira case, the same arguments about his powers and his current killing profile.

Harry opened his mouth to speak, but his cell phone rang and he sighed. Pulling out the red phone, he looked once at the caller ID before grumbling absently, "If it's something to do with Hermione smacking Ron with a broom because she's hormonal again, I'm going to go to England and strangle him..." He paused, flinched, and then said with more volume, "Um, sorry Ryuzaki, Raito. I have to take this."

As he walked out, he flipped open the phone with a dull greeting and a quite loud British accent yelled, "DID IT WORK? ARE YOU WITH YOUR BO—"

"You do not have to yell, you moron!"

When Harry finally walked out, Raito turned to L and said, "What is up with him? He's almost as bizarre as you, in a normal way."
"That doesn't even make sense, Raito-kun," replied L, tearing his eyes off the closed door and focussing his attention on the glass of sugar-coffee to his right. He took a sip, smacked his lips, and continued, "But he is a very interesting human being, so I believe that it works in his favour."

"Interesting," stated the copper haired teen. "But do you know what's up with those scars? I can't stop thinking about them, and I don't know which one is worse. I don't think he did it to himself, but there doesn't seem to be any other explanation."

"I don't believe that it is of much concern. Ninety-eight of the human population have scars, and frankly, if he felt like volunteering that information, he would enlighten us with the facts."

Raito shot back, "That's not like you at all, being all kind and chivalrous towards a person's attributes. Usually you demand facts and won't rest until you completely solve the puzzle, even when it comes with someone's past. You can't tell me you're not curious."

Yes, L was very much curious, but he wasn't going to tell Raito that. "Everyone is entitled to secrets when it comes to aspects concerning scars and other physical deformities."

Harry walked in, shut the door, and walked towards the bed, falling face-first into it, saving L from Raito's continuing tirade about L's sudden Harry-influenced courtesy. Harry mumbled something against the bed sheets before turning his head towards L and saying, "Sorry. I turned off my phone. I hate when my friend Ron calls me. He's—er—not very good with telephones, among other things. Anyway, I was going to ask if you're usually like this or if you just didn't show me how space-brained you are in reality."

L debated on throwing a file at Harry's head and decided against it. He picked up an éclair and popped it into his mouth, chewing thoughtfully, and then he stared pointedly at the emerald eyed man and said, "Excuse me. I have quite a bit on my mind." L quickly looked at Raito, who was absorbing the conversation into his mind, and then decided to switch to French, as they were as alone as they were going to get.

"James-san, did you do that to yourself? The writing on your hands..."

Harry sighed, sat up, and said, "Yes and no. You wouldn't understand." Ignoring Raito's annoyed eyes at being left out of the conversation, he continued, "It was a long time ago, something that...happened when I was still in school. Let's just say that a teacher didn't like me yelling out truths in her class, embarrassing her and her...the government, and she tried to force it out of me."

L tightened his legs closer to his chest and grasped his knees with his hands, his eyes intense on Harry's green orbs. Raito said something, but he didn't pay any attention, instead asking, "And the one on your forehead?"

Harry's expression darkened and his eyes tightened behind those round glasses of his. "The man who killed my parents...he carved that into my forehead on your second birthday before he disappeared."

L didn't know how to reply to that. The pain swimming in his eyes was visible even to Raito, who had caught on to the clear fact that some deep things were being shared between the two due to the tense atmosphere. Continuing on with a hard chop to his words, he said, "Don't tell him. Don't tell anyone. It's my business and my business alone."

"Yes. Do not worry about that, James-san. Your secrets are safe with me. I'd prefer it if he knew as little about you as possible."

"Don't make me throw an éclair at you, James-san. But I do have another question, especially since this is as alone as the two of us are going to get."

Quickly, Harry's expression went from dark to anxious. L could tell that the emerald eyed man knew what was going to come up, and was preparing to make a run for it. This led L to the conclusion that Harry was either embarrassed about the last time they had seen each other or was reluctant to admit anything. This meant that he was either confused about the situation or disgusted by it. Something twisted in his stomach at that thought, so he decided to filter that deduction to ponder later.

"Yes...?" Harry asked quietly, dragging on the word.

"I believe you know what I'm asking without voicing it aloud, James-san." Code for 'No, I don't want to say it aloud, because it's slightly strange for me to speak about'.

"Ryuzaki...just—stop with the honorifics, please." It was a hasty diversion to admitting why he had kissed L, but the detective wasn't letting it go that easily.

So he took a deep breath, exhaled through his nose, and without holding his true name back (he could always delude Raito that it was a French word, not a name), he said, "Harry. Why did you do it? I believe I have the right to know."

Silence. Harry's eyes were focussed on the beige comforter, biting the corner of his lip—and no, L wasn't staring; it wasn't distracting, absolutely not—with his white teeth. L could practically see the cogs turning in his head frantically, indicating that some lying was about to take place. That, in itself, was enough to make him speak again, to warn against it.

However, Raito beat him to it. "Okay, you two. I'm out of the loop and it's getting a bit tiresome just staring and twiddling my thumbs. Besides, I have to use the lavatory, and I'm handcuffed to you, Ryuzaki."

Not missing Harry's relieved expression (along with something that seemed to be anger, or was it jealousy? And why would he be feeling that way anyway?), L stood up and said in Japanese, intentionally forgetting to omit the honorific, "James-san, we will continue this conversation when Raito's finished."

Harry stood up as well, hesitated, and then reached a slow hand out to rest on L's shoulder. His hand was large and warm, cupping the rounded flesh in a firm, but gentle grip. Raito paused on his way to the door, watching the exchange silently and analysing it, while Harry murmured, "I won't be here. I've outstayed my welcome. Perhaps I'll see you soon, with more information."

He turned to walk out, passing by Raito without saying goodbye, and L found his mouth working without his brain keeping up. He called out after Harry in a voice that the detective hadn't heard come out of his own throat before, "You'll be here tomorrow, won't you?"

Harry came to a stop mid-step, looking back over his shoulder with slightly widened green eyes and gave him a smile that caused L to stop breathing. "Yes Ryuzaki. If you want me here, I'll be here."

For over a minute, L stared at the spot Harry had just vanished behind, his lungs screaming for air without registering the discomfort, until Raito said, "Ryuzaki, you're turning pink. Breathe or you're going to pass out. And what was that about?"
The oxygen was heaven to his lungs, but for some odd reason, it didn't seem very fulfilling. Gaining purpose again and ignoring his suspect, L began walking fast towards the main room of the headquarters, his long, slender legs striding as fast as he could. He reached the destination, his dark eyes already going towards the monitors to watch the tall, dark headed Harry NoLastName journey through the lower levels until he walked out the door and disappeared past the sight of any cameras.

L’s chest felt tight again.

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Ryuzaki's shoulder had been so very warm and fragile in his grasp.

The emerald eyed wizard flexed his right hand, still feeling the brush of soft, baggy cotton hiding that pale, warm skin that Harry longed to touch. With that smooth feeling still present in his mind, he journeyed down a dark alley and Apparated to his flat with a loud crack, nearly scaring Kreacher to death. He brushed off the house elf absently with a glance at the clock (21:46, and when in the hell did it get so late?), and then went to his bedroom and flopped onto his bed, legs still dangling. He was sluggish and slow, his eyes heavy and itchy with the lack of sleep he had been getting as of late, and sleepily kicked off his shoes so he could climb into bed and finally get a somewhat-decent night's rest.

...decent...sleep...sleep...

*Ryuzaki was standing there, eyes narrowed, wrong-wrong-wrong, something different about him, oh yes, Harry, something bad.*

Bad, Harry, you better fly.

"You're going to let me die, Harry, aren't you? How many people have you killed? You killed Sirius and Dumbledore and Lupin and Fred and Tonks and Bill and Neville and McGonagall and Mrs. Weasley and Luna and Ginny...everyone. You killed Draco, Harry, you killed him, made him die and fall with a flash of green light and you couldn't save him, could you? You couldn't save your only love, so how are you supposed to save me, Harry? I'm going to die and you're going to lose me, because I'll be rotting and dead and clutching my heart with agony. You won't save me, because you can't save anyone. Everyone and everything you touch dies."

That's not true.

"It's true, Harry. You are a failure at keeping the people you love alive, so I'm doomed, aren't I? I'm going to die because you kill the people you love. Am I just going to be another Draco? Am I going to die right in front of you, with no chance of waking up again, with the last thing in my eyes a snapshot of you screaming, cursing, dying along with me?"

I won't let you die.

"Prove it, Harry Potter; prove to me that you can save me." And he fell, oh God, he fell, he fell, eyes wide and grasping his chest with bitten nails, the lollipop in his delicate grasp shattering on its impact against the stone floor of the Department of Mysteries. His mouth gaped with pain, and he screamed, a terrible and horrible shriek that echoed in the empty air around them, and Harry reached for him, no!

The veil is going to touch his flesh.

*He grasped the skin of his shoulders, already cold with death, and worked-worked-worked,*
fighting-fighting-fighting for Ryuzaki’s survival. His wand was broken in half, and the Elder Wand was all he had left to use, and he whispered the spells and felt the dark power entering Ryuzaki’s still form until he cried the last one without sound. And he woke, he woke, he woke! He was breathing, but his eyes were red and slit like a cat...

No, you aren't like him.

...but still beautiful, so beautiful, skin like porcelain but still cold like ice, dark hair contrasting around those eyes, those red eyes, his eyes-his eyes-his eyes, mouth wide and flushed and pressing, moving. Dead; yet alive, because that wand was evil, bad, vile, evil...

Don't touch me.

But he did, oh yes he did, and he was naked, gloriously naked beneath Harry's fingers even though Harry couldn't make out the sight. Still cold and dead but heaving and thrusting into the touch with a breathy gasp even though Harry couldn't describe the touch. And he couldn't stop, couldn't keep himself from pulling on it, the desire, the taste, tongues battling against each other even though he couldn't taste the taste, strawberry shortcake and cherries and those goddamn cookies. The heat was unbearable, burning his nerves and his brain past recognition, and then—

Get away from me you monster.

It was gone, and Hermione was giggling, her stomach bulging and nearly prepared to pop. Ron was kissing her softly on the cheek and it was adorable. There was nothing cuter than the two of them, snuggling close with nothing but love in their eyes, even though they did have their many insane arguments. Usually it was Hermione's hormones talking nowadays, but they were so ridiculously devoted to each other that it made everything okay again.

Why can't I have that?

You do, though, Harry. You have him.

Good.

"You'll be here tomorrow, won't you?"

Of course, Ryuzaki, because I love you and I will always love you.

"I don't understand love yet."

I didn't expect you to.

"But that's okay, Harry-san. You saved me." And Ryuzaki walked forward, the handcuff that was normally chained to Raito trailing on the ground behind him. He was normal now, alive and warm, with his big, charcoal grey eyes sparkling with his usual speculation. This was the Ryuzaki that Harry knew and loved and kissed over a small, two-seater table.

I will always save you.

"Why did you kiss me, Harry-san? I have the right to know."

I told you already; I love you.

"Good. Come back tomorrow."

I will never leave you.
"I know, because I won't let you." He reached forward and delicately handcuffed Harry's wrist where Raito had been, linking them together for as long as they needed.

Now I'll be here to save you and shield you.

His lips were just as soft as the last time, timidly pressing against Harry's own. Harry equalled the pressure, raising his hands to cup that narrow face in his palms, loving the soft, white skin and its texture beneath his fingers. His thumbs lovingly caressed the dark bags under his eyes, feeling the raised skin that seemed to be colder than the flesh around it, and then brushed his eyelids, his mouth slanting against Ryuzaki's so he could feel more, even though he knew that it was only his imagination.

I love you.

Love?

I love you.

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Ten kilometres away, L Lawliet fell into a light sleep with his cheek cushioned against the side of his unused bed, his arms surrounding his knees like normal, and a small smile upon his lips.
Chapter Ten

Blunder

8 October 2010

Ryuzaki's rolling speech of the plan and action concerning Yotsuba was interrupted by Watari.

"In order not to be detected, first Aiber and Wedy will—"

"Ryuzaki," came Watari's voice over the computer behind Ryuzaki's crouched form.

"What is it, Watari?"

The elderly man's reply was filled with exasperation. "Matsuda-san is sending a distress signal from his belt buckle."

"Belt buckle?" questioned Harry out of the corner of his mouth, scratching the back of his head. Yagami Soichiro, whom the emerald eyed wizard had grown quite fond of as he reminded Harry of a mix between Kingsley Shacklebolt and the good aspects of Mad-Eye Moody, took it upon himself to answer back in a hoarse whisper.

"He gave all of the investigation team these belts, and if we push on the buckle, an alarm rings on Watari's phone, alerting the rest of us that there's trouble."

Harry nodded and turned back to the conversation, feeling quite annoyed and irritated at Matsuda's dim-witted traits, and yet amused when watching Ryuzaki's equally annoyed and irritated disposition.

"—en he'll probably be killed," stated the good-looking Aiber, huffing a bit and closing his eyes as if it didn't bother him either way. Which was probably the case, but Harry didn't know the guy.

Ryuzaki pressed his index finger into his forehead, drooping heavily and looking like he was ready to kick Matsuda in the place where men shouldn't be kicked, just out of spite. "Forget everything I just said. We'll need to rethink our plan...stupid Matsuda."

"Matsuda is supposed to be always watching Amane. So they're both in Yotsuba?" questioned Soichiro, sweating a bit in fear of his youngest (and most moronic) protégé.

"Who knows with that bumbling idiot?" mumbled Harry in Italian.

Ryuzaki gave him a sideways look, amusement shining in his charcoal grey eyes, and then said in
a serious voice, "When Matsuda-san is outside, he's only carrying identification as Amane Misa's manager, is that right?"

"Yes, we make sure of that," replied Soichiro.

"Yagami-san, please call Matsuda-san on his work telephone," ordered the detective, holding a hand out.

"Isn't that dangerous?" Harry and Raito demanded at the same time, glancing at each other in silent and definitely insincere apologies.

Meanwhile, Ryuzaki was clearing his throat in different tones, sounding as if he was humming a scale in a coughing sort of way. It was unique to Ryuzaki, most likely, and only added to the increasingly ridiculous list of Ryuzaki's oddities. However, when Ryuzaki finally got an answer, he said loudly in a more nasally voice than normal, "Yo, Matsui! It's Asahi. Asahi!"

Harry's highly sensitive ears couldn't even pick up Matsuda's voice. There was a pause, and then Ryuzaki continued on his little escapade to assess the situation using code, which meant that it was likely that someone else was there. "Oh, it doesn't sound like you're outside. You at home?"

Another short pause. "Alone?" Another small pause.

Then Ryuzaki spun around and called out, covering the mouthpiece of the phone, "Matsuda and Amane have separated and Matsuda is in Yotsuba by himself."

Then back towards the phone: "Wanna go drinking?" Normally, Harry would've been a bit irked at that—why couldn't Ryuzaki go out with him, huh?—but he was more preoccupied with how adorable Ryuzaki looked while having the conversation. "Why? Is your wallet in trouble again?"

Pause, then: "Matsuda's in trouble!" chirped Ryuzaki. He raised the phone again, and said, "Oh well. I'll invite you again next time then. Later!"

"That was good, Ryuzaki," said Soichiro in his deep voice, but Ryuzaki didn't even acknowledge him. Instead, he began instructing Raito on calling Misa and discovering information that way.

Harry could practically see the wheels turning behind those large, dark, endless eyes, and eventually Ryuzaki mumbled, "Though if Matsuda-san dies now, that will substantiate suspicion against Yotsuba." Harry let out a laugh, quickly turning it into a loud cough at the glare the rest of the team was giving the detective. Ryuzaki continued as if not realising that he was about to get yelled at, "Anyway, any drastic actions right now would cause them to notice us. Let's wait and see for now."

"Yes...we have no choice," grumbled the Chief.

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Misa did well on instruction.

The entirety of the men who had caught Matsuda being an idiot were currently lounging in Misa's private quarters, surrounded by women clothed in practically nothing that were from the agency. L watched them with unblinking eyes, not daring to look away except to follow Harry's trek with Mogi, as the two strongest people on the investigation team, to work on the Getting-Matsuda-Out-Of-Kira's-Way-Intentionally plan.

Once there, Mogi and Harry pulled the mattress off the bed in the room directly below Misa's lounging quarters, preparing to catch the man mid-fall. Aiber and Wedy, the former not very happy about the arrangement, were on street level, ready for the signal to start playing dead and
L himself was definitely not happy. Harry had laughed at him for over five minutes, tears leaking out of the corner of his eyes, in stitches due to the outfit L had been forced into (against his will). Mind, he was not alone, but quite frankly, Raito could pull disguises like this off. As for L, he was itchy and hot and uncomfortable and grouchy because the socks were restricting his lower phalange movement. The hard hat was pressing uncomfortably around his ears and the strap covering his chin was scratching. Oh, he could go on and on and on, but he had to focus on the scene unfolding on the monitors in the ambulance he was currently stationed in, watching everyone's actions and preparing to give the signal.

The vehicle was dark, sitting on a side road, and L waited impatiently to see Matsuda come onto the balcony. He didn't have to wait long thankfully, because there was the idiot now, doing a handstand and falling off the end of the balcony. As if in slow motion, L watched the mattress fly out, deliver Matsuda to safety at the last moment, and disappear, Harry throwing out a sand bag the same colour as the dark street below that made a sickening thump as it made contact. Aiber was next, quickly lying down like a dead man face-down with that ridiculous wig hiding his bright blond hair, while Wedy shrieked nonsense to gain as much attention as she possibly could.

Misa was getting rid of her guests while L, Raito, and Soichiro waited five minutes to head for the 'body'. The detective watched Harry and Mogi begin their walk downstairs, while the eight men from Yotsuba hurried towards the exit, muttering amongst themselves in soft tones that couldn't be picked up through the microphones.

And L noticed something.

Harry and Mogi were going to intercept the men from Yotsuba.

"No!" exclaimed Raito, and quickly pulled out his cell phone to make a call, but L knew that it was too late.

Harry ran directly into Namikawa Reiji, nearly knocking both of them off their feet. Very quickly, Harry was apologising in Japanese, while Mogi seemed to be at a loss of what to do. Namikawa just shook his head and said, "Don't worry about it. I was not paying much attention to my surroundings."

And then the strangest thing happened. Most of the men kept heading in the direction of the exit, minus Namikawa (who was currently smiling at Harry as the emerald eyed man said something amusing), but one of the others stayed behind. He was one of the least attractive ones out of the entire group, with an aura of self-importance surrounding him like a blanket. He had shiny dark hair that was beginning to recede, narrow eyes that glittered with some strange spark, and a smirk on his thin lips that gave L a horrible feeling.

The best word to describe him was creepy.

"Well, hello young man. James, was it? I wouldn't forget a face like yours."

L didn't have to be looking at Harry to know that he was definitely not impressed.

"Higuchi-san? Oh yes, long time no see! I'm sorry, Namikawa-san, Higuchi-san, but I must be going now."

Higuchi-san? thought L with confusion. Where have I heard that name before?

"It was lovely meeting you, James-san, and may you have a wonderful evening," said Namikawa, bowing a bit and receiving a bow from the two taller men in return.
Higuchi yelled out at Harry's hastily retreating back, "Is this the boyfriend you were talking about at the park?"

*Oh, that's where I remember him from. This is the man that asked for Harry's number and started the whole boyfriend talk.*

With an air that told L that Harry was making up some clever lies very quickly, the emerald eyed man stopped and said, "No, this is one of my boyfriend's friends, actually. He's supposed to be watching over me to make sure no one tries anything funny to me on my way to his apartment."

"Well, personally I think I can be more of a man than that boyfriend of yours could. I'd protect you myself, as I am a Five-Dan in kendō. Give me your number, gorgeous."

"Wow! That's really impressive! But I really have to go, Higuchi-san; I don't want to keep my lover waiting."

Harry turned on his heel and all-but flew to the elevator, practically dragging Mogi (who looked really confused) away from the scene. Higuchi made to yell something else, but Namikawa turned towards the unattractive man and said, "What is wrong with you, Higuchi, hitting on a man that has a boyfriend? You should've given him your business card to call you instead."

"Oh, yes, you're right." The two of them went to follow their comrades outside.

"That was one of the most bizarre things I have ever seen..." said Raito in a disbelieving voice, while his father said, "Okay, it's been five minutes. Let's go." The ambulance flared to life and sirens cut through the night, attracting even more attention. It was good, but unfortunate for L, who did not want all of these people seeing him.

Raito and L popped out of the car hurriedly, appearing to be quite convincing, and L chanced a look at the man who had just thrown himself metaphorically at Harry. He was looking up at the floors, a small diabolical grin on his face, and soon disappeared into the same limousine that had brought them to the headquarters, driven by Watari in butler-mode.

Once back in the ambulance, speeding off only to double back when the streets were clear, L stated around his index finger, "While I know we're short-handed...I am not happy to be doing this. Stupid Matsuda."

Aiber nodded enthusiastically, while Raito just sweated.

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L started right in the second he came walking through the door (in his own clothes).

"James-san, the first time you met him was at Shinjuku Gyoen, correct?"

Harry, who was sitting on the glass stairs leading up to the second floor with Mogi standing next to him and Misa sitting a few stairs above, rolled his eyes and replied, "Yeah. That was Higuchi Kyosuke, that weirdo that tried to hit on me the last time I went to the garden. You heard me talking to him, remember? I didn't know he was with Yotsuba. But anyway, he gives off a creepy vibe, doesn't he Mogi-san?"

Said blocky man grunted in affirmative.

"And he's pretty persistent. I liked Namikawa though. Nice, polite guy with a good-looking face."
L stopped walking, his eyes widening at that. Harry, however, wasn't paying attention. He was
currently in a discussion about the Yotsuba men with Misa, who was giggling.

"I thought Mido was cuter, James-kun."

Harry laughed. "Of course you did, Misa-chan; he's a carbon copy of your damn boyfriend over
there, only he's older, wears glasses, and his hair's fluffier."

"Fluffier?" Misa let out a shriek of giggles that echoed. Irritated, L turned away and tried to block
the conversation between the two, sitting down and staring stonily at a plate of pastries. For some
odd reason, his brain and chest felt like they were being clenched in a tight fist, but he couldn't
place the emotion.

And just when did Misa and Harry become Misa-chan and James-kun?

L's jaw clenched and he moodily shoved a pastry into his mouth.

"Well, Mido and Namikawa were the only guys not staring down the girl's shirts. I mean,
Takahashi was a total pig! Even Higuchi was trying to get my number! I thought he was just as
bad as Takahashi."

"Probably. And creepy."

"Veeeery creepy!"

"But Mido is just not very attractive to me." He laughed and called out to Raito, who seemed to be
blocking the conversation out as much as L was, "Sorry, Raito, but you're not my type."

"So what is your type, James-san?" asked Raito, glancing once at L with a speculative glitter in
his eyes.


"I do believe that is none of your business."

Actually, I think I'd like to know. Maybe it'd explain the...kiss.

L shoved another pastry in his mouth and pouted, annoyed with the two friends on the stairs.

That damn elusive man, thought L sullenly. But maybe that's why I like him around so much.
Eleven: Unison

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Eleven

Unison

15 October 2004

The meeting started at almost twenty-two o'clock.

It was the latest Harry had stayed at the compound, and his eyelids felt like sandpaper. Probably because he hadn't been sleeping as well as he should have. He was not Ryuzaki, after all, and so he needed sleep to function.

But Harry spent most nights either having nightmares that tore his heart apart or dreams that made him wake up hot, tingly, and ridiculously aroused. The nightmares about Ryuzaki dying were the worst. Harry just couldn't save him in time and he cradled the detective's thin body in his arms, unimaginable pain coursing through his veins. And the pleasant dreams...he didn't know what was worse: having no relief or the fact that it made looking at Ryuzaki even more agonising than usual.

Harry refused to touch himself when he woke up like that. Unnervingly, it felt as if it was degrading towards the shorter man and so he quickly hopped in a cold shower or did some clever magic to stop the problem.

Get back on topic or you're going to have a problem right now, Harry James Potter.

Ryuzaki's dark eyes were intensely focussed on the gigantic screens, where seven of the eight men were sitting, preparing for a meeting of a sort. The slimy blond bloke was absent, and the odd thing was...they didn't even look too concerned. If this was a Kira meeting like Matsuda had claimed, Harry doubted that any missing persons would prove to be a nonchalant affair.

Raito seemed to have the same thoughts. He said quietly, "It's later than Matsuda said, but they are starting a meeting..."

Matsuda ignored that statement, exclaiming excitedly, "My heart's pounding! They're about to start the secret meeting I uncovered with my heroics!"

"With your stupidity," corrected Ryuzaki under his breath, at which Harry snorted and hastily covered it up as a cough.

"But I only see seven of them," pointed out Soichiro.

"Yeah, for real," Harry mentioned. Then, off-handed, he said, "Black suits, black ties...who are
these guys, the mafia?" Ryuzaki shot him a hard look at that, which made the emerald eyed wizard scratch the back of head and clarify, "Not that I know anything about that...stop looking at me like that, you weirdo!"

"I'm not looking at you in any way, James-san," said Ryuzaki, a twitch in his mouth signalling that a tiny smile was threatening to pop on his face.

Harry smirked, feeling internally fluttery and trying not to show it.

"Well, they probably killed the missing one," said Raito, and quickly Harry and Ryuzaki focussed back on the feed of the meeting playing on the screens.

The bald one who always wore sunglasses pressed his lips against his interlocked fingers and said in a somewhat distorted voice, "For the further advancement of the Yotsuba Group, who shall we kill?"

Well that was quick.

Harry sighed and chanced a look at Ryuzaki, who appeared carefully blank. However, his eyes were far too intense, and when Harry looked closely enough, he could see something akin to apprehension swirling in those charcoal depths. If there was one thing that Harry could tell just by the lack of expression on Ryuzaki's face, it was that he was not happy.

Harry definitely understood why. If they sat there and confessed like the morons they were proving to be, it would prove to be difficult to see how Kira killed. Seeing the method that allowed Kira to kill from distances by 'supernatural' ways was the detective L's main goal out of this entire case.

If these people started rattling off names of soon-to-be victims, the rest of the team would probably go on a crusade about the importance of human lives over catching Kira...

Especially when that pig Higuchi said, "L doesn't even know that Kira can kill without using heart attacks. There's no way he could make the connection."

Idiot!

"This is amazing! It's like they're confessing to everything," said Matsuda, his jaw dropped, while Soichiro continued, "Yeah, won't we be able to arrest them all with this video?"

If anything, Ryuzaki slumped into his chair even more, beginning to bite his thumbnail absently as his mind began whirling. Harry's eyes narrowed at the sight, knowing exactly what was running through Ryuzaki's mind: No, I don't like this; it's unravelling too fast.

It took a little while of the Yotsuba men running their mouths and agreeing on the next kills before Soichiro decided it was time to speak up, a tone of jubilation in his deep voice, "Kira...deaths by accident, deaths by disease, the time of deaths...it's just as we assumed. There's no doubt; this corporation is in affiliation with Kira! We should move in now and arrest them before Kira has a chance to kill these men."

"No," said Ryuzaki loudly. "Unfortunately, we cannot say there is no doubt until the people mentioned die."

Harry nodded and stepped up, laying a hand on Ryuzaki's thin shoulder without realising. "Yeah, Ryuzaki's right. What these seven say at this meeting and their actions until the people mentioned are killed are completely non conclusive. There's no way that we can pin them on the crimes until we have definitive proof that they're in league with Kira."
The two Yagamis looked as if they were about to start yelling, but after a brief hesitation, Ryuzaki added, "We will have no proof unless these men die, because then we'll have evidence to use against them." He picked up a bowl of anmitsu and spooned a bit with his delicate grip. "Right now, for all we know, they could just be talking about what they want to happen in the future, but that's not enough to solve the case."

This time the father and son duo yelled, "Ryuzaki!"

The bowl of anmitsu nearly went flying into a computer screen, and without thinking, Harry's hand shot out and caught it before it could even barely move. *Quidditch and Auror training reflexes*, thought Harry dumbly, wincing at the slightly shocked expression on Ryuzaki's face. After all, it wasn't really normal for a man to be able to catch something that fast.

While Ryuzaki blinked once and then gingerly took the bowl back, beginning his tirade on why they should wait on the arrests, Harry found himself lost in thoughts, barely taking in the conversation.

Harry had thought long and hard about telling at least Ryuzaki (and unfortunately, Raito came with the deal) that he was a wizard, but every time he had decided to do so, he had found that he just couldn't say anything. He knew exactly where it would go: one, Ryuzaki would *not* believe him; two, Ryuzaki would demand demonstrations; three, Ryuzaki would demand Harry interrogate Raito, which was illegal to do to Muggles without permission from the Ministry of Magic; and four, Ryuzaki would accuse Harry of being Kira.

And frankly, Harry didn't want to get into that conversation.

Harry knew that Kira was a Muggle with an overbearing ego and a superiority complex. Like he had already deduced himself, the good wizards (AWB) would've mentioned it to Harry and the bad wizards (the last rogue Death Eaters) would've killed Harry and the other head honchos immediately. So by process of elimination, the killings were solely in the Muggle world, a fact that had been proven correct by countless hours with Ron and Hermione as they investigated it.

That and Harry had done another super-sensory charm on his hand and then touched them with no burning sensation. This meant *no wizards*.

Honestly, Harry sensed nothing but truthfulness from Yagami Raito, but after pouring over those details with the detective since joining the investigation team, Harry knew exactly why Ryuzaki suspected—and still did, as a matter of fact—the teen-ager of being Kira. And Misa, regardless of how much Harry liked her as a person, was *definitely* the Second Kira.

Problem was...Ryuzaki wouldn't be able to determine the true culprits until he had evidence against them, and there clearly was something to hide. Therefore, Ryuzaki wouldn't be safe until Kira was caught, which brought him back full-circle.

Telling Ryuzaki that he was a wizard could, and probably would, move the investigation along; that or getting Hermione to obtain some Veritaserum from St. Mungo's so he could slip it into Raito's morning cup of black coffee.

Then slip some into Ryuzaki's *first* morning cup of coffee so he could determine what the insufferable man thought about him.

After all, while Veritaserum had a fifty-fifty chance of working on a wizard, it was fool-proof against Muggles. Veritaserum was just a liquid version of a polygraph test that police officers used, and many wizards, with proper training, could lie even while under the influence of the truth serum. The most powerful truth potion or not, it could be fooled by a wizard.
However, the potion was not only potentially toxic to a Muggle in large quantities, but there was no chance of said Muggle lying for a good twelve hours at least.

It was sort of like a Pepper-Up potion: it was the cure for the common cold when used by wizards, but it had caused many Muggle deaths because of their lack of magic to nullify the effects.

"Ooi!" yelled Matsuda, while Raito and Ryuzaki said simultaneously, "Namikawa!"

Harry jumped.

The emerald eyed wizard had been so consumed in his thoughts, his hands lightly holding the back of Ryuzaki's chair, that he was momentarily confused when Raito picked up the phone and called Namikawa, clearing his throat.

"Is this Namikawa Reiji, the head of marketing for Yotsuba Group?" asked the teen in Japanese. Harry leant forward towards the monitors, taking in a deep breath of something sweet before realising that it was Ryuzaki's hair. The dark strands were less than a metre in front of him, but the scent was absolutely *divine*, so he leant a bit closer without seeming too conspicuous.

*What is that?* Harry thought. *It smells like everything that is good in this world. What did he do, take a bath in a love potion?*

At Namikawa's affirmation, Raito said, "I am L." He paused, letting that sink in, while Harry nearly choked on his saliva. "We have cameras and bugs set up in that meeting room. We have audio and visual recordings of the recent meeting. The topic was of Hatori-san's death, then Eraldo Coil's findings, and now you're talking about who to kill next, correct? If you are not Kira or someone who can speak directly to Kira, let's make a deal."

Raito, that damned quick thinker, began manipulating Namikawa outstandingly, getting him to call off the killings for an entire month while pulling him under the table as a spy. Honestly, it was genius, the way he had manoeuvred the attractive man to do exactly what was necessary to buy some time.

All at once, it satisfied Ryuzaki (to said detective's annoyance, Harry could see from those narrowed charcoal eyes) and the ex-Chief. Ryuzaki would get his time to devise a plan to uncover Kira's method of killing, and Soichiro would rest knowing that those men wouldn't die until *L* died...

...which would never happen, if Harry had anything to say about it.

Ryuzaki himself had no qualms about discussing his demise in his normal bland voice however. "You sure are impressive, Raito-kun. You not only delayed the killings, but now we may be able to get information out of Namikawa. It's similar to how I would have done things, and you came up with it faster than I did. At this rate, if I die, you could probably become the successor to the L name, Raito-kun."

Harry felt like his heart was being squeezed. *Goddamn* that man for throwing out his potential death like it was nothing. Yeah, Harry knew it was just to prompt a remark from the teen-ager that could maybe pin him down as Kira (because honestly, being Kira and *L* would be the ideal outcome, as Kira would control his own case), but it didn't make it any easier to hear.

The emerald eyed wizard gritted his teeth and said, "Don't say that."

"Yeah, Ryuzaki. We have to figure out who Kira is, and obtain evidence within a month. The hard part is just beginning."
Ryuzaki didn't even look at Harry. "Yes, but that was a stroke of genius, Raito-kun. One could say that you’re more capable than I am. You might be able to do it, Raito-kun."

"To be your successor as L?"

"No, that wasn't what I was thinking." Then, adorably, Ryuzaki called out with his mouth wide open like a total weirdo, "Buuu...if I die, would you take over for me?"

Raito and Harry both glanced at each other, their eyes mirroring each other. Just like Harry, the teen knew exactly what Ryuzaki was implying.

"What are you talking about, Ryuzaki? As long as we have these, we die together, right?" He jingled the handcuffs, the sound ringing in the silent room.

Harry decided to answer this, trying to keep the panic out of his voice, "No, not exactly. If he dies of a heart attack, you'll still be alive. I doubt your fates are tied together like that, unless one of you jumps off a cliff or drowns or something. But stop talking like this! You're not going to die, Ryuzaki. I won't let you.

For a long second, the team stared at him, but Harry only had eyes for Ryuzaki, who looked as if he was debating on dumping his rapidly cooling tea on Harry's head.

Then Ryuzaki turned to the screens again, and Raito finally interrupted the silence: "Sorry, Ryuzaki, but I'm going to tell everyone here what you're thinking. If I am Kira, Ryuzaki is assuming one of two possibilities. The first is that I'm putting on a big act and faking that I'm not Kira. The second is that Kira's power has been passed to someone else and I have no memory that I was Kira. If it's the former, and I'm acting, then these handcuffs will never come off. I cannot be allowed to be free again."

Like hell you are, Harry thought. I'll definitely break the law and interrogate you if that happens. Ryuzaki is not going to be chained to your sorry arse for the rest of his life.

Raito continued, "Actually, he probably won't remove the handcuffs for the other theory either. Ryuzaki thinks I'm Kira, and even if the power has been passed to someone else, he's assumed that I have set up things in a way that the power will eventually return to me. So I wasn't controlled. It was all a plan to pass the power to someone else and gain it back when I'm no longer a suspect. 'Yagami Raito could become Kira while also becoming L'. That's what Ryuzaki is thinking."

The silence was thick and uncomfortable. Ryuzaki's eyes stared blankly at the empty meeting room on the screen, face carefully not giving away anything.

Still, that eighteen-year-old bastard kept talking. "To gain the position of L and be able to freely control the police around the world while being Kira behind the scenes...that would be the ultimate position. And you're saying I could do it; no, that I'm trying to do it.

"But what about now, Ryuzaki? You should at least realise that I'm not acting. If I was planning on taking over the role of L, I wouldn't be revealing it in front of everyone, and if Ryuzaki...I mean, if L were to die while I continued to live and Kira suddenly appeared again, you'd just need to have Watari or a third party determine that I was Kira. And for the other possibility...say that it's true that I sent the power to someone else and plan to have it return to me in the future. If that's the case, the assumption is that I've lost my memories of being Kira."

Raito moved behind Ryuzaki's chair, spinning it around so the detective was staring up at the teen's furious face. With his tanned hands on Ryuzaki's thin shoulders, Raito declared, "Ryuzaki,
if I capture the current Kira...after that, do you really think I would become Kira, become a murderer? Do I really look like that kind of person?"

They stared at each other, the tension so thick Harry could've cut it with a knife. The emerald eyed wizard tensed, right hand twitching as the hidden wand under his sleeve warmed, as if ready to start firing at Harry's very whim.

And Ryuzaki said, "That's what I think, and that's how you look."

Raito's eyes closed, and the teen took a very deep breath.

All at once, it seemed as if the tension exploded, with Raito punching Ryuzaki squarely in the nose and the detective's right root slamming into the teen's cheek bone. Ryuzaki's chair tipped backwards, and he would've fallen if it hadn't jammed against the table, shaking the computers violently and scattering papers everywhere. The tea sloshed a bit onto the table, but miraculously didn't fall off, and neither did the sugar cubes.

Harry very nearly pulled out his wand so he could obliterate the handcuffs and throw Raito across the room, but Matsuda yelled hastily, "Stop! Once is enough! Let's just end this before it goes too far."

The two scooted away from each other as far as they could with the handcuffs on. The entire right side of Raito's face was deep pink, and there was an angry red mark on Ryuzaki's nose.

Quite frankly, Harry wanted to jinx the bastard into a slug and pour salt on him at that particular moment. However, the wizard knew that Ryuzaki would probably kill him and never speak to him again, and he didn't really want to kill Soichiro's son in front of him. That, and Misa would've strangled him.

"Let's just capture the Kira that's in front of our eyes. You can't complain as long as I have the handcuffs on," Raito mumbled.

"Yes, we only have one month," replied Ryuzaki, licking his lip.

"Ryuzaki, if we use that meeting as evidence and capture the seven of them, won't the killings stop?" asked Soichiro, and Ryuzaki drooped again.

"Unfortunately no."

"No? But—" started the ex-Chief, but Harry decided to take it from there.

"Like we said before, there's no guarantee that Kira is among those seven. One of them may merely be connected to Kira. If that's the case, capturing them will not stop the killing of criminals. It will only cause the seven of them to be killed by Kira. Unless we can be absolutely certain that Kira is among them, capturing them would be meaningless because we can't determine that Kira is part of Yotsuba Group. We need more time."

Ryuzaki, who had turned around and began dropping sugar cubes in his tea, glanced over at Harry and nodded slightly, his charcoal grey eyes sparkling with agreement.

"B-but we can't say that he's not among them for sure. That means there's a chance the killing of criminals could stop."

"That's true. My father's right; there's a chance."

"The killing of criminals might stop," said the detective, visibly pouting.
"Sorry, Soichiro-san, but that will be difficult. You're no longer a detective and it doesn't look like the police will help in this case. We can't go barging in there, spouting off that you've got video of them plotting murder. Firstly, we have no proof that they're actually killing people, and secondly, video feed that's obtained without a warrant can't be used against them in court. The only thing we'd accomplish is making Kira kill the lot of them."

"But isn't limiting victims the most important thing?"

"Soichiro-san, please listen to reason!" Harry practically yelled, fighting to keep control of his temper. *Is this really that hard for him to comprehend? "The killing of criminals will never stop unless we catch Kira, and to catch Kira, we have to find him. Going in there blind is not going to stop the killing of criminals, especially if Kira's not among them. We have to wait a little longer, even though it seems wrong and horrible. We have to find Kira, or this'll never end."

Soichiro opened his mouth to argue, but Ryuzaki said loudly, "I think I should go after Kira on my own." He picked up a handful of sugar cubes, apparently tired of dropping them in one-by-one, and let them all fall into his tea. "You can use these headquarters, as will I. You can try to catch Kira in any manner that you wish. And I will do things as I wish. Otherwise, we'll just be arguing with each other. Let's split into two groups and act separately."

This read as *I have a plan that you lot aren't going to like.*

Harry grinned at the thought.

"Ryuzaki, you intend to merely concentrate on uncovering whether one of them is Kira?" asked Soichiro.

"Yes," replied Ryuzaki, matter-of-fact.

"Criminals or not, this is human life!" the ex-Chief yelled.

"I understand, but your way doesn't necessarily mean the killings will stop. Actually, I'm ninety-two per-cent sure that they won't stop at all, and actually will cause more casualties, which is my priority to prevent." *Liar,* thought Harry, grin widening. *You don't give a ruddy hell about casualties. You just want to see how Kira does his dirty work, and having the others out of the picture is the easiest way to get there, because you won't have the others getting all righteously indignant on you. "I can't say that stopping the killing of criminals is meaningless. However, unless all the mysteries are uncovered, Kira will appear again and the number of victims will only increase. That's why I believe it's better to locate Kira than to capture these seven. I am against going after these men in Yotsuba Group, so if you're going to do it, you better take full responsibility, Yagami-san. I will go after Kira on my own."

He had already stood up, dragging the protesting Raito along with him on his trek to...wherever the hell he was headed. Harry fell into step with Ryuzaki, as he was siding with the detective on this one a hundred per-cent, and would've followed even if he hadn't agreed with Ryuzaki.

They were heading to the elevator when Ryuzaki said slowly, as if the words were hard to express, "Thank you for defending my point back there. It was very considerate."

Harry shrugged and said, "Don't worry about it. I'm taking into account the idea that you might just be right."

"Take it into account? So you're saying that even if he hadn't been right, you still would've followed him?" questioned Raito, rubbing his wrist.
The elevator door opened, so Harry and Raito walked in, but were surprised when Ryuzaki didn't join them. Instead, he had paused, eyes impossibly wide as they stared at Harry's face.

"Ryuzaki?" called Raito quizzically.

The wizard and the detective looked into each other's eyes, emerald green in charcoal grey, and then Harry took a chance and reached out, grasping Ryuzaki around his entire left wrist with his right hand.

As the sleeves didn't come down all the way, Harry was finally touching that skin he longed for. It was silky smooth and warm to the touch, and Harry could feel the older man's pulse beating-beating-beating under his thin skin. And _Merlin_, was it fast...it might've been the sugar Ryuzaki had been eating, but an illogical part of Harry hoped with everything he had that the reason it was beating so fast but steady was because he was touching Ryuzaki's skin.

Gently, in a daze, Harry pulled the smaller man in the elevator without breaking eye contact. Harry felt as if he could've stayed like that all day, in his own world while staring at the man who haunted his dreams, but eventually, Ryuzaki looked away and pushed the button for Misa's floor.

But his arm didn't pull away from Harry's grasp.

The tendons and muscles were tight, which Harry understood as tension from touch, something that Ryuzaki was not used to. However, there was a slight brush of goose bumps, indicating that the touch had _affected_ him...made him _shiver_.

Raito was watching with a raised eyebrow, so reluctantly the wizard let go, brushing Ryuzaki's soft skin all the way down his palm to his fingers with Harry's own. At the tips, their fingers held, for only a second, but it was enough. Enough for Harry's blood to burn hot enough and his heart to race with sensation...

"Yeah," Harry finally said, quietly, still looking at those downcast, slightly confused eyes even though they weren't focussed on him. "I would've followed anyway."

The door opened to Misa's floor, and Raito walked out hurriedly.

However, the second he had went around the corner, Ryuzaki beginning to follow him, Harry reached out and grasped that delicate face in his palms, knowing that he was crossing the line, crossing it too far to return.

Stepping close, Harry pressed his nose in the older man's hair, taking a deep breath of that intoxicating scent and brushing thin cheeks with his thumbs. He could feel Ryuzaki tense under his ministrations, but he didn't say anything, which Harry took as a good thing. Definitely a good thing.

The chain pulled taut, but didn't pull, nor did Raito call out or look around the corner.

So Harry leant Ryuzaki's face up, those dark eyes finally making contact with his own. They stared deeply at each other, the detective's eyes flinching to a small degree at the corners, but he didn't pull away; he didn't even look like he was _considering_ it.

His skin was so smooth and blemish-free that it didn't seem real. From this close, Harry could see the individual dark eyelashes surrounding those big eyes, charcoal grey orbs that radiated curiosity, confusion, intensity, and a slight brush of fear. Unconsciously, the shorter man's eyes flicked downwards, and those pale lips parted slightly, giving off the impression of impatience, perhaps, or maybe even something close to...eagerness?
No, that couldn't be right. (But it was, goddamnit, it was.)

Harry's fingers traced his eyelids, his temples, the dark bags under his eyes, his nose, until finally reaching the skin around his lips, so softly brushing his right index finger across Ryuzaki's ridiculously soft bottom lip, heat exploding in his body at the touch.

Harry took another deep breath, opened his mouth to say something, and then closed it, forgetting mid-word what he wanted to say. Harry's hands cupped Ryuzaki's face yet again, and the emerald eyed wizard exhaled softly before gently pressing his lips against the detective's for the second time.

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For the first time in over two decades, L Lawliet's analytical mind was blank.

His mind was blissfully thoughtless, perfectly white, and completely consumed by nothing except what was going on in his body. He wasn't thinking about murders, numbers, cases, or sugar. He didn't even know what those things were.


Was a kiss supposed to make blood boil?

Because L felt like he was burning alive.

Harry's lips were slightly dry, but not rough, and they fit remarkably well with L's own. His nose was touching L's left cheek lightly, and it was cold, but it only contrasted with the feverish feel of L's skin and honestly it felt wonderful. Almost as wonderful as those large hands cradling the detective's face so tenderly.

Or those lips that took his breath away.

L clenched his hands and found that they had moved without his knowledge, the fabric of Harry's navy long sleeve shirt thick and strong between his fingertips. He could feel the hardness of Harry's chest against his knuckles, and the rise and fall due to his steady breathing, so unlike L's own, which was just slightly erratic.

Harry pulled away, inhaling another deep breath, and L was surprised to find everything dark, as he had closed his eyes without even realising. When he had finally focussed on Harry, there was a small smile that was maddening to L, because he didn't know what it meant.

"Are you okay?" he whispered, brushing a lock of L's dark, heavy mass of hair out of the detective's eyes. He seemed genuinely concerned, and a sharp tightness formed in L's chest at the kind question.

Maybe this wasn't so bad after all.

L swallowed thickly and then nodded once, which made that smile widen just a bit more. It was infuriating, but L couldn't concentrate on it, because once again Harry had bent down to capture L's lips in a gentle kiss.

This time, the twenty-four-year-old detective was less shocked and more prepared. Unconsciously, his back straightened into an average human slouch, which gave Harry more room to move in closer, exactly what L had been aiming for. The heat between them was sweltering, and L found himself using his fistful of shirt to pull them together even more, his normally unblinking eyes closing yet again.
Simultaneously, as if it had been planned, both of their lips parted ever so slightly, and the kiss, relatively tame and mild before, went a shade deeper. This time, there was a bit of moisture, but instead of making L cringe, it just made the experience more slick and smooth.

And...L liked it.

More.

L relaxed his mouth, and Harry's hands left the detective's face, opting instead to bury his fingers in L's hair. The sensation was electrifying, and grew even more when a light stroke of Harry's tongue made L's heart go haywire in his thin chest.

L couldn't even stop the small gasp that fell from his lips.

He had never...never imagined that the mere act of pressing mouths could produce such a reaction in one body and that a tongue gently sliding across his own for a single moment could make his normally sturdy knees want to collapse. It didn't seem possible that a human being could feel something so intense without exploding from the inside.

And of course L's cell phone had to ring.

They both jumped, staring wide eyed at each other, and then L was digging in his pockets hurriedly, pulling the phone out and holding it to his ear in his normal fashion.

"Hello?"

"Ryuzaki, Aiber has information to share with you about Yotsuba Group. Would you like to be patched through right now?"

There was an abnormal sound to Wammy's voice, and L's eyes narrowed. He had never heard him ever talk like...

...oh. And they call me a genius.

"No thank you, Watari. I must talk to Amane for a moment before speaking with Aiber." Watari murmured an affirmative, and L chanced a look at Harry, who appeared to be an odd mix between amused and annoyed.

"Watari...did you happen to override the video cameras in the elevators from the main terminal?" asked L, voice tight.

Harry's emerald eyes went impossibly wide behind his glasses.

"Yes, Ryuzaki," sighed Watari. "No one saw your little show on camera, and yes, I'm deleting the footage as we speak." There was a pause, and then Watari declared loudly enough for Harry (and surely the rest of the floor) to hear, "And I'm expecting James-san in my office right about now so we can have a nice chat."

L flinched.

Harry just groaned.

For the third time in his life, Harry Potter walked towards his doom.
Perhaps not literally, but it seemed pretty close. The first and second times he had known that he could die—the first time he did die, in the Forbidden Forest, and the second time, in the Battle of London, he came so close that it was scary—but this time it was different. He was pretty sure his death wouldn't be via Killing Curse, and it sure as hell wouldn't have been from Voldemort—or at least it better not be.

It'd be either strangulation or being threatened to death.

*Over-protective father figure, here I come. I promise I'm not going to get him pregnant, Mr. Watari, and I'll bring him home by eleven-thirty every night!*

Yeah. Right.

It was also sort of eerie. He had Ryuzaki's cell phone up to his ear, listening to Watari give him directions in a clipped voice that did not bode well, and practically walked blind. It was strange, because he knew the old man was watching him through the cameras, leading him to his metaphorical death in the pit of hell.

The door of doom loomed at the end of a long hallway, quite a way from the rest of the rooms. At the sight of it, Harry steeled himself and took deep breaths, trying to quiet his instinct to run like his arse was on fire.

He hated conversations like this.

He hung up the phone and opened the door slowly.

The first thing he noticed was that there were loads of computers in here. It made the main room of headquarters look like nothing, with all of the high-tech equipment lit up in the otherwise dark room.

The second thing was much, much worse: namely, one Watari, real name unknown, was sitting in a spin-around chair, his face set sternly and his arms crossed on his chest. It was the picture of meeting the father of a blushing schoolgirl without the double-barrel shotgun sitting on his lap (or the wand tapping on a leg, like with wizard fathers).

Honestly, though, it was scary, and Harry didn't scare easily.

There was a single empty chair in the middle of the room, and Watari gestured to it without saying a word, so Harry took the hint and sat down, squirming a bit in discomfort. He wasn't sure if it was just at the situation or because the chair had no padding and was made out of wood. It was most likely a bit of both, straining towards the first one.

"Good evening, Harry," greeted Watari, but the words sounded rough.

"Good evening, sir," sighed Harry.

Something akin to a smile fluttered on that aged face, but the old man wiped it off quickly, as if remembering that he was supposed to play a part. At this, Harry knew without a doubt that he was alright, and visibly relaxed.

This did not go unnoticed. "I see that my façade has failed."

"Not really. I'm just officially relieved that you're not going to kill me and bury my body. With the greatest detective in the world always at your side, I'm positive that you could get away with murder."
Yeah, and if you try it, I'll Obliviate you in about two seconds, then make you believe that I'm quite alright for your maybe-son to kiss in elevators. Elsewhere would be nice too.

This time, the smile didn't leave Watari's face. "True, true, but I'm not interested in killing you Harry. I want to talk about what went on just now with Ryuzaki."

Harry felt his cheeks get hot. How was this anyone's business but Ryuzaki's and Harry's own? "Sir, with all do respect, I don't think that there's anything to talk about. I—I kissed him and he kissed me back. Enough said."

Watari replied, "Not exactly. Ryuzaki is not the type of person who can be taken lightly, Harry. Not only has he never been in a situation like this before, but he is also relatively a child. He does not understand what you're propositioning."

Harry bristled in anger. "Sir, I respect your position, but I am not propositioning him to do anything he doesn't want to. And whether or not you want to believe it, Ryuzaki is not a child. He understood exactly what was going on, and he's had almost three months to stew on the implications and the outlook in that way he does. I think he realises what he's getting into."

Some of the colour left Watari's face. "Three months, you say?"

...shit. "Er, I dunno why he didn't tell you, but...this isn't the first time this has happened. On the last day I saw him, I sort of...well, yeah."

Dawning realisation crept up on Watari's aged face. "Oh. Well, that explains quite a lot, Harry."

"Explains what? What happened?"

"It is nothing to worry about. He just seemed a little odd and preoccupied after that day, but he kept insisting that nothing was troubling him."

They both stewed on that for a moment, before Watari let out a sigh that came from the bottom of his soul. "I understand where you are coming from. Ryuzaki is a young man who can make his own choices when it comes to something like this. I'm just an old man worried about his charge. He's never experienced anything like this before, and I'm anxious for him."

"I know, but you don't have to worry. For one, he still might kick me later, and also, he just might not be ready for a relationship along this nature yet. I'm not going to force him to do anything, especially since he's chained up to that prat—er, I mean, kid."

Watari laughed, the first time Harry had heard him do so. It was kind and rich; the kind of laugh that grandfathers had. "Yes, I do believe that you're not the only one at odds with the Yagami boy."

The atmosphere was now friendly and relaxed, but even so, Watari continued in a low voice, "But I will tell you right now, Harry. I can't believe I'm saying this about Ryuzaki of all people, but if you break his heart, or hurt him in any way, I will make good on the idea of getting away with murder. Do you understand?"

Harry took a deep breath and leant forward, his eyes filled with nothing but truth. His voice conveying the absolute genuineness of every word he spoke, the emerald eyed wizard said, "If I break his heart or hurt him in any way, you have my permission to do what you will. I'll deserve it and a million times more."

Watari nodded slowly and said, "Good."
Twelve: Bait

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Sociably-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Twelve
Bait

15 October 2004

Harry opened the door and paused at the conversation, all of it in Japanese.

"...if we win, Misa-san won't die. As long as we're handcuffed, we share the same fate, right? If I die then so do you, and then wouldn't Misa-san be the saddest of all? So either both Raito-kun and I die or we catch Kira. Which do you prefer?"

"Catch Kira! I couldn't live in a world without Raito!"

"Come on, Ryuzaki, this is crazy," declared Raito, looking about ready to punch the detective yet again.

"I don't have time. I'm desperate." He glanced at Misa, who was looking determined and set, and continued, "Amane Misa's guts, acting skills, and her love for Raito-kun are the greatest in the world."

"R-Ryuzaki...I think I've been totally wrong about you this whole time, calling you a pervert and all. You really do understand me!"

Ryuzaki turned away from Misa, rolling his eyes in a remarkably uncharacteristic gesture, and mumbled, "Yes. Misa-san is the perfect woman for Raito-kun."

Misa squealed in delight and ran up to the detective, kissing him on the cheek and said happily, "Thank you Ryuzaki! Let's be friends!"

Ryuzaki looked up at the ceiling, shoving his hands deeper in his pockets. "I've gained yet another friend."

"To hell with the friend idea," laughed Harry, finally gaining the attention of the rest of the room, "I want to know why you think Ryuzaki's a pervert. That sounds like a fascinating story."

Misa laughed and said, "Oh, Ryuzaki just has creepy hobbies and is chained to Misa's Raito, and he watches us too closely." She giggled and skipped directly towards Harry, who grinned back at her and grasped her outstretched hand. The blonde dragged Harry towards the others and said, "But anyway, James-kun, you're going to be working with Misa too? Misa's even happier now. We're all friends!"
And out of nowhere, Misa had everyone in a circle, spinning around. Harry stumbled a bit before seizing Ryuzaki's hand more firmly, relishing the feel of his long-fingered grasp. Unlike Misa's small, glove-covered hand, Ryuzaki's was smooth and slightly chilled and oh so soft. It made stomping around in a crude circle worth it.

Eventually, Misa stopped and said, "Misa never betrays her friends. I know I'll do a good job, so just leave it to me! With the four of us working together, Kira is in big trouble."

"Have I missed something?" Harry questioned, deciding to speak in his awkward Japanese because of Misa not knowing how to speak English.

"Have I missed something?" Misa asked while pointing at Harry and Ryuzaki's still clasped hands. With a start, the wizard noticed that they were the only ones still holding hands.

"Well, actually," said Ryuzaki, not even paying attention to Misa, "Raito-kun disagrees with my investigation methods and will be working with his father, so it will just be the three of us."

Harry shook his head in amusement and grinned, while Misa looked livid.

Raito seemed upset too. "This is a dirty trick, Ryuzaki. Now it's like I have to join you guys!"

"Of course you don't," said Ryuzaki, pressing his thumb against his lip. His fingers twitched in Harry's hand, and those dark charcoal eyes glanced downwards. He seemed mildly curious at the fact that they were still connected physically, and seemed to miss the conversation between Raito and Misa.

That is, until she said, "I want to be able to help you. I want to be of use to you and be loved by you more. Plus...I would gladly die for you."

Hear, hear! Harry thought. Let's just hope it doesn't come to that.

It was one of the main reasons that Harry liked Misa so much. Not only did the two of them hit it off from the beginning (what was there not to like about her, anyway?), but they both were dedicated to helping a specific person. In Misa's case, she was hopelessly in love with Raito, who had pretty much not even acknowledged her existence nor returned her sentiments.

In Harry's case, he wanted to do anything he could to help Ryuzaki...to help L.

If it came to it, he would save him too. No matter what it took.

Because Harry Potter was hopelessly in love with the slinky, childish, nutty detective.

Harry groaned, gaining the attention of the others. But he couldn't help it, because he knew that without a doubt, telling Ryuzaki was going to be a pain in the...

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Amane led the four of them to the sofas.

L had been filling Harry in on the conversation, telling him the plan of Amane getting close and individually interrogating the Yotsuba members. Their hands weren't connected any more, mostly due to being shuffled to the other end of the room to amuse the model-actress, and L found that he missed the touch.

"Wait a minute. You're going to use Misa to get close to an entire group of blokes to interrogate them?" As he spoke, he gave back L's cell phone, which was taken and laid on the cushion beside
his crouched form.

"Yes," L said simply, knowing where he was going with this.

"Okay. You know two of them are married and that at least one is a flamer, right?"

L cocked his head to the side in response.

"Good. Now, how in the hell are you going to get Misa in the lives of these three married men and at least one gay man."

Yes. He's thinking in that direction. "Absolutely not, James-san."

Harry looked surprised. "So you're saying that it's okay if Misa goes out and has faux-dates with random strange men that might be Kira, but it's not okay for me to go?"

"Oh yeah! Since there are eight of them, we should split them up so we could get it done faster and catch Kira quicker. James-kun could take the married men and another one and I could take the rest." She grinned slyly and added, "You want Namikawa? You think he's cute, right? I know he'd go on a date with you; you're really cute!"

For a split-second, L's entire body tensed, and strangely enough, he felt a sharp stabbing sensation in his chest. His arm very nearly reached up to clutch in the general location of the pain, but Harry's words caught him completely off-guard: "No, Misa-chan. There's only one man I have eyes for, and it is not him. And besides, there's only seven now."

Misa raised an eyebrow, but decided to ignore the ominous information. She giggled, and sang instead, "Ooooh, James-kun has a boyfriend!"

Raito flinched and glanced once at the detective, shaking his head to silently expunge his thoughts.

L simply picked up the phone from the cushion and dialled Aiber's number to avoid talking. Regardless, he kept his attention on the conversation while quietly filling the con artist in on the plan, as said conversation was clearly about the...relationship between Harry and himself.

"I do not have a boyfriend, Misa-chan. That is such a girly term."

"Then what are you, lovers?" L nearly dropped the phone but kept talking in a relatively calm voice. "It's a little gross to think about two guys together, but whatever makes you happy, I guess."

"We're not that either! We're—well, actually, I don't know, but I really like him."

L's chest fluttered, then tightened, and he tried to keep his emotions out of his voice.

"Who is it anyway?" Misa asked with a huge grin on her pretty face.

At that, Harry hesitated. His green eyes flickered in L's direction once, and the detective tensed yet again. He wasn't sure what exactly he was so internally anxious about, because he wasn't sure if he wanted the situation between them to be public (he hadn't had the time to ponder the implications of it being known yet).

He wondered if Watari was closely monitoring the feed or if he had already switched it off, viewing it privately.
Finally, Harry said, "It's a secret. But I will tell you this: he's definitely worth pining after."

Misa squealed. "That's so cute! We should go on a double date—when Misa and Raito aren't being watched by Ryuzaki any more."

L couldn't fight the smile from creeping on his face, especially when he gauged Raito and Harry's reactions to this.

Raito thoughts were written clearly on his face: *Yeah, fat chance of that happening at this rate.*

Harry was very amused, and said with a grin in French, "*Ha, that's rich, considering Ryuzaki'll be there, just without the handcuffs.*" Then, at Misa's odd look, he said, "Sorry, I said that as soon as Ryuzaki and your boyfriend aren't chained up together any more, we can set a date."

L hung up the phone, finished with Aiber, and searched for something sweet. Seeing nothing, he sighed, and interrupted the conversation between Misa and Harry, not liking where all the talk was heading. "Namikawa or not, James-san will not be participating in this part of the investigation."

Harry huffed. "Look, here's what I'm thinking. Matsuda is supposedly dead, which makes Misa manager-less. Since I'm youngish and already associated with Misa, I could pick up the roll, take her for her interview with Yotsuba, and then start investigating with her. I'll be there, and I can give my contact information to Kida and Takahashi, who are married. And as reluctant as I am to do it, I'll investigate that creepy pig while I'm at it, because he'd be more likely to spill to me than Misa."

"Ew, you're going to investigate Takahashi and Higuchi? Well, at least I don't have to do it, even though I feel sorry for you."

"Absolutely not," repeated L for the second time.

Harry continued as if he hadn't heard the detective's words. "Instead of investigating all seven, we could narrow it down. Some of them, like Namikawa for instance, are way too smart to have Kira meetings. They'd work by themselves. So we don't necessarily have to start digging into all their lives."

"He's right, Ryuzaki," said Raito, stroking his chin in thought. "Some of them are unlikely Kira. Like James said, Namikawa is most likely not Kira, and I don't believe Shimura or Mido are either. The three of them are much too smart, observant, and careful, and I believe they would've worked on their own. I also have my doubts about Kida, but it's fifty-fifty."

"So Takahashi, Ooi, Kida, and Creepy Pig. But how is this going to work? Two of them are married, and one's a total flamer."

Misa giggled.

"Well, you could always do the investigating yourself and leave Misa out of this," said Raito. "I'm sure you could take care of yourself, James, and I mean that in a friendly way."

Harry rolled his eyes and said, "Yeah, yeah, whatever, but I honestly wouldn't mind. I don't like the idea of Misa being alone with a potential murderer either."

"Aw, everyone's so worried about me."

"So it's okay for you to go against Kira, but not Misa?" asked L loudly in French, tired of being ignored in the face of such a ridiculous plan. "There's no reason why Misa cannot do the investigating herself without you getting involved. She's a brilliant actress—"
"She's also tiny and can't defend herself."

"Neither can you against Kira."

Harry smiled, but L could tell that it was forced. "It's better me being in danger than Misa or anyone else out there."

The sharp pain stabbed his chest again. "You really do have a hero complex, Harry."

"That's not funny. I'm just doing what I think is right, and I will have more luck than Misa because of my gender. Please let me do this." His eyes were pleading, and his arm twitched, as if wanting to reach out. L blinked once, finding that he wouldn't have minded the action but knowing that it was logically correct for him to hide his feelings in front of the murder suspects.

Raito already knew, and that was dangerous in the current state of things. Harry's existence in L's life would be an excellent tool for Kira to use against the detective, as there was clearly something going on between them.

What it was, however, L didn't know. Harry didn't even know. But it was something, and that something could prove to be disastrous if Kira grew aware of it.

If Kira found out about Harry and discovered his name, Kira would kill him. Harry had claimed that information on him would be impossible to find, but L didn't trust him. Hiding everything in a person's life was very difficult, and the detective found it hard to believe that Harry had completely hidden everything.

Even a shred of information could get Harry killed by Kira.

Just because of his involvement with the detective L.

That was something that L did not want to happen. Maybe it was because of this situation they were in, or perhaps it was that Harry was the first and only friend L had ever had. L was ninety-two per-cent sure that it had to do with the fact that the mere idea of Harry dying made his chest so painful that it was making his hands shake.

L looked down at his chest, and his analytic mind wondered if he was having a heart attack. His chest, in the area around the vital, blood-pumping organ, was on fire, and not the kind of fire L had felt while pressing his lips against Harry's. It felt like he was being stabbed, and L knew what that was like from personal experience.

Don't go there, L's mind ordered, quickly closing that train of thought.

He shook himself inwardly, schooled his expression carefully, and finally said, "I don't want you to be in danger, and interrogating Kira suspects is dangerous."

Harry visibly bristled and threw L's words right back at him: "So it's okay if you go against Kira, but I can't?"

L's eyes narrowed, but he didn't know exactly what to say to that double-edged question. What could he say, really?

In the end, he didn't have to say anything, because after the small pause, Harry continued in a soft voice, "Look, the sooner that we catch Kira, the sooner you can stop risking your life on this desperate manhunt you've gotten yourself into. Besides, you can't just throw Misa under the bus as if she doesn't matter. She's a person too, and I think she'd appreciate it if you didn't just offer
her as bait."

L had the sudden craving for a piece of cake. He felt as if he couldn't think right.

The detective glanced back up, eyes narrowing stubbornly, and said, "I don't want you to do it. Even if we have to come up with a different plan, I don't want you to do it."

Harry sighed, seeing that he had lost the battle for now. "Okay. If that's what you want, fine. We'll come up with something different then, alright? But that doesn't mean I'm happy about this." He yawned, attempted to cover it with his hand, and said in English, "We'll talk about this later. If I don't get some sleep, I'll be a monster. An evil, sleep-craving monster. I don't know how you do it, Ryuzaki, but you're nuts. I'm practically non-functional when I haven't slept."

"Bye James-kun!" called Misa with a cheery wave.

L stood up, dragging Raito with him. Maybe he was on his way to get cake, but quite frankly he just wanted... "James-san, all of the subways are closed."

They walked out of the room after Misa had given Raito a kiss on the cheek, heading toward the elevator again. The teen seemed quite uncomfortable, but that was to be expected taking into account what all had happened an hour and fourteen minutes before. He was most likely considering different ways to get away from the situation as fast as possible.

Harry pressed the button for the elevator and yawned again. "Nah, I wasn't planning on taking the tube. I'll catch a cab or something." His green eyes flicked once to the left at 'something', and L immediately deduced that he was holding back on something.

L blinked slowly. "Or something?" The detective paused, followed Harry and Raito into the elevator, and then said, "You weren't here when I explained this to the rest of the investigation team, but this complex has twenty-three levels above ground and two below. Levels five through twenty have four private rooms, although three of the floors are already taken up by the current team. There is plenty of room for you here to save the constant commute."

A wickedly playful grin the size of Russia crept up on Harry's face. Behind L, Raito let out a small huff of poorly concealed amusement, and L sighed. He knew where this was going.

"Wow, Ryuzaki. You're already asking me to move in? You move quickly, you feisty detective you."

Watari was probably choking to death in his chair. L could only hope that he had shut off the cameras and microphones from the viewing of the main terminal.

"That is not what I meant." I think.

At that, L's mind completely blocked out everything else, eyes going wide. Kissing was one thing, but that on the other hand...that was a whole other complication.

Was that where this was going? He had been extremely disgusted by the idea of kissing, as the germs exchanged were immense, but had discovered that it was pleasurable enough to entice explosions within nerve endings. He had finally discovered what it was like to touch another human being in a non-platonic way, and had realized that it was an experience that he would most definitely like to repeat.

But sexual intercourse, like he had always believed, was the epitome of disgust. He had read up on the subject out of intellectual curiosity, considering it was a major motive for murder and he wanted to understand why people would kill because of it. He had found that every pore leaked
perspiration, saliva was usually laid down on many parts of the body, skin touched skin in great quantities, and the vilest part about it was the fluids that were exchanged between the sexual organs.

Harry was male, and so was L. He knew the basic gist of intercourse between males, and the idea of a body part being placed inside there was enough to make L shudder (and L didn't shudder, not even in the face of ghastly murders). And not only that, but at the moment of climax, millions of tadpole-like cells entered the submissive partner, not to exclude the fact that it all came back out again.

Sex was messy and riddled with germs, and L had never wanted any part in such acts.

However, back to the original point: was that where this was going?

He had been wrong about the act of kissing and trading saliva being disgusting. It had been quite enjoyable, and he wanted to do such an act again. Sexual intercourse between Harry and himself, on the other hand...he had no idea if he wanted that to happen. Just thinking about it put a slightly pinched expression on his face that the detective could akin to drinking a glass of unsweetened tea.

L had invited Harry to live in the complex, and Harry was a man that L had kissed, multiple times in fact. Was this another step to a fate that included exchanging bodily fluids? Would Harry see it that way?

No.

Yes, L could fairly say that. Harry would probably think about it (he was a healthy and normal twenty-four-year-old man), but he most certainly wouldn't act upon it unless L allowed it. Which the detective was leery to do—it was gross, after all.

He really needed a piece of cake.

"Oi! Earth to Ryuzaki!"

L glanced up in sudden awareness, realising that they had returned to the second floor, where the main terminals were located. Shaking himself from his strange thoughts, he stepped out, shoving his hands in his pockets to seem a bit more relaxed.

It seemed to work, for they didn't call him out on his lack of input on their conversation ("Yes, it's quite nice, even though I can't get a decent night's rest due to Ryuzaki typing on computers and talking on cell phones in the weirdest languages." "Well, I dunno if it'll be my cup of tea if I'm being spied on in the shower by someone. There are cameras everywhere.").

Well, perhaps he needed to make a comment here. "Is James-san hiding something from me that he doesn't want me to see through security cameras?"

Harry's face adopted a sheepish expression, but his eyes were sharp and cautious. L could immediately tell that he was choosing his words carefully. "Well, you know, I have all these dead bodies in my closet that I don't want you to find..." Raito laughed, and Harry loudly proclaimed, "And wasn't I right? He just admitted that he'd be watching me!"

"I could always have them installed in your home," said L in his smooth monotone.

Again, his emerald eyes tightened. "That's completely unnecessary. You don't know where I live anyway."
"It'd take us about two seconds to find out," admitted Raito, scratching his temple.

"Raito-kun is correct," confirmed L.

"You guys are creepy. Alright, I'll make you a deal: I'll move in here if you keep the cameras out of the bathroom. That's just weird, you know."

"But then there'd be a blind spot in my universal coverage of the complex. Therefore, it would be an area where the investigation team could go to kill criminals without my knowledge," remarked L, pressing a thumb against his lip and staring wide-eyed at the emerald eyed man.

Harry sighed while Raito declared, "So you're saying that James might be Kira then? I mean, it's not like anyone else is going to be going into his section of headquarters to take a shower or something."

"No, he's right," said Harry slowly. "He should be thorough. Just...keep the cameras out of the shower. I'd like to at least bathe in peace."

"Deal," mumbled L, biting his nail.

Harry yawned again. "I'll get the essentials tomorrow, I guess. Now lead me to my bat cave before I pass out."

***

L watched the screen with wide, concerned eyes.

In this room, there were two beds with a massive armchair in the middle, and Raito was sleeping peacefully in the one closest to the door. Usually L sat in the armchair and watched the teen sleep, until he drifted off in the early hours in the morning, but this night was different.

He had sat himself down on the floor in the middle of the two beds, one leg pressed against his chest and the other stretched out past the high-tech laptop he was currently staring at.

Said laptop had been used to tap into the cameras in Harry NoLastName's room, where said man was currently sleeping, or whatever word could be used for such a sorry excuse for sleep.

Harry was thrashing, in the throes of a vivid nightmare, with a pained expression on his face. The limbs were tangled in the sheets, his lightly golden skin gleaming with a light sheen of sweat, and his entire body was tensed.

At first, L had nearly ripped Raito out of bed to reach his cell phone, as it was out of reach. A few centimetres from disrupting Raito's sleep, he had realised that Harry would've woken up or died in the time it took Kira to commit murder. So he settled himself back down (he wasn't completely insensitive, and he let Raito have exactly eight hours of sleep), nearly as tense as Harry was, until it changed.

If L would've had the audio on, he would've heard Harry's screams.

And he was screaming. Harry screamed like someone was dying, right in front of him, like his heart was being torn out of his body from the horror of it.

L nearly jumped out of his skin at the sight, and was in the motion of standing up right as Harry tore himself out of the nightmare. As soon as he had stood, L was crouched again, his balance impeccable. His nose was almost touching the screen, and his sleep-deprived eyes refused to blink, completely focussed on what was happening in Harry's room.
Harry's cheeks were wet with tears, but his breathing was deep and thorough, so he was perfectly fine health-wise. However, his entire body was shaking and he had curled up onto himself, squeezing his emerald eyes shut to block out everything around him. The occasional sob came from his lips, and L knew that without a doubt, something horrible had happened to him. Despite his carefree and happy disposition, he was being torn apart by something in his past.

At that moment, even with his inability to show much affection, he wished with everything he had that he hadn't chained himself to the teen-ager beside him. He longed to be there, even if it was something as simple as touching his fingers to Harry's cheek, feeling the salty liquid on his fingers.

Longing.

L's index finger traced the contour of Harry's face on the screen and tried in vain to still his racing heart.

***

The next day, Harry took his last trip to his flat.

He had left Misa, Raito, that Aiber bloke, and Ryuzaki in the living area of Misa's floor, rehearsing for the interview with Yotsuba she had coming up in two days. Even though there was no change in the plan, it was still important to have Misa in the inner working of things.

Harry had fought with Ryuzaki for almost an hour earlier in the morning over the plan. While the rest of the investigation team watched without comprehending—thank Merlin they couldn't speak French—the conversation, they had argued over the plan. Ryuzaki had been pretty firm in insisting that Harry be kept out of the interrogations of the men of Yotsuba, especially Higuchi which was surprising.

Harry stayed pretty firm too, and while the wizard knew that he wasn't nearly on the same level as Ryuzaki in manipulating, he used his last-resort skill: lie.

Between five slices of cake consumed by Ryuzaki and a momentous sugar cube skyscraper built with delicate fingers, Harry had come to the conclusion that he was going to lose the argument if he didn't change tactics. Neither one could really come up with a better plan than the one already in motion, but Harry realised that he could tell a simple lie to turn the situation in his favour.

Mind, Harry wasn't too happy about lying to the man he loved, but it was the most ideal situation. Yet again, Harry had decided that telling Ryuzaki that he was a wizard was not the most ideal way of dealing with this situation, so he had to come up with a different method. Hence: Operation Lie.

"Okay, Ryuzaki. You win. I won't do it, and Misa can go in alone. I'm not happy about this, but I understand," Harry had told the detective, which had appeased the stubborn Ryuzaki.

However, Ryuzaki didn't read between the lines.

Harry had an idea, and when he was alone with Misa on the way to the interview, he'd let her in on it.

They'd both make plans to investigate the next day after shooting the commercial. Misa would make a date with Kida and Ooi, both of whom would agree to meet her, and she'd attempt to get them to spill something of vital importance while recording it with a cell phone. Harry would investigate Higuchi and would record anything of importance.
Then they'd lie again and say that the filming had taken a lot longer than originally predicted, securing that window of time they had used for investigating.

It'd fool Ryuzaki long enough for Misa or Harry to get information about Kira, and if Harry happened to get lucky (which he expected he would), then Ryuzaki wouldn't be able to stop him from continuing his one-on-one investigations as Harry would be the only one who could get through to Kira.

And if Harry had anything to say about it, he would be investigating Kira on the 'dates'. Misa was a good actress, yes, but she also wasn't very proficient in self-defence like Harry was. Furthermore, Harry was proficient in interrogation, unlike Misa, and could get information easier than she could regardless of her talents.

Also, Harry had stewed over who he believed was Kira for hours instead of sleeping in his comfortable but strange bed. He just didn't think that Kida was, because not only was he smarter than some of the others, but he was also needed for financial matters and nothing else. As for Ooi, he was far too blunt, and Harry personally believed that he'd work on his own as well. As for Takahashi, Harry honestly didn't think the latter had anything to do with Kira except making the notorious murderer look smarter.

Higuchi was Harry's prime pick for the position of Kira. Maybe Harry was biased, but Higuchi was creepy, diabolical, and was definitely stupid enough to need a group of people to be the brain of Kira. Not to mention that he was also obsessed with himself and how amazing he was...

Lastly, Harry had an advantage that Misa did not: he was a wizard.

It would be a simple matter to throw a couple of spells in Higuchi's direction and put the man in a false sense of security. He would've put him under the Imperius curse, but the invention of the Spell Track by the German Ministry of Magic in 2002 made that impossible. Any of the pre-determined 'bad' spells that were fired by a witch or wizard could be located, and quite quickly there'd be an official from the Insert-Country-Here Ministry on one's doorstep, firing spells first and asking questions later.

It was a good invention when it came to dealing with the last rogue Death Eaters, as they had a tendency to use the 'bad' spells a lot (the Unforgivables, to start with), but it would've been nice to use some of those spells—the Imperius curse and the Obliviation charm specifically—in his quest for knowledge about Kira.

Anyway, it wasn't exactly spells that he was aiming for. The main reason for leaving headquarters had to do with making a quick visit to England so he could badger his best friend, who had a profession at St. Mungo's.

Well, that and getting rid of Kreacher for the time being. The last thing Harry needed was a conversation explaining what in the hell a house elf was.

Harry opened the door of his flat and had the familiar battle with the keyhole, pulling with all his might to get the damned thing unstuck. By the time he had done that and closed the door, Kreacher was standing by his leg, looking mighty grumpy. "Master Harry didn't come home last night when he promised he would. Kreacher made an entire meal that went uneaten."

"Sorry, but something came up. I'm moving away from here, Kreacher, and that means you have to go, and soon." Yeah, soon, because Watari was securing a luggage rack to help him get the essentials and Kreacher did not need to be seen by the old man.

This seemed to catch the house elf's attention. "Is Master Harry going to leave Kreacher behind
again for some strange country? Perhaps Master Harry will choose a place with a more civilised
grocery instead of the still-squirming fish."

The wizard smiled, amused even in the face of his rush to get the house elf out. "Actually, I'm
taking you back to London. I'm moving to a place where you can't be because they don't know
I'm a wizard there, and there are security cameras and microphones placed in every inch of the
flat. I'm sorry, Kreacher, but you're going to have to stay somewhere else."

"Fine, fine. Kreacher will go back to her Mistress's house if it satisfies Master Harry."

Harry was relieved. "Great. I'm heading to London, actually, to visit with Hermione, so I suppose
this is goodbye."

"Yes, indeed, Master Harry." And with that, he disappeared with a loud crack.

Harry took a couple of deep breaths before romping to his bedroom, and therefore, his closet.
Thankfully, the house was in perfect order, due to Kreacher's skills, so he didn't have to be
worried about being horribly embarrassed. If the house elf hadn't been magically bonded to Harry,
then the house would've been a disaster. He just didn't care much for housework.

He had emptied half his closet by the time Watari knocked lightly, coming in when Harry yelled
"It's open!"

"This is a lovely place, Harry-san," remarked Watari, earning a quick snort from Harry's position
in the bedroom.

"Yeah, I'm sure it really measures up with your standards, but thanks anyway. Make yourself
comfortable; I shouldn't be long."

The old man laughed lightly and did just that, while Harry got out of sight of the door while
pretending to head to the drawers. He very hastily began putting the not-obvious magical things in
the suitcase, and then started transfiguring everything else. He tried to keep it as sparse as possible
—after all, too many rubber gloves, belts, and bad Britney Spears CDs would be suspicious, and
that's all he could transfigure things into.

Harry fought down a laugh and won.

So with nearly a suitcase filled with belts, he closed it and turned to his broomstick, sighing. He
wouldn't be able to explain a broomstick away, especially with Firebolt 2000 written in gold on
the handle, and it would surely be triggered by the metal detectors. Not that it had any metal in it,
but the magic in the broom was so intense in that object that it would cause the machine to go
haywire (he knew from personal experience). It was the same with the invisibility cloak, which
would be kept safe at the same place his broom was going.

He slumped, shrinking it and putting it in its place on his leg (Harry really hated baggy jeans), and
then headed to the bathroom. He was quick in there, careful not to get anything decidedly magical
(like Sebastian's Free-Floating Shaver: Say the Word and it's Done!).

Finally he was done, and he lugged his two suitcases and large bag to the living area, where
Watari had stationed himself. He set it on the luggage rack for the old man and then grabbed his
backpack from the coat closet, heading to the little dresser beside the telly to get his photo albums.
He refused to leave them behind, even though the magical pictures would definitely be a tell-all if
Ryuzaki got his long fingers on them, and put them in his bag.

Watari was already heading out the door. Harry quickly locked the stubborn door and followed
the old man out of the complex, giving his key to the man behind the counter and saying goodbye
They loaded the luggage in the trunk of the car, and Harry turned to Watari with an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry, but I've got to go somewhere else first. I have to drop off my last payment for the flat.

"Ah yes, of course."

They hopped in the car and headed for the small, out-of-the-way place, not speaking much. Watari stayed in the vehicle, thankfully, because there was a huge difference between a place like Sato-Mari's and this place.

Because this wasn't a collections building at all. It was just bewitched to look like one.

No, this was a secured and confidential Japanese Apparation Building that was regulated by Japan's Ministry, and it was surrounded by Muggle repellent charms. Conveniently, the place was a billing cooperation that no Muggles had to pay at, only 'serving' people that were conveniently witches and wizards.

He quickly took off his glasses and brushed his hair over his scar, and gave an entirely fake name for the registry before Apparating with a loud crack.
Chapter Thirteen  

Lust  

25 October 2004  

"James-kun, please let Misa take Higuchi instead."

Misa had been acting strange since her interview with 'Coil' and specific Yotsuba members. Not only was she more determined than ever to go along with Harry's secret plan ("Wow, James-kun! That's really smart! Let's do it and make Raito and Ryuzaki proud!), but she was getting ridiculously passionate towards investigating Higuchi in particular.

"No, Misa-chan. We've already made plans to go out, and besides, he'll react more to me. I promise I'll be careful, so concentrate on doing your best with Ooi."

She pouted, gritting her teeth strangely, before continuing with the touch-up on her make-up. For a while, she was quiet, but eventually she said, "Well, then let's take him together! He's definitely into both of us—"

"—Misa. He was drunk when he hit on you, and he's been trying to get with me since July. I don't know why you're so desperate to have a date with Higuchi, but trust me, if he knows anything, he'll tell me."

She didn't seem convinced. Instead, she just looked even more upset. "What, are you going to mess around with him or something? We both know that Higuchi is a pig who'd definitely spill his secrets while doing that, but Misa doesn't want you to stoop that low."

"Then what in the hell were you thinking about doing, hm? And for your information, I'm not planning to do anything with him. I'm in love with someone else, you know that. Besides, I have better taste than that, sweetheart."

She giggled against her will, hiding it behind one manicured hand. "Misa's sorry. It's just that Misa knows that Higuchi is really suspicious and Misa just wants her Raito to be proud."

Harry sighed and wrapped the small woman in a one-armed hug. "I know that too, but so is Ooi." He wasn't really, but Misa didn't need to know that. "And Raito will be happy no matter what. I know he's against it now, but once we find out something concerning Kira, he won't be so mad any more. In fact, he'll be very happy because it'll help Ryuzaki catch Kira."

He could tell by her eyes that she was bought. "Just be careful, okay James-kun?"
Harry kissed her once on the top of the head. "Don't worry about me; I'm very good at getting things out of people without doing the nasty with them."

She giggled again. "Well, Misa promises that she won't do the nasty with Ooi either."

They both laughed.

A few minutes went by before Harry said, "Alright, it's seven-thirty. Please be careful with Ooi and I'll meet you in front of headquarters at eleven, okay? Remember to stay away from the doors, or Ryuzaki's cameras will see you. We have to go in together, or that crazy guy will go nuts."

Another giggle.

Harry took a deep breath and walked out of the restroom, where they had both taken refuge on the wait to get picked up by their respective dates. He glanced every which way, taking in the entirety of the park that they were waiting at, and finally laid eyes on a bright, gorgeous red Porsche 911 Carrera with Higuchi Kyosuke leaning against the hood.

Harry wasn't one for Muggle vehicles, but the Porsche was absolutely divine.

"Oh wow!" exclaimed Harry with a slack jaw. He did have to lay it on thick, after all, and make the chap seem more self-important than usual. "What a stunning car!"

"You like it?" grinned Higuchi. "You can ride in it any time you'd like. Hell, I'll even buy you one."

Well. Wasn't he anxious for a lay...

Harry hopped in and was even more impressed by the leather interior and the fact that the car was an automatic instead of the customary manual. A car like this must've cost a small fortune. Maybe I got in the wrong line of business.

The wizard fought the urge to snort.

"Alright James, how about some dinner? I've got a reservation to Genjikoh, a fantastic restaurant here."

"That sounds great."

"Fantastic, then." The car sped up, and Harry smirked like it was fun to go against the law by speeding. "So, gorgeous, you not seeing that boyfriend of yours any more?"

He's not my boyfriend. "We broke up almost a week ago. He wasn't fun any more, and I needed something exciting in my life."

"Well, I'm definitely the man to come to. I'll show you a fun time."

Harry forced a grin, a bit revolted at Higuchi's thick innuendo. "Well, that's what I'm here to find out. Misa-Misa said I'd like you and was the one who talked me into going out with you after the break-up."

Higuchi's grin turned lecherous. "Did she? Well, your Misa is absolutely right."

The emerald eyed wizard casually put a hand in the pocket of his blue jeans and touched the cool glass of the small vial, nodding towards Higuchi with a smile.
Ooooh, this is so fucking illegal.

Genjikoh was a high-scale place, with many business-looking Japanese elites dining with their wives—or their mistresses. Quite frankly, it wasn't the type of place Harry was interested in eating, but he couldn't really do much, considering he had to let Higuchi flash as much of his wealth around as possible. It was what got the creepy man's rocks off.

It was nice, that was for sure. Lots of murmuring, dimmed lights, a Japanese garden illuminated for viewing...Harry could appreciate the place, but he'd prefer a home-cooked meal instead of the raw stuff. The table that Harry and Higuchi were seated at was closest to the garden, the cool breeze tickling their hair.

The only thing that Harry thought was Ryuzaki wouldn't like this place at all.

They were given drinks and Harry's hand once again slipped casually in his overcoat pocket to finger the vial. Of course, if anyone magical was to see this, they would probably freak out, considering it was one of the potions intensely regulated, especially by the British Ministry.

But having a friend named Hermione Granger-Weasley that was pretty damn good at potions really paid off, especially when it was essentially effortless for her to get the potion from St. Mungo's without being arrested. Yes, she was breaking the law, but in the end, it was solving mass murder ("Unacceptable, Harry, and I'm very thrilled that you're helping with the investigation") and making Harry happy again ("We don't really see you smile much any more, so I think I like this Ryuzaki-L bloke just on principle").

He just had to wait for the perfect time to drip a single drop in Higuchi's glass without being seen by a crowded restaurant or the man himself. And he couldn't add more than one drop or he could potentially kill the chap and mess everything up.

Adrenalin pumping through his body and his heart racing in anticipation, he said, "Wow, the garden really is beautiful tonight. I mean, look at the trees. Gold and—all those reds. They're my favourite colours, you know." One odourless, colourless, tasteless drop of Veritaserum plopped in Higuchi's tea. "Oh and look. Here comes the waitress."

Done. One down, one to go.

The waitress came with their orders, and the two of them took respective sips of their tea before breaking apart their chopsticks and eating. A wicked grin appeared on Harry's face without being able to stop it, and Higuchi seemed to take it as a different meaning.

Time for a little questioning. Harry reached into his other pocket discreetly and turned on the recorder of his cell phone, his grin widening in the thrill of the interrogation.

"So, Higuchi-san, you work for Yotsuba?"

"Oh yes. I'm one of the most powerful in their ranks, too, and one day I'll be sitting in the president's chair, overseeing the entire company." He looked extremely proud while saying it, proving that he was very much interested in getting laid. He just couldn't do it very straightforward; he didn't want to completely piss Higuchi off, and wanted to take the approach of getting as much information out of him while staying in good favour. After all, the friendlier they were, the more information Harry would get.

"Oh wow, so I've got a hot-shot on my hands. Mmm, if you're such a big strong man now, why aren't you already the president?"
Very, very suddenly, Harry had the horrible feeling of being watched.

Instantly, his entire body tensed and his wand burst into his hand with a flare of magic, hidden underneath the table. His green eyes kept eye contact with Higuchi's brown ones, but his other senses—the smell of something out of the ordinary, the sound of suspicious shuffling, the taste and feel of magic in the air—were searching for anything that was dangerous.

"Well, you see, I've got more working in my favour right now, gorgeous. I didn't have much luck until a little over four months ago, when something very interesting happened."

Bragging git. Well, it corresponded with the time-line of the newest Kira. 14 June was when the current Kira had began killing criminals again, and Higuchi...despite the hairs standing up on the back of Harry’s head, he knew that he was going to get lucky with this one.

"Something interesting? Sounds like fun."

"Oh yes, it is," smirked Higuchi, his expression going superior. "Hey gorgeous, what do you think about Kira?"

Bingo!

Harry allowed himself to adopt a gleeful, beaming smile, still trying to find the threat in the restaurant. "Kira-sama? He's the god of this new world, isn't he? I mean, think about all of the bad people he's killing. It's like he wants us to live in a happy, peaceful world, and I'm grateful for his work." Harry felt sick just saying these words, but he leant over the table and said, "But you can't tell anyone I said that, though. I like my job as Misa-Misa's manager, and I really don't want to get fired because of this. She'd be really upset; we're really good friends."

"Oh, don't you worry, gorgeous. Your secret is safe with me." Higuchi was still practically humming with anticipation, and Harry's brain was on overdrive, realising that his chance to get a hell of a lot of information out of the moron would be easier than imagined. He was virtually desperate to spill everything.

"Good." Harry swallowed and then smiled dreamily, saying in a low voice, "Kira-sama is wonderful for what he's doing. I'd love to meet him."

Higuchi took another sip of his tea and his grin went feral. "So, if Kira was sitting right in front of you, would you agree to be his lover?"

Well, this is going in a direction that's going to piss some people off, that's for sure. Might be best to skirt around the question with a question of my own. "What are you trying to get at, Higuchi-san?" Harry asked, intent in hearing the Veritaserum-influenced answer and yet still on-guard. The feeling of being watched had full out escalated to a barely restrained panic, because none of Harry's senses were detecting anything. If this lasted much longer, Harry was going to blow his cover to everyone by doing some impressive magic to find the invisible observer.

"Well, I know this is going to be kind of hard to believe, but I have a confession to make." Higuchi leant closer, Harry following suit, and whispered, "I'm Kira."

Got it!

"No way. I don't believe you," Harry murmured, trying to play the disbelieving card while his entire body was dancing with elation at the blatant confession.

"No, I'm serious, gorgeous."
Disillusionment charm? No, my magic would've sensed it. An Invisibility Cloak, maybe? Perhaps, but those things are intensely regulated in the world and the only one in Japan that I know of is in Okinawa. If it is someone in an Invisibility Cloak, they've probably guessed that I'm investigating the Kira investigation. Hopefully they don't do something stupid.

"Prove it."

At that, Higuchi's face flickered with apprehension. "I have to go home to do it. I know that it doesn't make much sense right now, but we can head to my place and I can prove it immediately."

Harry thought hard. If he did go, he'd probably find out the way Higuchi killed people, but Ryuzaki would not only storm the house with a million and a half police officers but he'd be upset. As Harry wasn't even supposed to be doing this anyway, Ryuzaki would've been really his own version of epically pissed despite the huge advantage they would have. Furthermore, he had Misa to think of, as it was almost nine-thirty and they were only half-way done with this meal. It would take a half-hour to get from this place back to headquarters, maybe more depending on traffic, and so he'd only have a half-hour to spare. There just wasn't enough time to go to Higuchi's place.

On the other hand, if he didn't go, Ryuzaki would be a little less upset, and would probably think of a really interesting way to get the creep to reveal his way of killing. Harry couldn't exactly question him about it, because if the wizard had Higuchi spilling out everything of importance, it would seem pretty suspicious in itself. After all, even Higuchi wasn't stupid enough to say everything over a small date with a relative stranger. He'd save some secrets for later, and that was only natural.

To tie it all up in a creepy little bow, the feeling of being intensely watched was starting to really unnerve him. He hadn't felt like this since the War, and that definitely wasn't going to help his judgement.

Was there a way to have a win-win situation here?

"You're just saying all of this so you can take me home and do naughty things to me. I'm not going to fall for it." Think, Harry, think! Now is not the time to be a blockhead!

"I wouldn't lie to you like that, especially if I'm going to take you home with me one day and show you how a real man has fun."

Harry experienced the strange sensation of being entirely grossed out while simultaneously being elated. He had an idea. "Look, I know how you can prove it. Just stop killing criminals for a few days until I tell you to, that should be enough to tell me that you are Kira-sama."

There was a seedy contemplative expression on Higuchi's face, and then the man said, "Hmm, that's a good idea. Alright, when I stop killing criminals, you'll know that I really am Kira. Then you'll come over to my place, right?"

"Sounds good." Harry finished the last bite while Higuchi paid the bill, turning off the recorder of his cell phone discreetly while using the time to scan everything around him for disturbances.

They walked out, hopped in the Porsche, and then quite suddenly Higuchi had grasped Harry's face and all-but attacked him with a near-brutal kiss.

Harry fought down the initial reaction of pulling out his wand and jinxing the bloke into a slug, allowing himself to respond with enough enthusiasm to seem interested but not enough for Higuchi to get the wrong idea. Perfectly deliberate, but Harry was a bit surprised to note vaguely that he wasn't exactly bad at this. Not that he'd be seeking it out or anything; this was just an act,
filled with nothing on Harry's side but calculation.

Besides...nothing could ever compare to what he had experienced with Ryuzaki.

And why did Harry still have the feeling he was being watched?

When it was over, Higuchi seemed ridiculously pleased, and Harry grinned, leaning back in his seat while internally praying that he wouldn't try anything else.

"So where are you going, gorgeous?" asked Higuchi, and Harry replied, "Misa-Misa's. She wants to hear all about tonight."

"But doesn't your ex live there?" Higuchi asked suspiciously.

*He's not my boyfriend.* "Nah. He moved in with the guy he cheated on me with, actually. Total arsehole. I moved in with Misa-Misa, because she's one of my best friends."

After that, the drive was quiet, but a large hand had found its way to his leg, grasping Harry's thigh with intent. Harry knew that if he would've allowed it, he would've been at Higuchi's place five minutes ago doing things, and the wizard tried not to gag at the thought.

*Think about anything but Higuchi. We're almost there.*

The high-rise loomed in the distance, and Harry nearly sighed with relief. Instead, he schooled his expression into a suitable sad expression, so when the car pulled up, the wizard looked positively miserable to be leaving.

"You know what? I think I'd like to do this again with you, Higuchi-san."

Higuchi grinned and his hand went up uncomfortably high. He leant forward and whispered in Harry's ear, "Don't worry, gorgeous, we'll definitely get together soon. Call me, okay?" He licked the lobe of the emerald eyed man's ear and Harry shivered, having a horrible urge to lose his dinner. This was *Kira* nibbling on his ear, and *Kira* wanted Harry's L dead...

"I've got to go, Higuchi-san."

The man finally let go, and smirked. "I'll see you later gorgeous."

"Bye!" Harry said, giving him a wink, and then all-but bolted out of the car towards Misa, who was sitting on the steps and attempting to see through the tinted windows.

At the sight of his disgusted face, Misa giggled and grasped his arm, waving once at the car before it drove off into the blackness. The second it was gone, she practically bombarded him with questions. "So what happened? Did you find out anything, because Ooi was a total joke. Couldn't say anything to save his life. Why do you look so scandalised? Did you guys do anything?"

"I need to go brush my teeth with bleach," choked Harry, both of them finally reaching the doors and being seen by the multiple cameras. "That was gross, I swear to God, that fucking pig—but at least it's good news!"

Misa squealed, and Harry grinned, knowing that there was a group of worried and-or grumpy investigators listening in on the microphones, confused as hell. Harry pulled out his cell phone, going to his recordings and getting the file ready for playback.

When Mogi showed up and let them in, not saying much like usual, he led them quickly to the main room of the complex, where every single one of them was sitting—or crouching, in
Ryuzaki's case. Quite suddenly, Harry got a huge tingle of nerves in his gut, knowing that even through it all Ryuzaki was still likely to kick him in the head or something equally violent.

For a minute, Harry and Ryuzaki just stared at each other, while the others watched, feeling the tension in the room. But they didn't see anything but the other, Ryuzaki emitting off waves of unusually harsh anger. It was justified, though, because Harry knew that he had went behind the detective's back to do something potentially dangerous, even though Ryuzaki didn't know how safe Harry actually was.

He looked dangerously beautiful though. In his customary crouch, he appeared to be nothing more than blank as usual, but the wizard could see how sharp his charcoal grey eyes were, how his normally pale and delicious lips were in a tight line of disapproval, and how his knuckles were white at the force with which he was clenching his knees. Harry almost expected Ryuzaki to jump out of the chair and deck him a good one in the nose, and he still wasn't counting the kick to the face out of the equation.

Raito was the first to speak. "I called to see how late the commercial was going to be, and they said that shooting ended at seven. Care to explain where you've been for the past four hours?"

Misa opened her mouth to speak, but glanced over at Harry's intense face and was gratefully silent for once. Harry didn't answer, choosing instead to try to convey to the love of his life that it was all for him, without speaking a word.

Ryuzaki seemed to get the gist of it, and he said in an uncharacteristically hard voice, "You said you wouldn't, James-san. You said you wouldn't."

That cut like a knife, especially in that tone of voice.

"I know," Harry sighed, but Ryuzaki interrupted, his voice going lower, "No, apparently you don't. You could've extremely compromised this investigation by acting out on your own, essentially doing the exact same thing that Matsuda did except in smaller proportions. What if one of them had been Kira?"

Harry's heart was hammering in anger, knowing that he had done the right thing no matter how brash it had been. "One of them is Kira, Ryuzaki, and I have his confession to prove it!" There was a sudden, wide-eyed silence, so Harry continued after absently wiping his mouth, "And just so you know, you insufferable man, I could've found out how he kills too, and I came this close —" Harry lifted up a shaking hand to pinch two fingers at the detective. "—to watching him do it, but no. I didn't. And do you want to know why?"

The blood was pounding in his brain, making everything besides Ryuzaki slow down immensely. Without waiting for an answer, Harry said furiously in French, "Because he told me I had to go home with him, to see it, which means that there's evidence by the way, and I knew that if I went home with him, that he'd expect something out of me. So instead of finding out how Kira kills and ending this investigation, the only thing I could fucking think about was you and your silly little face crumbling in either anger or something worse. I couldn't do it because I was too damn worried about you, and don't you dare tell me that what I did was off-limits. I'm doing this, doing everything in my power, to make sure that you get out of this alive. It's all about you, you, getting out of this alive, because if there is one thing I will never allow to happen, it's losing you to a mass-murdering psycho because you're too stubborn to let me risk myself in the same way you already are!"

Very quickly, Ryuzaki had stomped towards Harry, Raito nearly falling from the suddenness of it all. For a long moment, Harry honestly believed that he was going to get hit considering the vast amount of rage in those charcoal grey eyes. He didn't allow himself to think too much on the fact
that he had never seen Ryuzaki like this, nor had anyone else due to their reactions, and that the amount of ferocity radiating out of those hard, narrowed eyes was nearly scalding just being near it.

The Great Detective L was definitely a force to be reckoned with when he had the necessity to be so. There was a side to him that was more powerful than Harry himself.

And Merlin, that was saying something.

However, against all odds, he didn't throw a punch, but instead said in a too-calm voice, "Where is this recording, James?"

No honorific. That had to be bad. "It's here on my cell phone," Harry explained, wiping his mouth yet again. Without further ado, Harry pressed play and let it all fold out: the questioning about Yotsuba and Higuchi's quest to be president, the confession, and unfortunately all of the innuendos and flat-out verbalisations on what he wanted to do to Harry. Those were the worst, because every time it happened, Ryuzaki's eyes flinched, although in disgust or pain Harry couldn't tell.

When Watari decided to show up mid-play, it was even worse. The old man was clearly upset.

By the time it was over, Raito had already said, "Well, I usually wouldn't be convinced by this. It's perfectly logical to assume that Higuchi was just talking big to get Harry to spend the night with him."

Ryuzaki picked up a truffle from a box on the computer desk and bit into it harshly, while Harry was screaming in his mind, No it's not, you prat; Muggles can't lie while under the influence of Veritaserum!

Raito continued, "However, it would be rather concrete proof that he was Kira if the criminals stopped dying."

"Not really," said Soichiro thoughtfully. "What if Higuchi brings it up at an emergency meeting or calls everyone to propose that criminals stop dying for a while? As much as I'd like to believe that the killings will stop, we'd be no closer to solving the mystery of who Kira is."

Harry smiled tightly, wiping his mouth again in a vain attempt to get rid of the feeling of Higuchi's mouth on his. "Actually, no. I told him to stop killing criminals. If Higuchi is Kira, the killings will stop immediately. If he's not—" Which he is. "—Kira, then the killings will go on a little bit before stopping."

"You're wrong," snapped Ryuzaki, eyes boring a hole in the tray of truffles. "He'd go home and call the others immediately."

"And you're wrong," Harry shot back. "We'd have phone records and Wedy's recording devices to prove he called."

"Wedy hasn't installed audio devices in three households yet, and one of those households is Higuchi's."

"We'd still have phone records. He'd have to call all of them back-to-back the second he got home, and it'd be clear evidence. He wouldn't call them otherwise, and why in the hell would they listen to that old creep anyway? And besides, I just know he's the one, and now you'll have a couple of days without Soichiro-san being a mess because of all the murders."

Ryuzaki said in French, "What about the method of murder, James-san? Is the only way to
discover the method of murder having you investigate Higuchi at his house? I seriously doubt that we could go barging into Higuchi's home without police permission and come out of it with the murder process. There's an eighty-seven per-cent chance that he'd destroy it before we could get our hands on it, and he might lose his memories of the entire ordeal and the power."

"Come up with some spectacular plan to fish him out, Ryuzaki. I thought that would be obvious. If anyone could execute a preparation in his own favour, it would be you. Don't be so moody and irritable because of what I did. I'm giving you a window to do whatever you want without mutiny from the others, and it's going to bring you a hell of a lot closer to solving this case. Please get over it, because nothing happened between Higuchi and me, and that's the only explanation to why you're acting like this. You're pissed off because you're jealous."

Again, Ryuzaki's eyes flinched, and Harry realised that he was right on the button.

With his heart a strange mix between guilty and elated, Harry turned on his heel and marched his merry way to his suite. After all, he really did need to brush his teeth to get that nasty taste of guilt out of his mouth.

***

L Lawliet was furious.

For starters, Harry alone had been the main person on the investigation team that had actually done much to aid the Kira case. Yes, Matsuda had had a hand in it, but Harry had discovered the link between Yotsuba and Kira, and Harry had gotten a confession from the possible Kira. L and even Raito, both of them clever minded and ridiculously intuitive when it came to the investigation, had missed key points in the case, which did not sit well with the famous detective. Since the fiasco with Raito's incarceration, L hadn't done anything except save Matsuda's idiotic self.

Secondly, Harry went back on his word. Harry had lied, straight to L's face. Yes, he had done the investigation a lot of good by what he did, but the fact still remained that Harry had lied and didn't even seem to feel sorry for it.

Also, Harry could've died on his date. Higuchi could've killed him when Harry declined the offer to spend the night with him just out of spite. It had been so dangerous, and that made L even angrier because Harry could've stayed true to his words and avoided that situation.

But all-in-all, Harry was right: L was experiencing a stabbing sensation in his head and chest that he could easily classify as jealousy.

Harry had been wiping his mouth obsessively, making strange faces in the process. L could logically assume that Higuchi wouldn't have been so eager to give up information about Kira without something in return. Eating at a restaurant or driving around in a car alone with the emerald eyed man wouldn't be enough to satisfy a sneak like Higuchi Kyosuke.

Harry had kissed him.

Kissed him.

The same way Harry had kissed L. Maybe it had been just as awing and delicious and electric to Harry. Maybe Harry thought Higuchi was a better kisser—which made sense because L had never kissed anyone but Harry before and surely L was rubbish at it—and didn't want to be around L any more. Maybe Harry liked Higuchi more and was going to take him up on his offer to go home with him anyway, because of how good Higuchi had kissed him. Maybe Harry liked
Higuchi more than L.

Then L’s mind blanked out.

Had Higuchi touched him?

_No-no-no-no-no!

Without even being aware of doing it, L had dug into his pocket, pulling out a small key and unlocking his handcuff, quickly snapping it around the wrist of Wammy. He didn’t even have half the mind to say anything about watching Raito closely, because he was out the door within seconds, storming up to Harry’s quarters with horror and anger and _fear_ rolling around in his body. When he was almost to Harry's room, he called out loudly, "Watari, cut off the feeds." Hopefully L’s handler heeded the detective's words.

L didn’t even knock on the plain white door, instead barging in to find Harry sitting on the end of his bed, his head buried in his hands. At the banging sound the door made when it hit the wall, the emerald eyed man shot to attention and went wide-eyed at the sight of L without his constant companion attached to the wrist.

L was almost beyond reason as he asked, "Did you kiss him?" L was surprised by the sound of his voice, as it was loud and had a definite twinge of _something_ embedded in the tone. He tried to delude himself into thinking that it was just the sound of desperation for information, but he knew that it was a panicked sound.

Harry stood up and opened his mouth to speak, but L couldn't help saying, "Don't you lie to me, Harry-san; don't lie."

Harry seemed surprised at his real name being said, but with a deep breath, he said in a calm voice, "Yes."

That simple word of affirmation knocked the breath out of the detective. But instead of walking right back out of the room and simmering in his self-pity, he retaliated.

The fist connected with Harry's cheekbone with a satisfying thump, but L was not fully content yet. Again, L lashed out, knowing in his mind that his actions were irrational but his heart refusing to listen to reason.

Harry just stood there and accepted it, allowing L to hit him again and again and again, until L had finally grown tired of Harry’s lack of response. Why couldn't Harry give it back? It would've been more gratifying if he had returned the anger, if Harry would've tried to defend himself. But no, Harry just allowed it, his eyes closed and biting his lip.

Those lips had been connected to another's.

For the first time in a very long time, L lost it.

"Come on! Fight back! Defend him!"

Harry snapped, and very quickly, things escalated into a full-blown argument.

"Never will I defend that disgusting, revolting, nauseating piece of shit, nor will I fight you. He kissed me and I allowed it, but that doesn't mean I want to defend him. All I want to do is rinse my mouth out with bleach until the day I die, and I've already brushed my teeth three times because of it." He paused, his cheeks slightly pink, and then he proclaimed loudly, "I hated it, but it could've been a lot worse! Trust me when I say that I don't want to kiss anyone but you!"
L's next words were not what he would've normally admitted, not even to himself. "But you did! You did! And soon you'll leave and go with Higuchi, because he's better than me!"

Harry's jaw dropped. L was breathing heavily with exertion, and inwardly was horrified. However, he knew that it was true; Higuchi was better than L at relationships, because Higuchi was experienced when it came to kissing and having a connection with someone.

And L was nothing. L was not good at talking to people, or laughing at jokes, or being affectionate, or holding people when they were sad, or being entirely truthful, or just being there as a comfortable presence when it was needed. He wasn't good at saying what he felt...he wasn't even good at identifying how he felt, and he sure as hell wasn't good at reacting because of how he felt. L wasn't good at being nice or friendly, and he wasn't patient, and he definitely was childish and selfish. L wasn't good at expressing himself except in pride and validation, and occasionally in anger like he was now.

L wasn't good at kissing.

L wasn't good at physical stimulation.

L wasn't good at love.

Harry's voice was soft and concerned. "...what...in God's name are you talking about, Ryuzaki? Leave you? I will never leave you unless you want me to leave. Go with Higuchi? I don't want to be with anyone but you. Higuchi being better than you? That's not possible, because not only are you smart and clever, but you're ridiculously brave and improbably gorgeous to me, whether you want to believe it or not."

Harry stepped very close. L's heart was racing and much too large for his chest. He felt light-headed, for what Harry was saying was insane and it had to be a lie. Despite the truth in those green eyes, L just couldn't believe a word or it, because it was improbable, not logical. L wasn't any of those things, not one, and Harry was deluding himself.

"I don't want anyone but you. So unfortunately you're stuck with me until you decide that you're tired of me and want someone a lot less screwed up in the head. But for now, I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere. I'll never, ever leave your side until the day comes where you don't want me around any more, but for now I'm not letting you go." Harry's hands came up and cradled L's face, those eyes so intense and genuine that they were hard to look at. "I will never leave you, and there is no way that anyone could be better than you. Even with your crazy actions and your millions of strange quirks, you're you, and that is more than I could ever want."

Harry's voice softened even more. "I know that you don't believe me, but you're perfect in my eyes, and I will never leave you. I will never leave you. I swear on my life that I won't."

It had to be a hallucination; it couldn't be happening. It had to be a delusion, a mirage, an illusion, a fantasy. It had to be a dream, because things like this didn't happen. People like Harry NoLastName didn't say things like that in real life, and certainly not to L Lawliet. It wasn't real. It didn't make sense. L wasn't like that—L was not...it wasn't real...it couldn't be real...

He wanted to scream, yell, get his anger back and hurt Harry with everything he was capable of, but he couldn't do more than stand there, eyes so wide that it hurt, hands shaking by his sides even though he wanted nothing more than to be in control.

Out of the hundreds of possible things that could be said, the only thing that came out of L's throat was "You're not screwed up in the head."
Harry laughed breathlessly, a soft and wispy sound that tickled L's nerve endings. "Apparently you don't know me that well yet. I suppose that's my fault, though. But take my word for it; I'm quite messed up mentally."

L wanted to deny that too, even though he knew there was truth behind it due to some of his actions and the horrible nightmares Harry had, but the emerald eyed man spoke first: "I'm going to kiss you now. Feel free to punch me again if it makes you feel better."

But the detective didn't want to hit him any more, because those lips were on L's own and moving just right.

Unlike the last couple of times they had connected their lips together, this kiss didn't start off tentative. Harry's mouth slanted against L's with intent, his tongue immediately bypassing the detective's lips and twisting. Harry had moved his hands down to wrap around L's waist, fingers soft and yet hard on L's hips.

L felt like he was weightless. He grasped broad shoulders for something to keep him steady, mouth moving at a speed that felt right. He felt as if his blood was boiling, the heat overpowering in just one body, and the tingling sensations were coming from every possible cell in his body.

They separated, hovered, and then connected again, the movement of their tongues causing L's blood to roar in his ears. Maybe he was getting better at kissing, because Harry let out a groan that shot an electric current down L's spine and kissed harder, the slick muscle in his mouth moving faster and more determined.

L's hands moved upwards, burying his long fingers in Harry's soft black hair so he could grip something substantial. They moved closer now that L's arms weren't in the way and the sensation of Harry's body against his fully was enough to make his knees shake and threaten to buckle. Harry was so warm, so whole against him, and the hands that had so recently been at L's narrow waist slipped under the white fabric after a brief, hesitant pause.

This time, L's knees did give out on him.

Those large hands supported him, the skin warm against the pale flesh of L's waist and causing a stir in his body that would've taken his breath away if he had had oxygen in his lungs to start with. Everything seemed hypersensitive, more-so than anything L had ever felt in his life, and he barely noted the fact that he was being steered to the bed.

Until he was laid back-down on it, that is. Harry stood above him cautiously, his eyes searching for something in L's own charcoal grey orbs, but finally leant down and pressed his lower body—and therefore his hips—sensually into L's own.

L couldn't even stop the sharp inhale at the movement, his mind wiped of everything except friction-friction-friction. L's mouth, no longer timid, was moving against Harry's madly, faltering slightly when Harry's hips moved in a light, circular motion. L could feel his entire body tighten, his jeans hot and tight against his legs, and he vaguely registered that he could feel it, not just his own but Harry's as well.

Shins still dangling down and his toes touching the floor, he moved his legs apart a bit farther so Harry could get as close as humanly possible with clothes on, and breathed in sharply as Harry's hands found their way back to L's waist. However, this time they didn't still on contact, instead moving up L's stomach and making their way to L's chest, dragging the fabric up along his wrists.

For a long moment, they didn't move, Harry just laying his hands upon L's chest and feeling the detective's racing heartbeat. L took in deep breaths, trying to control himself, well aware that it
was in vain. He was actually quite surprised that he hadn't exploded or melted from all the heat that was being generated in his body, to tell the truth.

He wondered how far Harry would go; probably until L said to stop, but then again, L didn't know if he even wanted to stop. Now that L had a few moments to think instead of react from the barrage of sensation, he wondered what it would feel like to keep going, to relieve the pressure below his waist, to discover something that he had never expected to experience. He wondered if it was as painful as some said it was, or if it was as gross and disgusting as he had always believed.

Maybe it was both, or perhaps neither. All L knew was that if it was half as wonderful as this was, he was sure to lose his mind. He just honestly couldn't believe that anything could feel better than this; it was already so much to take in for his relatively untouched form, and the idea of it getting even more dizzying was hard to imagine, even for L.

How far would L allow him to go? For even though L was nearly burning alive from the breathtaking feelings coursing through his veins, he was...scared, and that was the truth of it. He was frightened of it all, because it was unfamiliar and new and just too much for his mind to take in at once. He needed to think, but the pleasure was distracting, and he needed to break it down but the blood was pounding too hard to concentrate.

That was something that L was torn about. He needed to think about every possible pro and con before moving into such unknown depths, but he also knew that things like this happened. It was never planned, and it was never predicted, and that was the biggest part of the entire situation. It wasn't supposed to be dissected by L's orderly mind, piece by piece by piece, moment by moment by moment. The only reason he was so conflicted was because of the idea of being completely out of control, and that was bound to happen. That scared him, because L had always been in command over his own emotions and his bodily reactions, and not being able to control his body and mind was terrifying.

L's mind was singularly the most important thing to him, and losing the ability to function it for even a moment was unnatural to him.

L's thoughts were cut off when Harry's lips pressed against his in a smouldering kiss, and L found that his shirt was being taken off his upper body. After his internal debate on whether or not this should've continued, he found himself again unable to think clearly, and he allowed it, watching Harry fling it absently off the bed.

L's back was unaccustomed to being so straight. It was almost painful at first until the muscles relaxed, but he hadn't really pondered that because Harry had leant down and pressed his mouth to L's neck, causing the detective's breathing to escalate erratically.

Those slightly rough lips on the soft flesh of L's neck were absolutely jaw dropping. When Harry began moving his way up to L's ear, the detective felt like he was in an anti-gravity chamber. But when Harry's teeth gently pulled L's left earlobe in his warm, wet mouth, L couldn't stop himself from letting out a whimper.

A whimper? That's a very strange sound coming from me, L thought dazedly.

Nevertheless, it was clear that Harry didn't think so. The emerald eyed man's right hand began roaming all over L's chest, leaving every inch of skin he touched electrified. He dipped lower, lower, until he was pressing his thumb into a pressure point on his hip.

That mixed in with his ear—what an odd place to be sensitive at, L figured—was outrageously thrilling.
The doubt and the desire to think all-but flew out of his mind, and he found himself thinking without much comprehension, *make it even, level out the playing field, take it off*. His hands left their death-grip on Harry's head and began clumsily trying to unbutton that black shirt that went so well with his emerald eyes and raven hair. Harry took in a shuddering gasp that made L's earlobe cold and then began helping, eventually leaning upwards to shrug out of it.

Whereas L was thin as a rail and sharp, Harry was defined and lean, with the form of a runner, or perhaps a swimmer. Harry had a dark trail of coarse hair starting below his navel, and L had no hair to speak of. Physically, they were both completely different, and L couldn't take his eyes off of him.

He really was beautiful, though. Especially now that his glasses were gone and L could see his emerald green eyes in stark clarity, due to being inches away from L's own charcoal grey orbs. They stared at each other, both breathing heavily and occasionally trembling, and then L leant up and captured those slightly swollen lips with his own, pulling the lower lip with his teeth.

At first, L wondered if Harry didn't like it. His entire body tensed and the left arm that was holding Harry up was taut like a bow, and he promptly stopped breathing. L paused for only a split second before the emerald eyed man let out a moan that made every nerve ending on L’s body flare with pleasure.

He had never known a human being could make a noise like that, so thick and husky and filled with longing.

So L decided to discover Harry's external secrets, on a quest to learn everything there was to know about the truly wonderful man above him.

...and then the phone rang.
Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Fourteen

Reluctance

25 October 2004

"Fucking...phone..."

Half-naked and unknowingly putting on a show for fathomless charcoal grey eyes, L Lawliet watched Harry NoLastName frantically search for his glasses while attempting to find the phone simultaneously. By the time he found it, his golden cheeks were rosy with exasperation and annoyance, his green eyes once again covered by (lopsided) round glasses.

"Hello?" he answered breathlessly, not even looking at the caller ID, and even from his crouched position on the bed, L could hear a male British voice bellow, "HARRY? IS THAT YOU?"

Harry's expression soured pretty quickly. "Stop yelling, you moron; there are people here that can hear you."

Instead of apologising, he exclaimed in a quieter (but not by much) voice, "Harry! Her water broke! They're coming, mate, the twins are coming!"

Instantly, Harry's irritation at being interrupted evaporated, his face stretching into one of the brightest smiles L had ever seen. "Are you serious? Merlin, how exciting! Have the contractions started? I don't hear her trying to out-scream a banshee, so perhaps she's becoming a bit immune to the labour pains after having the other four demons."

Sometimes, L wondered if Harry was a sci-fi fanatic. Using strange words like Merlin, demons, banshee, and dragons definitely alluded to liking the whole magic bit. Maybe he had an unhealthy fascination with magical things.

The British man exclaimed excitedly, "Don't call my kids demons, Harry, or I'll lock you in a broom cupboard and tease you about coming out of the closet. But seriously, Harry, you have got to get down here! You haven't missed a birthing yet, and you better not start now."

L barely had a chance to inwardly recoil at the idea of Harry leaving before an ear-splitting scream erupted from the cell. "You get your famous little arse down here, Harry James Potter or I will kill you a hundred times over! I don't give a right shit in hell if it's past midnight there; I want you here now!"

Harry cringed.
Harry James Potter had a nice ring to it. L glanced towards the emerald eyed man and cocked his head, not really as interested in Harry's full name as much as the idea of the younger man being famous. Famous for what, exactly? L knew he would have to look into it as soon as possible.

"Sorry, mate. I know you're with your little boyfriend and he's not supposed to know your name or whatever, but it looks like Hermione's about to crap out the Ford Anglia, actually."

Boyfriend?

"Ronald Weasley, I am going to castrate you! I hate you! I hate you! Look what you did to me, you bastard!"

Harry rolled his eyes and said to L, "She always says that and then she gets pregnant as soon as she's out of the hospital. It's her second set of twins she's having, and she's got two singles on top of that too. All of them are girls but one, including the twins she's having now, so it's a nightmare. Oh yeah, and I'm Harry Potter. It's nice to meet you."

L's lips curved into an involuntary small smile.

"Alright, I'll try to get the soonest flight out of here to England, okay Ron?"

The man named Ron said in a puzzled voice, "Fly? You mean on an aeroplane? Why don't you just—"

"Ron!" bellowed Harry and the woman named Hermione at the same time.

"Oh yeah, sorry mate. I forgot about the SS."

SS? No way; if Harry was some glorified Nazi, L was going to have to—

Harry caught the expression on his face quickly and interrupted, "I'm not a Nazi, Ryuzaki, and I'll explain it when I get back, because there's no way in hell I'm missing this. And shut the hell up Ron. I'll be there as soon as I can, alright? Be patient."

"Yeah, yeah, I hear you. You better hurry, because she won't castrate me if you're here."

"I'm going to castrate you as soon as I can walk, you evil prat!"

"I'll talk to you guys soon, alright?" bellowed Harry, trying to be heard over the woman's shrieking and barely succeeding. After a hastily yelled goodbye from the male, Harry hung up the phone and flopped onto the bed, groaning.

At this angle, L could freely see his entire chest while not clouded over with want, and so he decided to take full advantage of the situation. With delicate fingers, he began tracing over old scars and burn marks, eyes narrowing at the numerous wounds he counted. There were so many different kinds of healed cuts, ranging from long and thin to wide and short.

They looked like war wounds, if L assessed the old injuries properly. However, war wounds seemed a bit far-fetched, because there hadn't been a war since World War III ended in 1986, so perhaps he had suffered from a horrible accident.

However, that didn't seem likely. These looked like no accident he had ever seen, and the detective had seen many of them in his lifetime.

"What happened to you?" questioned L, but Harry's green eyes instantly grew cloudy and guarded and L knew that he wasn't going to get a straight answer.
Instead, what he said was not expected. "Well, I could ask the same about you." Harry's own index finger traced a light scar on L's abdomen, and whispered, "We both have secrets, scars. I don't think it's right to speak about it now, especially when it just brings up bad memories and it's a good day. I'm going to have two more godchildren by this evening, bringing the grand total to a whopping seven of 'em, and I think we should focus on the happy things in life. One day I'll tell you the entire story; there's no way you'd be able to be around me for very long without catching onto my really big secret, but for now, let's just focus on my best friend's well-being and catching Kira."

Big secret? L couldn't help but ask, "Harry, are you Kira?"

There was a long pause before Harry sighed, "Honestly, if I was Kira, I would have never killed criminals. I would have never killed anyone. I'd kill myself with the power before I'd ever take a human life, no matter how bad their crimes were."

"You say that with an ominous tone, Harry," mentioned L, touching a burn mark on his fourth rib on the left side. It was rough to the touch, but still had that strange silkiness that scars adopted over time.

"Have you ever taken away a life, Ryuzaki?" asked Harry, his eyes falling on L's face and reaching a hand up, twirling a bit of the detective's hair with his fingers.

L's response was immediate. "Yes."

Harry's eyes flickered to L's ear and he said, "Other than the criminals you've caught to put on death row? That's not taking away life; you just brought them to justice."

This time, L's response was hesitant. "No."

"You're lying," Harry said instantly.

Another small smile popped its way on to L's face before his brow scrunched in thought. "Why is the scrutiny on me? Have you ever taken a life yourself?"

Harry's eyes narrowed. "I asked you first. Answer my question and I'll answer yours. You don't have to go into specifics or anything, but it's sort of an important question."

Again, L paused, but finally he admitted in a low voice, "Yes. I have. Now answer my question."

Harry sighed dramatically. "You're always so impatient." He smiled, fleetingly, before sitting up, brushing the hair away from L's left ear.

L flinched, which Harry seemed to feel, before the emerald eyed man said in a quiet voice, "I suppose I'm a bit like you. I've been the reason a lot of people are dead in this world. But the difference between you and me is that you've been the reason that thousands of criminals have died on the electric chair or through injection. As for me, yeah, some bad people died because of me, but all of my friends and family except a fair few did too. My very existence seemed to piss a lot of people off, and it caused a lot of fighting too. Many, many people have died, and it's the main reason I can't sleep a full night to save my life."

L absorbed that, still tense and wary of the fingers that were trailing over the scar behind his left ear—hate it hate it don't touch it i hate it—before Harry said in a voice so quiet it was hard to hear, "I could never do the things that Kira is doing. Besides, even if I didn't have my abnormally large moral conscious, I don't think I'd be killing your type of criminals. I think I'd be in a whole different league, myself." His expression was far away, eyes narrowed in his thoughts as he
contemplated that statement. But finally he said, "But you never answered my question."

L moved his head away from Harry's hand and said in a monotone, "Please don't touch that."

Harry's eyebrows went up, but he didn't protest, opting instead to pull his body up and press his lips chastely against L's own. It only lasted for a few seconds, but L's eyelids drooped heavily and he suddenly felt sleepy for the first time in a while. It was very warm and soft, being loosely held by the emerald eyed man, feeling gentle breathing against his cheek.

But the good things came to an end. Harry eventually sighed and began making quiet phone calls, while L laid his temple against his knees, listening to his soft words and taking in as much of Harry's face as he could. L almost wanted to ask him to book three seats, but he knew that he couldn't do it. He had to continue on with the investigation even if Harry wasn't there.

Harry hung up and smiled gently, straightening his glasses at last while saying, "My flight leaves in an hour and a half. I have to get out of here, because Hermione will kill me if I'm not there. Personally, I don't think it would be very fun to die by being cursed to death." A slightly panicked look passed behind his green eyes, but it quickly disappeared. "Besides," he continued, "I've never missed one yet, and I don't plan to."

L nodded, once and brisk against his knees, before they were both up and moving, shirts returning to their frames. Harry grabbed a small suitcase but didn't pack, as the bag was already full with whatever the man wanted to take. It was odd that Harry hadn't unpacked everything yet, as he had been living at the headquarters for almost—

"You think too much. C'mon, let's go."

They began walking towards the others, being unconsciously quiet, until Harry said in a hard voice, "Promise me you won't do anything rash while I'm away. I'll try to be back by tomorrow evening, and I'm sure you can behave yourself until then. I don't want to show back up here and find out that you've gotten yourself axe murdered or something."

L fought the urge to roll his eyes. "I will do whatever is necessary to solve this case. After all, after that stunt you pulled a couple of hours ago, I feel as if I deserve to set the matter straight."

Harry scoffed. "Are you kidding? Settle the score? What about you taking off and chaining yourself up to a potential murderer and then not talking to me for months, hm? I think that my three hour investigation was not even close to the same level as your three month long interrogation with Raito-kun."

L snapped his teeth together with a barely audible click. Harry did have a point, but as much as L was centred on one Harry James Potter, it wasn't enough to stall him in his investigation. After all, Harry was essentially correct: the case had to be solved completely before the threat of L dying was eliminated, and once L was victorious, there would be nothing stopping them from continuing...this.

Whatever this was.

Once they reached the closed door leading into the main terminal room, Harry kissed him once more, lingeringly, as if it was the last kiss they would ever share. It was disturbing, and so L whispered, feeling his mouth move against Harry's own, "I won't die."

"You don't know that." He pulled away, pressed his lips against L's forehead, and then pushed the door open, smiling hesitantly at Wammy, who looked annoyed. Thankfully, the rest of them looked oblivious, with the possible exception of Raito, who just seemed amused. The glint in his
caramel eyes was way too obvious to L, who could read him pretty well, and the detective was aware of the thoughts flickering in that brain of his.

Harry smiled brightly and said, "Well, good news; my best mates are having another set of babies, so I've got to go to the birthing or they'll kill me. I'm godfather, after all, and I have to fill out all that troublesome paperwork."

Unfortunately, Misa hadn't retired to her quarters, so there was quite a bit of squealing from the actress-model. There were murmurs of congratulations and many smiles from the entirety of the investigation team. Matsuda seemed remarkably composed for once, but Soichiro and Harry had wandered off to the side, talking seriously to each other.

With a slight frown, L glanced over at Harry, wishing that he could hear the whispered conversation. It seemed important, demanding even, and Soichiro nodded gravely, patting the British man on the arm.

Harry readjusted his grip on the suitcase and then motioned L to follow, which the detective instantly did. They didn't speak to each other until they had left the room, opting instead to have a small semblance of privacy for the last bit of time they had until Harry was gone.

"I'll be back within a couple of days, three at the very most. She was in labour with Hugo for two days, but the others were fairly quick, so I don't think I'll be there for too long." Harry sighed, and then continued, "I'll be back here soon, but can I please ask you to not do anything rash?"

L pulled open the door and felt a blast of chilled wind hit his face. For a long moment, he just stood there, not stepping out onto the concrete stairs that led to street. It was comforting, after the stifling heat from the complex, and he had a sudden urge to go to the roof to be away from all the street life.

Finally, the detective spoke. "I cannot make any promises, but I won't die. You don't have to be worried. We still have to wait a bit to see if criminals die, and by then you'll be back. But if you're any longer than two days, I'll be forced to execute a plan to get Higuchi to show his method of murder. However, I don't believe that there's any possible way that he could come about my name, and I don't plan on showing him my face."

"I know, but I'm still going to harp on about it. Just...be careful, okay? Call me whenever you want to, and let me know if anything comes up. I'll be waiting for you to come up with some spectacular plan to save the day or some rubbish like that."

L lifted a hand to press his thumb against his lips. He turned his wide, charcoal grey eyes to Harry and nodded, watching the taller of the two smile softly. Harry leant down, only once, to press a small kiss on L's cheek, and then shifted his grip on the suitcase and began his decent down the stairs.

When L couldn't see him any more, he turned back around to return to his seat in the main room of headquarters. After all, he had suddenly come up with a plan that would work spectacularly, if Matsuda was willing to play a part.

A loud crack echoed in the street life behind him.

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25 October 2004

"Just landed; I'm in a cab in the great 'ol London as it pours down rain like usual."
"Yes, it always does seem to rain there."

"I forgot you used to live here. Wasn't it in Winchester or something?"

"You are correct, James-kun."

"James-kun, huh? You could always handcuff Raito to Watari again, you know. That's what I would do."

"I could potentially miss something that Watari wouldn't see. The risk is too great."

"Yeah, yeah, I hear you. I just want you to come to England with me and that'd be the best excuse to get you here."

"...I can't. No new criminals have died in the ten hours you've been gone, and it's very likely that Higuchi is Kira."

"Told you. Aren't I freakin' awesome?"

"No. You are reckless with no sense of self-preservation."

"Look who's talking, Ryuzaki."

"I'm not reckless."

"Yeah, you're the cold and calculating type, but the last part is true."

"I have to catch Kira."

"You don't have to yell, 'Come on, kill me! Kill me!' on a live broadcast to goad Kira into slipping up."

"That was for investigation purposes only."

"Yeah, but you didn't know that at the time. You could've died."

"But I didn't, so your point is invalid."

"You could've, and that's what makes you have a lack of self-preservation. If you would've died..."

"It wouldn't have mattered. As we didn't know each other at that point of time, you would've been oblivious to my existence and life would've gone on."

"You talk about your death as if you're chatting about the weather."

"But my words are the truth."

"Logical and precise indeed. But I'm happy you didn't die. Who would I shamelessly make out with during a criminal investigation if you had died?"

"Perhaps Raito-kun would've been willing to oblige."

"...did you just make a joke?"

"I have my moments."
"They're usually accidental, though. I'm at the hospital, so I'm going to let you go, alright?"

"Yes, that would be wise."

"The screaming's going to make me go deaf, and I don't want you to suffer the same fate as me."

"It would be difficult to be a detective if I could not hear."

"Hell yeah it would. Talk to you later?"

"Yes. Good-bye."

***

28 October 2004

"James-san, don't pick up the phone unless it's from this number, okay?"

"Why, Ryuzaki? What if it's Higuchi calling about Kira or something? I might be getting a phone call from Soichiro-san, too."

"If it's Higuchi, just ignore it. Soichiro is programmed into your phone, yes?"

"Yeah?"

"You may speak to him about whatever you must, but if it's Higuchi or an unknown number, do not answer the phone."

"Are you going to tell me why? You aren't coming up with some sneaky plan and not telling me about it, are you?"

"There is no sneaky plan in place."

"You're lying to me, Ryuzaki. What are you up to?"

"Just don't pick up the phone, James-san. I'll fill you in when you get back to Japan."

"Okay?"

"Good-bye."

"See ya later alligator, after awhile crocodile, don't forget to write!"

"You are weird."

"So are you."

"Fair enough."

"I expect a full explanation when I get back, understand?"

"Yes, James-san."

"Okay, don't die, alright?"

"Of course not. Good-bye."

"Bye."
In Tokyo, Japan, a helicopter rested on the pavement of a major highway.

Police vehicles were flashing and wailing, surrounding a bright red Porsche that had crashed against the side rail of the road. All of the officers in the area were training their weapons on an unattractive man who was in custody, eyes covered and being dragged towards a police cruiser, a confirmed Kira murderer in their grasp.

L Lawliet's eyes narrowed at the form of a white...monster that stood by the Porsche. It was gigantic, and clearly otherworldly, with glowing gold eyes and a skeletal body that was grotesque in design. It was a shinigami, even though L had never expected such a beast to exist.

And yet there it was, existing with the simple touch of a notebook of death, the very notebook in his delicate grasp. At the sight of the monster, the shinigami, everything rushed through his brain, an overload of information that refused to stop coming.

"A shinigami...so they really exist," murmured L, while his mind went on hyper-drive. Notebook—show each other our notebooks in Aoyama; Yagami Raito and Amane Misa met in Aoyama.

"Is this true, Ryuzaki? Let me touch it too!" said Raito, grabbing the notebook, but L couldn't concentrate on him. Notebook—met in Aoyama. Kira, the Second Kira, love at first sight. This is Kira's method of killing. Yagami Raito was Kira; he'd never use it in front of me...at least two notebooks exist. Two; this isn't over yet. We'll have to make sure that nobody can use this notebook and then—

Raito screamed, clutching the notebook and staring unseeingly in front of him.

A little over a minute later, Higuchi Kyosuke clutched his heart and died, one eye bulging from his skull and his mouth wide open.

***


The first female twin, Alexandra, had been born nearly four hours before Angelica. The first baby had been a crying, five pound mass of bloody, wrinkly flesh, and her sister didn't look much different. They both had a shock of red-orange hair and big brown eyes, and they both could shriek louder than their mother.

While Ron and Hermione, the happy parents of two more children, held their babies with adoring smiles and loving coos, Harry Potter's phone rang.

He excused himself, exited to the hall, and then picked up the phone. Without speaking a greeting, Harry said in a tired voice, "Both of the children are born. I'll be back in ten hours."

He was shocked when Ryuzaki—the great detective L—said in a solemn voice, "Higuchi Kyosuke is dead, and I am in possession of the method of murder. Please return soon so we can discuss the development of the Death Note."

The call was terminated.

Harry unbuckled his belt, untransfigured it back to the Invisibility Cloak, and re-entered the birthing room at St. Mungo's, kissing the two babies on their chubby cheeks. He then told them
that Ryuzaki had found Kira's power, and that he'd be back as soon as possible. They nodded once, told him *good luck*, and made him promise to come back with the love of his life next time.

Harry promised, covered himself with the Invisibility Cloak, and Apparated with a loud crack.
Chapter Fifteen

Hiding

29 October 2004

Harry held his breath and listened.

He had Apparated into the generator room of headquarters, the Invisibility Cloak barely fluttering around his feet, and the loud crack thankfully was masked by the groaning and moaning of the power devices.

Harry shook his head at the absurd amount of electricity needed to power the high-rise building and the hundreds of state-of-the-art computer systems before taking a deep breath and beginning his trek around the complex.

He had already mapped it all out. The generators were in a room that had no doors, instead having an open space for manoeuvring through the entirety of the second floor, and thankfully the second floor was where the main terminal room was. Furthermore, the way was clear (usually) and so he’d have a quick shot to listening in on the investigation team.

After all, it wasn't normal if a man could be in London one second and Tokyo in the next. It just didn't work like that, and so he had to resort to being in the shadows for the next ten hours. Then he could pretend that he had just gotten off a flight and be free of suspicion.

However, Harry was a bit desperate to see what was going on. If Ryuzaki had Kira's method of murder physically, a weapon that Ryuzaki had called a *Death Note,* then that meant the threat of the detective's death was over. If Higuchi was dead and the detective L was holding his evidence in his hand, then it was finished. The nightmare was over, and Harry could whisk the man away.

*Oh, wait. There were two Kiras. That would mean that there are two weapons out there, at least, so the investigation is just reaching the crescendo. This isn't over yet.*

It took Harry five minutes of tiptoeing around to get to the doorway leading into where the rest of the team was located. Thankfully and mercifully, the door had been left open, and Harry finally laid eyes on the people inside.

Most of them were sweating rivers. Soichiro, Matsuda, Mogi, and a man that Harry didn't know were the ones that were covered in perspiration. Their dark eyes collectively kept glancing to an empty space in-between themselves and the computers where Raito and Ryuzaki were sitting. The Yagami son was glancing at his father occasionally, and then appearing to glare at the same empty
As for Ryuzaki, he was stacking half-and-half coffee creamers in a tower.

"Well, Higuchi might've committed suicide. He had the power to kill; it's not impossible that he could kill himself," mentioned Soichiro, looking intensely at the table.

Matsuda remarked quickly, "But he killed by writing people's names down in the notebook. So wouldn't he have to write his own name down? Besides, if he could kill himself without writing his name down, why did he point the gun to his head earlier?"

Writing names down to cause death? That doesn't sound like any type of bewitched object that I know of.

"Well, maybe he figured it'd be less painful than dying by a heart attack," speculated Soichiro, glancing with fearful eyes at the empty spot yet again. "A coincidental heart attack...suicide...another Kira...a shinigami... Which is it, shinigami?"

Soichiro and the others looked towards the empty spot, Raito joining them, and paused as if listening. For a long moment, Harry just stared dumbfounded, wondering why in the hell they were doing such a silly thing. Yes, there was such a thing called Death, if the Tale of Three Brothers story was correct, and the Deathly Hallows had reinforced that idea. But the suggestion that there were multiple Deaths was a bit absurd. Was there really a shinigami—a Death God—standing in the room?

The man Harry didn't know hung up his phone and said, "Ryuzaki, Raito. The notebook and the ink used to write the instructions are made up of substances and materials that do not exist on Earth."

"Yes!" exclaimed Soichiro, clenching his fist in excitement. "So as Rem said, the notebook is from the shinigami realm, and the rules were written by a shinigami to allow a human to use it."

Matsuda continued enthusiastically, "We figured it had to be that, considering that we now know shinigami exist. But this is great, Chief. Now Raito and Misa-Misa have been completely cleared!"

The unknown man picked up a black, thin book, and Harry moved closer to read Death Note on the cover. The man cleared his throat and opened the notebook, reading out loud from the inside-front cover, "How to use: the human whose name is written in this note shall die. This note will not take effect unless the writer has the person's face in their mind when writing his or her name. Therefore, people sharing the same name will not be affected. If the cause of death is written within forty seconds of writing the person's name, it will happen. If the cause of death is not specified, the person will simply die of a heart attack. After writing the cause of death, details of the death should be written in the next six minutes and forty seconds."

He began flipping through the pages while Harry reeled from the intense overload of information. "The names of criminals written here correspond to the television broadcast order, and the names of people whose deaths were advantageous to Yotsuba are in here as well. The rules match the documents recovered from the meetings those eight were conducting."

Holy hell, this is unbelievable! A notebook of death, of all things! Regardless, Ryuzaki's probably not very thrilled. He'll want to test it himself before believing it. Shinigami or not, he won't believe in its authenticity unless he witnesses it himself.

The man flipped to the back of the book and said, "And the How to Use section on the back
cover: if the person using the note fails to consecutively write names of people to be killed within thirteen days of each other, then the user will die."

Mogi spoke for once, his deep voice saying, "If Raito and Amane, who were in confinement for over fifty days, were the Kiras, there's no way they'd be alive right now."

"They couldn't even write down a single letter while they were imprisoned," grinned Matsuda triumphantly.

Soichiro glanced at the empty space again and said, "But this means we can't dispose of the notebook."

Yeah," the unknown man said with a nod, "this final sentence: if you make this note unusable by tearing it up or burning it, all the humans who have touched the note up to that point will die."

Soichiro sighed and said from behind his hand, "So if we dispose of it, at the very least everyone on the task force besides James-san will die, since he hasn't touched it yet."

"Man, I shouldn't have said 'I want to see the shinigami too!' and touched it!" whined Matsuda with a groan.

Harry began silently shuffling up towards the unknown man while Soichiro reprimanded Matsuda about his lackadaisical attitude. Meanwhile, Ryuzaki in all of his gorgeous glory picked up another creamer cup and said, "Rem-san, there are more notebooks in the human world, aren't there?"

There was a long pause. Harry saw the entire team glance at the empty spot and took his chance to reach a single finger out. The notebook was cold and roughly textured, but otherwise completely normal to the touch. The wizard quickly pulled his finger under the Invisibility Cloak just as Ryuzaki said, "If there were other notebooks, would they all have the same rules?"

"Yes, they're the same," said a husky, deep female voice. With wide eyes, Harry slowly looked up and seen what had previously been invisible. There was no other indication that the...thing was female except for the voice, for it had no distinguishing characteristics regarding gender. It was white and lilac, with one golden slitted eye focussing on a bare spot behind Ryuzaki's shoulder. It appeared to be over seven feet tall, towering over everyone else.

But regardless, the being—Rem?—had eyes that weren't dark and dangerous, nor sneaky and evil. It had kind eyes, despite its grotesque image, and seemed like it was walking on a thin layer of ice. Harry couldn't help but wonder if it was being pressured by something...or someone.

The shinigami continued, "There are numerous notebooks in the shinigami world, but all the rules are the same, and it's the same rules when a human uses it. There's no mistake."

"Ryuzaki, the suspicion against Raito and Amane has been cleared. The surveillance of them should end," said the unknown man, and Matsuda exclaimed in addition, "Yeah, it's crystal clear!"

Harry moved, quietly shuffling his way towards Ryuzaki so he could clearly see the detective. He steered clear of the shinigami, moving around the table and pulling out his wand from his forearm holster silently, ready to start firing off spells at a moment's notice.
He would do anything to save Ryuzaki, even if it meant making himself known to the others.

***

L felt like he was being watched.

After the first interrogation of the shinigami, he had taken off the handcuffs attaching him to the Yagami brat and had grumpily retired to his personal quarters for the first time in a week. He did have other cases to work on, and it would help organise his mind enough to think clearly.

He had the thought to call Harry, but he knew that it wouldn't matter. He was on an aeroplane, and wouldn't be able to use a cellular device for the next nine hours or so. However, L really wanted to speak with the man, even if it was just to talk, because Harry's voice usually tended to calm down the rapidly firing information swirling around in L's brain.

But back to the original point: L felt as if he was being watched.

He sat down on the floor in front of his computer, one leg against his chest and the other stretched out, and began working on a Russian file under the code *Lesta*. It kept him occupied, but it was simplistic enough to let his senses stretch out, trying to find what was making the hair on the back of his neck stand on end.

He wondered if it was the shinigami. He couldn't see the death god, but that didn't mean anything. She had been invisible before, so perhaps she had willingly chosen to be invisible yet again to spy. Maybe she was scouting the investigation team for Kira or his proxy and would reveal all of her findings to the murderer. Shinigami could probably see names, and it was pretty likely that Rem was now aware that his name was *L Lawliet*. There was no telling how loyal she was to Kira, and if that was the case, she could kill him at any moment.

Not only that, but there was the case of Amane. Regardless of the thirteen-day rule, L refused to believe that his deduction was wrong. Ever since the death of Higuchi, Raito had returned to that same suspicious disposition that he had sported before his 'memory loss', and was now making L even more distrustful of the teen than before. Every glance and flicker of those caramel eyes were ominous and oppressing, filled full with secrets, and it made the detective want to pull his hair out in frustration.

Raito *had* to be Kira, but the evidence objecting that was overwhelming. How could he argue his point if every shred of proof went the other direction? He knew with every molecule of his being that Raito was guilty, but it was convincing the others, and Raito's father...that was the problem. No one would believe any allegations of Raito's guilt that L would proclaim, and it would only prove to discredit L's stability in the case. If he was to stubbornly insist that he was one hundred per-cent correct in his deductions, they would lose confidence in L's ability to solve the case.

Harry would believe him. He had to. Wammy did too; it was obvious in his expressions. But Harry...Harry was smart and clever, and he thought in ways that L did not. He had gotten the evidence against Yotsuba and Higuchi. He had moved the case right along at a speed that had flexed between horrifyingly fast and unspeakably slow. Harry had been the one to think in ways that L hadn't considered—hell, that even Raito hadn't considered—and if anyone would have an idea of what to do next, it would be him. Together, they could come up with an explanation for all the madness that was swirling around.

Between the two of them, they'd find something to use.

He finished the file and picked up another, this time German under the code *Lorenz*. He wished Harry was here, sitting here and cracking a sarcastic joke while thinking aloud. Without Raito
here, perhaps they could talk for the first time, really talk and try to figure this whole thing out. Not just the Kira case either; L was quite curious to know exactly what went through Harry’s mind during the moments they were together. L wasn’t an expert when it came to his own personal life, especially in the romance department, as this was the first sexual situation he had ever really been in (except for that, but that was not the same).

What did Harry think about when he was looking at L? What did Harry feel when he was touching L’s skin? What did Harry want?

Furthermore, L was curious about the background of Harry. What really big secret was Harry speaking of? L had obviously searched Harry James Potter through his various Intel sites and through the British systems, but the hunt had come up with nothing. Literally, the man just didn't exist, a walking ghost of sorts. Not once did L ever have a problem like that when investigating someone and it was highly suspicious that he had come up with nothing.

Harry was intelligent, clever, had fantastic reflexes, and was very charismatic. Was he affiliated with the British government? Did he work for a company that had ordered him to investigate the Kira case, and in turn L himself? Somehow, L didn't believe that, because if the British government had any information about L, said detective would've heard about it. Moreover, Harry and L had met before the emerald eyed man had ever figured out that he was L, and had been friendly for a while before that bombshell had been dropped.

But then what? What was Harry hiding? Was it bad, or good, or strange? L was very, very sure that he wasn't hiding anything on the Kira front, because Harry just didn't fit the profile. There was the simple idea that Harry was just an excellent actor, and had manipulated not only L but other men who were practised in finding liars; however, no one could act that well because L was an expert at discovering lies and L didn't want to believe it anyhow. He knew that it was probably dangerous to get so involved with a person that he barely knew and had admitted to keeping secrets, but he couldn't help himself. Just like with Raito, where every molecule believed in Raito's guilt, every molecule believed that Harry was a force of good and would do nothing to intentionally hurt L's investigation...or L himself.

L’s mind wanted to shoot that thought down, to be as critical of Harry as he was with every other person on the planet, but after everything, he just didn't want to. It was a bit frightening to consciously know how much the emerald eyed man had affected his reasoning. Harry had invaded his thoughts and wormed underneath L’s skin, in ways that the detective had never experienced before. Harry could've been dangerous (which he wasn’t), or evil (which he wasn’t), or even Kira himself (which he most certainly wasn’t), and L had the feeling that he would overlook it all.

L’s normally shatter-proof judgement had been completely destroyed when it came to a single man. A single man had completely disrupted his personal life and his mental advantage.

L needed Harry when he was thinking out loud to find the solution to the case. L needed Harry when he wanted to feel a bit less burdened. L needed Harry when he wanted company even though L had never wanted company before. L needed Harry to be there when no one else was.

L sighed, threw the case into the ‘finished’ pile, and curled up on the floor. He wasn't sleepy, but emotionally exhausted. Everything had happened at once: L feeling completely powerless for the first time in over a decade in result of being so aroused against his better judgement, Harry leaving L alone even though it had been necessary, Higuchi dying of a heart attack in front of countless police officers, the Death Note and the existence of shinigami, and then Raito's total personality switch.

He wasn't used to feeling ineffective and pathetic. He was used to being strong and powerful, with
everything in his control.

He was used to winning.

The detective reached a hand out and switched his view to the front entrance, knowing that the second Harry showed up at the complex he'd be there to greet him. Maybe he would have another strawberry cake with him, and they could retire to a private room and talk without Raito around or any interruptions. That would be nice, and maybe L could somehow get a kiss without making a fool of himself.

L Lawliet laid on the carpeted floor, his fathomless eyes staring endlessly at the clock and waiting for the moment that the man always in his thoughts would walk through the door with his customary smile on his exotic and handsome face.

He could've sworn he heard a sigh.
Sixteen: Planning

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Sixteen
Planning

29 October 2004

It was about the time to show up at the complex.

Thankfully, at around that time, Watari had opened the door with some truffles on a silver platter. Harry had watched Ryuzaki eat one, letting it melt on his tongue, before slipping out the door. It was fortunate that Watari had opened the door, because Harry had been stuck in here without a way to get out—Apparating would make too much noise and startle Ryuzaki, and opening the door would surely freak him out—and make his sudden appearance. After all, he still had to go to Sato-Mari's and pick up some things that Ryuzaki would like, hail a cab after picking up his suitcase from his unused flat in the city, and then drive to headquarters as if he had just gotten off the aeroplane.

His 'flight' had landed about five minutes ago, if the plane had been on time. He would have plenty of time to do his business in the same time it would take if he had really been on the aeroplane like scheduled. He just had to hurry, and thankfully Watari had given him an open way to do so.

Literally.

He slipped out, heading quickly and quietly to the loud and grumbling generator room and Apparated in an instant to the home of Andromeda Tonks and Teddy Lupin in Scotland. He quickly wrote a note to his godson, telling him to be good and to stop morphing into random celebrities and walking the Glasgow streets with a shit-eating grin on his face. There wasn't a doubt in Harry's mind that the kid was doing it, and he was probably going to freak some people out. That and he'd eventually get caught by the United Kingdom's Ministry of Magic. Then Harry would have to bail him out and it would cause a gigantic uproar in the magical community. He could see the headlines now: Harry Potter's Godson is Apprehended for Breaking the Statute of Secrecy!

He transfigured the Cloak back into a belt and left it by the note, knowing that Andromeda would put it up where it wouldn't get lost. He couldn't take it to the complex, as it would make the metal detector and scanners go haywire, and so he had to leave it behind. He quickly grabbed his suitcase, took off his glasses, covered his scar, and Apparated to the Tokyo Apparation Building, signing a log with his alias before rolling his merry way out of the place without trouble. After throwing his glasses back on hurriedly, he flagged down a taxi and then gave the address to the sweet-shop that had to be the best in the country, maybe even the world in Harry's opinion.
Between the terrific sweets and the fabulous green tea ice cream, the memories of meeting Ryuzaki for the first time and their get-togethers afterwards, it was enough to render the place in Harry's mind permanently.

It took him ten minutes before picking up Ryuzaki's normal order, the blonde cashier named Tanaka smiling and flirting like usual. Lugging the four bags of sweets, he jumped back into the cab, the driver a bit pissy that it had taken him so long and yet surprised at all the bags he was carrying, and gave the address to the complex.

Fifteen minutes later, he was nearly jumping in his seat at the thought of finally seeing Ryuzaki and being seen in return. After a little over ten hours watching the man and wishing that he could just touch him, even chastely, he was pretty much a happy wreck that he would finally be able to hold Ryuzaki's hand, or run his fingers through the detective's hair, or kiss him ever-so softly on the lips that haunted Harry's dreams.

He all-but pranced out of the taxi after paying the fee, walking as fast as possible while holding three bags of sweets on one arm and the last bag on the other with his suitcase in his hand. He felt loaded down, and yet higher than the sky, because in mere seconds he was going to be standing in front of the love of his life, those incalculable charcoal eyes staring back at him in their normal, sparkling and speculating manner.

He kicked open the glass door and walked through the foyer, heading to the off-room that led to the main terminal. He didn't really want to have to do the entire check-in—finger print, retinal scan, codes, basically the whole she-bang—but when he entered the room, the far door opened and there he was.

Slouching and hunched like usual, Ryuzaki was alone, gloriously alone, and Harry couldn't stop the grin that widened on his face at the sight. No Yagami prat dampening the mood, only Ryuzaki without his constant attachment. They'd be able to be alone, talk without an audience except perhaps Watari, and could do whatever the hell they wanted together.

Harry bypassed the check-in station and greeted his...whatever Ryuzaki was to him. Boyfriend was too primary school, lover was essentially incorrect, soul-mate was too cheesy, and beloved was ridiculous. Maybe they were significant others? Although to tell the truth, they were probably just L and Harry or vice versa.

"Hello there, my favourite froggie. I've brought you sweets, as I'm sure your stash is getting low."

Ryuzaki's brow furrowed slightly. "Froggie?" he asked, cocking his head. "Are you calling me a toad?"

"Ribbit, ribbit," teased Harry, his grin widening. Ryuzaki took a deep breath and looked as if he was suppressing the urge to roll his eyes, but he seemed to quell the impulse. Together, side-by-side, they entered the investigation room, Ryuzaki grabbing one of the bags and rummaging through the contents.

The shinigami was massive, standing next to the couch. For a single second, Harry and Rem caught eyes, gold into emerald. He fought the urge to flinch at her small gasp that everyone in the room seemed to notice, as they all started and stared bewilderingly at the shinigami. For all the world, Harry gave of the inclination that he couldn't see the being at all, and asked Ryuzaki confusedly, "What's wrong? What are you staring at?"

He had forgotten that Death had created the Invisibility Cloak as an impenetrable force, and that it was possible to hide from Death using it. This was the first time Rem would've seen him, and Harry was sure that it was a shock. After all, if she was Death, she must've been aware that he
Millions of questions seemed to pop into existence all at once. Was there a special exception to the rules when it came to Harry's supposed status of Master of Death? Could this Death Note kill him at all, with a heart attack or anything else, or would it just void his name out and he wouldn't die? If the title of Master served correctly, could Harry control the shinigami? Could he question the being and get the answers to all of Ryuzaki's questions? Could he order Rem to release the names of the Kiras? Or would his title only work in certain instances; for example, he couldn't die via the Death Note, but he couldn't control a shinigami? Or perhaps it was the complete opposite; he could die by someone writing his name in the Death Note but could control the shinigami.

If he could order the shinigami, could he order Rem to not kill Ryuzaki?

"I want you to touch something, James-san," Ryuzaki replied, beginning to walk a bit faster and beating Harry to the table. He picked up the black Death Note and held it out, at which Harry narrowed his eyes and read the cover, "Death Note? This is Kira's method of murder?"

"Yes," answered Ryuzaki. "He wrote names in the pages while thinking of their face and they died. You have to touch it."

Harry raised an eye, looking entirely confused. "Why would I have to touch it? I mean, I will or whatever, but why?"

"It's the only way to see the shinigami," called out Matsuda. Harry sighed, pretended as if he was disbelieving, and then slowly reached a hand out, touching the rough cover of the notebook and taking it from the detective.

He looked fully at the shinigami, allowing his entire body to jerk with shock. Those golden eyes narrowed, and Harry could tell that Rem was doing some quick thinking. She was probably wondering why he was pretending as if he didn't understand what he was looking at.

"Holy fuck," whispered Harry, one hand lowering to the table to steady his body. He hoped that Ryuzaki didn't see through his façade, and continued to stare at the otherworldly figure with astonishment. Finally, though, he shook his head and said, "Well, this is interesting, that's for sure."

"Indeed," remarked Ryuzaki, eyes wide and trying to absorb Harry's every reaction. *Don't get paranoid, don't get paranoid; he'll see it for what it is*, thought the wizard, flipping open the book and reading the rules for himself. He quickly finished and began scanning through the book, seeing all of the names of dead criminals and hot-shot business men, and then read the back cover with a frown. At the sight of the thirteen-day rule, his eyes narrowed and he glanced up at Raito, biting the corner of his lip in thought.

He had already debated on this while he had been under the Invisibility Cloak in Ryuzaki's room. With this rule, Misa and Raito were innocent by the rules of the notebook, and surely Ryuzaki was busy brooding and trying to find a way around the rule. The detective had questioned the shinigami extensively about the rules possibly being fake, but even so, Ryuzaki was probably constantly thinking about possible ways to get around her denials.

Harry turned to the shinigami. "So you were with Higuchi?"

"Yes," she said cautiously. "I've seen you before."

*She has probably heard of me too, a lot, but best not to let that slip. For now, I should try to keep her from announcing to the world that I'm a wizard. I need more time to think about the pros and
"Yeah. I felt like I was being watched when Higuchi and I...met up a couple of days ago. I thought it might've been someone in the restaurant, but I suppose it was you."

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed at the reminder of the date. Rem, on the other hand, looked as if she was fishing. "You must have a very good supernatural sense, then."

Interesting way to go about it. I know just the way to answer this. "So I've heard. I've had a couple of friends who were really into the whole supernatural idea, and so we messed around in it for a couple of years. I never thought I'd actually see something supernatural in my lifetime though, so this is quite a shock. I never thought beings like you existed."

She nodded. To the others, it must've looked as if she was agreeing with that statement, because it was pretty common for Muggles to dabble with that rubbish fortune telling stuff and whatnot, but to Harry it was a confirmation that she understood the need for secrecy.

Maybe she had to do what he said after all. It was a definite possibility.

"So every name you write in this notebook of death dies?" Harry asked. Ryuzaki sat down in a chair in his customary way and Harry sat beside him, although normally. He had to get some information without giving himself away. There would be time later to debate on telling the others about him being a wizard, along with being the Master of Death, but first he had to figure out what said Master of Death title got within the shinigami realm.

"Yes. Humans whose names are written in the pages die in whichever ways are mandated."

Harry thought about that and then said, "Can people who have these notebooks kill each other? For instance, is Kira not allowed to kill the Second Kira, or vice versa? I guess what I'm trying to ask is if there are exceptions to this rule."

Ryuzaki looked intently at Harry, eyes sparkling in what Harry took as pride. It was an odd glint, but Harry still felt remarkably happy about it. Harry winked, and a small smile crept up on Ryuzaki's lips, which made Harry feel as if he had swallowed a vial full of liquid happiness that bubbled in his blood.

Rem answered quietly, "The Kiras can use the Death Note against each other if they so choose..." Harry inwardly grunted, glancing at Raito and taking in his reaction. He didn't look as if this information was particularly interesting, but what Rem said next made his caramel eyes flash for a split-second in complete and utter fear:

"However, there is one exception to the rule, yes. There is one human who cannot die by the Death Note. Even if his true name is written and his face clearly pictured, he will not die. He is unaffected by the rules."

Bingo! And doesn't poor little Raito-kun look worried! He is so guilty; I don't care what the rules say about it, because Ryuzaki is right. Yagami Raito is one guilty son-of-a-bitch, if that expression has anything to say about it.

"Kira? Is Kira the exception?" demanded Ryuzaki, while the others moved closer in curiosity. Ryuzaki's eyes were so wide that Harry wondered if they would pop out of his skull, and he was munching on a chocolate chip cookie almost feverishly.

"No," answered Rem, still looking at Harry unendingly. "Kira can still be killed by the Death Note or a shinigami if his or her name is written down. It is the Master of Death that is the exception to the rules."
"Double bingo! shit, but it looks like she's going to let something slip; I need to move in here!" asked Harry, hoping that his rushed question would be interpreted as excitement from the others instead of panic.

Rem appeared confused. "Of course Kira isn't the Master of Death. It's—"

"Fuck!" Harry's eyes went wide and very minutely he shook his head, praying that she had to obey Harry at least a bit. Thankfully, she seemed to notice even though the others didn't, and she quickly broke off her words. "Forgive me; I would tell you, but it goes against the rules. I could be punished by the Shinigami King if I told you this information."

Thank Merlin; that could've been bad. Time for the next question. "What about the deaths? Is there a way that the death notebook can be voided?"

Everyone in the room, including Ryuzaki, seemed taken aback by the question. Perhaps it was because they thought he was asking a pointless question, but from the look on Ryuzaki's face, he seemed impressed. Another burst of happiness exploded in Harry's blood, and he glanced yet again at Raito.

Raito stared back, eyes very intense. Whether it was from horror that he was asking such questions that could potentially screw over his plans or from concentrating on the effect the information could have that would benefit the investigation, Harry didn't know.

Rem hesitated, and then said, "Yes. There are ways to avoid death despite being written in the Death Note."

A collective gasp echoed in the room, and Ryuzaki looked triumphant. He took the last bite of the cookie and then reached out towards Harry, grasping the wizard's shoulder with a tiny smile that spoke volumes, and Harry had to fight the urge to grin like a loon. Instead, he struggled to keep his glee at Ryuzaki's exhilaration out of his voice as he asked, "Care to elaborate?"

The shinigami's nose twitched as if reluctant to admit anything, but she ended up speaking with obvious unwillingness. "There are rules that shinigami are aware of. The Death Note will never affect a victim whose name has been misspelled four times, but if the user intentionally errs with the name they will die. Also, if the same name is written in two or more Death Notes within six-hundredths of a second from each other, the entry is regarded as simultaneous; the Death Notes will not take effect and the individual will not die. In addition, the Death Note will not take effect if a victim's name is written on several different pages. However, in the end, these situations are very rare and the Death Note is a contract. Unless this uncommon circumstance occurs, which is very unlikely like I said, the human will die. The Death Note is a contract, and once the human's name is written, the human will die however it was specified. There is no avoiding it, and it always happens."

Damn. I could probably ask her about resurrecting with the spells I was thinking about and just blow my cover, but I honestly believe that Raito is Kira. And if Raito is Kira, then if I pretty much tell him that I can bring someone back from the dead with the spells, then he'll take appropriate actions. He'll kill Ryuzaki in a way that I can't save him from, like being run over by a bus or throwing himself in a burning fire. I can't have Raito knowledgeable about the possible ways to get around my magic. Besides, there's no guarantee that Rem is completely bound to this team. She could be working with Kira, with express orders to kill Ryuzaki at the slightest indication to do so. If I make it known that I could possibly save Ryuzaki from dying by a heart attack, it'll force her to take it to the extreme. If she does take that approach, I'll have to hide Ryuzaki from her to keep her from knowing that Ryuzaki is alive and trying another method to keep him dead.
So Harry promptly yawned.

He wasn't exactly tired, per se, but he had time to question the shinigami further about the rules. At the moment, he had all the time in the world to spend some alone time with Ryuzaki (he refused to believe any different), but he wanted to talk to Ryuzaki more than he wanted to interrogate a mystical being.

Shinigami? He had seen worse magical creatures; among the list were vampires, grindylow, merpeople, dementors, banshees, hags, and the ultimate horror being the inferi.

As Master of Death, he wasn't very worried about dying any time soon, and he had a feeling that his theory on bringing the dead-by-heart-attack back to life would be successful after the conversation with the shinigami.

Suddenly, at the sight of Harry's yawn, Ryuzaki hopped up and dodged Soichiro on his way to the computers. He brought up a programme, typed in some codes, and then nodded to himself, exiting the system and getting back up.

Ryuzaki grabbed two of the bags and was quickly trudging his way towards the stairs, so Harry gave a tight smile to the investigation team and Rem. He hurried after the detective after grabbing the last two bags of sweets and his suitcase; he could barely keep up with Ryuzaki's long legs towards wherever in the hell he was headed.

They stopped in front of a door that Harry recognised as Ryuzaki's room, and very quickly the doors were thrown open so they could both enter. The detective placed the bags on the floor, next to a pile of dishevelled files that were in many different languages, and then immediately pulled out his phone, dialling a number. Harry just placed his two bags next to the others and placed his suitcase near the door.

"Watari, will you please bring some tea and the necessary utensils to eat cake with?" A pause.
"Thank you." He hung up, turned, and took a deep breath.

"Look," Harry finally said, his curiosity bursting forth, "I'd like to know what little diabolical plan you came up with to get Hig—"

L pounced.

It came as a bit of a shock when Harry found himself with a lapful of detective, having fallen down quite ungracefully, especially when said detective was nearly choking him to death. Many files went flying, the papers scattering everywhere, but Ryuzaki didn't even seem to notice, his nose cold against Harry's neck.

"Well, hello to you too," wheezed Harry, smiling even though he was baffled. The action wasn't characteristic of Ryuzaki, and it was surprising to say the least.

Ryuzaki let up on his grip and pulled back, his eyes sparkling with excitement. In a rush, he said, "That was brilliant; most of those questions hadn't even crossed my mind, and we learned quite a bit from that. Every time the shinigami spoke to me, it just said 'I'm not sure', but it answered your questions. Imagine it, we could find a way to stop Kira and stop the killings as well. Not only that, but we discovered that we—"

This time, Harry was the one who interrupted, only he grasped Ryuzaki's face and kissed him ardently, tying to convey everything he felt in a single kiss. Remarkably, Ryuzaki didn't hesitate, swiftly responding with fervour, as if he had been craving it. And it was perfect, the amount of passion that sparked in-between them more vibrant than the previous moments.
It was as if they were simultaneously trying to fuse together into one living organism. Their mouths moved frantically, trying to absorb and consume and devour with every intent to combine in a moment of perfection. Harry's hands grasped handfuls of Ryuzaki's thick, heavy mass of hair, while Ryuzaki's hands were restless, constantly moving as if he couldn't figure out what to do with them.

A small cough came from behind them, and Harry broke away hastily, trying to take deep breaths. He had completely forgotten about Watari bringing up tea in the light of Ryuzaki going absolutely bonkers, and with embarrassment, Harry said breathlessly, "Oh wow, this is awkward."

Ryuzaki turned his head to stare at his handler, who was sporting a curious mix of anger and mortification on his elderly face. Deep charcoal grey eyes took in the tea, plates, and silverware without a word, while Watari said, "Here is what you requested, Ryuzaki."

"Thank you," breathed out the detective, moving to where he wasn't kneeling in-between Harry's legs—don't think about that, don't think about that; it'll only make matters worse—and standing up. He went to the cart and began making himself a glass of overly sweet tea in his usual style, and Harry smiled sheepishly at the dangerously protective vibe rolling of Watari in waves. It wasn't exactly hostility, but Harry could clearly tell that Watari was not pleased.

"You may leave now," stated Ryuzaki, taking a sip of his tea and wrinkling his nose a bit, adding even more sugar to the already-syrupy liquid. Watari shot Harry one last warning look before closing the door behind him.

Harry sighed and fell back against the wall lazily, one hand coming up to rub his temple. "I don't think he likes me any more."

Ryuzaki took another sip and nodded slightly to himself, rolling the tray closer and then grabbing a bag with a cake in it. He pulled out the carton with delicate fingers and then began cutting the strawberry shortcake, placing two pieces on plates and poking forks in the tops.

He poured another cup of tea, just black like Harry liked it, and then paused, staring down at his fingers while lost in his thoughts. The wizard gave him a couple of moments to collect himself, and finally Ryuzaki said, "I'm sorry about that. I don't know what came over me."

He was lying. He knew exactly what had come over him; he just didn't want to admit it to himself. Ryuzaki had a tendency to do that—he would be merciless when it came to other people and their feelings and emotions, but when it came to his own, he wasn't very confident. It was very obvious that Ryuzaki hadn't had much experience dealing with his own internal conflicts, and therefore was relatively childish and timid when it came to confronting his own needs and desires. It would take a bit of coaxing to get the nutty detective out of his shell and to keep him from thinking so goddamn much.

"It's okay," said Harry airily. "You can do that to me any time you want."

Cake, 45 pounds.

Tea, 10 pounds.

The look on Ryuzaki's face when told he had free reign to kiss Harry whenever he pleased? Priceless.

Harry took a bite of cake and grinned.
Seventeen: Pictures

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Seventeen
Pictures

31 October 2004

Harry woke up with a scream.

He was covered in a cold sweat, shivering with horror and pain, and he felt like he was going to lose his dinner. He groped frantically for his wand, trying to find his only weapon against the red eyed monster that had killed nearly everyone in his past, but he couldn't find it, he couldn't find it, no matter how hard he tried. His vision was blurry, from tears and the lack of glasses, so he couldn't see anything, but he felt like he was going to go mad because something was watching him, someone, someone bad and evil and they had to fight for vengeance and hate and revenge—

A pair of cold hands touched his sweaty forearm, and Harry couldn't keep himself from nearly flying out of the bed, ready to defend himself in retribution. He grabbed the hands in a hard grip, pushing against the foe and trying to fight even though he couldn't find his glasses or his wand to really defend himself.

"Harry, don't make me hurt you."

The voice stilled his cold blood and turned it fire-hot, and he all-but jumped on the love of his life, plastering himself against the thin but warm body. He held on as tightly as he could, burrying his face in a narrow shoulder, taking deep, shuddering breaths to still his frantic heartbeat. If he held on hard enough, Ryuzaki wouldn't die, he wouldn't, he couldn't. He would survive, even though Harry had never been able to defend anyone around him. He hadn't been able to save Ginny, Neville, Luna, Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, Lupin, McGonagall, Kingsley, Dean, Seamus, Draco, or so many others, but he had to save Ryuzaki, had to, or life would just cease to have meaning.

"I'll save you, I swear, I'll save you from everything. I'll protect you. I won't let you die, not on my watch, never. You'll be okay, because I'll keep you safe, I swear I will." Harry let the words roll out of his mouth in a hurried whisper, trying to convey how serious he was, and Ryuzaki just nodded slowly.

He breathed in and snaked his hands past Ryuzaki's shirt, feeling the muscles beneath his paper-thin skin flex at the contact, and felt the detective's heartbeat. It was a bit erratic, but normal and he was alive, completely alive. It would stay that way, even if Harry had to kill himself to guarantee it. Ryuzaki would live, L would live, and that heartbeat would stay strong until the end of time.

"I know," Ryuzaki finally said.
Harry choked out, "Happy birthday, L," before finally breaking down under the weight of his sorrow.

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Across the massive expanse of Asia and the bulk of Europe, a woman cocked her head.

She was silvery blonde, with heavily made-up eyes that were seen even behind her pink, faux-jewel-rimmed glasses, and a ridiculous amount of bright red blush and lipstick was upon her face. With her pale features and bright hair, she almost looked cartoon-ish, especially with the green and violet attire she was sporting. The pencil skirt and blouse were nearly hidden behind a form-fitting emerald cloak with an attached hood.

"Are you sure?" she asked intently, pressing the end of a long and thin bottle-green quill to her lips.

Her prominent companion, a short and stout woman, raised her eyebrows and said in a fluttery, girlish trill, "Are you questioning the information that has been gathered by me, Ms. Skeeter?" She crossed her arms across her chest, clad in a fuzzy pink cardigan, and tapped her foot restlessly. Her mousy brown hair was pinned back with a barrette that was in the shape of a kitten's face, and shockingly, it meowed as if reprimanding the taller woman as well.

Hastily, the woman named Rita Skeeter shook her head and said, "Of course not. I was just surprised, that's all. I was under the impression that he was...all-but heterosexual, actually, so the information took me aback. Do you have proof that we can publish in the Prophet? I know the Wizarding public would be thrilled to know that the Golden Boy is not as golden as one might seem."

"Of course, Ms. Skeeter," answered the toad-like woman irritably. She clutched a cat-shaped handbag and groped in it for a long moment, eventually pulling out a thick envelope. With delight, Rita snatched it away and ripped it open, gasping at the sight. With an exuberant grin lighting up her sharp features, she thought happily, these pictures will be worth a fortune, and the story I'll publish will be legendary! Finally, the public will see what he has run away from the Ministry for and what he's gotten himself into!

"These are going to be absolutely scandalous!" she exclaimed breathlessly, raising shiny eyes to Dolores Umbridge. Then she looked at the three men behind the disgraced Ministry official and giggled. "Oh, Ms. Umbridge, please tell me that they're eye witnesses. I'll simply die if they are."

Umbridge nodded with a creeping smirk of her own stretching across her podgy features. "You can't die until you've published that story and ruined that brat's gleaming reputation. You can see this as divine retribution for being blackmailed when I was Headmistress of Hogwarts."

Rita's giggles turned into outright laughter. "Don't worry, Ms. Umbridge. I'll do my best. I can't do it too negatively, or the Prophet will never publish it, so I'll run it through the same technique as I did with the novel of Albus Dumbledore."

"Good," said Umbridge, clenching her hands together with anticipation. "This meeting is to be completely secret, and I'm paying you a great sum to keep quiet. The three men behind me are the photographers of the pictures. Obviously, they witnessed his floundering, and Mr. Rakakaro is going to continue getting more. Mr. von Temp is your eyewitness for France, Mr. Bonacello for Italy, and you can give them credit where credit is due. Mr. Rakakaro, to keep the tail on the brat and his job at the Japanese Ministry, he must be kept under the radar. After all, he has been risking everything to take these pictures without breaching privacy agreements. I expect the story to be out by Friday, the fifth of November, and the only reason I'm giving you such leeway is because I
want it *perfect*. Do you understand me?"

"Five days to work on it will be more than enough. I can send you a secretly delivered advance copy if you'd like."

Umbridge grinned wickedly, making her face appear more toad-like than ever, and then tossed a small velvet bag to Rita. "One hundred Galleons and two hundred fifty after the story is in every Wizarding home possible."

With that, she disappeared into thin air with a slightly wheezy crack.

Looking down at the hearty stack of moving pictures in her manicured hands, Rita Skeeter had a brief but intense feeling of foreboding. It pulled at her insides violently, and for a full minute, she debated on not publishing the story at all.

Rita looked out the window of the abandoned cottage. The sky was still dark, as it was very early in the morning in England, and the only source of light was from the multiple *Lumos* charms lit from the three wizards and one witch.

In the end, however, she decided she was being foolish. Flipping through the stack, she convinced herself that if she didn't publish it, Umbridge would take her Galleons and find someone else. Not only would Rita be out of a nice bundle of gold, but she'd lose out on the biggest story of her career. It was going to be published *anyway*, so why shouldn't she do it? She'd do better than anyone else on the market, because she knew how! She could deliver the news harmlessly while swaying the readers of his morals. Gay relationships weren't uncommon or disgraced, but men high in society like he was were supposed to produce heirs, and from this information...he definitely wasn't in the market for women at all. Furthermore, he wasn't helping with the rebuilding, or being present in the government like customary, and wasn't bringing the last of the Death Eaters down, instead running away from his obligations and responsibilities to have sordid affairs with multitudes of men.

She paused on the more recent pictures, the ones from Tokyo. She cocked her head again and watched as Harry Potter laughed with global Muggle celebrity Misa Amane during the production of a major Japanese motion picture, obviously a good friend of hers. She watched as Harry Potter sat at dinner with an awfully ugly man, leaning close and smiling flirtatiously.

The majority of them, however, were of a young man with black hair and dark circles under his enormous eyes, clad in a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The way that the Golden Boy looked at the unknown man was tell-all, more passionate than she'd ever seen with anyone before.

Walking side-by-side in a park with him, eating at a steakhouse with him, laughing at his disgusted expression over a greasy hamburger, meeting him at various establishments, moving out of his flat to move into the massive building that the man so obviously lived in along with Amane...

Over and over and over again under wand-light, Rita Skeeter watched Harry James Potter kiss this nameless, strange-looking young man over the table of a sweet shop.

*Bingo!*

***

L knew that All Hallows Eve was not the best day for Harry.

The detective had known that Harry's parents had been murdered on the holiday and that he had been scarred for life on his forehead, but L had a suspicion that there was more to be told. Harry
had been young during the attack on his family, and memories faded. However, there were obviously some other horrors that had been committed on the thirty-first in more recent years, and as curious as L was about Harry's past, it wouldn't have been wise to bring them up.

If Harry wanted to grieve, then L would let him grieve, although he had suspected that Harry would soon put on a false face of happiness for the event and try to celebrate somehow.

Which soon proved to be true.

"Good morning," Harry called tiredly. All at once, the entirety of the investigation team turned their heads, raising eyebrows at the haggard look Harry was sporting. His movements were as if he was moving through mud, his green eyes missing the spark that L had come to have a deep fondness for, and L did not like it at all. He wanted Harry's vibrancy back, that glow of life and happiness simmering beneath the surface of his lightly golden skin.

"Good morning," returned Matsuda, his brown eyes concerned. "Are you okay, James-san? You look like you didn't sleep well."

"I'm okay. Didn't sleep well, but it's going to be alright. Today is...special for someone I know. Where's Watari?" asked Harry, smiling half-heartedly.

Raito shot L a hard look and answered, "He's probably getting another one of those towers ready for Ryuzaki to gorge himself on. In the kitchen, I'd say."

"Ah. I'll go get him, as I have a better..." He trailed off absently and cocked his head, listening to something in the distance. The shinigami glanced towards the side doorway, the same general direction that Harry had inclined his head to. For a couple of seconds, L just narrowed his eyes and very nearly spoke, but Harry interrupted him by saying, "No matter. He's walking down the stairs now."

*He can hear through a closed door over fifteen metres away?* thought L.

Sure enough, Wammy came through half a minute later holding a domed silver tray in front of him, and Rem focussed her attention back on Harry. Her golden eyes watched him endlessly, occasionally flicking up to an empty space above his head. She was clearly watching Harry’s lifespan while absorbing every move he made.

And why is she so interested in him?

"Good morning, James-san. Ryuzaki, I have your favourite truffles, imported directly from Switzerland. Would you like me to leave it on the counter for you?" Although no one else could've noticed, L could see that Wammy was concerned over Harry's appearance. The questioning look was loud and clear to someone like L, who had learned how to read his handler's hidden expressions during the years.

"I need to talk to you, sir. Without the birthday boy," said Harry in Italian, glancing over at L with a soft smile. "I'll be right back, alright?"

L nodded, irritable, as Wammy placed the truffles on the computer desk. The two of them walked side-by-side back out of the room, and L let out an uncharacteristic sigh of irritation. Celebrating his birthday wasn't *that* important. He was getting *old*, and why should anyone celebrate that? Soon, he would be so old that he wouldn't be able to walk or breathe on his own, let alone be a super-detective and help people. He couldn't imagine himself with aged skin and greying hair, or getting arthritis or some other ailment that accompanied the elderly. He couldn't see himself changing physically, and he didn't want to either. The elderly, while wise and world-wary, had
brain cell degeneration, and he could lose some of his intelligence or develop some horrible disease like Alzheimer's. In his profession, losing his memory or intellect was disastrous.

Despite L’s religion of being completely logical, he had always entertained the idea of living forever. He wasn't afraid of death, not at all, but he was troubled by the idea of getting old and just…fading away. He wanted to do something to warrant death; being in a battle of wits with Kira would be a good way to die, L supposed, not that he wanted to die by Kira's hand. It was the idea of dying while fighting with every bone in his body, in an epic battle that wouldn't be forgotten by the good of the world. He wanted to die for a cause, had the desire to die doing something he believed in. Dying while confronting the misdeeds of the criminals in the world was agreeable.

L wanted to die in a gunfight, from protecting the innocent from criminals, in the pursuit of justice. L wanted to die in a way that wasn't weak or pathetic, like wasting away from old age, and he wanted to die as he fought for what he believed was right.

It was a romantic notion for sure, but one that L had always thought about. He didn't want to die especially now that he had Harry to discover, but he knew that eventually the time would come, and he wanted the reason to mean something.

Again, the one and only time L had celebrated his birthday was a major disaster in ways that couldn't be expressed.

L moodily stuffed a truffle in his mouth and swallowed it whole, barely tasting it.

"Are you okay?" asked Matsuda worriedly. "You look annoyed, Ryuzaki."

L rolled his head lazily to look at the curious investigation team. "Mind your own business, Matsuda-san, and stop asking me questions." He was not in the mood for dealing with Matsuda.

Or for being watched intensely by the shinigami and Yagami Raito both. It felt as if L was the one being watched and observed now, instead of the other way around, and it did not bode well for the detective. Between it being a whole year closer to death, being watched by Raito incessantly, and Harry's demeanour of absolute sadness and despair, L felt weighed down.

It felt as if the case would never end. Almost an entire year had gone by with barely anything to show for it except Harry.

Harry was definitely the best present that he could receive, even over catching Kira.

As he thought that with a small, involuntary smile upon his lips, said man walked through the door with a smile that wasn't as cheerless or fake as before. Wammy was smiling slightly, almost invisible to the eye, and plainly enthusiastic about something.

L had a feeling it was going to turn into an argument. He couldn't leave the complex with Amane roaming the streets as a free woman, and Raito couldn't be left alone with the Death Note or the shinigami.

"You and you," Harry said with determination, pointing at Raito and Rem respectively. "You're both coming with me."

Raito raised an eyebrow. "What's this about?"

"We're going out," replied Harry.

"What?" demanded L and Raito simultaneously.
"Well, I have to say that I quite enjoy your company, Raito—" The teen let out a soft snort at that. "—and Rem is not leaving my sight until this case is solved. We're going to Osaka, and we're leaving in the next fifteen minutes. Watari says you can operate a helicopter, Ryuzaki," said Harry, suddenly looking intrigued.

"Why are you going to Osaka?" enquired Soichiro, brows scrunching in confusion.

"Because Misa is going to be at a photo shoot all day here in Tokyo and he won't want to run into her. If we had the time, I'd drag him to France. My friend Hermione can make a stellar strawberry birthday cake."

Damn.

"What?" exclaimed Matsuda excitedly. "It's your birthday Ryuzaki? Why didn't you tell us? How old are you?"

L grimaced and said, "I'm not talking to you for the rest of the day, James-san."

Harry laughed, and a sparkle of happiness glittered in his emerald eyes. "Yeah, yeah, Kermit, keep tellin' yourself that. I give it an hour at most. C'mon, though, let's go."

"Happy birthday, Ryuzaki!" called out Matsuda cheerfully, waving erratically, "and Happy Hallowe'en!"

Harry's flinch was missed by everyone but L.

***

Ryuzaki adamantly refused to fly the helicopter.

In the end, Watari had to take it upon himself to sit at the controls and Harry took the front seat beside him. Ryuzaki and Raito were in the back, but Raito spent more time talking into his headset than bantering with the detective, as said detective was sitting in a stony silence.

Rem was in the middle, but as she was a death god, she was free to roam in the helicopter. Thankfully she didn't leave to fly, as Ryuzaki probably would've blown a gasket.

"Why does he not like celebrating his birthday?" asked Harry in Italian loud enough to be heard over the headphones but not enough to be heard from the roar of the blades and motors. Ryuzaki had taken his headphones off in an effort to keep from being bothered or questioned, as Harry had done quite a bit of both in the first five minutes. It would've helped if he wouldn't have been so upset about the idea of letting people know he was a mere twenty-five-years-old.

"The topic of birthdays has always been a bit of a sore spot for him. The idea of getting older and potentially losing all the knowledge he has accumulated over the years frightens him, I think. Acknowledging his birthday is acknowledging that he's closer to death." His death was extended indefinitely just by knowing me, Harry wanted to say. A brief stab of pain twinged in the wizard's chest, and he grimaced. "I suppose that's one way of looking at it, but Ryuzaki will live and continue to rule the political underground for a very long time, if I have anything to say about it. I'll bitch-slap Kira all over—"

Ryuzaki kicked Watari's chair and said something loudly into the microphone-headset held between his fingers. Harry vaguely placed the language as Russian, which the elderly Watari seemed to understand, but it sounded harsh and sharp. It could've just been the language, though;
Harry was minutely familiar with German, and knew that even if kind words were spoken it still sounded like an insult.

French, on the other hand, always sounded like adoration and compliments, even when verbally vulgar in reality.

Raito raised an eyebrow at the language.

Harry took the hint that they needed to stop talking about Ryuzaki and watched the landscape fly by. It really was beautiful, that was for sure, but he rather enjoyed flying by himself on his broom. Being completely alone with the wind flying through his hair...it was truly superb and not nearly as noisy.

He debated on opening the door of the helicopter and jumping out, Apparating to the compound right before he hit the ground. It was the sort of thing Harry, Ron, Viktor, and Bill used to do during that last year of the War. Climb up trees, fly up on brooms, whatever could get them up high enough for a free-fall to be possible, and then pop out of harm's way before getting hurt or dying. Just in case, Luna and Hermione had been near them to perform whatever healing or slowing charms they could to keep them from really dying, while Draco had lounged in the shade under some tree or another, seemingly unconcerned about their well-being. Those were the last days that there weren't imminent threats against their lives, carefree moments that they could all pretend that everything wasn't as bad as it all seemed.

Those six had been the only ones left alive in the year 2001 with Harry. They had stuck together completely, desperate to keep each other safe. Even 'that bastard Malfoy' had fought to keep the last of them alive, and it would've been a reality if the last battle hadn't been so destructive.

Between keeping each other safe, saving Muggles, and making sure Harry could get close enough to Voldemort without dying...it had been too much.

Viktor had gone first when the Tower of London had come crashing down. Even with all of his reflexes and talent for evading harm, he had still been crushed almost beyond recognition. The ironic part of it was that the Tower had been blown apart by Bulgarian wizards, allied with Voldemort, and had effectively killed their most famous resident.

Luna had been next, but only by a couple of seconds before Bill. Harry, Hermione, Bill, and Luna had been rushing toward a hospital, where medical wizards could've healed Luna's punctured lung, but they hadn't been able to make it. Bill, who had been carrying Luna as he was the strongest but falling behind regardless, had been side-swiped by the destruction of a skyscraper by the Thames. Harry and Hermione had flown two hundred metres from them as a result of the debris and blast of air that had pelted them, and hadn't been able to get to Bill and Luna in time before Death Eaters had swarmed. They had killed Luna with a Killing Curse, perhaps mercifully compared to Bill, whose throat they had fatally slit with a Sectumsempra curse. Harry had heard him die, whereas Hermione had heard and seen it as she tried in vain to heal it, while Harry had fought off the Death Eaters in a rage. He most likely would've been overwhelmed if it hadn't been for Draco and Mr. Weasley coming to his aid.

They had met up with Ron and some French wizards around the final battle sight, in a park close to the Thames. Voldemort had been battling a set of wizards that Harry didn't recognise, but it had soon ended as a wave of Death Eaters had come to their master's aid. Surrounded by flashing light and screams in the dimming day, Harry had fought with all his heart, avenging all of the lost. It had been up to him to end it before more people were casualties, and he had almost succeeded.

When the sun had begun to set in the scarlet sky, Voldemort had sent a Killing Curse flying towards Harry, and he wouldn't have been able to avoid it if Draco Malfoy, the goddamned prat, hadn't taken it for him.
It was hard when loved ones died. Ginny and Harry had been together, engaged and preparing to marry each other after the War, but she had been taken and tortured, then eventually killed. Harry had lived through that aftermath, seeing her face frozen in a scream, but he hadn't witnessed it with his own eyes. It had been hard; especially since had Harry had loved her—still did honestly—but it had been separate. That and the simple fact that Harry just wasn't sexually attracted to her, instead feeling more of a sisterly love for her, was dulling.

Seeing Draco fall right in front of him, knowing that he had died just the same way as Ginny had, in the hope that Harry would end the War and bring peace, had been just as torturous. It had been harder in a way too, not only because it had been right in front of him but also because Draco had filled something that Ginny had never been able to.

Harry had loved Ginny, had loved being with her, and would've spent the rest of his life with her despite his own personal feelings. Ginny had been a woman, but Harry had loved her regardless of his lack of a sexual desire for her. Ginny Weasley had been his one exception to his sexuality and he had honestly wanted to spend the rest of his (most likely short) life with her regardless of everything else. He probably would've had kids with her and had a happy, truthful family with her, and most likely would've been completely content with her. He would've learned to love her in the way he should've, and would've learned to enjoy it.

But Draco Malfoy had been different, because it had been a sexual relationship with the feelings making it even more wild and passionate. Ginny had been the woman he was going to marry but he hadn't really wanted to have a physical relationship with her, and Draco had been a human being that Harry quite liked having sex with on a weekly (daily, actually, or more like hourly) basis. Being physically consumed by someone in addition to the feeling of love was much more powerful, and losing him so soon after losing Ginny had been enough to make him a great big ball of agony.

Ron and Hermione had lived. They were the only ones that did, besides Teddy and Mr. Weasley. He was thankful that Ron and Hermione hadn't died with all the others, because Harry was pretty sure that he would've ceased to exist if they had. As horrible as it was to say, he would rather lose Draco a million times than to lose either one of them. Especially Hermione, as she had been the only person in the entire world who had stuck by him through thick and thin no matter the cost. He would not have been able to live without them in this world, and probably would've been more soulless than prisoners subjected to the Dementor's Kiss.

He probably would've killed himself.

Harry tore his eyes away from the window and turned to look at the brooding detective L, catching those big charcoal eyes with his own emerald ones.

Harry had known Ron and Hermione since he was eleven, green behind the ears and new to the world of magic. He had grown with them, learned to love them in ways that could never be comprehended, and would gladly do anything for them. Harry had been with them for over a decade, fighting beside them, saving them as they saved him, eating and drinking beside them, holding their beautifully ugly newborn babies while crying pathetically alongside them. He had suffered with them, starved with them, cheered with them, fought with them, and lived.

Harry had known Ryuzaki for only a tiny fraction of that time (it would be four months as of tomorrow), but that didn't matter. After nearly a lifetime of being with Ron and Hermione, of being a single unit of three that could never be separated even in the face of destruction, he knew that Ryuzaki was just as important. The detective was on the exact same level as his two better halves, just as important and priceless and imperfectly perfect.
In the same way, Harry knew he could not exist without Ryuzaki. It was different from the love he had had with Ginny and Draco, because it wasn't about sex or kids or marriage or family. It was about loving him, no matter the situation or emotion, against all reality and fantasy. It was different from the love he had with Ron and Hermione, because they were the other parts of his soul and Ryuzaki was the other part of his heart.

It didn't make the deaths in Harry's past any easier to deal with, but it helped a little bit knowing the three most important people in his life were still alive, within his grasp.

"I love you," Harry said in his mind and heart, trying to project that to the gloomy detective. He knew that Ryuzaki didn't understand what it was yet, that annoying little thing called love, but the wizard knew that he would be by Ryuzaki's side regardless. He pretty much had no choice; his entire being wouldn't have it any other way.

Harry tore his eyes away and focussed his attention outside again, in an attempt to keep from being overwhelmed by it all. Again, he wished that he could jump out, maybe delude himself that Viktor and Bill were beside him whooping in a rare moment of elation. Maybe he could imagine, if even for a moment, that he was still in the past and could save them all. He would remember when they died, where they died...he could keep it from happening.

He could even use a Summoning charm to get one of those damned Death Notes and end it before it even started. The Death Eaters and Voldemort were going to die in the War anyway.

"Wow. Putting myself on Kira's level is not a good thought process. You would probably never know Ryuzaki if Kira hadn't shown up in the first place. Even though he's a Muggle, it'd be very difficult to find him. He's well-protected without magic, after all.

That wasn't good at all. Not knowing Ryuzaki was enough to send another sharp pain rushing through his chest.

"Focus. Stop thinking about the past and try to focus on Ryuzaki. Make him realise and understand that getting a year older isn't bad, because it means that he's had another successful year of saving lives and gaining new experiences. Make him understand that he's growing in the best way possible, and that's a fantastic thing because it's only going to make him smarter."

"Yeah. Using the intelligence card positively was bound to be a good thing. All Ryuzaki cared about was his intelligence."

When they were preparing to land in a predetermined space, Harry had calmed himself down to the best of his ability. Even if it was the third-year anniversary of countless deaths spanning over two decades, he couldn't let it get to him. The past needed to be remembered, cherished, and mourned over, but it needed to be separate from the present and future, especially if Ryuzaki was involved. It was his birthday, and that needed to be Harry's sole concentration. Ryuzaki was more important, and Harry needed to focus on him instead of being a total nutter.

The emerald eyed wizard took a few deep breaths and closed his eyes, preparing himself for the day. He was going to somehow lose Ryuzaki for a couple of moments so he could Apparate to England and ask if Hermione could somehow make that fabulous strawberry cake with magic. Then he'd return to Osaka, lolly-gag around for a couple of hours, and then Apparate back to get the cake for the detective. After all, if Ryuzaki loved strawberry cake, he'd definitely drool over Mrs. Weasley's recipe that Hermione had in her mental arsenal. It was just that good.

Harry's magical senses prickled.

He saw Rem move out of the corner of his eye, and he snapped his gaze back to see that the
shinigami had let her head materialise out of the helicopter, her eyes facing the rear-end. Harry's wand began heating up in his alarm, and he tried to see what was flying behind them.

Without a doubt, someone or something was following them through flight.

There were no rear-view mirrors to glance out the back, and a look at the radar showed that it wasn't a Muggle invention. Either it was another shinigami (Kira's?) or there were one or more wizards following with the proper masking charms in place.

He couldn't tell without pulling out his wand and outing himself, and that would've been bad as he didn't want Raito or Ryuzaki to know he was a wizard. Especially Raito.

Ryuzaki and Raito noticed the look of distress on Harry's face as well as Rem's head exiting the helicopter, and the detective hurriedly put on the headset. "What's going on?" he asked loudly, this time in English, and Watari visibly bristled.

Harry quickly schooled his expression and said, "I'm not sure; Rem's checking it out." Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed in confusion, and he went to speak again, but Rem came back down and said, "It was just a large bird. Nothing to worry about. Your landing is clear."

Harry would've believed the lie if his senses weren't still ringing in alarm. Regardless, he said, "I thought that you had seen another shinigami or something. It's a relief that you didn't." He adopted a look of just that to fool the others, but Ryuzaki's expression did not change.

"You seem to have very good senses and reflexes, James-san," he remarked, fishing for information that Harry was not going to give.

"I guess so. I mean, I just felt her move and that concerned me."

"Forgive me," said Rem. For a split-second, Harry wondered how they could hear her so clearly over the roar of the helicopter, but decided that it didn't matter. "There is no shinigami following us."

"Are you sure?" demanded Ryuzaki. Raito didn't seem concerned, as if he knew something the rest of them didn't, and didn't comment.

"Yes." Her large golden eyes swivelled onto Harry slowly, and then she went back to floating in silence.

She wasn't lying, but she wasn't telling the whole truth either. She felt the same thing that he did, but what it was Harry didn't know. Honestly, Harry had a suspicion that he hoped to whatever godly being really did exist was not correct. Although Harry's inklings had a tendency to be accurate, he hoped with everything he had that it was false for once in his entire life.

Because Harry's senses were screaming 'journalist!'.

If it was the press, things would get very bad very quickly.

The wizard's leg began bouncing in apprehension as he prepared himself for the worst.

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Harry acted strange the entire day.

By noon, all of the company was on edge and glancing over their shoulder, tense in the face of an unseen adversary. Harry strangely attempted to keep L out of sight as much as possible, making L
sit in pastry shops with his back away from the window, making him ride on the inside of vehicles—apparently Wammy had called in a limousine service and paid the driver double salary to get lost for the afternoon—away from the window. Quite frankly, L wasn't allowed near a window, and even when they went walking into a garden that L dragged them to, Harry all-but hovered.

It was in the gardens, around fifteen o'clock, where the day came to its climax.

Perhaps fortunately, they were alone. The end of the gardens was empty due to the simple fact that everyone on the entire planet was indoors, putting on costumes and make-up or filling up bowls with treats. All Hallows Eve was the day where everyone stayed indoors until the sun went down, and it was quite isolated in this area of the gardens.

Rem, who had been floating silently above their heads, said softly, "Normally I would say nothing at all, but it is getting very bothersome. You are being followed by another human."

Harry, who had been snorting at L's aversion towards sitting on a bench (germs!), quieted immediately, his entire body tensing in preparation for something. Wammy's jaw clenched and his hand began inching to his chest, where L knew a .37 Magnum was hidden. L himself bent his body forwards, in an attempt to appear as shrouded with shadows as possible. Even Raito seemed on-guard, going stiff as well and for once looking genuinely concerned.

"Do not pull out a weapon," said Harry under his breath, getting three looks of mystification in response. "That will only make matters a hell of a lot worse. Please, just let me handle it, okay?"

"Absolutely not," L said immediately, edging closer towards Wammy and his concealed weapon. "It could be another shinigami."

"It is not another shinigami," Rem said, floating a bit higher to see around the bend. For a moment, they were all silent, and then she said, "It is...a Japanese Ministry official."

Raito said, "There's no such thing as a Japanese Ministry. What are you talking about?"

Harry, on the other hand, exclaimed in shock, "The Ministry?"

And with that, he turned on his heel and bolted down the pathway towards the so-called 'Ministry official'.

"Wait! What are you doing?" cried out Raito, while L hesitated. It was only when Harry disappeared around the bend and went out of L's sight that he broke out into a run, nearly flying in his attempt to chase Harry down. His back unconsciously straightened, his legs tensed and then flexed, and his mind was not on keeping Raito and the shinigami in his sight but solely on Harry.

L got around the bend just as Harry tackled a Japanese man to the ground in a mass of limbs and shouts.

"Give me that camera, you motherfucking bastard!" Harry was yelling, trying to pull a small digital camera out of the Japanese man's hands. They both rolled around a bit before Harry finally got the camera into his hands and kicked himself away, breathing heavily and snarling with anger.

"Camera? Why does that man have a camera? What is going on? A series of conversations began echoing in L's head, thoughts running rapid in his mind, but he recalled a conversation between Harry and his two British friends from many days ago. The woman had screamed over the phone, 'You get your famous little arse down here, Harry James Potter or I will kill you a hundred times over!' L had barely even registered the 'famous' part in the light of nearly being ravished only minutes before, and hearing Harry's full name had been more important at that time. Since then, it had all-but left his mind at the result of the insanity in the Kira investigation and the sheer fact that
yes, shinigami did exist after all.

Besides, since he had found absolutely nothing about Harry let alone a feat that could induce fame, he had come to the then-logical conclusion that he was 'famous' for something mundane, perhaps at a school or function instead of a global scale.

Now, however, the phrase was front and centre in his thoughts, especially when Harry stood up, grasped the man by the scruff of his shirt, slammed him against a tree, and demanded, "Who paid you to take pictures of me?"

L and Wammy, the latter right on L's heels, visibly recoiled.

There was absolutely no way this was happening. L had done his research to find any and all information on a green-eyed, black haired man named Harry from England. Absolutely nothing had come up. When L had found out Harry's full name, he had researched the name Harry James Potter extensively, along with the names Hermione and Ron, and again absolutely nothing had come up. If L couldn't find anything, then there was nothing to find, and the knowledge that there was a man, following Harry around while taking pictures, was unbelievable. There was no way that Harry could be held as famed in the public without L knowing about it. Infamy came with public knowledge of a person's deeds, but there wasn't even something in the records regarding Harry's very existence, let alone of some great feat that had made him well-known.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" the Japanese man nearly sobbed, crumpling against the tree and clutching a small stitched-in symbol on a strange-looking blue cloak. The badge of sorts was of a pair of sticks with stars coming out the top ends, as if they were firecrackers or chopsticks that sparked. "She told me that I would be safe if I got closer. She told me she would protect me!"

"Who?" bellowed Harry in the most explosive voice that L had ever heard from him. His emerald eyes were blazing with fury, lips in a tight line that clearly expressed his rage and disapproval. For a single second, the amount of ferocity and wrath in Harry's tall form was enough to make L step back in a stab of pure and undeniable alarm. Harry looked ready to honestly kill the Japanese man who was trembling in terror within his grasp.

Wammy, not taking the time to hide his expression of anxiety, pulled out the weapon.

Even though L felt as if he was being punched in the stomach, he reached out and grasped Wammy's wrist in a firm grip, forcing it down. Regardless of what was happening, the weapon would only prove to worsen the situation, and the Japanese man looked about ready to relieve himself just by Harry's volatile atmosphere.

"Dolores Umbridge!" the man blubbered, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Harry's entire body flinched back, accidentally dropping the man on his side. Absently, Harry brought up his left hand up to his chest and rubbed the back of it, tracing the flawless scars that formed words with his fingers, his internal inferno slightly dimmed as his eyes were lost in thought. However, it didn't last long, because suddenly Harry's entire demeanour deflated as his eyes focussed on L's form. Briefly, he looked guilty and exhausted, and he dropped his hand to his side again and said tiredly, "What's your name?"

Sniffling, the man replied in a shaky voice, "Rakakaro Matsushiro, Mr. Potter."

"He is telling the truth," remarked Rem in her husky voice, floating above all their heads.

L's eyes narrowed. He knows Harry's name? What is going on here? What am I missing?

"Rakakaro-san, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to lose my temper, but as you probably well know, it's not
"I'm sorry for your loss, Mr. Potter sir," breathed Rakakaro. "It is a day of mourning and celebration for all of us across the world."

I don't understand!

"Rakakaro-san, you are bound under the Statute, but I still need to know what's going on, so tell me as simply as possible. How long has she been watching me?" asked Harry, frowning heavily. Every word he said sounded heavily weighed and calculated, as if he was trying to keep something from being said out loud, and that word, statute, was ominous. A degree of what, exactly, was Rakakaro required to obey? What law could Harry possibly be talking about?

"I understand," Rakakaro said, shooting a frightened glance at L. "She has photographs of your time in France and Italy, and she's recently acquired photographs of your time here," he continued, clearly expecting Harry to go off on him again.

No-no-no!

Harry glanced at L again, sighed, and then said, "How many photographs does she have of this young man behind me, and how much does she know about him?"

Wammy stepped forward and demanded, "What is going on here?"

Instead of Harry answering, it was Rem who spoke. "Please do not get involved. This is a matter that you will not understand, and it will do more harm than good by questioning his motives."

Harry and Rakakaro continued on as if they hadn't even heard Wammy speak. "She has dozens, but I don't believe that she knows who he is yet. Apparently he's well protected, which is shocking for his kind; even Ministries around the globe don't have any information. That's all I know, but there's no telling how much she'll find out over the next five days. She's very prominent in the political underground, you know that as well as I do, and she has her way of getting information when she wants it."

My kind? What does that mean?

"Impossible," declared Wammy. "There is no way a woman could find any information about him."

Harry's head extended towards the canopy of trees overhead. "It's debatable. You don't know Dolores Umbridge as well as I do, and the methods that she uses are...well, illegal, actually." Harry paused, and then said, "She sold the rights for publication to Rita Skeeter at the Daily Prophet, didn't she?"

Publication? thought L with a twinge of dread. His entire body felt heavy with the knowledge that his face was going to be on some newspaper of sorts, for a reason that he wasn't even sure of.

Very slowly, L said, "Please do not tell me that my face is going to be in the pages of a tabloid."

"Yes," breathed Rakakaro fearfully, and Wammy said firmly, "Come now; we're leaving." He grasped L's shoulder and began steering him away, but Harry said tightly, "No one is leaving anywhere until this is dealt with. You can't hide from this. When is the article going to be in print, Rakakaro-san, and who else knows about this man's existence other than you?"

"Only four others. Ms. Umbridge demanded that the entire thing be kept quiet until it was published. She also demanded that it be in the Prophet by the fifth of November, so Ms. Skeeter
could perfect it in a way that would sway public opinion without seeming too critical."

"When is your next rendezvous with them? Do you know where the informants and Rita are? And how much am I going to have to pay you to force you to keep quiet?"

L glared at Wammy, silently stressing the need to be left alone. As angry and taken aback as he was about Harry's personal life, he knew that he couldn't leave. He could very well see that the emerald eyed man was doing some quick thinking, and somewhere in the back of the detective's mind, L realised that Wammy's damage control wouldn't do a bit of good. It would be Harry's actions that would determine L's anonymity.

Besides, L didn't think he could leave Harry, even if it ended up being the death of him. It wouldn't have even mattered if Harry ended up being Kira; L wouldn't be able to leave. He wouldn't. He wouldn't.

"I'm supposed to meet Ms. Skeeter on the fourth to give her more pictures and information. She wants to meet up once more with the informers that day to double check facts like is customary, so I suppose that's when you'd be likely to catch all of them at once. Are you going to tell the Ministry that I was tailing you, because I could lose my job and the main reason I've been doing this is because I really need the money."

"What in the hell is this Ministry you're speaking of?" questioned Raito, but Harry ignored him and said, "No, Rakakaro-san, because you've obliged in answering my questions. However, if I find out that you've lied to me or you follow me or him any more, I will make sure that you receive a very special kiss from a very special someone."

At that, Rakakaro wasn't just sniffling—he was outright wailing. It was almost pathetic how genuine his terror was, and Raito actually turned away with a pained expression on his face. Wammy tentatively pocketed the gun and L tried to decipher the code to no avail. His brain just wasn't cooperating with his mind at the present; information was overloading his thoughts in such extent that he couldn't seem to process it quickly enough. It was almost like when he was alone with Harry, connected together by lips and tongue, because everything seemed jumbled up and out of focus.

After years upon years of keeping his face from being caught on film and his name and personal life out of the system, everything had been blown apart because of someone named Dolores Umbridge.

"What in the world does that mean?" whispered Raito, but L was more occupied with the simple fact that Harry said solemnly, "On the fourth, at noon, meet me...meet me at the gate leading to the Shrieking Shack in Hogsmeade. Do you know where that is?" At Rakakaro's feverish nod, he continued, "I wish you the best, and I'll compensate you for your time and discretion. Have a lovely day, and Happy Hallowe'en."

With those final words, he turned on his heel and led the way out of the gardens.

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Harry didn't say a word the entire way back to the complex.

He knew what was coming, and he knew what he was going to have to do. There was no telling how long it would take for Harry to completely obliterate the evidence of the wizard's involvement with Ryuzaki and then tear Umbridge a new one, but he knew that it was necessary. Harry only had three choices, and all of them seemed hard to deal with.
The first was leaving for Britain to deal with those snivelling little bitches with creative means, make sure Ryuzaki's face stayed out of the papers, and potentially not be able to get to Japan in time to save the detective from death.

He had no way to know if Kira—if Raito—would act in the time that he'd be gone, which he assumed would be around a week or so. He'd have to tie up any loose ends, bribe the Prophet to not publish any stories about him because of some excuse or another to keep suspicion off him, ask Mr. Weasley to hold the Prophet liable if such a story came out anyway, and then deal with repercussions of 'the Great Harry Potter Being Back In Britain!'. Then, on the fourth, he'd intercept Rita's little party, confiscate the story with the backing of the Ministry, and then petition to have Dolores Umbridge destroyed in every possible way. He'd have to stay until at least the sixth to make sure that the article didn't make a surprise showing by leaking out mysteriously, and he could return home on the seventh.

It was one thing to follow Harry around, taking pictures and stalking him on a day-to-day basis. He could deal with that in a relatively good manner, and just pick up all his magical possessions and move to wherever suited his fancy.

It was another thing to stalk Ryuzaki just because he was intimate with the Boy Who Just Wouldn't Die. Even if Ryuzaki hadn't been someone to keep secret for his protection, it was still a hit below the belt. Stalking Harry was fine, but when he was finally happy with someone and wanted to live his life without worry, they had to begin digging into Ryuzaki's life in order to sell some copies of the paper. It was horrible and wrong, and unfortunately a fact of Harry's life, but it didn't make it any easier to deal with. The other men had been amusing flings, and quite frankly Harry didn't mind if they made the front page; it was Ryuzaki's face and background that needed to be kept secret no matter what.

*The price for fame is privacy.*

The second was to stay with Ryuzaki, watch him endlessly to make sure he didn't die by a heart attack, and wait until the case was solved even though it would result in every witch or wizard alive knowing Ryuzaki's face. This option was unacceptable, for obvious reasons.

The moment the helicopter landed on the roof of the complex, it was nearly seventeen o'clock. The sky, which should've been bright with sunshine, was dark and stormy. It was menacing in a way, threatening not just rain but bad days ahead. Perhaps he was just reading into it, but it set his nerves on edge.

Ryuzaki exited the helicopter and began striding towards Harry, his pace determined. Watari followed behind him, and Raito after him, but Harry did not want to explain himself to anyone but the love of his life. Quite frankly, he wasn't in the mood to do anything but curl into bed and cry his pathetic eyes out.

A man deserved one day of sensitivity at least, and to put it in reality, Harry was uncommonly compassionate about everything. He needed days to scream and howl just like anyone else in the world, except perhaps Ryuzaki.

Harry did know one thing: there was no way he was going to get out of the complex with his balls still attached if he didn't somehow explain himself to the detective.

Harry held the door open for Ryuzaki and then led the way to the wizard's private quarters. The entire walk was in silence, Ryuzaki a bit behind him and just observing his movements, and when they finally entered the bedroom of Harry's suite the detective simply stood by the door and watched Harry solemnly.
The third choice was coming clean, spending his free time in Japan with Ryuzaki, only leaving when he absolutely had to. With this, he could be free to Apparate within specially determined areas that were predetermined with Ryuzaki to be cut off from recording devices, and would be able to make himself known whenever necessary.

Harry closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths to steady his nerves. He wasn't prepared for this but now he merely had no other choice. If there had been any other way to go about it, Harry would've taken advantage of it, but in the present situation, there was nothing else he could do to postpone it.

It had to happen, and it had to happen now. He had no other choice.

"Ryuzaki," Harry whispered, his eyes still closed beneath his glasses. "I am going to tell you something, but I need it to be completely private. No cameras, no microphones, just you listening with your own ears and seeing with your own eyes. It's either that or I'm leaving here to go deal with this mess and you will have nothing to show for it. I'm serious; if it was to get out what I'm about to tell you, to the rest of the investigation team and even Watari, I could be thrown into prison for breaking a law that's been in place for hundreds of years. I need secrecy, and I have to be able to trust you with this. You must understand how important this is."

Without a word, Harry heard Ryuzaki journey to the desktop computer in the corner of the bedroom and enter the system. He quickly shut off all the monitoring equipment in the suite, keeping it on the command prompt to make sure that no one hacked into the programme in an attempt to watch the conversation.

Harry opened his eyes.

Ryuzaki was perched in his seat, and Harry decided that was as stable as the detective was going to get. For a long moment, Harry debated on how he would say it, but decided fairly quickly that being as simplistic as possible would be the best way to go about it.

His time for stalling had run out.

Harry took a deep breath and said, "Ryuzaki...L...I'm a wizard."
Eighteen: Introduction

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Eighteen

Introduction

31 October 2010

L Lawliet stared at Harry’s bedroom door.

Half a second ago, Harry had been standing right in front of it.

Now, he was gone. The loud crack still echoing in the room was all that was left of him.

After a lifetime of complete and utter logic ruling his life, the greatest detective in the world found himself surrounded by shinigami and intimate with...with someone that just couldn't be possible.

Unsteadily, L turned and walked to Harry's rumpled, but made bed. His entire world, yet again, had been tossed upside down, his brain buzzing with questions in an intensity that made his entire body numb.

L wasn’t sure if this birthday had been better or worse than his twenty-first. In an attempt to somehow trick his mind into stabilising itself, he thought about the disastrous party, and quickly convinced himself that no, that had been far worse than learning that things like...that could even exist.

L sat down on the edge, for once sitting like a normal human being. He let his toes brush the carpet absently, his hands lying in his lap almost in a proper manner, and bowed his head.

Harry had said what he was in a grave voice, and L had almost opened his mouth to ask, 'Are you out of your mind?' Before he even had a moment to take a breath, the emerald eyed man had turned on his heel and suddenly disappeared with a loud bang. Even then, he had not experienced a full heartbeat before he had been face-to-face with him, nearly causing the swivel chair to topple over backwards in L's shock.

He had vanished for a split-second, only to reappear right in front of L’s face. It didn't seem achievable, or real, or reasonable. It was too much, way too much, for L’s analytical mind to process in a few short minutes.

And the questions, the questions! They rumbled in his brain like a frantic blast of freight trains in a valiant attempt to take over his entire being. The questions numbered in exponents too numerous for one person to handle, even a human being like L. He felt like his head was overheating like a computer that had just received an outsourced virus, ready to break down and explode in the wake
of its power.

The questions were immense, and laughingly ridiculous, but anything was possible now, wasn't it? Could he transform people into toads? Could he create something out of nothing? Could he use some strange and exotic brew to make someone break out in the flu? Could he halt ageing? Could he force people to think a certain way? Could he make people tell the truth? Could he go back in time? Could he kill just by thinking about it? Could he turn invisible? Could he fly?

Could he manipulate someone's feelings and persuade them that they were infatuated with him against all possibilities?

L shuddered and finally brought his knees to his chest. This could not be happening. Maybe Harry was Kira, playing along with L's game the entire time and making L genuinely believe that Yagami Raito and Amane Misa were guilty. It would explain his near-perfect timing when running into L in Sato-Mari's, only a mere two hours after Raito and Yagami-san had been put into incarceration and four days after Amane. Maybe Harry had forced Raito to act a certain way, and maybe the Death Note was some strange—

A loud crack came in the room, and L jolted backwards, startled. Harry stood in the middle of the space, but this time he was not alone. Two people stood beside him, one male and one female, holding Harry's wrists tightly and looking slightly queasy. The male had bright red hair that brushed his collar, bright blue eyes, and a splash of freckles on his long nose. He was ridiculously tall, easily bypassing six foot, and L had to crane his neck to look at him. What really completed his look was a slightly dirty pair of jean trousers, a maroon shirt with sleeves that were rolled over his forearms, and a slightly dim-witted expression. Regardless, he grinned brightly, looking around with interest.

The woman, on the other hand, was tiny and carrying three books, which made all the difference in the world. She turned on her heels, bushy brown hair flying in a halo around her heart-shaped face, and focussed chocolate brown eyes and pale features on L's face.

"It seems as if Harry wasn't exactly untruthful," she muttered under her breath, cocking her head. She nearly lost her stack of books in her haste to give a small bow and say, "Hi! I'm Hermione Granger-Weasley, and you must be Ryuzaki. It's lovely to meet you."

Lovely?

The redhead, whom L reckoned to be the loud character named Ron, nearly tripped and said, "Oh. I'm Ron Weasley. I'm not exactly sure why we're here, but I'm sure Harry has a fantastic reason for interrupting our quality time with Dad."

"We see him every single day, Ronald. This is important! I'm going to give the greatest Muggle detective in the world a crash course in our world. This is a momentous moment in history."

"You're mad, Hermione. Not everything is based on changing history. Haven't you had enough of that? I mean, our children can't even go down to the bakery without being harassed."

"The last time we changed history we changed the world for the better; this is essentially the same thing, even though Voldemort makes Kira look like a featherless painted peacock—"

"Can we get on with it? I did not bring you here to bicker with each other. I want you to help me convince him that I'm not Kira," Harry said with exasperation, throwing his hands in the air.

The redhead named Ron laughed loudly. "If you're Kira, then I'm the Queen of England with a massive erection."
Hermione rolled her eyes and said, "Sometimes I wonder why I married you." She turned away from him with a sniff and then put the books down on the desk, facing L with a smile. It seemed genuine, but three people had just appeared out of nowhere in a highly secured compound as if taking an everyday stroll.

"Look," she finally said, "you're one of the most influential figures in the underground world of politics and law enforcement, if not the most. I've read that your safety and survival in this world is what determines how the Muggle world functions, and just by being alive you greatly increase the chance that criminals will not get away with horrendous crimes. You're a universal good, and that is very important."

L's grip on his knees tightened, and he decided to speak for the first time. "Essentially you are correct, but this has no rational point. Common logic would determine that I am L, but your existence in my secured building without tripping any sensors causes that logic to fail. Your existence completely changes that reality."

It was Harry that replied. "I think you believe that witches and wizards need to be hooked under the same category as shinigami. We're no different from you in the sense that we have laws, government, and so-forth. We suffer consequences the same as everyone else. Besides, just because I can wave a wand around and cause your skin to turn purple doesn't mean that I'm going out, manipulating people and killing on a day-to-day basis. If I was to do that, in front of a Muggle like you, I'd go to prison."

"No you wouldn't," scoffed Hermione. "If there's one person above the law, it's you." She focussed on L again and said, "But if there's one thing I know about Harry Potter it's that his mental moral compass is screwed on tight. He doesn't manipulate people except in good reason, and even though our kind does have the ability to do such acts, we can't get away with it."

"Clarify that," demanded L. Surely people like...them were above such laws. With that sort of power, they could do anything, couldn't they?

She grinned. "Just as if you have tracing units on artillery and police enforcement, we have magical tracking and the various Auror Departments within the Ministries around the globe." She pulled out a long narrow stick with intricate designs on the wood from her pocket and pointed at L with her finger. "If I was to aim my wand at you and mutter the Obliviation charm, the spell would be tracked through the proper channels. Almost as a bullet and fingerprints can be traced back to a gun, magic can be traced back to wands. We can determine whose wand it was, who was touching it when the spell was cast, and provide the appropriate measures to put them in Azkaban." She lowered her wand-stick and began walking to the corner of the room, towards the chair behind the computer desk.

"Azkaban is a wizard prison, the most feared in our world," Harry clarified. "Aurors are like the CIA, FBI, or even you; everyone knows that you exist to take out criminals on a high-scale basis, and Aurors are on that same level only in a magical sense and much more publicity. Muggles are non-magic human beings, like you. Oh yes, and an Obliviation charm is a memory modifier. For instance, if Raito was to find out what your name was, we could use it to actually delete the memory from his brain. We could make him forget his own name and how to breathe, if we needed to."

Hermione nodded but continued, "However, there's a difference between using, say, a shaving charm against using Obliviate. As long as witches and wizards do not do magic in front of a Muggle, omitting some exceptions, we can essentially use anything we need. As long as it's not harmful to Muggles, is one of the Coded spells and potions, or an Unforgivable Curse, we can use magic and alchemy in our homes without trouble."
"What does that mean?" asked L, leaning forward. Despite every fibre in his being telling him to call Wammy and chase them out, his mind was already thinking ahead. If everything was so intensely regulated, then could Harry honestly be innocent in this? His intuition had always told him that Harry wasn't Kira, and so he found himself yearning for Harry's purity in the nature of the Death Note.

Besides, Harry and these two other people were telling him all this, and Harry knew that L would try to use such abilities to his advantage. If all of these things were possible, then perhaps they could use Harry's talents to get Raito and Amane to talk.

"There are a series of spells that earn you a one-way ticket to Azkaban. Some of them are just imprisonment, and some are worth getting the Dementor's Kiss over," said Hermione, sitting down in the chair with a sigh. The redhead that was silently listening journeyed over to her and wrapped his freckled arms around her neck. She smiled softly before continuing, "Dementors are the jailers of Azkaban prison, and they're the reason Azkaban's so horrid. Dementors aren't human, but instead beings that absorb all of the happiness out of a person. They're left with their worst memories, condemned to stew in despair and weakness until they serve their sentence, and most commit suicide within the first couple of years. The Dementors also provide another...service, only for the worst of criminals. There are things worse than death, and this is one of those things."

"What could be worse than death?" asked L, not convinced. Death was the end of mortality, the conclusion of life, and meant that the person would cease to exist. It was the ultimate ending that could never be taken back.

The couple watched Harry walk to L with a heavy stride, sitting down lightly on the other side of the bed. With a weighty tone, he finally answered, "Losing the people you care so deeply about is one of them. Losing loved ones makes you yearn for death in a way that would break even the strongest man. There is nothing on this Earth than can be more agonisingly profound."

"Immortality is also a horrible experience as I've heard. Forever on this world, without the relief of mortality, is taxing. People can be scared of death and wish for that horror, but even they will tell you that it is a choice that no one should make. You can never get close to a person because soon they will be gone, and despite seeing the world change and keeping your beauty through the ages, it is not worth it. That is worse than death, in my opinion," remarked Hermione quietly.

Depends on who you're asking, L thought. If I could get Harry and Wammy to live forever as well, I would quite enjoy living forever. The ability to fight for the good of mankind for an infinite amount of time would be perfect.

Ron finally spoke up. "And then there's the Kiss. All three of us have watched it being preformed, and it's...something you never forget. Dementors, to put it bluntly, suck your soul out of your mouth and ingest it into their body. The wizard lives, but barely just, in a shell of a body. You can't think, you can't feel, and you can't exist, but your body lives on mechanically."

"Imagine not being able to think, Ryuzaki," said Harry. "Imagine not having the ability to have free will, logic, or life experiences. Imagine that all of the intelligence and information you've acquired over the years was sucked through your lips and taken away from you. That's what happens when you receive the death sentence in our world."

L's entire body tensed at the idea. He honestly would rather die than have his livelihood torn away from him in such a manner. To keep his mind off the idea, he said in a hard voice, "What sort of...abilities are illegal for you?" He didn't want to say the word, because somehow it would seem more real, and his brain was still trying to catch up to this information. He was learning about an entire world and lifestyle in a matter of moments, and he was uncommonly at a loss on how to
Harry smiled, while Hermione was the one to speak. "We have a multitude of spells, charms, and curses we can use. Be it heating charms, concoctions that can cure the common flu within seconds, or spells that cut the grass without having to mow, the variety is endless and usually very innocent and common. We cook, clean, create, and heal with magic. However, there are certain spells that are illegal, because wherever there is a good thing there's someone trying to ruin it. The curses all have their reasons for being against the rules, and for good reasons too, as most of them are harmful to Muggles and wizards alike. We have to get permission to use them, from the government, and even then it's under strict circumstances."

"They used to be subjected to a life sentence in Azkaban, but in 2000 they changed the law declaring the use of an Unforgivable to be punishable by the Kiss," said Harry. "They're the worst spells ever known to mankind, and even the accidental use of one is condemned. The Coded spells are illegal to a life-term in Azkaban, although once upon a time conjurers were just given fines. During the War, it got so bad that it was necessary to make them illegal in such a way, and when the fighting was over it was sworn into law. As for potions, they're less regulated as you could plausibly brew them in your own home, but many ingredients are illegal to buy and it makes it complicated to prepare. To get the potions already made is impossible unless you work with a hospital or a Ministry or are in an underground market, but with the amount of regulations being forced on the public, it's near impossible for that as well. Trust me, I know; Hermione's what you'd call a doctor, and she gives us all the down-low on the merchandise."

Ron laughed.

"What Harry's trying to say is that since the War, it's very hard to use spells that would help your investigation," Hermione interjected, rolling her eyes. "If he was to walk up to your suspect and perform the Imperius Curse on him, he'd be in loads of trouble. Naturally, since he's Harry Potter, he wouldn't receive the Kiss, but he'd still have to spend some time in Azkaban. Perhaps a couple of months, I'd say."

Harry snorted. "Are you kidding, Hermione? As long as I agreed to work with the Auror Department, I'd get off with no jail time. They've been trying to force me there for years."

Hermione smiled. "Yes, you're right, but what would you rather have to do, Harry: spend a couple of months in Azkaban or work with the Ministry for the rest of your life?"

"Go to Azkaban," Harry said confidently. He shared a look with Hermione that L could not read, so L asked in curiosity, "If it's a prison to be feared, why would you choose to go there instead of employing yourself in an organisation where you could bring down criminals? Why would you willingly go to prison?"

In response, Harry just laughed and said, "I'm working with an organisation now that's helping bring lawbreakers to justice, and I like it much better than the Auror department. It's called being around the detective L. Furthermore, I'd break out of the place in the first ten minutes. I've done it before and I'll do it again."

"When did you break out of Azkaban?" asked Ron, narrowing his eyes. "I don't remember that, so I must've not been there."

Hermione replied with a sly grin, "Technically we broke into Azkaban, but then we had to break out again. It was right after you were injured by that Bulgarian wizard and put into hiding and right before I joined you in Versailles—"

"And got pregnant," Harry snickered, and L felt a tiny smile tug at the corner of his lips.
"—France, and do shut up Harry James Potter or I'll jinx you into a jelly. Anyway, we fixed up a group and got Viktor and Luna out of Azkaban. Surely you remember that?"

"He was most likely too distracted by you liftin' up your skirt to concentrate on what that mouth of yours was saying. Probably thought it was you harping on him for such a bad job," Harry cackled, and very quickly Ron had pulled out his own wand-stick and waved it sharply. Disturbingly, Harry's dark hair began changing into a pastel pink colour and growing at an alarming rate, but apparently it wasn't that big of a deal because Harry nearly fell off the bed he was laughing so hard.

*Please tell me this is some sort of daydream.*

Meanwhile, Hermione dead-panned, "Boys, I swear. You're probably going to give Ryuzaki a heart attack just by your immaturity. Please tone down on the pranks while attempting to have a serious conversation."

"I am not bad in bed! I'm married with six kids because I'm good in the sack, so fuck off you prat!" Ron bellowed.

"You're married with six kids because Hermione loves you despite your faults," Harry chortled, but then suddenly his mouth was moving but his vocal chords were silent. For a long moment, Harry gaped at Hermione, but she shook her head in exasperation.

"Sorry," she apologised to L. "I've used the Silencing charm because they're going to do more arguing than explaining things to you. They're both rubbish at doing spells without muttering an incantation, so we shouldn't have to worry about them any more. And seriously Harry, I can't take you serious with that hair." She waved her wand-stick again and his hair quickly grew back into his skull, turning the proper colour in the process.

L let out a breath that he hadn't realised he had been holding.

"Look, we don't need to be talking about these spells. I've got three books here that I've tamed and it'll tell you all you need to know about them." She gathered up all the books and then stood up, asking with a cocked head, "May I sit down?"

L hesitated and then nodded once, briskly, pulling his legs closer to his body as if shielding himself. She bit her lip in concentration while putting the books down and sat cross-legged on the end of the bed, attempting to get them into some particular order. Eventually she held up a book titled *The Wizarding World through the Ages*, the heading written in Spanish, and said, "This book here is a history book. It's not like those dull ones back in primary school, though, but it does give information that you might find either interesting or useful. It talks about all of our customs and lifestyles, foreign populations, magical creatures like centaurs and werewolves, and mentions cities that are rich in our culture. It's a fascinating read."

She laid it to the side and picked up another, this one titled *Decrees of the Ministry: a Full Study on the Law of the World*, which was labelled in French. "This one is essentially a law book. It was published in early 2004 so it's very recent, and it should tell you what you can and can't get away with in your investigation without getting us into loads of trouble."

Harry held up a thumb and gave L a crooked smile. He mouthed *It's a good one* and scooted closer, picking it up while brushing his shoulder against L's. It made a shiver go down the detective's spine, and he found himself wondering, perhaps foolishly, if Harry was going to be mute for the rest of time. L quite liked hearing him speak, and wouldn't like it if he was stuck that way forever.
"This last book is one that Harry's probably not going to like me giving to you, and I'm not even sure if it's a good idea. It's one of Rita Skeeter's abominations."

Harry shook his head violently as L's eyes narrowed. "Rita Skeeter is the woman that has pictures of Harry-san, yes?"

Hermione's nose scrunched up. "She's an infamous reporter that really doesn't like Harry, or me for that matter. She's been working with Dolores Umbridge for years, trying to find out little tidbits of information to smear us in the Daily Prophet in a horrible attempt to get back at us. I found out she was an unregistered Animagus and threatened to turn her in unless she stopped writing the stories, but that old cow Umbridge registered her and I didn't have anything else to hold her. Regardless, though, she does have a talent for writing an accurate tale, and I'm sure that you'd like to hear a precise point of view on it all. I'm sure Harry will want to tell you the story eventually, but this is objective. She did a good job, I have to reluctantly say."

"Animagus?" asked L, and Hermione's lips curved up in a smile. "Oh, sorry. An Animagus is a person who can transform into a single animal at will, but it's illegal to become one without registering with their respective Ministry. It's like owning a car, because you can't drive unless you get it insured and get plates, but even then some people break the rules despite the danger. Rita was transforming into a beetle, small enough to sneak into confidential meetings and sessions without being detected, and she'd come up with wickedly true stories because of it. When the lot of us were in our fourth year at school, she kept publishing articles about Harry having seizures all over Hogwarts."

There was too much there to question except for the obvious concern: "Harry-san was having seizures?"

Said emerald eyed man began clapping his hands with intent, trying to speak. Hermione sniffed and then said, "Fine, but if the two of you start arguing again, I'm going to retaliate."

She waved her wand-stick yet again and Harry immediately said with anger, "I was not having seizures or vying for attention, which was something she liked to say in the papers as well. My scar hurt, and anyone with half a brain knew that. She set the entire foundation for the public distrust of me during fifth year, which did not help matters either. Dementors; honestly."

"If you would've learned Occlumency like you were supposed to, you wouldn't be so bitter about that," remarked Hermione. "But I suppose the entire Triwizard Tournament wasn't your fault, and that you can freely jinx Rita for."

None of that made any sense to L whatsoever. He was starting to get a headache from the lack of sugar and the onslaught of information that was not being explained. He dug in his pockets for a second, looking for that last sucker, but then recalled that he had all-but devoured it on the way back to the helicopter.

I can't think right. I need to be left alone to process. I need silence. I need strawberry cake.

Harry tilted his head, touched L's shoulder, and then stood up, giving a cheery wave before disappearing with a crack. The sound made L's fingers twitch, but he focussed his concentration on the woman, who blinked rather slowly and said, "Where d'you think he went?"

L looked at Hermione's worried expression and replied, "He can disappear and reappear from any place on the planet, or are there limitations?"

She looked at him, puzzled. "Well, except for the places that have Apparation wards, there are no limitations, per se. Some places have been protected with magic so people can't get in through that
way, for security measures and because it's quite annoying really. Also, it's illegal to tell Muggles about our world, so it's easy to say that Apparating in front of them is off-limits. Most cities with a large population of wizards have one or more designated buildings that hide under a cover but really provide a safe place to Apparate. Why?"

L looked upwards at the ceiling and said, "He's off to get something sweet. I should've called Watari, although if he doesn't come back with tea I'm going to have to call him anyway."

Her puzzled expression eased up, and she said, "You know it's proven that you're better off to eat fish than sugar for mental capacity, right? I've read studies on it, and it's been proven that the vitamins and minerals in fish accelerate the brain's ability to think clearly and process more efficiently."

L rolled his head to glance at her. She was actually quite pretty in her own right, although quite pale. He remembered that she was fresh out of a hospital from having twins, and he wondered if persons like her had the ability to heal those wounds quickly. "Milk is also good for bone growth, but if some people drink it they develop gastrointestinal problems."

"Are you saying that you're allergic to fish? That would be dreadful; I quite like swordfish," she stated, bringing a hand up to brush a lock of bushy hair behind her ear.

"I'm just using it as a stalemate. Every human being has different reactions to different effects. Perhaps I function better on sugar and you on swordfish. Perhaps I do not like the taste of fish. Perhaps the idea of killing an animal for my own selfish health is disagreeable to me. The justifications could be endless."

"Fish is rather fishy," said Ron, scrunching his nose. L's eyes narrowed slightly at the somewhat dim-witted remark but chose not to comment on it. Moreover, he had reached out and picked up the book on Harry, fingers delicately touching the red cover, and held it in front of his face. The gold writing that said *A War of Power: the Truth behind the Relationship between Harry Potter and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named* was slanted and elegant, written in German. There was a gigantic black square taking up most of the front, directly underneath the title and above the author's name.

"Like I said, I've tamed the books, so you can read them in public if you very well wanted to. Harry told us that you speak a variety of languages, and I don't think it's wise to give you books that the other members of your...team can read over your shoulder. The one on law is in French, the history one in Spanish, and that one is in German. I do hope that you can read them."

*Naturally. I am an international detective. "Yes," he said in a low tone, narrowing his eyes a bit. "What do you mean by 'I've tamed the books'?" L eventually asked, flipping open the book open to read the insert description.*

"In this particular book, it's just stilling the pictures. You see, our pictures aren't stationary; they move as if being filmed through a video camera. In other books, you can get cursed, jinxed, or even yelled at. I opened a book once about poltergeists and the book told me I had a spider on my nose. Unfortunately it wasn't lying—nearly gave Ron a heart attack."

L looked up. "An inanimate object *spoke* to you."

Hermione laughed. "It was a clever bit of magic, actually, to have paper see and speak. It reminded me of the Marauder's Map, only the Map *hears* and *writes* instead of seeing and speaking. Oh yes, and in the books, the pictures had to be blanked out. If you're reading a book with pictures of Harry in it, it'll give the rest of your group an idea. I can use magic to let you see the pictures solely if you'd like. It would require me doing magic on you though."
"I'm not sure about that, L thought. He glanced back down at the précis and read silently:

*For sixteen years, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named terrorised the Wizarding world in the pursuit of total domination and a pure race. His feats were tragic, immense, and terrible, ripping families and friends apart with death and destruction. However, despite all his power, in one night he was thwarted by a young, one-year-old boy named Harry James Potter.*

*This is the truth behind the connection between the murderer of all murderers and the Boy Who Lived. Written by Rita Skeeter, this tale follows Harry Potter, who lived life in the Muggle population before returning to the Wizarding world and becoming the Chosen One, epically destroying He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named in a duel that will be remembered by all left alive. The story of Harry Potter, filled with war and bloodshed, is a tragic one, but the world will always remember the name of the most famous wizard of the last three centuries and his quest to destroy the epitome of evil.*

*Rita Skeeter, the best-selling author of The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore and reporter for the Daily Prophet, is the—*

L tore his eyes away at the sound of a crack. He looked up, catching the sight of Harry looking windswept and flustered, a black-spotted feather stuck in his hair. He was carrying a large bag with three large Ws on the front, which made the redhead laugh. L took a peek to see if he could spot any sweets, but the only thing that was in the bag was *more* bags and two boxes. Nothing from Sato-Mari's, unfortunately. He debated on calling Wammy for some cake and tea, but he was distracted by the woman speaking again.

"What in the world happened to you?" asked Hermione with a shake of her head, while Harry sat down. She pulled the feather out of his hair and laughed, "Never mind. This quill is still wet. Did the girls jump you again and ask you to have their babies?"

L internally choked, but Harry only seemed annoyed. "You'd think they'd stop trying to attack me after all these years. I hate giving autographs, and I'm surprised they swarmed so fast. I was faster than I've ever been in those stores before."

"Yeah? Well welcome to our world, Harry," laughed Ron. "Can't even walk out the front door without someone asking for one. Mostly they ask if you'll come back home, but I never answer 'em."

The emerald eyed man rolled his eyes, but didn't comment, sitting the bag on the bed and looking sourly at the book in front of L. "I'm still not happy about that book, Hermione. He's not going to understand a lot of it without me right there, anyhow."

"He'll get the major gist of the details, Harry. You might have to explain what some of the spells and magical creatures are if he can't find them in one of the other books, but it'll give him a third-party take on the entire thing. I think it'll be mostly simple for someone of his nature anyway."


"We get the general idea, Ronald," interrupted Hermione with exasperation.
Harry said, "We don't need to be concentrating on the past. We need to be focussing on Ryuzaki. What are we going to do about Rita Skeeter, and what's the plan for dealing with the Kira issue?"

"For the next week, the sole focus needs to be on the article," said Hermione, biting her lower lip in thought. "I know you might not agree with me, but it's the main concern right now. If that editorial gets out, there won't be a secretive detective L. He'll be a whole other version of famous if it's published."

No-no-no! There has to be something Harry can do about that. Wammy and I will be useless if the article's being released in their...world.

"It won't matter much for your public appearance. People know about your affair with Malfoy, even though he was a convicted Death Eater—" Strangely, Ron's comment made Harry crumple in on himself, and Hermione even looked as if she'd been kicked in the stomach, but the redhead didn't seem to notice. "—and nearly all screamed themselves to death, so I don't think it'll get more violent than that. They might still reprimand you for not settling down with a nice witch and having a bunch of kids like what's expected from you, but for the most part it won't do much to shift open opinion of you."

Hermione recovered fast, but her voice was still a bit shaky when she said, "If they find out that he's a Muggle, there will be a general outcry at first, and it'll get worse when they find out you're going to spend your life with a man. However, I believe that they'll get over it rather quickly when you tell them that your love for him is more important than a bundle of Potter children."

L's entire brain froze at the crooked smile that began creeping up on Harry's previously distraught face.

"It's not going to matter though," continued Hermione, turning to L as if that comment hadn't just come out of her mouth. "Harry's relationship with you, especially if it's going to continue and be long-term, is going to go public eventually. I don't care how much you keep under the radar, or how much you have to bribe the various ministries or newspapers in both our worlds—it's ultimately going to be among the topics of discussion during dinner and tea breaks. It's something that is going to have to be discussed among you both, because it's an inevitable end to your situation. They are going to find out about you, and it doesn't matter how well you've hid yourself. I give it five years, with the best masking charms and cover-ups in place, before every witch and wizard in our world knows your name."

"It doesn't necessarily have to be that bad," said Harry hastily.

"This topic of conversation isn't going to go anywhere," said Hermione. "You'll just disagree with me. Nonetheless, the article is going to have to be snuffed, and the sooner the better. Trust me; hanging around you my whole life has taught me a few things about the press and damage control."

"Then what about Kira? He might attack Ryuzaki soon, and I have to be there to make sure it doesn't happen. We've been over this before, Hermione."

"Wait," said L, forcing his brain to work at the nature of that remark. "Are you saying that you can neutralise the effects of the Death Note?"

Harry and Hermione looked at each other once, intently, before Hermione grasped the book sitting in front of L. She began flipping through it, obviously not able to read German but looking for something regardless, while Harry said, "Look. The Death Note is a contract, a pact of sorts. From what I can tell, the person whose name is written in the pages has to die. It's honour bound and cannot be changed. There's nothing I can do about that. However, once they die, I believe it's safe
to assume that the person, having fulfilled the contract, could be revived."

"Autopsies of the bodies proved that the amount of infarctions in the blood vessels from a Kira victim is not reversible. It can't be cleared quickly enough for a defibrillator to work without brain damage. It's medically impossible unless the victim is okay with being a vegetable for the rest of his or her life," L shot back, narrowing his eyes in scepticism. There was no way that L could get that lucky, in the sense that he could be brought back to life regardless of Kira's wishes.

"That's correct, but only in the Muggle world," Harry answered calmly. "Hermione's done research, and she believes that it can be accomplished. Not only can wizards use magic to clear up multiple blood clots in the body within seconds, but we can also use magic for revitalising dying tissue and thinning the blood. We also have the ability to shock to restart the heart. We learned this in third year, and I'm pretty confident that I can do it. Of course, I do have something else working for me, other than being a wizard."

L's brain was working in hyper-drive now, thinking about all the possibilities of such talents. However, he finally asked, "And what is that?"

Hermione smiled and handed the book out to the detective, its pages open to chapter fifteen, titled 'Der Meister des Todes'.

L's jaw dropped.

Harry said in a slow voice, "I'm the holder of the Deathly Hallows. The holder of these three items that were created by Death is the conqueror of Death itself, and Rem told us herself that only the Master of Death is immune to the power of the Death Note. Fortunately, you met him in a sweet shop in downtown Tokyo and he's sort of sitting right in front of you."

L stood up and stepped off the bed, bringing a hand to his mouth and biting his thumb nail. He began thinking out loud, the others actually listening to his thought process, while he started pacing unhurriedly. "If he finds out about this, he could use it against us, hence the reason for all the secrets. If I was to question the shinigami about Harry's standing within her rules, he could overhear by hacking into the internal hard-drives. It would be unwise to alert Raito of the existence of an entire world where such talents are feasible, as he could use it to his advantage. Perhaps he could—no, that's ridiculous, but maybe his motives wouldn't be so pure. If such a situation occurs, there's a large per-cent possibility that it will greatly affect Raito and Misa's lifespan. The shinigami said that such acts were fatal, but if even the shinigami realises that a heart attack will essentially be nothing but her own death sentence, she'd find a way around it. Jumping off a building, committing suicide via a gun...maybe that would be fatal to me universally. Yes, I'm sure that's it. The only person who could possibly find my true name would be people like Harry, other than the shinigami, so if Rem is taken out of the picture then Raito will have no way of getting my name. After that, I can find out about interrogation with—Harry-san, thank you for telling me this information. It has proven to be very helpful."

"I have a feeling that you're going to tell me I have to let you die," said Harry gloomily, and L let a small smile creep onto his face.

"You should deal with that article while I am working on a new lead for the Kira investigation. Surely there is a way to attempt to resurrect me without letting them know. I'd prefer if Raito-kun did not have any more information on you than necessary. If he was to realise the power behind people like you, he would surely take advantage of it the same as I would. I can only imagine what it would be like if he discovered those secrets."

Hermione said quickly, "He wouldn't be able to utilise them without having a following, and that's absurd. Harry is practically worshipped by our world, and even if they sympathise with Kira,
they'd be at a huge disadvantage. With the entire world protecting Harry, and in effect you, it
would be impossible to get close enough to hurt you. Kira can't touch Harry, and with the entire
world hiding you, they wouldn't be able to find your name. It would require your existence to be
publicised, but it can be done. All-in-all, the only people that would possibly help Kira would be
the last of Voldemort's supporters, and since they're criminals, I don't think Kira would ask for
their help."

_I don't like being told that my options are going public in their world or potentially dying. That
seems like a no-win situation after all I've worked for in regards to my personal life being secret.
Perhaps the woman is right though, and the outcome of my existence being acknowledged is
inevitable. No, surely there is a way to get around that._

Then L cringed internally. _That's impossible. These people can probably read each others minds
and force people to talk using their magic sticks; there's no way I will be able to defend myself
against that type of ability._

"Even if he would stoop to that level, the possibility of Kira getting in touch with them is next to
zero," said Ron, scratching the freckled skin below his eye. "It's near impossible for us to track
them down, so the idea of a Muggle accomplishing it is extremely low. Besides, Death Eaters hate
Muggles and want to exterminate the entire population, so joining forces with one is a no-no even
if he's Kira. If Kira _does_ start working with wizards, it'd be really easy to find them. I mean, Dad's
Minister, and Harry's name is gold in the government. We'd be able to track down any suspicious
behaviour regardless of the country."

"We need to set up a magical perimeter around this building, which will be quite the feat if it's
really as big as I assume it is," observed Hermione. "If you shut off all the external cameras,
including the ones looking out the front doors and possibly the roof if it's flat-topped, Ron and I
could take care of this with no problem."

"We'd have to set up an Apparation point in the building," said Harry. "Probably this room, as we
can say that I'm always in my room sleeping or something. Hell, I could say I'm sick, and it'd give
a legitimate excuse. I can Apparate to and from this room, but the cameras will have to be shut off
in here permanently. I know that Ryuzaki won't like that, so I suggest that we set up detectors in
this room magically. We can know who came in this room and how long they stayed in here, and
I can also come and deal with the problem if it's someone we don't approve of. I could come
through the bathroom, where there are no cameras anyway, and blame the noise on dropping a
bottle or the plumbing."

_He's lucky I didn't put cameras in the restroom, even though the idea was tempting._

Hermione nodded and then interjected, "I'd recommend petitioning the Ministry for the right to use
Legilimency on Muggle suspects in the investigation in the time you're in London, but that would
require you telling them why you need to interrogate Muggles. We could let Mr. Weasley in on it,
and we'd have to tell the Japanese Minister as well, but we don't have to tell them that we're
involved with the detective L. You're well-known for having a hero complex, Harry, so I suspect
that you getting mixed up in the Kira investigation won't alarm anyone. I'm surprised the papers
haven't already mentioned it, actually. Going after a mass murdering criminal is what you're
famous for."

"Ha-ha," Harry said sarcastically, but then suddenly snickered and said, "For your information, it's
what _the three of us together_ are famous for. We're not called the Golden Trio for nothing,
Hermione."

"What is Legilimency?" asked L, eyeing the bag on the bed. He wondered if one of the bags had
cakes or something else sweet, and if it was a treat that L had never seen or tasted before. He
actually had a file on his personal computer that held L's own critiques of every single sweet item he had tasted in the past five years, and he quite enjoyed consuming new and previously unknown sugary products.

Focus.

Harry said in a tight voice, "It's probably the suckiest ability besides the Unforgivables. You'll read all about it in that book, but essentially it's where a wizard has the ability to extract feelings and memories from another person's mind."

L's eyes went wide, and he stopped mid-step. "You mean mind reading?" For once, I hope that I'm wrong about something and they can't read minds. Please let me be wrong.

Harry grinned. "As a good man once said, the mind is not a book to be opened at will and examined at leisure. Thoughts are not etched on the inside of a brain. The mind is a complex and many-layered thing. However, those who have mastered this ability can probe into the minds of others under certain conditions, and interpret their findings correctly. There aren't many people who can do it though; it takes a lot of talent and skill that most of the Wizarding population can't even dream of."

Regardless of Harry's complex answer, it still seemed like mind reading to L. Perhaps unfortunately, it also appeared to be a discovery worth knowing about. He could only dare to imagine what damage could be done with a skill such as that, including finding out what L's true name was. "Interrogating suspects in such a manner will still convict a criminal, though, correct?"

"Yes, but when it comes to Muggles it can have a damaging effect. It's the same idea as Veritaserum," Hermione answered, facing towards Harry with a raised eyebrow. "Speaking of Veritaserum, how much do you have left of the potion from when you used on that one bloke?"

"Higuchi? Only a tiny bit, not enough for mass interrogation. Even with one drop per Muggle, it would still be pushing it."

"You used this serum on Higuchi?" asked L, walking towards Harry intently. "What exactly does it do, and why did you use it?"

"It's a truth serum, Ryuzaki," said Harry. Hermione added with a smile, "The most powerful in the world. Witches and wizards have magic in their brain and bloodstream, so they can combat the effects. In other words, with practise we can learn to lie without being detected. However, Muggles obviously don't have that magic, so one drop has a subject spilling his darkest secrets for twelve hours straight. It's how Harry got the confession so easily. It's ridiculously illegal, almost as bad as Legilimency, but it was necessary. Harry seemed a bit desperate when he asked for it, and I had to steal it from a highly secure storing facility. If I had been caught..."

"Do you have enough to use on Raito and Amane?" asked L with a tight feeling in his chest he acknowledged as the elation of near-success. Everything was working so perfectly because of what Harry was. Everything was going to work out with utmost precision. L's confidence in succeeding was so high at the moment that he felt weightless, because after so long of being constantly pushed down by the Kiras, it was finally looking up.

L was going to win this.

"Well, I don't have enough to really work effectively. There's enough for about one-third of a drop left in that little bottle I was given, so no, I don't have enough at the moment. Why didn't you steal more Hermione?" asked Harry, wiggling his eyebrows.
Although it was rather clear that Harry added the last bit just for a tease, but she still sighed and said, "I told you, if I would've taken any more than that I would've been found out, because we used the last of the stock on the interrogation of a few Death Eaters rounded up in Bulgaria."

Harry's nose scrunched up. "So your stocks are completely depleted?"

"Yes. Besides, I don't care how desperate you are to catch Kira; Veritaserum is deadly to Muggles if the most extreme precautions aren't taken. You were lucky that you didn't kill Higuchi when you fed it to him. Even a tiny bit more than the amount to successfully administer the potion could poison him and kill him before a confession can even take place. It's too risky, and it takes ages to brew."

"I know but I was desperate. We still have Legilimency, though," said Harry, looking at L with an earnest expression and patting the space beside him. L didn't even hesitate to sit down next to him, in his customary manner, and begin biting his thumbnail yet again.

Meanwhile, Hermione said insistently, "Legilimency isn't as dangerous to a Muggle, but it still has risks. Forcing a person's will upon another person's mind can cause the subject to go mad. Even if he or she is a wizard, Legilimency can turn a brain to mush if too intent in its extraction."

"It's also very demeaning," said Harry, "but that's beside the point."

"Again, you should've learned Occlumency and it wouldn't be a problem," scolded Hermione, poking his knee. She turned to L and said, "Oh yes, and Occlumency is the polar opposite of Legilimency, as it blocks the mind from outside mental attacks. It's like a shield around those thoughts and memories that Legilimency is trying to discover."

L opened his mouth to speak but Harry beat him to it, answering his question before a word came through his vocal chords. "Legilimency and Occlumency, when properly learned, are all about magic. It's impossible for a Muggle to learn. You could attempt to use your own will to ward off the attack, like in the beginner lessons of Occlumency, but in the end, even the weakest wizard proficient in Legilimency would tear your mind apart if he so well wishes. If it gets to the point where Kira is affiliated with wizards, you'll have to be well-protected to assure that this doesn't happen. Don't worry, though. It'll just be Hermione and me, although Ron will definitely tag along; we're pretty much all the protection you need. Hermione's one of the strongest Legilimens in Britain, and she is the strongest Occlumens," said Harry with obvious pride in his voice.

Ron grinned while Hermione blushed delicately. "Don't say that. I'm sure there are loads of other people who better than I am," she said, but it was clear she was pleased by their pride in her talents.

"She deserves the credit," proclaimed Harry, smiling widely at her while absently caressing the back of L's hand. Yet again, a shiver rolled down L's spine, but he kept his attention focussed. He needed to pay attention as Harry continued, "Like I said earlier, not very many people have the talent to accomplish one or the other, let alone both, and Hermione conquered it in two years. I mean, Ron and I are rubbish at it—we all-but wear our emotions on our sleeve, so Legilimency would be practically useless anyway—but Hermione more than makes up for our shortcomings."

"Oh stop it," Hermione said, flustered. "The only reason they don't know at least Occlumency is because they never took the time to learn it. I think Snape turned them off of the idea."

"You bet he did," huffed Harry. "He spent every Monday night for months breaking into my head over and over again. I swear I felt sick for the rest of the entire year."

"Snape was a fantastic Legilimens, better than all-but Dumbledore. He even hid the nature of his
missions for the Order from Voldemort, which was said to be impossible. You should've been a bit more considerate about his efforts to teach you," reprimanded Hermione.

"Bollocks," Ron said with a sniff. "The only reason Snape was doing it was to torture Harry for being James Potter's son. Probably wanted to get a few more looks at his mum too, no doubt."

"Shut up Ron. Snape, despite the many times we accused him of working with Voldemort, was never guilty. Let's drop the subject before Harry rips your head off." Hermione frowned and then looked at L. "Alright, I need to work a couple of charms on you if you don't mind. I'll fully explain them to you, and they will not in anyway be abrasive or uncomfortable."

L tensed, but Harry tentatively grasped the detective's hand and smiled. "She's the brightest witch of the age, and one of my best mates. There's no one on this planet that I'd trust more to perform magic on you, and you'll be perfectly safe. I swear it."

Despite L's mind being alarmed and intensely reluctant, he nodded. He shrunk back a bit and waited for her to pick up her wand-stick, in which she said in a soothing voice, "Okay, this first charm is so you can see the pictures in all these books. This one is completely painless, but the area around your eyes might feel a bit tingly for a moment. It won't hurt though. Are you ready?"

Again, L tensely nodded, but he unconsciously grasped Harry's hand with bone-breaking force and tightly closed his eyes. He heard her speak, something in a strange form of Latin, and waited for his body to catch fire or something equally horrific. For a long moment, he sat next to Harry in silence, and then opened one eye. "I didn't feel anything."

Harry laughed. "That means Hermione has done a wonderful job. Take a look." He gestured with his free hand at the red book and L raised his eyebrows, allowing his body to relax a bit. Replacing the black square was a picture of Harry in a full-body shot, so it showed how relatively small he was before hitting his growth spurt. He looked much younger than L had seen him before, with black, scarlet, and gold robes on, leather accessories that hid most of his lower extremities, and a strangely shaped broom in his right hand. His youthful face looked mildly uncomfortable, as if he wasn't very happy about getting his picture taken at all. He seemed to be in an open stadium of sorts, with three bubble-blower-shaped rings on the far edge.

To L's surprise, Harry's picture waved at him and gave the detective a beaming smile.

"I was thirteen when that picture was taken," said Harry with a melancholic smile. "Back then, the biggest worry I had was getting revenge on the man whom I briefly believed had betrayed my parents and dealing with Ron and Hermione's daily fights about her cat trying to eat his sneak of a rat. That was right before one of our Quidditch practises before Ron joined the team. I was the Seeker, and I really liked playing. I probably would've gone professional if it wasn't for the War and the simple fact that back in those days, being an Auror was the only thing that really made sense to me. Now...well, one of these days, perhaps when this case is over, I'll let you watch a game between our lot. You can probably watch good portions of the games in that book, although I'm not sure. Haven't read it and most certainly never will. It'll probably be more embarrassing than baby photos, because when this book was published, right before running off to Italy, Rita was told to write a book glorifying my life. There wasn't much of a market for anything else. Not only that, but there probably are baby pictures in there."

"Oh you were a cute, fat little tot," said Hermione with a grin, "but before you get all interested in the pictures, I'd like to finish up. We need to get back home and spend some quality time with Mr. Weasley. He's watching the twins for us while we're gone." Her wand-stick rose again and she said in that same gentle voice, "This time I'm going to put a monitoring charm on you. Healers like me use the same spell to apply a sensor to the skin in patients that need monitoring. About a year ago, I developed a way to programme the spell into a device that can deliver the stats from infinite
distances, which is something relatively unheard of in the healing field."

"She's a genius," beamed Harry.

With a pink blush on her cheeks, Hermione continued, "Anyway, I'm going to apply it to your wrist, but it'll be invisible to the eye so you won't have to worry about looking at it. It's going to keep tabs on your pulse and blood pressure so I can make sure nothing happens of concern when Harry's not with you. It will feel as if you have a thin bracelet on that fits snugly, but you won't be able to see it. This way I'll be able to monitor your heart to see if you're suffering from a heart attack. I'll remove it once the mess with the *Daily Prophet* is dealt with, but until then you're stuck with it. We have to know immediately when your heart begins failing because we have to get there in time to save you from brain damage."

L thought about it briefly before saying, "It's no different from wearing the handcuffs for three months and getting pulled on at periodical moments. If it does not prove to be a large distraction, I shall oblige with this demand."

Hermione raised an eyebrow, but said, "It should be okay. I'll direct the current into my ring, because it's the one thing on me that never comes off, so here we go." Yet again, she quietly said a phrase in a strange dialect of Latin, but this time there was a squeeze as if he had snapped a latex glove over his wrist. It didn't hurt, but he could distinctly feel it even though he could not see it.

"That's interesting. Invisibility can be a fortunate ally in your world, it seems," L muttered to himself, and relaxed his muscles even more.

"I can feel your heartbeat in my finger," giggled Hermione, flexing her fingers. She seemed to time it before saying, "It's in a normal range. A bit higher than the average human, but I suspect that it has to do with your blood sugar. If you have a sudden heart attack like the Kira victims, your heart rate will have a brief moment of abnormal palpitations before flat-lining. With that, we should be able to get to you in time, and by *we* I mean Harry."

Harry said loudly to L, "Even a stampede of wild hippogriffs couldn't keep me away from you if you were hurt."

L allowed a small smile to tug at the corner of his lips, even though he had no idea what hippogriffs were.

Hermione shook her head in exasperation and stood up, waving her wand around the room. She disappeared for a few moments into the bathroom and closet, nearly walking out of the bedroom into the private living space. Thankfully, Harry had stopped her before she had opened the door, therefore saving her from being spotted by the cameras still rolling there. Wammy was probably watching the footage intently while trying to bypass the block that L had placed on the cameras. L would have to find Wammy soon or he would come barging down the door. It wouldn't do to have him worried about what was going on in the room that L didn't want Wammy to see, and it could potentially cause...problems.

Harry squeezed his hand before he said out loud, "I'll get my broomstick from the flat and do the outdoor security, alright? It'll save you from having to come back here, and I know how hard it is for you two to Apparate that far."

"It's supposed to be nearly impossible, Harry, and to have two side-along carriers with you is taxing for us. I felt like my cells were being disintegrated. Perhaps you should take us one at a time. It might be easier if you don't try to shove all three of us through that hole again."

Harry rolled his eyes and said, "Hermione, you have such a dirty mind." At Ron's snicker and
Hermione's gaping expression, he grinned and said, "Is it alright with you if I take Ron first and Hermione last? Hermione will be loads less annoying than Ron with his non-stop talk about Quidditch and the horrible feats he's accomplished to repair his pride. I doubt you want to listen to him attempt to convince you that I'm a dirty liar and he's absolutely smashing in bed."

L blinked.

Ron spluttered.

"I'll take that as a yes, then. C'mon Ron. I'll take you to Grimmauld Place. I've got to pick up my broom and the cloak from there, make sure Kreacher hasn't died and attempted to have one of the suits of armour behead him, and then I'll get Hermione and bring her back when she's done here."

Harry lifted up L's hand, kissed it lightly, and then let go. The detective saw Hermione smile behind her hand, and he inwardly flinched at the idea of her feeling his pulse jump at the contact. How...humiliating, L thought, sighing silently to himself.

"Got it. See you later, Ryuzaki, and it was nice meeting you. Hope you don't die!" said Ron without an ounce of tact. Harry cringed, but then grasped Ron hard on the forearm in retaliation. "Ouch, you git!" the redhead exclaimed, and Harry winked at L once before turning on his heel and disappearing.

The second they were gone with a loud crack, Hermione lowered her wand-stick and turned to L, bowing her head a bit. Eventually, after a few seconds of silence, she said in a low voice, "I'm happy you're here." Even if L had been capable of answering that statement at the present moment, she didn't give him enough time to comment as she continued, "You'll see the pictures and read the articles, and you'll notice it just the same as everyone else did. As the years went on, and more people started dying, it was like he started dying himself. Everything he did was weighed down unless he was fighting for one of us, and out of hundreds of friends and pseudo-family members he had, every single one of them died except Teddy, Ron, and me. Ron's entire family with the exception of his father was killed, Ginny died, Draco died, and in the end, when it was all over, he just collapsed. I don't think I've seen him genuinely smile since, except with us.

"But in late July of this year, he came to see us for the first time since I had gotten pregnant with the twins. The first thing he did was smile so brightly that I thought my eyes were going to fry from the vividness of it. He started rattling off rubbish about living on some island, and then Ron fed him a few drinks and he said that he had met someone."

Hermione sighed, closed her eyes, and said, "I'm rambling on about this, but you need to understand why he's taking this the way he is. Harry's loved three people in his lifetime, unconditionally and without shame. One was a woman, despite Harry's budding sexuality, and she was a spitfire. Full of life and energy, just as easy going as her many brothers, my husband being one of them. Harry loved Ginny Weasley and probably would've spent the rest of his life with her, regardless of what his internal desires were. He couldn't though, because she was tortured and killed by Bellatrix Lestrange within the first year. Bellatrix finally got tired of Ginny's refusal to give information and...and beheaded her, sending her head by wizard post. He lost it, went completely mad in the head for a while. He refused to eat, to sleep, and tried his hardest to get to that monster so he could quite literally annihilate her."

L's eyes were narrowed. Not many people could commit murder, and to do something as barbaric and psychologically twisted as sending the severed head to Harry's doorstep was in a league of its own.

Hermione took a few calming breaths and said, "And then against all reason, Draco Malfoy came into the picture. Harry loved him in a different way than Ginny, as he was male and she was not.
Merlin, was he a bastard, though! Proud, arrogant, and he was a convicted Death Eater that had been forced among their ranks against his will. We had known him since the beginning of our magical lives, and Harry spent more time getting into violent fights with him than acknowledging that Draco Malfoy was quite stunning in his own right. He was a Pureblood, an aristocrat of our world, and it made Harry quite honestly hate him. Yet, in spite of it all, Harry loved him, but I can say with candour that if Malfoy hadn't died, they would've either killed each other or avoided each other. During times of war, it's common to get overwhelmed by everything, and in the real world during peace, they wouldn't have made it. Frankly, Harry hated him as much as he loved him.

"In the end, Draco, ordinarily the most proud and selfish little prat one could meet, ended up stepping in front of the Killing Curse, the worst of all the Unforgivables. He was dead before a single heartbeat could sound through Harry's blood, and it happened right in front of him. Despite doing everything in his power to save the man he loved, Draco died for Harry to survive. On the 31st of October 2001, exactly three years ago at sunset, Draco Malfoy died protecting him, in the hope that Harry could bring peace to our world."

L's entire body felt weak but he refused to show it, watching Hermione's chocolate brown eyes gradually fill with tears.

"Harry looks at you the same way I look at Ron, and I can read his emotions even without using Legilimency. It radiates off him like tidal waves, thicker than syrup and harder than diamond. It's so much stronger with you than the other people he's been with by a thousand fold, and I think it has taken me a bit off-guard. The fact that you're risking your life, in a war of your own with a man that can kill just by writing a name down, is making him go batty all over again. If he was to lose you, I have no idea what it would be like. It was hard enough watching him suffer through Ginny and Draco, but it's so obvious that he's connected to you on a totally different level. It's almost...frightening in a way, because it rivals what Harry has with Ron and me, and we've been together for over a decade. The connection that Harry has with us is actually legendary, and you'll read about it extensively in that book beside you, and to feel that same sense of unquestionable love and faultless connection is astounding."

Hermione clasped her hands and rested her chin on them, elbows tucked into her chest. "Look...I know this is probably way too much to take in at one moment, and I know that a scientific person such as yourself being blind-sided by shinigami and wizards has got to be a swift kick to the brain. I just don't think Harry will tell you, and you have the right to know. You have to know what's at stake so you can trust us without doubt. You have to know what's at stake so you can trust us without doubt. You, regardless of the simple fact that we don't know a lot about you including your name of all things, are one of us now. Even if you were to look in my best friend's eyes and tell him that you didn't want him around any more, the three of us will still put our lives at risk to make sure you get out of this alive. I admit that I liked you before I even met you, because of how you helped him rekindle that flame within Harry's heart and soul that is so famous in our world. He was dead when he met you, and I can never thank you enough for that. This damned case is probably the best thing that's happened to him in years, because he met you."

There was a crack behind L, and Hermione hastily wiped her eyes with a sniffle. Harry immediately said softly, "What's wrong, Hermione?"

L supposed that was the breaking point, because the bushy haired woman burst into tears and wailed, "I'm so sick of being hormonal! I'm never having another kid even if I have to get myself sterilised!"

Harry walked to her and wrapped his arms around her petite form, burying his nose in her hair. He squeezed his eyes shut as if in pain and rocked her, shushing her as if comforting a child. L just sat there, a bit awkward. He had never been good with people when they were upset and crying. His
experiences with lamenting people had been in orphanages, children sobbing in pain as they starved almost to death or nursed their bruised and beaten bodies. He had watched, curious at the idea of such an expression of melancholy as he had never experienced it himself, but had never really known what to do.

As it was a woman that L didn't know very well who was crying, he didn't make a move to say or do anything. He just watched Harry, who seemed to be internally fighting the urge to join her in breaking down. It had been difficult watching Harry lose control so violently before, and the detective didn't want the same thing to happen again. It had been unnatural to see such an outwardly happy man in tears.

By the time Hermione had calmed herself down, she said in a thick voice, "It was really great to meet you. I think we'll get along much better when I'm not being betrayed by my body's involuntary responses." She laughed wetly, and said, "When this case is over, you should come to England. We'll give you the grand tour of Wizarding London. Loads of great sweet shops filled with stuff you can't even imagine, although a fair few samples are in that bag."

Harry focussed on L's perched form and said, "I'll be right back. Don't touch that bag, okay? It might be full of those sweets she's talking about, but I still don't want you getting into it without me."

He turned in unison with Hermione and cracked out of L's immediate existence.
Chapter Nineteen

Unsanitary

31 October 2004

Ryuzaki wasn't in the room when Harry came back.

He could hear voices coming from the living room in his suite, and he decided to check it out even though he had a good idea what was going on despite the language being unfamiliar. He walked with a sigh to the door after placing his Invisibility Cloak and Firebolt on the desk, took a deep breath, and then pushed it open.

Watari and Ryuzaki were standing quite a ways from each other, calmly conversing in the harsh tones of what Harry presumed to be Russian. Despite the seemingly composed atmosphere they were keeping themselves in, it was clear to anyone paying attention that their words were not friendly. Ryuzaki's tone carried a bite that Harry had seldom heard in any language, and Watari's normally pleasant voice was sharp. Both of them seemed as if they were squaring off with each other, Watari's arms crossed and Ryuzaki's entire body tense.

At Harry's appearance in the doorway, they both stopped speaking. For a long, stiff moment, Watari glared at Harry while Ryuzaki frowned at his handler, and it was awkward enough to warrant Harry saying, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can say to you without Ryuzaki's permission."

Very quickly, Watari said a long phrase in Russian again, to which Ryuzaki replied with a definite edge of finality in his tone. Harry figured that it wasn't going to get any better with him around, so he toed back into the room, shutting the door as silently as he could.

He journeyed to the bed and sat down with a groan of exhaustion. It had been a long day; the fiasco that had resulted with that moron Japanese Ministry official in the garden and the fact that it was one of the worst days of the year was bad on it's own, but now, after ages of keeping such a secret from becoming known, he had finally told the detective the truth and quite possibly caused a major rift in the relationship between Watari and Ryuzaki.

Everything he touched seemed destined to be ruined.

He pulled the bag towards him and began pulling out the contents. He had only picked up two things at Weasley's Wizard Wheezes (an Invisibility glove for Ryuzaki's amusement and some darkness powder as he was running low). He pulled out a smaller, but still massive bag from in-between the two products and laughed out loud.
What could he possibly give Ryuzaki first, a chocolate frog or a sugar quill? He'd have to supervise Ryuzaki if he started eating the Every-Flavoured Beans, because there were coconut beans in there and it wouldn't do to have the detective falling over because of something so ridiculous. It would definitely put a damper on the whole situation.

*I should probably start with something small, like the quill. If he opens a box and a chocolate frog flies in his face, he might just have a heart attack without Kira even being involved. Yeah, let's start with something small.*

His eye caught the red book lying to the side. He stared at it for a second, fingers itching to throw it across the room or burn it. Hermione shouldn't have given it to him, because it was better for Harry to tell him. He didn't know what that book said, and trusted Hermione's judgement about it being a good informative read, but he despised the idea of it. Rita Skeeter was a big part of the reason why Harry had to pop in and out of the complex for the next week, leaving Ryuzaki momentarily defenceless. She had already smeared him and Hermione in the press multiple times, and he was justified to say that he didn't trust a word that came from her nasty little quill.

Ryuzaki was smart, as Hermione knew from Harry's description. He would be able to read behind Rita's words and see the attempt to sway the reader's minds towards something worse. Even though she wrote *Harry Potter is legendary*, he'd be able to see the truth that said *I think Harry Potter is a legendary brat*.

Yeah. Harry wasn't too happy about it at all.

Hermione was right, though. If he was to tell Ryuzaki the story about his existence on this planet, it would take a year for him to get it all out. He could probably get through the first half in a couple of hours, maybe more if Ryuzaki asked a lot of questions (which was likely), but from the death of Sirius and on he'd choke. Perhaps it was better to just allow Ryuzaki to read; cross-referencing his questions with the other two books, and then enquire about the remaining questions when he was done.

Harry gingerly picked it up and stared at the cover.

There had to be pictures of everyone in here. Merlin only knew what he'd read in the pages, too. He had been engaged to Ginny Weasley, which might've posed some difficult questions, and there was no telling how he would react to Draco Malfoy. He had been the complete opposite of Ryuzaki, being a social butterfly with a pompous take on the world, and Draco was...to face it fully, stunningly gorgeous in a way that Ryuzaki could never be and vice-versa. It was hard to imagine what Ryuzaki's reaction would be upon seeing *that* face, that tall and proud form standing at the head of pictures with an egotistical smirk.

Ryuzaki's antithesis.

Perhaps with the worst possible intent, Harry began flipping through the pages. Faces of friends and family tore at his heart in the brief moments he laid eyes on them, but he didn't focus on them. He'd break down *again* if that happened, something that he didn't want to subject Ryuzaki to twice in a day. Harry wasn't weak despite Severus Snape's refusal to believe any different (Harry smiled, melancholic at the memory), and he didn't cry easily. He didn't want to even see them in the face of falling apart again.

Harry was contradicting himself, because there he was.

During the War, Draco Malfoy had been, in a way, less attractive. His normally shiny, slicked-back hair was long, messy, and choppy from being cut hazardously with scissors. His weight had dropped significantly due to the constant stress and worry of being found. His normal alabaster
skin had faded into a grey colour that seemed unhealthy. His icy grey eyes, formerly filled with arrogance and malevolence, were dimmed with the darkness of his lifestyle.

In this picture, he was standing next to a younger Harry in the photograph of the AWB after the battles along the Thames. They had been celebrating Ron and Hermione's arrival back from France in late June (and Hermione's accidental pregnancy), so the party had raged on for hours. It was the last picture taken of the entirety of the AWB, before the last of them had died. Most of the group had refused to keep their laughter to themselves, so most of the members photographed were outright cackling.

Naturally, Draco wasn't. Cloaked in black with silvery hair that brushed his shoulders, Harry watched him roll his eyes and begin rubbing his temple, obviously annoyed by the clear immaturity of the party. The twenty-year-old Harry cracked a smile that didn't entirely reach his eyes and shook his head quickly, walking out of the picture with Draco in tow.

Harry slammed the book shut and threw it across the room.

It hit the bathroom door with a loud bang, the noise thankfully hidden by the spells that Hermione had placed around the room. To distract himself, he began pulling out individual sweet bags and boxes, laying them out on the bed in a disorderly fashion.

He had gone into the Diagon Alley branch of Honeydukes for only a couple of minutes to snatch anything he could reach before getting mauled, quickly popping to Weasley's Wizard Wheezes when he was finished paying. He hadn't really paid attention to what he was grabbing at the Wizarding sweet shop, practically just flying through to grab handfuls of everything he could get his hands on. The Weasley shop, which was being run by Lee Jordan and two Weasley cousins, had been a bit harder because he had actually been forced to look before grasping the items.

*Canary creams are bad. If either one of us turned into a canary for five or so minutes, it could potentially be dangerous. Acid pops? Even if Ryuuzaki would eat one I still wouldn't give it to him. I don't know if Ryuuzaki chews bubblegum, but it might be wise to not get any Drooble's. Bubbles flying around everywhere refusing to pop might be bad. Fizzing Whizbees will be funny to watch Ryuuzaki try but they'll have to come when he's not as tense about eating them. Ice Mice might freak him out, but perhaps...squeaking Sugar Mice might be more amusing. Chocolate frogs are a definite yes, as are sugar quills and perhaps the jelly slugs...*

The door opened and Ryuuzaki walked in with his slump more pronounced than ever.

His dark eyes took in all of the merchandise on the bed, eyes narrowing slightly at some of the boxes, and said, "Can I eat them?" His expression was more guarded than usual, more suspicious and intent, which didn't bode well. Harry, in a way, had been quite shocked at the lack of a response that he had received. Sure, Ryuuzaki had nearly fallen out of his chair when Harry had Apparated in front of him, and had been ridiculously tense during the magic being done in the room, but he hadn't closed off. He hadn't even responded in an external manner at all, which was nothing short of shocking.

Honestly, Harry had expected a couple of flying appendages to come swinging in his direction, aiming to hurt him. Maybe a couple of weapons being waved around by Ryuuzaki or Watari or both were just as likely. In fact, Ryuuzaki closing off completely or even *yelling* about how Harry was nuts was more probable than just listening and thinking.

Harry hadn't seen his reaction when discovering that shinigami weren't just legend, but he seriously doubted if Ryuuzaki had just sat there without reacting. It didn't matter if Ryuuzaki had been a goddamned rock before meeting Harry—there was no way that a logical and scientific person like the detective L just sat there without at least freaking out inwardly. Even with a
shinigami, or magic for that matter, being waved in front of his face, he surely was going to react with aversion and suspicion, and even perhaps fear.

So why had L taken it so well? Why had he quickly accepted something as seemingly preposterous instantly as complete and utter fact without debate?

"You can eat some of them," replied Harry with an apprehensive smile. Surely Ryuzaki would start closing off now. There was no one in this room except Harry any more, and since Harry had already seen him in ways that perhaps no other had, the wizard fully expected to be at the mercy of Ryuzaki’s full force.

Ryuzaki slowly walked forward in his heavy-stepped gait but didn't sit, instead standing in front of the bed with a small frown tilting on the corner of his lips. His fathomless charcoal eyes stared into Harry's own, his gaze intent but blank. It was painful to see, considering Harry had spent months breaking into that carefully crafted exterior Ryuzaki hid himself under.

"You can sit down, if you'd like," Harry said cautiously. He was a bit on edge, wondering exactly how this next conversation would present itself, and he fully expected to be questioned relentlessly.

Instead, Ryuzaki just stood there and stared. He didn't say a word, and Harry could almost hear the gears working inside his brain, whirling with thoughts that Harry wished he could hear but couldn't. For the first time in a while, he wished that he had at least made a harder attempt at learning Legilimency, so he could hear what he was thinking.

Then, immediately, he thought, No, I couldn't do that. His mind is none of my business; let him keep his thoughts to himself. It's the least I can do after pulling the rug out from under his feet just now.

After a long moment, Ryuzaki said in a tone that Harry couldn't identify, "You're not Kira."

Harry's entire face broke out in a grin as he scratched the back of his head. "Nope," the wizard replied, his chest tight with elation. "If I was Kira, I would've killed you already. As you're not dead, it's pretty clear that I'm not him." Harry's smile faded as he thought back, and finally he said hesitantly, "How angry is Watari?"

Ryuzaki's eyes went uncommonly soft at the mention of his handler, and after taking a breath, the detective finally stepped up on the bed, sitting in his normal crouch. "He's of no concern to me at the moment," Ryuzaki said, but his voice said otherwise. "I'll have to tell him, eventually, but I'd prefer to keep him distant of this particular development."

"Why?" asked Harry, confused. "Usually you want your partner-in-crime to know every detail of your life. It might be better if he knows."

Ryuzaki eyed one of the boxes with obvious hunger in his charcoal orbs. "At this moment, Watari isn't too happy with us. He's advised me to dismiss you from this investigation, and I don't want to give him any more incentive to dislike you being here."

That was a bit surprising and very distressing. Despite Harry making out with Ryuzaki spontaneously around the compound, leading to a bit of tension between Harry and Watari, the wizard had always believed that they got along well enough. Besides, there was no way in hell Harry was going anywhere, even if he had to troll around in the cloak for the rest of the investigation.

Ryuzaki seemed to catch the alarm in Harry's body language, for he said in a low tone, still
avoiding eye contact, "He is concerned about the idea of the article, even though he has no idea what it is based off of. He thinks you are a liability that might compromise our situation." He paused, then said in almost a mumble that clearly told Harry that he was uncomfortable, "He also thinks you're a distraction that needs to be extinguished. He believes that my ability to reason and think properly has been faulty as of late because of your presence here."

*Imagine that.* "I'll leave if you agree with him," said Harry, biting his lip and hoping he wasn't going to have to go on a rampage.

Ryuzaki finally glanced up and said, "You are necessary for the success of this case."

Harry rolled his eyes in amusement. "Keeping me around because you want to solve the case? Thanks a lot. I feel so appreciated." He grinned at Ryuzaki's small smile, a bit happy that he had eased the tension. It had been pretty heavy news to hear, and to joke around about it cleared up the suspicion and borderline hostility in Ryuzaki's body language.

He picked up one of the bags and held it out after taking out one of the sweets for himself. "This is a sugar quill. You shall be extremely surprised to hear that most wizards back in Europe still use quills on a day-to-day basis instead of the more conventional Muggle writing instruments. Anyway, these were made so we can snack on them in class without getting in loads of trouble." Ryuzaki gingerly took out one of the white snacks, eyes widened slightly as he studied the perfection of the craft. It looked identical to an actual feather, but Harry quickly popped the end of the feather in his mouth, the sugar dissolving on his tongue and proving that it was completely fake.

Ryuzaki timidly followed suit, nibbling at the end, and cocked his head slightly. He smacked his lips once, making Harry's smile grow larger, and said, "I suppose I expected something more dramatic."

Harry's smile turned wicked. "Oh don't worry. We'll get there next." Harry quickly threw the quill in the empty Weasley's Wizard Wheezes bag and picked up a smaller box. He figured that since Ryuzaki had mentioned dramatic sweets, he was ready to witness one. He had wanted one of the frogs since lying eyes on them anyway.

"Alright, this is a Chocolate Frog. It's got a small spell on it, but it fades quickly. They usually get one good jump before conking out." He opened the box and presented the chocolate to Ryuzaki, only to watch his face briefly contort into mild shock when the frog jumped onto his denim-clad knee. For a long moment, Harry stared with amusement at Ryuzaki's expression, but then broke out in laughter.

"It...jumped on me," Ryuzaki dead-panned, seeming to glare a hole in the frog. As the magic had worn off, it just sat there, so eventually Harry plucked it off of Ryuzaki's knee and bit its head off.

"You occasionally get ones that'll jump around for a couple of minutes before the charm wears out, so it can be good fun to try to catch it. Only problem is that it's chocolate, you see, so they melt if you don't eat them soon. It's annoying when they get away from you on a hot day. Anyway, they all come with a famous witch or wizard card, so you can collect all of them and read about their feats." Harry took out his card after shoving the rest of the chocolate in his mouth. He swallowed with mild difficulty and said, "This is Severus Snape. He's one of the greatest men I've ever known. A damned snake, yeah, but a great man all the same."

Ryuzaki took it in his long-fingered grasp and briefly read the back before turning it around. The photograph was blank, which wasn't uncommon, and he said, "There's no moving picture here."

Harry laughed and said, "Well, you can't expect him to stick around all day, can you? He's got to
go visit the other cards as well."

Ryuzaki looked up and raised a thin eyebrow. "You mean the people in the photographs actually leave?"

"Yep," said Harry, pulling out a couple of squeaking sugar mice from another box. "Some portraits will actually carry on conversations with you, and they can travel hundreds of miles in seconds to give you updates on what's happening on the other end. If you get a bunch of portraits together, they usually end up cramming into one frame and drinking themselves stupid. They can get quite rowdy, if you ask me. By the way, these are sugar mice, and they just squeak a bit." He pointed to another box and continued. "Those are peppermint toads. You won't like them because they're not sweet, but they bounce around insanely in your stomach for about fifteen minutes."

"Those?" asked Ryuzaki, pointing to a large bag made of red canvas.

"Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans. It means every flavour. You can't eat them without being supervised, though, and I doubt you'd like most of them anyway. Besides getting normal tastes like peppermint, chocolate, and berry, you also get the unpleasant ones as well. Prunes, soap, oil, ear wax, you name it. Unfortunately they use real ingredients, so you have to be careful. There's coconut in there, I know for sure. They're fun to sit around and try though. Never know what you're going to end up eating next."

Ryuzaki's nose scrunched up. "Yes, that one might not be safe for me."

Harry began pointing at various other bags and boxes. "Those are acid pops, and they burn a hole straight through your tongue. Heals instantly, but it's a right shock that's for sure. That box is filled with canary creams, which turn you into a massive canary for about ten minutes or so. It can be a bit disconcerting, at first, but it's a right laugh to see happen to someone else that you don't like. We used to prank with those all the time. Er, those are Fizzing Whizbees, which make you levitate for a couple of minutes. You can try one of those if you'd like, as they taste like sweet sherbet, but again it's a bit disconcerting. Pepper Imps, yeah, you won't like those. They make you breathe fire for a second or two, and they're really spicy. Cauldron cakes are okay. They're like eating a very sweet spice cake, complete with rich icing. Sherbet lemons are good, but I doubt you'll like them. Nice and tart, they are. Pumpkin pasties, blood pops—I'm not sure why I picked those up; they're for vampires—cockroach clusters, and Drooble's gum. I don't think you'll like any of those. Maybe the pumpkin, but who knows. There's loads of chocolate here that's not really magical, but chocolate's popular because it helps people recover from a dementor attack."

Everything mentioned was looked upon with interest by Ryuzaki, despite the clear aversion to some of the sweets and the poorly concealed alarm at the idea of vampires actually existing. He picked up one of the Fizzing Whizbees and studied it for a long moment, charcoal eyes curious and speculative. Eventually, he said, "So if I eat this, I will float off the bed."

"Yeah, but it's nothing really significant. You'll probably raise about ten millimetres at the most, hover for a bit, and then slowly sink back down. If you really want to fly, you'll get on that." With a grin the size of Japan, he pointed at his broomstick, glorious on the computer desk. "It's the newest model on the market. The Firebolt series is the fastest in the world, and this one is the quickest one ever made. Almost three hundred fifty miles per hour at its top speed, and it can go nought to one hundred fifty in five seconds. It's an exceptional broomstick."

Ryuzaki stared at it with both eyebrows rising on his pale face, and said, "That's impossible, isn't it? The amount of torque and pressure put on a body to go that speed without a protective body cage would be fatal."

"Well, that's why it's illegal to own one of those babies unless you're seventeen or older. Adults
know how to do the proper spells and charms to prevent fatalities from occurring. Riding on one of those at top speed is like taking an easy stroll on a lightly windy day, if you can do the charms properly. As for you, you might find the item next to it a bit more interesting."

Harry rose off the bed and grabbed the bundle, quickly returning to his spot on the comforter in front of Ryuzaki. He was within arms distance from him, thankful that Ryuzaki didn't move away, and so he held out the cloak. Ryuzaki's legs dropped a bit, his bare feet edging within inches of Harry's legs, and laid the sugar quill down on the box containing a bundle of darkness powder. He grasped the fabric in his hands, tilting his hands as he felt the airy material slide through his fingers, and said, "What is this? It doesn't feel like anything I've felt before."

Harry gave him a smirk and focussed an intent green stare on Ryuzaki's face. "That, Ryuzaki, is an Invisibility Cloak." The detective's eyes went impossibly wide, and Harry took the cloak from his grasp, quickly wrapping it around Ryuzaki's shoulders. Within seconds, his entire body from his neck down was gone, and Ryuzaki's eyes flashed between fright, amazement, and honest-to-Merlin diabolical.

"My body is gone," he whispered, his eyes going glassy. "Imagine what conversations you could listen in on with no one realising that you were there. Imagine the things you could hear and witness while hidden underneath this. This is a phenomenal discovery, Harry." His tone was almost...awing, in a way, which was quite a surprise. Harry had known Ryuzaki would appreciate the cloak, but he hadn't expected near-veneration.

His charcoal eyes focussed back upon Harry, the gaze so piercing that Harry lost his breath just staring at him. Harry's entire body seemed to flare, and the atmosphere around them changed.

Ryuzaki tilted his head and said in a tone that seemed confident, "We're going to beat this, aren't we?"

Harry said in a soft, slightly breathless voice, "Yes, you are." Almost dazedly, he reached out with a slightly shaky hand, touching his warm fingertips to Ryuzaki's slightly chilled skin, and felt a shiver roll down his spine.

Ryuzaki seemed to hesitate for a split-second, but then took a deep breath and exhaled evenly. He allowed the cloak to fall around him, but his eyes didn't break from Harry's own, opting instead to watch with a hint of nervousness in his eyes. Harry once again longed to know what he was thinking, but in the end he didn't have a chance to fret about it for an extended period of time.

Ryuzaki leant forward, allowing his body weight to fall on his knees, and pressed his lips against Harry's own, his eyes curious. It was the first time that the detective had actually instigated such a moment, and very quickly Harry responded with elation, his right hand going to Ryuzaki's hair and pulling the detective closer. Harry tongue caressed L's lips, demanding entrance, and suddenly their tongues were winding together, exploring and devouring. It was smouldering, nothing like Harry had ever experienced with Ryuzaki even though they had done this before. There was something present there that had never been there before, some burning heat and dark desire that alluded to what seemed ordinary to do.

As the kiss turned deeper and a small groan echoed in the room (from who, he wasn't even sure), he knew that it might not stop this time. He hoped that it wouldn't stop this time.

Somehow, he didn't think it would.

***

L was scared and frightened and terrified and yet anxious and expectant.
It was a bundle of emotions that overwhelmed him, because he knew that it was different. As Harry lowered him downwards, kicking his legs slightly and pushing off multitudes of boxes to the ground with a clatter, L could feel the distinction in the air. He could sense more than see Harry's intensity, as if now completely willing to surrender himself now that L knew what he really was. Strangely enough, L found himself okay with that fact, and finally allowed himself to just let go.

Harry's lips began moving to L's neck, kissing and sliding in an intoxicating pattern, but suddenly Harry bit gently at the detective's neck and L felt his entire body move up without accord. Something white flashed across his vision, so he shut his eyes tightly, his hands going to Harry's head and grasping handfuls of jet-black hair so he could find some semblance of grounding. He could feel something hard pressing against it, and the pressure in L's abdomen flared out of control at the sensation.

Harry's hands began dragging up L's white shirt, taking his time palming up the fabric as if trying to make L go insane. His rough hands brushing up L's skin, mixed in with Harry finally connecting his teeth and lips against the oddly sensitive lobe of L's left ear and the strong hips pressing against his own, was like an overload of feeling that was bound to cause the death of him. It was just so intense that it didn't seem humanly possible that one person could feel that much without the brain finally over-capacitating with too much information. And yet here L was, clutching Harry as he was nearly tortured by the feelings running rampant in his bloodstream.

L forced himself to tear his hands away from Harry's head, feeling his upper body being freed from the shirt. He vaguely wondered why he was the only one losing clothes, and as soon as the thought crossed L's mind, he was tearing at that annoying piece of blue, short-sleeved fabric that was restricting his view...

When he had flung the material absently towards his right, L leant up and recaptured those enthralling lips. He felt Harry settle against him, holding his weight with his arms but still pressing his tall body into L's shorter one sensually.

Suddenly, Harry moved. He pulled his lips away from L's and began trailing downwards, kissing and nipping at the skin of L's throat. His hips were moving, rolling in and causing a friction that tore an alien groan from L's traitorous throat. Harry shifted his weight, placing most of it on one side, and then his free hand went down, fingers trailing everywhere and sending almost-ticklish sensations down his sides. Harry's teeth nipped at the taut tendon on L's neck, and the detective's mouth fell open as he tried to catch his breath without avail.

Harry's hands went to L's jeans, deftly unbuttoning them with one hand and slowly pulling down the zipper. He began edging the denim trousers down L's legs, L's quiet cry almost too loud as his fingers softly brushed the cloth-covered it. L could barely lift up his hips long enough to get the stifling hot things off, and the cold air was a shocking contrast on his burning skin. He distantly heard more boxes falling to the ground, but he couldn't concentrate on them, as Harry gently bit at the sharp edge of L's clavicle.

The emerald eyed man leant back up to L's lips just as his wandering left hand bypassed that last barrier, stifling L's sharp gasp at the gentle but thorough touch.

Everything was on fire. L honestly felt like he was going to die, the heat was so powerful, and he grasped Harry around the neck to hold on for dear life. His eyes clenched shut, but dazedly he returned Harry's fiery kiss, L's entire focus on the hand that was moving and sliding and twisting just right.

Harry's teeth pulled on L's bottom lip before his mouth began descending yet again, his breath hot against L's electrified skin. Without warning, the hand stopped moving; it caused a small groan of
disapproval to echo in the dusky-lit room, but L's attention was diverted by the mouth going
down-down-down.

Instantly, L was torn between being horrified, appalled, or self-conscious.

*What is he doing? Is he planning on doing...that...there? But that's so unsanitary and what if he
doesn't—oh, that feels good—should I push him away or should I just stop thinking? It's not
hygienic, and kissing is a lot different than putting his mouth where mouths should not go—*

Harry, eye-level to L's navel, smiled, clearly seeing the conflicting thoughts passing through L’s
mind and facial expressions. He cocked his head with that same grin and said, "Stop thinking so
much. Just trust me, okay?"

L’s mouth opened a bit as he tried to speak, but then just made a soft choking sound in the back of
his throat and whispered out loud, "It's unsanitary."

Harry let out a breathless laugh and repeated, "Trust me."

*Trust. The number one ingredient in any relationship*, L thought distractedly, and nodded
hesitantly.

And then swiftly, L's undergarments were being pulled off his legs while a slick, heated muscle
slowly licked the entire length of it.

"Oh," breathed L.

After that moment, L's mind couldn't form coherent words. Everything was too much, too intense,
and he clenched his eyes shut against the assault. He couldn't figure out what to focus on because
so much was going on at once, too much for one body, his entire form gradually tensing as a
response. Harry's hands gently grasped L's hips, holding him down as L's body shuddered without
control. L's shaking hands went to his own hair, grasping his dishevelled locks almost painfully as
he clenched his teeth together in an attempt to stop from making noise. He could feel his toes
curling, his back beginning to arch slightly off the bed in the opposite direction it was supposed to
go, and everything was coiling up in preparation.

Choking on his breath, he gasped out, "Wait...stop. *Stop."

Harry stopped moving, lifted his head up, and said in a deep, husky voice that only added to the
heat swirling around in L's bloodstream, "No."

When he lowered himself again, it was a thousand times more intense. His movements were
faster, his mouth and tongue doing...*things* so unbelievably fervent that he felt as if his brain was
going to explode. The sounds weren't as embarrassing any more because now he barely even
realised he was making them, and his breathing was so sporadic that he almost believed he was
suffocating.

L's body began going rigid, and he knew that if Harry didn't stop—

Then suddenly, as if he knew that L was close to breaking, Harry hummed in the back of his
throat, causing vibrations to stimulate L even more than he already was, and L snapped against his
will. With a loud cry that echoed in the empty, dim-lit room, L's entire body went unimaginably
taut and yet again arched, except this time it stayed like that. There was a ringing in his ears,
blocking out all sound, and his lungs couldn't take in oxygen. His heartbeat was out of control,
early bursting out of his chest underneath his skin. He could feel his body jerking, shuddering
wildly as his entire body fired off at once, all-but causing him to burn alive.
A few moments went by, and very slowly, L's body relaxed down into the bed as he sighed. His eyes were closed, arms thrown carelessly above his head as he took deep erratic breaths in an attempt to quiet his heartbeat to a normal pace. His chest heaved while the few and occasional shudders flexed beneath his skin. He could feel the air on his skin, causing him to shiver as the light sheen of perspiration cooled.

As he tried to regain control of his body, he heard Harry mutter a few words under his breath. Curious, L's eyes opened in their normal wideness, although it was quite the feat as his eyelids seemed heavy and hard to move. He focussed his blurry charcoal gaze on Harry, who had sat up and was now staring at L with a burning intensity that caused L to tingle.

"What did you say?" L eventually asked tiredly, the tone of voice uncharacteristic for the insomniac. "It sounded like Latin but I'm not as proficient in Latin as other languages."

"It was a spell. It corrects my eyesight for about an hour, although it's variable." As he spoke, he laid the wand-stick back on the end table gently, quickly turning his attention back to L and asking, "Are you okay?"

L was boneless, and exhausted, but definitely okay. More than okay, really. He felt more relaxed than he had since...well, ever. "Why don't you always use that...magic? You could have perfect vision, then." He closed his eyes, not wanting to sleep but wanting to imprint that experience in his memory perfectly before it dimmed away.

"I like my glasses, actually. I don't want to stop wearing them. They sort of define me, I suppose. And you didn't answer my question."

L couldn't stop the small smile from creeping up on his lips as he stretched languidly. He opened his eyes lazily and watched Harry's emerald green orbs trail slowly up and down his naked form. He tilted his head to his right, staring up at Harry and his heated gaze as he lay there, completely unconcerned with his bareness. After all, it would be foolish to be self-conscious when Harry had already seen him fully, and besides, he had nothing to really be ashamed of. He was male, had normal features for his relative age group, and didn't have anything that Harry didn't.

Maybe that was a faulty assumption though, because Harry's eyes burned a fiery trail down L's torso as if the sight was something he had never seen before. The look caused L's heart to skip a beat, and L sat up, his own eyes beginning to wander. L again took note of the scars on his chest, the dark but slender line of hair that disappeared underneath the waistline of his jean trousers, his strong arms and large hands, but his eyes were inevitably drawn to the centre of his body. Even though the trousers were quite loose, L could still see that they had grown tight around his hips, and the detective couldn't take his eyes off it.

Harry leant forward and pressed his lips against L's forehead, his breathing hot and a bit laborious against his skin. He sat there for the longest time, and L closed his eyes, another small smile popping up on his lips. He lifted his hands and pressed his fingers lightly against Harry's throat, and simply explored.

He felt the tensing of tendons in his neck as he brushed his fingertips against Harry's warm skin, feeling a slight roughness that was beginning to creep into existence. His hands went lower, brushing against the smooth edges of his collarbones, tracing the skin until he reached his shoulder blades. He grasped them and rubbed, captivated by the way the skin rolled and flexed between his palms, before making his way down Harry's arms, feeling the light dusting of silky hair and the occasional bump of scar tissue. He pressed into the ridges of Harry's hands, briefly threading his fingers through Harry's before making his way back up his arms, this time making his way across Harry's chest. His skin was smooth and hot, slightly sticky with perspiration, and L let his palms lie flat against Harry's chest. He felt his heartbeat, feeling his own palpitations speed up to match
Harry's erratic rhythm, and then began sinking lower, his breathing growing quicker as his entire body heated up yet again.

Harry's body twitched when L's fingers brushed down the centre of his chest and traced around his navel, but L didn't stay there. His hands began moving to Harry's sides, eventually making their way to caress the skin of his back. He trailed his fingers up his spinal cord, fleetingly running his hands through Harry's soft hair, and then began pressing his fingertips into the defined skin and muscle of his back. He roamed, feeling scars and definition as he made his way downward, slightly distracted by Harry's lips as he began kissing down the side of his face. He pressed his cheek against L's, his lips lightly brushing against the skin of L's left ear, and when L finally let his hands go still on Harry's hips, the emerald eyed man whispered softly, "Are you sure you want to do this?"

L pulled his head away, eyes still closed, and pressed his lips together as he thought.

He was still scared, and he was still frightened, and he was still terrified. However, this wasn't an issue any more, could never be an issue ever again. Even though he had lived his entire life holding people at arm's length, making sure he never got attached and keeping his fascination with people as scientific and clinical as possible, he trusted Harry. He trusted Harry with everything he had: his success in the Kira investigation, keeping his identity secret even though it would be difficult to do so, and most importantly of all his life.

This was the last thing that L could give Harry, and L knew, without a doubt, that he wanted it to happen. He wanted to give this part of him to Harry, to hand this last piece of himself over, because he understood that everything would be okay. With Harry, he could be what he had never allowed himself to be before. He was still petrified, but he was accepting and was ready.

L opened his eyes.

"I trust you," he said simply, his voice filled with something he couldn't name.

Harry smiled, a beaming one that seemed to light up the entire dusky room. Softly, he pressed a kiss to L's forehead, then his left temple, both cheeks, his chin, the tip of his nose, and then finally pressing them against L's lips. Over and over again, he kissed L, gentle pecks that spoke volumes, before he finally laid L down upon his back.

His green eyes were filled with emotion, and L was consumed by it, not even noticing when Harry began taking off his trousers. Instead, he leant up, wrapping his arms around Harry's back and holding his defined shoulder blades. He felt a slight flutter of nerves in his stomach that stood out against the heat, and he searched for more with his lips in an attempt to fight off the feeling. He met Harry in the middle, mouths consuming and tongues winding together, and very suddenly L realised that he was tasting himself in Harry's kiss. He vaguely wondered why it wasn't as bitter as he expected, more sweet really, and wondered fleetingly and insanely if he was slowly turning into granulated sugar.

L shook off these thoughts rather quickly though, because suddenly Harry was atop him, his bare skin like silk as it slid against him. There was something hot and rigid against his thigh, and instead of making L cringe or shy away from the contact, he felt his entire body come alive. His blood began boiling, every electrified cell moving and exploding with awareness, and without thinking, he arched into it while making a peculiar gasping sound at the sensation.

Harry broke the kiss with a small groan and pulled on L's bottom lip before making a heated trail to L's ear, immediately pressing his tongue against the pressure point underneath. His large, strong hands brushed down his sides, eventually coming to rest on L's thighs. He took L's earlobe into his mouth as he began moving, situating himself in-between L's legs. He didn't take it any farther...
though, instead flicking his tongue against L's ear before reaching out distractedly, grabbing the wand-stick while shifting his weight to lie upon the bed beside L.

L started to look and see what he was doing, but he suddenly had to clench his eyes shut as Harry gently bit down on L's earlobe, tearing a sound from L's throat that shouldn't have been possible. L felt his fingers begin to dig into Harry's skin without accord, which caused Harry to let out a heated gasp that sent shockwaves down L's spine. At the same time, he felt a strange, almost invasive tingle in his abdominals and the area in-between his hips, which made him twitch in mild discomfort.

L exhaled unevenly and mumbled something that didn't make sense over the roaring of blood in his ears, but he heard Harry say in a shaking, disjointed voice against L's ear, "Sorry. Cleansing charm. Necessary. Gross otherwise."

At the last disorganised word, Harry's teeth dragged the flesh of L's earlobe heatedly before quite abruptly he was kissing L again, all-but consuming his entire being in the process. It was growing steadily more frantic as they began losing sight of themselves, and L scarcely had time to breathe without being immediately devoured again. It didn't matter anyway, for he couldn't breathe due to his breathlessness and the anticipation that was ringing through his blood.

Then, unexpectedly, he felt a light pressure below his waist.

It was barely noticeable, and that came as a bit of a surprise. He had been under the impression that even preparation was painful, even when there was lubrication, but it didn't hurt at all. He could feel his body stretching slightly against the intruding finger, and he could feel the pressure against the first ring of muscle, but other than that, he couldn't feel much of anything. It definitely did not hurt.

"That's not so bad," breathed out L against Harry's lips, loosening his grip on Harry's shoulder blades with near relief. He knew that it might not be as easy when Harry's more substantial length decided to make an appearance, but for now he was just content that he wasn't going to be cringing every two seconds in some unimaginable pain.

Harry gave a small laugh at that. "Well, lubrication definitely helps. Oh, I love magic." With that, he began moving his finger in and out, the digit sliding easily as it was coated with something warm and slippery. With each movement, the pressure decreased a bit more, until he couldn't even feel it happening any more. He was more interested in the fact that Harry was kissing him again, although instead of frantic it was more leisurely and relaxed, as his concentration seemed to be down lower.

Harry nibbled at L's bottom lip as he entered another finger, which caused the pressure to increase a bit more noticeably. It didn't hurt at all beyond L's entrance, the sensation more of being filled instead, so it was just easing his way into becoming ready to deal with the pressure. Just like before, every time he moved in and out the pressure decreased, but this time it didn't entirely go away. It was a bit uncomfortable, but still not painful exactly; however, the feeling of Harry's fingers beginning to curl up as they moved inside him was strange. Again, not painful, but it felt odd enough that L's attention diverted directly towards it.

Harry's lips pressed against L's cheek, the side of his head pressing against the pillow, as he breathed, seemingly trying to catch his breath. L could feel his heartbeat slowing as well, a bit preoccupied with the bizarre sensation and the pressure that—

L let out a sharp cry that echoed loudly in the still air.

He heard Harry chuckle thickly against his skin, but he couldn't concentrate on that. That...that
push in his entire body that made white spots come across his vision and his heart quite literally stop for a moment was so intense that he felt like he was going to explode. Immediately, he felt his form twitch almost violently as his body moved, pushing unconsciously against Harry's hand to get more-more-more.

Harry's grin stretched against L's cheek as he repeatedly began hitting the same spot over and over again, briefly caressing before continuing to move rhythmically. As a result, L dug his fingernails into the skin of Harry's back, feeling overcome with the liquid fire and pleasure singing through his entire body. His eyes clenched shut, and as hard as he tried, he couldn't seem to get air into his lungs. He was vaguely aware of the near-constant noises he was making, and the sharp breathing of Harry against L's skin, but the only thing he could focus on was the fact that this pleasure was going to tear him to pieces and catch him on fire. He didn't even feel the third finger join the two others, stretching and moving just as perfectly, and he felt like he was going...going...

And then without warning, the fingers were gone, and L let out a whine in the back of his throat. He was so close it didn't seem fair, but he forced himself to open his eyes and unclench his hands from Harry's shoulder blades. An emerald gaze was blazing back at him, the lust contained there sending a shock through L's already over-sensitive body, and he shuddered as Harry once again positioned himself in-between L's thighs.

Only this time, he knew that he wasn't moving away any time soon.

Harry grasped his wand and flicked it absently, but L didn't comprehend the action. He was trying to prepare himself for what was coming through the haze in his mind, because he knew that what was coming next was the big part. A bit anxious, he wondered how badly it would hurt, because even though L wouldn't allow himself to look down at Harry's...arousal, he knew that it would be more substantial than three fingers.

Harry took a couple of deep breaths and then said in a husky whisper, "Are you sure this is what you want?"

L knew that Harry would've stopped. He would've been a bit disappointed, yes, but he would've taken it in stride like the good man he was. Maybe he would've allowed L to come to completion, but he would've been perfectly okay with ending it right then and there if it meant that L would be more comfortable.

But nothing had changed. L still trusted Harry with everything he had, and besides...he didn't think he could say no even if he wanted to.

"I trust you," L said again, his words slightly choked in a mixture of anxiety and anticipation as he dropped his arms.

Harry swallowed thickly, grasped L's hands tightly, and breathed out, "Okay. Take a deep breath and try to relax."

L felt something hot, slick, and hard press against him, and shakily obeyed Harry's request. He took in a large lungful of air through his nose, held it there, and let it out slowly just as Harry finally eased the tip of it past the tightness.

His exhale abruptly cut off, his face scrunching in an expression of extreme discomfort. Now this was painful, and as he tensed from the sharp sting, the feeling only continued to grow. His hands clenched against Harry's, and L buried his face in Harry's soft hair in an attempt to keep those emerald eyes from looking at his face. Even though Harry continued on slowly, every millimetre was like he was being stretched to the point of tearing, the sensation an aching experience.
Harry, from above him, was breathing so unsteadily that L felt slightly alarmed through the buzz of pain between his legs. He didn't trust himself to open his mouth to speak, fearing that he would end up making a slightly panicked noise.

However, it seemed as if the pain dimmed into a dull throb quite quickly, and L took another few shallow breaths before pulling his nose away from Harry's hair and allowing his head to flop down against the pillow again. He blinked slowly before letting his eyes take in Harry's own expression, which was set in a pinched grimace. It almost would've been amusing if the situation hadn't been so serious.

Serious indeed. L Lawliet was currently as close as he'd ever get to another human being, and he was sharing the experience with the only man L would ever consider. As he allowed that thought to fill his mind, an inexpressible surge of emotion exploded in his entire body. Despite the ache that was beginning to ease off, he felt so much that it didn't seem real. For as long as he could remember, he had been blank and emotionless, believing that it was better to be alone and without meaningless feelings. He had always convinced himself that he was smarter than all the people who allowed themselves to be run by their emotions, who surrendered to their unpredictable hearts instead of their logical minds.

But here he was, with the most fascinating, considerate, feisty, passionate man as close as humanly possible, and he knew that he would wish for no different. He had finally given almost everything about himself to another human being, and his mind was free of suspicion and contemplation. Harry had seen him in every way that L was capable of being, and he knew that it was okay.

It was worth it, without a doubt in the world.

And as Harry whispered in a strangled tone that still managed to convey every pure and caring thought, "Are you okay?" L knew that he was happy.

L allowed a small smile to pop up on his lips, a bit disoriented, and Harry's face split into a slightly amazed grin to match.

"I'll take that as a yes, then," Harry said shakily, and then pressed his forehead against L's softly. It was amusing, because they hadn't even moved much nor exerted much effort and yet they were both still lightly coated in a thin layer of perspiration. Their bodies slightly stuck together in a way that would've normally made L cringe and immediately desire a shower, but he couldn't even contemplate that now. The longer Harry stood still, despite the obvious effort it took for him to accomplish, the less it hurt.

Honestly, the only part that hurt was that first ring of muscle. After that, there was just the odd sensation of having an organ inside of his body, somehow pleasurable due to the feeling of being full but still bizarre regardless. He could feel how his body had adjusted to the intrusion, but the only pressing concern was the sting accompanying his entrance. He knew that it would become more flexible and lax as he was stretched by his...his erection, and therefore more pleasurable, so he blinked again and said in a remarkably even tone, "You can move now."

Harry's striking emerald eyes opened lazily and he muttered with a relieved grin, "Oh thank God."

He moved slowly at first, trying to get L used to the sensation. As L had expected, the soreness picked up, but each time Harry thrust back in, it dimmed back a little more. There was a slight burn, and occasionally there were angles that pressed against him painfully, but Harry gauged his reactions and kept searching until he found what he was looking for.

Like before, light flashed before his eyes as he let out a sharp cry, his body arching into Harry's
strong chest as his hips pushed insistently to further the contact. His hands left Harry's so he could wrap his arms desperately around Harry's neck, and he felt the emerald eyed man firmly grasp L by the thighs. Again and again, Harry's aim was perfect, and L almost wanted to scream at the intensity of it all as he urgently wrapped his legs around Harry's lower back. The burn was all-but gone, the pain non-existent, as the only thing that mattered was the fire running through his veins, the electricity frying every cell in his thin body, the pleasure that coursed like a hurricane through his nerve endings. His cries were loud and frantic, echoing the groans that ripped from Harry's throat, and he could feel his body edging closer to the edge of logic and reason.

Harry's mouth latched onto the side of L's neck, heatedly kissing and nipping all the skin he could reach, and L felt his legs tighten around Harry's sides. He could feel Harry losing control as his rhythm went erratic, but his direction and intensity never wavered. L felt his entire body coil, tensing in what could possibly be the death of him. He felt like his heart was pumping air instead of blood, it was beating so fast, and it felt as if it was going to tear its way right out of his chest. His fingers grasped handfuls of Harry's hair so tightly that it probably hurt, while Harry's hands clench ed so firmly on the back L's thighs that he was sure to have bruises. And despite all of this, L's mind only knew one word: more.

He pushed insistently against Harry's hard thrusts once, twice, thrice...and then he exploded with a shrill yell that seemed deafening to L's ringing ears, his entire body arching, pulled taut like a bow as he felt a hot liquid burst in-between their chests. He dimly heard Harry cry out as if he was far away, feeling something positively scalding burning inside him, only furthering the indescribable climax that wracked his form. Every muscle spasmed, his body shuddering wildly with the overload, his closed eyes rolling into the back of his skull as white light flashed across his black vision.

Harry collapsed, his breathing coming in rough gasps against L's neck. The weight was comforting as L slowly returned to some semblance of normality, his eyes refusing to open as the eyelids were so unbelievably heavy. He didn't acknowledge that he was covered in sticky perspiration and his own bodily fluids, instead trying to keep his weak grasp around Harry's neck from slipping. His skin tingled in the aftermath, and without realising it, he laughed, a small and breathless sound but a laugh all the same time. The sound seemed to rouse Harry, for he grinned a bit goofily against L's skin before pulling his softening erection out.

That sensation was definitely disturbing, especially as all the fluids started to follow Harry's example, but L was much too dizzy and tired to say anything but "Hmm, that's gross," in a dazed hum that didn't seem to belong to him. Again, Harry laughed lightly and leant up, pressing a soft kiss against L's closed eyelids and lax lips.

"Go to sleep, L," his British voice said, the tone rich in L's ears. He didn't acknowledge the name referral, because at the moment he didn't know what that meant, and his arms fell down to curl beside his head.

He was asleep before he could think another thought.
Chapter Twenty

Strobe

1 November 2004

When L woke up the first time, he noticed that his eyes hurt.

They were itchy and felt like sandpaper, all while being ridiculously heavy and droopy. He shifted, his mind still going dreadfully slow, and buried his face in a cool pillow while burrowing deeper into the warmth of the comforter. He felt skin against his back and arms around his chest, curled up behind him and cocooning his body in warmth. His eyes shut again, and he quickly lost consciousness.

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The second time he woke up, his eyes still hurt but his mind was working at a reasonable speed.

He blinked heavily, watching the rain pour outside the window on the far wall, and let his head catch up with his surroundings. He was lying down on his side, knees slightly bent and his arms loosely wrapped around his pillow. Wait, Harry's pillow.

It was a slow, almost luxurious moment then, where everything sort of...seeped back into his thoughts at a drawn out pace. He closed his eyes yet again, not exactly reliving it in his mind but instead remembering how his body had reacted.

It was pretty clear now to L why people would kill and commit horrendous crimes out of desire for sex. It was much better than having an infinite supply of strawberry shortcake and ice cream; which, in L's point of view, was quite a feat.

He shifted, blinking rapidly to attempt to ease the rough feeling of his eyelids, and curled up tighter. It was possibly the first time in years that he had slept without having denim trousers on his lower body, and it was strange to feel the silky fabric gliding against his bare thighs.

He breathed slowly in and out before directing his attention to his surroundings. He took note of the grey sky pouring down buckets of precipitation with a still slightly clouded mind, wondering what time it was. It couldn't be too late, because there was still a dim amount of light creeping through the heavily clouded sky. It was probably around eighteen o'clock, nineteen at the latest.

He couldn't feel Harry right next to him, but he could hear the shower running in the opposite room. Glancing downwards, he was slightly perplexed to find that every scrap of clothing was
gone along with the ruined sweets that had been knocked down. He debated on weaselling his way out of the warm cocoon of blankets to get up so he could find his clothing, but eventually decided that he didn't mind being naked, so he burrowed his nose back into the heat and glanced at the digital clock absently.

Then he promptly made a strange, oddly choked panicked noise.

Either Harry had the ability to turn back time with his magic-stick and make it still his birthday or it was nine o'clock and the first of November.

There was absolutely no way he had slept fifteen hours without waking up except for a brief moment. That was impossible.

He shot up, his eyes wide and hazily frantic, and quickly began searching for any of his clothing. However, he just grasped the back of the chair, nearly falling over while his head went dizzy, almost light-headed as his entire body grew unimaginably tired. He could barely even keep himself upright, so he just held the back of the desk chair tightly and closed his eyes, waiting for it to pass.

Vertigo. It was odd, but to be expected.

*Oh, I'm tired. Will anyone even notice if I go back to bed?*

It passed, and he slowly began searching yet again. He almost wanted to just go back to the warm blankets and lay there until Harry got out of the shower and gave him clothes.

He paused and turned towards the door to the bathroom.

He cocked his head, watching the tendrils of steams creep out of the room. It was filtering golden light through the crack, and L had a sudden shiver crawl down his spine. His eyes tried to see past the heat, but then his eyes were distracted by a slight movement behind the thick opaque doors of the shower.

L's head cocked the other direction.

Considering.

**Contemplating.**

He finally took a step forward after making up his mind. He walked forward with slow purpose; he wasn't discomfited about what he was planning on doing but he didn't know how Harry would react. Perhaps he liked his time in the bathroom to be private.

But he could feel the stickiness on his body although oddly it wasn't visible, and he really wanted a shower before walking through the hallways and being seen on security cameras.

He pushed open the door and poked his head in the steam, trying to focus through the heated mist swirling in the bathroom. He looked at his blurry reflection in the mirror directly opposite of the open doorway, trying to see himself clearly through the condensation, but only seeing a vague outline of his naked form. He glanced around the immaculately clean bathroom, again confused about where all of the sweets and clothes had gone, and then promptly blinked.

*Oh yes, he probably made them disappear using his magic-stick. How could I have forgotten to think about that?*

He heard a small movement and then one of the glass doors slid open. Harry's face popped out
from behind the door, his hair sopping wet and hanging heavily in his green eyes, and L felt no need to hide the small smile at the sight.

Harry let off a beaming smile in return as he said innocently, "Well, good afternoon Sleeping Beauty."

L blinked. "Ah, so it is the first of November then. This might be a problem."

Harry laughed and reached out a dripping arm, beckoning L closer. When he was in grasping distance, he did just that, wrapping his hand against L's wrist and leading him into the shower. As he did, he continued on in a cheerful voice, "Well, the problem is almost completely dealt with. Watari ended up going ballistic early this morning and gave your cell phone a ring. I'm surprised you didn't wake up."

L fiddled with the hot water knob for the second shower-head as he mulled that idea over. He must've been really tired, for he didn't remember dreaming at all. Normally he would've been startled awake from either a dream or his constant paranoia within the first hour or two of losing consciousness, but besides that brief moment of opening up and feeling like his eyes were sandpaper, he couldn't recall sleeping at all. He did feel significantly tired, most likely because his body was not accustomed to that much rest and had adjusted accordingly.

But for him not to wake up at a phone call...that was surprising.

The idea of Watari going 'ballistic' was alarming as well. "What exactly happened?" he asked, eyes narrowing as he stepped underneath the warm spray of water.

"Well," Harry said, following L's example, "He called around...probably seven or so this morning. I picked up the phone, knowing it probably wasn't a good idea to just let it ring or something. He asked to talk to you, so I told him the truth and said you were sleeping. Obviously he didn't believe me, because it's pretty clear that you don't really get much snoozing time, and said that he was going to come down here and drag you out himself."

L fought the urge to flinch and succeeded. "Why didn't you wake me up?" he questioned, loosely knowing the answer but wanting to clarify it anyway.

"Like I said, you don't sleep much. It's a good thing that you're letting your brain have some rest. Sleep is good for a healthy brain, Kermit."

L refrained from rolling his eyes, instead allowing them to close, putting his face into the water and letting out a small sigh. He felt relieved that things weren't awkward between them now that...it had happened. After all, it was said in books and from various criminals during interrogation that sex changed everything about how two people interacted. Whether or not it was for love or selfish gratification, the act of intercourse always changed something, if not everything. Here, however, Harry was acting exactly the same as before, with the teasing that made L want to throw cake at his laughing face. Obviously, they were both naked and showering—without being able to stop himself, L's eyes flickered downwards and quickly looked away before he could lose his train of thought—but other than that, the atmosphere didn't seem any different.

But regardless, this was not what he should be thinking about. He wiped his eyes and switched track almost immediately, stating, "I'm surprised that Watari didn't come and shoot the door down. Care to explain that?"

Harry sighed and focussed his emerald stare on L. "You shouldn't instantly interrogate people after waking up. Especially me, after all we've been through together. Ah. There's the change. This might get bothersome."
When L’s questioning glare only intensified, Harry groaned and explained himself, "Well, after the phone call, he did make his merry 'ol way down here, and I sort of panicked. I knew he was coming because I could see him through the cameras that you left on the screen yesterday, and I figured that I wouldn't be able to turn him away. I didn't want to use magic, couldn't really, because then the other cameras would've been able to see it and I didn't know who could be watching. At the same time, I didn't want him coming in here, for obvious reasons."

He gave L a pointed glance, and L fought the urge to sigh. "So what did you do?"

Harry grinned. "I ended up splitting the difference. I couldn't let him come in here because you weren't modest—" At that, Harry's glance turned downright impious. "—so I ended up doing some quick magic before he could come barging in here. Made you appear to be presentable, moved all of the sweets and clothing under the cloak, dressed myself...and then went out to meet him before he could wake you up."

"What do you mean, 'appear to be presentable'?" L began searching for the shampoo, inwardly amused that for a bit he'd smell like Harry, and was pointed in the right direction.

"I made it look like you were still wearing clothes. It wasn't real, but to Watari's eyes, it would've seemed as if you were fully clothed. I didn't think you'd appreciate him coming in here and seeing you like that. Oh yeah, and all of my stuff is coconut-free."

At that, L squeezed some of the lime green shampoo on his hands and began rubbing it in his hair quickly. He had never been one to stand in the shower and soak, instead using every moment to meticulously scrub his body clean, but regardless, it was a different situation this time.

The scent of green tea and alfalfa permeated the air of the bathroom.

"Thank you," he said, simply and quietly.

Harry shrugged and said, "I didn't want him seeing you like that, either. I don't want anyone seeing you like that except me."

"You aren't going to go all strange on me, are you Harry-san?"

Harry groaned. "Oh hell, you're still going to use an honorific? I think I'm going to cry." For good measure, he sniffled as if personally wounded.

L dead-panned, "Sarcasm isn't becoming of you."

He laughed while L began rinsing his hair. For a long moment, there was nothing but silence, but then Harry finally continued on, his voice quiet. "I met him in my living area. He was furious, I could tell, but I figured he wouldn't make that big of a scene because he hadn't turned off the cameras. He spoke in French, and I allowed him to look in on you from the doorway. He could see you breathing, and knew I hadn't, like, killed you or something, so he just told me to send you down when you were awake. I think he was a bit shocked, really. He hasn't called since though."

L took a few breaths in and out before he said, "That's good. It would've been unfortunate if you had used magic in front of him."

Harry immediately tensed, as if preparing himself. He said in a slightly off voice, "I think we should tell him. If I'm going to be able to protect him, he has to know. If he knew what I was capable of, he might trust me here more."

L began searching for the body wash and picked it up, briefly glancing at it while thinking about Harry's comments. He watched as Harry opened the opaque door again and grabbed one of the
clean, white wash-cloths, handing it to L. As the detective soaked the cloth and applied the soap, a pomegranate and mango mix that contrasted with the green tea and alfalfa, he said, "Deal with the article first. I think that is the top priority at the present moment. We will have to deal with finding Kira again, after this fiasco of Higuchi dying, and I'll have to keep an eye on Amane as well. I think that involving Watari in this would prove to be an unwise decision as of now. He'll want to go into hiding again if he knows that Kira and those people tailing you are all attempting to find out who I am. He'll believe it to be too dangerous for you to be here because of that added threat."

"I can understand where he's coming from, though. Perhaps it might be better if you did go into hiding. If and when Kira attacks you, I think it might be a good idea to hide you regardless. If you died and seemingly stayed that way, it would make you able to hunt Kira without having to get yourself involved again. I could stay involved in the investigation while you watch, keeping an eye on Raito. Hell, one of us could probably tail him in the Invisibility Cloak and catch him in the act."

"Can the shinigami see through it?" asked L.

Harry grinned. "Nah. It's one of the Deathly Hallows, created by Death himself. I'm assuming that Death means that Shinigami King that Rem was talking about, because it doesn't seem as if shinigami like Rem could create something with that sort of ability."

"The Deathly Hallows?" That sounded interesting, especially if there were three objects with powers rivalling a cloak of invisibility. Perhaps they could be utilised for L's benefit.

"I'll let you read about all of that while I'm working on smothering the Daily Prophet. If I have my way, I'm going to annihilate those two infuriating women with my bare hands."

L recalled the books and was looking forward to reading them. He would have nothing but time while waiting for Kira to make another move.

"That's an interesting idea, Harry," pondered L, intentionally omitting the honorific. As he began cleaning his body, he began talking out loud. "If I die, it might be better to go back into hiding if you can revive me."

"When I revive you," Harry said moodily.

L continued on as if he hadn't heard him. "Then I'd be in a position to see how Raito reacts in the situation of my death. The most beneficial move for Kira to make would be to have the role of L under his own influence. It would be an interesting development, giving me free reign to tail him and get the evidence I need and the perfect alibi for disappearing after the case is over."

Harry hesitated slightly but eventually continued, "What are we going to do about the L name? I mean, if he takes over that position, the power he will have is—"

"Yes, I think I might have a way to combat that. Raito is intelligent, and could very well take over the name, but I think I can arrange for you to be my conscious successor."

"What?"

"Well, it is very clear to most people that we have...a unique camaraderie, and so it wouldn't be hard to explain that you are the 'second L' and had only been here in the case of my death. Besides, you have mostly solved the Higuchi-Kira part almost on your own, without much help from Raito and me. Mostly, though, this will be for looks, and I suppose there is a way where I can give you directions without giving away that I am alive. Also, it makes it convenient because you aren't affected in the Death Note."
Harry raised an eyebrow, obviously a bit taken aback. Regardless, he said, "What's going to happen if Raito finds out who I am as well and tries to write my name in the Death Note, but I don't die from it."

L thought about that and finally answered, "Hopefully it won't come to that. I think the most vital aspect is making sure Raito does not find out about your world. If he had the same talents at his disposal, he would quickly utilise it in his benefit. We have to make sure that it doesn't head in that direction."

"Okay. So if you have a heart attack, I am to revive you and find a way to make it seem as if you're just a corpse before letting you hide. I'll talk to Hermione, as I'm sure there's a way to talk with each other in public without giving ourselves away with the security cameras. Sounds simple, although I'll probably have to improvise."

L nodded and said, "Yes, this is an agreeable plan that I believe will work. If it does come down to Raito not being able to kill you after somehow finding out your name, there's a good chance that we could catch him at that moment. He would realise that you are the Master of Death that the shinigami was speaking about, and he might give himself away. I don't expect him to make a scene, and he might try to hide it, but I'll be able to tell if he's hiding something."

"I don't think the prat will confront me or anything, but yeah, it should be easy to determine. He might ask me questions, or bring things up that wouldn't normally make sense. Regardless, though, I agree. It'll be bad if he finds out about our world. I mean, it's not like anyone would ever help him, because I've got the entire Wizarding population backing my every move, and the only people that would align with him are the sparse few Death Eaters with a lingering vendetta against me. I don't think it'll be much of a problem."

"Yes," L said again. "We are going to win this."

"And afterwards, I am so taking you to a Quidditch game."

L didn't have the chance to speak before Harry was kissing him lightly. It didn't last long, but it did effectively make L forget entirely what he was going to say. As they both hopped out of the shower, Harry flinging a towel on his head with a laugh while mentioning that he was going to proceed to play sick, L wondered exactly what was going to happen afterwards.

He almost didn't want to think about it.

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Harry cracked out of existence and found himself in the dreary House of Black.

After getting into a mild argument about how the cleansing charm on Ryuzaki's clothes meant that they were clean and not dirty, he found himself ready to start his afternoon.

He knew that Ryuzaki, now that he was alone, was most likely putting on a façade of complete indifference to the investigation team while inwardly over-processing every single thing. He had fallen asleep—for fifteen hours—too quickly for him to think about what had happened, and when he had woken up, he hadn't had much time to think before being distracted again. By Harry.

The wizard snickered.

He couldn't remember the last time he felt so relaxed, sated, and happy. Even despite the overpowering knowledge that Ryuzaki was probably going to die in the near future (although he wouldn't stay like that, absolutely not) and the pressure of the case's future, he felt completely tranquil and in high spirits at the same time. He almost wanted to start yelling and cheering in the
emptiness of Grimmauld Place, not only because he had finally had that unfathomable moment with the love of his life but because of the simple fact that he felt complete for the first time in his existence.

They hadn't done anything after getting out of the shower, of course; Ryuzaki had been much too tense about the clear-and-upcoming verbal deathmatch that was bound to take place with Watari, and it was obvious that he was still a bit overwhelmed about the fact that he had let himself go like he had, but still, Harry had something to prove. Harry knew that Ryuzaki was probably over-analysing it and wondering if things were going to be different, due to his previous scientific analysis of affection and-or sexual desire. Therefore, Harry understood that he had to seem as if what they had done together wasn't something that was going to change how their...relationship of sorts worked.

Nothing was going to change, except now Harry could say little things around others that were bound to fluster Ryuzaki...which was going to be fun. Oh so much fun.

"Why is Master Harry smiling wickedly to himself? Has Master done something very naughty?"

That was the trigger, and Harry reckoned that Kreacher was not very amused with his loud, booming laughter that echoed through the halls. Unfortunately, that damned painting woke up, beginning the usual shrieking, and as he attempted to breathe he waved his wand, effectively putting a silencing charm on her.

Hm, he was getting quite good at those, it seemed.

Eventually, he stopped laughing, wiping the tears from his eyes as he began walking towards Kreacher, crouching low to get as close to eye-level as he could. "How have you been, Kreacher?" he asked kindly, quirking an eyebrow. "Been getting yourself into trouble?"

"Of course not, Master Harry. Kreacher has just been cleaning Master's house while he's been away, making it welcome for when he decides to return. Should Kreacher make Master Harry some onion soup?"

"Sorry, Kreacher. I've got to go down to the Ministry and deal with some business before going on a mad witch hunt. I figured I'd drop off the Invisibility Cloak and the Firebolt here, because I don't want Ryuzaki getting any ideas while I'm gone." He paused, cocked his head, and said, "Wait, you could make a cake for me. Do you remember that recipe that I told you for the strawberry cake, one of Mrs. Weasley's old ones? Can you make that for me?"

"What time will Master Harry be back to pick up his cake?" asked Kreacher, a small note to his normally grumbling voice that said he was pleased for something to do that wasn't cleaning.

"Um, I'm not sure, but I'm thinking somewhere around the nineteen o'clock range. Can you have it done by then?"

"Of course, Master Harry. It shall be done to the best of Kreacher's abilities."

Harry grinned, handed the elf his cloak and broom, and Apparated yet again.

He found himself in the entrance of the Ministry of Magic. For a long minute, he strolled through the crowd entering and leaving the governmental building without attracting any attention, but that didn't go on for very long before the entire place went into an eerie hush at the sight of him. He kept his head down as he all-but ran to the other end of the Atrium, bypassing the new fountain with unease—it was so embarrassing to see himself etched in gold, surrounded by Ron and Hermione, all of them holding their wands in front of them as they spurted water. He ignored the
staring and the whispering (and the one woman near the back-end that yelped "On Merlin's baggy underpants, that's Harry Potter!") as he made his way to the security desk next to the golden gates hiding the lifts.

After being away from the Wizarding world for over two years, it was a bit of a shock to see his face in the Ministry of all places, he presumed.

He impatiently stepped in front of the stricken security wizard and mumbled, "This is ridiculous. I shouldn't have to do this. I really need to talk to Mr. Weasley about changing this." He cleared his throat and said in a forced cheerful voice, "Hi, I'm here to see the Minister and for some personal business. Here's my wand."

The man shakily took the wand, deposited it on the single scale, and said in a strange squeaking voice that didn't match his gigantic form, "Eleven inches, holly and phoenix-feather core, been in use for thirteen years, registered to H-Harry Potter."

"Yes," Harry said with strained calm, trying not to lose his temper. He hated being in Wizarding places, especially areas with many wizards and witches in one small area. He hated getting this treatment. It had been bad during his school years and had been nearly unbearable during the War, but now it was just unbelievably annoying and irksome.

One of the reasons he had disappeared from that world.

He grasped his wand and pocketed the badge he was given. He didn't need it for people to know why he was here or who he was, and if he slunk around enough he'd miss most of the people in the place. With a quiet "thank you" he strode through the front gate and took the first lift he could find that wasn't much occupied, trying to keep his breathing under control.

It took him nearly half an hour to find Mr. Weasley, who was looking at a group of two odd wizards trying to figure out why a rubber duck was trying to bite their fingers off. His face had a poorly hidden look of some unimaginable sadness, and Harry could see it for what it was. A couple of years ago he had had his entire family surrounding him as he had worked at a low job at the Ministry involving Muggle 'artefacts'. Now he had no one except Ron and he was working at a job he didn't want nor was exactly qualified for.

Harry knew he would've given his title of Minister and the surrogate father of Harry Potter to be that low-paid wizard surrounded by all of his children and his wife.

"Hey Mr. Weasley," Harry said softly, putting a hand against on his shoulder. The touch and words seem to startle him out of that sadness, for he automatically adopted a huge grin of excitement.

"Hello Harry. I suppose we should go talk in private, so these chaps will stop staring at you, hm? I heard from Ron and Hermione about what's going on, so I think we need to settle this before you swear off hanging out with us forever this time."

They both laughed and began walking towards the lifts and the Minister's office.
Chapter Twenty-One
Information

1 November 2004

L shut the book with an uncharacteristic look of disquiet on his sharp features.

He wasn't finished. Usually, he had his way with a book by speed-reading; taking in the major gist of the information while memorising all of the more important details in a fast sweep of the words. It was characteristic of L's abilities, as he utilised the useful skill quite often.

However, this wasn't a case file which he practically knew the information of before looking. This was a book written by a woman described to him as a ruthless sort that didn't quite like Harry or his friend. Therefore, as he read the woman's well-versed words, he noted that it was positively riddled with underlying signals and hints that didn't bode well.

Appearing out of nowhere in the middle of a tournament clutching the dead body of another schoolboy? It seemed as if that school needed serious reform if it was allowing young children like Harry had been to get into predicaments such as that. The school was famed for its security and the headmaster of that time being the strongest wizard, and yet it was so relatively easy for enemies to get to Harry, including multitudes of teachers that had been hired for his well-being. The list was endless: a teacher with the face of a monster on the back of his head; a teacher that had attacked him with the intent of leaving him to die in a chamber; a criminal mass murderer breaking out of a highly secure prison in a seemingly passionate attempt to kill Harry, only to break into the school multiple times; a criminal that had impersonated yet another teacher with the intent of bringing back this 'Dark Lord' and killing Harry in the process...

He picked up the second book. He had lost touch with his better judgement so he could read a bit about Harry's life, when he should've been reading the book on law. There had to be a way to use their magic to find Kira. He wanted to just have Harry question the shinigami endlessly, because surely it meant that Rem would give Harry the information he needed. However, he knew that was an impossible strategy, not without there being a potential disaster involving heart attacks turning into L Lawliet puts a Glock 22 against his head and pulls the trigger. Somehow, he didn't think that he'd be able to recover from that one.

Raito was searching on the computer for information, but was coming up with nothing. The others seemed ridiculously bored, having nothing to do now that Higuchi was dead and their link to Kira was gone. The murders had stopped, but L hadn't a clue when they would start up again.

He opened the book and began reading.
"Shouldn't you be working on the Kira case instead of reading those books, Ryuzaki?" came a voice that grated against the headache that was beginning to pound at his temples. He figured that it was from the sleeping incident, but he wondered if it was because of the nature of being stared at so endlessly by the shinigami. It felt as if the tables had turned, and now L was the one being watched instead of Raito.

He didn't answer Raito's question, deciding to give the illusion that he was ignoring him, and turned a page. The eighteen-year-old let out an exhale that seemed more of a sigh of frustration, and said, "Where's James-san? Usually we can't break you two apart."

That voice was eerie and made the hairs on L's neck stand up. Now that Raito was in his previous disposition, the one before his lengthy incarceration, everything he said sounded as if fishing for information while being cocky about it. He tried to hide the superiority in his voice and actions, but L could see right through his façade even when no one else could.

Well, Harry had noticed, and had commented on it. As had Watari.

"He's not feeling well," said L, intentionally being vague.

"He's sick? I hope he gets better soon!" exclaimed Matsuda from across the room.

Raito dropped his voice and leant closer to L's ear. "Have you spoken to him about what happened yesterday? What that guy said was alarming, and I'm surprised you're reading a book instead of trying to figure out what that was about."

"There's nothing for you to be concerned about, Raito-kun," L said, with a tone of finality.

Despite the look on Raito's face that said he wasn't happy with that response, the copper haired man didn't question it, instead going back to his absent searching for any leads.

L tried to ignore the feeling of being watched and turned back to the book.

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Harry cracked into the bedroom and was startled.

Ryuzaki was sitting in the corner, his nose in the book on law that was lying on his knees. Those large, charcoal eyes flickered up after his small jump at the sound, and then he continued reading as if not bothered.

So, obviously, something was going on.

"Is it Raito or Rem?" asked Harry in a light voice, beginning to wander around while thinking intently about his next move towards ripping Dolores Umbridge a new one. "Or is it Watari? Have you figured out what you want to tell him yet?"

The silence was expected, so he lay down on the floor next to Ryuzaki's perched position and stared up at the white ceiling. He absently began flicking his wand, making it turn purple, then lime green, then an ugly brown, lost in his thoughts. He knew that Ryuzaki would answer when he was ready, or when he was fully concentrating on it.

He had nearly fallen asleep when Ryuzaki decided to speak. Nearly an hour had passed with just the sound of Ryuzaki turning pages, and the sound had been hypnotic. He was still slightly drowsy when the detective said, "I want to test the Death Note."
Harry sighed. He had known that was coming, and he knew that it had to be done. "How do you want to do it? The others will have a fit if you try."

"I want to test the thirteen-day rule, and I have a couple of ideas on how to do it."

Harry thought about that and replied, "Regardless, they're going to object to it. Perhaps you could do it without them knowing?"

"No, I'd like the others to know about it. At least Raito, as I would like him to feel pressured just in case the rule isn't foolproof."

"So how do you think you'll do it? If you don't write another name down in thirteen days, and that rule is not a hoax, then you'll die, and I might not be able to save you from that."

Ryuzaki turned the page, his eyes still reading even as he said, "I've figured out a way to work around that. I know that another country will allow me to test it on their soil. I'm considering America, as the president will surely oblige with my demands. I'm thinking that I could arrange to have a death row inmate write a name of another death row inmate, and then wait the thirteen days to see if he dies. Either way, I find out something of interest; no one has to be forced to write names down every thirteen days as well, which hopefully will placate the rest of the team."

Harry nodded awkwardly, his hair rubbing against the carpet uncomfortably, and then said, "That's good. I think that'll work. Have you told Watari about this?"

"Yes," Ryuzaki said quietly. "We spoke earlier and I let him in on the plan. He's attempting to get permission as we speak, most likely with Texas. We can't allow Raito to discover the inmate's name, so he can murder him at the precise time, but I'd like him to know that. I need him to be under pressure, as he might slip."

Harry thought about bringing up the topic of Ryuzaki's conversation with Watari, but decided against it. Almost absent-mindedly, Harry said, "Well, I've gotten the mess with Mr. Weasley done. He's the Minister of the British government, and it's going to take a while to get permission to bring potions and-or spell-casters into Japan for interrogation. Regardless, I've petitioned for the right to use Legilimency and Veritaserum on a Muggle, and the paperwork will be sent to Japan tomorrow. I would like for my end of the process to be as legal as possible, but I'm not sure how they'll react."

"What do you mean?" asked Ryuzaki, finally looking up from the book.

"Well," Harry said in a slow voice, "Kira hasn't attacked any witches or wizards in any country. Yeah, it's probably because our existence is usually completely hidden from Muggle records, and our population isn't even considered on the global census, but regardless, there have been no casualties on our watch. The Wizarding population of Europe will back me immediately, but I do admit that my influence isn't as quick to act in this country. The Japanese Ministry has always gone by the book, and I don't know if the Minister here will allow me to just start interrogating Muggles with magic if the problem is a Muggle ordeal. The Statute of Secrecy, the SS if you will, forbids our existence to Muggles to be in mainstream society, and they aren't going to break that without proof of Kira attacking wizards. In fact, many other countries might take the same approach."

Ryuzaki's eyes flickered with a thought Harry couldn't name, but it disappeared as quickly as it had come. "Well, let's not make a hasty assumption. They might agree to your demands."

"Perhaps, and if they don't, there are ways to get around it. I would just rather do it legally, instead of going behind their backs. Japan might take it as a surge for control, and might react badly if
they find out. It's better if they don't know I'm in the country as of yet, as I'm not exactly here legally and definitely haven't given my paperwork to their Ministry. You have to have permission to become a citizen in this country, if you're a wizard, because they have to have the necessary information to track your wand."

"So you're saying that you're here illegally?"

Harry rolled his eyes. "I'm a Muggle citizen, mostly because I haven't really used magic. I hadn't planned on using it at all, because the UK still has my information as is still tracking me. I didn't want the press to track my location down, so I mostly stopped using my wand unless it was for small, barely noticeable things. Besides, we're in the middle of mainstream Tokyo. There are probably at least fifty thousand witches and wizards within a fifty-kilometre diameter from this building, so pinpointing whose magic is doing what is hard. So unless someone's performing a mass memory modification charm or throwing around the torture curse, the Japanese Ministry won't get involved."

The silence continued on for a long time, perhaps around thirty minutes, before Ryuzaki looked up from his book and said, "It's disconcerting. I feel as if I'm being watched by them, and I dislike the feeling. It's supposed to be the other way around; it will be nice when I can go back into hiding without worrying about this any more. I don't like being physically involved in an investigation because of this."

"We can go along with the plan of you pretending to stay dead, and then the rest of the investigation team will believe that you no longer exist when this case is over. It's the perfect hiding technique. As for me, I don't mind if they continue to think about me being the face of L after this investigation is completed."

Ryuzaki looked down at the book again, but Harry could still see the small smile on his lips. "Perhaps you could be the new Watari when this case is completed." Harry raised an eyebrow, slightly startled at the idea. "The current one is over seventy, and I'm sure he'd like the chance to settle down."

Harry laughed. "I wouldn't mind. Watari could go woo Esmée and give me the excuse to shamelessly make out with you on other cases too."

If Harry wasn't mistaken, a light blush had marked itself on Ryuzaki's cheeks.

Harry grinned wickedly, amused, before adopting a concentrated look. "I spent all day getting gawked at the Ministry, but tomorrow I have to go deal with the petition to use the Obliviate charm and Legilimency on one Rita Skeeter. I'll have to eventually go to the *Daily Prophet*; they're very adamant on getting information about me and my whereabouts, and I can't let them in on the idea that Rita has a very good story on her hands. If she's already told them about the story, however loosely, I'll have to bribe or threaten them. I'm going to wait until the fourth to confront Rita, dig into her thoughts and erase her memory if I'm allowed, because if I just attempt to bribe her, she'll find a way to weasel her way out of it. She'll give the information to someone else and let them publish it, because it'll drive her insane to sit on a story like this if she knows I'm so involved in not letting it get out. I have to avoid that at all costs.

"So tomorrow I'll deal with that petition, which I seriously doubt will be denied as most people despise her, and then I'll go confront Rita and the others. Get the others to keep quiet or quite possibly erase their memories too. And I'll get all of the information and pictures while I'm at it. After that, I'll go to the *Prophet* just to make sure that Rita didn't already tell them about the scoop, and then I'll go annihilate Dolores Umbridge. Preferably with a very large brick."

"You wouldn't."
Harry shrugged. "I'd like to, but no, I probably wouldn't. I really hate that woman though. Like, really hate her. She's one of the only people I've genuinely wanted to utterly destroy; she's only trumped by Voldemort and occasionally Snape when he was being an incredibly horrid bastard. How far have you gotten in that book?"

"Which one?" asked Ryuzaki, eyes reading the French text with a blank expression.

"The German one, I think."

"The book Rita Skeeter wrote. Hmm, I'm halfway through, just past the information about Albus Dumbledore's death. I thought you said Severus Snape was a good man."

Harry let out a sound that was like a depressed laugh, almost a sigh. "He was. It just took us a long time to understand that. He did a lot of bad things when he was alive for the sake of keeping his cover as a spy for Voldemort, but in the end he made sure that I lived and helped me in ways I didn't even understand until he was already dead. What...what are your thoughts about it so far?"

"Well, from what I can see, this woman really doesn't like you very much and I think she harbours even stronger expressions of dislike towards Hermione Granger—" Harry cringed, smacking a hand to his forehead in exasperation. "—but regardless, it's very well told. I'm taking Mrs. Granger-Weasley's word on the fact that it is accurate, and I can honestly say that I'm not impressed."

That caught Harry's attention. "What? Not impressed with what?"

"This school of yours. Or, in particular, Albus Dumbledore. Time and time again, without fail, you were attacked endlessly by dangerous men. You were lucky during your years, but the simple fact is that the lack of satisfactory security measures and the actions of your headmaster led you into situations that could've killed you on multiple occasions. It seems as if he took a careless approach to your well-being, and that is irritating. I also suspect that the incident with your godfather could've been averted as well with the idea that your headmaster telling you the information you needed to know the second you walked into the world. A lot of casualties could've been avoided if he had made that obvious decision."

Harry bristled at that, even though he knew Ryuzaki had a valid point—he had angrily thrown delicate magical objects across the room yelling his fifteen-year-old head off about the same points. "He hid that from me because of love. He didn't want me to be burdened by that knowledge."

"And the direct result of his desire to keep you innocent and pure from this idea was the death of Sirius Black," Ryuzaki said, matter-of-fact.

"That's not fair. Not all people have the emotional range of a teaspoon when it comes to situations like this, Ryuzaki. Not everyone has the disposition that you do. He couldn't do it, and most others wouldn't have been able to either. Yes, I know that his decision might've caused unnecessary damage, and I remember telling him that before he died, but you can't fault him for his humanity. He loved me, and he didn't want me to know that until I was ready."

Ryuzaki gave him a long look that clearly said you're wrong and I'm right, and you arguing with me is not going to change anything.

Harry sighed. "You're right, I know that. But I don't have to like it."

Again, the silence swept through the room, and Harry decided to get up. He looked for a long while at Ryuzaki's face, hit again by the memory of the previous night and the passion that had
conspired between them. He gave Ryuzaki a kiss on the top of his head, breathed in the scent of his own shampoo, and then stood up and fell upon the bed, exhausted.

He laid there for a couple of moments, and debated on telling Ryuzaki exactly how he felt, but he decided not to. Ryuzaki was probably still internally reeling from what they had done together, and with the stress of the Kira case as well he didn't need to hear it at that particular moment. Besides, Harry didn't even know if he was ready to say it out loud anyway. He loved him, but telling Ryuzaki that was different. The detective wasn't ready to hear it, and Harry wasn't ready to say it.

He fell asleep to a dream of running.

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4 November 2004

"It has to be done, Ryuzaki."

L sighed. He knew that it was becoming a problem. Wammy was walking around, doing his 'normal' duties, but had taken to cornering L whenever he possibly could. It was becoming taxing to lie to him constantly, and L knew that he had to do something before Wammy ended up barging in here for good.

He didn't want Wammy to know about Harry's abilities because of a simple reason: Quillish Wammy was seventy-one-years-old, tired and much too old for all of the complications pertaining to the Kira investigation, and no one else knew that he had already suffered through one heart attack. It had been a while back, and yes, Wammy had been taking very good care of himself since, but it was a major cause of concern for L.

L tried to turn his mind away from that train of thought, but instead he heard himself say to Harry, "We cannot pressure him any more than he already is. He's already had one heart attack, and I fear that the shock of knowing that I'm intimate with a wizard from a completely unknown magical world might send him over the edge."

L hated how he couldn't keep his mental filter stable around Harry. It had become significantly worse since they had had sex, because L had made the decision that he had nothing really to hide from Harry. He had read the entire book on Harry's life, had asked multitudes of questions about the chunks of time that weren't covered in the book due to Rita Skeeter's obliviousness, and now knew everything about this person—although the topic of Ginny Weasley and, worse, Draco Malfoy had proved to be a slight damper. How Harry could think L was attractive when he had been sexually involved with that man was beyond L's thought process, as Draco Malfoy was one of the most attractive men L had ever seen (excluding Harry of course).

Regardless, L was intimate with him, even though they hadn't done more than kiss since L's birthday, and L knew that it was a tiny bit unfair to keep his own life completely hidden. He couldn't exactly tell his own life story to Harry, as it wasn't in his nature, and he didn't go out of his way to talk about it, but he reluctantly answered the questions that Harry had asked. Like how he had become a detective and met Wammy and about how the succession to the L name progressed. The only person who knew as much as Harry now did was Wammy himself; not even the children at Wammy's House knew such stories to the extensive detail that L gave. It was an aspect of his life that was kept hidden from all—but his handler, and Harry seemed grateful for the insight.

"He's already had a heart attack? That means he's a lot more vulnerable towards a deadlier one in the future," stated Harry, his face scrunching up in worry. "But surely knowing that I'm a wizard
wouldn't cause him to have one. I think the knowledge of you not dying if Raito makes a move against you will be more comforting."

"Watari knew that I wasn't dying when he had his first one, and yet the strain of the situation caused a heart attack anyway. I don't want him to be hit with all of that seemingly impossible information, and if you turn the bed into a bunch of rubber ducks like you did for me the other day, you'll frighten him into one."

Harry snorted, most likely at the memory of the rubber duck episode, but then grew serious. "Wait, what situation? I mean, why did he have a heart attack in the first place?"

L hesitated, which Harry saw. "You don't have to tell me or anything. I just want him to survive this too, and I think that Raito might go after him too. I'd like a sensor to be put on him just in case, and there's no way I could do it without telling him about my talents."

L internally sighed. He knew that Raito would deem him a target as well, considering how close he was to L, and he was also worried about Harry's involvement being known because of the same reason. If he found out all of their names or used Rem as a way to eliminate them all, and Harry didn't die in the process, Harry's Master of Death status could be compromised which would prove to be a disastrous problem.

However, the thought about the idea of Wammy being carefully monitored was agreeable. He knew that Wammy wasn't young any more, and he could have a heart attack even without Kira's involvement, and the idea of Harry helping him in his handler's time of need was something to be considered.

"No," L said slowly, wondering if this was a good idea but knowing that he should try to let Harry in more than he was currently. "He...had a heart attack on my twenty-first birthday, four years ago. It was the first time I had had a party of sorts, and the elder children at the House all brought alcohol."

Harry leant forward and took one of L's hands, almost as a silent form of comfort. L was thankful for it, and glanced down at his toes while squeezing the warm fingers in his grasp. He was becoming more comfortable with touching Harry without thinking too hard about it, which was sort of a relief. "One of the boys there, a couple of years younger than me, had quite a bit. He idolised me, and when Wammy and Roger tried to get all of the others into their respective rooms, he followed me. He had always been a bit strange, and we had noticed that he was much too violent and slightly psychotic than we particularly liked. It was one of the main reasons that we didn't allow him the chance to become the successor of the L name, but I knew he had nowhere to go. If we let him out, he'd end up really hurting someone, and I wanted to keep an eye on him."

"What happened?" asked Harry quietly, his emerald eyes intently watching L's face.

L was uncomfortable, and he didn't want to talk any more, but he took a deep breath and said nonchalantly, as if it didn't really matter, "He propositioned me and I declined. He took it personally and got angry."

"What happened?" Harry repeated, his voice taking a darker edge that didn't bode well.

In the same indifferent voice, L said, "He had a knife and he used it."

Harry flinched. "Ah," he said simply, nudging his glasses out of the way and rubbing the bridge of his nose as if in pain. Maybe he was. L suddenly wondered if he had gone too far in telling that particular story, but he found that his thoughts wouldn't stop, nor would his voice.
"Watari found me. I was alone, in the hallway adjoining the upper rooms where all of the main heirs slept. Near, Mello, Matt, and then him. He got me to hospital, found out that I'd live, and then collapsed. He was in hospital longer than I was."

"No place better to have a heart attack than in hospital," said Harry tiredly, and then said, "Who did it?"

"Why does it matter?" asked L, burying his chin in his knees and winding his fingers around Harry's.

"Because I'm going to kill him," Harry stated in a faux-pleasant voice through his teeth, and L's lips curved into a smile. He had never thought that a human being except for Wammy would ever say words like that.

"There's no need. Kira already did," L said off-handedly.

Harry looked up in shock. "Really..." he said, dragging out the word and letting it trail.

"Yes. He left the House in 2002 after I announced my heirs and didn't include him. He ended up planning four murders with the idea that creating the perfect case that I couldn't solve would be the way to beat me. He wanted to commit the crime that the detective L could never solve. A ghost case, if you will. He nearly succeeded."

"Nearly, hm?"

"Very close indeed. The fourth murder was his own suicide, although I wouldn't have known that. I do admit that the case he devised was incredibly perfect, and I think that it would've been unsolvable even for me. He was a genius after all, worthy of his time at the House. However, he got caught at his own game by Naomi Misora, who I had hired to be my eyes and ears of the case, and was arrested after attempting to burn himself alive. He was murdered in prison in late January of this year by Kira for the crimes he committed."

"Kira's killed a lot of the people you've put into prison, hasn't he?" asked Harry tiredly.

L's mind flickered to a particular face, a man that L hadn't put in prison, and he quickly banished that thought, saying casually, "Quite a few of them, yes. But I suppose that's to be expected; I've put a fair few people in prison since I started this career."

"Still can't believe you were eight," remarked Harry with a laugh that was slightly choked. They were both quiet for a moment before Harry continued, "So that's where you got those three scars on your chest, from him stabbing you?"

L hesitated yet again, but then said, "Yes."

"And what about the one behind your ear that you don't like me touching?"

L dropped Harry's hand and stood up, climbing off the bed to search for the book on Wizarding history. It was the only one he hadn't finished. "I don't want to talk about that, Harry."

The emerald eyed man sighed and put his glasses back on, flopping down onto the bed. "That's fine. I'm surprised you told me about...that. That's more than enough. What was his name, anyway?"

L stopped mid-step, narrowed his eyes, and then said, "Beyond Birthday. His name was B, because he was my backup."
That sentence was like sucking on a sour candy, and when Harry said, "I have to go now; I only have half an hour until I have to meet Rakakaro and deal with Rita Skeeter, and I sort of wanted to go early," his mood darkened even more.

"Very well," he said grumpily, walking to the door so he could get something sweet to quell the bitterness on his tongue.

Harry sat up and quickly strode to L, turning him around. His lips crashed against L's with a deep passion, and L responded immediately, burying his fingers in Harry's soft hair. They consumed each other almost greedily, Harry pushing him against the door and pressing against him heavily as if trying to either melt into him or crush him. They disconnected, hovered, and then delved for more, and L could feel his entire body grow taut with that need he had only recently discovered within himself. Harry's hands were everywhere, moving-moving-moving, touching everything he could reach with a burning intensity that shot straight downwards.

L didn't mind, however, and found himself gritting his teeth together when one of Harry's hands unbuttoned L's baggy trousers, pulled down his undergarments, and gripped with intent. A long groan tore itself out of L's throat as Harry began moving his hand quickly, his lips kissing L's so deeply that the detective couldn't breathe.

It didn't take long before L was yanking on Harry's head unconsciously as he cried out, white crossing his vision as he tried in vain to take in oxygen. He bucked his hips, jerking his knee into Harry's arousal as his body arched against the door, and felt a wet heat begin seeping into the denim on his knee.

He drooped against Harry's shoulder as the wizard said in a slightly puzzled, breathless voice, "Where in the hell did that come from?" L blinked rapidly, trying to see something that wasn't blurred and just shrugged in reply, allowing Harry to carry him to the bed and lay them both down. For a long moment, they just tried to catch their breath, L draped over the top of Harry's form like a blanket, before L finally decided to speak, his voice muffled from the fabric of Harry's shirt.

"You have to go, and I have to change."

He forced himself to sit up, his entire body like heavy rubber, but Harry grasped his hips before L could get off. His emerald eyes traced along L's body, causing him to heat up exponentially, and he said in a husky voice, "Well, I don't have to go early, and you are straddling my hips."

L couldn't help but to succumb.
Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Drive

4 November 2004

He was a minute late.

Rakakaro had an expression on his face that said he was about to book it right the hell out of there, while a surly looking Ministry official seemed ready to leave himself, but before they could turn on their heels, Harry was popping into existence and grabbing Rakakaro's arm tightly.

"Don't—ugh—even think about it, Rakakaro," said Harry with a grunt.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Potter!" His accented English squeaked slightly in the middle. "I didn't think you were coming, so I thought I'd go down to the Three Bro—"

"Absolutely not. I am not being caught dead in that place. I don't care if it's cold out here or not, we're dealing with this. Now, tell me exactly what Rita and that old cow Umbridge said, and I'll pay you five hundred Galleons for your time."

Perfectly late, like usual these days, Hermione Granger-Weasley Apparated close to the gate and gave Rakakaro and the silent Ministry wizard a haughty hello that said she was already in a slightly horrid mood. Perhaps mercifully, Rakakaro was looking a bit starry-eyed at the news of getting so much money just to be cooperative.

Too bad he didn't know that Hermione had been approved to erase his memory and raid his Japan house for any evidence he was hiding for collateral, using Legilimency to tie up any possible end.

Harry snickered, getting one nervous look from Rakakaro and one devious one from his best friend.

It took almost thirty minutes for Harry and Hermione to get enough information to be fully satisfied. The two friends glanced at the Shrieking Shack with melancholic expressions—Remus Lupin’s pain, Sirius Black covered in grime and skin stretched tightly over his bones, Voldemort laughing shrilly as he ordered Nagini to kill Severus Snape—before they all Disapparated, Hermione with Derrick (who still looked surly but also star-struck) and Harry with Rakakaro.

Tightness, then a breath of fresh but freezing air as they found themselves in southern Scotland, in exactly the same spot as the Japanese man had pointed out in the magical photograph he had provided. Rakakaro took in a shaky breath, and stayed quiet while Harry and Hermione began
talking to each other in low voices.

"How's Ryuzaki's heartbeat?"

Hermione giggled. "It's fine now. You made me late you know, because I was worrying about what was going on with him. I'm serious, Harry; every single time you ravish him—" Harry grinned a bit manically. "—I keep wondering if he's having a heart attack."

"Well, to be fair we've only had sex twice," said Harry, his grin widening.

"Yes, but his heart is constantly fluctuating. I mean, when you leave the UK and go back there, it's like a constant problem. I can't ever tell if he's having a heart attack of if you're just looking or touching him. It's very frustrating."

"I am so not stopping."

Hermione rolled her eyes and then hissed out a breath, eyebrows crinkling in the middle as she concentrated. "Speaking of that, his heart started beating really fast all the sudden."

Harry's own eyes narrowed. "How bad? Is it bad?"

"It's abnormal. Very fast, but it's steady. It's holding. I don't think it's life-threatening. Something has happened, but he's not having a heart attack. You should call someone, see what's going on."

Harry dug out his phone, his breathing going erratic as he grew increasingly panicked. As he brought it out and prepared to speed-dial Ryuzaki's personal cell, the phone rang.

Well, sort of, because he answered it before it could finish ringing, speaking in Italian (just in case there was someone unfriendly on the other end; as far as the others knew, James Lupin was sick in bed). "God, you scared the hell out of me! What's going on?"

Said detective replied in a dark Italian mutter, "Be deliberately vague. Many people are listening and will recognise specific words despite the language, and I'm sure that the white one isn't oblivious to our conversation."

He's right; Rem probably knows a plethora of languages and she's got great hearing. "Got it."

Harry glanced at Hermione, gestured towards the two eavesdropping men to the side, and watched as she discreetly preformed the Muffliato curse on them. "What's happening there?" he continued, putting it on speaker phone, knowing that they wouldn't be able to overhear the conversation.

"He's starting killing again. It's all over the media, and they're criminals that were publicised after the death a couple of days ago. It's mostly just criminals here, but from another few countries as well. All I know is that he's back, and the white one appears to be on edge."

"So that's why your heart is beating so fast," mentioned Hermione. Harry shot her a bewildered look, and she interpreted it correctly, adding on, "What? I roughly learned Italian a year ago after treating this one bloke. I'm not as good at remembering languages as you are, but I'm fairly decent at it. I also know two more, but they're not from his world."

Harry just shook his head, still a bit taken awares. He really needed to stop avoiding the Wizarding world and spend more time with his faux family. Well, when this case is over, and I'll go see them more. Maybe Ryuzaki'll come, although somehow I think he'll come kicking and glaring at me.

At that sombre thought, he sighed and focussed on the continuing conversation.
"Okay, just keep a lookout on your end. We're about to rendezvous with the party in question and are preparing to deal with this problem on our end. We will call you with an update when—"

"Oh! I have an idea!" exclaimed Harry.

The statement seemed to surprise Hermione, and Ryuzaki sounded curious as he said, "And what is this idea?"

"I'll tell you when I get back, okay? I don't want anyone to overhear it, 'cause it's a freakin' awesome idea. Well, you'll probably find something that makes it faulty because you always do, but I'll run it by you after we get done here, alright?"

"Fair enough. Call me with an update, like you mentioned. I would prefer to be informed. I'm planning on making the announcement later on, so the others can be prepared."

Hermione shot him a confused look, clearly demanding explanation, and Harry said, "Alrighty then. I'll run this idea I have at the hormonal one, and then I have to fill her in on what's going on. She might bite my head off in the process, though."

"Shut up you prat," seethed Hermione.

"Very well. I shall see you soon, then," said Ryuzaki, his tone guarded, but Harry caught the hidden amusement.

"Good-bye," said Hermione, already turning away to mutter the counter-curse.

Harry closed his eyes and said softly, "Yeah, I'll see you soon and we can talk."

"Good-bye."

"Bye..." I love you.

The call was disconnected, and Harry turned to the two others. "Alright," he said with another sigh. "Let's get this show on the road."

***

L Lawliet fought the urge to throw something across the room.

He was not in the mood to deal with the rest of the investigation team. He was in the mood for locking himself up in a room, banging his head against the wall, and then pouting until Harry decided to come back and fill him in on what happened.

Perhaps unfortunately, L knew that such an act would be considered losing his cool, and therefore didn't hide out, give himself a concussion, or pout. Besides, he had been acting unprofessional—L almost rolled his eyes at that; when was he ever 'professional'?—as of late with the team and with Wammy.

L hesitated, cocked his head, and then turned in his chair to address the team.

"I have an announcement to make."

This caught the attention of the worn out police members and the shinigami. Wammy looked a tiny bit alarmed, although the others wouldn't have been able to see through his calm and friendly façade. After all, L usually ran his plans with Wammy, using the extra mind, but as Harry was around...
L looked up at the ceiling, sticking his thumb against his lip. He had made up his mind on *that* front too, but he needed to talk to Harry first.

It was pretty simple logic: either Wammy would have a heart attack learning about Harry's abilities, immediately being resurrected or by said wizard, or he would have a heart attack as a result of Kira and-or the shinigami and he could possibly die. Either way, Wammy could have a heart attack; even though two was worse than one, it would be better for L's handler to be safe instead of in the potential danger of the second option.

Death was permanent, and L couldn't face that.

He wouldn't.

L steeled himself silently and then said loudly, "James-san will be the new L if I die."

The shinigami's eyes widened dramatically, and her jaw went slack. L glared at her, watching Raito's reaction out of the corner of his eye as well. The young eighteen-year-old didn't make much of a face, but his eyes steeled. L could practically hear his mind working, probably to find a way to get at Harry.

Little did he know that such an act with the Death Note was impossible.

L internally smiled, that little creepy one that sent shivers down spines. However, he did have a bad feeling about how the entire escapade would turn out. He shot a glance at Yagami Soichiro, blinked once, and then allowed his mind to wander while taking in the atmosphere around him.

As his thoughts flickered in and out, his brain working around every detail and potential plan he could possibly come up with, he said softly in Russian, "Watari, I'd like to speak with you in a couple of hours, alone."

The old man nodded stiffly and then presented a tray of truffles and éclairs after pulling off the domed top. L took them with his delicate grasp, watching as Wammy poured a glass of tea and deposited a mound of sugar cubes in a tiny blue bowl. His hands were shaking slightly, almost not noticeable, but the detective caught it very quickly.

Taking a sip of tea after sweetening it thickly, L pondered and contemplated...

...then internally sighed.

*Why do I feel like something bad is coming?*

***

L and Wammy stared at each other.

It was a bit shy of twenty-two o'clock and the sky was dark, but Harry's room was brightly lit. The computer hummed in the corner directly in front of Wammy's sitting form, the cameras diligently watching to see what Raito and the rest of the team were up to. The shinigami had perched herself onto the sofa in the corner, peering over Matsuda and reading the article on Amane Misa's new movie that was being released.

L himself was also perched, but it was on the corner of Harry's bed. His hands were lightly placed on his knees, his expression carefully composed as they waited.

Wammy, L could see, didn't know what was going on. He had been watching the cameras diligently, not only for the team's sake but to spy on L's activities—that much was certain at least.
He knew that 'Harry NoLastName' had not left the room, and yet L could tell by the expression on his face that he was on edge because Harry, in fact, wasn't here.

"Where is he?" Wammy had asked, and L had replied, "He is gone, but he will be back shortly."

The phone rang.

L reached for his phone rather slowly, almost as if his arm was made of heavy rubber, before pressing the speaker button and letting his hand return to his knee. "Hello, Harry," the detective said quietly, his voice low and his charcoal grey eyes not leaving Wammy's face.

"Um, is Watari in my bedroom because of what I think he's in my bedroom for?" said Harry's voice, tired and slightly sharp. L's eyes flickered to the phone, his chest going tight in something he likened to fear, but quickly returned his attention to his handler, whose eyes were searching the room for cameras or a hidden Harry with no avail.

"Yes, I have exhausted all of my previous notions and have decided that telling him would be the best possible outcome." L hesitated slightly before adding, "Are you quite alright?"

Harry gave a small laugh. "Oh, I'm fine. Hermione's fantastic at healing, so I'll fortunately live. Although I've never fancied being hit with the Sircumsempra by Rita Skeeter, I'm not bleeding any more, so that's good."

Wammy opened his mouth to speak but L interrupted, "She retaliated? Are you sure he's okay, Mrs. Granger-Weasley?"

The lilting British tone of Harry's best friend piped up, "Call me Hermione, Ryuzaki, and yeah, he's fine. On another note, he filled me in on the plan, and I think that there might be complications. I personally think that this Rem being you speak of will blab to Kira if given the—oh blast it, let's just go down there and do this in Japan. If you Splinch me, though, I'll kill you Harry Potter."

"Yeah, yeah, I hear you runnin' your mouth. But you're right. Watari, try to relax and don't be startled; there's going to be a very loud sound in a second, and I don't want to freak you out as much as possible, okay?"

Wammy opened his mouth to speak again, but then there was a loud crack and two people appeared out of nowhere in less-than-presentable appearances. Hermione looked windswept, but otherwise unhurt except for a small bruise on her neck, but it was Harry that was alarming. The sleeve of his thick, long sleeved blue shit was ripped to shreds, the fabric stained a deep purple from blood. L could see his skin, the golden flesh covered in dried vermilion, and a few pearly lines indicating more new scars on Harry's body to discover.

L didn't even register that he had jumped up and had already taken the arm in his long-fingered grasp. He also didn't pay any attention to Hermione, who was mouthing words under her breath to try and calm Wammy down using her magic.

L trusted Harry, and Harry trusted Hermione with his life.

"Hey, I'm fine," Harry said, using his free hand to brush a lock of dark hair from L's eyes. He really needed to cut it before it got too long; the front was already creeping past his nose and the ends brushing his shoulder blades lightly. "Hermione's very good at what she does, and we've had to deal with this previously secret curse of Snape's going global for years. She's been healing it for ages now, and she happened to have a Blood-Replenishing potion on her too. I'm not even tired except from having a long day filled with excitement."
"Excitement? You're covered in blood, Harry," L said, making a conscious effort to stay calm and continue to be almost clinically detached in front of both Hermione and Wammy. He shot a glance to his handler, who looked relatively calm as Hermione spoke softly to him even though his body language screamed that he was more distraught and anxious than he let on.

"Talk to Watari, while I get cleaned up a bit. I think this was a bad way to introduce ourselves, and he'll be more comfortable with a friendly face. He's never met Hermione, and even though it's pretty obvious she's a good person, she's also pretty hard-headed and self-important occasionally, so make sure she doesn't mess it up. She loses her patience for us less intelligent folk, because we don't get things as fast as you do. Probably why she likes you so much."

L nodded after filtering that comment and turned to Wammy, looking at his hands with an internal grimace before reaching for the hand sanitiser on the desk. His eyes scanned the computer, watching as Raito worked diligently at the computers while Soichiro nodded off on the sofa, and then again focussed on Wammy, interjected where he believed necessary and filling in the blanks of the case.

It took a while, even though the description they gave him was quite basic and non-descriptive in a way to save time, and Wammy didn't become more comfortable as the lecture progressed. However, by the time Hermione and L—and Harry, after a while—had finished, he said calmly, "Well, this explains a lot."

Enough of that, then, L thought. Let him process. "So what plan have you thought up?"

Hermione was the one who answered. "Well, he wants to use another language like Italian or French to talk to Rem. It's a language that the others don't understand, so Harry would be free to question her without interruption or the others being able to comprehend."

L didn't have to think. "I've thought along that particular process myself, and it's not possible. Even if you speak in another language, there's no certainty that Raito won't memorise phrases and look them up later, especially since he's free to leave the compound now. Also, it's not certain that the shinigami won't let Kira in on what you speak to it about. She could immediately tell Raito or Amane about your conversation and enlighten them on your position."

"What position? Being what he is?" asked Wammy, his heavy eyes narrowing.

"Er, no sir. I'm the Master of Death," said Harry simply, ignoring the small choke from Wammy. "It'd be bad if he knew that I can save you lot from heart attacks and am immune to the power of the Death Note. But back to the original point, I'd like to talk to her. I think I need to clear some things up. I'm curious on whether or not she is forced to obey my commands. She's made the indication of not being able to hide things from me, so I'm wondering if I can just waltz up to her and say 'Oi, you aren't allowed to kill L and Watari, nor are you allowed to tell Kira. Oh, and who is Kira, by the way, and care to mention the Second Kira as well?' or something along those lines."

L considered, and then turned to Harry and said, "Fine. First, we'll need to discuss what questions to ask so the shinigami doesn't get any ideas of what we're trying to plan, in a way to keep her as much in the dark as possible. You can speak to her tomorrow when you finish your business in England. How did that come along besides the clear fact that you were injured? Has the article been stopped?"

"Yeah, Hermione was totally badass," snickered Harry, putting an arm around her tiny shoulders. She rolled her eyes, nudged him none-too-lightly with her hip, and then corrected adamantly, "What he means is that the problem has been dealt with. I used Legilimency to make sure she
hadn't hidden copies of her research or told anyone about her story, and we tied up the loose ends by deleting her memories of the entire article. There are no more copies, as I made very well sure that Rita wasn't hiding anything, and I made sure that Rakakaro wasn't lying either. The others, Bonacello and von Temp, have also been Obliviated. The only problem we have left to deal with is Dolores Umbridge and the *Daily Prophet*. She told them that there was a story about Harry Potter that she was working on, and that it would be out tomorrow, the fifth of November. We have to go make sure that they forget that little tidbit as well."

"Isn't Dolores Umbridge part of the Ministry? Couldn't your father-in-law, as Minister, deal with her accordingly?" asked L, cocking his head and biting his thumbnail gently.

Hermione sighed and said, "She heard about Harry being back in Britain, talking to Mr. Weasley. There are not many reasons that Harry would be caught dead in a public place like the Ministry, being as famous as he is, so Umbridge filled in the blanks. It's...er...pretty obvious from these pictures that you're important to him, so she used her judgement and her judgement happened to be correct. She left the country a couple of days ago. Our government is tracking her down as we speak, with a warrant issued for her retrieval by the Auror Department. She's already been in Azkaban once, for her Nazi-like regimen against Muggle-borns like me, so it was only a matter of time before she stuck her slimy foot back into her mouth and caused problems. It's like she can't help herself. It's a bit pathetic, and a whole *lot* of ridiculous. But anyway, this time we're searching on the grounds of a breach of International Secrecy with three foreign countries. It's mostly just an excuse to get her in, and then we can deal with her however necessary. It seems Azkaban hasn't really changed her attitude, if you ask me."

Harry sniffed. "I say we give her a blood quill and force her to write lines until the message has sunk in. See how she likes it. Instead of *I must not tell lies*, we could have her write *I am a snivelling, sneaky, smelly toad who is miserable because I am a fuc—*"

"Wouldn't fit on her hand," Hermione interjected, although her expression seemed as if she fancied the idea. "I'd like to give her the Kiss, but I don't think even Mr. Weasley will go for that."

"I could always kill her," Harry said with an oddly hopeful edge to his voice.


Wammy blinked.

Harry sighed.

Hermione, who had ignored that conversation, continued, "But we'll get to that when we get to it. It depends on what she does in the time it takes us to find her. If she's just hiding out, waiting for the non-existent article to show up, it'll be a mediocre sentence, probably in Azkaban again. If she, say, comes here and tries to kill you like she's been threatening for *years* or comes after my family, then she might be in a bit lick of trouble. I'll send her to the Dementors myself, while Ron and Harry fight off anyone who tries to stop us."

Harry nodded determinedly. "If she tries to so much as touch any of us, we'll deal with her. Personally, I don't think she's *that* stupid, but Dolores Umbridge won't be able to show her face in Wizarding Britain without being arrested on the spot. I'm not letting her get away with this, and she might react in that insane way she's patented over her course of terrorising us."

Hermione frowned. "I don't think she'd be that thick-headed either, but she's done worse things while put under pressure. When we arrested her the first time, she nearly killed a couple Ministry officials in the duel that took place afterwards. She claimed that she thought they were rogue Death Eaters, but we all know she was pressured. It might be wise for my family to lay low for a
bit. Perhaps reinstate the Fidelius Charm on the Burrow and live there until we catch her. I have six children, so I don't want to take any chances despite the minuscule nature of it."

"That might be a good idea," said Harry with a nod. "Hide the kids, Ron, and yourself. Don't go out unless you absolutely have to, because you can't protect all the children and yourself at the same time. Tell Mr. Weasley to be on his guard, and make sure Ron knows that Stunning her doesn't work as well as something like *Petrificus Totalus.*"

Hermione laughed.

L shot a look at Wammy and said, "There are books that you can read, the same ones that I've been reading. Also, I'd like a sensor to be put on you, so we can know if you have a heart attack in the near future." L lifted up his wrist awkwardly. "I have one on. You cannot see it, but I can feel it. It measures my heartbeat and makes sure I'm still alive."

Hermione giggled, and L tried not to cringe. He just barely succeeded.

"Shinigami and wizards, Ryuzaki?" muttered Wammy. "I'm getting much too old for this excitement."

L looked at him, bowing his head slightly and placing his hands on Wammy's shoulder, feeling the warmth seep into his fingertips. He watched Harry and Hermione bicker back and forth, their eyes glittering with mirth and love for each other, and then let out a breath he hadn't realised he was holding.

"I know, but it will all be concluded soon. We're going to win this, Watari."

Wammy sighed and said softly, "Yes, but at what cost?"

*At what cost, indeed?*
Chapter Twenty-Three

Bells

5 November 2004

L heard bells.

It wasn't the first time he had heard them. Usually it meant that something bad was coming or even happening at that moment, and it was a constant ringing that did not bode well for the detective. He knew that it was all in his head, but it didn't stop him from feeling even more on edge than he had been during the entirety of the Kira investigation. After all, every time he had heard them, either in his head or in his real life, a very bad situation occurred either to him, Wammy, or one of the children at the House. Now, at the present moment, he was eye-deep in a case that he was ninety-two per-cent sure he was going to die solving, even if Harry could resurrect him, and that in itself was a cause of concern.

It was giving him a headache; the constant ring that echoed in his skull uncomfortably, making him tightly scrunch his eyes and clench his fists in an attempt to block out the noise. Obviously, it wasn't working, and concentrating so intently on extinguishing the ringing was causing his entire head, face, and neck to throb mercilessly. This was the last thing he needed to deal with.

He glanced down through squinted eyelids, taking in Harry's form. He was stretched out with nothing but pyjama bottoms on, his bare arms reaching out towards opposite sides of the bed. His toned chest inflated and deflated evenly, his breathing deep and calm in sleep. His face was smooth and relaxed, eyes flickering back and forth underneath his eyelids as he dreamt, and L was taken aback not for the first time about how he had become so fortunate as to know the man before him.

Focussing on Harry instead of his own internal conflict made the never-ending sound of chiming bells fade into a background noise, and he unclenched his hands to brush an index finger down Harry's soft skin. He started at the throat, tracing the hard bone of his sternum before making his way across his left clavicle bone. He allowed his finger to trail along his broad shoulder, down his arm, before reaching his relaxed hand and grasping the digits lightly. His fingers were so sturdy and strong, so unlike L's long and spindly ones. Even in the dimness of the room (the only light coming from the cracked door of Harry's bathroom) he saw how their skin tones differed.

He allowed his mind to return to the subject he had been thinking over before the bells had started ringing in his head. He was going over multitudes of potential problems that could occur if Kira was to make a move against Wammy and L himself. Furthermore, he was also running through Harry and Hermione's little idea, which revolved around Hermione getting the blueprints and
memorising Wammy's pattern between the Harry's room and Wammy's personal terminal so Hermione could get to him while Harry dealt with L's more public heart attack accordingly. She could use a Disillusionment Charm to rush through the complex without being seen, while Harry could use the Invisibility Cloak to hide L's 'body' while giving an excuse like *I've already moved the body to another room.*

He wanted Hermione here now, if he was perfectly frank with himself. He had a bad feeling that chose to make itself known through those *damned* bells, and he wouldn't feel comfortable until she was here, watching over Wammy just in case something did happen. For all he knew, Kira could—

His mind was working so sluggishly that it was slightly alarming. He figured it had something to do with the headache and the simple fact that he hadn't slept in four days, staying conscious due to an almost obscene amount of coffee, tea, and sugar.

He brushed the knuckles of Harry's hand with his fingertips, memorising the feel of his hands. They were warm, slightly rough, and large, with a light brush of dark hair and slightly protruding veins along the top. L liked Harry's hands, knew what sort of acts they were capable of. These hands could be gentle and demanding, friendly and sensational, and L found them to be one of Harry's best qualities, preceded by only those emerald eyes and that bright smile. L couldn't get enough of them; he enjoyed watching them clench and relax, and was blown away by how they could run along L's body and cause his blood to turn to fire and his skin to burn with energy.

L lay down on his side, his knees bent only slightly, cradling Harry's hand and forearm with his own hands. He knew that he needed to allow his mind to rest after so long without the chance to do so, and he was very comfortable despite the headache still raging and the bells still tolling. He blinked repeatedly, the time spent with his eyes closed increasing steadily, before he finally dropped of the edge of consciousness and drifted off into nothingness.

***

Harry was startled awake from his surprisingly pleasant dream by a small noise.

He tightened his arms around Ryuzaki, not exactly surprised as much as pleased that the detective was curled so snugly in Harry's grip, and listened closely, his blurry gaze flicking around the room for even a fuzzy sense of movement. For a long moment, he heard nothing further, but then the small noise that Harry placed as a small sound of discomfort came from Ryuzaki's closed lips. Harry's heart thumped terribly, his stomach instantly twisting into knots, and he gently shook Ryuzaki's shoulders. The older of the two inhaled sharply when his dark eyes snapped open, his fingers quickly wrapping around Harry's wrists and *squeezing.* It hurt, and Harry grimaced, saying in a voice barely hiding his discomfort, "Let go."

Ryuzaki blinked a few times, very slowly, before he finally loosened up his grip and dropped his hands, a small frown creeping up on his lips. He averted his eyes, the charcoal orbs going slightly glassy as he became lost in his thoughts, and Harry watched with concern. Had that been Ryuzaki's version of a nightmare? He didn't know, but it was tearing at his chest to see the detective so clearly affected by what his subconscious nature had dreamt.

He didn't ask the cliché question "Are you okay" nor did he deem it appropriate to speak. Instead, after circulating his wrists, satisfied with the small pops they made, all he did was wrap his arms around Ryuzaki's shoulders and wait it out, knowing that Ryuzaki would talk about it if he wished.

Harry didn't know how long they lay there, silent and just breathing, before Ryuzaki said, "I want
you to be on your guard today Harry, with your friends and on my end as well."

The wizard's eyes narrowed. "Why? Is something wrong?"

Ryuzaki breathed against Harry's neck, moist and hot and even, for a long moment before he said softly, "Something is going to happen today. Bad things happen when I hear bells. It's giving me a headache."

*Bells?* "What does that mean?" Harry asked, burying his nose in Ryuzaki's hair and breathing in the scent of Harry's green tea and alfalfa shampoo. He was considering having Ryuzaki bring in the shampoo and stuff that he had been using before he had been showering with Harry, mostly because Harry remembered that smell as it had been positively *intoxicating.*

"I don't feel like telling you that," said Ryuzaki in a low voice, and Harry nodded, snuffing his disappointment. He knew that Ryuzaki had a long, long way to go before he felt entirely comfortable being as open as Harry was now, but it didn't stop him from feeling let down.

"Well," Harry eventually said, drawling out the word, breathing deeply and growing increasingly uncomfortable. His disappointment was being slowly overwhelmed by the emerging sense of something being off, and it was making Harry feel on edge. Perhaps it was just the tension in Ryuzaki's thin shoulders or the quietly spoken words, but Harry *knew* that today was going to be the day, although he wasn't sure what *today* even meant at the moment. He eventually continued, "We've pretty much dealt with the article. We have to find Umbridge though. I mean, there's no telling what she'll do. But you're *sure* that you think something's coming? Do you think it's Kira?"

Ryuzaki didn't speak for a long time. His hands reached up to press his fingertips against Harry's chest, the digits cold but comforting, and Harry's heart thudded heavily. Ryuzaki was right; something bad was coming, and Harry felt the sudden urge to just steal Ryuzaki away and protect him away from this world, where Kira couldn't touch him and no one would threaten him. He knew that was impossible, but he wished for it just the same.

Finally, he said in a voice so quiet Harry had to strain to hear him, "I don't know. From what I've read about that woman, she's never made a move herself without a very good reason. It's more in her psychological profile that she would hire someone or use magic to manipulate her hand, and I don't think she'll be able to get to us this quickly. Pressured or no, I think it might take her a couple of days to get her bearings, to react in a particular way that would cause problems for us. We need to be on our guard, but as of now she is of lesser concern to us than Kira."

Despite the gravely important topic of conversation, Harry's lips were slowly creeping into a smile. He wasn't sure if Ryuzaki had consciously noticed that he had started speaking about them both as a unit instead of two singular people, using words like 'we' and 'us', but Harry himself felt a sort of contented happiness. Yes, his entire body was growing increasingly aware of the twinge of apprehension for the day to come, and yes he was worried nearly to panicking about Ryuzaki's well-being, but he felt at ease just then, holding the detective's thin body snugly in his arms.

Harry let one of his hands wander to Ryuzaki's chin, coaxing him to look up at Harry. Troubled, apprehensive emerald eyes caught Ryuzaki's wide, closed-off charcoal ones, and Harry leant down to press a soft, chase kiss against the elder's lips.

Ryuzaki mumbled against Harry's mouth, his breath hot against the sensitive skin, "I think you should be here today, just in case."

"Anything you want," Harry replied softly, kissing him again and grasping the back of his head gently. "Even if it turns out to be nothing, I'm not leaving this compound."
Ryuzaki hesitated, his ragged, bitten-off nails slightly scraping Harry's chest as his hands tensed. Then, after a few heartbeats, he averted his eyes and whispered, "Thank you."

They lay in silence for a while, their lips still lightly pressed against each other's, before Harry said calmly, "I'll use the cloak to watch you, just in case. I need to get a hold of Hermione and Mr. Weasley; if it is Kira, then we need her here since I won't be able to Apparate her and she can't go that far herself, and Mr. Weasley can order Aurors to watch the family while she's gone and search for Umbridge. Then, if something does happen, I'll be able to worry about keeping you alive and keeping you hidden from the others without the added pressure of reaching Watari in time to get his heart beating again. Can't wait too long, after all, because then he could have brain damage and that would suck."

Those dark eyes rolled up from staring blankly at Harry's shoulder blades as he said, "Yes, that would be unfortunate."

Harry paused, thinking, and asked, "Can you see what time it is? I don't wanna turn around to see the clock."

Ryuzaki wiggled a bit, trying to crane his neck to see the digital clock behind him, and said, "It says thirteen past five in the morning."

"That means it's twenty-one o'clock in England." Harry sighed once and then reluctantly stood up. He stretched languidly, looking down upon the pale form of the man he loved, and then said with a bit of trepidation, "I'm going to go to Hermione's house. She probably won't move to the Burrow until tomorrow morning, but I'm sure that Ron can handle that himself. I want to get her here as soon as possible."

"Why the tone, Harry?"

Harry snorted, then said, "D'you want to come with me? To London?"

Ryuzaki gave Harry a long look, his expression carefully blank despite the intensity in his eyes, and dead-panned, "You want me to disappear into thin air, travel 9536 kilometres as a mass of scrambled cells, and then appear in the middle of your friends' home, where there are at least six children either running around or crying themselves into a germ-infested fiasco, all to pick up your friend and bring her back here because I'm being irrational?"

Harry laughed and said in a teasing voice, "Yep. Perfect analysis, there."

Harry could see Ryuzaki swallow thickly before he said with a barely noticeable nervous edge in his tone, "Are you sure this is a good idea?"

"I've Apparated Muggles before with great success. I'm not going to let anything happen to you, especially something as ridiculous as Apparating." Harry laughed again, and continued, "You don't have to go, of course, if you honestly don't want to. I'm just saying that I promise that I'll be extra careful with you." His expression changed, softened, and he sat back down on the bed, caressing Ryuzaki's impossibly soft skin with his thumb. "Besides, Teddy's been staying with the Weasleys for about a week now and you did express a fascination with his ability. Since it's still early-ish and he's older than the others, although that doesn't really matter with those Weasley children, he'll probably want to show off for you. Well, I'm going to go get in the shower. Feel free to join me if you want to go."

Harry leant down, pressed a lingering kiss to Ryuzaki's lips, and then stood back up, heading to the bathroom to get ready, yawning widely along the way. He heard the bed creak behind him before a hand timidly grasped his own, squeezing lightly.
Harry smiled.

***

"Take a deep breath."

"Why?"

"C'mon, just do it?"

"Will I not be able to breathe?"

"No, and it's a bit uncomfortable, but it only takes a second. Just take a deep breath."

"Uncomfortable how?"

"Okay, I get that you're nervous, but you know how it works."

"From a wizard's standpoint, not from a normal person's."

"Great, you don't think I'm normal. Thanks for that lovely little insult."

"I am not comfortable with this."

"If you don't want to go, then that's fine. I told you that."

"No. I'm just apprehensive. Humans aren't supposed to be able to do this."

"Thanks for that lovely little insult too."

"Okay. Deep breath, you say?"

"Yes. Are you ready?"

"...no."

"Alright, on the count of three? One."

"I am going to die."

"Don't be ridiculous. Two."

"No, this is going to kill me. My head will get Splinched. In half."

"Okay, Mr. Morbid, deep breath..."

"No!"

"Three!"

Crack!

***

L's legs gave out on him when they hit solid ground.

Harry caught him before he could fall, but it didn't stop L from taking in huge, unflattering breaths as he tried to keep his latest sugary snack stationary in his stomach, just knowing that his body
was now stretched out grotesquely and he was going to—

A shrill scream came from L’s direct left, followed immediately by a massive crash.

His body lurched, his wide eyes frantically searching for what was going on, and Harry held on tighter, bellowing, "Rose, that piano could've hit us!"

"I'm sorry!" cried a high female voice, "I didn't mean to! I mean, it was an accident!"

There was a breakout of laughter and Harry exhaled loudly, steering L towards a couch and sitting him down. "Alright, I have to fix the house, okay? She just threw a baby grand piano out the window with some accidental magic, so I've gotta make sure no one saw it. I can't imagine that they did, because Hermione's pretty nuts about security." He paused, cocked his head, and then said slowly, "...are you going to be okay? I know this is a bit too much to take in, but I didn't imagine that she'd be in here. I figured they'd all be eating or terrorising the cat or something."

L took a moment to try to control his hyperventilation and get his broken mask back into suitable shape before saying in a forced-calm voice, "I am okay."

Harry nodded, caressed L's cheek, and then said, "Yeah, I doubt it." He sat down, put a hand around L's thin shoulders, and then said loudly, "Oi, Teddy, I know you and the twins are snickering over there. You come over here, and go get your mother, Claudia, if she's not already barrelling her way—"

"Rose! You threw the piano out the window?" came Hermione's voice from another room, just as L finally felt calm enough to breathe properly and take in the room. His eyes took in the damage, the black baby grand half out the window in a mess of broken glass and keys, before he averted his gaze towards the obviously flustered woman with a sleeping baby in her arms. She waved her wand, careful not to wake the child, and fixed the entire problem within half a second.

L felt a bit faint.

Hermione glanced over at Harry and L and frowned. "Hello, Harry, Ryuzaki. Did something happen? Your heart went funny, but I figured..." She laughed, causing Harry's cheeks to go a bit pink and L to internally cringe. "Well, anyway, it's nice to see you here. I suppose there's a reason I've been honoured with your presence."

A young boy snickered and said, "Please, Auntie. Uncle Harry's weird."

"Oh shush, lad," admonished Hermione, wagging her finger at him. The young child stepped out of the shadows, and L had to fight the urge to drop his jaw.

Well, for starters, the kid had purple skin. For a long moment, he just stared, his eyes so wide that it was hurting his face, and watched as his hair changed from bright neon pink to brown to a lime green that clashed horribly with his skin. His eyes fluctuated between green and yellow, eventually stopping at the latter, and his ears elongated to the point of being a foot long.

"Stop freaking him out, Teddy," drawled Harry, almost as if bored, but his voice sparkled with mirth.

The child's features went to a semblance of normality, his entire body growing lanky as his face evened out. His skin went a deep gold, his hair a caramel colour, and his eyes a bright hazel. L blinked twice, still taken aback, before his eyes narrowed and he said, "Hmm, he does look like Raito-kun when he's appears as such."

The young boy raised a slender eyebrow and said, "Okay, you're weird. I'm going to the loo."
And with that, he turned on his heel and actually strutted out.

Harry rolled his eyes and said with amusement, "Well, he reminds me more of Sirius every time I see him, and just to think Teddy's only six."

Ron took that moment to barrel into the room and say loudly, "I heard a really big crash and a scream and—oh hello Harry's boyfriend."

"He has a name, Ronald," Hermione snapped, huffing under her breath before leaving the room in a swish of bottle-green robes.

"Sort of has a name, and he's not my boyfriend. What are we, in secondary school?" remarked Harry.

"Well, what in the hell is he then?"

Harry opened his mouth to retort, but L spoke up in an uninterested voice, "This is not why we have come here. We must speak with you and your wife immediately, without outside presence."

Ron shrugged and yelled loudly, "Alright, if there's a kid anywhere near this room for the next hour, you won't get those chocolate frogs I promised."

There was a scurry of footsteps, one of the female twins waving shyly at the detective before disappearing into a hidden nook close to the doorway, red hair flying.

Hermione stepped back in the room, beginning to wave her wand again—Muffliato and the Imperturbable Charm, if L heard properly—and eventually sat down on the couch opposite Harry and L. She closed her eyes briefly, taking a couple of deep breaths, before she said, "Alright, now that the babies are asleep and the children can't overhear, why the impromptu visit?"

"We need you at the complex for the day," stated Harry.

Hermione's warm brown eyes narrowed. "I thought we were going to go on a manhunt for Umbridge and make sure the Prophet doesn't go a bit nutty. And I was planning on moving the kids to the Burrow tomorrow."

"Change of plans. We have reason to suspect that Kira might make a move, and we need you around just in case. It does take a bit of time to get to Watari, after all. Can you do that, and leave the move to Ron? Maybe Mr. Weasley could have some officials stalk the Prophet just to make sure. I don't think it'll be a problem, and I'm sure Ron can deal with the move. Ask for Auror protection if you feel like you need to."

Hermione looked back and forth between L and Harry before she nodded once, all business. "What time is it over there?" After Harry answered, she continued, "Okay, so we need to leave now. It's probably a good thing, having the time difference. Ron, can you handle getting the children to the Burrow?"

"Sure, sure, I'm fully capable of doing things on my own, Hermione. Jeez, give me some freakin' credit..."

Harry turned to L and whispered, "So as we leave them to their bickering, we have to go back now. Told you we wouldn't stay in the germ-infested house for long."

L glared at the emerald eyed wizard.
"You ready?" asked Harry, grinning at L's expression while grasping his hands and helping him up. Immediately, L's entire body tensed and his hands unconsciously began shaking, not at all excited about going back that way. Even at the thought, he could feel his stomach clench around the two slices of cake he had had after leaving the shower, threatening to come up the way L definitely didn't want them to, and his form began shaking quite visibly.

"Can I fly instead?" asked L in an uncharacteristically small voice, knowing that he couldn't because it'd take too much too long and he had to watch Raito. The thought was almost amusing, because L very much disliked flying despite the fact that he was constantly flying in aeroplanes around the globe. Therefore the idea of preferring an aeroplane rather than doing...that again was slightly shocking, yet very-very-very agreeable.

Harry sighed and wrapped his strong arms around L's body. He whispered softly in L's ear, "I'm sorry, especially since you seem to dislike it so much, but we have to get back now. I'm going to take you first, and then I'll follow immediately with Hermione after she says goodnight to all the children. Take a deep breath, okay?"

"Wait," L said weakly, fighting for breath as he began hyperventilating again. "What about—"

"No Portkeys if you think Apparating is bad. Trust me. Other than flying and taking ten, fifteen hours to get back to Japan, this is the way to go."

L felt an urge to whine, but he quelled it and gritted his teeth.

"Alright Ryuzaki. Deep breath, one...two...three!"

Pressure, tightness, shoving him through, body too big for the spiral, can't breathe, can't see, can't think, the spinning, everything clenching and being stretched, spasm, pressure—

L's knees bucked and he fell to the ground, automatically reaching for the bin close to the desk to retch violently. The force of it caused his eyes to water, the salty liquid dripping down his cheeks, and the bells clanged louder and louder as his brain tried to piece itself back together. A gentle hand brushed his hair away from his face while the other held a damp, cool cloth to his clammy skin, cooling down his cheeks and wiping away the sick-induced tears.

Afterwards, he was pulled onto a warm embrace, feeling a strange tingling in his mouth as Harry used his wand to wash away the bitter, sour taste. Regardless, he still wanted to brush his teeth at least a dozen times and sterilise himself in a blistering hot shower for at least an hour. If he could've mustered up the energy and drive to do so, he would've, but at that moment, he was content to just close his eyes to stop the room from spinning and try to even his breathing out. His head pounded in sync to his rapid heartbeat, and his stomach rocked dangerously as if he was seasick.

It took a while, but the shaking eventually faded to an occasional shudder and his heart maintained a steady beat. His eyes opened, and he was relieved that the room was not spinning like a top on straight methamphetamine any more.

L lifted himself and leant heavily on Harry, blinking rapidly as he tried to focus. His head was positively throbbing; he honestly felt as if his head was going to be pounded into a minuscule little speck of brain matter.

In a hoarse voice, he choked out, "Never again, never again."

Harry pulled him into a tight embrace and replied, "I absolutely agree. We'll fly from now on, or we'll just take a car. I'm sorry; I shouldn't have asked you to come."
L debated on hitting him, but decided that it would take too much work and probably wouldn't be very effective anyway. "Just...when you go to get Hermione, will you ask her if she has anything for a headache? That added to the bells is not helping the constant pummelling I'm currently feeling."

"Alright, that's fine. I'm going to go get her now. Do you need help getting to—"

"I'm fine," L insisted, already annoyed enough with his reaction to something that Harry and Hermione seemed to do without blinking, and fought his way up onto shaky legs. As he made his way to the bathroom, he heard the sharp crack behind him and finally let out a groan of pure misery, thankful for the privacy at that moment.

He proceeded to grab his toothbrush in a sturdy grip and brush his teeth over and over and over again.

And then again for good measure.

***

Ryuzaki made a disgusted face and gagged at the bitter taste of the potion.

Harry rubbed the detective's shoulder blades soothingly while calling Watari, filling him in on their situation. He was to meet Hermione at his private terminal, and then they would proceed to stay in there all day (while Hermione probably bored him half to death with her curiosity about how everything worked).

Meanwhile, Hermione was already grabbing the cloak from the end table, and when Harry hung up she said, "Alright, I'd prefer if you led me there, and since I haven't had much time with the twins to study the layout of this place. It's still fairly early, so it should be okay."

Ryuzaki nodded, and so Harry and Hermione both got under the cloak and disappeared. After a small blink from Ryuzaki, they began making their way out of Harry's living space, following the detective as he led the way to Watari's terminal. They had to fight to keep up, as Ryuzaki had long legs and didn't have the added problem that Harry and Hermione did, which was keeping their entire bodies covered. It was quite the feat, as both of them were fully grown adults now, but they managed.

When they reached the door, Ryuzaki opened it and walked in, waiting for them to slip past him before sliding the door shut. He stood, his posture wretched, and Watari turned around right as Hermione pulled the cloak off.

The aged features on Watari's usually calm face twisted into worry, and he asked softly in Japanese, "What's the matter, Ryuzaki?"

Looking at the detective, it was pretty easy to see that his face was unusually pale and the dark bags were blacker than usual. It probably had to do with the headache, which seemed to still be causing him pain if he judged the tightened skin around L's eyes, but the 'bells' and the vomiting episode probably didn't help matters.

"What is it?" said Watari, his voice growing even more concerned, but Ryuzaki just shook his head, gave a long glance to Hermione, and then pulled Harry close. For a long moment, he just buried his nose in Harry's neck and dug his fingers into Harry's shirt, before he exhaled slowly and motioned for the wizard to come.

Harry just took Ryuzaki's head in his hands, pressing a long and lingering kiss to his soft lips. He could feel what Ryuzaki was talking about—hell, they all could feel that premonition of
something just plain bad coming—and when he pulled away, he brushed his thumbs against Ryuzaki's pale cheeks.

Harry said in the softest, most truthful voice he had in his heart, "I love you."

Ryuzaki's eyes went a tiny bit wide as he said simply, "I know."

***

"I'm testing the thirteen-day rule."

At once, the entire visible investigation team, save one by the name of Yagami Raito, gasped and immediately looked prepared to start yelling. Regardless, he ignored them and continued speaking over the intercom to Wammy, "I don't care what country. Let's contact them. There shouldn't be a problem if we're up-front about it. We'll have them use the notebook in an execution."

"You mean to test it?" bellowed Soichiro, a vein popping out on his forehead as his voice echoed in the large room.

"No way!" added Aizawa. "We don't need to do that. The power of the notebook is clearly real!"

Matsuda decided to say in the same angry tone, "Yeah, and who's gonna write the name down? Once you start, you have to continuously write name in it every thirteen days or you die!"

L sighed, tried to think past the bells, fought the urge to address or reach out for Harry, and said, "We'll have a criminal scheduled for execution within thirteen days write the name down. The deal will be that if the person lives past thirteen days, then his death sentence will be commuted."

He turned back to the speaker and addressed to Wammy, "Watari, contact the leader of a country who would agree to this. I'd recommend America or China, as I have a good standing with both of their leaders."

"What does this accomplish?" Aizawa practically screamed, getting much too close in L's personal space for comfort. L could nearly feel the possessiveness and protective nature rolling off Harry in waves from right beside him, where he was watching the shinigami and Raito endlessly for any activity.

"Obviously to test whether this murder notebook works," L said, picking up one of his panda crackers and popping it in his mouth.

Then, quite suddenly, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up when Harry made a small, almost unnoticeable intake of breath. His stomach clenched as he felt an invisible hand grasp his own fingers that were lying on the desk. The grip was painful, shaking, and so obvious-obviously-obviously panicked.

And then there was a large crash from over the speakers...

...like a chair toppling over.

No!

"Watari?" choked out L, his entire body going taut as he fought to breathe. His heart thudded painfully fast in his chest as he suddenly had an urge to scream. His hand continued to be clenched by Harry's, and L didn't care who saw it, because he was scared and he couldn't help but hold onto Harry's hand for dear life...literally.

The screens above their heads went white except for the words 'All data deletion' in thin black.
No! his mind screamed like a mantra, over and over again. No, no, no, no, Hermione please save him, save him, don't let him die, no, no please don't let him die...

Very slowly, L leant back and tightened his knees to his chest. One hand still curled around Harry's invisible one as he said in a dark, barely-calm voice, "I told Watari that if something ever happened to him, he should erase all the data he can, and get his system up to erase automatically after a certain amount of time."

"If something happened to him?" whispered Aizawa, his previous anger gone.

"You mean...like death?" Matsuda breathed out.

Harry's hand clenched. "Where's the shinigami?" asked L, refusing to look back. He felt like he was going to throw up again, the fear in his stomach was so thick and swirling. His body shuddered beneath his baggy clothes, and he felt a small breath blow across his ear.

"I'm sorry, Ryuzaki, but I have to go, to come in. I love you, be brave, I'll save you, I promise..." Harry's voice left and L nearly panicked and broke his cover, wanting to reach out.

Don't leave me! Don't...don't...don't leave me, don't leave me, I don't want to die.

Steeling himself with a breath that didn't feel fulfilling, he steadied himself, picked up his spoon, and called out, "Everyone, the shinigai..."

His heart burned, thudded, broke, and died.

His eyes closed as he fell into the blackness.
Chapter Notes

Dedication to Sociially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara All remaining mistakes are mine. Special shout-out to Sheska, my favourite Aussie.

Comede Noctem is credited to Shiny and Blue by Der Mondstrahl. It's an excellent HP slash fiction, and you should read it if you have any taste whatsoever. Though keep an open mind on the pairing - trust me, it's worth it.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Part III

Chapter Twenty-Four

Exhaustion

His eyes were filled with complete and undeniable terror.

It haunted him, knowing that he was leaving the man he loved to die alone without a hand to hold onto or a warm set of arms to fall into. He would dream about that moment, feeling the overwhelming guilt because he didn't know if he would be able to save his life.

Harry ran.

***

The plan was simple.

Watch Rem from underneath the Invisibility Cloak as intently as possible. Make sure she doesn't so much as twitch without noting it, and if she leaves the room, follow her. If Watari and-or I are compromised...it is of vital importance to watch the shinigami regardless of the outcome, and if she leaves the room or dies, the existence of the Death Note must be accounted for. The notebook, if it is up for taking, must be taken before the investigation, or especially Raito, can get their hands on it, for it could get disastrous if that happened. After the Death Note is accounted for, and only then, turn to me and resurrect me if possible.

Easier said than done.

***

Breathe.

He had already preformed a charm that would silence his footsteps, which benefited him at that moment. He had to be as fast as possible as he ran towards the exit of the room, heading to the door that would allow entrance into the room where Rem had slipped into. He knew that he had to get to her, because what she was doing was affecting Kira's lifespan and she had told him that such an act was fatal to her.
She hadn't said anything about what happened to her own personal Death Note.

They *had* to know.

Just as Harry reached the doorway leading out of the main terminal, he heard Ryuzaki's words fade away and a chair scrape, along with a simultaneous cry of "Ryuzaki?!

Harry choked back the scream that echoed in his head, his body immediately slumping against himself in agony and fear as he knew...

He nearly turned back, his entire form fighting to get back to the side of Ryuzaki despite the cost, but he knew that the Death Note had to be in his possession if he could. Ryuzaki had demanded it, insisted on him making sure that no one would be able to get their hands on another spare notebook, *especially* Raito.

*Breathe.*

He forced himself to move faster, choking back a sob as tears began running hot down his cheeks. He forgot to be quiet as he ran the small way to the door down the hall leading to a room filled with files, where Rem had disappeared into, banging into the wall and nearly breaking through the door in his haste. He all-but tore down the door, his blurry green gaze taking in the room with a frantic intent, and he spotted a glittering pile of sand lying, out of place, in the middle of the aisle.

In the middle was a black, slightly open notebook.

It hadn't been destroyed after all. Ryuzaki had presumed correctly.

Harry was already rushing down the aisle while ripping off the cloak. He grasped the book without looking inside and immediately began sprinting back down the hall, nearly tripping over a box filled with olive green files. He frantically pulled out his wand and hissed, "*Evanesco!*" watching the notebook and his Invisibility Cloak vanish into thin air.

There was a scream from the main terminal room, echoing down the hallways and screeching in Harry's brain.

*Breathe.*

He turned on his heel and bolted, making sure to secure the door behind him.

It seemed to take ages to get to the room. It was like one of those dreams he had during his fifth year at Hogwarts, where the hallway leading to the door of the Department of Mysteries just stretched on and on, taking forever to reach the handle. He could see them from a distance, completely focussed on Raito screaming about how *they were next*, but he couldn't seem to reach them. Almost agonisingly slow, it crept closer and closer and—

He burst into the room and roared, "Shut the *fuck* up, you stupid child, and *get the hell away from him!*"

Harry practically slid across the floor he was running so fast, and when he dropped to his knees he really *did* slide. Ryuzaki was lying limp in Raito's arms, eyes closed and his chest not moving, fingers lightly curled in death.

He all-but tore Ryuzaki's body from Raito's grasp and bellowed, "Find the shinigami! Find her *now!*"

Soichiro, Aizawa, and Raito moved immediately, rushing through the room to various exits to
search the complex for the shinigami, who had just conveniently disappeared. Raito shot like a bullet towards the hallway Harry had just come from, his eyes intent on the wall that hid the room the shinigami had disappeared into. As for Mogi and Matsuda, they both hesitated, seemingly wanting to help Ryuzaki even though he was past saving by their means.

Harry himself stood up, carrying the limp body in his arms as he fled from the room.

The second he was out of sight, he was ripping out his wand and whispering a rushed silencing charm around his immediate area. Then, with a deep breath, he turned on the spot and Apparated to the control room.

He hit the ground hard, his wand already waving and flicking frantically as he worked with a lightening-fast pace. The spells hissed out of his mouth like snakes, even though he wasn't able to speak Parseltongue since the Horcrux in his body had been destroyed.

Another voice, this one determined and higher-pitched, began whispering spells, some more verbal than others, and the two of them worked to the point where Harry's fingers burned with the amount of magic being pushed through his wand's core.

Then Hermione muttered, "Move."

He backed away as she tapped her wand almost as if it was beating his chest. Ryuzaki's body jerked once, twice, and then she smiled weakly, her fingers to his throat.

Harry finally broke down into choked, fiercely deep sobs.

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Harry blinked slowly and rubbed his temple.

"So she did disintegrate then," he asked, his question such a faultless lie of omission that it was almost ridiculous. His tone was thick, deep, and filled with so-obvious pain that it made Matsuda let out a small, almost pathetic sound in grief. "Where is her Death Note?"

"There wasn't anything there. We think it probably disintegrated with her." Soichiro's words were truthful, as were Raito's eyes. The caramel-coloured orbs were slightly unfocussed, whether from sorrow at the fact that Ryuzaki was dead or his brain going through plans Harry didn't know.

He was probably wondering why Rem had attacked Ryuzaki and Watari, but had just left out Harry, who had obviously been a huge factor in the investigation and had been named as successor in an impromptu manner.

"Okay," Harry said tiredly. His body felt heavy, mostly because this wasn't over yet. He had no idea if something else was planned, if he was missing something of vital importance that would be of extreme concern, if Watari and Ryuzaki were going to die.

"Is Ryuzaki..." whimpered Matsuda, eyes large and slightly watery.

Harry's gaze went blurry, and he said, "Yes."

***

"Talk to me Hermione."

She snapped her teeth together, took a short breath, and then exhaled slowly, the air whistling. Eventually, she said in her doctor voice, "I've put both of them in magical comas. Watari had a
stroke almost right after. I nearly didn't..." She took a deep breath to collect herself yet again. "He died, I brought him back okay, but then the blood being pumped back through his body caused some of the dead tissue to break off and he had a brain embolism. He started seizing, and I thought...I really thought he was going to die."

"Is he going to be okay?" asked Harry, so mortally exhausted that he felt like lead.

She hesitated, and then said, "I don't know. There's nothing I can do after this. Just have to make sure that he stays in his coma for now to give his body time to heal as much as possible and make sure to keep him as comfortable as possible. I'm not sure if there will be any lasting effects or brain damage, and he's so old. You've said that he's had a heart attack before, but with having another one at his age along with a stroke and having to restart his body twice...I just worry. I don't think we should keep him here. I'd like to transport him to St. Mungo's."

Harry's eyes flickered to the left.

He didn't have to speak—she just knew. She always had and always would just know. Hermione said, "He's fine as far as I know. Of course, I'm giving him a day or so before taking him out of the coma, because even if he's lucid, he might panic and try to rip out his endotracheal tube. That would not be good because he could go into shock."

Harry let out a small whimper that Hermione probably heard, but didn't comment on. "Are you sure we need that thing anyway? Surely he can breathe on his own, right, and besides, I don't like that thing in there. Surely there's magic that you can use..."

"I've been drilling this into the heads of the Healers at St. Mungo's too, Harry. It's important to try and use as little magic as possible on Muggles. You should know this. Too much magic in his body, which is not used to such a presence being in there, is dangerous."

"Hermione," Harry said in a voice that was clearly doubtful, "we've used magic on Muggles before. Throughout our lives, we've hit them with memory charms and Merlin knows what else, so I think a breathing charm would be better than having that tube in his throat."

Her chocolate eyes closed, showing the signs of exhaustion in the form of dark circles and pale skin. He didn't like her looking like that, because it reminded him so much of the time during the War. "Harry," she finally said, "I'd rather be safe than sorry. Overloading a Muggle body with magic is dangerous, and any Healer will tell you that. Muggles can't filter out magic the same way we can, and sometimes they can't filter it out at all. If we pump too much into him at once, he could go into shock and that would be harmful. I've already put a lot into him to heal as much of the heart damage as I can besides the chemical coma. I don't want to push it, Harry."

"During the war, we—"

She interrupted with a slightly raised voice, "The only reason we did it so extensively to Muggles during the War was because we had no choice, and I to this day still feel regret for it. I still don't know how many people went away from those mass-modifications with their minds completely intact, and I know some went insane and even died because of it. I know seeing him like that worries you, but we have to be safe, and this is the best way right now."

Harry wanted to argue, but he didn't. He had always been under the impression that Muggles weren't any more in danger from being hit with magic than wizards were, but he wasn't as studious as Hermione, nor was he a Healer.

He sighed, long and deep.
"Thank you for being here, Hermione."

She smiled and laid her head on his shoulder, both of them watching the comatose men in their respective beds that Hermione had conjured.

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6 November 2004

Hermione removed the tube and still Ryuzaki slept.

His chest was bruised from the shocks, but it was superficial and would heal. Hermione had healed as much of the internal damage as she could, but eventually she had done all she felt comfortable doing, and had decided to finally wean him out of the coma after removing the tube.

Watari was prepared for the journey to England, his elderly face horribly pale. Hermione was worried, Harry could tell, and he wondered if Watari would die. He was so old, so fragile, and to keep him alive in such a state was a precarious thing. He wasn't as strong as Ryuzaki was, and that was a huge cause for concern.

Harry told her to keep him alive no matter the cost, even if it was just until Ryuzaki could see him. If Watari didn't improve, Ryuzaki would have to deal with that.

Harry prayed to a god he didn't believe in that Watari would heal.

Harry had been in and out of the complex, running back and forth between Ryuzaki, the investigation team that was in limbo, and to England, where he had been talking himself hoarse. It had taken Mr. Weasley five hours of paperwork and horribly sudden meetings with the Japanese Minister of Magic to get the Medical Portkey taken care of. After all, if Hermione had made one, even for a legal transport of a patient to England, Magical-Japan would've probably declared a state of emergency and blown down the door to the complex.

They couldn't Apparate Watari nor use a regular Portkey, so they had to make a quick and rushed plea of temporary bargaining to get MedPort made. Although Japan wasn't aware of whom the patient was, they had made an exception when they found out who was transporting him.

The name Hermione Granger-Weasley went a long way in the Wizarding world, even when it wasn't attached to Harry's (since he was still technically here as a Muggle, and wanted to keep it that way for as long as he was able).

She waved her wand as Harry thought about the future. The press would be everywhere at St. Mungo's—after all, the entire Weasley family had quite suddenly disappeared from their lives, and everyone who read the Prophet now probably knew that Hermione was transporting a patient from Japan to the infamous hospital in London. Hermione had already placed the necessary protection in place around Watari, making sure that no one would be able to take a picture of him with his real face, and had arranged for a completely private room to be made Unplottable and put under the Fidelius Charm, with herself as the Secret-Keeper. Every precaution was being taken to make sure that his identity remained secret, and when Ryuzaki visited (probably by Apparation, the poor thing, because they wouldn't have time to fly out until after the case was solved), he would be put under even more protection.

Thankfully, there hadn't been even a whisper of Rita's article in the papers, nor had Dolores Umbridge made a move as far as they knew.

Harry walked to the conjured medical bed and gently picked up Ryuzaki, who was still limp but
breathing-breathing-breathing, and so very much alive. Now that he was officially sleeping and breathing on his own, Harry felt it safe to move him, and he did so, carefully placing him in the centre of Harry's bed.

His emerald eyes watched him endlessly as he pulled the blanket over Ryuzaki, his fingers brushing feather-light against his skin as he tucked him in.

Finally, he stood up reluctantly and pulled Hermione into a long, bone-crushing hug. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Hermione. I love you so much, you know that right?"

She sniffled and he felt the shoulder of his shirt get wet with her tears.

"Of course I do, silly," she said in a thick, wet voice. "Just so you know, when this is over, I expect you to take me to Comede Noctem on your Galleon."

Harry groaned.

***

The mood was solemn.

Harry hadn't made much of an effort to hide his raw and puffy eyes from the others. There wasn't any reason to; he didn't particularly feel composed, but that was okay because it wasn't a secret that Harry had been very close to Ryuzaki.

Closer than all the others, in ways that had not been discussed amongst them.

After a long time of silence, Matsuda finally spoke up in a voice that was remarkably quiet, "We should have a funeral for them, for Ryuzaki and Watari."

Harry, who had been blindly staring at the dark screens in the main control terminal, let out a small sigh and closed his eyes. He took off his glasses, absently cleaning them on his oddly cheery yellow long-sleeve, and debated on how to go about this.

He said in a tired voice, "That won't be necessary. I'm dealing with this how Ryuzaki wanted it done if such a situation...happened." The break in his voice was genuine, because that situation still could happen to Watari. He wasn't out of the woods yet at all, and even Ryuzaki would be feeling the backlash from his heart attack for a long time.

"And what is that?" asked Raito. "We all want to pay our respects to him."

In an obviously irritated voice, Harry said, "You can do that just as well from where you're sitting, Raito. Don't worry about the details behind the scenes. I've got it covered, and that's all you need to know." Perhaps Harry wasn't as nice as he always had been, but he wasn't called out for it. Good thing too, because Harry wasn't in the mood to play nice.

"So you're the new L then?" asked Soichiro. He hesitated slightly and then eventually continued, "It's what Ryuzaki wanted."

Harry put his glasses back on. As he stared at the reflection of the others and himself in the biggest monitor, he said, "I suppose I am."

Silence echoed yet again in the room, as everyone processed that bombshell. It was the statement that was more important than anything said in this room before, of knowing officially that Ryuzaki was gone from the case.
As far as they knew anyway; however it was still going to be hard without him here.

His insanity had been a central part of how the investigation team had worked as a unit, after all.

"So what do you want to do, James-san?" asked Matsuda.

Harry didn't even have the heart to huff about the honorific. Instead, he looked straight at Raito.

"We," he said in a hard, dedicated voice, "are going to test the thirteen-day rule."

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Later that evening, Harry lay down beside Ryuzaki and slept.

It was fitful and restless, and he awoke from his light sleep over a dozen times just to make sure Ryuzaki was still breathing, still alive. He was, every single time, his chest falling up and down steadily and his pulse still beating soundly in his neck, but that didn't stop Harry from waking up sporadically to check.

It was the fourteenth time this had happened when Harry saw half-lidded charcoal eyes blankly focussed on the ceiling. Harry started almost violently, and was immediately taking his pulse and whispering, "Hey, can you talk to me? Talk to me Ryuzaki, please just talk to me and tell me you can speak."

Ryuzaki's dark eyes rolled onto Harry's face sluggishly, his entire body lax. Hermione had warned Harry about this, that Ryuzaki would wake up terribly exhausted, and would most likely spend a few days in bed (Harry had found that hard to imagine, but now he was fully convinced that it might end up that way). She had told him to get him to talk, ask him various questions to make sure that he had brain function, just in case something had gone wrong while in a coma.

A low, tired voice said, "Harry," and said wizard let out a choked exhale of air, gently pulling Ryuzaki into an embrace. For a long moment, Harry just held on, before he finally decided to speak again.

"See, I saved you, although Hermione had a gigantic part in it," he said into Ryuzaki's thick mass of hair, trying to control the emotion that was seeping into his tone. He felt about ready to break down, but he needed to get his act together. He needed to pull strong and help Ryuzaki heal, and then he had to catch the sonofabitch who had killed the love of his life.

"Harry," Ryuzaki said again, in that same exhausted voice.

"Hmm? Do you need something?" asked Harry, finally pulling away and staring at Ryuzaki's face. "Hermione told me to bombard you with questions, because you were in a coma and we have to make sure you have total brain function."

Something in Ryuzaki's worn out charcoal eyes flickered, something akin to panic, which Harry expected. However, he blinked slowly, as if it was dreadfully hard to open them back up, and eventually said, "I have to go to the bathroom."

Harry stared at him for a long moment before he started to laugh.

It had been such a shocking statement, definitely not the first sentence that he expected Ryuzaki to say, and he just couldn't help himself. He heard Ryuzaki say in his trademark you're-an-idiot drawl, although it was thick with exhaustion, "Normally I would be intrigued by your strange amusement, but I'm a bit preoccupied by the fact that my body is about ready to urinate on you, Harry."
Still chortling, he grasped his wand and managed to mutter a breathless spell under his breath. Almost immediately, Ryuzaki's face went from exhausted and uncomfortable to even more exhausted and relaxed.

"I think you're okay, Ryuzaki," Harry said with a smile that was slightly twisted with worry as he thought of Watari in London. "You should sleep now. I'll fill you in on all of the extra details later, but for now you need to rest. You died yesterday, and you need to let your body heal."

"But what...about Wammy?" Ryuzaki asked in a thick mumble, practically asleep in Harry's arms.

Harry blinked at the name, for the first time recalling Rem's Death Note, which was currently Vanished into non-being until Harry decided to call it back. Ryuzaki's true name was in there, and so was Watari's (Wammy's?) and...that name sounded really familiar to Harry but he couldn't remember where he had heard it. Well, besides Ryuzaki's explanation of Wammy's House, which was in Winchester, but Harry hadn't realised that it had been named after Watari himself.

Harry had definitely heard that name before, other than in Ryuzaki's explanation.

"He's alive. He's still in a coma, and we've transported him to St. Mungo's in London for more specialised care." Ryuzaki's body tensed in his grasp, so Harry continued hastily, "He's going to be okay. He had to be brought back twice, because the heart attack caused a stroke, so he's really weak right now, but he's alive with normal brain function. Hermione thought it would be wise to keep him there for her constant care in an actual hospital. He's under the best protection we can even contemplate, so you don't have to worry. You just work on getting better, and when you're ready, we can go visit him."

Ryuzaki let out a low mumble that Harry couldn't even decipher despite his sensitive hearing. However, his thin body did slump in Harry's arms, so he just pressed a small kiss to Ryuzaki's forehead and then pulled him close. With his nose once again buried in Ryuzaki's thick hair, he said softly, "Just rest, and then we'll discuss everything when you're lucid, okay? Everything is under control, so you don't have to worry."

"Okay," Ryuzaki breathed out almost inaudibly, already growing more lax as he began to drift off. "You better not be lying to me. I...will kick you."

Harry smiled against the detective's hair and replied, "I'm not." Then he closed his eyes and said, "I love you."

This time, with his arms tightly secured around the love of his life, Harry Potter slept like the dead.
Twenty-Five: Pain

Chapter Notes

Dedication to Socially-Diisoriiented. Beta credit to Skylara. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Twenty-Five

*Pain*

*7 November 2004*

The rain hadn't let up in two days.

The sky was just as dark grey, the clouds just as big and ominous, the rain just as torrential as the day when L had died, and he almost wanted to ask Harry to close the curtains. The window took up the whole east wall from floor to ceiling, with three white dividers separating the plane of glass into four squares, so the entire eastern part of Tokyo's Marunouchi district was in blurred-by-rain sight. The expanse of it only accentuated how high up they were, and with the rain and lightening flashing, L briefly wondered if the building would get hit by lightning and cause the entire complex to experience a power outage. Or maybe the booming, window-rattling thunder would actually bust in the windows directly, showering them with rain and glass and cutting them up in the process. Harry could probably save them, but maybe the entire building would fall down and he wouldn't be able to save the others inside.

Although perhaps...no, he wouldn't think that no matter the situation.

They were sitting together, L's right side flush up against Harry's left, in total silence as they watched the storm rage in the outside. Their fingers were loosely entwined and Harry's thumb caressed L's index finger lazily, and the fingers of his other hand trailed up and down L's forearm, causing the skin to break out in goose bumps at the ticklish sensation. Harry's legs weren't stretched out, but L's weren't pressed up to his chest either, so they both had settled into a mutually comfortable position where their legs were sort of bent and sort of stretched out.

On the coffee table in the small living area of Harry's bedroom, there was a food-filled plate that had caused their current argument. L's chest hurt, but he wasn't sure if it was because of the emotional exertion that he had let loose at Harry (and indirectly at Hermione, who had fuelled the fire and caused the spark) or just because of the heart attack. He knew that it was probably a mixture of both, but he figured that it didn't help that he was arguing over something that he knew was faulty logic on his part, but...

He was *not* going to eat that food. He didn't care if it was important for healing his heart or not, he still refused. Perhaps it was "idiotic" but he wasn't going to do it. He did *not* like fish, or spinach, and he was not going to eat it. He was twenty-five-years-old, in charge of his own life and dietary habits, and a heart attack wasn't going to change that. He would *not* bend to Harry's will even if Harry made good on his promise to let him starve before letting him touch something unhealthy like cake and ice cream.
Except he probably would. He knew Harry was right, but it didn't make it any easier. He was an adult, who had been living in universally the same way since he was halfway into eight-years-old. His diet had been the same, his lifestyle had been the same, and the most extreme change in his life until this case had been restricted to varying hotel rooms in numerous countries. However, since this case had come to his attention, he had been forced into different situations that he was not used to. He had been forced to show his face to people other than his heirs and Wammy. He had been forced to accept that shinigami existed, and then later on, an entire world full of magic. He had met a human being that had completely changed his routine schedule and made him realise that L wasn’t as heartless and stunted as he thought, because despite L’s shortcomings, it seemed more natural than he could've expected.

Now, his body had been literally *forced* to have a heart attack, and because of that, he was being forced to change his diet and take a bundle of medication because he had to "take care of himself for once".

As much as he wanted to look at Harry and tell him *no, I'm in charge of my own life and there's nothing you can do to change that*, he knew he wouldn't. He just...*oh this is ridiculous*, he thought. And it was, in a degree that shouldn't have been possible with him.

Harry *loved* him.

*Harry loved L.*

L wasn’t sure what it meant, because the first things that came to mind when he thought of love were sappy romance movies like Amane Misa was currently filming and people committing murder. That in itself was probably off-the-wall, associating love with murder, but it *was* the first thing that popped up into his head due to the overwhelming amount of love-based murders that were executed.

L...supposed the feeling that he felt for Wammy was love, but regardless, he was uncommonly clueless about the whole emotion in the sense of what *Harry* most likely felt. He had no idea what it meant besides unending devotion, starry-eyes, tears, and lots and lots of passionate sex and-or kissing. And, on occasion, one of the partners getting betrayed or jealous and killing their opposite partner (which was his speciality—not the killing, but the murder part, of course). That was the extent of *love* for him, what was depicted in those movies that he watched when the cases were lacking and he wasn't learning a new language or something.

What he felt for Harry, on the other hand, was complicated. He had experienced so many feelings since meeting Harry: anger, pride, annoyance, confusion, exasperation, amusement, defiance; and then, of course the desire, companionship, heat, content, and *completion*. The amount of bonding they had done together, accomplished side-by-side, and the experiences they had shared had been eye-opening and just...he didn't even have a suitable word in any language that would suffice, and that was saying a lot. These things were so aweing at times, and so destructive at others, that it had put L's brain through a metaphorical boxing match. He had come out stronger and more knowledgeable about the world around him, especially concerning the way that he had been living his life before compared to how he was with Harry as a constant presence now.

He was *happier*, honestly. At the moment, he was angry, and he wanted to front-kick Harry so hard in the chin out of pride that it was practically setting his blood on fire, but regardless, he had never felt more content with himself and his existence.

Did he *love* him, though? Harry had said it, probably after sitting on the word for ages if the psychological profile that L determined on him was spot-on. However, L knew that Harry's thought processes were different, despite the fact that they both seemed to run on similar
wavelengths. He believed that Harry's word was genuine, mostly because when he looked into those emerald green eyes there was no room for doubt. Harry rang with sincerity, and despite L's confusion yet again on how in the world he had gotten someone like Harry to experience love, he had to believe it. He didn't even want to anyway—just the thought of it made L's chest feel tight and painful, even more-so now that his heart had gone through the attack and his life had been saved by Harry.

He didn't know what love was, not really. L did know some things though, like that he owed his life to Harry, and that when Harry was around he felt more alive than he ever had before. He knew that in spite of the clear fact that L was infuriated with him a large portion of the time, even looking at Harry was something that calmed him. He felt content, and so many other things too, but contented seemed to cover it pretty well.

He just felt at peace when they were together, and after a lifetime of fear and sadness and loneliness, it was the most perfect feeling in the world.

At that thought, he looked away from the window to take in Harry's face from the profile. Not for the first time, L was taken aback by how...handsome he was. L blinked twice to focus his vision and then allowed his eyes to trail on his strong jaw, lightly golden skin, almond-shaped eyes, and pinkish lips. Again, L noted how long his hair was getting, starting to creep farther and farther past his nose, the back already quite a bit past his collar. He wondered if Harry would cut it soon, because if L was entirely truthful, it was rather irritating when his hair kept falling in L's face when they kissed.

Then, without warning, his thought process completely changed from the contemplation of his feelings for Harry to something a lot more clinical. He blinked again and then allowed his eyes to narrow, and he steeled himself physically. Harry looked vaguely worried, and quickly he was there, saying, "Are you okay? You're tensing up. Are you in pain?"

Yes, he was, but that was not his urgent concern. He would be fine. Instead, he replied, "I think we need to talk about the case. It's been almost two days since the incident, and we need to make a move. We've wasted too much time already."

Harry frowned. "Well, to be completely fair, you've been unconscious for the majority of that time."

"What have you been doing for the past two days, Harry?" L demanded, trying to stand up so he could get some control. Immediately, though, he felt uncommonly dizzy, and with a heavy exhale he fell back against the headboard of the bed. He fought against his body's desire to snarl at his weakness, hating the idea that he couldn't even get up, but with his impeccable self-control he stayed as blank as he could hope for.

That, admittedly, wasn't much, since Harry seemed to have that uncanny ability to read L like a book. That was nearly as irritating as Raito's ability to read L's facial expressions, although to be frank Raito wasn't nearly as good at it as Harry seemed to be.

"Stay down, Ryuzaki. You're too weak to be moving around. Please, just...I know it is horrid, and I know it might suck hairy monkey testicles, but you just have to deal with it."

L's eyes, which were slightly narrowed in annoyance and anger, mellowed out as he wondered why he was associating himself with such an odd person.

Which was saying a lot.

"Well," Harry eventually said when L didn't remark on his insane words, one eyebrow
disappearing into his long bangs that were flicked to the side. "I did tell the others that I'm still going to be testing the thirteen-day rule. Mostly, we've just been arguing over...well, a funeral."

L cocked his head after getting comfortable against the headboard again, bringing up a hand to bite lightly at his thumb. His other hand's fingers returned to grasp tightly at Harry's, and the pressure was returned. After a moment of silence, L remarked, "I would've been most upset if they would've carried on with a funeral had I stayed dead. That hasn't changed."

Harry smiled, which caused L to give him a glance that clearly said he was not amused.

Harry rolled his eyes, his smile fading a bit. "You can't be upset that they want to hold at least a wake for you. You're dead, Ryuzaki. At least, as far as they know. It's normal for them to want to remember you."

In a blank voice, L argued, "It's a bigger insult to my memory to meander around doing nothing to catch Kira. They should be stepping up the pace to apprehend the criminal or criminals responsible for my apparent death, and you should be pushing them to do so."

Harry gave him a long look before he said with no trace of his previous amusement, "You have no idea."

L fought the urge to break eye contact with Harry and won. They continued to stare at each other, Harry's emerald into his charcoal, before L said, "Perhaps I don't. But the same concept applies regardless. Even in your unique situation, you had to do what you had to do despite the cost. If you had died, would you have been upset if they had given up the war and allowed that dictator to take over society?"

Harry's face twisted slightly in anger, eyes tightening. Visibly they both hardened, preparing for an argument, and then Harry said in a very soft but tight voice, "People are allowed to mourn. People need to mourn. I know that better than anyone. Even a moment can mean something and you have to say farewell. I've told the others that we're not having a funeral because it's not what you would've wanted, but I don't think that's entirely fair. Maybe not as far as a funeral, no, but they should be given a few days to...well, process."

"The only thing you've done is given Yagami Raito two extra days to scheme and plan on how he's going to win this."

"He isn't going to, Ryuzaki. We've been over this, and then we went over it again for good measure," he replied, his voice not getting louder but definitely getting sharper. "The only person that could possibly foil his plans is me. You're apparently dead, as is Watari, and I'm the one who is going to be in his face because I can't die."

"He could affect you indirectly, Harry," remarked L. "Just because you aren't directly affected by the Death Note doesn't mean he can't come up with a way to dispose of you through different means. Raito is smart, and we would be wise not to underestimate him. He's gotten past my schemes multiple times, and he's going to be even more offensive now that I'm seemingly gone from the investigation. He wants to be the new L, which would be the top standing he could have. With that title, he could completely take over. Harry, we have to have constant vigilance."

Harry laughed, a choked bark of sound that caused L to mentally jump, both of them simultaneously breaking eye contact as L blinked and Harry smacked a hand to his forehead.

Eventually, as Harry visibly put himself back together from his odd outburst, L said, "That statement was not meant to be funny."
Harry snickered again and said in a sardonic, mock-serious tone, "Yes, Mad-Eye. I see you look like the man I love and you have two normal-ish eyes. Have you been messing with the Polyjuice Potion again, Professor? Because you know that's illegal, although I suppose that wouldn't stop you."

There was that word again. Love. L blinked yet again and then said, "Sometimes, I think you're the abnormal one."

Harry's laughter this time was full of mirth and genuine amusement instead of harsh sadness. With a softening expression, L watched Harry laugh, his upper body lying flat against his legs, his back working with the force of his laughter. His hand broke away from L's to join its opposite as his arms twisted around his legs, holding them tightly, quite a lot like how L usually slept. Well, before he had met Harry, he supposed, because of late he had been waking up curled against him, not at all in a foetal position.

Without being able to help himself, a small smile popped up on L's lips, and he reached out with his now-free hand to tentatively press his palm against Harry's back. He could feel the muscles working, shaking, flexing as he tried to get himself under control, and very suddenly the soreness of his chest didn't seem real.

He just leant forward and wrapped his arms around Harry's middle, feeling the vibrations from Harry's laughter in his nose and forehead. Almost instantaneously, Harry's laughter died down to a softer vibration and then to nothing but deep breathing, both of them taking comfort in that moment. L's eyes focussed in and out on the stitches of Harry's nightshirt, vaguely figuring out the pattern before his vision blurred again, as Harry's large hands reached up to grasp at L's long-fingered ones.

To L, time seemed to creep by at an astonishingly slow speed, but he didn't mind at all. As the sound of the rain and thunder crashed outside the full window to their right, they just sat there, completely at peace with each other even though they had just theoretically had an argument. He felt his heartbeat slow down to match Harry's strong and healthy tempo, and his breathing matching that same deep and thorough inhale-exhale.

L almost wanted to feel confused, to force himself to question what was going on, but the only thing that he could muster up in his brain at that moment was that he was calm. He felt like he could just drift off even though he had declared earlier that he had slept more in the past week than in his entire life, and (perhaps foolishly, considering the circumstances) that he was refusing to sleep another second until he had cake instead of fish and spinach to eat.

Perhaps a second had gone by, or an hour, or an entire day, but quietly, Harry said in a tone that vibrated all the way into L's chest, "I love you."

L breathed in, out, and in again, calm and quite drowsy, before he said, "I know."

Harry finally moved, helping him gently rest against the pillows that were piled along the headboard to give it cushion, and eventually he laid beside him, putting his head on L's bony shoulder. His left hand's fingers returned to entwining with L's as his right hand spun his holly wand through his fingers. L watched the action, allowing his head to lie on top of Harry's, and then suddenly Harry muttered "Redero" almost off-handedly.

The Invisibility Cloak and a black book popped out of nowhere, falling to the bed with a light flutter and a dull thunk respectively. Harry laid his wand down carefully before clutching the Death Note in his hand and bringing it to his chest. His exotically handsome face turned towards L, green eyes piercing, and said, "Your real name is in the pages of this book."
L visibly swallowed, trying to lubricate his suddenly-bone-dry throat.

Something so simple, so seemingly harmless, was the reason that the world had changed completely for L. Because of such a seemingly harmless notebook, he had discovered a world of Death Gods and magic, shown his face to people besides the inhabitants of the House, died, found his true rival in the form of Kira, and had finally found a semblance of peace with a man that had all-but shown him the world.

Despite everything that had happened, he was very...grateful that he had taken this case.

Harry handed it to L, and the detective finally began flipping through the pages with both hands, having almost reluctantly released his hold on Harry's fingers. There were so many names in so many languages—Japanese, English, Arabic, Filipino, Afrikaans, Welsh, Dutch, Greek, Hungarian...the list just kept going on and on, with so many names and descriptions of death that it was turning his stomach just looking at it. He stayed outwardly blank and calm, but inside he realised that just by holding this book, he was saving lives. By destroying that shinigami, so many people were saved from the horrors of such a terrible act as a result of a shinigami with little or no compassion.

And then, a little past the middle of the book, two names in English stood out.

*Quillish Wammy.*

*L. Lawliet.*

Two statistics that were alive and breathing, defying the very nature of the Death Note.

He brought the book to his chest, his hands shaking, the two names burning into the skin of his bare chest. His eyes were wide but unseeing, staring somewhere in front of him but unable to focus. He brought his legs up tightly against his chest, his thighs pressing firmly into his hands and driving the notebook harder into his skin. He could feel the front of his hair falling into his eyes, brushing the sensitive skin of his cheeks almost uncomfortably, but he didn't brush the hair away.

"Are you okay?" Harry asked, his voice quiet but comforting.

It took a moment of breathing to calm himself down before he was able to speak. "Yes. I'm okay," he said, finally looking over to his right. Harry was averting his eyes to the window, and a flash of lightening made them go black as night. His skin seemed paler than usual, probably because he hadn't been getting as much sun since joining the investigation team, that knowledge causing something akin to guilt to coil in his stomach along with the thick disgust at the book he held in his hands. Eventually, after a moment of taking in Harry's appearance yet again, he continued, "Have you looked at this?"

"No," Harry said, his voice honest and his green eyes still watching the raging storm outside.

Even though Harry couldn't see him, L nodded and allowed his mind to think about...*that.* A booming clash of thunder caused the windows to shake, and again L wondered if the windows would break in, showering them with glass and causing the rain to soak them.

Then, after he had made up his mind, he asked in a low voice, "Do you want to?"

L watched as Harry's eyes looked up to the ceiling. Even from his awkward angle, he could see the thoughts flickering in the emerald orbs, although L couldn't decipher them from his position. He might not have been able to anyway; Harry occasionally was even more unreadable than L himself, although such times were very few and far between. He did wear his heart on his sleeve, after all.
Harry turned his head and stared into L's eyes, bringing up a hand to cup his cheek. The warmth seeped into L's chilled skin, the touch so calming as to combat his own rampaging thoughts, and he said in a hoarse whisper, "Of course, but only if you are willing to show it." Harry's thumb brushed the bag under L's left eye—the dark circles always there, no matter how much sleep he got; a lifetime of insomnia had scarred him as permanently as Harry was on his forehead—as his eyes flickered down to L's lips. Unconsciously, L licked them, his own eyes trailing downwards to rest on Harry's, and he felt the wizard's hand tense.

L couldn't speak, couldn't even think of words, so he nodded once, very slowly, not allowing his eyes to tear away from Harry's lips. He felt his body loosen up, the notebook falling onto his lap name-side up, but Harry didn't even glance at it.

Instead, he just leant forward and finally closed the gap.

Even though L could tell that Harry was being cautious, the kiss was still full of heat. Their tongues winded together languidly, taking their time in exploring. He tasted like lemon-pepper, from the bite of fish that Harry had eaten in a sarcastic showing of it's not poisoned, Ryuzaki! and L decided that it wasn't so bad when it wasn't connected to the fish. At that thought, a small smile crept up onto his lips, which caused Harry to grin as well.

"It's weird. You don't taste like yourself. Usually the taste of sugar hits me in the back of the head like a bullet-train," Harry remarked, his lips moving lightly against L's own, almost ticklish in a way but pleasant all the same. Harry's breath was warm and moist against his skin, and both hands had found their way to L's hair without the detective having a recollection of them getting there. His own hands had left the Death Note and had grasped at the thick fabric of Harry's sleeping shirt on their own accord, but the material clenched in his hands was comforting.

"You taste gross," L lied, looking for all the world like he was telling the truth, but Harry just snorted, pressing another kiss against his lips. This kiss was shorter than the first, but no less powerful, and by the time they parted for air, L felt weightless.

Well, that was familiar at least.

For a moment, they just pressed their foreheads together, gasping for air. When his heart was beating more steadily, he turned his head and glanced back down at the two prominent names taking up an entire page of their own. His eyes lingered over Wammy's name, for the millionth time wondering if he was going to be okay and then quickly-frantically-vehemently reminded himself that Wammy was going to survive. L didn't know what he would do without him, and he was fervently convinced that he wouldn't have to know that.

Even if it was illogical, as the old man was seventy-one-years-old and was in a coma due to a stroke and a heart attack. If he survived this (which he would, L mentally declared with a slightly panicked buzzing in his brain), his life would be considerably shorter than before due to the trauma his body had endured.

"Are you sure," Harry whispered against his cheek, his hands caressing L's hair gently, comfortingly, as if he knew the emotions that were swirling in his mind.

This time L spoke, in a low tone with no inflection, fighting to keep the fear from overtaking him regardless of his fight to convince himself that everything was going to be okay. "Yes, I want you to."

Harry took a deep breath and exhaled against L's cheek, pressing a soft kiss to the now-warm skin before finally looking down and reading L's true name.
For a long moment, there was silence, and then he said, "Quillish Wammy. He's a famous Muggle inventor from England. I know of him because even wizards took some of his inventions on prison security and implemented them in places like Azkaban and Alkatorez. That's where I had heard the name before. I bet Hermione recognised him when she met him; it would explain some of the comments she made."

L let his left index finger trace the letters in Wammy's name. In a soft voice, he said, "Yes. It's actually how we became acquainted, through his inventions."

"Before the case?" Harry asked, his fingertips tracing absent patterns on L's bare forearm. Again, little bumps appeared all over his body, a small shiver rolling down his spine.

Instead, he answered a bit hesitantly, still very uncomfortable relaying information about his own personal life, "Indeed it was. I submitted a paper under a false name to a Russian scientific magazine in February of '87, knowing they wouldn't publish it if they knew how old I was. It was about using one of his inventions in a way that was previously unthought-of in maximum security prisons, and it garnered his attention. It was rather easy to track me down—I was still naïve about the processes of hiding back then, and he narrowed down my location quickly. He sent me the files that he had gotten from his much-younger brother, who had been a general in the Navy at that time. He had already spoken to the supervisors about me, and eventually he sent me the files to see if I could figure them out. Like I told you, I thought it was a game, but I was eight then and very..."

"Green behind the ears?" offered Harry, his expression curious from the corner of L's vision.

L blinked and then said, "Well, in that particular manner, yes. Anyway, you know the rest of the details, about the first time I met Wammy face-to-face, because of the files he had anonymously sent me."

After those words, there was a long stretch of comfortable silence. He vaguely wondered what Harry was thinking; he had brought up Wammy's name but not—

"Does the L stand for something?" asked Harry suddenly, cutting off L's thoughts as he brought it up the second it crossed L's mind. "There's a period at the end of the L, so I was just curious as to whether it was just a shorter version. I mean, the shinigami did say that full names were required, but it seems peculiar regardless."

L hesitated again, for longer this time, but after a moment said in a cold voice, "No."

L could see Harry's brow scrunching in thought, green eyes staring intently at L. Even though the detective was focussing intently on the wall opposite his immediate vision, he could feel Harry's eyes burning a hole into his temple.

In due course, though, Harry said, "It's fine if you don't want to elaborate, but you don't have to be so harsh about it." His voice was kind and gentle, obviously trying to calm L down, and the detective visibly deflated, his eyes rolling to the side to finally rest on Harry's face.

"Forgive me," he grumbled, but his voice had no bite despite the obvious insincerity of the statement. Harry sighed, a soft sound, before he took the Death Note and placed it atop the nightstand on his side of the bed.

The silence was tension-filled this time, more on L's end because he felt oddly defensive. Harry was clearly thinking about how to best approach the subject again, but L was already throwing up the mental barriers that had been his constant companion since practically birth. He was not going to go there, no matter how chummy he got with Harry. He didn't...he did not want to talk about
that, but he felt something twisting in his gut that felt like guilt and that was *not* supposed to happen either.

L whined in the back of his throat.

Immediately Harry looked over, his eyes intense as they went straight to his chest. He opened his mouth to speak, but L interrupted, "I'm fine. I'm just having an internal conflict."

Harry's averted his gaze to L's face as he said slowly, "Internal conflict. I suppose that would account for the strange noise you aren't supposed to be making unless I'm shamelessly making out with you."

That startled the tension right out of the room, and they yet again sat in a comfortable silence, Harry wrapping his arms around L's middle and pulling him close. As the minutes wore on, L's eyelids got heavier and heavier, fighting the urge to sleep. It was completely nonsensical how frequent and long his naps were getting, even though Harry seemed to be pleased with his new sleeping habits. Hermione had assured him that it was normal for him to feel exhaustion after being in a briefly-fatal heart attack and in a magical coma, but it was growing on his nerves. Even though the dreams had all-but gone away since he had been all-but living with Harry (or was it the other way around; it *was* technically L's suite), it was still irritating knowing that there was so much he could've been doing in the hours he had formerly been awake, and those hours and days were being utterly wasted.

There was *so much* that needed to be done, and yet he was falling asleep like a narcoleptic most of the time.

He was half-asleep when he said in a thick-with-exhaustion voice, "In the hospital where I was born, they assigned the unnamed children a letter and number sequence based on rows and columns. Mine was L13, because I was in row L and the thirteenth child in that column. When I went to the first orphanage, I still didn't have a name, so they called me L. It just...it was me. *Is* me. It probably always will be. It might just be a letter, but it's all I have."

Harry was silent, absorbing that, but he ultimately asked, "And the surname?"

L didn't answer for the longest time, all-but asleep against Harry, but in the end, he said slowly, "I found my biological father out of curiosity, and only met him once. I didn't exactly tell him who I was, but we looked too much alike that it was quite literally impossible to deny he was my father. When Wammy adopted me, I had my first identifying papers drawn up. I took his surname, as a reminder of...of what I needed to be."

"And what was that?" asked Harry softly, his arms tightening around L's waist.

Right before L fell into unconsciousness, he whispered against Harry's chest, "*Not him.*"

***

"Get up Ryuzaki!"

L startled awake, automatically assuming a defensive posture despite his rude awakening. His eyes were wide, only half seeing Harry rushing around the bed with a crumpled bundle of clothes. With suddenness, he started pushing L's arms through the holes of a green turtle-neck that definitely *did not* belong to him, trying to get him to help move his body along.

"What's—"

Harry interrupted, "I just got a message from the mirror, Ryuzaki. We have to go. *Now.*" He
hesitated, his face crumpling into an expression that L had only seen on his face once. That had been on L’s birthday, right before he had broken down right in front of the detective, and that was enough to push L into action.

He didn't even care that the turtle-neck didn't fit him right and was too tight around his neck. He didn't care that the jeans he was wearing were the same ones he had been in for the past two days. He didn't even care when Harry grasped his arm in a strong grip and turned on his heel, Apparating into nothing. He did notice that his heart fluttered in a way that was not normal and that he was fighting to keep from dry heaving, but none of that mattered.

There were four witches and one wizard in the room, brandishing their wands at Wammy’s seizing body and pouring their magic into him, the magically-run heart monitor beeping sporadically in tune with Wammy's heartbeat. Hermione was yelling instructions at the others but L didn’t understand her words, but he did notice their efforts get more frantic as the seconds passed. Eventually, the convulsion slowed, and where the sound irregular palpitations had been before, the sound of a single note pierced L’s skull and brain like a shotgun blast.

He didn't know when he tried to run to his handler, while the healers were shocking with their wands in an attempt to restart Wammy's heart, but he could hear his own voice echoing in the room so loudly, saying Wammy's name over and over again in an attempt to block out the sound of the single note that wouldn’t stop shrieking. He could feel strong arms around him, restraining him, keeping him away from the man who was only sleeping-only sleeping. He fought, heard his voice get louder in the room as that note wailed—

They turned off the machine just as L broke out of Harry's grasp.

He distantly heard them call time of death, but he refused to believe that because it was a lie. They just hadn’t tried hard enough, and if they’d go just a little longer, he’d be alive again and he wouldn't be gone. He pumped (one, two, three, four, five, six) and pumped (one, two, three, four, five, six) and pumped (one, two, three, four, five, six!) until his eyes stung and he couldn't see because his vision was blurry and he was being pulled away without much a fight, arms still outstretched towards the corpse on the hospital bed as he tried in vain to reach him.

"Look at him, Harry, he's only sleeping. We can still save him; we just have to keep going. He's just sleeping Harry...let me go back, please let me go, let me save him. He's just sleeping, Harry, and we need to go make him wake up. Please, Harry, please, don't, he's just sleeping, look at him!"

All Harry said was "I'm sorry" over and over again, as Hermione finally covered Quillish Wammy's body with a white sheet.

Then, for the first time in L Lawliet's life, he cried.
Chapter Twenty-Six

Emptiness

7 November 2004

"The car is outside, okay?"

Hermione's voice was gentle, calm, and comforting, but he could barely even hear her speak. She continued in that same easy, patented-by-doctors voice, "It's unmarked and untraceable, so you shouldn't have any problems on either side, be it Muggle or not. You can have it as long as you like, okay? There's no rush."

Harry said in a tired, quiet tone, "Thanks, Hermione."

Hermione smiled weakly and gave him a hug. Harry dwarfed her, his strong arms engulfing her form despite the weight she still carried from recently giving birth. They seemed so comfortable together, so natural, that it was almost too much.

L took a shallow, shuddering breath, but didn't allow his face to falter from its current blank nature. His hands trembled in his pockets, so he clenched them in an attempt to stop the impulse, although it didn't help much. He turned away from them, wishing that Harry would just give him the Invisibility Cloak so he could get out of the building. The sooner they could get out and handle the current predicament, the sooner they could get back to the complex and dealing with...

L swallowed thickly and blinked hard, trying to fight the urge to just fall down and stare endlessly at the wall. He had to focus his mind, get back into his natural setting, because he had to get justice for Quillish Wammy's murder even if it was the last thing he ever did. He had to, or his meaning for existence would fall and he would have no purpose.

Harry let go of his friend and then passed the Invisibility Cloak to L, frowning at the expression on L's face. The detective had no idea what Harry was seeing, and that worried him, because he couldn't let people see what he was thinking either in voice or expression. That was so dangerous in his line of work, especially since he was working on the Kira case in person instead of behind the safety of a computer screen.

L draped the cloak over his head and allowed Harry to come closer to his invisible form. Their bodies pressed together, L's front to Harry's back, but it was only because the proximity seemed to be needed (although L could close his eyes and feel Harry breathe, and he knew right then that he wasn't alone despite the fact that his whole world had shattered into a million pieces).
According to Hermione, there was quite the welcoming party outside.

The first time L would be able to see Harry's fame in action, something he had been quite curious about, was the only time he had wanted nothing more than to do the complete opposite.

Harry sighed from in front of L, his entire body tense with worry. He reached behind him, his hands open and welcoming, and L straightened his body out, trying to press his invisible form as closely as possible to the only link to life he had left. His invisible hands grasped Harry's visible ones and held on for dear life, wishing so dearly that they were alone, completely alone, with nothing between them. Away from the world and away from death, in a world that L could pretend was back to his semblance of normality.

Harry had originally wanted to wrap them both up in the Invisibility Cloak and Apparate them directly to the car doors, and they had planned for that while they waited for the car to show up. However, one of the doctors that had taken Wammy's...Wammy's body away had seen Harry and an 'unknown man' on the floor, and although she hadn't seen L’s face, she had still decided to go to the press and spill out the entire ordeal.

She had been terminated the second the emergency _Daily Prophet_ had been delivered, because of some twisted form of doctor-patient legality (even though L knew it was enforced because Harry had all-but gone on a rampage, and Hermione had joined him while adamantly threatening to quit unless it was dealt with).

Rita Skeeter had still made her presence known, just in the opposite way than L and Harry had originally anticipated—through a totally different article. No pictures, but the accusations were the same.

Wammy was dead, Kira was still free, and yet L and Harry were being hit with this disaster at the same time.

So the press had flocked to the initial atrium of the hospital, and so they couldn't just Apparate out. Harry had to make a statement, to try and discredit the woman of her allegation of L's existence in an effort to keep the press at bay, and so he was forced to show his face in public.

That and it probably would've been a bad idea to Apparate, considering every single time they did, L ended up losing the food he had consumed or dry heaved until his face was blue. There was nothing more obvious than an invisible person hacking up their stomach acid.

Harry said softly, "Stay close. Don't let anyone touch you through the hallways, and when we hit the atrium I want you to practically be my shadow. You have no idea how to get outside of the barrier, and it's a bit disconcerting walking out a solid window as if it was air. Just stay with me, and I promise everything will be alright. Keep the cloak close and you have to make sure that not even your feet show. They know I have an Invisibility Cloak, but these people will believe me when I say that there was no one else in that hospital room with me." He cringed. "I can't believe I'm ruining this woman's career though. I'll make it up to her somehow, even if—"

"Harry. You have to go," Hermione interrupted, cutting off Harry's ramblings of topics L had heard four times in the past hour. If he had been capable of speech, he would have told Harry to stop repeating himself because L was perfectly capable of remembering the first time, but for once L did not mind Harry's mindless words. It was comforting to hear him speak, because it was familiar and normal and it made everything seem more grounded.

The door was opened.

The hallway was empty and silent, and so Harry began making his way forward. L kept his hands
in Harry's, not willing to let go until the last possible moment, and he didn't even want to do so then. Even though he knew in his mind (running thick and slow and painfully) that people would see and notice Harry holding hands with an invisible presence, completely thwarting Harry's statement to the reporters, he still just...

L blinked and dropped his hands just as a group of what these people called *Healers* came around the corner.

The four Healers stopped walking abruptly at the sight of Harry, their eyes wide and mouths slightly open. It was a lot like how Misa was gawked at in the streets of Japan by all of her fans, but even so, there was a slight difference. Misa's fans watched her in envy, lust, and excitement.

These people were *reverent*. Like *Kira worshippers*.

Harry stiffened visibly and L could feel more than see his hair stand up on end. Harry raised a reluctant hand to give a half-hearted wave, and the female Healer began to shake in her boots and robe, blushing a pale pink that was oddly flattering. All four of them smiled blindingly and began muttering greetings and overly sickeningly-sweet words like "Oh, Mr. Potter, welcome back to England!" and "It's so lovely to meet the man behind the legend, Mr. Potter."

L didn't know what to do, so he just followed Harry's rushed footsteps as quietly as possible until they got to a golden lift. It was empty, and when the doors shut Harry reached out almost desperately, grasping handfuls of the cloak and pulling L close. Harry whispered under his breath, "I hate this, I hate this. Why are we doing this?"

L, rigid in Harry's embrace, couldn't speak. His voice still hadn't recovered from his...breakdown of sorts, and he was afraid that if he opened his mouth, he would lose control again. Perhaps not *that* way again, but L felt nauseous and light-headed regardless.

Harry dropped his arms and said, "We're almost there. Please stay close." L didn't answer, instead walking behind Harry's form in preparation for when the doors opened directly into the atrium of St. Mungo's.

When the door did *ding* open, it wasn't to blissfully silent, empty hallways where L could grasp Harry's hands as a life-line. Instead, it was like a solid wall of noise when Harry's face became visible through the golden doors. L fought the urge to recoil physically, but his mind was reeling from the sight of dozens upon dozens of people with flashing cameras and rolls of paper floating in mid-air. There were even parents and their children standing behind the red rope keeping the crowd at bay, all-but shrieking at him with their own smaller cameras ranging from Polaroid to digital.

Harry, his back straight and stiff like a board, began walking into the wall of noise, plastering a god-awful fake smile on his face that was reflected off the mirrors on the walls.

This time, L reached out a hand and lightly pressed his palm against Harry's back, making sure not to crinkle his shirt, and some of the tension bled out of his muscles. It didn't disappear, but it helped, and even L felt a little better as some of the tautness he himself was feeling in his own body eased off.

Suddenly, he recalled Hermione's words just a week ago: "*Harry's relationship with you, especially if it's going to continue and be long-term, is going to go public eventually. I don't care how much you keep under the radar, or how much you have to bribe the various ministries or newspapers in both our worlds—it's ultimately going to be among the topics of discussion during dinner and tea breaks. It's something that is going to have to be discussed among you both, because it's an inevitable end to your situation. They are going to find out about you, and it doesn't*
matter how well you've hid yourself. I give it five years, with the best masking charms and cover-ups in place, before every witch and wizard in our world knows your name."

Was this L's future?

The stab of panic nearly tore the breath from L's lungs, and his heart gave a lurch that made his knees shake. L wasn't an "armchair detective", as some had said before, because he was aggressive even in the field (the escapade with Raito had proven that, along with other cases from the past including the Detective Wars.) He had dealt with press issues before in regards to his own infamy, but this was on a whole different level.

Was this L's future?

He had lived his entire life hiding away from people staring, from cruel faces and heavy hands and sharp tongues. He thrived in anonymity, revelled in it, and it was all he had ever known. But this —being intimate with someone, feeling what L felt (whatever that was, but it was strong) for Harry—this was almost enough to stop him in his tracks. It had been hard enough opening up to Quillish Wammy, enough to allow the man to legally own him until he was of age, but the idea of being the subject of fascination from an overwhelmingly gigantic magical community was too much.

And now the man who had always been the buffer between 'real life' and 'L's existence' was dead, his ashes in an urn in the forest green, 2004 Jaguar S-type waiting outside. The man who had always been a solid foundation to L was gone.

There was no one but Harry and the House left. Wammy wouldn't be that constant, comforting figure always in the background. Wammy had left him alone to deal with all of this, and even though L had Harry, it just wasn't the same.

L forced himself to breathe and to listen to Harry's words, trying to stop his thoughts right there. Wammy hadn't voluntarily left him, but had been murdered by a psychopath with the name Yagami Raito. Wammy had died because of L, and for that, justice needed to be achieved no matter the cost.

Even if it killed him—for good this time.

"Healer Margarete Ravine was mistaken. There was no one with me. Quillish Wammy was a dear friend of mine, and his loss is a tragedy for both the Wizarding community and the Muggle population, but I assure you that I was the only person mourning his death in that hospital room."

"Are you seeing someone, like Rita Skeeter said?"

"I am currently involved with someone, yes. I wouldn't dream of telling you otherwise. I am in love, and yes, with a man, and I plan on spending the rest of my life with him if he'll have me. However, he was not affiliated with Quillish Wammy and he was not in that hospital room, no matter what...that woman said."

"What's his name? Can we arrange an interview?"

"Absolutely not, on both accounts. I'd prefer to keep him in anonymity as long as possible; I'd like to spare him the insanity of you lot and your stalking tendencies." There was some laughter that rumbled through the crowd, no one denying that statement, and Harry continued, "And I'm sorry. I have to inform Mr. Wammy's family that he is no longer with us. No more questions."

Harry began walking again, and the reporters exploded with more questions all at once. The flashing lights from the multitude of cameras, even dulled slightly behind the see-through fabric of
the cloak, were blinding, and L had to keep a hand held out lightly against Harry's back to find his way. Thankfully the people had all been roped off and Harry was allowed to exit without interference, so when Harry reached the glass door at the front, he simply stepped through and disappeared to the outside of the complex.

L briefly tightened his grip on Harry's cloak when he passed through the solid glass, and even though he didn't feel anything but a blast of freezing wind that threatened to blow his cloak away, it was still rather unnerving.

The Jag was waiting with its doors opened, Ron and an unknown man waiting for their appearance. Harry held back to talk to Ron, obscurely giving L time to climb in out of the bitter chill and into the warm luxury British vehicle. He shivered in on himself, half out of cold and the other half out of relief to be out of that place. Harry gave Ron a pat on the back and climbed in after the detective.

Immediately after the door was shut behind them by the unknown man, L threw off the cloak, his face completely blank from the stewing pot of emotion in his body. Harry pulled L's body close and he whispered against L's hair, "I'm sorry. I wish there would have been another way. I will do everything in my power to make sure that you never have to do that again."

Ron clambered into the driver's seat and immediately took off, manoeuvring his way easily through the late-night traffic. A glance at the clock in the front told L that it was nearing on two o'clock in the morning here.

A total blackout had been issued at the place L and Harry were headed, confining all of the inhabitants to their rooms behind locked doors, like was customary when L made his physical presence known. All of the windows were tinted, and combined with the blackness of the night sky it would be rather hard to see anything outside. Also, L was still wearing the itchy green turtle-neck, his normal blue-jean trousers, and had a pair of his own white tennis shoes on his feet. He wouldn't stick out, especially since he was wearing one of those big black robe things to shield him from the icy wind and freezing temperatures.

Still though, the edge was precarious. The Wammy's House was an orphanage filled with genius children and teen-agers that all practically worshipped _L_, and so there was bound to be a commotion. It was that reason alone that made L wary of the children attempting to somehow break out of their rooms to catch a glimpse of the infamous detective.

Especially Mello and Matt. Those two boys...

The alert system had been initialised in the white, empty room of the _L_ programme, and since the head letter was still alive, he had to shut it off himself before everything snowballed into chaos at the House.

That and Roger needed to be informed about the new Watari as soon as possible.

Eventually, Ron turned off the main roads and pulled the Jaguar over behind a petrol station, not bothering to stop the motor. He sighed, breaking the thick silence of the interior vehicle, and then said, "I'm going to leave, then." He didn't offer any more explanation before he opened the car door (with some difficulty, as the wind was fierce), closed it right back, and then Apparated with a sound that was masked by the shrieking outside.

The wind howled as Harry and L sat in the back seat, totally silent. They were both staring at the decorated metal box lying in the left floorboard, in which held Wammy's remains. L was pressed snugly against Harry's side, invading his space so as to get as far away from it as possible. He almost wanted to cover it with the cloak, to forget it was there, but he knew that it would mean
touching the metal, and L refused to touch it or the urn that was contained inside.

The urn that held the ashes, the only thing left of the man who had given him the world.

As if they had simultaneously decided upon it, Harry opened the door and they both rushed out, huddling in on themselves. When they both were outside, they both leant against the right side of the vehicle, staring wordlessly at each other as the wind attempted to blow their forms away.

"I'm driving," L said loudly, his first words spoken in hours upon hours, and immediately pulled open the door to the driver's side, hopping in and shuddering with cold. He watched Harry walk around the bonnet before opening the passenger's side, letting out a harsh exhale as he shook as well. L adjusted the Jag to his liking, glanced out the rear-view mirror, and then released the clutch, forcing the car into first gear, out of the parking lot, and onto the left-hand side of the road.

Then he drove like a demon, his entire mind blissfully focussed on the hum of the vehicle as it sped towards Winchester.

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Watching Ryuzaki handle the manual car was ridiculously beautiful.

Harry couldn't really explain himself any better than that, because how could he? He was though, beautiful anyway. Ryuzaki's eyes were focussed, a strange glint in those charcoal grey orbs that Harry didn't recognise, and all of the tension, sorrow, and guilt had completely vacated his form. It was almost as if someone had flipped a switch in Ryuzaki's brain, wholly erasing everything from existence except the vehicle.

Harry had a feeling that if he had said a single word or sentence, no matter what it was, Ryuzaki wouldn't have even heard it.

It was absolutely gorgeous, watching him.

He was speeding almost ludicrously, already nearing the top speed of 233 kilometres-per-hour. If he had been pulled over, he would've gotten a charge of attempted manslaughter, but even that didn't seem to faze him (probably because he could get out of almost anything; he was the detective L after all). The ride was effortless, smooth, perfect...as if the two of them were combined into one single, breathing machine and nothing existed in the world but the sweeping roads and the cracking pavement.

Merlin, it was breathtaking.

Especially watching him manoeuvre the gear-shift...

Harry forgot about Watari, the new article that had been published with rumours, the Kira investigation, and even Ron and Hermione.

Instead, he fought not to drool.

When he came in close to the city of Winchester, Ryuzaki bypassed the main town and took a few obscure winding roads west of the city as if he had been driving down these roads all of his life, dark eyes flickering with concentration and awareness. Maybe he had been driving these roads all of his life, but for some reason Harry knew that it wasn't the memorisation of the roads but the thrill of the vehicle and the drive itself that made Ryuzaki so...there wasn't even a word in the English language to describe it.

Maybe this was Ryuzaki's—L Lawliet's—version of genuine enthusiasm.
Ryuzaki suddenly began slowing down, and Harry blinked in surprise. He glanced around to the countryside and his eyes grew wide at the sight through their wind-shield.

The buildings were a massive thing in the background; all of them were white brick with huge marble columns running up the fronts. The lawns of the place were coated with an eerie dusting of moonlight and perfectly groomed. Through that, there were dozens of large trees dominating the space, consisting of elks and maples and oaks and pines and everything in-between, making the place seem like it was in its own world with its own shield from the sun and rain. The bare branches were blowing so roughly that occasionally Harry could see one of them rip off, flying away into the surrounding blackness. In the back through the four buildings (three in front with one in prominence and the last one in back), Harry could distantly see the tip of a tennis court and a huge track through the trees, and if he wasn't mistaken even a football field. All-in-all, the property was massive, perhaps being on a lot of hundreds of acres, including the countryside that ran in the back behind the last, long building in the back.

Every window in the entire establishment stood out in stark contrast to the glowing white brick surrounding them, because they were black as pitch. Heavily tinted, it seemed, which was fortunate as well as slightly disturbing. Harry glanced quickly at Ryuzaki, wondering why he had taken such precautions with security, even in an orphanage filled with children who knew all about him, before he turned back to the front and began absorbing again.

Ryuzaki drove to the main gate and stopped at a black box. The screen flickered to life with a logo that read **The Wammy's House** in the same font and colour as Ryuzaki's L sigma. Ryuzaki didn't say a word or even open the window, but there was suddenly a tiny, blinking purple light and the gate slowly swung open.

The detective sped onto the grounds and onto a circular drive, eventually stopping the vehicle in front of the massive front doors on the most prominent building. He killed the engine and then ran the tips of his fingers along the leather of the steering wheel, almost tenderly, as if absorbing the feel of it into memory.

Harry knew that he didn't know much about L's hobbies or his personal life (or lack thereof), except solving cases and testing sweets from around the world, but this was unexpected. Harry had never seen him like this, and it was surprising to say the least. Harry's hadn't expected Ryuzaki to be a petrol-head, for lack of a better word.

Then Ryuzaki pulled the hood over his hair and pulled the door open with effort.

Harry jumped into action, reaching over the back-seat, hesitating, and then gingerly picking up the metal box that held Watari's ashes. He pulled it over the seat and pulled open his door with even more difficulty, and followed Ryuzaki to the steps leading to the heavy wooden doors.

When they finally stepped into the foyer of the main building, both of them shivering with cold, Harry only got a moment to look at the lavish decorating that would put ordinary Muggle orphanages (and manors, really) to shame before he was all-but chasing Ryuzaki. They winded through hallways decorated with paintings and scenic photographs, passed empty and dark computer terminals, flew past libraries that rivalled the one at Hogwarts, and hopped up elegantly carved staircases. It took nearly ten minutes to reach their destination even though Ryuzaki knew exactly where they were going, and most of those ten minutes were spent on Harry's end trying to absorb everything about the décor and layout as possible.

Without knocking, Ryuzaki barged into the room with about all the tact of a rhinoceros.

There was an older man sitting at a table, pinning various insects in a vague but highly artistic
circular pattern. He didn't look up when the door flew open, opting instead to continue meticulously pinning a butterfly's wings to the cardboard backdrop. His round, circle glasses were slipping down his wide, stubby nose, and his thick grey eyebrows were scrunched in concentration.

"Hello L and guest," he said in a dull British lilt.

Ryuzaki finally pulled off his cloak, leaving him in that emerald green sweater of Harry's (which looked ridiculously good on him—why did he always wear white when green really suited him?) and his regular shitty trousers. With his own blank voice, he replied, "His code is to be H, and I demand that letter to be taken off rotation from here on out, but he will be known throughout the House as the new Watari."

That made the old man look up with a slight brush of confusion in his brown eyes. "Pardon?" he asked, his eyebrows rising. "You have dismissed Quillish? Is that even possible?"

There was a long pause before Harry held out the metal box and said in a gentle voice, "I'm sorry, sir, but he's dead."

All the colour left the old man's face rapidly, and his eyes grew so uncommonly sad behind those round glasses. Almost absently, he brought his hands up so he could bury his face into the palms, and he let out the longest sigh Harry had ever heard. "Kira killed him but not you?" he eventually asked in a slow voice. "He didn't kill this man beside you, who Quillish informed me a few weeks ago was highly beneficial to this investigation? Why would he single him out when you two seem to be the threat?"

Harry glanced at Ryuzaki, but apparently the detective had an answer ready. With a tone that sounded unfamiliar, he said, "It is a very long story, Roger. H will inform you of everything when this case has come to a conclusion, as he is an expert of sorts in this new world of shinigami I have discovered. Furthermore, I will be administering specialised learning to the top three heirs, as Mello will surely tell Matt everything."

The old man named Roger sighed again, just as long and from the bottom of his soul, before he said, "Very well. After the conclusion, I shall set up a schedule for Near, Mello, and Matt. Is there anything you need?"

Ryuzaki advanced to the table and picked up a pen in his normal precarious fashion. As he began writing a series of numbers down, which Harry quickly recognised as his own encrypted cellphone number, Ryuzaki muttered, "I shall be staying here for at least the next few hours to shut down the L programme. Keep the lockdown engaged until we have vacated the premises and I have terminated the safety lock firesafes and the internal alarm software."

Whatever in the hell that means, thought Harry with a frown.

Roger glanced at Harry from over the top of his glasses and said, "Very well. Should I put Watari-H into the guest suit on the west wing or the—"

"There is no need for that," L stated, not offering any explanation as to why. Instead, he turned on his heel and took off right out the door again.

Harry, being more polite, said in a soft voice, "Good-bye, Roger. It was lovely meeting you. Thank you for your time, considering we barged in so late."

There was a flicker of something in Roger's eyes that reminded Harry of Dumbledore, and although Harry couldn't place it off the top of his head, he felt an automatic fondness for the thin,
elderly man.

"You are very welcome H. Please enjoy your brief time at the House, and I hope to see you soon." Harry grinned and finally turned to follow Ryuzaki, who was silently watching the exchange at the open doorway.

As they both began tearing their way through the building again without any time to even breathe properly, let alone take in the sights, Ryuzaki said, "It is nice to see that you have encouraged Roger to enjoy your company. I am sure that he will enjoy your presence instead of mine."

Harry almost said 'Yeah, weren't you rude?' but he didn't, mostly because Ryuzaki's mood had backtracked from the ride in the Jaguar. Harry knew that Ryuzaki was mourning inside, but he was being unusually stony and silent.

Harry watched him manoeuvre through the still hallways and wondered how everything would go from here, not only in the case but through their relationship together.

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L watched Harry open the urn that had been taken from the metal box.

At once, he began dumping the contents slowly into the shrieking wind, and the ashes blew away into the English countryside of Quillish Wammy's most beloved home. L watched them fly away until every fleck of dust was blown away, and with a steeled face, he whispered, "Good-bye."

Then he allowed Harry to steer him out of the cold, away from all that remained of the man that gave L Lawliet life.
Twenty-Seven: Knowing

Chapter Notes

Dedication to *Sociially-Diisoriiented*. Beta credit to *Skylara* All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

*Knowing*

8 November 2004

Harry watched him work.

Harry didn't understand a goddamn thing that he was doing, but whatever it was, it seemed to be rather tedious. It was repetitive, and it didn't look like Ryuzaki was getting anywhere, entering in seemingly random number and letter combinations on various screens.

Ryuzaki's expression was different from the blank almost-enthusiasm in the Jaguar, but his concentration on the computer screen that was all alone in the middle of the white room was just as intense. It was freezing in here, as the walls were all made out of plated steel that coated the room in a chequered pattern, and the floor was also made out of steel, but in an elongated pattern almost like a hardwood floor. Harry wondered briefly why it was so sterile and institution-like in this area, with nothing but a computer and its motherboard in the centre of the room. Couldn't they have put the computer on a desk, put a rug on the floor, made it a little homier or warm in here?

Harry shivered.

Ryuzaki was on the floor, his right leg up to his chest and the other at an awkward angle. He was typing steadily on the computer, his long and bony fingers looking more like an extension of the Macintosh than a body part, and his slightly damp hair was falling into his unblinking eyes. Immediately after the two of them had let Watari's ashes go, he had disappeared into a private suite and locked himself into the loo. Harry had wandered around aimlessly as he listened to the shower run, wondering and worrying about Ryuzaki for the hour he had been in there.

As soon as Ryuzaki had come out of the bathroom, in fresh clothing that looked identical to his usual preference, he had immediately gone to a wooden door and entered in a code, opening the door to the cold room.

Harry clutched the cloak to his form and began looking around from his own spot on the floor. Satisfied that there were no cameras except the disabled one on Ryuzaki's Mac, he pulled out his wand and said an incantation out loud, pleased when a warm wind began blowing out of his wand. He directed most of the current in Ryuzaki's direction, in an attempt to dry his hair so he wouldn't get ill. When he was content with the temperature in the room, he stood up, needing to stretch his legs.

Ryuzaki seemed to not even notice what was going on around him, as he was concentrating as if
the slightest misstep would cause the apocalypse (for all Harry knew, this was the truth). Harry sighed, and then jumped when the detective said in a dull monotone, "This will take a few more hours. Feel free to explore the compound to your liking, and I will find you when I am finished. Please do not show your wand to others, although I doubt you will run into anyone. If you do, please inform them that you are Watari-H, and if it is two young boys, one with blond hair and the other with red, please tell them both that their chocolate and computer privileges respectively are suspended for a month."

Ryuzaki was speaking strangely. Harry watched the back of his body, his brain trying to work out what was going on. Usually, regardless of the situation, Ryuzaki was so dialect-neutral that it was hard to place an authenticity on him, although anyone with any accent experience could place the odd mixture of Russian, Japanese, and English occasionally in his speech. However, during that paragraph spoken in a monotonous tone, he had sounded...different. Ryuzaki had had a definitive accent, however diluted.

Russian.

Which meant that Ryuzaki made a conscious effort every single day to wipe any trace of nationality from his words even if sometimes he slipped, and he had somehow forgotten to hide it in his technology-based solitude (because Harry somehow knew that Ryuzaki was speaking on auto-pilot, and that to Ryuzaki, Harry Potter just didn't exist at that moment).

"Okay," Harry managed to choke out, his brain working fast and yet slow at the same time. From what Harry had concluded from Ryuzaki's reluctant and heavily guarded stories from his past, he had been born in Japan and had spent nearly five years there, learning English there. And hadn't he only been in Russia for, like, three years? It didn't make sense that Ryuzaki would...wouldn't he be more inclined to speak with a Japanese accent?

Harry left the room. He felt a stab of irritation in his chest, because Ryuzaki knew everything about Harry and yet Harry knew nothing about Ryuzaki. Harry wanted to know everything about the man that had stolen his heart, and it was distressing to be reminded of how much Harry didn't know. Yes, Harry knew some things, and he knew that it wasn't easy for Ryuzaki to look back when he was so used to looking solely into the present and future, but still.

As Harry walked towards the door leading to the exit, very much curious about the place he was currently in, he made sure his wand was stashed in his arm holster and grabbed a piece of pie while he was at it. After all, someone somewhere had put a full buffet table full of various sweets in the kitchenette, and Harry figured he could carry a piece around with him. He hadn't eaten in ages, with everything that had happened in the past day, and pie was about as good as it was going to get unless he ran into a cook.

This time, he paid close attention to where he was going, taking in all of his surroundings. It really was fantastic, completely lavish with style and elegance. It wasn't all like Hogwarts, with all of its stone and tapestries and grandeur, and instead it was like an upscale Victorian set-up but very minor and classy about it. Harry blinked to himself, not knowing how to explain it even to himself, so he just continued to wander, memorising the layout to the best of his (shitty) ability.

He found two kitchens, which seemed really pointless to Harry although he understood what it was about. He bypassed the first kitchen, which was more for decorating food and getting buffets ready for eating, and went straight to the refrigerator, putting his half-eaten piece of pie on the centre island. It was one of those massive fridges that the Americans bought instead of the normal, English ones, probably because of all the children and teen-agers that lived here. However, when he opened it up, he gave a half-hearted smile when he took in all of the eating possibilities.

_Jackpot_, Harry thought, and then laughed out loud to himself.
He began raiding the place, and he ended up making a massive ham and turkey sandwich that would've made Ryuzaki blanch, complete with lettuce and tomato and bacon and pickles and three types of cheese and dear Merlin it looked delicious. As he fried the bacon and bustled around for tea and crisps, eating bits of scraps as he worked, he contemplated what he was going to do once Ryuzaki was done doing...whatever in the hell he was doing.

He was going to test the thirteen-day rule immediately, because it couldn't have been mere coincidence that Rem had decided to act right after Ryuzaki had proclaimed that he was going to do it himself. There was something fishy about that, and if the others in the investigation team weren't such idiots (with the utmost respect for some of them, Matsuda somewhat included) they would've noticed the connection.

And Raito...that kid was a goddamned genius, so it made absolutely no sense that he wasn't agreeing with Harry on this one unless he had something to hide. It was so obvious that the thirteen-day rule had caused Rem to take action, and honestly it was obvious that Raito was hiding something by saying that it was pointless. By having a criminal scheduled to die via the death penalty, the risk was minimal, and besides, going on blind faith that something was correct was foolish. They had to test the Death Note in every way humanly possible, because only then they would have the answers they were looking for. The entire case heeded upon that fact.

The thirteen-day rule had to be tested, since Rem had acted because of it.

Harry put the bacon on the sandwich and finished it with the top piece of bread, taking the plate his odd breakfast was on to the island. He sat in one of the three barstools and immediately dug in, letting out a moan when the delicious array of tastes hit his tongue. He forced himself not to scarf it down like a ravenous beast, but it had been more than a day since he had eaten last, and it was hard not to.

He was a little over halfway done when he heard footsteps coming into the kitchen behind him. Despite wanting to turn around hastily and demand a name, which was his first impulse, he made sure to stay calm, eating just as slowly as before without looking back. He picked up a crisp absently, popping it into his mouth and chewing, but his appetite had waned quite a bit.

For a long moment, not a word was spoken, but then Harry said lightly, "It seems like so long ago now, but a few years back, I knew this man. He was...around the same age as Mr. Wammy was, and they had some similarities. I mean, they were quite different at the same time, but he was uncommonly kind and stern in regards to his charges just like Mr. Wammy, and the man I knew was a good man. He was the best man I'd ever known." Harry laughed softly and continued, "He was a manipulative sonofabitch, and he spent most of his time keeping the truth from me, and he was a master of his art in bad ways as well as good, but he was an uncommonly good man. He was the father I never had, the grandfather I always wanted, the oddball friend that I constantly needed, the teacher that made sure I was in line and on task. He kept me from losing it, and he made me hate him so badly that I wanted to just scream endlessly. He was my rock, my shelter, and gave me a home where I felt as if I belonged. I loved him as much as I hated him sometimes, but he was everything. He gave me something to live for, and even though his actions caused so much damage in the end, he really did give me an existence."

He laid his temple on his knuckles and then said with a bittersweet air, "When he died, I thought my entire life had fallen with him. It took a long time for me to get over that, and without the help of my friends and the family that had all-but adopted me, I probably would've spiralled out of control." He took a drink of the now-lukewarm tea, breathed in the sharp fumes, and then said, "I'm not going to let L fall. I will never be what Mr. Wammy was to him, and I'm not even sure what that was. But I will be there for him whether he wants me to be there or not. L is important, not just as an international detective that is considered the best across the globe, but as a person.
He might be a pain in the arse sometimes, and he likes to kick people, and he spends more time being insufferable than not, but L is worth fighting for and I will fight with him until I'm either dead or severely maimed and he won't let me. I know we'll avenge Mr. Wammy's death, even if it's the last thing we ever do, because L won't give up and I won't give up on L."

There was a pause while the wizard finished the last bite of his sandwich, and then Harry asked, "Did any of that make any sense at all, or was it so overly sappy and sugary that it got eaten by L himself?"

Roger laughed. It was a different kind of laugh than Watari's had been, and instead of grandfatherly and kind it was more nasally and loud, with all of his teeth showing. Harry snorted in amusement, grinning like a loon.

"Yes," Roger's British lilt finally chuckled out. "It did. This person must've been very important to you, H, and it's nice to see that you have some common ground with L. Not many people do."

Harry raised an eyebrow and scratched his head. "Well, sir, I'm not sure about that. I couldn't imagine how it is for him because I had an overwhelming support system when Professor Dumbledore died and L...well..."

"Doesn't," Roger answered simply.

Harry nodded once (because it was true, no matter how hard it was to admit that), stood up, gathered another teacup, and asked as he was returning to his seat, "Were you and Mr. Wammy close?"

Roger poured himself a cup of tea from the elaborate teapot and took a small sip, his eyes fuzzy as they stared absent-mindedly at the island. His round glasses, smaller than Harry's own and a shiny copper, slipped even further down his nose, but he didn't bother pushing them back up.

Eventually, Roger said, "Not many people know this, but Quillish was married once. Her name was Eleanor, and she was my sister."

Harry sighed and closed his eyes.

"They got married when they were both twenty, and I had never seen two people so completely smitten with each other. Very much in love, they were. He was well-off because of his infamous inventions, and she revelled in the fact that he worked from their home, which happens to be the very building we are sitting in at this moment although extensions have been added. They were married for thirty-three years before she died in a car accident."

Although Harry didn't want to know, he couldn't help but ask, "Were there children?"

Roger frowned heavily, his wrinkles deepening. "Yes, there was. A boy. We don't talk about him, or at least, we didn't. He's gone too; killed in '68 when he was thirteen by a bunch of thugs in London, and Ellie couldn't have any more children, so he was all there was." Roger pulled out a bill-fold from one of the inside pockets of his suit jacket, and pulled out a picture that was old and tearing at the corners. "This is him. Benjamin." Roger let out another loud, nasally laugh. "A spoilt brat if I've ever seen one, and I've seen a lot of 'em in this damned orphanage. Looked just like Quillish when he was a tramp of a teen-ager, but he had Ellie's skin and all of her stubbornness."

Watari, Harry was a bit surprised to admit, was actually quite a good-looking man when he had been younger. His hair was a deep, rich brown that was styled as was customary in the sixties, all slicked back with curls. His eyes were that same greyish colour that had been lighter, but oddly similar, to Ryuzaki's own, and his golden skin was creased with mirth as he hugged two people in
both his arms. He had on a spiffy suit that was fitted on his sturdy body very well, even though the tie was rather hideous.

The woman had hair the colour of honey, falling in curls around her heart-shaped face that was pink with laughter. She looked nothing like Roger except for their shared brown eyes and fair skin that looked as if it burnt easily, and was rather beautiful if Harry was being honest. She looked like she was meant to be by Watari's side, in her cute little old-fashioned blouse and skirt, her curvy form wrapped securely by Watari's strong arms.

The kid looked to be about twelve or thirteen, which meant this was taken rather close to when the boy had died. Harry blinked at the pouting boy, who seemed irritated that his parents were being so happy-go-lucky and hugging him tightly when all he probably wanted to do was go roll around in the dirt with his friends. He did look remarkably like Watari, with the same dark curly hair and grey eyes and broad shoulders. Harry wondered what the boy had been like when he had been alive, but then quickly decided that he was probably better off not knowing.

"What a beautiful family," Harry ultimately said. What else could he say?

Roger smiled and said, "Yes, they were. That boy was a brat, though. Quillish and Ellie spoilt him rotten, gave him whatever he wanted and more. I couldn't even stand it."

Harry snickered and said, "You don't like kids, do you?"

"Hate 'em," Roger affirmed, nodding rather forcefully, and Harry laughed harder.

"Why in the hell are you running this place, then? It's an orphanage full of genius children, and usually the smart ones are bigger handfuls than the average ones, which is saying a lot," Harry asked after he had calmed himself down somewhat.

Roger smiled and shrugged, finally pushing his glasses up his nose. "Do you want the whole truth and nothing but, or do you want the condensed truth that is easier on the ears?"

Harry raised an eyebrow again and took a sip of his tea, green eyes rolling up to the ceiling. After he thought about that, he said, "The whole truth and nothing but."

Roger shrugged again, laced his fingers together, and said, "Well, it was a combination of reasons. Ellie died, and not even a year later Quillish stumbled upon L in Russia. Quillish was an inventor, and like any inventor, he wanted to create a copy of L's genius, a backup; a line of L's that could continue on through the years. Quillish needed someone that had no real...future, and someone he trusted enough to keep the secret and the goal alive within an orphanage. Someone like me, with no wife or children or real drive to do anything but study and learn. And honestly, that brat L reminded Quillish so much of Benny that it was borderline unhealthy. I understand where he was coming from, because while Benny was as dumb as a box of rocks compared to L, they still have similar perspectives about how life should be handled, how humanity should be dealt with, how justice is the most important thing that could be achieved. It was unhealthy, like I said, but this was Quillish's fortune, his life, and Quillish needed something to live for. L had incredible talent, has incredible talent, and not only did Quillish feel a kinship towards the kid because of his dead son, but he was an inventor."

Roger turned his head to glance at Harry, who was speechless as he absorbed the old man's words. Roger said in a tone of finality, "Quillish adopted that kid because he was like Benny. He created these orphanages because he wanted to mass-produce Benny. However...that changed. He continued adding children to the House because he wanted to mass-produce L, because L's existence had saved countless lives, put criminals into prison, and because that Russian brat had brought the thugs that had killed Benny to justice. Quillish originally brought that kid to be the
replacement. People think the heirs are the copies of L, but in reality, L was the first copy and in a way always has been. It's not a pleasant thought, and it makes Quillish sound horrible, but that's the truth and nothing but."

Harry gaped like a fish, trying to put his chaotic thoughts into words, and Roger smiled at the clear horror in Harry's eyes. Almost absently, Roger added, "Quillish loved L, more than anything in the world, and L is his own person, completely independent. Quillish knew that. It just took him a few years to stop looking into the past so he could focus on what was right in front of him. Quillish loved L, like a son and a grandfather and all of those other things that you felt for that Dumbledore fellow, and you should know that."

Harry bit his lower lip as his eyebrows scrunched together, his entire body oddly tense. He cleared his throat and said in a slightly hoarse tone, "I know that he loved L. I could see it in his eyes. But it's hard to imagine that this place was founded for...that."

Roger drained his cup of tea and then stood up, placing a knobbly hand on Harry's shoulder. Softly, he said, "Everyone has dark moments in their pasts. I know I do, and I'm sure you do as well. Quillish Wammy was human, and he made mistakes, but what came out of it was worth it in the end. These genius orphans will grow up and be let loose to do great things for the world, and some of them will inherit L's detective codes and continue his astonishing legacy. Quillish died knowing that he had helped the world through his inventions and by unleashing the full potential of L upon the world, and because of that, he died a hero in my eyes."

Then Roger turned on his heel and left Harry at the island counter, absorbing Roger's words, wondering if Ryuzaki felt the same way or if he even knew.

He probably did, but for Harry's sake, he hoped he didn't.

Then, suddenly, Harry had a brilliant idea.

***

L pressed the enter key and immediately put his aching head in his palms.

For a long moment, he just sat there, letting the knee that had been pressed against his chest for hours on end fall to the ground with a light thump. He could feel his heart beating steadily against his ribs, proving that he was alive and breathing.

Now that the L programme was finally shut off and reset just in case L had to set off the timer in the future, they could return to the complex, but for the moment he was content to just sit in the middle of the steel floor, his stinging eyes closed. He wasn't sure if it was because he hadn't slept in a while even though his healing body yearned for it, or because of the episode in the hospital, or because he had spent the last four-ish hours staring into a computer screen without blinking as much as he needed to, but his eyes felt as if they were on fire regardless. His fingers felt stiff, as only they could feel after typing for a long period of time, and his back was sore from staying so still for so long.

They needed to go back, to solve this case as quickly as possible so Wammy didn't die in vain. L needed this like he needed oxygen to breathe, like he needed water in his body to survive. L needed to avenge Wammy, and he needed to do it now.

But he couldn't even get up off the floor, so he could go track down Harry on foot. He couldn't even lift his fingers to type in a command to find active movement in the House, in order to find Harry via the surveillance cameras that had been shut off because of L's arrival. He couldn't even grasp the cell phone that was lying beside the speakers, so he could call Harry and demand that
they get going.

L held his breath, counting the seconds that went by.

His mind flickered between what he had done in the Kira Investigation, what he could've done differently to avoid the outcome that had happened. If he had stayed in the shadows, Wammy would still be alive. If he had kept Wammy behind the scenes while he had actively showed his face to the team, Wammy would still be alive. If he had made Wammy seem as if he was just a butler instead of Watari himself, Wammy would still be alive.

If he hadn't gotten involved in the damned case in the first place, Wammy would still be alive. He wouldn't have met Harry, but *Wammy would still be alive.*

L knew that he would've taken the case. Not only because there were more than ten victims and that he would get paid roughly two hundred billion dollars from various countries to complete the case, but also because of certain individuals that deserved to rot in prison dying swiftly before their time. Some people, like Kira, needed the death penalty to prove to them that they *weren't* gods, that they *weren't* immortal. However, some people deserved to be put into solitary confinement until they all-but rotted into their padded cells.

L shuddered as he exhaled, half out of cold and half because he was sickened with himself for thinking such a thing (even though it was so, so, so true).

There was only one man that really, honestly deserved such a fate, and L tried to forget that man's face. For the most part, he was successful, but when L was in moods such as the one he was in at that moment, that face popped up without accord.

A face that had been frozen in a scream when death had claimed him before his time.

L heard the door open behind him, and again L shuddered against his will. He wrapped his arms around himself, around his chest, in some sort of attempt to quell the pain there, and a second pair of arms, warm-warm-warm, joined his.

They sat there in silence, together in the steel room that held the L programme, until Harry stood up and carried him out in a way that L had never imagined himself being carried, kicking the door shut behind him. L wrapped his arms around Harry's neck, his long and stiff fingers burying themselves in Harry's silky hair, his lips pressed against the slightly rough skin of Harry's jaw. He inhaled the scent of Harry's skin, so musky and male and simply *Harry,* and shuddered again, not willing to let go of Harry even as the two of them lay down upon the bed.

He felt Harry's words against his cheek and he felt the tingling of the magic pouring inside of him, and the pain eased off. He almost wanted to tell Harry to stop, because Hermione had warned that his body might not be able to handle all of the magic, but he couldn't even open his mouth in fear of what might come out instead. He felt the pain in his chest lessen, still there but so much easier to handle and live with, and he knew that his recovery had already been lessened by half *at least.*

Hermione was going to have Harry's head for this, even if he hadn't healed it completely.

L could feel the magic in his blood, electrifying it, and he felt stronger by the minute even though he felt as if he was bursting at the seams because of it all. Wrapped in Harry's arms, he could almost *feel* Harry's mind working, and L said against Harry's rough neck, "Tell me."

Silence, then: "Our current plan of action, if both of our suspicions are right about Raito being Kira, then the case will be solved in about fifteen days, correct?"

"Ninety-eight per-cent correct, yes," L stated, his lips brushing against the stubble-covered skin,
"Because even though I know that we're right, there is still the slightest possibility that Raito is not Kira, as reluctant as I am to admit that."

There was another pause, and then Harry said, "I'm going to cut that down into five days tops, if you'll trust me on this."

L's eyes narrowed, and he pulled back to look Harry straight in the face. "How?" he asked.

Harry smiled, very sweetly, and then began talking.

By the time they had exhausted Harry's idea into perfection, L stated very calmly, "I've created a monster out of you."

Harry laughed, and then said, "I love you for it."

***

As the sun rose over the horizon, they stared into each other's eyes with intent.

He felt strong as he pushed his body to straddle Harry's waist, and his heartbeat was steady and regular. He could smell sugar and pastries in the air as his fingers unbuttoned Harry's dark blue long-sleeve and ran down the expanse of Harry's perfect, scarred form. He could hear the ticking of a clock as he pressed his lips against the rough column of Harry's throat, his fingers swiftly and calmly unbuttoning his jean trousers. He could see the flush on Harry's face and taste the sweat on Harry's body and L felt pride as he touched the man's body so thoroughly that Harry's body arched and twitched desperately. L heard Harry gasp for air as if all the oxygen in the world was gone, and L was overwhelmed by the satisfaction and power he experienced at the knowledge that the strongest wizard in existence was consumed just like L had been, that Harry was at the mercy of what L wanted.

And L wanted...he wanted...

L felt the sweat on his own body chill as he stripped off his own clothes and Harry's trousers, bypassing the blue button-up and the cloak that Harry still wore. He felt Harry's desperation as he grasped his wand and said words that L could not understand but could feel in his body. He felt breathless as fingers pushed inside and turned him into a being that couldn't think or see or feel anything but the fire and the longing that rushed through his veins.

L felt in control as he finally lowered himself down, his chest burning with the exercise that it probably wasn't ready for and his back popping loudly when he threw his head back with abandon. L felt in control as he clenched his rough fingernails into Harry's chest, his knees digging into Harry's black cloak that billowed underneath them. L felt in control as Harry's hands clenched L's hips without caring if L would bruise, because Harry was consumed by L, inside L, and L felt something right then that he simply had to tell Harry, and Harry had to know.

L breathed, "Harry, I..."

Harry's emerald green eyes were blazing into L's charcoal grey ones, and in a gentle voice that contrasted completely with the raw need surrounding them, Harry whispered, "I know."

L Lawliet's entire world exploded.
Twenty-Eight: Tea

Chapter Notes

Dedication to **Sociially-Diisoriiented**. Beta credit to **Skylara**. All remaining mistakes are mine.

Part of the migration from LJ/FFdotNet to AO3 and edited to my 2013 standards by yours truly.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

*Tea*

9 November 2004

Just like last time, Harry conjured a cool, damp cloth and wiped Ryuzaki’s forehead tenderly.

As he waited for the detective to finish retching into the bin, he thought about his next move, his mind flickering between different scenarios that could and most likely would end up occurring over the next few days. The left pocket on his deep black jacket was filled with parchment and the right was heavy with Galleons, leaving Harry prepared to weasel his way around legalities and bribe anyone who stood in his way.

There was a bitter taste in his mouth at what he was about to do. It was the only inconsistency in the entire plan, because everything was all-but easy and simplistic, but this...this was almost too much, honestly. He was about to do what he swore to never do the moment Voldemort had fallen to that scarlet sunset, and it soured his blood.

“Go,” he heard Ryuzaki’s voice croak from beside him, and Harry sighed, grasping the periwinkle-coloured potion from the desk. He handed it to Ryuzaki, who took it with a small, almost unnoticeable groan. He didn’t open it though, which didn’t surprise Harry in the least, because headache potions were terribly bitter and even made Harry himself blanch.

“I'll be back,” Harry whispered, kissing the heavy mass of black hair on the top of Ryuzaki’s head. He stood up, gave one last fleeting glance to the love of his life, and then turned on his heel.

When the sensation of being squeezed through an unforgiving rubber tube ended, he took a deep breath and then glanced around at his surroundings. It was quite a bit different from the Ministry in London, but that was to be expected. Instead of dark colours, tapestries, stone, and golden statues composing the décor of the entire atrium, the Japanese had styled theirs rather traditionally and in good taste. There was a massive Japanese-styled garden in the centre of the main floor, with streamlined fireplaces and Apparation points in perfect symmetry. There were windows surrounding the entire ground floor of the building, showing the bustling Japanese crowds outside but not letting them see inside. In the building, it was fairly easy to see which wizards were foreign and otherwise, because every Eastern face had on Muggle attire and the Western faces had on the normal, customary robes (or so Harry had thought—Eastern wizards were so different).

Harry blinked at a Muggle family walking next to the window, laughing joyously while covering their mouths. It was actually quite surprising, to see that the Ministry was stationed in one of the purely magical high-risers in Tokyo’s Shibuya district (there were more than most would expect in
the more conservative England, although the number didn’t even come close to New York’s). The entire building was over thirty stories of pure magical government, at least five times bigger than England’s complex in London, and Harry was surprised despite being mentally prepared already.

God, it was so modernised that it didn’t seem real. There were even computers in a Wizarding building. Harry could hardly believe his eyes, considering that in the UK they still didn’t want to acknowledge that Muggles even had televisions.

Harry sighed. Leave it to the Japanese to be technologically superior.

A few grumbles alerted Harry to the fact that he was still blocking the Apparation ward he had popped into, so he moved hastily to the front desk. Dark, slanted eyes followed him but no one called out if they recognised him, which made the entire process a bit easier to be honest—at least he didn’t have to deal with a huge gaggle of people shrieking for his autograph like he did in Europe.

He reached the front desk and the Japanese wizard cocked his head. Harry took the hint and said in English, “I need to speak with your Minister immediately.”

The Japanese man, probably under some sort of language charm just like most greeters were, narrowed his eyes and said in English as well (although it was like a bad martial arts movie, with how his mouth moved with Japanese words but English came out), “The Minister is currently unavailable. You will have to make an appointment.” As he spoke, he brushed out an invisible wrinkle from his Muggle slacks.

Harry sighed and said softly, “I simply have to speak to him at this very moment. What I have to say is terribly important, and please do not force me to be a pompous prick in response to your disagreement.”

For a long moment, the man didn’t say a word, just staring at him, but then he said, “I will phone someone to speak to you. Your name will go a long way, Potter-san, but I doubt you’ll get more than the Undersecretary. Our Minister is very busy.”

Harry couldn’t help himself as he said, “Phones too? Why can’t the rest of the Wizarding world do that? I’ve been trying to get them to use those. It’d be so much simpler than using paper aeroplanes and owls.”

The Japanese man’s eyes twitched and he replied, “It’s because most of our community are still deluded by the fact that magic is superior to Muggle technology, which is a huge mistake. Muggles have nuclear bombs and super-viruses now—it would be unwise to underestimate them, and very wise to assimilate ourselves to their knowledge.”

Harry grinned, and the wizard pulled out a flashy cell phone, talking in Japanese to a woman by the name of Izanami. As he listened, he felt a tug on his black jacket, and he glanced down in surprise to see a young boy with shaggy black hair and bright brown eyes smiling up at him.

“Hi!” he said in chipper Japanese, and grinned back at his mother once before continuing, “My mama said that you saved us from a bad guy.”

Harry felt a small smile creep up on his lips and he crouched down to the little boy’s height, ruffling his hair. In Japanese as well, he responded, “Well, I had a lot of help, young one. I’m just happy we could stop him before he could scare you over here. You’re nice and safe from him now, so it’s okay.”
“Are you going to get rid of our bad guy?” the kid asked, his eyes as wide as they could go and his tiny teeth shining in the November light streaming through the open windows. “He’s hurting lots of people, and that’s not very nice.”

Harry practically felt his heart break as he stared into those hopeful eyes. As he tried to conjure up a statement to say to such an innocent kid, his mind fluttered between thoughts that only hurt more. As he replied to the boy, “Of course I am, because bad people need to be brought to justice,” he found himself melancholic at the memory of Ginny and what she could’ve given him. Perhaps if she had lived, they would’ve had children, tiny little things that were a part of both of them running around. Perhaps they could’ve had two of them, maybe three, and been a happy family filled with love and stability and adorable little miracles causing chaos in their home, like all good children did.

Harry couldn’t imagine what that would feel like, and it was all-but torture trying, so he forced himself to break away from that train of thought. The thought of kids would do nothing but make him morose, and so he ruffled the boy’s hair once again and then stood up, gesturing towards his mother with that same small smile.

Then, he turned to the greeter, who was still on the phone, and said in English, “Tell Izanami-san that if she can get me to see the Minister in the next hour, I’ll donate five thousand Galleons to this facility.”

Funny how bribing the government was quicker than going through proper channels despite the country. *Some things just never change*, Harry thought as he was bustled almost immediately to the lifts. *Now I know why Lucius Malfoy just opted to throw gold around like candy to get his way; it’s easier doing that than waiting for ages for the same thing.*

At least Harry didn’t have an ulterior motive.

Well, for the most part, anyway.

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The Invisibility Cloak was like silk through his long, thin fingers.

L Lawliet continuously ran it against his hands almost absently, his huge eyes staring endlessly at the doorway of Harry’s suite. His mind was rushing-rushing-rushing now that he wasn’t distracted by Harry’s presence beside him, trying to find any and every fault in Harry’s plan and finding so many that it made his brain hurt. The amount of things that could go wrong were so immense that even L wouldn’t have attempted it on his own, but he knew that with Harry at the lead of the investigation now, the chances of success increased.

He wasn’t making any sense even to himself. There was a good fourteen per-cent chance that his plan would fail, and that was just too...

L stopped stroking the fabric. The chance of his existence being proclaimed was minuscule at best. Perhaps half a per-cent at the most. He was dead to these people, even Raito, and he found it highly unlikely that that would change. The case would end, and the rest of them would continue to think that L was Harry, which was the best outcome.

He was going in circles now. He knew that, like he knew the lines in his hands, and constantly repeating it to himself was a waste of his brain capacity. But he also knew that there was a bigger chance of Harry dying. What that damnable man was planning was dangerous and foolish, and if there had been any other way that was as foolproof as this one, L would’ve taken it in a heartbeat.
He thought about the original plan. There was room for error in that plan as well, asking an inmate to write in the Death Note to see if he would die in thirteen days like the rule claimed. There were so many variables that could be taken advantage of in Raito’s case—between the fact that inmates talked, that prison guards could be bribed or threatened, that officials might leak information, there was too much space for Raito to manoeuvre in to feel entirely comfortable. Honestly, he had originally expected to make the announcement that he was testing the rule in front of Rem because he had half-hoped that the shinigami would approach Harry. He was the Master of Death after all, so didn’t it make logical sense that Rem would come to Harry in an attempt to bargain? It was so obvious that she was protecting someone, and it just made more sense that Harry could help her accomplish her goal rather than Kira, who had proven himself to be ruthless when it came to his own well-being and success with global domination.

He honestly hadn’t exactly expected her to just snap and—no, don’t go there, don’t think about it—because what would that accomplish? How would Rem protect who she was protecting (Amane Misa, the Second Kira, who was released as soon as the killings started again?) if she was disintegrated into dust? How would she be able to keep an eye out to see if her wishes were fulfilled if she was dead for good?

Perhaps it was just a fanciful thought, but wasn’t it also pretty obvious that Rem had known about the Wizarding world and Harry’s status as Master of Death, and therefore it was easily deduced that Harry could possibly reverse—please don’t think about that, my eyes hurt—and change the entire outcome of the case?

Perhaps it was because she had never seen a witch or wizard suffer at the effects of the Death Note, or perhaps she had just been idiotic in that aspect. L knew that if he had been a shinigami, he would’ve never made that choice with such disregard. Hypothetically, he would’ve marched up to the person who could’ve made a real difference, like Harry or perhaps even L himself, and threatened using the Death Note on all of his loved ones until a compromise could be achieved. He would’ve been proactive instead of killing himself over something that wasn’t going to make a lick of difference anyway.

After all, Harry was still alive and was sitting in the seat of the greatest detective in the world. L knew that he had ‘died’ to the rest of the team, which would mean that everyone would know that Harry would go on a warpath. Why wouldn’t he, honestly? Everyone had known about Harry and L’s relationship. Even Matsuda had noticed, the idiot. That meant that in the eyes of the team, it would be logical to assume that Harry would be out for revenge instead of justice, and that was simply dangerous for Kira, and effectively Raito.

L blinked, unsure of how his thoughts had rushed away from him again, and forced himself to focus back on the plan.

Harry was being over-dramatic on his idea, that was for sure, but L would’ve been lying if he said that it wasn’t satisfying to think about. It would be so, so gratifying to see that murderer gaping and horrified when the truth came out.

But was it worth it? Raito was smart and clever enough to put every single one of L’s heirs to shame, and he was parallel even to L in his intelligence. Raito would conclude the same thing that L himself would’ve in his position: Harry, despite being named as the next L and being the reason the case had gone so smoothly with his information, had not been targeted by Rem, in spite of being a large threat. Raito, naturally, would ask himself why, and would only be able to come up with a sparse few suggestions that probably wouldn’t be very good. Would he go as far as to suspect that Harry was the Master of Death Rem had spoken of? There was definitely a good chance, so what if Harry proceeded with his plan and Raito found a way to get around it? Could Kira write, say, Amane’s name in the Death Note with pulls out an illegal weapon and uses it to
Harry had assured L that it was all-but impossible, that any way his person was affiliated with the Death Note surely would be voided out by his status, but L didn’t deal with surely or all-but in his daily vocabulary.

If Harry got too overconfident in his title, he would fall and wouldn’t be able to get back up.

L wished that the door to Harry’s flat was open, so he could crawl under the Invisibility Cloak and follow Raito around until he slipped. He felt fine, and he was terribly anxious to get back to what he was good at. He wanted to put that murdering bastard behind bars until he got a death sentence.

He just had to wait a little bit longer. Just a little bit longer and it would all be over.

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“And to what do I owe this pleasure, Potter-san?”

The Minister of Magic in Japan was a short man in his late fifties, early sixties, with remarkably smooth skin for his age. It was probably a glamour, but Harry wasn’t entirely sure; all he knew was that it was entirely fake and really noticeable at that, which totally defeated the purpose of one in Harry’s opinion. His thin body was clad in a classy Muggle business suit, with a tie that changed colours methodically as if it was measuring each time the man blinked. He had clasped his long hands together on his desk, looking like the perfect picture of ease, but the glint in his dark eyes spoke a different story.

Harry sat down. “Well,” he started, speaking in Japanese just to put the man at ease, “I have recently become aware of a particular problem within your country and various others abroad. I’d like to proposition you into working together to solve this problem, sir.”

The Minister, Masunaga Ichiro, raised an eyebrow and said, “Kira is not a problem in our world, so why should we meddle?”

Harry scoffed. “Most people would say the same thing about Muggle technology and weapons, and yet from what I’ve seen, you take that into account every single day.” The Minister made a small sound under his breath, so Harry continued as if it was a mere afterthought, “Besides, Kira can kill in other ways than heart attacks, y’know, like forcing people to use the Killing Curse on each other.”

Yes, Harry was totally embellishing on this fact, since Kira was a Muggle and had absolutely no idea what the Avada Kedavra was, but the colour draining from Ichiro’s face was totally worth the exaggerated lie. Eventually, the Minister said, “What...where did you get this information?”

Harry answered simply, “I’m working directly with L to bring Kira down.”

“Why hasn’t he made a move on a magical community then? There are Death Eaters in prisons everywhere, criminals in our world just as thickly as the Muggle one. Why hasn’t Kira killed our criminals if you say that he has that ability?” the Minister shot back, his gaze heavy with warning.

Harry, naturally, had an answer for this. “Think about it, sir,” he said honestly, leaning forward in the plush chair he was sitting in. “Our prisons are guarded by Dementors regardless of country, and I’ve been informed that you also have other safety precautions that aren’t exactly legal in the Wizarding Nations.” The Minister’s face didn’t change, but his fingers twitched, and Harry knew that Hermione’s whispered words were correct instead of speculation. Harry went on, “Why would Kira want to kill Wizarding criminals when they’re much, much better off with the
Dementors? I wouldn’t if I was him.”

“There are still criminals running the streets. You know that just as well as I do.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, and they get caught the second they perform illegal acts due to the tracing of wands being made a global law in 2001. You know that just as well as I do, Minister, because you are the one who pushed it to be passed across the entirety of the Wizarding world.”

The Minister opened his mouth to retort and then shut it, not entirely because he had nothing to say but because he wasn’t sure what he was arguing over. Hell, neither was Harry. “What are you asking this Ministry to do for you, Potter-san? I figure that our conversation is going to go nowhere unless we just get to the real reason that you are here.”

Wow. He’s been terribly cooperative. Perhaps this’ll be done today, and we can have Kira behind bars tomorrow. Damn, if we are only so lucky!

Harry took a deep breath and began to speak.

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L jumped when Harry cracked back into the suite.

“Is it done?” he asked the second Harry had caught his breath, automatically stepping out of his crouch and leaving the computer running. He could go back to solving that case later, because Harry was back and would have information if the meetings had gone as well as could be hoped.

“Yes,” Harry said with a weak smile, and motioned vaguely to his left, where Hermione was pulling out vials of what looked like Polyjuice Potion. She looked up, gave L a wave and a smile that didn’t completely reach her eyes, and then returned to pulling the potions out of her bag.

Harry chose to ignore her after that because he grasped L’s hands and pulled him to the comfortable armchairs beside the massive window, threading his fingers through L’s own. He cleared his throat and said, “I was given permission. I had to bribe people like nobody’s business, but permission was granted. Well, mostly—they’re going to be tailing us, to make sure that we don’t do anything that’s technically legal but also harmful to the Muggles as well. Like, I dunno, a heating charm in their eyeballs or something. Although there’s not a chance in hell they’ll catch Hermione, to be perfectly honest. They seem to be just as anxious to catch Kira now because of my half-lies, that I hated telling by the way, but they aren’t taking any chances.”

“So it is done, then,” L said, eyes wide.

“Yes,” Harry said, then added, “I figure you probably worried yourself half to death while I was gone, but it’s done. We’ll solve this case in a few days, maybe less depending on how they act. Now, you know the plan, so it’s time to get on it. Just like we said, you’ll be on her under the Invisibility Cloak, because it’s pretty obvious that Kira’s shinigami will recognise your name if it’s floating around.”

“After this is over, I’m going to beat you to death with my Healing books, Harry,” Hermione said airily, and Harry groaned.

“Isn’t it enough that I have to take you to dinner at the most expensive Wizarding restaurant in Europe without dying via your obsession?”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “You just spent a good fifteen thousand Galleons getting your way around legalities, Harry Potter. I think a few hundred Galleons are a small price to pay. But if you had killed him because of your foolish nature—”
Harry cringed. “He’s still alive. His body filtered out the magic quite well, and there doesn’t seem to be any side effects. Besides, I didn’t heal him all the way, Hermione, just...er...a lot. Merlin, can you cut me some slack? We’re about ready to put two Japanese Muggles into a Wizarding prison, and you both are risking your lives to do so.”

“Yeah, and if he hadn’t filtered out the magic like you had hoped? He’d be dead, and to spontaneously make a decision like that without first consulting a Healer was incredibly thoughtless of you, Harry,” Hermione pointed out, and then sighed. “But no matter. You’re correct; we should focus instead on the future instead of what a thickhead you are.”

Harry looked as if he wanted to retort, but instead grumbled out, “Fine. Let’s get a move on. I guarantee every single one of them is going to be on my arse about being gone for so long. Honestly I’m just surprised someone didn’t come up here to make sure that I hadn’t killed myself or something, since everyone sort of knew about me and Ryuzaki...”

After putting on a jacket (it was cold outside) and grabbing his video camera (thankfully it worked beneath the cloak), L pulled the cloak around his shoulders and allowed his body to disappear from view. He watched Hermione as she placed the vials of Polyjuice in her bag and then downed the one potion she had left out. His eyes widened slightly as her entire form bubbled and changed before his eyes, leaving her with an easily forgettable Japanese appearance. She smiled, her teeth slightly oversized, and said, “I might’ve nicked a few hairs from a few patients of mine. I’ve got about six more vials with different hairs, so I’ll be able to switch quite a bit. I doubt a shinigami will be paying that much attention to my name but I’ll cast a few spells on myself anyway.” She pulled out an iPod and a cell phone, shoving them into her pockets.

“You’re very inconspicuous, Hermione. Just remember to keep yourself hidden well and to call on the Galleon if you have any problems.” Harry pulled out a small bag and gave both L and the transformed Hermione one, saying, “These are the coins that we used in the DA although they have been modified over the years. They’ll burn the hell out of your leg if someone calls on it, and if it does, you need to find a way to call me on your cell phone without being noticed since you can’t use magic to respond. Okay?”

L reached a hand out of the cloak to grasp the gold, his arm joining his head in floating eerily in the middle of the room. He quickly pulled his arm back under the soft fabric, pocketing the coin and flexing his toes that were clad in shoes. Harry muttered a few spells under his breath, probably to muffle L’s breathing and footsteps, before tapping his wand over L’s head. He felt oddly peculiar at the sensation of something running down his head and neck, and he vaguely recognised it as the Disillusionment charm. L opened the cloak a bit to see that his body had become see-through, almost like a chameleon, and he quickly closed back the cloak, feeling a tad bit nauseous at the sight.

Finally, Harry seemed to be content with his preparations and said, “Alright. Let’s do this. Hermione, you know what to do. See you there, alright?”

“Of course,” she said, glancing at L this time with a smile that did reach her eyes, and then she Apparated outside of the compound before L could even take a breath.

Harry turned to L and said, “Are you ready?”

L breathed, and then answered, “Yes.”

They strode towards each other, Harry’s hands cupping L’s mostly invisible face, and then they were together, and L vaguely wondered when it had become so natural and easy to just kiss the wizard in front of him. He couldn’t even remember as he accepted the tongue that prodded for
entrance and lifted his invisible hands to Harry’s chest.

They broke apart, both of them gasping for air, and then Harry gave L a blinding grin. “I love you, L Lawliet,” he said, brushing the hair out of L’s eyes.

In response, L couldn’t fight the smile that crept up onto his lips, though he doubted Harry could tell (and how it must’ve looked to an outsider when they had kissed), and it didn’t go away even after Harry had covered L’s head with the cloak.

Then they opened the door and left the suite, hopefully for good.

***

“James-san!” yelped Matsuda when Harry entered the main terminal.

“Hey there, Matsuda,” Harry replied. “Sorry that I haven’t been down here with you guys. You’d be surprised at how much he was doing—the number of cases beside this investigation is just huge.”

“I can imagine,” Soichiro said. “How are you holding up? You seem better than the last time we all conversed.”

Harry forced his face to adopt a stubborn but saddened expression. “I’m fine. Well no, I’m not, but I’m as good as I’ll get until Kira’s behind bars or worse.” He watched as Aizawa opened his mouth at that and said, “And yes, I’m still testing the rule. I’m hand-delivering it to the criminal in question, actually. It’s been dealt with and that’s not going to change.”

“When?” asked Matsuda.

Harry fought the urge to glance at Raito, who was currently sitting in one of the swivel chairs with his back to the computers. “Tonight, actually,” Harry said, smiling half-heartedly. “I’m not entirely happy about it, but it’s what we’re doing, and you guys won’t change my mind. Either way, we’re going to find out something new, and that’s only going to be beneficial to the case.”

“But—”

Harry caressed his finger along the outside edge of the Death Note currently in their possession. The material was just as coarse and cold as before, and he felt a shiver roll down his spine. He said, “Don’t start. This is my choice, and I’m L. I’m in control of this investigation, and if you don’t believe in my methods you can get the hell out of my way.”

There were a few moments of silence and then Harry said, “How many people have been killed today?”

“Twenty-three today, nineteen yesterday,” answered Raito, his voice remarkably even. Harry wondered if Ryuzaki was in his face or not, and figured he was probably as close as he could get without tripping over Raito’s chair legs. Or even his actual legs, which were stretched out in front of him.

Meanwhile, Matsuda asked hesitantly, “And what about...you know.”

Harry shuddered visibly. Despite the fact that it was what he was hoping would come up, the thought of it just immediately brought up the memory of Watari dying, of Ryuzaki’s reaction. He wondered how Ryuzaki was holding up, and wished nothing more than to reach out for him and pull Ryuzaki into his arms. “They’re...dealt with, and that’s all you need to know, okay.” He hesitated and then said loudly, “I need to get out. There’s nothing else we can do except test this
rule, and I need to get the hell out of this compound. I need air or I’m going to lose my mind.” He felt himself begin to shake, hoping that they interpreted it as anguish instead of anticipation, and said, “I’m going to have afternoon tea. Maybe...”

He pulled out his cell phone. As he searched for Misa’s number, Harry said, “I’m calling your girlfriend, Raito. Since she’s not filming today, let’s go out for lunch, just the three of us. Everyone else...just go have dinner with your families. Go out on the town. Have some fun. Mourn Ryuzaki in the best way you know how. Just remember him by surrounding yourself with life, with family and friends. Get drunk, get stupid, and then come back here tomorrow hung-over and ready to...to move on.”

Alright,” agreed Raito, getting out of his chair and walking to his father and Harry. Soichiro put a hand on Harry’s shoulder, his grip hard and comforting, and Raito’s eyes were caramel pools of compassion. Perhaps it was genuine; perhaps Raito did feel sorry about the entire ordeal, but that didn’t change anything. If he was Kira, then he deserved what he was going to get. If he wasn’t (even though both Ryuzaki and himself were convinced), then that was that.

He dialled Misa’s number and she picked up rather quickly. “James-kun? Is that you?”

Harry let himself smile, and honestly he was happy to hear her chipper voice. The Second Kira or not, she was just so much fun, and a small part of Harry’s heart wished that she wasn’t (even though she was, and they had physical evidence to prove it). “Hey sweetie,” he answered, nodding at Soichiro and waving good-bye to the exiting investigation team. “I’m taking Raito out for lunch, and I was wondering if you wanted to join us. I miss you, Misa-chan.”

“Aww, Misa misses you too, James-kun! Of course I’ll come to lunch with you guys. Where are we going? There’s this really good café down there close to the headquarters, so we should go there. Wait, is Ryuzaki going?”

Harry fought the urge to grin rather wickedly and instead adjusted his expression and voice to appear saddened again. “No, Misa-chan. Ryuzaki...won’t be there. It’ll just be us three. And I know which one you’re talking about. Café...er, what’s the Japanese word? Apple, right?”

“Yeah, it’s really weird but the food there is amazing. I’ll meet you there, okay? See ya!”

“Bye Misa-chan.”

He hung up and said softly, “You ready to go, kid? Raito laughed, his face lighting up in mirth and youthful enthusiasm, and said, “Sure. I don’t know about you, but I’m starving. Let’s go meet up with Misa.”

***

Harry was terribly good at this.

L followed Harry rather closely as he exited the complex with Raito by his side, and the two of them were chatting about easy topics. Raito knew that Harry didn’t like him that much, but Harry was giving the impression that he still wasn’t entirely trustful of him but willing to put it aside. If anyone could accomplish that, it’d probably be Harry, L thought.

He watched the disguised Hermione walk out of a building a few dozen metres behind Harry and Raito, but L didn’t hold back to wait for her to catch up while dodging afternoon foot traffic. Besides, he was more focussed on his surroundings, which were exasperating beyond belief. He had always entertained the idea of being invisible in crowds, to stop people from staring at him, but now that he actually was he was finding it to be a slightly irritating. Not only could they not
see his body to keep from barrelling into him, but it was growing frustrating to keep the cloak tight around his body. The Disillusionment charm wasn’t invisibility, after all, so he had to be completely cautious.

When they got to the café, Harry and Raito stood in line to order while L looked around. Amane wasn’t there yet, which was a good thing because it would be near impossible to get anywhere when she was surrounded by fans. L ignored the urge to go up to the front desk where Harry was ordering both of their meals after consulting with Raito and ask for some ohagi and perhaps a slice of that green tea cake...

It was terrible to stare at other people eating and not being able to join them.

Hermione walked in a few minutes later, earbuds in her ears and the classical music clearly heard through the low murmur of the café. She bypassed the line and made a beeline to the back corner of the room, dropping her shoulder bag onto a table and absentmindedly tapping the back of one of the chairs. She pulled out a small wallet and then finally trekked up to the line, looking for all the world to be just a simple Japanese student listening to music. As Harry and Raito went to go find a table, L spared Hermione one last glance before following them, Harry leading them to the back corner as well with a bento box and a coffee in his hand.

They sat a ways from Hermione’s table but not too far away, just enough to where it seemed like mere coincidence. L followed them, weaving cautiously through the tables and thankful that it wasn’t insanely crowded like Sato-Mari’s was. He sat down warily in the empty chair farthest away from Harry and Raito, so he could keep an eye out without getting too close or standing in the middle of the aisle. He was briefly thankful for Hermione tapping the chair, mostly because he didn’t want her accidentally sitting on him, and then let his entire focus come down to the conversation between Raito and Harry.

“Yeah, I’m going to call your father and perhaps Aizawa right before I leave to deliver the Death Note. You’re definitely the most qualified to run the team if something happens to me, and even Ryuzaki himself mentioned that he’d like you to be the next L before he told you about me.”

Raito broke apart some chopsticks and said, “What was that about, anyway? I mean, you’ve been really beneficial to this case, and I understand why he would name you as successor, but it came out of nowhere to be entirely honest.”

“Well,” Harry said, scratching the back of his head and sniffling a bit before breaking open his own chopsticks and digging into his bento box. “I was named the successor a long time before you even came into the picture. He was probably just testing you, to see if he could get some sort of confession out of you. Obviously that didn’t work. But he was essentially correct—you’d be an excellent L, and if something happens to me you’re more than ready to take over that role.”

Raito swallowed his mouthful of ume and replied, “Do you think Misa and I are the Kiras?”

“Well, the rule says that if you don’t kill someone in thirteen days, you die. But who knows—Ryuzaki wanted to test it, and he was the smartest chap I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet. It needs to be tested anyway, because it’s common sense to test something when you aren’t completely sure how it works, and I plan to make good on that idea. Do I think you’re Kira? I don’t know. Maybe, maybe not. I can’t know for sure unless I can clear you of suspicion one hundred per-cent, and if you’re innocent, Raito, then you should have no problems with me testing it on a man who’s going to die in thirteen days anyway. It’s either the Death Note causes the death or some chap with a syringe full of barbiturates, paralysers, and potassium solution. At least this way he’s dying for something useful rather than just his criminal acts. Any information is good at this point, even if it’s just putting my mind—and Ryuzaki’s for that matter—to rest.”
Good point; let’s see Raito try to weasel out of that one, L thought with a satisfied air, feeling a surge of pride in how Harry was dealing with the situation. He really had created a monster out of the wizard, in L’s opinion, and it was utterly fantastic.

“Well, that’s definitely a point,” Raito agreed. “Let’s just hope Kira doesn’t somehow get a hold of this information and use it against you. We need to avenge Ryuzaki, and we need to put Kira behind bars.”

Hermione rattled the table as she sat down, the classical music still blaring out of the air vents in her earbuds. L cocked his head a bit to look around her body, since she had blocked his view of Raito’s face somewhat. He ignored her as she pulled out multitudes of books on medical information, fully cementing the façade of being a student just like a few dozen other young adults within the café.

“Well, I doubt he’ll get that information. I’m fully confident that I’ll be able to transport the Death Note to its location and monitor the process without any problems.” Good, which means that Raito will take Harry as a fool just like I would’ve if I had been the one talking to Harry. What an idiotic statement to make, which is exactly what we’re going for here.

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probably being paranoid. There was a good chance that none of them had death-dates since they had touched the Death Note in the compound.

L wished he knew more.

“So where’s Ryuzaki, James-kun? Usually we can’t separate you two,” Misa said, sipping from her coffee.

L figured Harry’s face fell dramatically as Raito said solemnly and quietly, “He’s dead, Misa. Watari too.” L’s chest clenched painfully at the reminder. “Kira killed them both a few days ago.”

Misa gasped, one gloved hand coming to cover her lips. There wasn’t a glitter of anything resembling guilt, just pure and undiluted horror and sadness. Misa was a talented actress, but L got the vibe that she was genuinely surprised and perhaps even heartbroken over that news, and L fought the urge to sigh. He blinked, shooting a glance at Hermione who was bobbing her head while drinking from her own coffee, and then turned back to the conversation.

“Oh my...I’m so sorry. That’s terrible,” Misa whispered from behind her dainty hand, her eyes beginning to get watery. “Ryuzaki was creepy and strange, but I am going to miss him. He was my friend. I hope he’s at peace now.”

L refused to focus on that, instead double-checking to see if his entire body was covered in a way to somewhat distract himself. When he was satisfied, he stared at Raito endlessly, just as Harry said in a thick voice, “Yeah, me too, Misa. He’s...in a better place now. Both of them are.”

There were a few minutes of silence after that. Hermione let out a sigh and began packing her books up before Raito said, “He’s the new L, Misa. He’s going to bring Kira to justice for what he’s done.”

“Good,” said Misa, nodding vehemently. “Kira needs to be thrown in prison. Misa’s thankful for what Kira did, killing the men who murdered her parents, but this is unforgivable. If there’s anything you need me to do, James-kun, you just say the word. Misa will do anything to bring Kira down.”

“Thanks,” Harry mumbled just as Hermione stood up and began walking towards the exit doors. L heard her exit the café with a small bell chime and finally pulled out his video camera. He powered it up silently. He began filming the conversation, keeping the focus on Raito while listening to Harry as he said, “We’ll get past this.”

After that, they made small talk, chatting about mundane things that L had absolutely no interest in. Misa’s filming, how she was fairing now that she was out of the complex, how there was this guy that wouldn’t leave her alone. Harry’s mood seemed to lift, because he started getting very enthusiastic about “going down there and beating that loser’s face in with a brick” which made Misa laugh hysterically and Raito smile.

It went on until the meal was over and Harry finally stood up, sighing. “Well, you guys, I’m going to take a walk. Don’t have too much fun without me, okay? I’ll see you tomorrow Raito, and Misa, we’re so going to have to go out sometime, okay? Call me whenever you want, sweetie.”

“You bet!” Misa said, giving a peace sign and a wide grin.

Misa stood up and gave Harry a gigantic hug and L got to his feet as well, edging as close to the table as he could without blocking the aisle. Harry and Misa kissed each other’s cheeks before
Harry waved and walked out of the store, leaving Raito and Misa alone.

The two of them stared at each other before Misa said quietly to keep from being overheard, “He doesn’t have a death-date, Raito-kun.”

Yes!

There was absolutely no way to describe the feeling of complete elation that exploded in his bloodstream, and it took a gigantic effort to keep himself from just laughing. It was over, and he had it on video tape. Harry had done it, and even though there was still a long way to go before the case was solved, it was still over. Misa had the shinigami eyes, and she spoke openly about it to Raito. It was over. The case was solved.

Raito’s expression darkened. “That doesn’t make sense. I’m in possession of the Death Note that is at the headquarters, so why would he not have a death-date? Does he have a Death Note himself? Did Rem do something that I don’t know about?” L could practically hear his brain whirling with thoughts before Raito said, “What’s his name?”

“Harry Potter,” she answered.

Raito smiled, that same triumphant smile that he had had on his face when L had died on the fifth of November. “Misa,” he said lowly, “I want you to write his name in your Death Note. After he’s gone, I’ll be the new L, and we can create a perfect world together, with no crime and goodness surrounding us.”

Misa’s face fell, and she said, “But he’s Misa’s best friend. Misa doesn’t want to kill him. Is there nothing else we can do?”

Raito fitted her with an unreadable stare as he said, “No. He has to die, Misa, and I know that he’s your friend but he’s the one standing in the way of the perfect world we’ve worked so hard for. It has to be done.” His expression softened slightly as he said with a small smile, “If you do this, I will love you forever. We can move in together and live in perfect harmony.”

Misa’s face brightened up to the point that L just wanted to look away. Such complete and utter hope and adoration on such a naïve face...it made L sick to see Raito use her in such a way. He had always known that Raito had been taking advantage of her, but to see it first-hand in such horrible definition completely destroyed L’s appetite. He fought the urge to shudder so he could keep a steady hold on the camera as it filmed the entire exchange, just as Raito said, “Do you have any pages from your Death Note with you?”

“Yes, I do,” she said, leaning into his touch with sparkles in her wide eyes. As L watched, nauseous at the sight, he thought, Well, it looks like we technically have no use for Hermione any more now that I’ve got this on video tape and Misa’s the one who’s going to be writing Harry’s name down. Raito will probably tail Harry tonight, and I’m sure we could always stage an accident right next to a prison here in Japan or perhaps an airport. Now I just need to get Misa
on video writing Harry’s name in her Death Note.

They said their good-byes and so L turned off the camera, tailing Misa closely as she put her hood over her head to disguise her face. As the door was held open for her by a star struck young man, L took the time to slip out after her, glancing around at the Japanese faces surrounding them both. He wondered which one of the faces was now Hermione, but didn’t dwell on it too long as Misa skipped away, thankfully not hailing a taxi and instead walking through the congested streets of Tokyo’s Marunouchi district.

He followed her for ages, shivering with cold and constantly trying to keep from being run over within the foot traffic. She eventually turned into Hibiya Park thorough the Sakura Gate, passing tennis courts and thick bunches of trees on her way to the main fountain. She sat down on the edge as L pulled out the camera again, powering it up as he watched Misa pull her oversized purse from her arm. She dug around before pulling out a book and a page out with the same look and consistency as the Death Note in the complex, and L edged as close to her as he dared, focussing the lens on Misa’s face as well as the pages being held upon the book.

Misa hesitated, and L blinked when a tear rolled down her pink-tinged cheek and a small, almost unnoticeable sob came from her full lips. For a full minute, as they both shivered, Misa stared off into the distance, watching bundled-up pedestrians walk through the park, her face filled with a sadness that L could hardly believe. She must really care about him, L thought with some hesitance of his own, distinctly uncomfortable from more than just the cold air.

Then, she wiped her face with the back of her gloved hand, sniffled, and then wrote on the page: Harry Potter. Killed instantly in a car accident at 19.30.

It was over.
Chapter Twenty-Nine

Perfection

9 November 2004

As Harry Potter watched the video, L Lawliet stared down a chocolate frog.

It was through jumping, thankfully, considering it had gotten more than a few good hops in before the magic had worn off. L had followed it as it had fled for more than a minute, walking like a crab all over the carpeted floor of the hotel room Harry and L had rented for the night as the frog tried to escape to safety. However, as soon as it had gotten to the door, it had finally worn out the spell, and L had crouched in front of it, staring unblinkingly into the frog’s chocolate eyes.

Harry and Hermione had staged the car accident well. Hermione had taken the Nissan President that Wammy had used to chauffeur L around and had driven off into the night, disguised as Harry via Polyjuice potion. She had exited the city limits of Tokyo’s districts and into the countryside, where there was pretty much no traffic to be seen, before seeming to lose control in the vehicle and driving directly into a tree. She had Apparated directly into the hotel room that L had rented out before the vehicle had crashed, breathing heavily as if fighting off the urge to panic, which L understood. If she had been a second too late, she could’ve died, and L had a lot of healthy respect for the woman who had helped greatly with the last leg of the case.

Harry, who had been tailing Raito (who had been tailing the disguised Hermione himself from afar) on a broomstick, had Apparated to the hotel room a few minutes later, announcing that Raito had turned around after watching the crash and the resulting fire, apparently confident that the Death Note had done its job. Harry had assured Hermione that the vehicle had been properly Vanished into non-being, and then had promptly taken her home so she could finally be with her family.

L plucked the chocolate frog off the floor, cocked his head, and then threw the chocolate in the bin. His appetite still hadn’t returned since watching Raito manipulate Misa so thoroughly, and watching Harry’s name being written in the Death Note hadn’t helped either. If Harry hadn’t been the Master of Death...

L stood up, his knees cracking with the effort, and L’s eyes narrowed. Still avoiding the laptop screen that was playing the confession for Harry, he crouched back down onto the soft, fluffy carpet and assumed a negativa stance, a defensive position in capoeira. His left leg was tucked into his chest while his right was extended, lightly touching the ground. He lifted his right arm into a ninety-degree angle, protecting his face while his spare arm helped keep his balance.
He held it for a long moment, his weakened muscles burning with the exertion, and then he executed the *troca de pé*, which essentially was slightly bouncing into the air and switching his legs and arms to their opposites. When he landed, his right leg now tucked under his body while his left was extended, his wrist popped rather loudly, and L exhaled through his nose at the sound.

*It’s pathetic how far my body has declined since the heart attack.*

Back and forth he kept switching from the two positions, his joints and muscles protesting with every hop. His chest was heaving with exertion, a sheen of sweat breaking out over his pale skin, and then when he thought he just couldn’t do any more, he paused in his negativa, catching his breath. He closed his eyes, breathing in and out as smoothly as possible, and then, with no further warning, he began swinging himself in a *negativa au giratoria*. He probably looked like a cartwheeling crab, honestly, but he was so focussed in his movements of twirling around and around so close to the floor that when Harry walked up on him he immediately did a *negativa derrubando*, hooking his extended leg around one of Harry’s and sweeping him off his feet.

Harry was on the ground before L even thought to reign in his movement at all, letting out a surprised noise when his back hit the carpeted floor. The fabric was soft and cushioned his fall mostly, but it still didn’t feel particularly nice to be thrown around like a toy by a man who was still crouching on the floor. L quickly broke out of his stance and said, “Forgive me. I was startled.”

“What the hell was that?” Harry asked with a breathless laugh, reaching out and grabbing L by his shoulders. L himself fell to Harry’s side, both of them lying next to each other while the detective caught his breath, and Harry continued, “You looked like you were break-dancing.”

L gave Harry a long look. “I told you that I was proficient in capoeira. I was merely practising. It’s been a while since I’ve had any physical activity, and I needed to test my limits with my new limitations.”

Harry smiled sheepishly and said, “Wow. Well, umm, can I admit that I thought you were exaggerating with all of the capoeira talk without getting kicked?”

“Would secretly feeding you a canary cream suffice in retaliation?”

Harry even had the nerve to look scandalised. “How dare you joke about such a thing? How in the world am I going to make out with you in celebration that this case is all-but over if I’m a *canary*?” Then Harry looked positively terrified as he said, “Do you have some secret fetish that you aren’t telling me about? Because seriously, we need to talk about these things if we’re going to—”

L leant over Harry’s upper body and kissed him.

Harry responded immediately, lifting his chest up so he could wrap his arms around L’s waist. Their tongues danced slowly, languidly, as if time was of no consequence. Maybe it wasn’t. They had nothing but time now. There were only two possibilities that the future would bring in the Kira case, and both of them resulted in both Kira’s going to prison. L would disappear, would continue to work cases around the globe for the rest of his life, and he would be by the side of the man sliding his tongue so perfectly against L’s own. Maybe L would go public in Harry’s world and maybe he wouldn’t, but either way, L couldn’t imagine going back to the life he had been living before even with the looming idea of being publicised.

Well, as long as he could drive instead of Apparating...or fly, if absolutely necessary.

They broke apart, foreheads together as they breathed in each other’s oxygen, and for a long time
they stayed that way. Harry’s bright green eyes stared endlessly into L’s charcoal grey orbs, his gaze intense and yet cautious, and L found himself whispering, “Just say it.”

“You aren’t going to like it,” Harry said in a sing-song voice, his British lilt teasing but his gaze just as concentrated, but when L’s look intensified, he sighed and continued, “I want to keep Misa out of jail.”

L wasn’t sure how to react to that statement. He pulled his body away and laid on his side, propping his head on his fist and staring at Harry’s face as he contemplated his response. His free right hand began tracing Harry’s chest through the material of his grey sweater, in random patterns that had no design but made Harry shiver and close his eyes. Almost absently, L let his fingers bypass the hem of the sweater, touching the hair-covered skin below Harry’s navel, and his unblinking eyes watched as Harry’s body grew taut. As he traced circles around Harry’s belly button, he tried to work past his conflicting thoughts.

Amane Misa was guilty of being the Second Kira. She was even now killing people using her Death Note. She was following Raito’s command of domination and murder without blinking. She had sought out Raito, in Aoyama, with the full intent of becoming his mercenary. Even if he understood from a logical standpoint why she would go out of her way to worship Kira, considering how he had killed the man that had mercilessly murdered her parents in front of her, she was still a cold-blooded murderer herself. Even if she had not pulled the trigger, she was still responsible for thousands of deaths, and that was unacceptable.

L closed his eyes, seeing Amane shed a single tear before writing Harry’s name in the pages of the Death Note. Her apartment was wired, and he knew that she was curled up on her bed, crying without a reprieve in sight. He had watched her hesitation, her grief, become completely wiped because she just wanted to be loved by a man that she would sacrifice even her own life for. He had watched her completely put everything on the line just to make one man happy, even though even she had to know that he was only using her for her eyes, for her Death Note.

Again and again, he watched her face go from misery at being ordered to write the name of her ‘best friend’ in the pages of her Death Note to hope and adoration at the idea that doing said deed was all it would take to make Raito love her.

“How do you expect me to answer that, Harry?” L eventually said. “I can’t let her roam free—she’s a murderer, and we have proof. She tried to kill you, and if you had only been a wizard instead of the Master of Death, you probably would’ve been killed because there is no one here to revive you. How can I let her go in good conscience, when she has taken so many lives without batting an eyelash? Her direct actions caused me to make the choice that condemned me to death, which condemned Wammy to death. What do you expect me to say?”

Harry didn’t open his eyes as he answered, “I know. I could’ve died if my situation had been different, and Wat—Wammy did die. You died, even if you did come back. I’ll never forgive her for that. But the simple fact remains that Misa’s a good person, and she’s being manipulated by that evil sonofabitch. I don’t like it, not at all. Is there nothing else we can do?”

Clear as day, he could hear Amane say in his mind, ‘But he’s Misa’s best friend. Misa doesn’t want to kill him. Is there nothing else we can do?’

L clenched his jaw. There is no other option. Amane is a murderer, and she is indirectly responsible for Wammy’s death. She deserves to be brought to justice. She deserves the death penalty for what she has done not only to Wammy, but thousands of others.

However, justifying himself in such a way wasn’t stopping the small little voice in the back of his head that was whispering, ‘And does that make you any better than Yagami Raito, ordering
Harry to step aside while you strap Amane Misa to a chair and demand they inject her with poison?"

Harry opened his eyes, his green gaze piercing into L’s thoughts as if he could read them. Almost in a rush, he said, “We could get some of Raito’s hairs and mix them into a Polyjuice potion. We could tell her to give up ownership of her Death Note, and she’d lose all of her memories of ever being Kira, just like before, or I can even Obliviate her. She could be free of Raito, and free of that vicious cycle that psychotic prick has forced her to be in. She could live her life, be happy, and be who she was meant to be. She’s a victim in all of this, with her parents’ deaths and Raito’s manipulations. It’s not fair; it’s just not right.”

“Manipulated or not, criminals over innocents, she has taken human life. That is not right.”

Harry sighed and said, “Hasn’t she suffered enough?”

After that they didn’t speak. The time ticked by as if the Earth had slowed down its rotations. They laid together on that soft, cream-coloured carpet, their limbs intertwined loosely as they breathed and measured heartbeats. Harry’s fingers ran through L’s coarse hair absently, the sensation causing L’s eyelids to droop despite themselves. L’s own hands disappeared underneath Harry’s sweater, not moving but instead just feeling his chest rise and fall, feeling the goose bumps break across his warm skin. Their eyes never wavered from each other’s, blinking occasionally but never breaking, and their lips occasionally brushed so lightly that it could barely be called a kiss.

He could feel the life running through Harry’s body, and time slowed completely. He couldn’t hear the ticking of the wall clock on the end table. He couldn’t even hear his own breathing over the sound of Harry’s. His entire world was composed of emerald green eyes, dark hair, golden skin, and a disposition that irritated him just as much as it utterly consumed him.

Soon, when the case was over, L would be free to roam the world. He would work cases, eat cake, put criminals in prison, unleash his heirs upon the world, learn new languages, master new technologies, and would age. He would generally live his life no differently than before Harry’s existence except now he would learn the culture of Harry’s world, see new things that would seem impossible, witness things that would surprise him, and perhaps even be viewed in newspapers by an entire population that he had never even believe existed.

And through all of this, Harry would be lying beside him, experiencing new things with him, living alongside him.

Their life would be even more than L Lawliet could’ve ever possibly imagined.

“I love you,” he whispered.

Open wide.

Unafraid.

L almost wanted to turn his face away at the expression in Harry’s eyes as the emerald colour began to glisten with moisture, but Harry’s hand left L’s hair to cup his face, so softly and tenderly that it hurt. Harry pressed his lips against L’s, and his voice shook with poorly restrained emotion as he murmured, “As I love you. More than you could ever know.”

L broke apart. They met together, holding each other as if the world would end if they separated, and honestly it would’ve. As they consumed each other through lips and tongue and fingertips, it felt as if the whole world was falling around them, ceasing to exist like matter connecting with
antimatter. With every gasping breath they took, Harry whispered through his tears, “I love you, I love you, I love you,” like he couldn’t say it enough, and L tried to respond as much as he could through his actions alone.

How could anything be said when L couldn’t breathe? How could he speak when he had no voice to utter a word? How could he possibly convey what he was feeling in his mind, his body, his heart? How could he say thank you for saving my existence in a way that Harry could comprehend to its full feeling?

He couldn’t, so he tried in vain to breathe and tried to bury himself in Harry’s arms. He crushed himself against Harry’s front, their kiss faltering in the force of it, and then Harry was pushing them both up, their bodies still entwined, neither one of them willing to move away as Harry began walking L backwards. Harry’s arms pulled L’s body closer while L locked his fingers in Harry’s hair, gripping hard enough to be painful but not being told to stop.

They fell upon the bed, their bodies stretching across the bed instead of up and down, but neither of them moved to right themselves. It was pointless, meaningless, and besides, they were perfect just how they were, against all normality and logic. They were going to do things against the standard, and they were going to be strange and odd and bizarre for the rest of their lives, with each other.

Their kiss became deep, desperate, overwhelming. L wrapped his legs around Harry’s waist and arched as close to the man above him as possible right as Harry took his wand from the holster on his arm. L heard a dull ripping noise before the fabric of Harry’s sweater made contact with his bare chest, and they leant up simultaneously so L could shrug out of the destroyed shirt. His hands, once free of the sleeves, immediately began pulling off Harry’s sweater, and finally Harry broke the kiss to pull it over his head. His lips immediately bypassed L’s face to latch onto his neck, the tears on his cheek cold against L’s feverish skin but his mouth so-so-so unbelievably perfect. Between every movement, every kiss and nip, Harry whispered words that L couldn’t hear but could understand perfectly, and his hands grasped the sides of Harry’s neck, pulling him back upward so they could reconnect their bruised lips once more.

Harry began tearing at the button on L’s baggy jeans, pushing them down L’s hips along with his undergarments and throwing them across the room, already forgotten. He immediately started on his own, and when they were both bare against each other L arched up without thought, his eyes fluttering as they threatened to close against his wishes. Harry’s hands caressed every inch of skin on L’s body and so L did the same, trying so hard to keep staring into those wet eyes still covered by ridiculous glasses.

Then L was suddenly flipped over, Harry underneath him, in-between L’s legs with his hardness pressed against his body, and Harry whispered, “I need you. Please, just...please, make love to me.”

L swallowed, pressed his fingers into the warm skin of Harry’s chest, and said, “I don’t know how.”

Harry leant up and breathed against L’s lips, “I’ll show you.”

Harry laid back against the soft comforter, his pupils dilated and the remaining sliver of green still present so dark that it was practically black itself. His gaze was filled with so much emotion—arousal, adoration, hunger, love, lust, how could he possibly name them all—that it was hard for L to breathe, but he found himself saying without sound, “Okay.”

Despite what he had just agreed to, which should’ve been disgusting and worth arguing about, he found himself to be completely calm. There was a tingle of nervousness in his lower stomach that
mixed in with the electricity flowing through his blood, but he was calm.

Their mouths joined again as if a magnet had been switched on. Harry’s tongue danced with L’s own, taking its time in mapping out every single millimetre of L’s mouth as his hands traced every line and curve on L’s body. Harry’s thumbs brushed against places so sensitive that L broke from the kiss to throw his head back, and then Harry lifted his body up, his mouth following where his hands left.

It was like liquid heat, and his blood boiled at the action. He felt as if he was suffocating, perhaps with the fact that he couldn’t get enough oxygen to sustain him, or maybe it was because his chest was so tight that his lungs were compressed. L dug his fingers into Harry’s scalp, holding his head in place as he tried in vain to focus, to hold himself together. Harry’s tongue swirled and nipped, making L writhe against him, and they both gasped at the friction between their slick bodies.

In the unusually silent room, save heavy breathing and panting, L pushed at Harry’s shoulders so they both fell with a soft bounce onto the mattress. L’s hands pulled Harry’s face to his again, the action painful to his tender lips, but he couldn’t stop kissing him, mapping him out and biting Harry’s lower lip when his lungs yearned for air. Harry’s hands clenched L’s waist hard enough to bruise, rocking his hips up as he pressed L down, making them both arch and gasp, and their lips faltered at the sensation. L could feel it bringing him closer to the brink of reason, and judging by Harry’s face, his body, he wasn’t the only one.

Just as he thought that he would fall off the edge, his body taut and ready to snap like a bowstring, Harry shook his head frantically as if having an internal argument, his sweat-dampened hair sticking to his forehead. His bright eyes were wide and dark and the gaze shot straight down L’s spine, even though the unspoken question made L blink hard.

The nervousness returned, full-force this time despite the arousal singing through his bloodstream, when Harry disconnected both hands from L’s hips so he could search blindly for his wand. Harry’s eyes searched L’s, and maybe L was scared, but he didn’t stop Harry from grabbing L’s right wrist and squeezing it tightly in comfort. L watched Harry’s wand move from the corner of his eyes, more focussed on the slightly uncomfortable expression that crossed Harry’s features briefly, and then he stared down at the fingers of his right hand with slight confusion.

His long, pale typist’s fingers glistened in the low light of the room. The liquid was wet and slick, greasy in a way, and a slight smell of something musky wafted to his nose. He rubbed his fingers together experimentally, trying to distract himself from the knowledge of where his fingers were going, and brushed his own hair out of his eyes with his clean hand. He could see blurred colours shifting through, and he finally looked down at Harry, who was trembling from underneath him with unadulterated need in his eyes.

Without speaking, L shifted. His breathing slowed as he manoeuvred his body to sit cross-legged in-between Harry’s slightly bent knees, eyes narrowing as he tried to look at anything but where he was going. There was a soft smile on Harry’s face as he watched L, his body language still yearning for what L himself had grown so familiar with over the weeks. L’s stomach felt as if it had lodged in his throat, his eyes closing tightly, but he didn’t cringe or make a noise as Harry gently led him downwards.

Trying to remember everything Harry did when they were intimate, he hesitantly pushed the tip of his index finger inside the wizard, his ears picking up the sharp inhale that made its way out Harry’s throat. Harry’s hand pressed against L’s wrist, coaxing him down, and so he held his breath and easily pushed all the way in.

L’s eyes opened.
Harry was mouthing “oh my god” over and over again, but L couldn’t determine if he had broken the unspoken word for silence because there was a ringing in his ears that blocked all sound. L found himself staring at Harry’s throat as it worked, tendons tightening and his Adam’s apple shifting, his skin glittering with tiny droplets of sweat. L tried to swallow but he couldn’t get enough saliva built up in his bone-dry throat to do so. His body broke out in goose bumps as Harry pushed his hips up, and he slowly pulled his finger out just to push it back in quickly.

This time Harry let out a low, thick groan, and L’s entire body throbbed at the sound. He repeated his action again and again, absorbing every soft noise the man beneath him made. He watched his reactions and tried not to get too distracted by the fact that Harry’s body was pulling him in, clenching and flexing and burning hot. L wanted to cringe, to pull out and wash his hands until his skin was pink and raw, but instead his index finger curled as it was pulled out, causing Harry’s entire body to arch off the bedspread as his mouth opened in a silent cry.

L added another finger.

He continued to watch Harry’s face and throat as he tried to hit...hit that bundle of nerves that L knew from personal experience to be utterly earth-shattering. He wasn’t as perfectly precise as Harry seemed to be when they were intimate, but maybe he was doing a fair enough job because Harry was thrashing, hands grasping the edge of the bed above his head as if his life depended on it. His chest was heaving, muscles all over his body twitching, and L couldn’t even stop himself from finally looking down.

It was obscene and gross but L shuddered violently anyway, his fingers pausing in their movements as he tried to collect himself. His tongue went out to lick his dry lips absently, charcoal eyes taking in his long fingers that were buried deep within Harry’s body, not believing it despite the fact that his fingers were hot and being compacted so tightly that it seemed impossible. He pulled out slowly, watching as his shiny fingers became visible once again, millimetre by millimetre, the sight causing L’s mind to cut out in white noise. He opened his mouth to speak, make a noise, something, but he found that his throat was so dry that he couldn’t do so, or maybe it was the fact that he didn’t even know how to react in the silence.

L added yet another finger, watching with wide eyes as Harry’s body accepted the intrusion, and as he curled them into the nerves that were leaving Harry sweaty and shivery, he glanced slightly upwards. L was only newly familiar to Harry’s arousal, but the sight of it so close to his hands made his face burn. He could remember how it felt to have that solid length inside of him, even more-so than usual because his body was currently so charged with stimulation, and he wondered if maybe...maybe Harry would feel...that when they were...

He reached out with his spare hand, hesitated, and then cautiously touched the tip of it. The pearly liquid smeared on the pad of his fingers, oily and warm, and he quickly drew away. His eyes flickered back up to Harry, who was looking down with an emotion so lustful at L’s...investigation of sorts, and he felt his heart skip a beat in his chest. Again, he licked his lips, his mouth so dry that it didn’t do much, and then cautiously reached out again. He let his index finger trace one of the veins that spiralled upwards just as he pushed in hard with his fingers.

Harry’s body arched again, and the sharp gasp that he made was the loudest noise either one of them had made since they had last spoken. It startled L, because they were being so quiet unlike the other times they had touched each other, but L was more startled by Harry, who tore his hands away from the edge of the bed to pull L’s hands away. L glanced up at his face, his eyes following Harry as he frantically shook his head, eyes squeezing shut. L wiped both hands on the bedspread, his nose scrunching slightly at the idea that he was soiling the sheets, marvelling at the fact that L was doing this to Harry and not the other way around. He was reducing Harry into this...inarticulate, needy mess, and L gritted his teeth together, wondering how he was going to
survive this without imploding into ash.

Then, suddenly, Harry was moving. He didn’t have much time to react when Harry reached out and all-but yanked L towards him. Their bodies were flush against each other, sticky and vaguely disgusting, and L could feel Harry’s hardness flattened in-between them. Harry all-but attacked L’s mouth, his tongue going deep as if trying to reach the back of his throat, and L trembled against him, helpless against the onslaught of heat that seared his nerves. His hands, on Harry’s waist, clenched tightly, his short fingernails digging into Harry’s sides without thought, and he fought back into the kiss. He rocked his hips once, not able to control himself, and Harry gasped, giving him the opportunity to take control, biting at Harry’s lower lip and bringing the flesh into his mouth.

Harry let out a sound that sounded remarkably like a sob at the action, arching into L’s chest, and L could feel him flinging his arm out to the side, presumably to get his wand. The nervousness, which had all-but disappeared when he had witnessed Harry’s reaction, returned, but it was mild and by now he was so incredibly aroused himself that he didn’t even let himself think about it. Harry’s free hand gripped L’s coarse hair hard, not enough to be really painful but still strong and sure, and they connected lips once more just as Harry’s hand gripped L’s own hardness with intent.

L’s intake of air choked off, and his lungs screamed for oxygen. Harry’s hand was wet, almost greasy, just like L’s fingers had been, but it just made him glide easily over L. The detective broke the kiss and pressed his sweat-dampened forehead against Harry’s neck, forcing himself to breathe air that wasn’t fulfilling. His entire body tensed, his fingernails digging deep enough into Harry’s sides that L wouldn’t have been surprised if there was blood, and then he felt Harry lead L to where he was ready.

“Slow,” Harry breathed, so quietly that L almost didn’t hear him

L inhaled, exhaled, and then held his breath.

He pushed in, slowly but steadily.

Then, his eyes flew open in complete and utter shock.

L couldn’t breathe. He tried to force his lungs to inflate, his mouth open against Harry’s slick neck, but it was in vain. The feeling was incredible, Harry’s body tight and throbbing, and there were no words that could possibly describe what else he felt. He didn’t realise that he finally took an embarrassingly loud breath because he was too focussed on trying not to die from it all. He could feel Harry twitching underneath him, and someone was making a soft keening noise but L wasn’t sure who it was. For all he knew, it could’ve been both of them.

L wasn’t sure how long they waited, his sense of time and space completely warped, before Harry whispered, “Move. Please, move.”

L’s eyes snapped closed again when he shallowly obliged, breathing heavily against Harry’s neck. He fought his own mind, going slow instead of frantic like he was inclined to, and forced his hands to leave Harry’s hips. His left hand went to cup Harry’s neck while the other found its way to the back of Harry’s knee, pushing against his legs in an attempt get in farther, and maybe there was something gross about what he was doing but Harry’s legs were wrapping around L’s waist and it didn’t matter. The only thing that mattered was keeping himself from just...letting go and making sure that he didn’t hurt him, although maybe that didn’t matter because Harry suddenly made a noise that L couldn’t describe and hissed like a fiend, “Right there, c’mon, again!” and all-but slammed his hips into L’s.
For the first time in his life, L said in a choked whimper, “Fuck.”

It was too much. L and Harry jerked into each other, pushing and rolling and God it was unbelievable. He couldn’t see, he couldn’t think, he couldn’t even breathe—all he could do was feel his body being taken over by something alien, something so primal that he couldn’t help but to let himself surrender to it. It was terrifying, so startling that he wanted to just stop for a second to get himself back under control but he couldn’t. Harry was pushing up so hard that if L hadn’t been pushing down so hard himself he probably would’ve lost his balance. Their mouths tangled together, all tongue and teeth, and L’s left hand went to join his other at Harry’s hips so he could get in as deeply as humanly possible. He felt Harry wedge his own hand to grasp his arousal, his knuckles moving fast and hard against L’s lower stomach, timing the movements to correspond with every push that L accomplished without exploding from the force of it all.

Then L gave a particularly quick thrust and Harry all-but shrieked, arching so sharply that L heard his back pop even over the roaring of blood in his ears. Harry’s body clenched down so tightly that it knocked the breath clean out of L, his heart palpitating so rapidly and without rhythm that it hurt, and L managed to give two more pushes before he broke completely and totally apart. His teeth sunk into Harry’s neck, a bad attempt to keep from shouting himself deaf, while his entire lanky form shuddered wildly and without any seeable end.

The descent from L’s orgasm was slow and relieving, and when he opened his eyes, he was surprised to hear it storming rather violently outside the window of the room. He blinked, slowly, wondering when it had started raining, before looking at the digital clock on the end table and fighting a sigh. He didn’t remember dozing off at all, and even though it was still in the early hours of the morning, it was still unexpected.

Harry was curled up beside him, breathing deeply with a soft frown on his face. His lips were still slightly swollen—I did that—and a soft pink, and L reached out to caress them with a thumb. His dark eyes watched the action with a heavy glance before he pulled away and began tracing his fingers down every line and dip and scar on Harry’s body.

As he explored, Harry’s naked body shifted restlessly, and a small smile replaced the frown. L watched his face endlessly, drinking in his expressions avidly. When L’s fingertips traced down Harry’s side, the smile widened and he squirmed through his dreams. When L followed the lightly protruding veins on his long, golden arms, Harry’s expression evened out. When L began writing the names of Grecian cities in Russian-variant Cyrillic on the lean expanse of Harry’s chest, Harry sighed softly and unconsciously leant into the touch.

His finger traced a feather-light line from the hollow of Harry’s neck, down his sternum, around his navel, and through the coarse line of hair that led downwards, and Harry shuddered even in sleep. L watched with fascination as Harry’s body began responding despite being lost in his mind, his eyes flickering between Harry’s expression—beautiful, defined, aroused—and the organ in-between his thighs—rising-rising-rising.

Harry’s bright green eyes opened, framed by dark eyelashes, and he made a long sound in the back of his throat.

“Not fair,” he murmured, his voice low and husky from sleep, but he pulled L’s body closer anyway, breathing deeply and heavily into L’s hair. L didn’t hesitate despite feeling a bit awkward as his hand finally closed around Harry’s...how long was it going to take L to feel comfortable even using a word that was suitable for their situation instead of scientific or vague?

Regardless, Harry quivered against him, making the most astonishing array of noises that made L shiver just as frequently. At least he was getting better at the intimacy thing. It became easier every single day they were together to let go in such a way as to lose control, although what they
had done only a few hours ago was...a little too much.

Harry grabbed L by the arms and rolled them over, distracting him from that train of thought, before he said with breathless laughter in his British timbre, “Hmm, I think I could get used to this.”

“I’m going to kick you,” muttered L, frowning at the invasive tingle. “Besides, we still have to finish the c—” His words were cut off as he exhaled shakily, Harry’s finger stretching and curling. When he caught his breath back, he continued, “The case, and I am not entirely sure how I want to go about putting Raito in custo—” He arched, letting out a quiet cry when Harry quickly found what he was looking for. His body shook endlessly and he fought for breath, unconsciously pushing up to Harry’s finger.

“We are not talking about that prat or the job while I’m having my way with you,” Harry said, mock-sternly, but there was amusement enriching his tone, and L rolled his eyes. He wanted to shoot off a remark, but Harry added another finger and L’s mind went stark white. “Also, that question I asked you earlier is still up for consideration, yes?”

“I thought we w-weren’t going to talk about the case,” gasped L.

“You started it,” Harry said stubbornly, a wide and carefree grin contrasting with the dark arousal in his eyes. He added yet another finger and was relentless with his aim, and then said in a remarkably even voice, “By the way, did you say fuck earlier?”

“No,” L lied, the syllable choked as he crept closer to the edge.

“That’s terrible,” Harry remarked. “Lying to me when I have complete control over whether or not I let you come.” The phrase made L’s already flushed cheeks brighten, and surely Harry noticed if the snicker accounted for anything. “But you, my love—” he said, kissing L lightly on the cheek as his fingers continued to be persistent, “—are very lucky that I am a compassionate person and won’t torture you in such ways.” L glared at Harry as the wizard adopted a contemplative expression. “Although my unwillingness to wait any longer probably has something to do it...”

L was so close that it was just cruel, so he didn’t comment on that; instead, he jerkily wrapped his legs around Harry’s waist to pull him in, and he groaned in the back of his throat when Harry’s hardness pressed against his thigh.

This time Harry’s laughter was strangled. “Well, well, well,” he managed to get out. “I’m glad that you aren’t as self-conscious and disgusted by this any more, because it's totally gorgeous to see you like this, but wow. Forward much?”

“Stop talking,” bit out L.

Harry positioned himself, L angling his hips upwards in preparation, and Harry’s grin turned into a fond smile. “God, I love irritating you. It’s almost as awesome and stellar as doing this to you,” he said, and then kissed L hard as he slowly pushed inside.

L would definitely deny it later, but he made a cat-like sound in the back of his throat.

L came to the conclusion while every nerve and cell in his body was being incinerated by pleasure that he preferred having a small shred of his mind intact, preferred having Harry inside of him, rather than the other way around. With this, L was consumed and full and content, and before L had just lost himself in exchange for something terrifying, something unrecognisable. Maybe that would change, just like how having sex with Harry had become less of an awing shock and more
familiar in its place, but this...this was perfection.

Coming from a man who didn’t believe in perfection, it meant a lot.

L finally threw his head back, losing himself in his climax, feeling Harry join him. They cried out in unison, embracing each other so tightly that L’s ribs and arms ached, but he didn’t dare let go. He heard Harry let out a hysterical laugh, and maybe it was a tiny bit frightening but it didn’t matter, because everything was perfect.

When L had finally come down and his breath had returned, he said, “I’m growing mentally mawkish, and I feel utterly distraught about it.”

“What in the hell does that mean? Are you turning into a bird, because hawks are birds, so maybe mawks are birds—”

L kicked him lightly in the shin, a lot of his remaining strength going into it, and Harry let out a fake sniffle. L ignored it and before Harry could come up with something clever to say, L interrupted, “I am not a bird, and just because ‘mawk’ rhymes with ‘hawk’ doesn’t mean that they have any affiliation. I don’t even believe ‘mawk’ on its own is even a word in the dictionary. Mawkish means maudlin. Or over-sentimental, if that’s too complex of a word for you to understand as well.”

“So you’re turning into a fish? Because maudlin sort of reminds me of marlin, and that’s like a swordfish, isn’t it?”

L weakly kicked him again, shaking his head in fond annoyance.

Even though Harry would be lying beside him, experiencing new things with him, and living alongside him, Harry would also most likely irritate him half to suicide.

L couldn’t imagine it any other way.

***

They stood in front of each other, staring, charcoal grey into emerald green.

They were showered, dressed, still slightly flushed from the shower itself (and what had accompanied it; how odd was that?), but ready. L’s stomach was filled with anticipation, his heart was strong and beating soundly, and his mind was whirling away as it battled itself. He still was uncertain with how he wanted Misa’s fate to be sealed—she was a murderer, but Harry was too in his own context, and besides, Harry wanted this even if L did not—but they had plenty of time to think about it before they finally ended the case. They were going out to Sato-Mari’s for breakfast, because it would most likely be a long time before they physically came back to Japan, and maybe it was nice, going back to the place that had started all of this.

“How are you ready to get this over with?” Harry asked, reaching out both hands.

L took them softly, content, and said, “Yes. I am.”
Chapter Thirty

Revelation

10 November 2004

L still loved the flashy, colourful building that stood out against the rainy Tokyo backdrop.

The massive amount of sweets and pastries made his mouth water just staring at it, and he absently ignored Harry’s amused huffing from beside him. The usual crowd was cramped in the place, enjoying their refuge from the pouring rain and the slight bite of chilled air. He could see the blonde cashier that worked mornings, Tanaka Aimi if he remembered correctly, and she looked happy and healthy. Maybe she had gotten over what had happened to her, or perhaps Kira had finally killed the man who had raped her (an American man named George Corazon—he had researched it). He couldn’t remember if this was true, because the Kira victims tended to run together in their gigantic numbers.

L and Harry bolted out of the taxi (which had been terrible to be in, but since they had blown up the Nissan President in the staged car accident, there was no other choice besides the tube, and that was...absolutely not) and made a dash to the front doors, naturally getting soaked on the way there. Once in the doors and standing in the line, L stared with exasperation at Harry, whose eyes were crinkling up in the corners as he shook his head like a dog, getting water everywhere. A few other bystanders laughed, covering their mouths to hide their smiles, although a few grumbled rather irritably. L ignored them as much as he could, since he was still wary of the crowd, and shuffled forward.

“Do you think we’ll ever come back here?” Harry asked rather absently in Italian, squinting behind his round glasses at all of the colourful, plastic light fixtures at stood out against the white ceiling.

“If we ever come back to Japan, then yes,” L said, eyes for once not focussed on all the sweets that were tempting him and instead on Harry. Those sweets and pastries were for eating and would never change—Harry, on the other hand, was a living, breathing piece of life, and L didn’t want to miss it.

Besides, if he turned away even for a moment, there was no telling what sort of trouble Harry would end up in.

“So what d’you wanna do first when we blow this joint?” Harry asked. He blinked, then took off his glasses and began rubbing them on the thick fabric of his red turtle-neck sweater to clean them,
pushing his black jacket aside to do so. His black hair, brushing his shoulders now, glinted in the harsh glare of the fluorescent lighting above them, but the rest of his form was washed out due to the lack of sunshine flowing through the glass windows that dominated the front wall of Sato-Mari’s.

“We need to fly back to Winchester and set up a system where the children at the House can learn about your world if their chosen profession should be connected to that knowledge,” L said immediately.

Harry said lightly as if ignoring L’s statement, “I’m thinking a Quidditch match. The season this year is over in the professional circuit, but we could probably either set one up with a professional team or just go to Hogwarts to watch one. They should be starting their games about now. I’d prefer the former though, because I totally can’t play myself if it’s a bunch of kids. Man, we could get a tournament going with this huge mash-up of teams and private players. We could even give out a prize.”

While it would be interesting to see Harry fly with professional players in a game that L had only read about and seen moving pictures of... “I am not getting on a broomstick, Harry.”

Harry groaned dramatically. “But why?” he whined, sniffing in mock sorrow. “You’ll have control over the broom, and I’ll be there to protect you. Besides, I thought you liked riding broomsticks anyway.” Now his eyebrows were wiggling up and down, his grin downright devious.

L’s face felt hot, and he oh-so-wanted to throw his shoes at Harry’s wicked grin. Instead, he ignored the uncharacteristic blush that was surely on his cheeks, braced himself, and said in a forced dull monotone, “Well, since I’m not too fond of flying, I’d most likely just break the broomstick in half by accident than ride one with as much ease as you do.”

Harry cringed and L felt something akin to pride aimed at himself in his chest.

Before Harry could reply back, most likely with something as equally smothered in innuendo, L heard the blonde cashier say, “James-san! Ryuga-kun! It’s been such a long time since I’ve seen you in the shop—I was beginning to think that you had forgotten about me.”

“Of course not, sweetheart,” said Harry with a grin. “We’ve just been outrageously busy. How have you been?”

“Oh fairly good, actually. I’m going to be taking a week off to go visit family in Osaka, so you probably won’t see me around. I’m guessing the usual as well, right?”

Harry nodded and lied with convincing ease, “Ah, well, Ryuga and I are taking off as well, probably tomorrow.” His green eyes flickered at the lie, but Tanaka didn’t seem to notice, instead watching Harry dig in the back pocket of his trousers for his beat-up wallet (L had a sudden, insane urge to growl at her, but kept the impulse to himself). “We’re going to Scotland on business.”

“Aww, that’s too bad. Will you come back to stay?” the blonde asked, accepting the card that Harry handed her and swiping it. “Besides,” she added, giving L a smile, “you practically fund the store by yourself, Ryuga-san.”

“Naturally,” Harry said, grinning. He put the card back in his wallet and it disappeared into his pocket yet again, and continued, “Yeah, we’ll be back soon. This place is so amazing that I’ll probably get some of that ice cream and maybe some stuff for Ryuga if he’s nice.” The pointed look in L’s direction was clear and precise: I can’t believe you said you would break my
manliness. “We’ll definitely be back, every day if possible.”

Yeah, you’ll be the one coming back, because as delicious as Sato-Mari’s food is, I’m still not Apparating out here just for a single meal. I’ll end up losing everything that hits my stomach the second it gets there, which completely defeats the purpose of eating the pastries and sweets in the first place. Yes, no thank you, I’ll pass.

The line’s grumbling began increasing, so Harry and Tanaka said their good-byes while L just blinked in her direction and took off towards the back. He grabbed the table that they had taken the first time they had ever eaten together, beside the open doorway to the bathroom, and took the seat in the corner so he could keep his eyes on the customers and the pedestrians that walked outside. Harry didn’t seem to mind, plopping down ungracefully in his chair with a nostalgic smile on his pale pink lips, and L found himself returning it. The world had gone by so fast since then, and so many things had happened. They were both a year older and had the identity of Kira in their heads and hearts, and they had each other.

L was getting mawkish. It was quite terrifying, really, considering he had once prided himself on being what the criminals had always called him through microphones and computer screens. He always had been a miserable, emotionless fuck and an unemotional bastard, and had once been comforted by the lack of change. Now, though...

L cocked his head, noted that it had stopped raining for the moment, and said, “I’m ready.”

Harry’s grin tampered off slightly, going into business-mode. He pulled the black leather bag off his shoulder and laid it on the table, leaving L to unbble it and set up. He immediately got to work on the white laptop, a custom Mac with the LINUX kernel (to put it in Matt’s words, “Microsoft software is for pussies, Macintosh is for weirdos with potential, UNIX is for people with no drive to have a challenge, and LINUX is for badasses”), concentrating solely on his goal.

He vaguely registered Harry leaving after a while and returning with a few bags in hand. L wasn’t sure where he put them, only that he left to return with the sweets that hadn’t been bagged, including the coffee. He placed them around L’s workspace, and even though L wasn’t taking up a lot of room, there still wasn’t enough table space left over for spare plates like usual. Back in the days when Harry and L hadn’t been as close, they had chosen a larger table that seated six closer to the front. Well, except for the first time they had joined each other for sweets, because said first time L had kept all of his sweets except for the cake in their bags, so there had been plenty of room.

Now L figured that since they had slept together and shared more germs than he normally would find agreeable, they could eat off each other’s plates (not that he was particularly pleased with that, but at least Harry wouldn’t eat much).

He absently plucked a truffle off one of the plates and popped it into his mouth, typing quickly with one hand. He manoeuvred his way through the Kira Investigation Headquarters’ systems, turning off all security manually. There was another presence on the server that kept trying to block his advances—a hundred per-cent chance that it’s Raito, because no one else that knows about these systems has enough computer skills and the will to attempt to stop me—but he bulldozed his way through there. After checking to see if the investigation team was all in the main terminal, he locked all of the doors in the terminal simultaneously so the team couldn’t get out unless they had the correct keycode (which Raito wouldn’t be able to hack fast enough to make a difference before the last leg of their plan was executed). Then all the data that had been recovered from Wammy’s deletion was yet again deleted from the servers, and then all microphones and video cameras went off-line except the perimeter lines.

By the time he was finished with that, he had already gone through two cups of coffee, ten
truffles, a slice of cherry cake, and half a dozen anpan. Oh yes, and a cookie. He blinked a few times, his fingers still at the keyboard, and then powered the computer down, completely done.

Then as he popped a cherry in his mouth, he said, “Thank you for the coffee. It was quite good, sweetened to my liking. You’re getting quite good at that.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Well, I only poured half the sugar container in each of your two tiny cups, so I hope it was good. Jesus, L, sometimes I think you’re the mad one.”

“Perhaps we both have some say in that argument.”

“Bullshit!” Harry called, causing a few heads to turn at the loudness of it, and L tossed the cherry stem he had been sucking on at Harry’s head in retaliation.

Harry picked it up and glanced at the knot, a funny expression on his face. “Y’know, the first time you gave me one of these, I thought I was going to die. I think it was kinda obvious how I felt, and you still gave me a knotted cherry stem? I mean, considering everything, it was really evil, and I won’t believe you if you say that you had no idea what a knotted cherry stem meant.”

L did—is that even true, the idea that being able to knot a cherry stem with only a person’s tongue means that said person is a good kisser?—but he hadn’t meant for that message to be conveyed. It had been the first thing on hand that wasn’t edible, and had given it to him, distracted by the conversation of dates. L pondered on that, cocking his head and staring into Harry’s emerald eyes. He took another sip of his sweetened, rapidly cooling coffee absent-mindedly, barely registering the syrupy taste.

Well, might as well get this over with.

“Harry,” he said simply, and immediately the wizard’s face fell.

“But why?” Harry asked.

L tried to summon his thoughts up into a form that Harry could understand, watching the sky as it began to rain yet again, and eventually replied, “Yagami Raito deserves what you have arranged between the Ministries of Japan and Europe. He will be transported to Azkaban, and he will receive the Dementor’s Kiss. It is what he deserves, and that is what he is going to get. However, you are somewhat correct about Amane Misa. She is a naïve, manipulated young woman who is a victim of Raito’s insanity, but Amane is still a murderer. I cannot, in good conscience, let her walk free with her memories erased. If we let her go, then we have to let him go, because I’m sure he was manipulated by the power of the Death Note and the words of his shinigami himself. Kira’s original goal was something that I could relate to, because in the end Kira and I are more similar than people tend to realise. We both are using our respective skills to weed out criminals, and we both have put people to death, however indirectly I might have accomplished my own. I want a perfect world just like Kira did, because I know how terrible the world can be. His original goal was justice in a twisted, warped sense of the word, and essentially we strived for the same ending. We both want a world without fear, or crime, or malice.”

L took another sip of his lukewarm coffee, smacked his lips, and continued, “However, our solutions to this problem that distorts the world today are vastly different. Most of the people I apprehend are given life sentences. If the respective country themselves wants the death penalty, then there is virtually nothing that I can do about that. It is their decision, and within clarification of the law of justice, no matter how corrupt said justice systems are, I am content with knowing that their crimes were rewarded with whatever punishment they deserved.

“Kira, on the other hand, has single-handedly murdered hundreds of thousands of people on the
face of this globe. He has killed innocents to keep his identity secret, including FBI agents and Wammy himself, for this end goal. He has been corrupted by the power, the potential of a perfect world via the Death Note, and that’s no different than Amane, Harry. She was corrupted by the idea of Kira’s justice after the man that murdered her parents was killed by Kira’s pen. She was corrupted by the simple and true fact that Raito is a manipulative, clever, attractive young man and she was so desperate to love someone."

Harry, who was frowning heavily, said, “You are right about that regard. I’m sure Raito was screwed the second he opened that damned notebook. But I still think Misa’s circumstances are different than Raito’s. She killed people, yes, but—”

“Simply because someone told her to do it.”

“Because she felt indebted to him for what he had done for her!” Harry exclaimed. Several heads turned in their direction again, and Harry huffed, beckoning to the mostly-eaten sweets and pastries that littered the table. L nodded once, and Harry began packing up the food, boxing it up rapidly in his haste to leave the shop. L took it upon himself to repack the computer in its waterproof case and finish his coffee, shooting a glance in Tanaka’s direction. The young woman was glancing with worry in their direction, trying to take orders from curious customers.

Harry finished and strolled out the door, hailing a taxi. It took a few moments for it to arrive, and Harry muttered a few words to him through the cracked window before rushing back inside. He was dripping wet, his nose scrunched up as he looked himself over, and journeyed back to the table to grab the computer and two of the five bags. L followed with the remaining three, and Harry called out, “I’ll miss you Tanaka-san! Have fun on your trip!”

“Yes, good-bye,” L muttered in her direction, rolling one shoulder awkwardly.

“You too!” she shouted back. “Come back soon, both of you!”

Harry waved, and then they both bolted to the waiting taxi, curled over their bags as much as possible to keep the sweets from getting too wet. L almost thought about walking to the complex, since it wasn’t very far and rain wouldn’t kill him even though it was chilly, but he climbed into the cab anyway, cringing at the thought of all the germs. Harry followed him, shivering to himself, and L began moving the bags to the far corner, eventually curling into Harry and sighing into Harry’s jacket. He felt Harry’s strong arms wrap around him, enveloping his body in a cocoon of warmth, and the detective closed his eyes, just breathing in Harry’s scent. Harry pulled out his wand stealthily, muttering the *Muffliato* charm under his breath, and the driver rubbed his ears once, clearly annoyed by the buzzing in his ears.

Since the driver was taken care of, he said softly, “Amane Misa will not be given the Kiss. She won’t be in Azkaban. Instead, she will go to a mental facility that is not of your world. I don’t want her to relinquish her hold on the Death Note, but I do want it taken away from her and burned. She needs to atone for what she has done, and stripping her of her memories will only ensure her confusion of why she is in a criminal mental facility in the first place.”

“No chance of freedom?” asked Harry, his voice causing his chest to vibrate pleasantly against L’s face.

“No,” he said, his tone giving no room for argument.

Harry sighed, a sound so deep that it was a wonder he didn’t run out of air and start choking. They were quiet for a long time, and then Harry said, “Fine. As long as I can visit her.”

“Agreed,” said L in a dull monotone. He didn’t understand why Harry liked Amane so much—
she had her moments of sweetness, and she was beautiful indeed, but she usually grated on L’s nerves. He might’ve played the adoring fan in the beginning, and she really was talented in her profession, but she was still irritating.

Maybe it was the voice. Or perhaps the Raito/Kira complex. It was probably a mixture of both.

Harry waved his wand again with a soft mutter of the counter-curse and then said, “Alright, change of plans. We’re going to make a small detour...” He gave Misa’s address to the driver and then buried his fingers in L’s hair as the detective snuggled into his chest.

Then the phone rang.

Harry groaned and tried to manoeuvre as little as possible to dig the cell phone out of his pocket. He did a pretty good job at it, only jostling L a bit, and L closed his eyes, listening to Harry’s heartbeat and feeling the pleasant vibrations in his chest when he answered the phone in English.

“Heya Hermione. I bet you slept like the dead.”

From L’s position on Harry’s chest, he could hear Hermione’s British lilt come through the speakers, saying tiredly, “Yeah, I did, which means I’m still tired. You know how it is.”

Harry laughed, and L pressed a palm to his chest to feel the movements as he listened. Harry answered, “Hell yes, woman, do I know it.” They both laughed together before Harry continued, “So what’s up? It’s night-time there, crazy lady, so you must have a good reason.”

“Yes...twenty-one o’clock to your thirteen o’clock; night-time indeed. Ah, and I do have a spectacularly good reason for interrupting your catch-the-bad-guy day. Is Ryuzaki listening?” L hummed loudly enough that Hermione said, “Alright then, so I have good news and bad news. Do you have a preference? I’m asking Ryuzaki because I’m still pissed at you for healing him before his time. No offence.”

“I don’t take offence,” said L, his voice slightly muffled from Harry’s lightly damp jacket.

“I think the proper answer is ‘none taken’ or something,” mentioned Harry.

“Bad news first,” said L.

Alright, so apparently Umbridge had some pictures of you and Ryuzaki stashed with her. When she saw that the article had disappeared, she sent them to the Daily Prophet in retaliation.”

Harry hissed and L’s eyes snapped open.

“But before you guys get all worked up, the good news is that she didn’t know that the Ministry was intercepting all the mail because we were worried that just this would happen, so we caught the pictures before they could be seen by various reporters like Rita Skeeter herself. They’ve been seen by a few members of the Auror Department in the UK’s Ministry, so there is that.”

Harry immediately countered, “But you know she has copies, and I’ll bet my left eye that she’s planning on distributing them in mass quantities if the Daily Prophet doesn’t publish it then. The easiest way would’ve been through a paper article, but she’ll go door-to-door if she has to. Umbridge isn’t stupid—she knows that this guy’s important because she most definitely can’t find him on any Muggle records. Oh yeah, and the simple fact remains that I have done some crazy shit to keep him secret, so there’s a story there. She’ll make some wild conclusion in a way that only she can that he’s a criminal or something and that’s why he has no record. She will hand out the pictures to everyone she possibly can that will blow it out of proportion or will gossip about it.”
Hermione dead-panned, “No she won’t, because she was caught twenty minutes ago trying to do just that and is en-route to Azkaban.”

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Ryuzaki stood next to Harry, and behind both of them stood three Aurors.

They had been tailing Harry and Ryuzaki since Harry’s journey to Japan’s Ministry (although they hadn’t known that Ryuzaki had followed Misa under the Invisibility Cloak), their magical signatures distracting and irksome to Harry, but now they were needed. Oddly enough it was easier to deal with them directly rather than know exactly where they were and yet not being able to just jinx them or give them the slip. It was almost like being tailed by reporters, which obviously wasn’t Harry’s favourite thing to live through.

Harry lifted a hand and knocked on Misa’s apartment door. He saw Ryuzaki shift beside him, and Harry reached out a hand to grasp Ryuzaki’s own, linking their fingers together. He could feel the Aurors’ eyes watching, but they had signed a confidentiality agreement in the sake that the entire ordeal would be Obliterated from their memories (god forbid the amount of money it had cost him to make that happen). Ryuzaki needed to be forgotten though, and as long as the Ministers of both the UK and Japan knew what had happened, then everything could stay confidential.

“I’m coming!” trilled Misa in Japanese from somewhere outside the door, her voice oddly hoarse. It was most likely because of her crying all night with the cameras to prove it, and when she opened the door, her face was clearly swollen from a hard night (she’d probably blame it on allergies or the sort if it had been anyone else at the door).

Her brown eyes went so wide that Harry thought they would fall from their sockets.

“Hello Misa-chan,” said Harry.

Her expression was so shocked, her entire world flipped upside down, that instead of keeping her thoughts to herself—she was smart enough to know that it was over—she just said in a small voice, “I...I...don’t...understand. Ryuzaki, James...you’re...supposed to be...”

“Can we come in, Misa-san?” asked Ryuzaki politely, but then ruined the façade by barging in, nearly knocking her off her feet. Harry reached out with his free hand, half distracted by the fact that Ryuzaki was dragging him along for the ride, and steadied her, grasping her own hand and guiding her to follow.

The three of them sat down on her couches while the three Aurors stood by the door, watching them wordlessly. Misa didn’t spare them a second glance, instead curling up on her loveseat, facing Harry and Ryuzaki on the sofa. Quietly, she said, “I mourned for both of you.”

Ryuzaki looked at his knees, bringing his free hand to his lips so he could chew on the pads of his fingers. Harry stroked Ryuzaki’s knuckles absently with his thumb, and said after a small pause, “Do you regret anything?”

The tears spilled over like waterfalls, but she said in a resolute tone, “No. I did what I did for my parents, for Raito-kun’s love, and for the good of this world. People died, and I killed them. I know that’s evil, but I did what I felt I had to do. I hated that Rem was put in the position to write both Watari’s name and Ryuzaki’s name in her Death Note, I hated that I had to write yours in my Death Note, and I hate that Raito and I have no chance of creating a perfect world because we’re caught now. But I don’t regret a single thing I’ve done. I honestly and truly don’t. I am happy that you are alive though. I think you should know that.”
“Watari’s gone. I couldn’t save him,” Harry told her, and Misa let out a sound that Harry could not identify. Ryuzaki’s hand clenched in Harry’s, so he held on tighter.

“I’m sorry, Ryuzaki. Can I ask how you did it though, how you saved Ryuzaki, how you didn’t die? I have the eyes, and I can see your true name even now. Ryuk is laughing at me and has laughed since the first moment he seen you, but he won’t tell my why.”

“Is Ryuk your shinigami?” demanded Ryuzaki.

“Yes,” Misa said. “I have a piece of the Death Note in my purse. If I could go get it...?”

Harry simply pulled out his wand and Summoned it. It flew across the room and Misa gasped loudly, her tears stopping in the wake of her shock, and Harry caught it easily. He dug around in her purse and pulled out the coarse pages that were shoved in a paperback novel, handing them to Ryuzaki before looking up.

He was a lot different than Rem had been. Honestly, Ryuk looked more like a rock star than anything, albeit with a mutated body of course. He towered over them with his unnaturally thin body, bones jutting out at awkward angles and wings extended to take up the entire living room beside the couch. Not only that, but while Rem had been nothing but earnest and soft-spoken, this Ryuk looked absolutely diabolical, as if filled with mischief and secrets.

“Greetings, Master of Death, the Wizard of the Chosen,” the shinigami greeted, his grating tone filled with laughter.

“Shove it,” said Harry with a frown.

“Oooh, you’re lucky I can’t kill you, or I would just out of spite. It would surely put you in your place now wouldn’t it? What if I was to take out my Death Note and write his name down again, in a way that you can’t save him from.”

Harry’s entire world froze, and he heard himself hiss, “You are not to write his name in your Death Note.”

That grotesque smile turned into a frown. “Whatever, but I’m not going to stay hooked onto this girl for the rest of her life in prison or some crap like that. Are you going to let her release ownership so I can go off somewhere else, like back to the shinigami realm?”

Harry started to open his mouth to answer in the negative, but Ryuzaki interjected, “If she was to release ownership of the Death Note, she would lose all of her memories. However, Raito received his memories back just by touching the Death Note before Higuchi died, so is it safe to assume that you could do the same with Amane?”

“No,” said Ryuk, eyes big and innocent.

“Tell us the truth, Ryuk,” grumbled Harry, irritated.

The shinigami rolled his eyes. “Yes, it can be done. Are you ordering me to do so with Misa, Master?” His tone was condescending, but Harry didn’t want to argue with him any longer than he had to. He still had to deal with Raito and the rest of the team.

“Yes,” Harry said simply, glaring at the shinigami.

“Fine, fine, whatever you say. This is boring...why can’t you take over ownership of the Death Note? Between you being a wizard and fucking the great detective L, you’d be unstoppable. It would be so interesting, and I bet you could just create apples out of thin air...”
“So you are the shinigami that likes apples, then,” Ryuzaki muttered under his breath.

“So you two are dating then?” asked Misa, a ghost of a smile creeping up on her sallow face.

“Hell no, you crazy mythical creature,” stated Harry with a no-nonsense tone.

There was a beat of silence after everyone had spoken at once, and then Harry said, “Apparently he is, yes we’re dating, and seriously Misa, please relinquish ownership.”

The almost unnoticeable smile on Misa’s lips faded, and she said, “Please tell Raito that I love him, even if he doesn’t love me back.” Harry’s heart broke, but he watched silently as she said, “I relinquish ownership of the Death Note.”

Her eyes glazed over as Ryuk cackled overhead, and he quickly disappeared into another room. Ryuzaki shifted beside Harry, watching the shinigami leave with wary eyes, but Harry turned his gaze away to Misa, who was blinking rapidly and wiping her eyes. She was frowning heavily, clearly confused on why her cheeks were wet (and why her head hurt and her face felt feverish, because that’s what a night of solid sobbing did to a body).

“What’s going on?” she asked in her normal, high-pitched, chipper voice, glancing around and narrowing her eyes at Ryuzaki, then at the Aurors. “Misa thought Ryuzaki had been killed by Kira—did you and Raito-kun pull a fast one on Misa? And who are those creepy men in robes beside Misa’s door?”

Ryuzaki mumbled almost silently, “I hate how she speaks in third-person.”

Ryuk joined them as Harry was lying to Misa, telling her that Ryuzaki’s death had been a hoax and those were Ryuzaki’s new bodyguards (that was all she needed to know at that moment), and the shinigami’s playful voice said, “Oh yes, and I forgot to mention that if she touches the Death Note without it being owned by another human, she’ll be the automatic new owner.”

“Oh you lying piece of shit,” bellowed Harry, hopping to his feet and pointing his wand at Ryuk. “I might not be able to kill you or even hurt you, but I’ll sure as hell do my best trying.”

“What else are you keeping from us?” demanded Harry, his magic flaring and sparks coming out of his wand. Misa gasped again at the magic usage, and Harry could see the Aurors twitching at the knowledge that a Muggle was witnessing magic and they couldn’t do a thing about it.

“Well, except for the simple fact that I could disobey you at any time because you are not my King, absolutely nothing,” stated Ryuk, his tone serious for the first time since meeting him. Ryuk’s posture straightened, and he towered over them so highly that he shadowed the entire room. “I can’t kill you, and it’s not in my interests to kill your boy toy over there, because that’s just not entertaining. But you do not rule me, and you never will. You can’t control me any more than I can control you.” He cackled suddenly, causing Harry to jump against his will. “I will let you have ownership, and you can hold my spare Death Note.” He held it out with two fingers, almost identically to how Ryuzaki would’ve done, and continued, “You can touch Misa with it and give her back her memories, and then you can tell me to get lost. I might do it, and I might not.”
“I don’t wa—” started Harry.

“Do it,” interrupted Ryuzaki.

They stared at each other for a long moment, charcoal into emerald, before Ryuzaki said, “You’ll have ownership until you die. We’ll have the other notebook as well, the one that we’re holding at headquarters. That means no one else will have ownership of the two spare notebooks.”

“No more Kira,” said Harry, blinking.

There was a long moment of silence, Harry and Ryuzaki just staring endlessly at each other as they thought over those implications, before Misa finally said, “Notebook?”

It broke the spell of silence immediately. Harry lowered his wand and said, “Deal.”

“Fine, fine, I hear ya,” drawled the shinigami, and then the notebook fell to the ground. Misa and the Aurors inhaled audibly, the latter because Harry hadn’t used a spell to conjure a notebook, and even though they knew something out of this world was going on, it was still a brief shock to see spontaneous proof.

Harry picked up the Death Note.

“Congratulations!” exclaimed Ryuk with bravado. “You’re stuck with me until you kick it!”

Harry ignored the shinigami and handed the notebook to Misa, saying, “Yeah, a notebook. See? Look at it—it’s pretty weird. Came out of nowhere, didn’t it?”

She took it and shrieked.

Harry sighed, waited for her to calm down from the shock of sudden memories, and then crouched down, cradling her face in his large hands. He kissed her on the forehead, then hugged her tight, and promptly stood back up when her expression went from shocked to resigned and sad.

Then he said, “Amane Misa, you are under arrest for the murder of hundreds, if not thousands of people, including Quillish Wammy, and the attempted murders of the detective L and myself. There will be a cover-up declaring that when you found out that Yagami Raito, your boyfriend, was Kira and was arrested for his crimes, you went mad, and for that you will be in a mental health facility, to live out the remainder of your days in custody.”

Misa looked up and said, “I will kill myself in that facility before I live without Raito.”

Ryuzaki stood up and replied, “So be it.”

And Harry started to cry.

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“I’m sorry.”

“I know.”

“This’ll be the last time.”

“You know that’s a lie.”

“Yes, but it’s a white one.”
“...I’m ready.”

“Take a deep breath.”

_Crack._

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The two remaining Aurors conversed amongst themselves while L knelt at the bin.

He didn’t empty his stomach thankfully, but it took him a while before the nausea and light-headedness tapered off into something manageable. When his breathing settled down to a semblance of normality, he plopped down against the door, closing his eyes and just rested, his legs extended in front of him.

Harry crouched down and took off his shoes, throwing them absentely behind him. When L’s toes were free of the loose, beat-up sneakers, he weakly pulled his knees to his chest, and Harry sort of...waddled closer. He wrapped his arms around L’s shins, laying his chin on L’s knees while he stared up at L with big green eyes. It was rather endearing, and L didn’t bother reigning in the small smile that curved his lips.

Amane had been Stunned and was being carefully watched by the youngest Auror. The other two were shuffling around behind them, muttering in Japanese about meaningless things, like how the price for sake had gone up and how broomstick models were getting outrageously fast. Even though L knew that they were still listening in and watching (even though all three of them were being Obliterated, so in the end what was the point?), it was rather obliging of them to attempt to give them a bit of privacy. Although, they were speaking in Italian, and L doubted they spoke it.

Ryuk was sitting on the table of the kitchen where they had Apparated to (as it was conveniently right next to the main terminal but still far enough away that the cracks of the Apparation wouldn’t be heard. Harry had told the shinigami that if he stayed out of the way for at least fifteen minutes, he could have every apple in the kitchen. Upon investigation, Ryuk had enthusiastically agreed, considering there was a bag of thirty apples in the pantry.

“Are you ready to do this?” asked Harry, a soft smile of his own causing his face to lighten up. His British accent was diluting the Italian words more-so than usual, but L ignored it.

“Of course. Now that Umbridge is taken care of and Amane has been put in a makeshift incarceration until we give the signal to transport her to the prearranged institution, all we have to do is arrest Raito and it’ll be over. Wammy will be avenged, and we’ll be able to disappear.”

“To fly broomsticks in England? Bow-chicka-wow-wow!”

L gave him a stare that made Harry snicker.

“We’re ready, sirs,” said the female Auror from behind them in Japanese, finally interrupting their conversation. Harry sighed, squeezing L’s shins before standing up and offering a hand. L took it, accepting the help up, and then touched Harry’s chest softly with his fingertips.

“Are you ready?” asked L in English.

In a terrible American surfer accent, he proclaimed, “Woah dude, I was born ready!”

L rolled his eyes and donned the Invisibility Cloak.
Harry’s heart was beating like a hammer.

There was an erratic mantra flying through his mind, and normally hearing almost over! in his head on exuberant repeat would’ve irritated him. However, he was practically bouncing with the excitement and anticipation, so he was taking some time to calm down before entering in the keycode. He was outside the main terminal’s main door, listening to the investigation team talk to Raito, who from what Harry could tell was trying to get through Ryuzaki’s security.

He inhaled, exhaled, and then (as Ryuzaki whispered it in his ear) entered in the keycode: 4826810937.

He heard the lock click open.

Even though his heart was in his throat and he just wanted to laugh until Ryuzaki kicked him, he adopted a look of nonchalance before throwing open the door.

The first thing that he saw was a jumble of code on the gigantic computer screen, because something like that was really hard to miss. He forced his eyes away from it—how in the world can anyone understand that crap? he thought, almost amused—and then looked down at the main chair, where Yagami Raito sat.

He couldn’t stop the grin at Raito’s perfectly blank expression.

“Hello you guys!” exclaimed Harry, not taking his eyes off Raito. “Sorry I’m late—afraid I got distracted by blowing up cars in my spare time.”

“You seem really excited, James-san,” mentioned Matsuda, smiling.

Aizawa, on the other hand, said in confusion, “Blowing up...wait, what?”

Harry forced the grin off his face but didn’t extinguish the mischievous expression. He lifted up his eyebrows and said innocently, “Well, I got bored yesterday, so I took a spontaneous drive instead of delivering the Death Note to the prison, and I just got this urge to fake my death. I don’t know, maybe I’m just mad as a hatter.” Harry fought the urge to ask the team, ‘Do you know why a raven’s like a writing desk?’ and instead said, “I just might be.”

“Well, to bring you down to our level, the building’s been hacked,” said Aizawa, always the buzzkill. “We’ve been locked in here without cameras or security, and all the data we’ve been trying to recover from Watari’s memory wipe is gone again. Raito’s going to have to start all over.”

Harry blinked and finally looked away from Raito to Aizawa, who was standing close to Soichiro and Mogi. “Oh, yeah, sorry. That was me. My bad.”

“Aww, I’ve needed to go to the bathroom for over an hour now! I can’t believe you locked us in!” complained Matsuda.

“Well, you can leave now. In fact, all of you can except for the two Yagamis. The two doors leading out of this room are now unlocked,” said Harry off-handedly, letting his eyes focus yet again on Raito. He still hadn’t moved, his caramel eyes neutral and his face smooth. He really was handsome in a boyish way, and Harry could see why Misa (and other girls and guys, most likely) would flock to him. He wasn’t Harry’s type, but he still was good-looking in his own right.
Aizawa frowned and started, “But why—”

“Get the hell out of here or I will throw you out myself,” interrupted Harry firmly. “And trust me, I will.”

Matsuda and Mogi left immediately, but Aizawa hesitated. Soichiro, who was watching Harry with a mixture of curiosity and concern, said, “Listen to what James says. I’m sure he has good reason for this.”

“Okay,” Aizawa said, drawing out the word, before he followed the others out.

When the magical sensors Harry had placed upon the exit doors alerted him to the fact that the doors were open, a good minute of pure silence later, Harry said, “Alright, I’ve been given permission to scare the fuck out of the both of you. May I introduce two Aurors from the Ministry of Magic and one gorgeous motherfucker named L.”

When Ryuzaki pulled off the Invisibility Cloak, Raito gasped so shrilly that it was like that whistle noise a bottle rocket made before exploding. Soichiro let out a cry of surprise himself, but it couldn’t measure to that sound of pure horror and disbelief that Raito made, maybe because Ryuzaki had appeared out of thin air but probably because Ryuzaki had died in Raito’s arms.

This was a scene that Harry would never forget.

“Hello Raito-kun, Yagami-san,” said Ryuzaki.

The two Aurors walked through the doors and immediately pulled out wands, muttering containment charms. When they were done, they separated—the man stood by the door that led to the stairs, which led to the kitchen, and the woman stood next to the door that led to the front of the complex. Well, at least they were covering all of their exits, even though it was relatively pointless considering the containment charms and the fact that they were wizards.

“You’re...dead...I...I watched you die!” Raito suddenly shrieked, jumping out of his chair. His expression was wild, dangerous even, and Harry pulled out his own wand. Soichiro, who appeared to be in shock over his son’s uncharacteristic behaviour (or maybe it was just Ryuzaki being alive) opened his mouth to speak but Ryuzaki beat him to it.

“I did die, Raito-kun. However...James is the Master of Death, you know, and not only that, but he uses magic. I died, because my name was written in the Death Note, but after I died, James saved me.” They had agreed to still use aliases, because even though Raito would be given the Kiss, Soichiro was still watching.

“That’s impossible!” Raito shouted.

“Oh bloody hell, do shut up,” grumbled Harry, waving his wand. Immediately, Raito was forced back into the chair, and red ropes were conjured out of nowhere to tie him securely to the seat. Soichiro was gaping, his eyes bulging behind his glasses and his face paling rapidly, and Harry walked to him and said softly, “I’m sorry, sir, but this needs to be done. Your son is not in possession of Ryuk’s Death Note, but he’s still dangerous, and he needs to be restrained.”

“I don’t understand...” said Soichiro, clearly overwhelmed, so Harry led him to the flat couch against the stairs leading to the exit.

Ryuzaki and Harry had agreed to use the potion that Harry had been approved to use instead of just showing the video. It was the only way to get a full confession out of him, to get the entire story from the true culprit’s lips. So, as Ryuzaki walked to Harry and stood shoulder-to-shoulder against him, Harry pulled out the vial of Veritaserum and then began to talk.
“I’m a wizard, as you’ve probably just realised. I’ve been helping as much as I could with this investigation. When Ryuzaki died, his contract was fulfilled, but there was no rule indicating that I couldn’t bring him back to life. With Muggle technology, Kira’s heart attacks have proven time and time again that the dead cannot be brought back, but with magic, I saved his life. So we decided to get really...enthusiastic about catching Kira.”

“Since James had finally enlightened me on what he was, we developed a plan to catch Kira once and for all,” filled in Ryuzaki.

“So since Ryuzaki still suspected that the thirteen-day rule was a fake—which was true and we have proof from the shinigami who did it, who is probably eating all of the apples in the kitchen at this very moment—we decided to kick Kira’s arse with a bit of magic to help us along.”

Ryuzaki interjected, “To go off-topic, Soichiro-san, you will have to sign a confidentiality agreement with the Japanese Ministry of Magic because you are witnessing an entire world that is kept hidden from the average population. Prepare yourself for that.”

Harry could tell that Ryuzaki was just as excited as he was, because Raito was tied to a chair and was going to be given Veritaserum, and there was literally nothing that could get in the way of this case. They were rushing through their words, practically overlapping each other, but it was okay, because excitement was normal and dear fuck, Ryuzaki looked absolutely stunning in the glare of the overhead lights, his eyes wide and filled with satisfaction and retribution.

“God, I love you,” said Harry in a daze, smiling a bit goofily.

Ryuzaki turned his head to stare up at Harry, blinking once before he whispered in Italian, “I love you.”

Harry laughed, perhaps a bit hysterically but definitely full of giddy excitement.

Ryuzaki raised a slender eyebrow, perhaps in amusement or maybe in exasperation, and then a small smile popped up on his lips. It was a shy smile, innocent in a way, and Harry’s heart fluttered.

The moment was soon interrupted by Soichiro. “Are you saying...?”

Harry shook himself out of his Ryuzaki-focussed bubble and said, “Well, how about we do this the interesting way.” He held up the vial of truth serum, sloshing the clear fluid around. “This is illegal to use without government permission, and Japan has graciously given me clearance. The two Aurors behind me are employed by the government, and are here to make sure that I don’t kill you or something, Raito.”

Harry grasped Ryuzaki’s hand with his spare, entwining their fingers together. As a unit, they advanced on Raito, standing in front of him with identical expressions of anticipation. Harry wanted to know every move that Raito had made to get to this very point almost as badly as Ryuzaki did, and they were finally making it a reality.

Harry said, “This is Veritaserum, the most powerful truth potion in the world, and one drop of it will force you to spill every secret we ask of you for twelve hours solid. Open up, Raito-kun; here comes the choo-choo train!”

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In the end, it took both of the Aurors to hold Raito’s face still.
Harry dripped in a single measured drop into Raito’s mouth, and they all backed away instantly. Raito didn’t try to spit it out, although it wouldn’t have mattered, but L did feel marginally more content now that he wasn’t going to have to dodge saliva splatters while interrogating Raito.

If looks could kill, Harry and L would’ve both been dead.

“Have at it, my love,” said Harry.

Soichiro stepped up beside them, watching his son’s face with dread. He knew now, and even though there was a sliver of hope in his eyes (probably a meagre wish that somehow, against all odds, they were wrong), the dread nearly drowned it out.

“What is your name?” asked Ryuzaki.

Raito clearly made an effort to lie, to test the validity of Harry’s statement, because his eyes widened with panic as he realised he couldn’t. L’s own eyes widened with anticipation, watching him with his heart beating ungodly fast somewhere in his throat as his stomach erupted in jitters.

“Yagami Raito,” Raito bit out, his eyes glaring.

“When is your birthday?”

Raito made a sound almost like a growl in the back of his throat but answered, “…the twenty-eighth of February, 1986.”

“What’s your blood type?”

“A negative.”

God, this is brilliant. “Do you love Amane Misa?”

Raito’s expression was like the face of the devil, his handsome features twisted into ugliness. He bared his teeth, said “I hate you” under his breath (and that apparently was the truth, then), and then answered with clear reluctance, “No.”

L squeezed Harry’s fingers. This was it, the ending they were all waiting for. L inhaled and then held the breath there, thinking so rapidly that it hurt his head. It was over though.

He stood beside the man that he loved more than life itself. L’s entire body was filled with so much of it that he felt ready to burst, and it was growing increasingly hard to contain it. His life had been a shell of what he was now, because now he was complete. He was whole. He had met his match—not in a rival, but in a human being. His life had more meaning than just cases, heirs, and sweets, because now he had a new world to discover, a man to live the remainder of his life with.

His life didn’t make much logical sense any more, but he was standing next to the man he loved, and nothing short of death would be able to tear them apart. They were stuck together, for better or for worse.

His life had just begun.

So L lifted up Harry’s hand, kissed the back of it, and smelled the scent that was simply Harry, filled with so much love for a single man that it seemed unreal. Then said the three words that ended the case, avenged Quillish Wammy, and signalled the beginning of L Lawliet’s new, perfect life with Harry James Potter:
“Are you Kira?”

-End-


Chapter End Notes

Notes:

This is over. This is it. No sequels, no prequels, not even an epilogue. It's done. Ziiiiiiip, hodes, it's over. Feel free to PM me, spam my e-mail with e-mails (uh, yeah, of course they'd be e-mails...), add me on MSN...this story has been slated to end this way since pretty much the beginning (you are a genius, Socii!), and it's not going to change. So yeah, you might want to scream about how sucktacular it ended, but hey, it's evil and awesome, so it's totally my forte. Anyway, I would love to hear from you guys regardless. I'm not sure if there will be anything after this, in terms of writing more fanfiction, but we'll see. Maybe.

Dedications:

To all my readers: Thank you for riding along with me on this insane, totally bonkers story that I've somehow concocted in my mad-as-a-hatter mind. You fucking rock, I swear to God. Thank you for all of your support, all of your thoughts. Thank you for the reviews, for the Author Alerts, for the Favourite Story Alerts, the Favourite Author Alerts, but most of all, thank you-thank you-thank you for all the Story Alerts. Those things mean that people actually gave a shite about this thing I've written, and wow, that means a lot. After all, reviews are a pain to get up the energy to write (personal experience, yo!), but Story Alerts mean that someone's getting an e-mail spam from FFdotNet in some strange, bonkers attempt to read this thing. Thank you for everything, and just so you know, I less-than-three all of you.

Early beta credit and dedicated eternally to Sociially-Diisoriented. If it wasn't for her, this story wouldn't have ever seen the screens on computers around the world. Thank you, dearest, for putting up with this thing for as long as you did as a beta, and for telling me that it wasn't shite unless it really needed to be said. Thanks for everything. You are spectacular, and I adore you so much.

Later beta credit and special shout-out to Skylara. You are my knightess in shining armour. Thank you for putting up with this for as long as you have. I know I have a problem with adding 'little words', as you've called them, but I have you to thank for making this story the best that it could possibly be. It probably would've been rubbish without you. Please don't pull your hair out, and don't you ever even think about disappearing on me. I adore you as well, and thank you so much for everything you've done.
To my darling Princess Torro... This fiction, despite the fact that I still think it's utter rot, brought us together. Maybe that's corny, and I definitely don't care, but it's true. I'm so thankful every singe goddamn day that you gave me a review that compelled me to reply to it, because I got you out of this whole thing. I probably would've died if it wasn't for you, and dear God isn't that the truth? You have stuck by me through everything...you have just helped me. I can never, never, never repay you, Princess. You are the world to me, and my life belongs to you. This story belongs to you. You own me, mind, body, and soul. You are everything. You are everything. You are everything. Don't you ever forget that. I'd give you a billion penises right now, one gigantic orgy of awesomeness and love, but sites have this thing about hating the less-than symbol and besides, that's a lot of dicks. I might be gay (with one perfect exception and on occasion Kate Beckinsale, because, like, yeah...) and totally into cock, but even that sounds terribly...well, terrible. Seriously.

And even though he will never read this crap...to my husband Robert. Thank you. Just...thank you. Even though I couldn't say it to Alexandra when she was alive and even though I will never say it to you...I love you. I love you. Thank you for saving my life.

Thanks a lot, you weirdos!

With much love,

Gian

Translated into Russian by serseua here.