Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

by hatakaashi

Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Notes

So basically I was a boarding student in high school and thought my life would be interesting enough (lol pls) to be transformed into a Bokuaka fanfic. First time writing Haikyuu!! so please be gentle, ily and all my volleyball children.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Akaashi Keiji is a normal 16 year old. Although he has been told on various previous occasions he is rather too serious for his age. He sees nothing wrong with being mature and responsible.

It is Monday morning, just after 7 am, when he orders a cab from the hotel to his new school - Fukurodani Academy. His mother preferred to escort him inside, but he'd insisted on going alone. "I'm not a kid, mom. I don't mind.", he'd said. Still, despite his brave face, he's a bit terrified. After all, the place would be his home for the next three years. And it's the first time he'd actually be in a boarding school.

Akaashi's only read about them in books and seen them in movies. It makes him feel excited, like he's going to Hogwarts. And who wouldn't like to go there?

Truth is, his parents' busy schedules are the reason why he's going to stay in the boarding house. Both of them relocate a lot, due to work, and while he was younger, he didn't mind constantly switching schools. He was too "nerdy", and too quiet and never really made lasting friends. So there was no love lost there. But now, now he couldn't afford changing, not when he only had three years until graduation and then applying to university. He had to fully concentrate on his future. Besides, after doing some research online, he'd discovered it's one of the best prep schools in the country.

Akaashi doesn't like attention much, and that is perhaps unfortunate, because the school year has officially started as of September 1st and it is the middle of October now. It had taken three weeks for him to sit through the entrance exam and have his old school records transferred. The principal had told Akaashi that they didn't allow transfers once the trimester began, but due to his incredibly high GPA and the fact one of his fathers' co workers knew the principal and had called in for a favor, they made an exception for him. The crappy part of it is that everyone from his year already knew each other and have already become friends. So he'd be the new guy. Then again, he is pretty sure that even if he'd started from the first day, he'd still be the odd one that didn't quite fit in. But maybe, just maybe, things would change for him this year. A guy could hope, right?

With a big rucksack over his shoulder and heart hammering a bit too fast, Akaashi takes a deep breath and opens the door to his new home. He is instantly greeted by a woman at the front desk.

"Good morning." She smiles. "How may I help you?"

"Good morning." He nods his head. "I'm uhh... I'm the new student."

"New student? Are you sure? We don't get new students once the year begins."

Akaashi's palms begin sweating at once. Not on the first day, God.

"What is your name?" He tells her. "Okay, let me just make a call." The secretary says and disappears into her office.

By the time she comes back, Akaashi has done his best to stop his knees from knocking against each other. He's been told many times that he has a cool exterior, a constant poker face, and he congratulates himself for that. Even though that's a total ruse - he's a nervous wreck on the inside.

"Akaashi Keiji. Please follow me." She escorts him to the dean's office. "The dean is the one that deals with the boarding students, so please, go inside and introduce yourself. He will give you your schedule and show you around the school."
"Thank you very much."

"Have a good first day." She smiles and leaves.

Akaashi thanks her again, then knocks on the door. Once he hears "come in", he enters.

"Akaashi Keiji?" The dean greets him with a smile and shakes his (hopefully not too sweaty) hand. "Please, have a seat. Now... are your parents not here?"

"No, I'm alone. My parents had to leave on a business trip."

"I see." The dean nods his head. "You must be the first person who arrives here without his parents."

"And the first one to come a month after the school year has began." Akaashi adds.

The dean chuckles. "That is correct. Quite brave of you. Now. Here at Fukurodani Academy, we put the first years in rooms together. The second and third years get to pick their own roommates. But as you said, the school year has already started and the boys dorm is completely full."

Akaashi's fingernails painfully dig into his thighs. "Don't worry, there is a place for you. One of the second year students has agreed to share his room with you."

"Can students get single rooms?" Akaashi asks. He hasn't even met his new roommate, but he would love to have a room to himself starting next year.

"Yes, they can. All rooms are designed for two people, so all first and second years have to share. Third years could choose to be alone, because they have seniority."

"But you said my roommate is a second year."

The dean nods. "Indeed. But just like you, he is an exception. He gets to have his own room, because he has special privileges. If you do well this trimester, and as I see from your previous schools records you will, and you make the Honor Roll, you'll have privileges too."

"Might I ask what is an Honor Roll?"

"Of course. Our Honor Roll is a list of students, which have the highest GPA. The top of the list are students with Straight A's, the middle of the list are students with all A's and a single B, and the bottom of the list is all A's and two B's. As you already know we are a prep school, and our syllabus is on a very high level. We pride ourselves in the fact that every single one of our graduates has been accepted and gone to university."

"I have seen that on your website." Akaashi nodded. "It is very impressive."

"We think so too. Now, here's how it works. If you make Honor Roll, you get privileges. For example, you can have your own room starting next year or the year after that. Honor Roll students also have longer curfew on weekends, and could skip Study Hall once a week to go to the movies or dinner. Of course you must remain Honor Roll for the entire trimester to enjoy those privileges."

"So my roommate made Honor Roll the 3rd trimester last year?" Akaashi asks curiously.

The dean laughs. "God, no. He barely scraped by for the required 3.2. GPA. If a student's GPA is below that, they get detention every day after school and room restriction over the weekend. And it stays that way until their grades improve."
"So how come he got to be alone in a room? Until now, I mean."

"Well..." The dean scratches his head. "He's very... energetic. There weren't any volunteers to share a room with him. But don't worry, I assure you, everything will be fine." The dean smiles, but Akaashi is not at all convinced. He gets to be stuck with the one person nobody can stand to room with. Oh joy. "Besides, he is the star of our volleyball team. He just made Captain."

Akaashi doesn't really see the big deal about it, but since the dean is expecting some sort of reaction, he goes for a simple "Oh."

"Yes, it is the first time in the history of our school a second year gets to be Captain."

"He must be very good then." Akaashi replies. But he isn't too impressed, not really. The guy is probably a moron, if he has bad grades and nobody wants to live with him. But at least, he supposes, he's got sports going for him.

"We are very proud of both the basketball and volleyball teams this year, they're both very promising. We'll surely make Nationals this year again." The dean muses for a couple of minutes, then clears his throat. "Anyway, speaking of sports, have you done any in your old school?"

"Just P.E. class."

"Well, here, each trimester our P.E. class offers a different sport - fall is basketball, winter is volleyball and spring is tennis. However, if you are really good, you should try out for the teams. If you do get into one of them, you will practice it throughout the entire year."

"So sports are mandatory?"

"Indeed. Because you're a boarding student, each weekend you will get a sheet of paper offering you different sports activities, unless, as I just said, you make one of the teams. The more activities you do, the more points you get for your P.E. class. You will have to do a minimum of 3 activities each Friday, Saturday and Sunday to get an A. We also offer other activities, not just sports. But I won't get into details now, you would have to ask your new roommate. Now, let's make up your schedule." The dean announces and starts clicking on his computer. "Your first period starts at 8 am every morning, except, of course on Saturdays and Sundays. You have seven periods every day that are 60 minutes each. An hour of lunch break after the first four periods, then three more that are electives. You have Japanese and Math every year and they are always before lunch. Then you can pick between History and Geography."

"I prefer History." Akaashi says quickly.

"That doesn't mean you won't have Geography, you'll have it next year. The next class you can choose from is the sciences - Physics, Chemistry or Biology?"

"Uhh..."

"Let me give you a fair warning - each year you get to do one, but your third year you must take an AP class. Most students leave Physics for their last year, because it's easier than AP Chemistry and AP Biology. So, Akaashi-kun, what do you choose from the three?"

"I'll take Physics this year."

"You're not afraid of AP Biology or AP Chemistry?" Akaashi shakes his head. "Excellent! So your first four periods are - History, Japanese, Math and Physics. You might be wondering why all four periods are all the same throughout the entire year? We have made it this way, because it's more efficient - more material is covered and it's easier to be remembered. Now, for the three
remaining electives that are after lunch. Do you have any preferences?"

"What are my choices?"

"You have a mandatory language class - which doesn't include Japanese. So you can pick between English, Spanish, French and German."

"Well I'm already fluent in English, so I'll go with Spanish."

"If your English is good enough, I could put you in AP English Literature? Because it counts as a Language Class. Normally second and third years pick AP classes, but the more you take, the more credits you'll have. That way you could skip a year in university."

Akaashi nods enthusiastically. "I would love that."

"Good boy." The dean smiles. "I see why your parents trusted you with coming alone today. Alright, that's one out of three. Could I interest you in Model United Nations? Every year in April, the MUN class goes to Dublin and meets with students from all over the world."

"That sounds interesting."

"Are you any good with presentations?"

Akaashi doesn't even have to think about it. Is he a good public speaker? Absolutely not. He loathed giving presentations in his previous schools and he knows here it won't be any different. Why would he sign up for such torture when it isn't mandatory?"

"Not really."

"I see. But I'll tell you from now - in every class except Math, you'll be giving presentations throughout the school year." Akaashi gulps quietly. Oh boy. "And the best way to improve in something you are not good at, is practice. So how about I sign you up for the Speech and Debate Class?"

Akaashi clears his throat. "Are those two my only options?"

The dean chuckles. "No, I just thought I'd get you interested. No matter. How about Studio Art? Or Theater and Drama?"

Akaashi has photographic memory, so learning lines by heart would be a piece of cake. But there's the performing part, like plays in front of the entire school and such, and he'll probably end up with stage fright. So thanks, but no thanks.

Besides, he's not too bad at drawing.

"Studio Art, please."

"And that leaves one more. You can pick between Yearbook, Multimedia Journalism or Creative Writing. We offer Study Hall for second and third years who pick a lot of AP Classes. But since you only pick one this year...Unless you would like another AP Class?"

"Umm...How advanced is the Math class?"

"First years have Trigonometry, second years have Algebra and third years have AP Calculus."

"May I take AP Calculus?"
The dean taps his chin. "Ah, not afraid of the scary Math, eh?"

"I used to be a Mathlete in my old school."

"That is excellent news, young man! So, I'm putting you down for AP Calculus." The dean clicks a few buttons on his keyboard and then prints Akaashi's brand new schedule for the year. "And you're all set. Now let's get your luggage up to your room and I can give you a quick tour of the school."

Akaashi quickly learns that all the classrooms are on the ground floor, and the electives in different buildings. Second floor of the main building is the boys dorm, while the third floor is for the girls.

The dean informs him that mixed company isn't allowed in the school. So no boys are allowed on the third floor and no girls allowed on the second. If they get caught, they will be suspended. If it happens more than once, expelled.

The more the dean talks about the school, the more Akaashi thinks this place is like Hogwarts. Terrifying but at the same time exciting!

He quickly leaves his stuff in his new room, but doesn't have time to look around in order to figure out what sort of strange bird his roommate is. Later, when I'm not with the dean, he thinks.

"Tonight during Study Hall, the Resident Counselor, or as we call them RCs for short, from your floor will give you your uniform. Speaking of Study Hall, it begins at 7 pm until 9:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, then Sunday. The RCs go around all the rooms before it begins and collect your mobile phones, laptops and such, unless your teachers have specifically asked for you to hand in a printed version of your homework. Only then you can use your laptops. After Study Hall's over, you get your technological gadgets back. Hmm am I forgetting anything else? Oh yes, curfews. From Monday til Friday you have to be downstairs for breakfast, which starts at 7 am. By 7:30 latest you have to be down, because I take attendance. If you are ill, you will have to tell your roommate, or someone, who can inform me and I will send the nurse to your room to check up on you. Classes finish at 3:30 pm and you will have free time until 6 pm. Some students like to go to town during that time, but not all. Most leave going out for the weekend. Whenever you decide to go outside the school grounds, you have to sign out at the front desk. Smoking is prohibited, both on and off school grounds. Alcohol too, unless you have a signed parents permission. Do you?"

"Yes."

"Well, since you are already 16, and you have your parents signature, you can have a glass of wine or a bottle of beer during Friday and Saturday night outside the school. Don't think you can have more than that, because whenever students return for their curfew, they have to sign in and are tested by the RCs with breathalyzers."

Not that Akaashi is a big drinker, but these sure are strict school rules.

"You're a first year so your curfew over the weekends is 10:30 pm. If you are an Honor Roll student, your curfew is extended until 11:30 pm. Only second year Honor Roll students and seniors get 12:30 curfew."

"What if I'm an Honor Roll senior?" Akaashi asks and the dean grins.

"Sorry, kid, the latest curfew is 12:30. Unless you check out for the weekend. You can't check out to a hotel on your own, though, if that's what you're thinking. You can stay at a day student's house, if the parents of the student contact the school beforehand, or if your parents come to visit."
But they'll have to pick you up from the school themselves. We've had a couple of seniors trying to sneak out by pretending their parents were here, but let's just say they didn't get very far, because our staff is very good at herding its sheep." The dean chuckles. "Ah, and last but not least. Your rooms must be tidy during school days, because I check them every morning after you go off for your classes. If your bed is unmade, or there are clothes on the floor, you will be grounded and won't be able to leave the school grounds for the day. Same applies for your roommate. If his bed is unmade, you get punished for it too."

Akaashi thinks this is beyond unfair. So what if his new roommate is volleyball Captain? Big deal. What if he's a slob and gets Akaashi grounded every day? He doesn't complain out loud though, definitely not on his first day. If his roommate is indeed a slob, Akaashi will talk to him. But since he is Akaashi's senior, he will have to tread lightly over the topic. Worse comes to worst, Akaashi will just have to clean and fix his roommate part of the room and bed too. It's not that big of a deal, really, he thinks. He is always organized anyway.

"Of all days to get grounded, make sure it's not on Fridays, because then you won't be allowed to leave the school for the entire weekend." The dean smirks. "If you are late for class, you get an hour of detention after school. And that's pretty much it. You think you got all of that?"

Akaashi nods. "Yes. Thank you very much for your time and help."

"No problem. Now I have to go, but if you have any further questions, you should ask your roommate. Or the RCs." The dean glances at his watch again. "Ah. The first period is almost over. I won't force you to go to your second period - you could stay and unpack. But I want you in class for your third period, okay?"

"Yes. Thank you very much."

With a quick wave, the dean leaves and Akaashi heads back to his room. He hears the bell ring, followed by classroom doors opening, strutting of feet and chatter. Five minutes later, there's a warning bell and after five more minutes, it rings again and the school goes silent at once.

He quickly texts his parents that everything is okay and that he is settled and preparing for his next class. Then he starts inspecting his roommate part of the room.

The room isn't that big, but for two people it's okay. Two desks, two chairs, one bathroom. Top and bottom bed. Since both beds are made, Akaashi can't tell which one is his roommate, but he hopes it's the top one - he hates heights.

Judging by just the board over his desk, Akaashi can definitely tell his new roommate is very fond of volleyball (obviously), video games and owls. Owls? Nice. Akaashi likes owls too. And knowing his luck, that would be the only thing they share in common.

Great, I can already see what close friendship I will have with my roommate, he snorts to nobody but himself.

"Oh, so you like owls, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Me too."

Yeah, good talk.

He continues with his snooping, but there's not much to go on.
There is only one photo pinned to the board and as he studies it, his heart thuds to the floor. The photograph is of a boy in a red uniform, with messy black hair and a very big smirk. Akaashi knows that guy. Or, well, he's seen him before. He sends silent prayers to the skies above that this is not his new roommate. Please no, not him. He unpins the photo and sees there's a writing on the back of it. "Here u go, bro. You can sell this on ebay when I get famous lol." is written in a messy handwriting.

Thank God he is not my roommate. Akaashi exahles loudly, instantly relaxing. Besides, Fukurodani's school colors black and white and yellow. Not red. Whew!

But then it occurs to him that his roommate must be friends with the guy from the photograph, because why else would the photograph say "bro". Crap.

Oh well. What can you do about it.

Akaashi spends the rest of the hour unpacking his things and placing them into the empty cupboards and the left part of the wardrobe, which is free. Then he goes to the front desk with his schedule and asks for school supplies, books and such. The secretary quickly gives him all the things he need and he has enough time to leave everything but his AP Calc and Physics book, when the bell rings.

With a thudding heart, he locks his room and heads downstairs, keeping his head burried in his Calc book, so that none of the students will ogle him in the corridors, even though he knows he stands out, because he's the only one around without a uniform. He is so out of it, he doesn't even realize his book is upside down. Just let me make it to the classroom without being stopped, please, he thinks.

He remembers the dean telling him the math classroom is the last one on the left and he makes it there just as the warning bells rings. Akaashi scans the room quickly, noticing there are a few empty desks at the back. He plops himself on one and tries to look busy.

None of the students around have paid him any attention. Yes, good, he thinks.

Just as the second bell rings, the teacher walks inside their classroom and all the students rise on their feet.

"Good morning, class." He greets them cheerily and heads for his desk.

"Good morning, Sensei." The students reply in unison.

The teacher begins taking attendance, yelling out everyone's name, followed by "Yes.". All but Akaashi.

"Oh. We seem to have a new student." The teacher smiles and looks at Akaashi. Then all pairs of eyes are onto him, burning him like a laser beam. "Hello. What is your name?"

"Akaashi Keiji." Akaashi mumbles loud enough.

"Hmm, I don't have you on here. Are you sure you are in the right classroom?"

"Yes" Then after a few seconds, he asks. "This is the Math classroom, right?"

"That is correct." The teachers walks over to his desk. "Oh. You take AP Calculus?"

Akaashi nods.
"Yeah, this isn't the right classroom for you." The teacher smiles. "You wanna go to the door right across from this one."

"Thank you." Akaashi says, hoping his burning cheeks aren't as aflame as he feels them to be.

"Well, better hurry up now."

"Thank you."

In his hurry to disappear out of everyone's sight, as luck would have it, his thigh crashes into his desk with a loud thudding noise.

Oh mother of -! If he was alone, he would totally cry out in pain. But since he isn't, and the sound is followed by snickering, he purses his lips and nodding at the teachers "Careful now!", he leaves the classroom.

Well, this sure went well, he thinks and closes his eyes. He needs to compose himself now.

But that's hard.

If there is one thing Akaashi hates, it's unwanted attention. He will already be getting some since he is the new student, but now he is late for his first class. Which means he will be scolded in front of everyone.

The possibility of that makes his hands clammy and he quickly considers skipping class, going to the front desk and asking for the nurse.

But he can't, not on the first fucking day. Come on, Akaashi, get your shit together and suck it up. You can do this.

After a very quick, silent pep talk, he knocks and enters.

"Oh?" The teacher's eyebrows arch up and Akaashi wants to run away from all the stares in his directions. "And who might you be?" He asks, crossing his arms.

"I'm the new student." He mumbles. "I thought I was in the other classroom."

"Ah, yes. I heard we're having a new student, but I didn't think a first year would take AP Calculus." The teacher says in a tone which isn't the least bit polite. "What is your name?"

"Akaashi. Akaashi Keiji."

"Well, Akaashi Keiji, you're late for your first class. Not a very good start." The teacher clicks something on his computer, then turns his attention back to him. "Go take a seat. And try not to make your tardiness a habit, alright?"

"Yes." He nods his head in shame. "Sorry, Sensei."

The only available seat is right at the front. Of course it is.

Once he takes his seat, he looks over to his desk partner's book and opens his on page 12. The teacher continues with explaining how AP Calculus is no a joke, but a very serious and very difficult class, and how he won't allow any of the students sign up for the exam if they have anything lower than a B-. Akaashi isn't too worried, though. He is quite good in math and since the current problem on the board is to solve sine, cosine and tangent without a calculator, he quickly writes it down in his
board is to solve sine, cosine and tangent without a calculator, he quickly writes it down in his notebook, then puts his pen down and waits.

If you exclude his tardiness, Akaashi thinks this is a very good first class. He breezes through the problems easily. Then he heads to Physics and this time, thankfully, he gets the right classroom from the get go.

Just as their teacher finishes telling them what homework they have for tomorrow, the bell rings, announcing the lunch break and right on cue, Akaashi's stomach growls for his attention. He didn't ask the dean where the Dining Room is, but he follows the rest of the students and lines up at the back.

Just as he's reaching for a tray, panic begins to set in. Where is he supposed to sit? He's seen in movies how all students sit with the rest of their cliques or classmates, but he doesn't know the "rules" in here. Should he sit with all the first years? And where is the first years table?

It's his turn now and he presents his plate for the lunch lady. She asks if he wants any meatballs and tomato sauce over his spaghetti and he is so nervous that he says "No, thank you.", even though he really wants meatballs and tomato sauce over his spaghetti.

Well done, Akaashi, he thinks to himself as he exits the kitchen and heads for the dining room in front of him.

Oh God, where do I sit? Where?!!

All the corner tables are taken and they have a few empty seats here and there, but Akaashi doesn't know if they are reserved and the last things he wants to do is impose.

There are two completely empty ones right in the middle, so he places his tray on the first one. Just as he pulls the chair to sit, a girl from the next table tells him that is the teacher's table.

"I'm sorry." Akaashi quickly says and points to the other empty one. "May I sit in the other one?"

She nods her head and replies something, but the noise from the kitchen is too much, so he thanks her quickly, moves his tray and sits down.

Akaashi kind of wishes there was some sort of seating chart the dean informed him about or at least something. Otherwise breakfast, lunch and dinner here would suck major ass.

He decides to eat as quickly as possible, so he can leave the damn Dining Hall. Just as he takes a bite, someone very tall and menacing looking stands over him.

"Did anybody give you permission to sit at the basketball table?" The guy growls at Akaashi and he curses himself for looking so dumb, mouthful of goddamn fucking spaghetti.

He swallows fast without even chewing and nearly chokes.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know." He replies, stands up and takes his tray.

"Hey, I was just kidding!"

"No, that's okay, I'm done." Akaashi quickly nods his head at basketball guy and heads for the kitchen.

"Watch your feet!" Basketball guy warns a second too late.

Akaashi's foot catches on someone's backpack and he falls to the ground. He could have broken
the fall and prevented hitting his chin had he not been holding the stupid tray in his hands, but alas. All the students around start clapping their hands together as the plate and water glass smash to the floor and Akaashi wants the ground to open up and swallow him whole.

He just wanted to have a quiet and peaceful fucking lunch. So much for that.

Basketball guy crouches over Akaashi, gives him a hand and asks if he's alright, but Akaashi, hoping his cheeks not to be as aflame as he feels them, stands up on his own and mumbles that he's fine. He knows he should clean up after himself, but everyone's staring, so he just picks up the tray, leaves it in the kitchen and dashes upstairs straight to his room before he can make any more fool of himself.

Well, by now the school will know him as spaghetti guy, rather than new guy. Or both.

He quickly checks his schedule and sees he has Study Hall next. He doesn't know where to go, so he decides to ask at the front desk. But just as he is stuffing his books into his backpack, someone enters the room and without so much as a glance at Akaashi, throws himself on the bottom bed.

"I'm so tired already." A muffled groan. "How come you're here anyway?"

Akaashi is puzzled. Was his new roommate not told he was coming today?

"I live here. Where should I be?"

His reply makes the boy from the bed look up in surprise.

"Oh! You're not Bokuto. Sorry, I saw the room's open and I thought it's him... Hey! You're Bokuto's roommate!" He gets off the bed, grinning, and extends his hand. "Nice to meet you and welcome to Fukurodani Academy! I'm Konoha Akinori."

Akaashi introduces himself too and shakes his hand. "Thank you and nice to meet you too. Are you a first year too?" He asks, hopeful.

"Nah, it's my second year."

"Oh! Sorry, Konoha-senpai." Akaashi quickly corrects himself.

Konoha blinks, stunned, then laughs. "Hahahaha, aren't you a polite one. There's no need to call me senpai, though. Oh!" He suddenly grows very serious and beckons for Akaashi to come forward. "Let me give you the only advice you will need here. You listening carefully?" He whispers conspiratorially and Akaashi nods his head seriously. "No matter what situation you are in, be it life or death, do not, I repeat - do NOT - call Bokuto your senpai."

Akaashi pulls back confused. "Is that it? ...Konoha-san?" He tries to mask his disappointment, but perhaps not too well.

"You might not realize it yet, but trust me, I'm doing you a huge favor." Konoha winks, then glances at his watch. "Aw crap, lunch break's almost over. What class do you have next?"

"Study Hall. Uhh, I was actually wondering where Study Hall is?"

"A first year with Study Hall, huh? That's really weird. Are you sure?"

"Yes." Akaashi nods and even though he is sure, now that Konoha questioned him, he wants to be even more sure - better safe than sorry - so he pulls out his schedule. "There. Study Hall."
"Duuuuude!" Konoha gawps. "You take AP classes? Oh God, you take AP English Lit, what are you, crazy?"

"Why, is it that bad?"

"Only like the hardest! Bokuto's always- Oh no, I take that back. You have AP Calculus. You really are crazy."

"I like Math."

Konoha blinks, shakes his head, then blinks again. "Why?"

Akaashi shrugs. "It's easy."

Suddenly Konoha gasps. "This is great news! Maybe during Study Hall tonight you can come to my room and help me with Math, yeah?"

Akaashi doesn't see why not, so he agrees. "But Konoha-san? I thought during Study Hall you can't talk or leave your room? That's what the dean said at least."

Konoha waves his hand and snorts. "Pff, please. After like 5:30 pm only RCs are around and they're totally chill. Well, Rob is. Jared not so much. Buuut it's Monday, so we have Rob."

"Then yes, I would come help you, Konoha-san."

"Thanks, man, you're awesome! Then you can meet my roommate and tell us both about your first day here! How does that sound?"

"I'm looking forward to it."

"I'm totally not looking forward to it." Konoha says and chuckles. "The Math part, dude. I'm looking forward to getting to knowing you better. Also can I please be around when you meet your roommate?" He roars in laughter. "You guys are like total opposites, I can't wait to see- oh, don't worry, Akaashi, it's gonna be great."

This is the second time today Akaashi is being told not to worry about his new roommate, which makes him worry even more now. What does total opposites even mean anyway?

He has no time to ask, though, because the warning bell rings and he still doesn't know where Study Hall is. As Konoha and him start running down the stairs, as well as the rest of the students hurrying up to their classes, Konoha tells him Dining Room A and Dining Room B are used for Study Hall.

"Thank you, Konoha-san!" Akaashi says, but he doubts Konoha hears him.

Akaashi refuses to go into Dining Room A due to his earlier spaghetti fiasco. Not that by now there would be any students left there, unless they have Study Hall too, of course, but he is too afraid to go in case the kitchen staff come out and start yelling at him for not cleaning up after himself. He knows that is very unlikely, but still decides to settle in Dining Room B.

He's the only one there, and throughout the next half an hour that he spends doing his Math homework, nobody shows up. He's just about to get started on Physics, when the bell rings, so he leaves it for Study Hall tonight and heads for the other building.

He is kind of excited for Study Hall tonight actually, but wouldn't say it out loud, of course, because he remembers Konoha's face at discovering he liked Math. But precisely because of
Konoha and the invitation he'd given Akaashi to his room later, is what he is excited about.

His first day isn't totally awful, he thinks after he remembers that. Konoha'd said he would also introduce him to his roommate and would like to hear about his day. That is really nice of him, and Akaashi wonders if he only said it in order to get help with his Math.

Then he starts thinking too much about it and doesn't want to be paranoid.

He was nice to me, because he is nice, end of it, he tells himself, then pushes the thought at the back of his mind.

He is pleased to see he is the first one in the classroom and sits at the front, hoping he isn't taking anyone's seat. The teacher is already at his desk and looks up.

"You must be the new student I've been hearing about." He says in a foreign accent and smiles at Akaashi. "Welcome to Fukurodani Academy."

"Thank you, Sensei." Akaashi replies.

"Ah, ah, ah. No Japanese in this classroom." He chuckles. "English only."

"I'm sorry, Sensei."

His teacher shakes his head again. "Don't call me Sensei."

"Uhh.. what should I call you?" Akaashi asks in English.

"Sir. Sir would do."

"Right. Right, Sir."

"And your name is..." He glances at the screen of his computer. "Akaashi Keiji?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Nice to meet you, Akaashi. My name is David Burns."

"Thank you, Burns... Sir."

His teacher chuckles. "No need to use my last name, Akaashi. Just Sir or Mr Burns."

"Yes, Sir. Mr Burns."

"So are you excited to get started on the classics in English?"

"I like classics." Akaashi replies. "I also like reading."

Mr Burn claps his hands excitedly, then turns to the rest of the students. "Well! I never thought this day would come! Did you hear that, class? Our new student here likes to read classics."

No replies.

It is so quiet, in fact, Akaashi knows if this was a movie, now would be the time they would play the cricket noises.

Mr Burns doesn't seem to mind the silence at all and takes it as an opportunity to ask Akaashi about his favourite English author.
To be completely honest, the only books Akaashi has read in English are the Harry Potter series, but he doesn't know if that would be considered a classic. Even though he thinks it should be. But he quickly racks his brain for any adult...ier books which he's read so far.

"Uhhh I like John Steinbeck, Sir." He replies after a few seconds.

He hopes his silence has fooled his new teacher into thinking "I needed a moment to sort out through all the books and authors I've read and decide whose works I love the most."

"Steinbeck!" Mr Burns moves from his desk and leans against Akaashi's desk. "Did you hear that, class?"

Again, crickets.

"He's definitely one of my favorites." A big smile. "So which of his great works is your favourite, Akaashi?"

Oh, fuck, Akaashi thinks. He's only read one and a half, in fucking Japanese.

"East of Eden, Sir."

"Excellent choice," Mr Burns congratulates him. "In fact, East of Eden is in our syllabus this year. You would probably be bored during that time, Akaashi." He winks. "Or perhaps, you should do a presentation about it for the class, that way you get to be involved and entertained like everyone else."

That's what you get for trying to look too smart, you smart ass.

He's never volunteering and making small talk before class with his teachers ever again.

Mr Burns moves away from Akaashi's desk, but his attention is still on Fukurodani's newest student. "So, Akaashi, now that everyone's here, why don't you introduce yourself for the class? We already know you like reading and John Steinbeck." A chuckle.

"Oh, I uhhh..."

"Go on." Mr Burns encourages. "Get up on your seat and say a few words."

Akaashi rises to his feet. "Hello. My name is Akaashi Keiji, I am new here and this is my first day."

"Hello." A couple of students say.

"Now, now, class, is this really the way you would welcome a new student? Come on, be more enthusiastic about it!" Mr Burns claps his hands.

"Welcome to Fukurodani Academy, Akaashi, nice to meet you." Everyone replies in (somewhat bored) unison.

"Thank you." Akaashi says and sits down.

Mr Burns walks around the classroom, asking if everyone has read the book chapters they were given over the weekend, followed by a few "hai"s. Mr Burns clears his throat and the "hai"s are turned into English "yes, Sir"s.

"In that case... take out a sheet of paper please."
Lots of groaning and complains ensue.

"Except you, Akaashi." Mr Burn smiles. "Now, why don't you all write down."

"Mr Burns?" A student from the back raises his hand.

"What is it, Komui?"

"We can't start the pop quiz yet, Bokuto's still not here."

Akaashi's heard this name before and he realizes it's belongs to his roommate. But... isn't he supposed to be like really dumb? Why on earth would he be put in an advanced class?

"My, my, you're right. I was beginning to wonder why the classroom is so quiet." Mr Burns tuts. "Alright, do some last minute revision or preparation, whatever you want to call it and if he isn't here in the next ten minutes, I'm putting him down as absent and we're starting without him."

Akaashi begins to wonder if he will finally see this Bokuto roommate of his, but the ten minutes pass and there's still no sign of him.

"I'm marking him down as absent." Mr Burns says and goes to his computer, then tuts. "Ah, never mind, I just got a note he's at the nurse's office."

"Probably took too many balls to the head during lunch." Someone says, which gets a couple of chuckles from the class.

"Close all your books and answer the following questions." Mr Burns writes a couple of questions on the board, then lets the class get on with them.

Then he comes over to Akaashi's desk and sits on the other side.

"Let me fill you in on how this class works, Akaashi." He says quietly and tells him about the syllabus.

On Mondays they go over the assigned book chapters with small pop quizzes. Akaashi doesn't know why it's called a pop quiz, when the teacher is telling them beforehand about them, but doesn't speak. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, they read plays in class. And on Thursdays too, if they aren't watching movies.

"You don't seem the type that needs warning, but just so you know, you cannot sleep through the movies. I give out sheets with Q&A's at the end of each movie."

"Hai - I mean yes, Sir."

On Fridays, they practice composition, multiple choice and vocabulary quizzes.

Akaashi nods his head and notes everything down in his agenda, with tiny "Important! Quiz day!" bubbles over Mondays and Fridays.

Shortly, Mr Burns collects everyone's papers, then, once they are all neatly stacked up on his desk, starts giving the correct answers.

The class doesn't seem to like that very much, because each answer is followed by "Nooo"s and loud sighs. Akaashi begins to wonder if everyone in this class takes Theater and Drama, because judging by the dramatic sighs, everyone would be very good in acting.
The bell rings and Mr Burns yells over the sound of it to tell them their homework. Then Akaashi heads for his last class for the day.

He doesn't know what would be required of him there, but is quite glad he has something as easy going as Art for last period.

The Studio Art Building is his favourite on campus, Akaashi thinks. On the outside it looks like nice little hut, and on the inside, all the walls are covered in paintings and masks and clay things, like vases and bowls. Unlike the other classrooms, the desks in this one all form one big square.

The teacher is the eldest one he's had so far, probably in his mid sixties, Akaashi guesses, and he has a very pleasant air about him. He speaks very softly, and although he hasn't met all his teachers so far, he already knows Mr Burns and the art teacher, Mori-sensei, would be his favorites.

The theme for the day is "Home" and everyone is allowed to interpret is as they like.

Akaashi scratches the side of his head with his pencil, trying to find inspiration. He doesn't want to draw his mom or dad, not really, that would be too... lame. And obvious too. Peeking, discreetly, at each of his neighbours, he sees that they are indeed drawing houses and people. He is beyond glad to see that he wouldn't be the worst student in the class, because the classmate on his right side is drawing a terrifying looking human being. Unless the student is a member of the Addams Family and genuinely lives with Lurch.

He gently turns the little owl eraser he has in his hand and then it hits him - he's gonna draw an owl! It is, after all the school mascot, and technically this is now his home. He gives the blank sheet a couple of test sketches in the top corner and when he's pleased with the result, starts drawing for real.

Although his eraser is somewhat of an owl caricature, he decides to go for a great horned owl. Way more intimidating and wisdom-y looking. As he quietly draws, he thinks of Hogwarts and Hedwig and wishes he, too, could have a pet owl. Not that he'd be popular enough to get letters if he was a real Hogwarts student, but maybe, like Hermione, he could get the morning paper delivered by his pet owl.

He doesn't have any coloring materials, but since he sees the rest of the students get up to get some from the big desk in one of the corners, he goes and gets some pencils too. He's just about finished when the bell rings, but he doesn't leave the desk until he's completely done.

When he looks around, Akaashi sees he's the last student remaining, and Mori-sensei is standing behind him, looking at his work.

"This is beautiful work, Akaashi-kun." He compliments him. "Do you perhaps happen to know Bokuto Koutarou?"

"Not yet, Mori-sensei." He replies. "But he's my roommate, so I will probably meet him very soon."

"Ah, I see. Well, make sure you show him your drawing, Akaashi."

"Does he have an owl?" Akaashi asks and if the answer is yes, he will be very jealous. But maybe he could become friends with Bokuto, if only to see and maybe pet his owl.

"Oh, no. At least not here, as pets are not allowed in the school or the boarding house." Mori-sensei chuckles. "But he looks like one."
"Eh?" Akaashi is beyond confused. How can a person actually look like an owl?

Another chuckle. "You will see what I mean. Now off you go."

"Yes."

Akaashi takes his drawing and his backpack and walks back to the main building, when he hears the dean's voice booming over the speakers.

"Good afternoon, students! You have survived yet another Monday, so congratulations. The students that have to report for detention today are: Konoha Akinori, Aoki Midori, Yano Chihiro and Akaashi Keiji. Please report to Dining Room A. There will be no further - excuse me - Bokuto Koutarou, please report to the principal's office. There will be no further announcements for the day."

Akaashi thinks it's quite unfair he has detention on his very first day, especially when he wasn't given specific instructions for his classrooms. But he did hear Konoha's name, so at least one familiar face will be in detention.

And maybe on his way to the Dining Room he'll finally see his roommate. But by the time he gets there, Bokuto must already be in the principal's office. He kind of wonders if his new roommate is a troublemaker, if he's being called there. Not that he's familiar with how things are run around Fukurodani, but in his previous schools, if you get sent to the principal's office, it means you're in trouble. Big trouble.

There's a girl in the Dining Room already, sitting at the very first table, so he sits at the second one. His eyes dart to the floor in front of the kitchen door and, of course, it's spotless clean. Akaashi checks his phone and sees a message from his parents, telling him they are safe and sound and send him all their love and good luck on his first day. He also has an email from his dad, but decides to leave it for later.

His dad and him have this thing where they exchange videos or pictures of funny animals to make each other laugh whenever they don't see each other. Although his parents are always busy, busy, busy and go, go, go, he feels lucky to have such a good relationship with them both. Better than almost any other teenage boy he's met so far.

Konoha is the last one to arrive and waves at Akaashi, instantly pulling up a chair at the table he's sitting at. Akaashi nods his head politely, all cool and reserved, but on the inside he's very happy.

"How was your first day, Akaashi?" Konoha asks as he plops down right across from him.

"Long." He admits and Konoha nods in agreement.

"And there's detention now. Ugh. What did you do?"

"I was late for third period. What about you, Konoha-san?"

"I didn't do my Chemistry homework." He explains. "I better start doing it soon, or it'll show on my GPA and I can't afford that. Not unless I quit volleyball, and that's impossible."

"You play volleyball, Konoha-san?" Akaashi asks.

Not that he's interested in sports, but he wants to be polite to the first person that isn't a teacher who's been so kind and welcoming to him so far.

"Hell yeah, I'm a Wing Spiker, just like Bokuto." Konoha grins. "Do you play?"
"Not really, no." Akaashi admits, because he's learned his lesson from his English class now, that he shouldn't open his mouth and speak when he doesn't know what he's talking about.

"You've **never** played? Not even like beach volleyball?"

With whom, my parents? Akaashi snorts internally.

"No, never."

"Damn. Don't let Bokuto hear you say that."

"So no calling him him senpai or telling him I don't even know the actual rules of volleyball? Right, got it."

"You... you don't know the rules of volleyball?" Konoha actually gasps as if Akaashi has just insulted his family.

"Shit, man. Most definitely don't let Bokuto hear you say that." Konoha grins. "Too bad you don't play, though."

"Why? The dean told me the volleyball team is like the rock stars of the school."

Konoha laughs softly. "Yeah, that's true. But we only have one setter and he's a senior, so we'll definitely need to find him a replacement. And in order to have a good setter he needs to be well trained for at least a year... if we wanna make it to Nationals again, that is. Aaaand he has to be good at working together with the rest of the team, which takes a lot of practice and work."

Akaashi nods, even though he doesn't understand much of it. Konoha notices that and explains.

"The setter is like... the control tower of the team. Every player on the court is important, of course, but the setter gets the biggest control over the ball during games."

"Mm I see. So if it's such an important position, why isn't the Captain a setter?"

Konoha laughs. "Bokuto could never be a setter, no way!"

"Isn't the Captain the one that scores the most points?"

"Hmmm, doesn't have to be. Although Bokuto is the best player we've got. And I don't just mean in our school, no, I mean... he's like top five in the entire country."

"**What?**" Akaashi blinks. Sure, he doesn't get sports, but to be top five in the country! That's a very big deal indeed, even for a sports noob like himself.

"Yeah, it's true."

"Does he wanna be a professional volleyball player?"

"Yes, and he will. If you are that interested, you should save some of those questions for him, he loves talking about volleyball, and especially himself." Konoha chuckles.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"No, dude, it's totally cool. I'm glad you're asking. And he will be too."

"Konoha-san? Earlier, you said you don't think we would mesh together? Well, you said that we
would be complete opposites. Might I ask why you said that? Do you think we won't get along?"

It's one thing to not get along with someone, but if you live with said someone, and said someone
is the most popular person in the school (even if Akaashi doesn't care about popularity), he will
definitely make an effort to at least be on somewhat decent terms with Bokuto.

"Well it all depends on you, really." Konoha adds thoughtfully. "In my opinion, Bokuto's great.
Bokuto's the best. Sure, he's obnoxiously loud sometimes, and if he gets in one of his moods, he's
a right pain in the ass to deal with, but other than that then yeah, he's the best."

"So I should consider myself lucky to be his roommate." Akaashi concludes, which makes
Konoha snort.

"More like the other way round."

"Eh?"

Konoha shrugs. "You seem really smart, polite and nice and well, who wouldn't like a roommate
like that, Akaashi?"

Akaashi feels his cheeks burning slightly at the compliment.

"Thank you very much, Konoha-san!"

"Shhhhhhhhhhh!" The secretary's head appears at the doorway and scowl at the both of them.

"Sorry." Akaashi quickly apologizes. "So." He continues, whispering this time. "How about I
help you with that Math you talked about earlier?"

"Don't you have any homework of your own?"

"It's just Physics and some reading in English and I can do that later." Akaashi replies. He wants
to, in a way, repay Konoha for his compliment and kindness in whichever way he can. And Math
seems like the right way to go about it, he thinks.

"Well in that case, okay." Konoha opens up his book and points. "There. Do you see the
problem?" Akaashi nods. "I don't get it. Like, at all. Do you think you can explain it to me?
Because if you can't, it's totally cool-"

"I understand it."

To Akaashi it's very simple. But then again he's always liked Math as a subject, because logical
thinking comes naturally to him. He pulls his chair over to Konoha's side and begins drawing up a
diagram in his notebook. He quickly glances as Konoha's face, which still seems rather confused,
so he writes in big letters short explanations. Still nothing.

"Okay, let me solve it for you." Akaashi says. "And then I'll make one for you to solve, okay?"

Konoha nods and watches him carefully. Once he's done, he passes the notebook right to Konoha.

"See? It's not that hard. It looks hard, because of the way it's phrased, but if you... translate it to
yourself with simpler words, it isn't-"

"Holy shit! I think I get it!" He grins at Akaashi. "Can you make up one for me?"

Akaashi nods and quickly changes the numbers and words around. Konoha stares at it for a
couple of minutes silently, then begins solving it. Once he's written down his answer, he
quizzically awaits Akaashi's verdict.

"Very good, Konoha-san!" Akaashi nods his head approvingly. "That's the right answer."

"Another one, so I know it's not a fluke."

They repeat the same thing, and again, Akaashi agrees with the answer.

"Holy fuck, Akaashi!"

"Shhhhhhhh! Quiet down!" The secretary's voice reaches their ears and Konoha lowers his head guiltily.

"Holy fuuuck, Akaashi!" He repeats, quietly this time. "I can't believe you actually made me understand it. You're like... a Math genius, aren't you?"

The corner's of Akaashi's mouth turn up at the corners. "Thanks, Konoha-san, but not really. Is the rest of your homework with questions like those?"

"Yeah."

"Good. Then solve them and I will check them for you once you're done."

Konoha looks up at Akaashi and grins. "I can bet you that you'll be really popular around here."

"Right." Akaashi snorts. "The Math nerd is the new popular kid on the block."

"Dude, I'm totally serious! A lot of my friends suck in Math and if you have the patience to sit down and explain it to them like you just did with me, you'll be golden."

"I didn't really need patience, or much explaining to do, you got it from-"

"Don't be so modest, Akaashi." Konoha grins. "From all my friends and classmates, Bokuto is the worst in math. Like...the actual worst. So if you can help him pull like a C- or something, the Math teachers will come and shake your hand. And probably give you an award, which you will most certainly deserve!"

"Surely he isn't that bad." Akaashi replies. "He takes AP English Literature, right? I heard so in class today. Which he didn't show up for."

"He takes AP English Lit, because he travels overseas with his family during holidays and vacations. So he understands and speaks English. But his grammar fucking sucks!" Konoha covers his mouth and silently shakes in laughter. "And I mean in kanji, don't even get me started on English grammar."

"So uhh... do you know why he was with the school nurse and didn't show up?"

"Oh yeah." Konoha covers his mouth again and laughs. "He slipped right over there-" He points at the place Akaashi's spaghetti had spilled a few hours ago. "- and hit his head really hard against the corner on that table there."

Akaashi's stomach drops. Oh fuck. His clumsiness possibly gave his roommate, no, the volleyball star's head a concussion and he sees nothing funny about that, not by a long shot.

"Do you think he's okay?" He asks worriedly.

"Bokuto?" Snort. "Sure. Last year he played at a volleyball tournament with three broken fingers.
And he's a freakin' spiker! Knowing him, he probably faked it in front of the nurse to skip afternoon classes."

"Oh. Well I hope he's okay."

"I can bet you money that right this second, he's already at the gym, practicing. And he has been for the past hour that we've been here." Konoha glances at the clock over the kitchen door. "There's two minutes left. Wanna go check out the gym?"

"Thanks, but I'll take your word for it, Konoha-san." Akaashi replies and picks up his stuff.

"Catch you later then, Akaashi. And thanks for the help!" Konoha waves and leaves.

Akaashi heads up to his room and leaves his backpack over the back of his chair. He wonders whether his feeling of hunger is stronger than his tiredness. He could head downstairs and get something from one of the vending machines, or he could take a nap.

In the end, his laziness wins over. If he goes outside his room he might meet people and he prefers to not make an impression at all than a bad one. So, hoping Bokuto didn't call dibs on the bottom bed, he lies down for a quick nap.

Akaashi hears a bell in the distance and his eyes flutter open. He glances at his watch and realizes it's almost 7 pm! He's missed dinner!

As fast as a lightning, he pockets his wallet and leaves the room, but as he reaches the hallway an older looking guy shakes his head and stops him from going down the stairs.

"Sorry, Study Hall's just about to begin." He tells Akaashi. "Hey, you're the new student aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm Rob, your RC. Welcome to Fukurodani." He grins. Even though he's kind of sleepy, Akaashi can tell Rob can't be older than 25.

"Thank you, Rob-san." He covers his mouth as he yawns. "I'm Akaashi. Akaashi Keiji."

Rob laughs. "Please, just call me Rob."

"You aren't from Japan, are you?"

"Ding ding diiiing." Rob grins. "Fukurodani's very keen on diversity, so all of us RCs are from different parts of the world. As you can probably tell from my accent, I'm American."

Akaashi nods.

"Well I'm sorry, but I really can't let you go downstairs now. Once Study Hall's over at 9:30 pm, you can go."

Akaashi nods again.

"Mind if I come to your room and take your phone and laptop?" Rob asks and follows him inside. "Ah, your roommate isn't at his desk yet, surprise surprise." He chuckles as Akaashi hands him his phone and laptop.

He watches as Rob walks over to Bokuto's desk and picks up his roommate's stuff. Suddenly he sees a couple of onigiri sitting in a napkin over the desk and he tries hard not to drool. He's so
fucking hungry, though!

"I guess I'll leave you to it then." Rob winks and leaves.

Just then Akaashi hears noise from the bathroom - the shower water's running. Then it stops. Any minute now, he's going to meet his roommate.

He waits, paralyzed on the spot, heart beating a bit too fast. But nothing happens. He waits, two, three more minutes. Nada.

Sighing, he heads for his desk and sits down, taking his agenda out and begins on his homework.

At around 7:35 pm, the bathroom door swings open.

"Hey hey heyyyy!"
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

After about 0.4 seconds of seeing his roommate, Akaashi understands what Mori-sensei meant. His hair is white with black streaks and it's styled up in a way that makes him look not just like any owl, but a great horned owl.

He's basically Akaashi's drawing from art class.

Akaashi rises from his chair and is just about to extend a hand, when Bokuto brushes right past him and stands in the middle of the room. Even if he hadn't been in just a towel wrapping around his hips, but wearing actual clothes, layers of them, Akaashi would be able to see his impressively athletic build. It's really crazy how big his arms are, and his wide shoulders, and his chest and abs and just... wow. It doesn't take a detective to figure out that in order to get a body like that you need to practically live at the gym. The kind of dedication and hours must be unimaginable.

And he doesn't try to imagine them, because Akaashi prefers being curled up in an armchair with a good book and some carrot and cucumber sticks and dip.

Anyway. Back to this new roommate of his.

Akaashi doesn't know how to react next, because so far he only knows about him from Konoha and the dean's words and he expected a goofy dude, not this sort of intimidating looking horned owl guy that's staring him up and down silently and once he's finished with that, he crosses his arms and Akaashi could be wrong but it totally looks like he's flexing?

Yeah, the flexing totally takes away the intimidating part. He just looks... dumb. So dumb.

Still, Akaashi is getting tired of their staring contest, so he breaks the silence.

"Hi. I'm Akaashi Keiji and it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. What is your name?"

"My name is Bokuto Koutarou and I'm the Captain of the volleyball team! I play Wing Spiker and I'm in the top five aces of the nation. Last year I led the team to Nationals and this year I will do the same!" Then he pushes his thumb into his chest and smirks. "I'm very popular and busy, so I might not have much time for you, but nice to meet you!"

Akaashi thinks this is probably the tackiest introduction he's ever heard in his life. He's also kind of offended that he was just told "I might not have much time for you", because it insinuates very arrogantly and wrongly, that Akaashi wants to have his time and he really does not.

Bokuto's lips are moving again and he's going off on a tangent, about volleyball, or popularity, or something dumb, but Akaashi's already not listening. He doesn't remember asking about Bokuto's life story.

"Bokuto-senpai, I just asked about your name."
Bokuto instantly shuts up at once, except for the surprised tiny gasp that escapes his mouth. With a trembling hand he covers his mouth and he looks like he's about to cry with joy.

"Akaashi! You just called me your senpai!" He whispers, then suddenly booms. "Of course I'm your senpai!" He heads for the door and yells into the hallway. "Did you all hear that? I'm Bokuto-senpai! Hey hey heyyyyy!"

A bit too late he realizes why Konoha'd warned him not to drop the senpai word and with very good reason. He makes a mental note to listen more carefully to Konoha's warnings.

"Oh no, somebody fucked up!" A groaning voice comes from the neighboring room, overlapped by three different "Shut up, Bokuto!"s.

Bokuto doesn't seem the tiny bit guilty for disrupting Study Hall, and just walks out the door, hooting happily that yes, he is a senpai! Akaashi's senpai!

Not even five minutes later, he is being ushered back into the room by Rob.

"Bokuto, tone it down a notch." He says and it's perhaps a bit too soft to be considered scolding. Then he actually sits Bokuto down at his desk. "Now, where's your agenda?" He isn't surprised to just get a shrug from Bokuto. "Okay then, look for it and show it to me once I return with Akaashi's uniform."

Once he leaves, Akaashi heads for his own desk and as he passes behind Bokuto, he notices that his owl drawing from art class is pinned over Bokuto's board.

"Excuse me, Bokuto-san, why do you have that there?"

"Mm?" Bokuto's head turns and his eyes follow Akaashi's pointing finger. "Oh! I like it so much that I put it up." He explains, grinning. "You have to tell me where you got it from, I want more."

"I drew it." Akaashi replies, followed by a gasp. "But where did you get it?"

"You did? Wowww Akaashi, you're so talented! Please draw more so we can decorate the entire room with them!" Then he remembers there was a question in there. "And I found it on your desk! It was for me, right?"

"You just found something on my desk, assumed it's for you and took it?" Akaashi doesn't get Bokuto's logic, not really.

"Well isn't it for me?"

Sigh. "Sure, keep it. But please don't just take my stuff without asking first."

"But I did just ask?"

"No, you didn't."

"Oh. Right." Bokuto grins. "Anyway, we are roommates now so anything that's mine is yours."

"That's very considerate and I appreciate it, but not necessary."

"And anything that is yours is mine."

Hey now! Akaashi definitely doesn't remember agreeing to that. But he doesn't mind sharing, so he just lets it go.
Akaashi's completely done with his homework by 8:25 pm and there's just still so much time left until he can go downstairs for a snack from the vending machine. He hopes it has sandwiches, at least, not just candy bars.

Thinking of food makes his stomach rumble in loud complaints.

"Akaashi, your stomach keeps going krrrr!"

Akaashi thinks this is really rich coming from a loud chatterbox like him, but he does say "Sorry."

"Nooooo, don't apologize! Just eat already." Bokuto points at the onigiri that are now pushed to the edge of his desk that is closest to Akaashi.

"Oh. May I have one?"

"Akaashi! Konoha said you're like really smart, and I'm surprised to see you haven't eaten them already."

Akaashi blinks. So... Bokuto left onigiri on his own desk for Akaashi to eat?

He still doesn't get Bokuto logic, but he's very grateful for the food.

"Thank you, Bokuto-san." He nods his head in appreciation and quickly bites into one. Mmm. Finally some food.

"I tried sneaking up more," Bokuto explains as he watches Akaashi eat. "but we're not really allowed to carry food up here and one of the RCs stopped me."

"That's more than enough, really." Then he stops chewing. "Did you get in trouble for bringing them here?"

"Sorta yeah, but it's totally okay." He puffs his chest proud like a peacock. "Because I am a good senpai, right Akaashi?"

Akaashi busies himself with another onigiri, but Bokuto's elbow nudges him.

"Right, Akaashi?"

"Right."

Once Akaashi's finished eating, he feels much better, and sure, he'd said his thanks, but he wants to sort of repay Bokuto's niceness.

"Bokuto-san, would you like me to tell you the English homework for tomorrow?"

"Ooo yes, I wasn't there today! Thanks for writing it down for me, Akaashi, you're so thoughtful."

"Uhh... I take the same class."

"No way, we share a class? So cool! Where do you sit? I sit at the back, because Mr Burns allows me to nap sometimes, but I'll sit whenever you sit! Besides, he often gives assignments between two people to share and so far I haven't had a partner! Heyyyy, how cool, we're gonna be partners, right?"

Akaashi is not too sure he wants to be assigned school things with someone who looks as irresponsible as Bokuto, but it's not like it hasn't happened to him in previous schools. He likes things done his way, so if he can, he prefers to work alone. If he can't, he still works alone, and
nobody from the group ever objects, because they get A's without doing anything. So, it's a win on both ends.

"Sure we can, Bokuto-san. Now, the homework is to read three chapters from-"

"The homework is reading just three chapters?"

"Well, yes, but they're quite long."

Bokuto throws his head back and laughs as if Akaashi just made a joke. "Akaashi, you clearly don't know the gift that is SparkNotes!"

"I know SparkNotes. I just like reading." Akaashi explains.

"Yeah me too, but the books we get from school are so boring and bleghh."

"So what books do you enjoy then?"

"You know, comics, and sports magazines and stuff."

Akaashi wants to say those don't exactly qualify as books, not really, but he decides there's no point.

Rob walks into the room with a basket full of apples, bananas and power bars. Bokuto reaches over and gets a handful of power bars.

"Bo-ku-to." Rob tuts. "Don't take them all, you know everyone gets one each."

"Yeah, yeah." Bokuto rolls his eyes, but lets go of them all except for his one.

"You can take as much fruit as you like?" Rob offers and Bokuto shakes his head.

As Rob turns the basket towards Akaashi, Bokuto reconsiders and fishes out two bananas. Akaashi settles for an apple and tells Bokuto he can have his power bar too.

"Akaashi, you're the best!" He dunks his hand into the basket for the third time. His fists, now both with power bars, pump victoriously in the air. "Do you see that, Rob? I have the best kouhai, just like Akaashi has the best senpai!"

"Glad to see you two are getting along." Rob replies and goes to distribute the rest of the snacks on the floor. Once he's done, he returns with Akaashi's uniform, and turns to Bokuto. "Did you find your agenda by now?"

"I don't need an agenda, I have a good memory."

Rob snorts. "I'll give you fifty bucks right on the spot if your good memory consists of you knowing where your agenda is."

"... I don't need your money." Bokuto replies.

"Bokutoooo, we've been over this for the past five weeks now. You need to keep track of your homework!"

"Rob, please, the principal only checks those on Wednesdays and it's only Monday. Besides, nobody gets homework on the first day of school."

"But it's not the first day of school? It's Akaashi's first day here."
"Oh yeah, right."

Rob sighs. "Promise me you'll get whatever you have to do before Lights Out."

"I promise." Bokuto nods seriously and Rob leaves. Then he adds quietly. "...to get it done before school tomorrow."

"Do you always leave your homework for after Study Hall?" Akaashi asks.

"Aww, Study Hall is for nerds." Bokuto replies. "No offense."

A snort. "None taken."

Because really, he's been called words way worse than nerd in his previous schools. He would take nerd over weirdo gladly. Besides, he doesn't really get the rude vibe from Bokuto, he just seems like he speaks whatever he has on his mind.

Just then the bell rings and Bokuto heads for the door.

"Bokuto-san? Some clothes maybe?"

"Oh yeah, I forgot."

Akaashi has never met someone that can forget they are just wearing a towel and go out like that, but he believes Bokuto is the type of person that would.

Bokuto pulls at one of the drawers and takes out a pair of boxers. Then he just shrugs the towel off his body and Akaashi is just sitting in his chair watching Bokuto's bare ass. He blinks, then remembers his manners and turns his head to the side. He's definitely not used to this sort of nonchalant nudity, or any nudity to be honest, and he wonders if Bokuto simply forgot that he no longer lives alone in the room or that he genuinely doesn't care if Akaashi, or anyone really, sees his ass. Or anything else.

There's the sound of another drawer being pulled and Akaashi finally turns his head back and before he can ask where Bokuto's off to in such a rush, he's alone in the room.

Sighing to nobody but himself, he goes to take a long shower. As he is rinsing the shampoo out of his hair, he wonders if Bokuto always styles his upwards, because if he hogs up the bathroom for half an hour in the morning, Akaashi will have to talk to him about it. He changes into a white t shirt and pyjama pants while still in there, and hangs up his towel to dry.

As he exits the bathroom, he sees he has two guests over, sitting on the floor.

"Akaashi, this is my roommate Sarukui Yamato." Konoha begins with the introductions and the two boys exchange pleasantries. "Rob asked me to hand you back your phone and your laptop, by the way." Konoha adds and points at Akaashi's desk.

"Thank you." He doesn't know if Konoha and Sarukui are there for Bokuto, but they must be so he adds. "I'm not really sure where Bokuto-san went."

"Ah, he's downstairs of course." Konoha explains. "In case you're wondering what there is downstairs, there's nothing. Just couples making out, because the RCs don't really give a shit about PDA."

"I see."
"Aaaand in case you're wondering further, Bokuto's not making out with anyone, he's just getting himself hot chocolate probably." Konoha adds.

"I wasn't wondering further." Akaashi replies, the tips of his ears burning, even though he doesn't know why, and joins the two on the floor.

"So what's your first impression of Bokuto?" Konoha grins.

"He is..." Akaashi looks for the right word, because he already has a few that can describe him, but in the end he settles for "interesting". Yeah, interesting would do.

"How do you like the school so far?" Sarukui asks.

"I like it." Akaashi replies and it's the truth. He supposes it's been a good first day. Way better than he'd expected, actually. He'd spent the last month and a half worrying about making friends and stuff, but he can kind of see himself becoming one with Konoha, Sarukui and Bokuto in the future. He would certainly like that.

"You know, Sarukui and I were actually supposed to be in this room, but after one day we switched with Bokuto."

"How come?"

"You'll see in the morning." Konoha adds mysteriously and snickers.

"Konoha, don't scare him like that." Sarukui says. "It's the damn roosters. The building across the street is a farm and they go off with their cock-a-doodle-doo's at like 5 am."

"I'm a heavy sleeper, so I'm not worried about that." Akaashi replies. A tank could literally go through the room and he'll probably sleep through it. "I just hope I wake up in time for breakfast."

"Bokuto's very good at waking people up." Konoha grins. "He always does it for us whenever we have training camp."

A bell rings, indicating that it's 10 pm, but they continue sitting on the floor and chatting.

Akaashi learns that every Wednesday the first two periods are P.E. and then they get their original first two periods. Then there's lunch, and the other two original periods and instead of an elective, they all have Reading Class in the auditorium with a couple of teachers, including the principal, that go around to make sure nobody's sleeping. He can read any book he likes as long as it's in English.

"Bokuto tried getting away with reading a Batman comic book once last year, but the principal confiscated it and gave him detention." Konoha says.

"Maybe he's more of a Marvel kind of guy." Akaashi replies and he's awarded with a chuckle from both Konoha and Sarukui.

"I told you he's funny." Konoha grins and Sarukui nods.

Akaashi feels his cheeks growing warmer, but he's pleased with himself. Never before has he been described as funny. In fact, he'd tried cracking a few jokes in his last school, hoping that would be considered bonding and making friends, but since he'd only gotten a sort of uncomfortable snort-giggles in return, he'd stopped.

"Do either of you take Studio Art?" He asks.
"I do." Sarukui replies. "I saw you in class today. I sit three seats to your right, but I suppose there's been too many new faces for you to see. But I notice -" He points over at Bokuto's board. "- that you've given your drawing to Bokuto. Very thoughtful of you, he loves owls."

"I love owls too." Akaashi adds and watches Konoha and Sarukui exchange smirks.

"Bokuto probably just saw it and took it." Konoha says and Akaashi cracks a smile. They definitely know Bokuto's... Bokutisms. "And I take English and Yearbook."

"Is Bokuto-san also in Yearbook?"

Konoha actually bursts in laughter, while Sarukui, smiling, shakes his head.

"Bokuto isn't allowed to take Yearbook anymore." Konoha explains once he's calmed down. "Last year, he volunteered to be in control of the sports section and did this huuuuuge spread about the volleyball team, completely ignoring all the other teams and clubs. The teacher, as well all the teams and stuff, were super pissed about it. But there was nothing they could do, because the Yearbooks were all printed out."

Akaashi gasps. "Didn't anyone check what he was doing before approving it?"

"Nah, not really. Yearbook was led by Jared - the other RC guy - and he wasn't at all careful about it. But he got so much shit, that this year he's the strictest RC of them all." Konoha groans. "I thought I'd take Yearbook this year for an easy A, but it's a pain in the ass. Thanks for that, Bokuto. And for my language class, I take English too. Everyone on the volleyball team takes English, actually now that I think about it. Because we thought Bokuto could help us out with the work when- hey! You're good in English, right?" Konoha's entire face is suddenly beaming. "Will you help us out when you got time for it?"

"Sure, I'd love to."

"You're the best! I'm so glad you came here." He reaches over and pats Akaashi's back. "And I don't just mean that because you're smart and can help us with school shit." Grin.

All three of them hear Bokuto's laughter approaching, and shortly he joins them in the room, one hand holding a plastic cup, while the other a phone.

"Okay, I'm back. Yeah. Uh huh. Okay, I'm putting you on loudspeaker, bro, so you can say hi to my new roommate." He says and puts his phone in front of Akaashi's face.

"Hello? Bokuto's roommate, you there?" A voice carries and Bokuto nudges Akaashi.

"Uhhh, Bokuto-san, who am I talking to?"

A gasp comes from the phone. "Brooooo, have you not told him about me? Quite frankly I feel offended."

"Bro, I totally did, but he forgot, I think." Bokuto pulls a face which translates as "please lie for me"."

"Excuse me, I'm very unforgettable."

Akaashi doesn't know who this is, but they sound... tacky. No wonder they're friends with each other, Akaashi thinks. He looks at Konoha and Sarukui and mouths a silent "Who is that?" to which Konoha just shakes his head, but Sarukui reaches over to Akaashi and whispers a "you don't want to know, but you will", which leaves Akaashi all the more confused.
"Of course you are, bro." Bokuto answers.

"So, say something to me, Bokuto's roomie." The voice - Kuroo - says.

"Something to me, Bokuto's roomie." Akaashi deadpans and Bokuto roars in laughter.

"Oh ho hooo, aren't you a wise guy. Bro? Bro, is your roommate wearing glasses?"

"No, he isn't."

"He sounds like he's wearing glasses."

Akaashi doesn't even wonder what that is supposed to mean, and he's already deducted that he doesn't like this Kuroo guy very much.

"Anyway, bro, I gotta go. Call you tomorrow?"

"If you don't, you know I will."

Bokuto hangs up, grinning, and he hands Akaashi the plastic cup once he's sat down next to him.

"What is this?" Akaashi asks.

"It's hot chocolate for my favourite kouhai, of course. Although it's probably cold by now."

"Bokuto, please, I beg you, name two kouhais you have." Konoha says.

"Akaashi."

"And?"

Bokuto scratches his head. "And... Keiji?"

Sighs all around.

"Sarukui, we should get going." Konoha says and the two head for the door. "Bokuto, I left you my Math notebook at your desk. Once you copy the homework, give it back and make sure you do it before Light Out."

When they leave, Akaashi reaches for the notebook and tucks it under his pillow. Then he turns to Bokuto with a scowl. "I won't let you copy his homework."

"Akaashi! Why are you not taking my side?"

"Bokuto-san, I am on your side and that's why I'm saying it. If you just copy it, you're not going to learn. I can help you with the questions if you need it."

"Pffft, I'm going to become a professional volleyball player and nobody needs Math for sports. Unless you can name an occasion during which Math helped a sports team? If you do, I promise not to-"

"Yes, I can." Akaashi replies.

"Ehhh?!" Bokuto crosses his arms. "There's no such thing, you're lying."

"No I'm not. I actually read a book about it. A guy who was an Economics student, and Economics requires Math," He explains. "helped a baseball team reach 19 consecutive wins."
"I don’t believe this."

"Believe it or not, it’s true. It was some record, but I don’t remember it too well, because I’m not too familiar with baseball. But there’s a movie about it that came out a few years ago."

"Oh my god, Akaashi, let's watch it!" Bokuto exclaims happily.

"What, now?!"

"Yes, now!"

Akaashi glances at his watch. There’s like fifteen minutes to 10:30 at which time he's supposed to have Lights Out, but since he's Bokuto's roommate, he gets additional sixty minutes. And since he took a nap earlier, he doesn't feel tired at all, so they can watch the movie after Lights Out.

"We can do that. But only after you're finished with your homework."

Groaning dramatically, Bokuto pulls out his Math book and a notebook and lies down on his stomach. Akaashi watches as he writes down the date, the page and the problem number and he isn't surprised to see that the pen has stopped moving.

"Well? Aren't you supposed to help me?"

"If you think I'm just going to tell you what to write, you better think again."

Another loud and dramatic groan.

"Okay. What do you not understand from the question?"

"Everything."

Akaashi takes the Math book into his lap and begins explaining to Bokuto the basics of it. He uses simpler words than he did with Konoha during detention. He makes up a lot of examples and after a long while, Bokuto eventually gets them. There's a knock at the door and Rob walks in, but as he sees the two of them on the floor, working, he leaves without saying anything. Akaashi feels some sort of pride as he sees Bokuto solve the rest of the homework by himself.

"That wasn't too hard, was it?"

"No, but I could've copied it way quicker."

"No." Akaashi replies. "What other homework do you have next?"

"Just reading. And I'm going for sparknotes, because there's no way in Hell you can convince me three chapters of Catch-22 can help me improve my volleyball."

"You do that."

Bokuto takes out his laptop and starts reading, while Akaashi checks his email. His dad sent him a video of a cute owl being petted and hooting happily and he replays it twice.

He knows he shouldn't interrupt Bokuto while he's actually doing work, but he knows the small distraction, especially by something so cute, will be appreciated.

"Bokuto-san, look."
He replays it two more times for Bokuto, who is beyond happy.

"Play it again, please."

And so Akaashi plays it again.

"...You're not gonna play it again, are you?"

"No. Now finish your reading so we can watch the movie. I'll load a stream."

A couple of minutes pass.

"Akaashi, how did you decide to become a boarding student here?"

"My parents relocate a lot and they didn't want to leave me without any supervision." He explains.

"What about you?"

"Last year I couldn't afford the boarding house, but this year I get a free ride, because of volleyball."

Akaashi is quite surprised to hear that, because he remembers Konoha telling him Bokuto goes on vacations with his family overseas and that means his parents could afford tuition here. But he doesn't question it, because that's way too personal.

"I see. So your family isn't in Tokyo?"

"No, they're here." Bokuto replies, but his voice sounds a bit... off. So even though Akaashi is kind of curious why Bokuto's not a day student anymore, he doesn't dare asking.

Akaashi busies himself with checking Facebook. He has four new friend requests! He isn't too surprised by the three and instantly adds Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui. The last one, who is Kuroo, he ignores. He begins to go through the galleries, starting with Konoha's. Then Sarukui's.

Save the best for last, a tiny voice says in his head, and he ignores it.

Bokuto has by far the most photos and as Akaashi silently looks at them, he notices Bokuto is always surrounded by people. Especially by the same person who's photo hangs from Bokuto's board. He checks the tags and his stomach drops when he sees it's Kuroo.

Oh no, he thinks. Not him.

...Of course that would be Kuroo. Just his goddamn luck.

"Okay, I'm all done. Let's start the movie!"

He remains on the floor as he watches Bokuto pull up his chair in front of the bed and he places Akaashi's laptop on it. Then he reaches over the top bed for his pillow, puffs it up and places it against the wall. When he's lying diagonally over Akaashi's bed, he taps the empty space.

"Well come on, Akaashi, lie down so we start."

Akaashi takes his own pillow and copies Bokuto's position. When he's comfortable and all set, he presses the play button.

"Akaashi, don't tell me you streamed a movie with subtitles!" Bokuto groans. "Noooo! Get a dubbed version, please."
Akaashi should have known better. As the new stream is loading, there's a knock and Rob enters.

"Hey, it's Light- ooo what movie are you guys watching?"

"Moneyball." Akaashi replies.

"I've always wanted to see that." He replies and Bokuto taps the left side of the bed. Rob turns off the lights, but just as he's about to sit, Bokuto tuts. "Right. What should it be?"

"I feel like Doritos." Bokuto replies.

"Akaashi?"

"I don't know what-

Rob turns the lights back on and pulls the top drawer of the cupboard. Akaashi extends his neck as far as it would go and he gasps. The drawer is full of snacks like chips and chocolate bars. He doesn't really like eating junk food just before he goes to bed, but since they're gonna watch a movie, he points at a pack of gummy worms.

Then the lights are off again and they have their snacks, so they finally start the movie. Rob is a bit displeased that the movie's in Japanese, but he stays anyway.

Two hours later, when the credits begin rolling, Rob gets up and puts his RC hat on telling them to go to sleep for real. Then he leaves.

Bokuto helps Akaashi dust off all the crumbs off his bed, then he heads for the windows and pulls at the curtains, while Akaashi goes to brush his teeth.

"Bathroom's free." Akaashi announces once he's done.

Bokuto's night lamp is on and he's at his desk doing something. It's really late now, but curiosity takes the better of Akaashi, so he walks over and takes a peek over his roommates shoulder. There's a list full of names, which Bokuto is studying carefully.

"Ughhh I hate this!" He sighs after a few moments and throws his pen into the corner. "This is so frustrating!"

"What wrong, Bokuto-san?"

"Being Captain of the volleyball team! There's just so much to do!"

Akaashi scratches his chin. "With great power comes great responsibility."
"...Did you just quote Spiderman?"

"Technically I quoted Spiderman's uncle."

Bokuto groans. "Godddd, this is so bad."

"Sorry."

"No, not you. I just... I don't know what to do!"

"May I help?"

"That depends." Bokuto replies. "Can you help me decide a replacement, or at least a substitute, for our current setter? We only have one and if he gets injured, we are so screwed."
"I'm sorry, I can't do that. Especially since I don't even know how volleyball really works."

"What?"

Akaashi notices how Bokuto's eyes grow all wide in surprise and they look almost sad, awaiting his reply.

"... I'm only joking of course." He adds, and he can see Bokuto relax a little.

Whew, that was a close one, he thinks. Just so he's not caught lying, he makes a mental note to google the rules first thing in the morning. After he's had his coffee of course.

"By the end of the week I have to decide who I'm going to cut from the try outs and I haven't got the slightest clue!" Bokuto says miserably. "They're all kind of okay, but not good enough! Not for our team's standards."

"Maybe you're being too harsh on them?"

"Am not! I actually let this guy-" Bokuto points at a name "- stay in the try outs list, even though he threw up halfway through suicides!"

"I'm sorry, I don't know what that means."

"Suicides are when we line up and start sprinting over the court, front and back for like fifteen minutes."

"...Suicides don't really sound like fun."

In fact, puking your guts out, voluntarily, after sprinting like crazy is perhaps the last thing Akaashi has on his list of things he considers fun.

"No, but they sounds like conditioning and victory."

"You take this very seriously, don't you, Bokuto-san?"

"Of course I do."

"You're a good Captain."

"No, I'm not. I haven't even made the call yet and it's the middle of October! I'm the worst Captain ever!" He groans as his shoulders slump.

"That's not true." Akaashi awkwardly reaches over and pats his back, because that's the sort of thing you do when someone's feeling down, right? "You're one of Japan's best, and that's beyond impressive."

"You really think so?" Bokuto looks up.

Akaashi snorts. "Don't you?"

"Yeah, I guess..."

"I'm not sure what I can do to help out, but if there's anything, please let me know, Bokuto-san."

Suddenly Akaashi can barely breathe and he doesn't know if he's being strangled, because Bokuto's massive hands circle his neck and almost crush his windpipe, when he feels one of those
hands pat right between the middle of his shoulders, indicating that this is a hug. Perhaps a bit too rough for Akaashi's taste, but he doesn't pull away.

"Thanks, Akaashi. I really appreciate that."

They let go of each other eventually, but Bokuto still looks a bit sad and Akaashi thinks this look doesn't really suit him.

"Maybe I can swing by the gym tomorrow and watch you practice?" He suggests.

Bokuto's expression changes in less than a second.

"Really? You would do that?" He perks up. "Akaashi, you're the best!"

Akaashi notices it's way too late, like way too late, and they both have school in the morning, so he suggests they get some sleep. Bokuto heads for the bathroom and by the time he comes out, Akaashi is sound asleep.

* * *

Somewhere in the distance, Akaashi hears roosters being noisy, but it's way too early for this shit, and so he turns to his side and ignores them.

Then he hears Bokuto's voice, but it also sounds distant, so Akaashi ignores it too.

Suddenly his blanket is pulled off and he's too sleepy to fight back, but he manages to lock his fingers over the edge of it and pulls it back in its' place.

Yes, but.

Not even a minute later, a splash of cold water is poured over his face and he jumps out of bed, feeling murderous.

"Rise and shineeeeee!" Bokuto grins, already dressed up in his uniform. "You better get ready, it's nearly 7:15."

Akaashi stifles a yawn and accepts his uniform, which is being handed to him. He's too sleepy to care about modesty, so he changes on the spot. He fixes his bed and inspects Bokuto's, just in case, because he doesn't want to be in detention again. Then the pair take their backpacks and head downstairs.

The dean greets them at the kitchen door and notes down that they are both present and on time.

Akaashi pours himself a cup of coffee, hoping it's strong, and takes a few gulps. Then he refills his cup and follows Bokuto in Dining Room B. They sit down at a big table, which is already occupied by Konoha and Sarukui and there's a couple more students there, and Akaashi assumes they're a part of the volleyball team or second years.

"Good morning you two." Sarukui greets.

"What's so good about it?" Akaashi asks after he finishes yawning into his hand.

"Touche." Konoha chuckles.

Akaashi watches as Bokuto tucks into his mountain sized pancake stacked plate. The smell of them is deliciously wafting through the air, but other than black coffee, Akaashi doesn't really do breakfast. If he eats anything before like 11 am, his biological clock just goes "nope" and he wants
breakfast. If he eats anything before like 11 am, his biological clock just goes “nope” and he wants to nap.

And he can’t afford that, because he has school.

"Akaashi, you should eat something.” Bokuto says once his plate is completely empty. "You look like an unfed and hungry sparrow that’s barely made it through the winter."

"I appreciate the simile, Bokuto-san, but I’ll pass."

"Simi- what?"

Sigh. "Smile. You should learn that word before Friday, because it might be in the English vocab quiz we have."

Konoha snorts. "You’re asking him to learn a word for Friday when it’s only Tuesday? You really need to wake up, dude."

"Excuse me,” Bokuto grumbles. "I’m right here. And I’ll have you know I already know that word."

"Do you?"

"Sure I do, Akaashi just said it. Smiley. Everyone knows that’s the emojis you have on your phone."

"Bokuto-san, no. It’s actually s-, oh forget it. I’ll remind you on Thursday."

Konoha laughs.

The warning bell rings and they all quickly leave their plates and cups into the kitchen, then head for their classrooms.

Akaashi is almost awake now and he’s glad, because his first period is History with the principal. Konoha’d told him that he’s very strict, and not even Bokuto dares to goof off during a class supervised or lead by the principal.

Then there’s Japanese, followed by AP Calculus and then Physics.

Easy peasy.

Although he’s got quite a lot of homework in all classes, Akaashi isn’t worried, because he has Study Hall after lunch and then tonight.

As he lines up for lunch, he doesn’t have time to panic, unlike yesterday, because Bokuto yells his name and joins him by cutting the line, completely ignoring the complaints from the students behind.

Akaashi feels kind of like... popular, he guesses, because twenty four hours ago he was a nobody, but now he gets his named called through the hallways from Fukurodani’s volleyball Captain.

When Akaashi presents his plate for the lunch lady, she winks and gives him an extra portion of french fries. He nods his thanks, smiling, and turns to get some ketchup while he hears Bokuto demand the same amount of fries. Then Akaashi lets Bokuto take the lead into Dining Room B and onto their table from breakfast.

"Akaashi.” Bokuto’s shoulder gently nudges his ribs. "You should introduce yourself for the rest
of the team."

So it's the volleyball team, after all, that he's sitting with.

"I'm not very good at that, Bokuto-san."

He instantly regrets saying that, because Bokuto takes matters into his own hands.

"Listen up, everyone! This is Akaashi Keiji." He points at Akaashi and Akaashi feels way too many stares his way. "and he's the best roommate ever! He's very talented and smart and he's new here so please make him feel welcome! Or you'll deal with me!"

Akaashi wants to strangle Bokuto, because it's one thing to ask him to introduce himself to the table and a whole other to address the entire Dining Room. But since he knows Bokuto had his best interest at heart, he just quietly says "thank you", even though he's not at all thankful for all the unnecessary attention.

He manages to eat about a quarter of his burger, when he feels too full, so he pushes his plate away. He notices Bokuto staring at it longingly.

"You can eat the rest of it if you want to."

With the corner of his eye, he watches as Bokuto eats all of it, chewing happily. Once he's done, he takes Akaashi's tray and puts it on top of his, then heads back to the kitchen. He returns with a plate full of sugar powdered brownies.

"Where did you get those?" Akaashi asks.

"Did you not see the salad and dessert bar to your left?"

"No."

"Well it's there. But you can take some of these." Bokuto nudges the plate in front of Akaashi.

"Did Hell freeze over?" Konoha grins. "Bokuto is actually sharing food."

"Akaashi eats less than a seven year old." Sarukui replies. "Hence why Bokuto is sharing."

Akaashi takes a bite out of a brownie, and it's all chewy and rich in flavor. Then he puts it down on his napkin, leaving it for Study Hall, as a reward. But Bokuto interprets the action as "I'm done", so he takes it and eats it. He has sugar powder over his upper lip and Akaashi discreetly points at his own, to indicate Bokuto needs to wipe his mouth.

He doesn't get it, though, and Akaashi can't say he's too surprised. He doesn't like sloppiness, so he reaches for a brand new napkin and wipes it across Bokuto's mouth for him.

As he crushes it into his hand, he notices that the rest of the people sitting at the table are staring at him. And even though nobody comments on it, Akaashi feels his cheeks burning.

He literally has no idea what came over him to do something as dumb as that? Because he barely knows Bokuto and there he was mere seconds ago, wiping his mouth like they're close enough for that sort of thing. No wonder everyone's staring.

But Bokuto doesn't look like he minded. Not like that's the point, though!

Before he actually does anything else that's dumb and embarrassing, the warning bell rings, and he feels saved.
"See you later, Akaashi!" Bokuto waves and follows after Konoha and Sarukui.

"Bye!"

Only two more people, other than Akaashi, remain in their seats and await the beginning of Study Hall.

The bell rings again.

Since nobody comes to check up on them, Akaashi pulls out his phone and googles about volleyball. The rules are easy enough to follow and although there's a lot of slang terms, he's somewhat gotten the gist of it all. He checks out a couple of videos online and instantly sees it's not as easy as he thought. Of course. You can always tell a professional from an amateur, because they always make it seem like it's child play, when in fact it isn't. Obviously all team sports need incredible coordination, but this is... crazy. And they're all jumping so high and constantly moving, it's beyond impressive. He gets curious and types "Fukurodani volleyball team" into the search bar and there's like a ton of videos that pop up. He clicks for the first one, which has like a gazillion hits.

But before it's loaded and he can actually watch it, he feels a hand on his shoulder.

"Akaashi, you are not allowed to use your phone during Study Hall." He instantly goes stiff when he realizes the voice belongs to the dean.

"I'm really sorry, I was just-"

"Oh, you're watching the volleyball team, eh?" The dean chuckles. "Yes, I can see why you got curious. Okay, I'm letting you off with a warning, but only this one time, because I know you must be excited to go to the gym after school."

Akaashi wonders how the dean knows he'd told Bokuto he might swing by during their practice, but he's not one to look a gift horse in the mouth.

"Thank you very much, I promise it won't happen again."

"If it does, I'm confiscating your phone until the end of classes and writing you down for detention."

He heads for AP English Literature next. He greets Mr Burns, and pulls out "Hamlet". Shortly before the warning bell rings, Bokuto arrives in the classroom and plops down in the empty seat right next to Akaashi.

"Ah, Bokuto, you changed your seat?" Mr Burn says.

"Yes, Sir."

"The front desk is just what you need."

Mr Burns is done assigning the students the characters they are supposed to read before the bell rings. As they begin, Akaashi is instantly annoyed that the main roles are taken by students who can barely keep up with the reading. But he doesn't complain out loud, because he doesn't want to seem arrogant or rude. Instead, he decides to read the play in his free time, or Study Hall, because there's no way he can actually follow it up and understand during class.

Especially since Bokuto keeps shaking the desk in silent laughter. Half an hour through the class
he can't take it anymore and ever so quietly tears out a small piece of paper from the back of his notebook.

"What's so funny?" He writes down on the note, which he passes to Bokuto.

The reply he gets shouldn't surprise him by now.

"Hamlet sounds like omelette."

Akaashi's attention is back to the play, when he gets a new note.

"Kuroo is asking why you haven't approved his friend request."

Akaashi glances at it, reads it, and decides to ignore it, just like Kuroo's friend request.

Yes, but Bokuto's elbow keeps nudging him.

"Please let me concentrate."

He watches as Bokuto reads the note, which is followed by a loud snort, and he crosses his arms.

Akaashi heads for Studio Art next and smiles at Sarukui, who's changed his seat and is now on Akaashi's right.

The theme for the day is Modern Art and he wants to complain, because he doesn't get it, not really. He likes art just fine, but Modern Art is too messy and confusing for his taste. Because really, it could be literally anything - he could staple a goddamn goldfish onto a cardboard box and call it a day.

Today laptops are allowed in the classroom and Akaashi curses himself for not bringing his. He doesn't dare asking if he could go to his room to fetch it, even though Mori-sensei seems nice enough to allow it. He just has to think outside the box.

Akaashi gets up from his seat and goes around the classroom, searching for inspiration. He ends up getting a stack of magazines and scissors and begins cutting out bits and pieces for a collage.

"So," Sarukui whispers. "I heard you'll be joining us at practice today."

"How does everyone know about that?"

"Bokuto was so excited he told everyone about it."

"No wonder the dean knew about it too."

"Yeah. To be honest the entire team's looking forward to it."

Akaashi snorts quietly. "What's it to the entire team if I come and watch you guys play? Don't other students come and do that?"

Sarukui blinks, confused.

"What?"

"What... what exactly did you tell Bokuto?" He asks slowly.

"I said I might swing by and watch you guys practice." Akaashi repeats.
"Were those your exact words?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Oh boy. This is... not good." Sarukui pulls a face. "Akaashi this is bad. Like really, really bad."

It's Akaashi's turn to blink in confusion. "Why?"

"You shouldn't have suggested that, if you had no intention of following through."

"But I am coming. Just for a little bit, at least."

"Nooooo, you don't under-" Sarukui groans, and is instantly shushed by Mori-sensei. He apologizes and quickly types something on his laptop. When he's done, he turns the screen towards Akaashi. "Bokuto said you'll be trying out for the team."

"What?!" Akaashi yells, forgetting that he's in class.

"Do I need to separate you two, or can you keep quiet until the end of the class?" Mori-sensei scowls.

"Excuse me, sensei." Akaashi mumbles, then begins typing on Sarukui's laptop. "Absolutely not! I didn't even make a promise about coming to watch you guys!" Because it's the God honest truth. Akaashi always keeps his promises, hence why he rarely ever promises things. And he most certainly did not promise to watch them, let alone try out? That's crazy and he's having none of it.

"Please? Please, Akaashi?"

Akaashi doesn't even bother typing out his reply, he just shakes his head. He doesn't owe it to anyone, least of all to Bokuto, to put himself through excruciating physical exercise after school, especially after hearing that they have to run over the court like crazy and end up throwing up? Nope, no way Jose, not today. Not ever.

Sarukui sighs, then quickly types out something on his laptop, while Akaashi gets back to his collage. He's just finished drawing a big human eye when the bell rings. But he remains in his seat and tries doing the right one, even though it ends up all wonky. He supposes he can say he was inspired by Picasso, or something, but Mori-sensei tells him he can finish it on Thursday.

He is very pleased to not hear his name being called out during the announcements for the day. Then he swings his backpack over his shoulder and leaves.

But just as he takes a step out of the building, he is pulled into a huddle consisting of four students. Two of them are Konoha and Sarukui, and he recalls seeing the other two at the lunch table. He nods his head politely at the bunch, and tries to push past them, but they form a wall.

"So, we all got an emergency email from Sarukui that you're not coming to practice." Konoha says. "Akaashi, you have to come."

"Konoha-san, I don't know why Bokuto assumed I'll be trying out for your team, but I'm really not going to do that."

"You must!" One of the boys he doesn't know scowls. "Or practice will go to shit."

"I don't see why your entire practice has to depend on me, I'm nobody."

"Bokuto's expecting you. And if he doesn't get what he wants, he's going to sulk and not
cooperate." Sarukui explains.

Akaashi doesn't see why an entire team puts up with someone's childish temper tantrums, even if said someone is the Captain. All the worse, Akaashi thinks, that they've picked such a baby for Captain.

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you." Akaashi replies. He refuses to be forced into doing things he has no interest in.

He takes a step forward, nudging through their huddle, and to be quite honest, he expects to be hauled by his shoulders, or for a punch to land somewhere on his body, once he's moved on ahead. But they let him pass, unscathed. He curiously turns his head back and all at once stops moving.

All four of them, are on their knees, heads bowed to the ground.

"Please join us for practice, Akaashi, we beg you!" Konoha says and his voice is so full of desperation that Akaashi is startled.

Never in his life has he been begged before, and now all four boys, four of his senpais are pleading with him.

What the Hell, he decides in the end. Worse comes to worst, he'll pretend to get sick or fake an injury and they'll let him go.

He really does want to make friends here, and he's fairly certain if he says no now, they might hold a grudge against him. He hasn't cared in the past if someone was mad at him or not, but now he realizes he doesn't want to let these guys down.

Akaashi closes his eyes and sighs loudly.

"Okay, but only this once."

"Yaaaaaay! Akaashi, you're the best!"

There's a deafening roar of excitement all around, and before he knows what's really happening, he is lifted into the air by their hands and carried into the gym over their heads, even though he tells them to put him down.

Fuck Bokuto, he thinks exasperatedly. Just fuck him! This is all his fault.

Once they're inside, they let Akaashi down.

"By the way, these are-" Konoha points at the other two guys. "Washio and Komi."

"Nice to meet you, Akaashi." They grin.

"Nice to meet you, Washio-san, Komi-san."

He follows them into the changing room and is handed a gym uniform. He sits at the bench and stares at the floor as they all change, then head out. He considers that maybe it isn't too late to bolt for the door and escape. Yes, but Konoha is waiting for him, grinning.

"I can see what you're thinking, Akaashi, and it's pointless." He chuckles. "Come on, it's gonna be great!"

"Doubt it." He sighs and takes off his school uniform.
"I promise to explain the rules-"

"I already read them over Study Hall." Akaashi replies.

"Way to go, man! Aww, this is gonna be so awesome."

"You better not have any expectations, Konoha-san, because I'm going to suck."

"You can't be worse than the other people we've had trying out." Konoha chuckles.

Just you watch me, Akaashi thinks as he's done putting on his t shirt and shorts. Then he stares at his socks.

"I don't have my sneakers wi-" He all but grins, but Konoha throws a plastic bag into him.

"Bokuto already brought them from your room."

"Of course he did." Akaashi groans and puts them on.

Then he follows Konoha and listen to him explain how there are three volleyball courts, because the school often holds Jamborees (tournaments, he quickly adds) and such, because it's one of the biggest gyms in the area.

"There's also three basketball ones and the rest are for the rest of the teams and clubs."

Akaashi hopes they've all started practice already and wouldn't pay any attention to him, but of course, that isn't the case. The entire team is sitting on the floor and turn their heads as Konoha and him walk over to them.

"Hey hey heyyyyyyyy!" Bokuto hoots happily and jumps on his feet. "Akaashi! Glad you made it!" He swings an arm over Akaashi's shoulders. "I already told everyone about you, so we don't have to waste any more time with introductions."

Thank God for small miracles, Akaashi thinks.

A girl walks over to them and extends her hand to him. "Hi! Nice to meet you, Akaashi Keiji." She smiles pleasantly as he shakes it. "My name is Shirofuku Yukie and I'm the manager. Normally the team's all warmed up by now-" She glances at her watch." - but Bokuto refused to start without you."

Oh, joy.

"Well now that you are all here, come on, you guys, you know the rules. Five laps! Go! And no cutting corners, or I'll make you run suicides!"

Akaashi begins running with everyone else, grumbling internally, how this is ridiculous. Five laps just for a warm up? He'll barely survive through three and drop dead, surely. He slows down the pace after the first lap, but then Bokuto stays behind with him and claps his hands to go faster, faster Akaashi, run faster!

But by the third lap, Akaashi has the dreaded side stitch, making it almost impossible to move his feet in anything faster than a mild strut.

I'm so out of shape, he thinks and wipes the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand.

The manager walks over to him, worried. "You doing okay?" She asks and hands him a bottle of
"No." He croaks out and accepts it gratefully.

"Don't drink it all at once, just wet your lips." She says. "Come on, you have two more laps."

He doesn't know why he bothers, when he knows its hopeless, but in case the team accuses him of not even trying, with determination he didn't even know he had in him, he pushes his legs into a light jog.

By the time he's done all five laps, he joins the rest of them in stretching.

Akaashi can't remember the last time he's ever exercised this much. Probably never? And this is only the warm up. He's beyond sure he'd drop dead of exhaustion before he can make it to dinner. Or through the end of practice, actually.

Then the manager tells them to separate in twos and hands each pair a ball to practice between each other. Akaashi wants to pair up with someone who sucks as much as him, although he doubts there's another individual as inexperienced as him here, but Bokuto automatically volunteers to be his partner and joins him in the corner, as everyone spreads over the court.

Bokuto dribbles the ball down a few times, then tosses it to himself a few times in the air. Akaashi's attention is at everyone around, and just as he turns his head back to face his partner, the ball hits him flat across the face and bounces off into the corner.

Nice.

"Akaashi! Where's your head at!" Bokuto groans.

"Luckily still on my shoulders, Bokuto-san." He replies, grumbling.

"Are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

"Pay more attention, please." Bokuto says and goes to fetch the ball.

This is all your fault, Akaashi scowls silently.

Bokuto throws the ball over his head, then sets it for Akaashi, who doesn't really know how to receive it, so he just copies Bokuto's movements and sets it back. They continue passing it gently to one another and Akaashi thinks this isn't too bad.

"Akaashi! Now receive!" Bokuto says after a while and Akaashi doesn't really know what that means, because doesn't receiving mean what he's been doing so far? "Receive, Akaashi!"

"Bokuto-san, isn't that what I'm doing?"

"No, receive like it's a serve!"

Akaashi licks his lips. "Could you please explain to me how to do that?"

Bokuto puts the ball between his knees and extends his hands in front of his body. Akaashi notes the way he presses his palms into one another, with the thumbs connecting in the middle. Before he can ask where the ball should actually go, Bokuto tosses to him and he lets it fall over the middle of his extended hands, landing right on his fingers. It bounces off and goes into the corner.
Bokuto blinks at him, then turns his head to where the ball is, and back at him.

"...Akaashi! What the Hell was that?" He groans. "That was rubbish! I just showed you how to receive!"

"I tried!"

"You did it all wrong! You're supposed to receive the ball here." Bokuto points at his own hands, right under the beginning of his thumbs, where the sides of palms meet one another.

"Ohhh, there! I see."

"Have you always hit it like you did just now?"

"Yes."

"Didn't your teacher teach you how to receive?"

"Bokuto-san, I've never had a teacher tell me how to receive, as this is my first time playing volleyball."

Bokuto blinks and Akaashi thinks he's never resembled an owl as much as he does now. A very confused owl.

"Akaashi, what do you mean this is your first time playing volleyball?"

"I mean it as in I've never played before."

"Ehhhhhh?"

"Bokuto-san, do you always assume people know how to play volleyball?"

"But yesterday you told me you'll come for practice!"

"No." Akaashi shakes his head. "No, what I said was "I might swing by the gym and watch you practice." I never said I'll join you, even though you told everyone I'm auditioning for the team." Akaashi adds, trying to compose his tone from rising, even though he feels irritated.

Bokuto ignores everything Akaashi's just told him and taps his chin thoughtfully. "I didn't think you've never played before."

"But Akaashi! This is great!"

"How so?"

"You've been tossing the ball back to me so well!"

"That's easy."

"It's the most difficult part!" Bokuto walks over to Akaashi. "Show me your hands."

Akaashi doesn't really understand what Bokuto is getting at, but he awkwardly extends them forward, spreading his fingers apart. He watches as Bokuto carefully studies them. Then he proceeds to gently squish the bottoms of Akaashi's fingertips, silently nodding his head.

"Bokuto-san, what are you doing?"

"I want to try something. Come on!" Bokuto nods his head forward and the two of them walk over to the net. Then Bokuto yells. "Everyone, stop what you're doing and come over to this side!
of the court!"

Akaashi is just about to join the rest of the team, when Bokuto's hand presses his shoulder.

"Akaashi, not you. You stay right where you are." Then he turns to everyone else. "Listen up, everyone. This is Akaashi's first time playing volleyball!" There's quiet murmurs and groaning all around, but Bokuto shushes them. "Shut up, everyone! You!" He points at one of the boys. "You go right across from Akaashi and throw him the ball. Akaashi? I want you to toss the ball back to me, can you do that?"

Akaashi feels everyone staring at him and he wants to disappear.

"Bokuto-san, wait! I don't know what to do!" He says and he feels cold sweat running all over his body.

"Of course you do, we've been doing it for the past fifteen minutes." Bokuto explains.

The boy throws the ball in his directions and Akaashi instantly panics and tries receiving the ball. He hits it like he did before, with his fingers, and the action makes his arms burn from the force of it. But the worst part of it isn't the piercing sort of pain, no, it's the fact the ball goes into the corner and there are groans all around.

"Bokuto, are you serious?" Someone asks, followed by a few whispers in agreement.

"This guy sucks!"

"Yeah, can we get on with practice?"

"Everyone shut up!" Bokuto roars and this is the first time Akaashi's seen his roommate look angry. His eyebrows are pushed together and his eyes are flashing dangerously at everyone behind. "You'll be quiet and do as I say, got that?" Then he turns his head to Akaashi and the yelling is replaced by a soft voice. "Akaashi, not like that. When the ball comes to you, toss it high into the air using your fingertips, okay?"

Akaashi nods his head.

Once Bokuto returns to the line, he nods his head at the boy to toss the ball. Unlike before, the ball isn't directly flying towards Akaashi, and he can't really explain it to himself, how his feet automatically shuffle forward and he's suddenly crouching on one knee until he's directly under it, but he manages to get there in time, and he pushes it back into the air with the tips of his fingers.

It goes soaring up, high above him, and he has just about two seconds to move out of the way, as he hears Bokuto sprinting towards him. Then Bokuto jumps up high, as if he's suddenly sprouted wings, and Akaashi is suddenly mesmerized by the sight in front of him. He watches as Bokuto faces the ball and swing his right arm into a graceful arch. Then the palm of his hand mercilessly slams against it, making it land to the other side of the court.

The gym suddenly goes quiet, and Akaashi is certain if a pin drops, it'll be heard in there. Seconds later, there's a roar of yelling and Akaashi doesn't know what is happening, but Bokuto is pulling him into a hug.

"Did you all see that?" He roars over all the noise. "I knew it! I knew Akaashi will be good at setting!"

"Akaashi, didn't you say you've never played before?" Konoha yells and Akaashi nods his head wordlessly.
"He did it!" Bokuto grins proudly. "Did you all see how he got on his knee to set it! And then my amazing spike! This is so great, oh my God!"

"Maybe it was a fluke." Someone murmurs and Bokuto's head turns back.

"Who said that?" He growls.

All of the students take a step to the side, until the boy who'd spoken remains.

"You!" Bokuto points at him. "I know you! You threw up during suicides!"

The boy crosses his hands. "So what if I did? I'm in way better shape than this Akaashi guy. At least I was able to do five laps without stopping."

"I don't like you, puking guy." Bokuto growls, then turns to Akaashi. "Akaashi? Prove to puking guy your set wasn't a fluke! Konoha! Line up for a spike!"

Akaashi feels all eyes on him and he's terrified from the pressure, but at the same time he feels a bit excited, if he has to be completely honest with himself. He feels touched that Bokuto would stand up for him like this, in front of everyone. So he is determined to not disappoint his roommate!

As the boy throws the ball in Akaashi's direction, he sets it in the air again, and watches Konoha slam it, just like Bokuto had done.

Once again, the spike is followed by an excited roar of voices.

"See that, puke guy?" Bokuto grins. "It's no fluke! Akaashi is a natural."

"I actually have a name!" The boy grumbles.

"Yes, you're puke guy." Bokuto replies and pokes his tongue out at the boy. "Puke guy! Puke guy!"

A couple of students chuckle and join Bokuto's "puke guy" chants.

Akaashi feels kind of bad for the guy, but then the manager blows her whistle, shutting everyone up at once.

"Goddd, stop being such children and get on with practice! Now! Or you'll be doing suicides until you're all puke guys!"

She begins to yell out orders for everyone. Half of the people head to the other side of the court and begin practicing their spikes by the official volleyball team's setter (jersey #5), while the rest of them stay behind and wait to be set by Akaashi. Bokuto stays behind in Akaashi's line, and so do Konoha and Sarukui.

They do that for the next half an hour and Akaashi feels proud that he hasn't made a mistake, not once! He's constantly congratulated by Bokuto, who's grinning like a child at Christmas, and Akaashi can't help but feel excited.

He cannot believe he's actually good at volleyball!

But then the players are being separated into actual teams and once they begin playing a game, he realizes setting isn't as easy. He's confused where to go whenever his team is to receive and when there's been a point, because everyone is constantly switching their places. He keeps bumping into
people, and the manager asks for someone to take over his position and demands him to join her at the sidelines.

"Bokuto's right and you really are a natural at setting." She tells him. "But you're gonna have to work very hard to synchronize with your teammates. You should have Bokuto explain to you the rules today, so you can keep up. And you're gonna have to do a lot of work on your conditioning, because you tire quickly." As Akaashi nods in agreement, perhaps a bit too sullen, she smiles. "Cheer up, Akaashi! You should be proud of yourself! I've never seen someone take up volleyball as quickly as you, and on your very first time playing! It's beyond impressive."

"Thank you very much."

"Now go back to the game and set like you're in a championship game!" She pats his back and grins.

"Yes!"

Bokuto's team is leading by two points and as Akaashi gets back to setting, they quickly score one more, thanks to Bokuto's incredible spike.

There are only three more points until they get a victory and Akaashi feels determined to set like his life depends on it. He carefully studies his opponents and notices that they're all moving to block Bokuto, so after checking the rest of the court, he sets for Konoha, who earns the team another point.

Akaashi joins the rest of the team in congratulating him and he feels like he's in a dream. He had no idea volleyball could be this much fun!

They lose the next point, though, because the serve is nearly impossible to receive. Still, Akaashi catches himself clapping his hands for the opposing team, because it's an incredible serve.

Just before they hear the dinner bell in the distance, Bokuto lands another successful spike, earning his team victory.

Akaashi blinks in surprise as everyone congratulates him for the brilliant game, including the students on the losing team, telling him how great his setting was, and that all he needs is a little bit of practice to fit right in the team.

Hours ago, he dreaded even coming to the gym and now there's talks of him becoming an official member of the goddamn volleyball team! But nobody looks as proud and happy as Bokuto, who all but cries tears of joy every time he looks at Akaashi.

The manager blows her whistle again, demanding only three laps this time, to cool down. And Akaashi doesn't know how he manages to keep up with all the running, maybe it's the euphoria of the win.

Everyone goes to the changing room and takes their stuff. Then the day students leave to go home, while the boarding students, despite the fact they're all stinky and sweaty, head straight for the kitchen.

Akaashi goes directly to the salad and dessert bar, filling a plate of each, when he feels a hand pull him to the right, and he isn't too surprised it's Bokuto, demanding he gets a plate of the actual dinner, which is steak with mashed potatoes.

As they all sit in Dining Room B, just before they tuck in, Bokuto demands the table's attention, by clinking his glass of orange juice with his fork.
"A toast" He yells happily. "To Fukurodani's brand new setter, Akaashi Keiji!"

"Hear, hear!"

"To Akaashi!"

Akaashi's face is burning red from all the attention, and he drinks to the toast, his insides feeling all warm and fuzzy. Then, just like everyone else, tucks into the delicious food.

After his plates are completely empty, he takes a few bites from his cheesecake and then pushes it away, because he feels absolutely stuffed. He nods his head silently as the rest of the table talk about volleyball, and then he's suddenly dozing off, right in his chair. Nobody wakes him up and somewhere in the distance he hears a bell ring, but it's so far, he ignores it easily. Then he feels like he's being carried by a few hands back into his room, but he's just so exhausted, he doesn't bother opening his eyes. He's more than certain someone tucks him into his own bed, even though he needs to go take a shower.

Just a few more minutes and I'll go, he thinks.

But he doesn't leave his bed until 5 am, when the first rooster of the morning wakes him up.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Jsyk, the quotes from the "Wall of Shame" are actual quotes from former classmates of mine. And there's also that "do you think pigeons have feelings?" video I totally took inspiration from C: Enjoy, y'all!

Akaashi is so eager and panicked to get moving, that he hits his head on the bottom of Bokuto's bed. He lifts a hand to massage the pain away and feels a different kind of pain, shooting through his entire body. He's all cramped up from volleyball practice! Well of course he is, he's never done so much exercise in his life. Groaning quietly he gets off the bed and his limbs feel so sore that he wants to lie back down and not move at all. But that's not an option.

He rolls his neck, then grits his teeth and does a couple of squats. Ignoring all the loud cracks from his bones, and the burning pain from what feels like every single muscle in his body, he continues until he's done ten, even though they feel like a hundred. The worst of the stiffness is gone, so he heads straight to the bathroom for a much needed shower. He doesn't even bother waiting for the hot water, he just scrubs himself clean as fast as humanly possible. Taking a cold shower is just what he needs to wake up, he thinks, because there won't be any coffee until breakfast and he has homework to do. Remembering that it's a Wednesday and that first two periods are P.E., he changes into his gym clothes and sits at his desk. It's still too dark out, so he turns on the small desk lamp, hoping it wouldn't disturb Bokuto.

He slaps his cheeks a few times, then begins writing. He's even done with all his reading before it's 6:30 am and finally relaxes. As he stretches his arms, he notices that the board over his desk is filled with pink sticky notes. All of them have messy writing over them, so he begins reading, or at least trying to decipher them. Halfway through the first note, he realizes this must be Bokuto's doing, because they all contain volleyball terms with explanations, arrows and diagrams. Smiling, he begins studying each and feels grateful that he has photographic memory, making it much easier to memorize.

At 7 am, the bell rings and he hears the bed behind him creak, as Bokuto jumps off the tiny stairs. "Akaashi, good morning!" Bokuto greets happily. "You sleep like the dead!" He laughs and pulls on his volleyball uniform.

"Good morning, Bokuto-san." Akaashi replies after stifling a yawn. "Thank you for the notes."

"You're welcome!" Big grin. "Just so you know, Jared wasn't too pleased last night that you slept through Study Hall, but Kono and I convinced him you're finished with all your homework, so
it's cool. You are done with it, right?"

Akaashi nods. "Thank you, for not letting me get in trouble."

"Of course! I can't let you get a detention, when we have volleyball practice after school."

"Don't we have practice right now?"

"Yes, but after school too. You need to practice more and more, because I want you perfectly prepared for the upcoming game we have at the end of the month."

"Ehhh? But you have an official setter!"

Bokuto shrugs. "Yeah, so? You need experience and it'll be perfect for you, because the team that we'll play isn't that good anyway."

After Bokuto reminds him to put his school uniform in his backpack, the pair head down for breakfast. Their names are noted down and as Akaashi pours himself a cup of coffee, he hears the dean's disapproving tut behind him.

"Young man, you better eat something for breakfast! You have volleyball practice next and I heard you're Fukurodani's newest setter. Congratulations!" A grin, followed by a pat on the back, which makes a bit of Akaashi's coffee spill to the floor.

"Oh- not officially, but - thank you very much."

Before he joins Bokuto and the rest of the volleyball team at the table, he takes a banana.

Akaashi doesn't want to eat anything, especially when he knows he's going to be running and jumping and exercising for the next two hours. But nobody on the table, especially Bokuto, accepts his breakfast eating habits, which are nonexistent, and in the end, he eats the damn banana.

"That's good." Bokuto says, mouthful of cereal. "We always eat bananas before a match."

The warning bell rings and the entire school heads for the gym.

During the fourth lap, Akaashi regrets his second cup of coffee, because he feels all bloated and thirsty, but he ignores everything, and even though he's tailing the rest of his teammates, he pushes on without giving up until he's finished the fifth lap.

Who would have thought, he muses, as they begin stretching. And by the end of the stretches, his body is no longer stiff.

As the manager tells them to get in pairs again, Bokuto has already taken a ball and motions for Akaashi to join him.

"Akaashi, I want you to practice receiving, so don't set the ball, okay?"

Akaashi nods. He tries his best, he really does, but every single one of his receives go to the side and not to Bokuto.

"Hmmm. It's good thing the setter almost never receives during a game, because he always gets the second turn... But you need to get better! Now go and show me how you serve!"

Akaashi walks over to the line with the ball and blinks.
"Bokuto-san? Yesterday I didn't practice serving, so please, show me how to do it."

"Didn't you watch the game?"

"Yes, but I want to see how it's properly done, please."

Bokuto grins. "Of course you'd ask me to show you, you want to learn from the best! Hey hey heyyyy!"

No, he asks him, because he's Akaashi's partner. But he doesn't comment on it, because he feels grateful that of everyone around, the Captain volunteered to be paired with him, again. But maybe he'd only partnered up with him, because Akaashi is the least experienced one and needs help the most.

"Akaashi, you can't step over the line." He explains. "And serving is easy! You just have to throw the ball in the air." He throws it in the air, then hits it, and Akaashi can actually hear the wooshing sound the ball makes as it goes over the other side of the court. "and there you go!" Bokuto grins. "Now you do it."

Akaashi nods and takes another ball. He lines up and after making sure his feet aren't crossing the line, he throws the ball in the air. He does manage to hit it, but it goes way too low, rolling right under the net.

"Akaashi! You have to put more force into it!"

Bokuto demonstrates again. And Akaashi gets how to do it, but the difficult part is actually doing it.

He lines up again, but doesn't follow Bokuto's example. He remembers seeing a few of his teammates yesterday actually hitting the ball with their fist from the ground upwards and he does just that. He hits the ball alright, but it goes flying way too high and way too far, out of the other side of the court.

"Akaashi, nooooo, do not ever serve like that!" Bokuto shakes his head urgently. "If you serve like that during a game, you are literally handing the opposing team a point! Your serve needs to have more power!"

Akaashi continues trying, ignoring his burning palm, and he does get a couple of serves in, just as Bokuto asked. Bokuto nods his head approvingly.

"You are catching up really quickly, Akaashi, I'm impressed. After school today, you're gonna practice serving for an hour."

"What?!" Akaashi blinks.

"Yeah, you have to get better at this. The setter has to serve, just like everyone else on the team, so you can't get away with not knowing how to."

"...Yes, Bokuto-san."

"Hell yeah!" Bokuto grins, then puts both his pinkie fingers into his mouth and whistles loudly over the court. "Everyone! Line up and prepare for spiking!"

Everyone moves at once, and Akaashi knows by now that he needs to be in the middle of the court, right next to the net.
So far during practice, Akaashi felt kind of useless, but now he can finally do what he enjoys the most. He sets every single one of the balls that are being thrown his way, and each set is followed by a beautiful serve.

The manager blows her whistle and makes a gesture for Akaashi to join her at the side.

"I forgot to give you these to you yesterday." She says and hands him a pair of knee pads. "Please make sure to always wear them during a game."

"Thank you." He puts them on, then asks. "How come Bokuto-san's are different?"

"You have to ask him that yourself, because nobody knows." She shrugs. "He just prefers those over the regular ones."

"Maybe Bokuto-san is trying to make a fashion statement." Akaashi snorts, because Bokuto definitely doesn't strike him as someone who cares about fashion. And rightly so, it seems, because the manager throws her head back and laughs.

"Yukieeee!" Bokuto groans. "You can flirt with Akaashi later, now let him get back to practice!"

Akaashi feels all eyes on him, and the tips of his ears are burning at Bokuto's comment, because nobody was flirting with anybody!

"Says the one that's always distracting everyone!" She rolls her eyes. "Akaashi, go to the other side."

"No! Akaashi is on my team!" Bokuto grumbles, crossing his arms.

The official Fukurodani setter seems annoyed, but heads to the other side of the court. Akaashi feels a bit guilty, and sort of shrugs his shoulders in an apology to him. He also make a mental note to ask Konoha or Sarukui for everyone's names later.

The whistle blows and the game begins. Konoha, who is on the opposing team, is first up to serve. The second that the balls thrown into the air, all the players move into positions, including Akaashi, who goes right next to the net.

Someone from the back, who Akaashi by now knows is the Libero, receives. Akaashi quickly moves right under the ball and he hears Bokuto on his left, yelling "Akaashi, here!", but Akaashi chances a glance at the other team, instantly noting that there are three people about to form a wall in front of Bokuto. So, he decides to experiment and instead of setting for Bokuto, he ever so gently touches the ball and tips it over the net, missing it by mere centimeters. He watches the ball fall, landing on the ground untouched.

Silence.

Then he's all but deafened by Bokuto's happy yells, and everyone else behind him claps their hands, congratulating him on his quick reflexes and thinking.

"Akaashi! Where the Hell did you learn how to do a dump shot like that?" Bokuto asks as he pulls Akaashi into a quick hug. "That was amazing!"

"From your notes over my desk, Bokuto-san." Akaashi replies modestly.

The game resumes, and since they got the point, Washio, who is on Bokuto's team serves up. The opposing team receives, then #5 sets for Sarukui, who spikes the ball into the back and Akaashi is impressed that their Libero manages to get it back up in the air right into Akaashi's direction. He
sees an opening and does another dump shot, earning his team another point!

His team is even louder than before, congratulating him, and while Bokuto pats his back proudly, he scowls at the opposite team.

"You guys suck! Why aren't you covering the entire court and blocking? If you are this careless during an official game, I'm going to kill you all!" Then he turns to Akaashi, scowl instantly replaced with a grin. "Well done, Akaashi, that was awesome!"

Washio serves again and gets their team a point!

Suddenly, there's a whistle blowing.

"You guys, this isn't working." The manager says. "Bokuto, go to the other team."

"No way, I'm staying with Akaashi!"

"But the teams aren't even! Just go!"

"Nope!"

Sighing, she asks for Washio to switch with one of the other team's Middle Blockers. Bokuto takes over the serving and as Akaashi moves into position, he hears the whooshing noise the ball makes. But the serve is received, and the game is on!

With Washio towering over in the middle, Akaashi doesn't so much as think for another dump shot, and after studying the opposite court, sets the ball for the Wing Spiker on his right. Bokuto doesn't have time to grumble that he wanted to spike too, because the spike is blocked by Washio, earning his new team a point.

After that, Bokuto does in fact grumble quietly, saying how had Akaashi set for him, this wouldn't have happened.

"I'm sorry, Bokuto-san. I'll make sure to toss to you the next time."

Bokuto grins. He doesn't have to wait too long for the toss and he really makes good of his word, spiking the ball into the other court, earning his team a point.

"Akaashi! Did you see that? Did you see my amazing spike?"

"Yes, I did, Bokuto-san. It was impressive!"

Bokuto looks as proud as a peacock, and he has every right to be, Akaashi thinks. And even though this is only the second time he's seen Bokuto play, he now knows why Bokuto is the ace, as well as top five in the country. His game is on a whole new level.

There's a bell in the distance and everyone stops for a quick break. Akaashi heads for the benches, sits down and thirstily finishes half of the water battle the manager just handed him. She gives him a pat on the back, happily.

"Well done, Akaashi! You've done really great so far- don't drink it all at once!"

After a couple of minutes, the manager tells them to get off their lazy asses and head back to the court.

Even though the opposing team gets a few points in, Bokuto's team is still in the lead. With a quiet sigh, Akaashi realizes it's his turn to serve.
Well shit.

When the manager's whistle blows, Akaashi jumps into the air and his arm swings for the ball. His palm hits it hard, but it flies straight into the net. A couple of jeers, as well as claps, follow and Akaashi's handed the ball for another try.

This time, he can't really explain how he does it, because really, it's not skill, but luck, and his serve is perfect, the ball just about making it over the net, getting his team yet another point.

He cannot believe he's earned his team three points, literally all by himself!

The game continues and Akaashi is beyond happy, that he manages to set every single one of the balls he gets, followed by successful spikes from Bokuto and the other Wing Spiker. He no longer feels as lost on the court as he did yesterday, and a part of it is thanks to Bokuto's notes, but also, he realizes, it's because the longer he plays, the easier it gets.

He does botch up the next time he gets to serve, though, but he isn't too worried about it, because serving is not his forte. And after all, this is only his second time ever playing volleyball.

It's no surprise that by the end of P.E. class, Bokuto's team has won the game. They all do three laps to cool down, then head for the locker rooms.

Akaashi takes his towel and follows Bokuto and with a sinking feeling in his gut, sees that the showers have no stalls.

No wonder Bokuto is so casual about being naked, he thinks. In fact, nobody except for him seems to care about it.

"Akaashi, what are you waiting for? Come on, hurry up!" Bokuto's voice reaches his ears and he realizes he's the only one standing by the door.

Gulping, he takes off his clothes, hangs them over the wall and steps forward, trying not to look at anything other that the wall right in front of him. He turns on the shower closest to Bokuto and closes his eyes, hoping that nobody is staring at him.

But why would they? It's not like he has anything they don't, right?

He's just about done, when it occurs to him that he'll get to see Bokuto with his hair down! And his eyes automatically open at that. He glances sideways and sees Bokuto's neck is extended backwards, keeping his head and hair safely away from the streaming water.

Then, even though his brain is screaming at him to just close his eyes, right this instant, before he makes any eye contact with Bokuto, and this becomes really embarrassing, his eyes just sort of go down really quick.

And he does make eye contact. With Bokuto's dick that is.

At that, Akaashi shuts his eyes at once and thanks God, or anyone up above that can hear his silent prayers, that Bokuto's eyes were closed and he's gone unnoticed.

You're a goddamn idiot, he thinks, because really, he is an idiot. Who does this sort of thing in the shower when surrounded by naked guys all around?

What the fuck, Akaashi.
After that, he stops the shower, wraps himself up in his towel and heads for the locker room. Just as he's about to step inside, he hears a quiet murmur.

"...I still can't believe this Akaashi guy is being treated like he's fucking godsend!" Groan.
"Seriously, the way Bokuto worships him makes me wanna puke."

"Come on, man, you have to admit he's crazy talented. And you are "puke guy" after all." Chuckle.

"Fuck off, Rei!"

If somebody else was in his place, they might step in and confront "puke guy" about talking shit behind their back, but Akaashi hates confrontations, almost as much as he hates attention, so he walks in, head held high, as if he hasn't just heard the conversation.

As he waits for his body to dry, he sits on one of the benches. The silence is really uncomfortable, but it's short, because Sarukui walks in and sits right next to Akaashi.

"Sarukui-san? Does Bokuto-san ever let his hair down?"

"No, never." Sarukui chuckles. "Since you're his roommate, you might be the first one to see it, though."

"I doubt that."

"Yeah, me too."

Akaashi is all dressed up in his school uniform and without wasting another second, heads straight for History. He's already in his seat by the time the warning bell rings. A girl approaches his side and gently taps his shoulder for attention.

"Excuse me? Akaashi-kun, may I please share the desk with you? I forgot my History book at home."

Akaashi nods and she takes the seat next to him.

"Thank you very much."

She introduces herself, then quickly adds. "You don't need to use honorifics, just call me Ayame."

"Nice to meet you, Ayame. You can just call me Akaashi too."

"Thanks, Akaashi."

"You're also a first year, right? I've seen you in Japanese and Physics. And now that I think about it, we also share Studio Art together."

Ayame's eyes blink in surprise and her cheeks turn pink. Then she smiles and nods her head enthusiastically.

The principal asks the students to take out a piece of paper, but nobody makes a sound of complaint when he writes down a couple of questions on the board. Akaashi's the first one to be done, because it's nothing too hard, just a couple of dates and names from yesterday's lesson.

When the bell rings, he waits for Ayame and the two head for Japanese. She asks if she could sit next to him again, even though she has her own book, but she's nice and polite, so he doesn't see why not.
Akaashi is very happy that the Japanese classroom is closest to the kitchen, because when the bell rings, he's the first one to get in line for lunch. He takes his tray and heads for Dining Room B. He's halfway through his meal, when a slap lands between his shoulders, making him choke.

"Akaashi! Don't you dare die on me!" Bokuto jokes and takes the chair next to him. "Mmmm yakiniku, my favourite!" He grins happily, then stuffs his mouth with food. After he swallows, he turns to Akaashi. "Your parents coming over this weekend?"

"No. Why?"

"That's perfect! It means you'll be free to practice with the rest of the team!"

"Sure."

"Hey hey heyyyyy!" Bokuto grins. "And after we finish practice, you and I could go for a run!"

"But... why? We already run during practice."

Bokuto's elbow playfully nudges Akaashi in the ribs. "Conditioning, of course! We have to get you all fit!"

"Right."

Akaashi doesn't comment on the fact he plans on sleeping in until noon on Saturday. He waits for someone else from the volleyball team join Bokuto at the table, so he isn't all alone, then heads for the kitchen, where he leaves his tray, and goes up to their room.

He calls his dad and quickly summarizes the past three days, reassuring them that school's fine, and that he's fine and that he's started playing volleyball. Then his mom gets the phone and after a string of "yes" and "okay, Mom"s, he says goodbye and that he'll call them again soon.

"Were you just talking to your parents?" Bokuto asks and Akaashi's surprised to see him sitting on his bed. He didn't know Bokuto could enter a room quietly.

"Yes."

"Did you tell them I said hi?"

"...Sure."

"And did they say hi back?"

"Uh huh."

"Awesome!" Bokuto grins. "I can't wait to meet your parents! I bet they're as cool as you!"

Akaashi doesn't see why Bokuto wants to meet them, and he doesn't exactly consider himself "cool", but says "thank you" anyway.

"We have Reading Class next, in case you've forgotten." Bokuto tells him. "Just so you know, you have to take an English book with you and comics or magazines don't count."

"I know."

Akaashi lets Bokuto lead the way to the Auditorium. It's huge, of course, and by the time the warning bell rings, it's completely full by the entire Fukurodani student body.
Akaashi sits next to Bokuto and takes out his Hamlet book. Bokuto says "ooo good idea!" and pulls out his own. They might not have English class today, but Akaashi reads over the chapters they'd gone over yesterday.

He sort of regrets eating so much, because after volleyball practice and lunch, he feels his eyelids go all heavy and Shakespeare isn't helping much in keeping him awake. But he somehow manages to pull through until the end of the class.

Akaashi quickly heads to the Dining Room A and gets himself a cup of double espresso, because he wants to make it through the day without falling asleep and getting himself in detention. The school has a "no beverages in class" policy, so even though he burns his tongue, he finishes his coffee before the bell.

After that, he feels wide awake and breezes through AP Calculus and Physics.

But then there's volleyball practice and he doesn't feel like running at all.

Still, he sucks it up and warms up with the rest of the team. Just as they're finished with stretching, Bokuto glances around.

"Hey! Where's Saito?" He asks.

"Oh yeah, he told me to tell you he's got an important exam tomorrow, so he's not coming." Konoha explains.

"Huh." Bokuto's eyebrows pull together. "And how are we supposed to practice with just Akaashi as a setter?"

Akaashi makes a mental note that Saito is #5.

"I could set?" A voice carries over the silence.

"Oh, it's you, puke guy." Bokuto nods. "Yeah, I suppose you'll do."

"My name's Suzuki Kazuya!"

Akaashi makes another mental note that puke guy is Suzuki Kazuya.

Bokuto tells everyone to pair up, then turns to Akaashi.

"Akaashi, no, not you. I told you you have to practice serving for the next hour so please, take a couple of balls and go to court number one. Yukieee! Please go with Akaashi and watch him."

Akaashi and the manager head for the first court, then he lines up and begins. After three unsuccessful serves, she turns to him.

"Akaashi, I can help you get better."

He instantly perks up at that, thinking that maybe he'll get a pointer that Bokuto forgot to give him.

"Think about it this way - each serve that doesn't make it over the net and within the lines of the other side equals a minute of suicides." She smiles pleasantly.

Even though this isn't a pointer, not at all, she's right about one thing - he's definitely motivated and gets better at once.

Still though, he ends up doing almost ten minutes of suicides, which feel endless. By the time he's
done, he can barely breathe and stand on his feet.

I hate myself, he thinks, but I hate suicides more. And the manager. And volleyball. But he definitely hates Bokuto the most.

After his breathing has somewhat returned back to normal, the two of them join the rest of the team in the middle court.

"Akaashi, you go over there." She points and he goes to the side of the court.

"Yukie, no!" Bokuto complains. "I want to be on Akaashi's team!"

"No. I want to see you two play against each other."

"No!"

"Yes!"

"I don't wanna play anymore!" Bokuto crosses his arms.

"Bokuto, we're just gonna try it out for a bit." She says patiently. "Going up against Akaashi's setting will help your own spikes."

Bokuto eyes her up. "You're not just making this up, are you, Yukie?"

"No, I promise! After I see you guys play against each other, I'll be able to determine what you need to work on as a duo. Bokuto, your cross hits are really amazing, but don't you think it'll be really cool if you get to score points with straights?"

Akaashi isn't familiar with those terms yet, but Bokuto is suddenly beaming.

"Ehhh? You really think so?"

"Definitely."

"Akaashi! Go to the other team right this second!"

After the whistle blows, they begin playing.

Akaashi cannot believe that eventhough Bokuto is on the opposite team, his own team is leading by five points! After they take the lead with another point, Bokuto stops the game.

"Puke guy! You suck at setting!" Bokuto yells. "Why can't you be like Akaashi? You keep giving tosses that are too low and you can't read the opposite court better! I don't want you to set for me anymore!"

The manager taps her chin. "Hmmm, I guess Bokuto's right. Akaashi, Suzuki, please trade places."

The two of them switch and there's instant change in the score of the game.

"Hey hey heyyyyyy!" Bokuto fists the air victoriously. "Akaashi, did you see my spike?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san, it was amazing!"

"Bokutooo, stop going for easy spikes to the right and try with a straight!" The manager yells.
"Fine!"

Even though everyone heard that and Akaashi knows that they’ll be expecting him to set for Bokuto, he still sets for him. Bokuto jumps into the air, then, to Akaashi’s surprise, aims directly for the block, hitting it lightly. The ball bounces back into their court and Bokuto receives it.

"Akaashi, once more! You better make that toss a good one!"

Akaashi quickly sets the ball high into the air for Bokuto, who this time successfully spikes it down into a straight line, near the end of the opposing team's court.

"Yeahhh! Hey hey heyyyyy!" Bokuto's arm is suddenly pulling Akaashi into a half hug.

"Bokuto-san, did you hit the ball like that on purpose?"

"Yes! It's called a rebound." Bokuto explains.

"Wow. That was amazing!"

"It really was, wasn't it, Akaashi?" Bokuto grins. "Hey hey hey! I'm the best!"

At 6:30 pm, the victors (Bokuto's team) are free to go, after doing three laps to cool down, while the losing team lines up for suicides.

Akaashi, Bokuto and Sarukui head for dinner.

By the time they're almost finished, Konoha joins them.

"Akaashi, I hate you." He groans. "I really do."

"Sorry, Konoha-san."

"Akaashi, don't apologize! It's Konoha's fault for sucking." Bokuto grins.

"I don't suck, okay? Our team's setter, puke guy, is the one that sucks! Who, by the way, puked again during suicides."

"Of course he did." Bokuto nods.

"If only Saito showed up for practice." Konoha sighs.

"How come Washio-san and Komi-san aren't here for dinner?" Akaashi asks.

"They're day students." Sarukui replies. "But they both live really close to the school. Sometimes they come over and stay for Study Hall, when we have an exam the next day."

"I see."

"Speaking of exams, are you too busy tonight, Akaashi?" Konoha asks. "Because we have one in Math tomorrow and I need help."

"Me too." Sarukui says. Then since Bokuto doesn't comment, he adds. "And so does Bokuto."

"Sure, I'll help you, guys."

Akaashi, Bokuto and Sarukui stay at the table, chatting about volleyball, until Konoha's finished eating. Then they head upstairs for showers and to prepare for Study Hall.
Akaashi's already changed into his pyjama pants and t shirt when Rob swings by the room to take their laptops and phones, rolling his eyes as Akaashi points to the bathroom, indicating that Bokuto's still in there.

Akaashi takes out his agenda and begins his homework. After about half an hour Bokuto walks out of the bathroom and sits at his desk. Then, Akaashi feels a tap on his back.

"Hey, Akaashi? Akaashi!"

"What is it, Bokuto-san?" He asks, not even bothering to look up from his Physics book.

"Today was your first time sharing a shower with people, right?"

Akaashi blinks. "...Yes. How could you tell?"

"Your face."

"What about my face?"

Bokuto shrugs. "It looked all uncomfortable."

Akaashi always thought his face was unreadable? Because a lot of people in the past have had to ask "What do you think?" or "What do you feel about this and that?" and he's really surprised that Bokuto was able easily read his discomfort.

"You shut your eyes and didn't open them until you were done." Bokuto continues. "And I thought I'd do the same and close them, so you know, you don't feel alone."

Akaashi suddenly realizes Bokuto's way more observant than he gave him credit. The hairs on the back of his neck are all standing up now, because Bokuto had noticed, so he also must have noticed Akaashi taking a peek at his... junk? But Bokuto makes no further comments and Akaashi feels relieved.

He finishes his work and after stretching, turns his head to the side, surprised that Bokuto has been quiet so far, and he's actually huddled over his desk, working. He decides not to disturb his roommate, especially since this must be some sort of miracle, Bokuto doing work during Study Hall. He pulls out Hamlet and decides to read ahead.

Akaashi's not even halfway through the chapter, when Bokuto demands his attention.

"Akaashi! Guess what?"

"What is it, Bokuto-san?"

"Guess!"

"You're finished with your work?"

Bokuto laughs. "No, but I'm finished with this!" He pushes his notebook right under Akaashi's nose, who carefully studies the contents of the page. It contains symbols he's never seen before, and his eyebrows rise in confusion.

"Bokuto-san, what exactly am I looking at?"

"Our own language!" Bokuto replies, proudly. "I made up our own alphabet, so we can pass notes during class and if Mr Burns catches us, he won't be able to tell what they say! Isn't that great?"
A sigh escapes Akaashi’s mouth.

If only Bokuto put this much effort into his actual work.

"Yes, Bokuto-san, it's great. Now could you please start doing your work? We could study for the English vocab quiz together and then when Konoha-san and Sarukui-san join us, I'll help you study for your Math exam."

"Akaashi, you're no fun!"

Akaashi refuses to take no for an answer, though, and he makes sure Bokuto’s written down all of his homework (for tomorrow, at least), then the two sit on the floor and begin going over the English words they need to learn.

"Bokuto-san, what's the difference between a metaphor and a simile?"

"Hmmm, one starts with an "m" and the other one starts with an "s"."

"No."

He patiently explains the answer and only stops asking when he's literally drilled the answer into Bokuto's head.

"I get it, I get it now!" Bokuto nods. "All similes are metaphors, but not all metaphors are similes."

"Give me an example of a simile."

Bokuto thinks for a few moments, then says. "Puke guy's volleyball skills are like a garbage can waiting to be picked up and recycled."

"Good. Now give me an example of a metaphor."

"Akaashi, you are as good at volleyball as someone who's played for years."

"No, that doesn't work. Whenever you use "as" and "like", that's simile, Bokuto-san. Please try again."

"Hmmm...Akaashi, you are the volleyball team's secret weapon."

"I don't know about me being the team's secret weapon, but your example is correct. Well done, Bokuto-san."

"I got it!"

"Yes, you did. Now let's study four more words and leave the other for tomorrow night."

Bokuto groans, but does listen as Akaashi explains them. When he gets a correct example of each, he congratulates Bokuto and allows himself to be taught in return a part of "their" language.

There's a knock on the door and they both look up.

"Hey, guys." Rob greets with a wave. "Bokuto, please put some clothes on."

"Why? I'm in my own room and I can stay in a towel if I want to."

"Yeah, but a couple of students want to come over for some Math help from Akaashi."
"Fine."

Sighing dramatically, Bokuto goes over to the drawers and puts on a pair of boxers, shorts and a t-shirt. Not that Akaashi's looking at him or anything.

After a couple of minutes, there's another knock and Konoha and Sarukui walk in, followed by Washio and Komi, who wave at Akaashi.

"I texted them that you're helping with Math, so they came over." Sarukui explains.

But that's not all. The volleyball manager comes, followed by two more girls.

Akaashi blinks in surprise. He thought girls weren't allowed on the guys floor? Then Rob takes a seat on Akaashi's bed and he quickly realizes girls aren't allowed unless they are supervised by an RC.

"Akaashi, can you please explain to us all how Math works?" Konoha asks and hands him his book. "The exam will involve questions like this-" he flips a few pages -"this, and this."

Akaashi nods his head and begins explaining the problems in the easiest way possible. Then he makes up a few questions for all of them to solve and waits. He is quite surprised that Bokuto is the first one to be done. But he isn't surprised that they're all wrong. He doesn't move past the first problem, though, not until everyone's understood it, Bokuto included.

Then they move onto the second problem, and then the third. By the time Study Hall's over, everyone claps their hands in unison and thank Akaashi for his patience and help. And even though his cheeks are slightly burning, he nods his head and tells them they are welcome, and that he's glad they are prepared for tomorrow.

Rob escorts the girls out of the room, but they ask Akaashi to go down with them. He doesn't see why, though, because he's already in his pjs and he doesn't feel like leaving the room, but they insist, so he follows them. They stop at the vending machine and each get him a "thank you for your help" snack, even though he says over and over again it's not necessary. But he ends up with more candy bars than his hands can carry.

Bokuto doesn't bother asking for permission, he just takes a Kit Kat and eats it. Akaashi doesn't mind though, because he's got way more sweets than he can actually eat. Then he offers a few to Konoha and Sarukui, who accept one each, nodding their thanks.

Akaashi bites into a Milky Way and notices that Konoha was right and that the hallway is filled with couples that are making out. By the time the warning bell rings, he's concluded that coming downstairs after Study Hall is not worth it.

As they head back up, Akaashi gives his last piece of candy to Rob. Because he's nice and Akaashi likes him.

"Oooo, Snickers! Thanks, man!"

Then he follows Bokuto into their room and closes the door behind him.

"Akaashi, what movie do you feel like watching today?"

"Uhhh... shouldn't we sleep?"

"Do you feel tired?"
"Kind of, yeah."

Bokuto ignores his answer. "What d'ya say we watch The Godfather?"

"That's a good movie."

"Right?"

After they take turns brushing their teeth in the bathroom, Bokuto turns off the lights and joins Akaashi in his bed. And even though Akaashi really likes The Godfather, he just feels so comfortable and tired, that he falls asleep, even though his feet are on the floor.

In the middle of the night, Akaashi feels the need to go to the bathroom and when he does, he sees that Bokuto too has fallen asleep. Yes, but in Akaashi's bed.

Um, rude.

He tries to get him out by pulling Bokuto's legs off the bed, but Bokuto rolls to the inside and tells Akaashi to shut up and go back to sleep.

Yeah, I'm trying to, but you're in my bed, Akaashi thinks in annoyance.

He considers sleeping in Bokuto's bed, but he doesn't want to sleep that high up from the ground, and in the end, he mumbles a "If you kick me, I'll kill you." to Bokuto, then lies down, just near the edge and covers the two of them with his blanket.

And even though he's tired, he can't fall asleep right away, because well, Bokuto's lying right next to him and he doesn't remember agreeing for them to ever share a bed. But after a while, Bokuto's soft breathing lulls him into sleep.

Around four in the morning, Akaashi hears a loud thud, followed by a sharp pain on his side, but he ignores it and continues sleeping.

When the 7:00 am bell rings, he feels a pair of feet land on his chest.

"Akaashi!" Bokuto's surprised voice reaches his ears. "What are you doing on the floor?"

His eyes blink awake and he notices that he is, indeed, lying on the floor.

"You kicked me off my bed!"

"Sorry." Bokuto replies and starts putting on his school uniform.

"You literally kicked me off my own bed!" He grumbles as he rises to his feet.

"Akaashi, I heard you the first time. And I said sorry, didn't I?"

As Akaashi pulls on his own uniform, he tells Bokuto they are not going to watch movies anymore! Bokuto gives a non-committal grunt, and the two head down.

At lunch, Akaashi asks the rest of the table how their Math exam has gone, and they all say it was easy, because of his help.

During English, he gets a note in Bokuto's made up language and finds himself actually answering it. But he doesn't dare a second reply, because Mr Burns shoots him a glance.

His last period is Studio Art and as he takes his seat, he sees Ayame wave at him, smiling. He
waves back, then gets on with his collage. As the bell rings, Mori-sensei compliments his work, even though he doesn't feel too pleased with the outcome.

Akaashi and Sarukui head for the gym next, and once the team is assembled, they begin warming up. Then the manager grins at him and points to the other court. Sighing, Akaashi joins her and begins practicing his serves.

Today, he only has to do six minutes worth of suicides. Maybe by next week, he thinks, he'll get better at serving and he won't have to run like crazy all over the court. He joins Bokuto's team, but since Saito, the official setter, is present, Bokuto's team ends up losing and they have to do suicides.

There's nobody in the universe Akaashi hates more than Bokuto, and he makes sure Bokuto knows that, after they're finished running and head for dinner. But since Bokuto doesn't reply at all, nor does he seem even a tiny bit bothered by it, Akaashi concludes that Bokuto has selective hearing.

By the time Akaashi's finished his homework, his annoyance has completely ebbed away, and he helps Bokuto learn the rest of the English words. They take turns quizzing each other, and after they both nail every single one of them, they await the end of Study Hall.

Bokuto heads downstairs, while Akaashi decides to check out Konoha and Sarukui's room. As he walks through the corridor, he stares at a big piece of paper hung over the wall, with different handwritings over it. Jared, the other RC, walks over to him, snorting.

"You're looking at the Wall of Shame."

Before he has time to ask what that means, Jared explains.

"Whenever someone from the boys' floor says something really stupid, people note it down here."

Akaashi can't say he's too surprised to see his roommates initials scribbled a couple of times. He reads a few.

B.K. "So why is the Middle East called the Middle East, when it's not in the Middle of the East?"

B.K. "What the Hell does BC mean? What? Before Christ?! But that's impossible, there's nothing before that!"

B.K. "Swiss Franks? I have no idea who that is! Why is he so popular in Switzerland?"

Akaashi doesn't know if he should double over in laughter or cry, because really?

He reads a couple more quotes, but they aren't as dumb, or funny, as Bokuto's, and he feels grateful to whomever wrote them down.

Then he joins Konoha and Sarukui into their room.

He sits on the floor and studies both their boards. Konoha's one has a Harry Potter (Harry Potter!) poster over it, while Sarukui's is filled with race cars. Both boards, however, share the same photo of the volleyball team. Akaashi assumes it's from the previous year, and he notices the team is holding a trophy.

"Are you a fan of Harry Potter?" Konoha asks.

"Yes! Of course I am!" Akaashi nods enthusiastically.
"Cool! Which house do you think you belong to?"

"Well, I've taken a couple of quizzes online and if I have to be completely honest, I think I'll fit the most in Ravenclaw."

"Yeah, you totally have the brains to be a Claw." Konoha grins. "I'm Gryffindor."

"That's a good house to be in." Akaashi replies.

"Sarukui doesn't know Harry Potter-" He fakes a gasp -" even though I've tried to get him interested. But Bokuto - surprise, surprise! - has actually read all of the books and seen the movies and he's a Hufflepuff."

Akaashi thinks about that for a few minutes.

Bokuto's Captain of the volleyball team, so hard work and determination have gotten him that position. And there's just something about Bokuto, and he can't quite put his finger on it, not yet anyway, that makes him stand out as trustworthy and loyal. So, of course, he'll be sorted into the badger's den, Akaashi thinks.

Shortly after the warning bell rings, Jared walks into the room and tells Akaashi to go back to his own. He wishes Konoha and Sarukui goodnight and leaves.

Bokuto's lying on his bed, talking over the phone.

"...I'm telling you, man, he's it!" Bokuto suddenly grins. "Oh, hey, Akaashi!"

"Bokuto-san, could you please get off my bed?"

"Bro, lemme put you on speaker, so Akaashi can hear you too."

"Yooooo, Keiji, my boy, how's it going?"

Akaashi knows who the voice belongs to by now, and he rolls his eyes, even though they're closed.

"Kuroo-san, please don't call me that."

In a very Bokuto manner, Kuroo ignores the comment. "So, how do you like Fukurodani so far?"

When Akaashi doesn't respond, Bokuto all but stuffs his phone into Akaashi's mouth.

"...It's great, thank you."

"That's good." Kuroo replies. "Bro, sorry, but I actually have to go. See you tomorrow?"

"Totally, bro! Bye!" Bokuto replies.

Akaashi suddenly feels happy, because if Bokuto and Kuroo will meet tomorrow, that means he'll get the room to himself. And not that he has any urgent business to do or anything, really, but he'll most certainly enjoy the peace and quiet, even if just for a few hours.

"Akaashi, what do you say we watch Inception? It's such a good movie!"

Akaashi agrees, because Inception is a great movie, but he wants to sleep.

"Bokuto-san, please get off my bed."
"You wanna watch something else?"

"No, I want to sleep." Akaashi replies, yawning. "So, please, get off my bed. We can watch a movie tomorrow night."

"Nooooo! Tomorrow is Bokuro night!" Bokuto explains and Akaashi rolls his eyes.

Of course. Of course the two of them would come up with a name for themselves.

"Fine. Then Saturday night."

"No, that's also Bokuro night."

Sigh. "Sunday night then."

"You promise?"

"...Okay."

Bokuto nods, then turns off the light and climbs into his own bed.

Just as Akaashi's falling asleep, he feels the entire bed shaking. His eyes fly open at once, because he thinks it's an earthquake. But then-

"Hey, Akaashi? Akaashi!"

"What is it, Bokuto-san?"

"Do you think owls have feelings?"

"...What?"

"Owls? Do you think they have feelings?"

Akaashi decides to not even grace Bokuto with a reply, so he turns to his side and folds his pillow in two, covering his ear.

"Heyyyy! Akaashi!"

"...I'm going to give you ten seconds to shut up."

"Akaashi! Why are you being so mean to me?"

"Bokuto-san, I'm not being mean, I just want to sleep."

"Yeah, but we're not watching a movie!" Bokuto grumbles. "Before you came, I was sleeping in your bed and I watched one every night." He interprets Akaashi's silence as a "please do continue talking". So he does. "I'm not afraid of the dark or anything, I just can't sleep unless there's voices in the background. Or Kuroo and I would talk over the phone until I fall asleep. He's my bro and would totally pick up any time I call, but I could tell he was relieved that I'm getting a roommate, so he could get some sleep."

"Unlike me right now." Akaashi snorts.

"Akaashi, I'm sorry." Akaashi notes that Bokuto sounds... guilty? "I do have prescribed pills, but I don't like taking them, because they make me feel really queasy in the morning when I wake up."
Prescribed pills? This is serious and it's the first time he hears about it.

"Bokuto-san, why didn't you tell me before?"

"Akaashi, I don't want to burden you with my shit." Bokuto replies softly.

Bokuto suddenly sounds so different, so unlike the Bokuto Akaashi's used to, that he feels worried. Why would Bokuto think this is burdening for him? Doesn't he consider Akaashi a friend he can confide in? That's what friends do, right? They comfort each other?

At once, Akaashi jumps out the bed and turns the lights on. Bokuto's curious head peers over the sides of his bed.

"Akaashi what are you doing? It's Lights Out and it's Jared tonight, so if we get caught, we won't be able to leave the campus for the entire weekend!"

"Bokuto-san, I don't care about that-"

"Well I do!"

"Please listen to what I have to say, and I promise I'll be quick." Akaashi licks his lips and begins. "Bokuto-san, I consider you a good friend. So, please don't ever think that you will be burdening me, with whatever it is! I'm not very good at advice, but I promise that I will listen to everything you have to say! And please, Bokuto-san, don't ever hold back on me like this again!" He finishes with his head bowed down, because Bokuto's eyes are piercing into him and he can't keep up with the intensity, because it's like staring directly into the Sun? And yes, Akaashi has noticed that he has really nice eyes, all honey colored and golden and he's never seen eyes so... warm? Yes, warm would be the exact word to describe them.

As he's glancing at his bare feet, he hears a creaking noise, followed by a quiet thud, and there's another pair of feet next to him and Akaashi's being crushed into a hug from behind. Akaashi can't really maneuver this way, but he finds his own hands patting Bokuto's ones over his chest.

"Akaashi, thank you." Bokuto says after they let go of each other. "Really, you have no idea how much this means to me, especially coming from you!"

Akaashi doesn't know what the last part means. Especially coming from him? What is so special about it?

"I know that I'm loud and sometimes really annoying-"

So he is self aware, Akaashi thinks. But for some reason Akaashi refuses to just stand by and allow Bokuto badmouth himself.

"Bokuto-san, you're not-"

"Nooo, I know I am, and it's okay, really, but I hope that won't get in the way of our friendship, because I really like you, Akaashi!"

Akaashi makes a strange noise at that, because really, who blurts out such embarrassing things, just like that?

...Bokuto, clearly.

"I really like you too, Bokuto-san." He mumbles back, ignoring the fact his face feels really warm. "And it won't get in the way of our friendship, so please don't worry about that."
"You really mean that?"

"Yes, really."

And it's the honest truth.

Another hug follows, only this time it comes from the front, so Akaashi can reciprocate the embrace.

"Now we better turn off the lights or we'll be stuck in here!" Bokuto says, and Akaashi instantly notes that it's in Bokuto's usual happy voice.

Akaashi sits on his bed and when Bokuto heads for the stairs, he clears his throat.

"Bokuto-san? Didn't you say you wanted for us to watch Inception?"

Bokuto blinks, then grins. "Really?"

"Yes. Now get the chair and your laptop. Although I can't promise that I'll stay awake until the end."

But, surprisingly, he does. And he no longer feels sleepy, so when the credits begin rolling, he hears himself suggest they watch another movie.

"Yeahhh, let's do that!" Bokuto agrees at once, of course.

"I'm totally going to regret this in the morning, but do you maybe wanna watch Lord of the Rings?"

"Oooo yeahhh! Akaashi! Let's have a Lord of the Rings marathon!"

"Please let's not."

"No, but let's!"

Akaashi finds himself agreeing, and he doesn't have to wait until the morning to regret this.

Even though they aren't done with the last movie when the bell rings at 7:00 am, Akaashi's been awake for so long that he's at the stage that he finds everything funny. And when Bokuto begins singing, very much out of tune, Pippin's "Edge of Night" song, he hears his own, as well out of tune, voice singing back.

"Akaashi let's have a marathon of The Hobbit tonight!"

"Of course we will, Bokuto-san!"

As they head downstairs, Akaashi fills his plate with waffles, because fuck it, he's hungry and to stay awake he'll need to get lots of sugar, as well as caffeine, into his system.

When they sit at their table, Konoha and Sarukui's eyebrows both shoot up in surprise.

"Well, well, Akaashi's having an actual breakfast?" Sarukui asks.

"And I've never seen him smiling before he's had coffee." Konoha adds. "Hell, Akaashi, I didn't even know you could smile like that?"

Akaashi chuckles at both those comments. And since he busies himself with eating, Bokuto
decides to explain.

"Akaashi and I had a one night stand, that's why he's so wide awake."

There's confused blinks and silence all around the table, and the proper reaction should be for Akaashi to get beet root red, but he just finds Bokuto's mistake so damn funny that he barely manages to contain his mouth shut, and shakes in silent laughter until there are actual tears in his eyes.

"...You did what now?" Konoha asks.

"We had a-" Bokuto begins again, but Akaashi interrupts.

"No, Bokuto-san. What we did was watch movies all night." He explains and chuckles again.

"Eh? Isn't that what I just said?"

Konoha, Sarukui, Washio, Komi and Akaashi all shake their heads in unison.

"Hmmm..." Bokuto tucks into his fried eggs. "I still don't get the difference."

Nobody decides to fill him in, though.

"Hey, guys? Does the vending machine in Dining Room A have Red Bulls?" Akaashi asks.

"No, we aren't allowed to have energy drinks." Konoha replies.

"That's dumb."

"During exams we buy some from outside the school and sneak them in, though." Sarukui adds.

"And do either of you have any?" Akaashi asks.

More shaking of heads, followed by an Oscar worthy dramatic sigh from Akaashi.

Akaashi's good mood turns sour before even the end of History. And he suffers through the end of all classes until, finally, the bell rings at 3:30 pm.

But then there's volleyball practice.

Fuck.

After warming up, Bokuto addresses the entire team, telling them all who made the team and who didn't.

Akaashi's never played sports before, but he does know that in his previous schools everyone was allowed to join a team. But here at Fukurodani things aren't run the same way.

The members that didn't make it are all first years and Bokuto explains that they're all allowed to continue practicing, just not with the team in the middle court.

"So what's the point of it then?" One of the boys, who clearly got cut, asks.

"You can practice and prepare for next year." Bokuto explains.

"That's bullshit!"

The manager steps in. "Now, now. What Bokuto is trying to say is that the team has enough
members, as well as substitutes. So I'm really sorry for all of you that got cut. Please don't give up on volleyball, though, and continue practicing! Because you can become members next year."

"Fuck this!" The same boy grumbles and heads for the door.

A couple more boys follow him, but there are three that remain behind, take a ball and go to court one.

"Konoha-san, isn't that a bit too harsh?" Akaashi asks quietly.

Konoha shakes his head. "No, not really. We have to go to Nationals again this year and we can't have any "dead weight". Don't you think it'll be even worse if they get to practice like crazy with the rest of the team, but never get to play during actual games?"

Akaashi can see his point, but he still feels bad, because that's got to suck. He's pretty sure that if he got cut from the team, he wouldn't practice on his own, no way.

The manager then walks up to him, carrying a net full of balls, and asks him to join her at court three, where he starts practicing his serves again.

Despite the fact he's tired and sleepy, knowing that every failed serve would result in a minute of suicide, he motivates himself. And he actually makes every single one of them in!

He's very pleased with himself when the hour's up. But then the manager tells him he has to line up for five minutes of suicides, because he's the one member of the team that needs conditioning the most.

By the time the bell rings for dinner, Akaashi wants to cry. And it definitely doesn't help that his team lost and they have to do more suicides.

Just as he's heading out, Bokuto yells at him.

"Akaashi! Where are you going?"

"To dinner."

"Noooo, come back! It's Friday!"

"...And you think I'm not hungry on Fridays?"

Bokuto sighs. "Alright, fine. Go get something to light to eat. And come back! And make sure you bring me a banana!"

Akaashi nods then jogs to catch up to Konoha and Sarukui.

"Are you guys coming back to the gym after dinner?" He asks the pair.

"Oh Hell no!" Konoha groans. He was on Akaashi's team, so he also had to do suicides.

"Nobody, but Bokuto stays behind on Fridays." Sarukui explains. "He practices like crazy throughout the entire weekend, actually. But then again he's probably the only one on the team that wants to become an athlete after high school."

"He might not be the only one-" Konoha adds -"but he's the only one that's good enough for that sort of thing."

"You guys don't plan on playing volleyball in university?" Akaashi asks.
"Nah, neither of are good enough." Sarukui says.

"That's crazy, you guys are good!"

Konoha laughs. "Maybe for your standards. No offence." When Akaashi shakes his head in a "none taken", Konoha continues. "Although you're catching up impressively. You've taken to volleyball like duck to water, really."

"Thanks."

"No, I'm serious. You might actually be a prodigy, like Oikawa."

"Who is Oikawa?" Akaashi asks.

"He's like the best setter we've ever played against." Konoha replies. "You'll see him when we play against Aoba Jousai."

"Oh. Well.. thanks."

Akaashi takes a couple of onigiri in a napkin and two bananas, then waves a goodbye to the pair and heads back to the gym. Before he even reaches the middle court, he can hear the sound of balls being slammed.

He walks over to Bokuto and the two sit down and eat their meager dinner.

"Akaashi! Slow down, nobody's gonna steal your food!" Bokuto mumbles.

"I'm really hungry, Bokuto-san."

"Yeah, I can see that. Then he grins. "That's good, though! You need to eat up, so you can become strong!"

Akaashi nods, because Bokuto's right. Before he started playing volleyball, he never had such an appetite. When they've eaten their bananas, Bokuto gets back on his feet and gives Akaashi a hand to help him up.

"Can't we rest a little bit?" Akaashi groans. "We literally just ate!"

"No."

With a loud grunt, he accepts Bokuto's hand.

"Akaashi, please set for me so I can practice my spiking!"

They do that for the next hour and then they both start practicing serves. By 8:30 pm, though, Akaashi is so sleepy and exhausted, that he stops.

He watches as Bokuto serves for a couple more minutes, then they get the balls back into the net and he's surprised that Bokuto doesn't ask him to do laps to cool down, but very grateful.

As Bokuto turns off the lights, he takes his backpack and grins at Akaashi.

"You haven't been outside the school grounds, right?"

"No, not yet."
"Would you like me to show you around?"

"Sure."

But when Akaashi heads up to the stairs, because he wants to take a shower, he feels Bokuto's hand tugging the edge of his t-shirt.

"Not that way, Akaashi." He replies and points to the front door. "This way!"

"But I want to shower and change first."

"Later."

He doesn't really like the idea of going out all sweaty and in his gym clothes, but follows Bokuto. After they both sign out at the front desk, Bokuto breaks into a jog and motions with his hand for Akaashi to follow.

Akaashi does, but after a while, as they continue jogging at the side of the road, he groans.

"Bokuto-san, this is not what I had in mind when you said you'll show me around."

Bokuto continues jogging up ahead and Akaashi stops.

"Bokuto-san?" Akaashi yells. "Bokuto-san, I'm going back!"

Bokuto's hand goes up in the air and waves a quick goodbye at Akaashi, who turns on his heel and heads back to Fukurodani.

He signs back in, and shrugs his arms at the surprised RC woman at the front, then heads to his room. After he takes a shower, he puts on his pyjama pants and t-shirt and even though he wants to sleep, he decides to go check out what Konoha and Sarukui are doing.

Their door's locked though, and instead of calling them over the phone, he heads back down and sees that both of them have checked out. He curses himself for not staying with them for dinner, because maybe then they would have invited him out.

Sighing, he's just about to go back up, when the RC woman stops him.

"Hey! It's Akaashi, right?" She asks.

"Yeah."

"Nice to meet you, I'm Masha. Well technically Maria, but everyone calls me Masha." She smiles. "Masha from Russia."

"Nice to meet you too, Masha."

"Listen, Jared forgot to hand out the activity sheets during Study Hall yesterday, so could you please fill it out for me?"

Akaashi nods and takes the sheet.

"You're Bokuto's roommate, right? Could you fill his out too?"

"...Uhhh."

"I know he went running, and I have to write them down into the computer..."
"Oh, okay, then."

"I know you two are on the volleyball team, so you don't have to sign up for the exercise activities unless you want to."

He reads over the offered activities for the weekend and signs them both up for "Lake Walk", "Smores Time" and "Sunday Sundaes", because he likes those best. And since he stayed with Bokuto to practice more volleyball after their volleyball practice, Bokuto can stay with him for the three activities he signed them up for.

"Thank you." She smiles and takes the sheets. "Hey, we're actually just about to start a Chess tournament in Dining Room A, would you like to join?"

Akaashi is quite good at chess, because when his dad isn't too busy working, the pair of them play against each other. And this way he'll get to know more people, he thinks, and agrees.

None of the people he gets to play against are any good, though. After four very easy victories, Masha crowns his as the victor and hands him a big ass chocolate bar as his reward. He accepts it and after thanking her, heads upstairs.

Bokuto must be back from his run, because Akaashi can hear the shower water running. Then, as he sets his chocolate on the top of their drawer, he sees there's an envelope on it. He picks it up and curiously studies it. But there's no writing on it, so he puts it back down, because he knows his parents wouldn't send him a letter, and there's nobody else that would actually write to him, so it must be for Bokuto.

Just as he sits on his bed, Bokuto walks out of the bathroom.

"How was your run?" Akaashi asks.

"It was great, thanks!" Bokuto grins. "You should join me next time."

"I don't think so."

Then, as Bokuto puts on a pair of short and a t shirt, Akaashi looks away and informs him the activities he sign them both up for. Bokuto groans as he hears "Lake Walk", but as he doesn't explain the reason for the groan, Akaashi gets his phone out and starts looking for a funny animal photo he could email to his dad.

But before he can actually send it, his full attention is at Bokuto, who pulls out a small tent (a tent?!) from his side of the wardrobe and begins opening it up right in the middle of the room.

"Bokuto-san, are you setting up a tent in the middle of our room?"

"Yes."

"Bokuto-san, why are you setting up a tent in the middle of our room?"

"You'll see." Bokuto replies.

After Akaashi sends his email, he watches as Bokuto takes a rope (wtf?) out of the wardrobe.

"...Bokuto-san, why do you have a rope in your wardrobe?"

"I got it from the gym." Bokuto explains.
"That's not what I asked, though."

He watches as Bokuto proceeds to tie it to the bed, then he opens up one of the windows and throws the other side of it out.

"Is this some sort of exercise for volleyball?" Akaashi asks confused.

"No... but oh my God, Akaashi! Let's do it!"

"Do what exactly?"

"Let's climb down the rope and then back up again."

"No."

Because really, what's the point when there's stairs?

He silently watches as Bokuto crawls out of the window and descends down the rope. And then he climbs back up, grinning.

"Heyyyyy, this is so much fun!" He hoots happily. "Akaashi, come and try it!"

Akaashi remembers having to climb a rope in his old school during P.E. class and he was not only unable to do it, he can vividly remember the burns he got on his palms.

"No, Bokuto-san." And he quickly adds. "Don't tell me it's for volleyball conditioning, because it will only result in me having rope burns on my hands and I'm one of the team setters."

To his surprise, Bokuto nods in agreement. Then he reaches for his backpack and pulls out a beer.

"Bokuto-san!" Akaashi gasps. "We're not allowed to have alcohol on campus grounds!"

"Akaashi, chill, it's Friday night. Do you have permission from your parents to drink?"

"Well yes, but-"

Bokuto grins. "Then it's totally okay. Here," he hands him one. "you should have one too. You've earned it!"

"Thanks."

Akaashi doesn't see why not, because his parents always allow him to share a glass of wine or a bottle of beer with dinner. And he has their signed permission for it, so really, why not?

The two of them press their cans against each other and drink. Then Bokuto takes his phone and grins.

"Hey hey heyyyyyy!"

"What is it?" Akaashi asks curiously.

"You'll see in like a minute or two!"

Akaashi awaits to see this something that's going to happen? But nothing happens, so he takes another sip of his beer.

"Bokuto-san, are you sure it's okay for us to drink here?"
"Yeah, as long as we throw the cans outside the school and the RCs don't catch us- heyyy relax, it's Friday night and the RCs don't actually check the rooms."

"But the dean said they have a breathalyzer and-"

"Breathalyzer schmethalyzer." Bokuto snorts. "Only the students that stay out get checked with it. Besides, I've gotten away with it for the past year!"

"...Didn't you say you weren't a boarding student last year?"

"Oh yeah." Bokuto grins sheepishly.

"Oh my God!"

Akaashi's just about to head into the bathroom and pour his can of beer down the toilet, when Bokuto blocks his way.

"Akaashi, chill, man, seriously. You won't get in trouble, I promise.”

Akaashi isn't all that convinced, but in the end, he decides to drink his beer fast. But just as he's about done with it, the corner of his eye sees that the rope Bokuto'd thrown out the window is being tugged. He silently stares as a pair of hands as well as a head appear, and the head has a messy hair-do and Akaashi definitely knows who it belongs to. He all but groans out loud as he watches Kuroo climb up into their room.

Then Kuroo throws his rucksack on the floor, grins at Bokuto and the pair embrace, both of them saying "Broooo!" together.

After they let go, Kuroo's attention turns to Akaashi, and his mouth comically drops to the floor.

"You?!"
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

You guys, check this out, because I was totally inspired by those cute owlies C:

When Bokuto said Fridays and Saturdays are Bokuro time, Akaashi thought it meant that the two would meet outside the school. But he was very wrong about that, obviously. He should have put two and two together after seeing his roommate set up the tent in their room, because clearly Kuroo is here to stay. And it's even more clear that from now on, this is what his future weekends would consist of. Unless his parents come and visit. Which he hopes would be soon, as well as often.

Kuroo pulls Akaashi into a one armed hug, clapping him on the back.
"Man, I never thought I'd see you again!" Kuroo smirks.
"Lucky me." Akaashi says, and he doesn't know if the sarcasm is lost on Kuroo, or he too, just like Bokuto, hears what he likes to hears, not what is actually said.
"Yeah, lucky you! Now we're roommies!" Kuroo's smirk spreads even wider. "Hey, roomie!"
"Kuroo-san, please don't call me that."
"Hellooo? I'm here too!" Bokuto steps between the two and waves his hands in their faces. Clearly Bokuto doesn't like not having the center of attention. "I'm glad you two already know each other-"
"We don't, Bokuto-san."
"Sure we do!"

Loud groan. "Ughhh stop talking over me! Kuroo, did you bring the food?" Kuroo nods. "Good, I got the drinks. Now let's move this party inside our tent!"

Bokuto wouldn't take no for an answer in a million years, so after all three of them have a can of beer and a slice of pizza, they settle inside. Which is small enough as it is, but now Akaashi’s uncomfortably sandwiched in the middle. He doesn't see why they actually have to be inside the stupid tent anyway, but he's too tired to object. And it's not like his objections would make a difference.

He decides to busy himself with his pizza, because dinner was not only small, but hours ago. And
even though salami isn't his favourite topping, he's grateful and hungry enough to eat it, and then take another piece.

Akaashi only half listens to Bokuto and Kuroo's talk, because he doesn't know who or what Nekoma and Kenma are, but they both have to do with volleyball, because by now he already knows Bokuto only gets this excited when it comes to volleyball.

He does notice that Kuroo's knee keeps bumping into his own whenever he laughs or moves forward to clink his beer can against Bokuto's. And he does shift to the side, even though there's not much space, but it's like Kuroo purposefully keeps doing that? Or maybe it's the fact his legs are taking up half of the tent by themselves. But Akaashi's willing to bet it's the first one.

All too soon, Bokuto's attention is on him.

"Akaashi! Akaashi, come onnnn, why aren't you talking?"

"What would you like me to say, Bokuto-san?" He replies sleepily.

"Bro," Bokuto explains. "he's not usually boring like this, but he's tired, because we didn't sleep at all last night."

Kuroo's eyebrow shoots up. "Oh ho hooo?"

"Akaashi and I had a one night stand."

Akaashi suddenly feels wide awake, because no, God, why did Bokuto have to fucking say that again?!? And in front of Kuroo!

Ugh, dammit.

"Bokuto-san, please stop confusing "pulled an all nighter" with a "one night stand"." He explains, while his cheeks grow hotter.

Bokuto blinks. "There's a difference?"

Kuroo roars in laughter. "Awww, bro!"

When Bokuto asks to know the difference, Akaashi gladly lets Kuroo take over. But, since Kuroo is Kuroo, he starts with obscenities right off the bat. By the time he's done, Akaashi wonders if this is what Icarus must have felt like, flying too close to the fucking burning Sun.

Then, when Bokuto's finally heard the difference, Kuroo makes things worse, by adding.

"Perhaps it was a Freudian slip?"

An intelligible noise escapes Akaashi's lips, but what surprises him is the fact Kuroo actually knows what that means?

"What?" Kuroo smirks at his bewildered expression. "I read, I'm smart!"

"Sorry, Kuroo-san, you just don't look like it."

"Heyyy, easy with the insults, roomie."

"Please don't call me that."

"What is a Freudian slip?" Bokuto asks, his head turning to each of them for another explanation.
"It's not important, Bokuto-san."

"But I wanna know, tell me!"

"It's when -" Kuroo begins, then taps his chin thoughtfully. "You know what, bro, it's really not important."

"Fine." Bokuto crosses his arms, grumbling. "Now tell me how you know each other?"

Kuroo quizzically looks at Akaashi, who shakes his head to tell him it's okay if he tells the story. Even though he doesn't feel like hearing it at all.

"Okay, bro, so it was like... uhhh last summer? So like last year?"

"It was winter and it was almost two years ago, Kuroo-san."

"If you're gonna keep interrupting me for such minor details, why don't you just tell the story yourself?" Kuroo challenges, which instantly makes Akaashi shut up. "So, like as I said, it was almost two years ago, right? My cousin was having a birthday party at home and invited his entire class. I didn't really wanna go, because I knew it was gonna be super boring, but my parents insisted I go, if only to drop by for a quick hello, happy birthday and to give my cousin his present. And I'm glad I did, because if I hadn't, I wouldn't have met Akaashi." Kuroo's elbow nudges Akaashi playfully and winks at him.

"You would have met him now." Bokuto replies and there's just a tiny scowl on face, which Akaashi notices. He assumes it's there, because Bokuto would have probably liked introducing them to each other himself. And if Akaashi has to be honest, he would have preferred that too.

"So back to the party. My aunt and my uncle weren't gonna be home until 12 or some shit, I don't really remember, but point is, they weren't there. So since I was the oldest one around, I got a couple of my uncle's beers, you know, because the party was really lame, and I could always blame one of my cousin's classmates for drinking them. But I kinda got tipsy, because well, I wasn't used to drinking beers back then. After finishing them in the kitchen, I decided to join those losers in the living room and see what they're up to, right? And bro, can you guess what they were doing?"

"What were they doing, bro?"

"Those little shits were bullying Akaashi!"

"What?!" Bokuto's voice booms in anger.

"Bokuto-san, please calm down. And I wasn't being bullied, they were-"

"Yeah, you were. Those fuckers were like ganging up on him, calling him all kinds of names and shit, you know? Who knew those little assholes could be such vicious animals."

"Bro, please tell me you taught them a lesson."

"You bet I did!"

"Yeah, some lesson you taught them." Akaashi rolls his eyes. "You beat up a bunch of fourteen year olds."

"Damn straight."
"Akaashi! Why were you letting those idiots bully you? No, why where they bullying you in the first place?"

Akaashi doesn't want to relive the past, because well, it's in the past and it really doesn't matter anymore. But maybe it's the beer that he's already drank, or the fact Bokuto as well as Kuroo are both expecting an answer, so he finds himself giving them one.

"Because I never fit in with my classmates and this was the first time I actually got invited to a party, okay?" He answers, and he doesn't know why his voice is suddenly trembling? "I thought... I thought that finally I won't be the weird kid, or the nerd, and that they actually wanted to include me and become their friend. Obviously you two have never been in such a situation to know what it feels like!" He notices that both Bokuto and Kuroo are looking at him with this sad expression, like they pity him? And he doesn't want that, not at all.

"I'm sorry, man." Kuroo pats his shoulder. "But then I swooped in and saved the day."

"You actually think that?" Akaashi snorts. "Kuroo-san, before you beat them up, I was just the quiet nerd. Then I turned into the quiet gay nerd with the older boyfriend, and then even the few people that actually asked me about the homework and stuff, were too afraid to say anything to me." Akaashi's face is once again burning, because this was supposed to be a fresh start at Fukurodani for him, and now he's remembering all those stupid shit and he definitely didn't want to out himself in front of his new roommate like this, or to Kuroo, but it just sort of happened.

Oh well.

Kuroo's face falls. "What?"

"Akaashi..." Bokuto begins, but clearly he doesn't know what to say.

The silence is beginning to get really uncomfortable for Akaashi, so he clears his throat.

"Bokuto-san, I really hope you still want to be my roommate and-"

"Akaashi!" Bokuto's roars and his eyes are flashing dangerously. "I'm sorry to hear you had to go through this shit before, but I promise you, here at Fukurodani nobody, believe me, NOBODY, gives two shits about something like that! Especially of all me!" His voice softens. "I'm actually a bit hurt that you would think so lowly of me."

"I'm sorry, Bokuto-san, I-"

"Akaashi, noooo, you don't have to apologize for it." Bokuto throws his arm over his shoulders and pulls him into a hug. "You remember how yesterday I told you about my sleeping problem?" Akaashi nods. "Well, just like you said, you better not hold back on me like this again! We're best friends now and best friends aren't supposed to keep secrets from each other!"

Akaashi's lips turn up in a tiny smile, because this is the first time he's ever been called someone's best friend! And the feeling is really good.

"Well hey now, aren't you two forgetting me?" Kuroo's voice comes from the side, then he throws his arm over Akaashi too.

And there's suddenly a lot more weight than Akaashi's shoulders can support, because really, those two weight like a ton!

"Bokuto-san, Kuroo-san, I really appreciate it, but you're both crushing me."
They both laugh and let go of him.

Although Akaashi had been dreading the moment his sexuality would get brought up or something, he suddenly feels much lighter, because now the secret's out and nothing seems to have changed between them. And he really doesn't have any words to describe how grateful he feels.

But real friendship, it seems, doesn't need words or explanations for it.

"Hey, bro?" Bokuto suddenly turns to Kuroo. "What are you doing on Monday?"

"I dunno yet, why?"

"Whadd'ya say we go beat up those punk ass bitches that gave Akaashi Hell, huh?"

"Totally bro, we should go and-"

Akaashi puts his hands between the two of them. "Please, Bokuto-san, Kuroo-san. I appreciate it, but I don't need you to fight my battles for me."

"Yeah, but if anybody ever-"

"I know, Bokuto-san, thank you. Now how about you tell me how you two met and became-" Akaashi can't believe he actually says that word -"bros."

He should have probably asked one of them, because now Akaashi has to listen to the pair grapple over who gets his attention. In the end, Kuroo dramatically rolls his eyes, and allows Bokuto to go on.

"Okayyy so, we met last year at volleyball camp." He shortly explains, grinning.

"...That's it?"

"Broooo, lemme tell it." Kuroo doesn't wait for Bokuto's reply. "So, last year at volleyball training camp Fukurodani and Nekoma - that's my team - played a couple of practice games against each other, during said volleyball camp, and Bokuto and I became friends."

"Seriously, that's the whole story?"

"Akaashi, you're really smart! How can you not get it?"

Akaashi really doesn't get how two members of opposing teams can just become as close as the two of them are? But he's getting really sleepy now, and there'll probably be more chances in the future to hear that story with more details.

"I get it, Bokuto-san." He says, stifling a yawn.

Akaashi crawls out of the tent, and after opening both their windows, because their room stinks of pizza and beer and he doesn't want to get in trouble, he goes to brush his teeth in the bathroom. As he goes to turn off the lights, the envelope over the top of their drawer catches his attention. But Bokuto can get it himself, he thinks, and he gets into his bed.

"Heyyy, what happened to the lights?" Bokuto's head pops out of the tent entrance, followed by Kuroo's.

"I turned them off. Now goodnight."
"What? Akaashi! But it's not even midnight yet!"

"I don't mind if you two stay up and talk." Akaashi yawns and turns to the side, facing the wall. In fact, he's so tired, he wouldn't care if they turn on the lights and have a concert, because he would sleep through everything.

"Bro, you brought your sleeping bag, right?"

"Yeah, it's in my rucksack."

As Akaashi closes his eyes, he does note that both their voices are not exactly a whisper, but quiet enough, probably for his sake.

Yeah, but then Bokuto's voice rises.

"Brooo, check it out! Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"What'cha got there, bro?"

"A letter! Maybe it's from my fans."

Kuroo roars in laughter. "What fans, man?"

Akaashi hears a tearing of paper, followed by silence. Then.

"This isn't for me? Oi, Akaashi! Akaashi, wake up!"

"Shh, bro, let him sleep and read it for me."

So Bokuto begins reading it out loud.

"Dear, Akaashi, thank you for letting me share your History book with you. I'm really glad we get to sit together in all our classes. I hope you have a great weekend! P.S. I would really like it if next week we could have lunch together! M.A."

Kuroo is chuckling, while Bokuto gets out of the tent and nudges Akaashi awake.

"...What is it, Bokuto-san?"

"Who is M.A.?"

"What?" Bokuto hands him the letter and Akaashi reads it over. "Oh. It's Ayame."

"Who is Ayame?"

"A girl from my year. Now please let-"

"Is she stupid or something? Does she not know you eat lunch with the rest of the volleyball team? Oi, Akaashi, answer me!"

"No, Bokuto-san, she's very smart. Now please-"

"Duuuude!" Kuroo laughs loudly. "Your roommate's been here for five days and he already got a love letter, while you've been here for a year and two months and nothing! Hahahaha!"

"Kuroo-san, it's not a love letter. Now please, tone it down a notch - or ten - because I want to be rested up for volleyball practice tomorrow."
That seems to do the trick, because the room goes quiet at once.

*Akaashi, you have to get up!*

"Bokuto-san, it's a Saturday. It's not even 7 am yet!"

"Well it's your own fault, because you signed us up for Lake Walk. And it starts in fifteen minutes. So get up!"

Fuck!

"Why do they not specify it's this early in the morning?" He croaks out as he begins dressing up.

"Dunno." Bokuto grins. "But it's okay, we can have an early start to the day."

After Akaashi's done with the bathroom, he points at the quiet tent in the middle.

"Bokuto-san, shouldn't we wake him up too?"

"No, I don't have to do any activities, because I don't go to your stupid school." Kuroo's sleepy voice carries over to them.

Akaashi thinks it's really unfair that Kuroo gets to sleep in, while Bokuto and him have to get out and exercise. So, as he walks out the door, he adds.

"Yeah, figures. I'm pretty sure if Bokuto-san and you had a running contest, he'll beat you."

"What did you just say?"

Just like Akaashi expected, Kuroo all but takes the tent along with him, as he gets up. He does try to keep his face composed and not laugh out loud, even though that's quite the challenge.

Then the three of them head down and join the rest of the students and Masha, who were also dumb enough to sign up for this stupid Lake Walk. The second that they're all out the door, Kuroo and Bokuto start sprinting and this time Akaashi doesn't hold back his laughter.

Morons! he thinks as he walks behind with the rest of the group, smiling. He congratulates himself on his quick thinking, because now he doesn't have to listen to their blabbering mouths this early, before even having his coffee.

It's just past 8 am when they make it back into the school and Akaashi is happy to discover that the kitchen is full of all kinds of goodies. And since there are no classes, he can drink his coffee and eat a big breakfast without being rushed, or worrying about falling asleep. He carries his tray back to Dining Room B and the second Bokuto and Kuroo see him enter, before he's even had a chance to sit down, they start.

"Akaashi! I totally beat him!"

"Shut up, you loud owl, you're lying, I beat you!"

"Nuh huh!"

"Liar!"

"You're the liar!"
"No, you are!"

Akaashi quickly takes a couple of sips from his coffee, because it's still too early for this shit.

"Akaashi! Tell us who won!"

"Sorry, Bokuto-san, I didn't see."

"I have longer legs, so clearly, I won." Kuroo says, smirking.

"I have faster legs, so clearly, I'm the one that won." Bokuto replies.

"Bokuto-san, Kuroo-san, you are both winners. Congratulations."

"Pfff what sort of bullshit is that?" Bokuto complains and Kuroo grunts in agreement.

"Yeah, that's total crap."

"Fine. Then how about we play the silence game?" Akaashi suggests. "Whoever speaks first, they lose."

"Blaa, I lose." Bokuto says. "Fuck that game, it's boring."

At least I tried, Akaashi thinks.

"Dude, what kind of idiots do you take us for? Come on, roomie, give us a better challenge!"

"Kuroo-san, please don't call me that."

"Alright, Akaashi, then. Give us a better game!"

"Okay, fine. But let me eat my breakfast first."

Bokuto and Kuroo nod in agreement, but they're both staring at Akaashi, counting every single one of his bites until he's done.

God, so annoying.

"Bokuto-san, what time does volleyball practice begin?"

"Later."

Sigh. "I take it Kuroo-san stays and joins the team for practice?"

"Yeah, you got that right." Kuroo smirks. "I always come over the weekend and help your sorry ass team get better."

"Bro! That's totally not cool."

"Sorry, bro, you're right. That wasn't cool."

Neither of you are not even remotely cool, Akaashi thinks.

Two hours later, as all of Fukurodani's volleyball team join them in the middle court, greeted with a small wave from Akaashi, he is grateful that the official practice is about to begin, because he's run out of challenge ideas for Bokuto and Kuroo. He made them compete in doing suicides, jumping higher in the air as well as on the ground, climbing a rope, and they are still on their feet,
jumping higher in the air as well as on the ground, climbing a rope, and they are still on their feet, not even out of breath.

Not only that, they actually join the team for the warm up laps, as well as stretching. Then suddenly something occurs to Akaashi. He walks over to the manager and asks.

"Doesn't Fukurodani have a coach?"

"Yeah, sort of." She explains. "Well, the team practices under Bokuto and my supervision and the coach only joins us when we have official games."

"Eh? How come?"

She shrugs. "Well I come up with the game strategies, and Bokuto makes sure the team is prepared and follows through. The coach only comes, because we're supposed to have one, even though we don't need him. Why do you ask, Akaashi? Do you not think I'm good enough for the job?" She winks.

"No, no, that's not what I meant, I just-"

"Calm down, I was just kidding." She chuckles. "It's unusual, but since we got to Nationals last year without someone coaching us, the principal let us do it again this year."

"That's really impressive."

"Right?" She grins. "Now enough stalling and let's go to court one, so you can practice serving."

After his hour of serving, as well as five minutes of suicides are up, Akaashi and the manager go back to the middle court and join the rest of the team. She begins to spread the members into two teams, when Bokuto yells.

"Hold up, Yukie! I have an idea!"

"This can't be good." She mumbles quiet enough for Akaashi to hear her, who smiles. "What is it, Bokuto?"

"Kuroo, Akaashi and I will play against the rest of the team!" Bokuto explains, grinning.

A couple of snorts follow.

"Bokuto, are you for real?" Konoha asks loudly. "We're totally gonna wipe the floor with you three!"

"I'd like to see you owls try!" Kuroo smirks.

"At least take Komi on your team?" Yukie suggests.

"Nuh uh! Kuroo's a Middle Blocker, I'm a Wing Spiker and Akaashi's our setter! We don't need a Libero!" Bokuto replies confidently.

"Alright, but if you guys lose, you know you'll be doing suicides."

Bokuto and Kuroo both exchange smirks, while Akaashi quietly sighs, because he knows he'll be doing suicides in the end. No matter how good his teammates are, there's just no way three people can cover all of the court. Especially when he knows how good the opposing team is.

They really do end up losing, no surprises there. But the score is just so close, Akaashi is beyond impressed. Still, as the three of them line up and Yukie blows the whistle, he doesn't enjoy hearing
the jeers coming their way from the winning team, as they watch them suffer at the side of the court.

Once they're done, he walks over to the bench and thirstily drinks from his water. Kuroo joins him.

"No wonder Bokuto's so proud of you. Your setting skills are really impressive."

"Oh. Thank you, Kuroo-san."

"You might be even better than our own setter." He scowls. "He's a first year like you, and he joined the volleyball team, because I kind of pressured him into it."

"That sounds familiar." Akaashi snorts.

"Come on, aren't you glad you joined the team?" Akaashi nods. "And you haven't even had your first game yet! Man, I'm telling you, when you walk on the court, see the bleachers full of people, all screaming and cheering you on, you're gonna be speechless. Mark my words."

Akaashi notices that Kuroo's smirk is almost permanently on his face. And after less than twenty four hours later, he doesn't mind it much, because he's getting used it. He is also not surprised by the fact that Bokuto and Kuroo are the only ones that stay behind in the gym, practicing.

After lunch, Akaashi asks Konoha and Sarukui if they wanna join him for a walk outside the school, but they both decline, because they want to relax and tell him he can join them in watching a movie if he wants to. But Akaashi really needs to get some art supplies before Monday, so after he asks for directions, he heads back to his room and showers. He dresses up, then folds the stupid tent and puts it back into Bokuto's side of the wardrobe. Then he signs out and leaves the campus.

Not even ten minutes later, Bokuto calls him and demands to know where he is and why hasn't he returned to the gym? Akaashi explains that he needs school stuff, and Bokuto only hangs up, after Akaashi promises to come back to the gym after he's done.

Akaashi realizes this is the first time he's been alone since joining Fukurodani on Monday and even though he loves the fact he's made a lot of friends, he enjoys his walk, alone. Because he doesn't feel lonely.

He roams the shop, taking his time in going through the aisles full of stationary and art stuff. He happily discovers a set of owl stickers, with complimentary words like "good job", "well done" and so on, and instantly takes them, because he knows that he's going to make Bokuto's homework checking a lot more interesting this way. Then he gets a couple of owl patterned pencils, pens and notebooks and heads to the cashier.

He makes it back to school way earlier than he actually thought he would, so he changes back into his gym clothes and joins Bokuto and Kuroo.

"Akaashi! Welcome back!" Bokuto's face instantly lights up. "We missed you!"

"Bokuto-san, I was gone for like two hours?"

"Yeah, exactly!" Bokuto's smile is so genuine, that Akaashi feels his own mouth smiling in return. Only not as wide.

Then Bokuto asks him to set for him, while Kuroo blocks. He really doesn't know how the time flies by, because they've not only missed lunch, but it's almost dinner time! Wtf?
As all three of them head out the gym, both Bokuto and Kuroo congratulate him on keeping up with their practice. After dinner, he heads back to the room, while the other two line up for seconds. He takes another quick shower and puts on his pj's and t shirt.

Akaashi sits at his desk and starts working on his drawing from art class. He's just about done with the outline and reaches for his newly purchased colored pencils, when he feels someone's hot breath against his neck.

"Bokuto-san, please don't-"

"Guess again." He can actually hear Kuroo smirk, before turning his head.

"Kuroo-san, please don't do that."

"Why, does it make you uncomfortable?"

"Yes. Where's Bokuto-san?"

Kuroo shrugs. "He went for a run."

"Why didn't you join him?"

"Ouch." Kuroo gasps. "Are you trying to get rid of me?"

"No." Akaashi replies, even though the honest answer is yes. "But I would like to continue without being interrupted."

"Alright. Nice drawing, by the way."

"Thank you."

"You do realize that if Bokuto sees it, he'll lose his shit, right? Or is that what you're going for?"

Again, the damn smirk.

"It's for my art class."

"Uh huh." Snort. "Well anyway, if you need me, I'll be in the shower."

"I won't."

"You might get lonely, though?" Smirk. "If you do, please feel free to join me." Wink.

"No!" Akaashi splutters, which makes Kuroo laugh. "Thank you, but no thank you. Now, please, Kuroo-san, get on with your shower, because you're stinking up the room."

When Akaashi can hear the shower water running, he closes his eyes and relaxes. God. Why is Bokuto taking so freaking long? Normally he wouldn't care, but if it means he's stuck with Kuroo, alone, he most certainly cares.

All too quickly, Kuroo is done with the shower and walks out only in his towel around his hips. Then Akaashi hears the bed creak.

"Kuroo-san, you better be wetting Bokuto-san's bed and not mine." He grunts, but when he turns his head around, he's definitely not surprised to see that Kuroo is very much on his own bed, wetting it.
Kuroo lets his hand display his naked chest, in the same way girls present a car, or some sort of prize in a tv show?

"So. Like what you see?" Smirk.

"No." Akaashi turns his attention back to his drawing, silently cursing Bokuto for taking so long! Dammit.

"I don't blame you for admiring my physique."

Akaashi snorts so loud that he's surprised his nose doesn't fall off in the process. I'm not even looking at you?, he thinks.

"You know, you don't have to be so shy around me."

Akaashi ignores him, but Kuroo doesn't seem to get idea. Or if he does get it, he lets it slide by, in a very Bokuto manner.

"So, since you folded up my bed, should I take it as an invitation to yours?"

Akaashi can no longer keep quiet.

"No, Kuroo-san, most certainly not."

"Hmm, you could've fooled me." Chuckle.

Akaashi doesn't know what he did so wrong in his life to deserve this? But then he hears an announcement over the speakers, telling him it's smores time into Dining Room A and he all but sprints out of the room. But not before Kuroo yells a "get me some too, please!".

Akaashi has no appetite and doesn't bother actually eating some, but he has manners, and even though he doesn't feel like it, he makes a couple and puts them in a napkin. He remains at the front desk and awaits for Bokuto to come back, before actually going upstairs.

Bokuto is very happy to see him and instantly stuff his mouth with a smore, before Akaashi can warn him the chocolate's too hot, which results in him getting a mouthful of Bokuto spit all over his face.

Nice.

"Sorry." Bokuto grins and tries to wipe Akaashi's face for him, which makes it worse, because he's drenched in sweat.

Yuck!

Sighing loudly, Akaashi uses a spare napkin to remove all the things that don't belong on his face away. And he's glad to see, after they walk into their room, that Kuroo is actually dressed in shorts and a t shirt. But he's still in Akaashi's bed and he extends a hand expectantly.

"Kuroo-san, you're not getting any smores unless you get off my bed."

He rolls his eyes, but does move to the floor. As he begins munching on one, Bokuto goes into the bathroom, leaving the two of them alone again.

God!

"So," Kuroo begins conversationally, "you already know that Bokuto can't sleep, huh?"
"Yes."

"And have you witnessed one of his mood swings?"

"No, I haven't."

Akaashi is actually surprised to see Kuroo's face grow serious. "You better be prepared for them, because it'll happen eventually."

"...Okay."

Kuroo finishes chewing, then continues in the same serious manner. "I'm not fucking around, though, you're gonna have to find a way to deal with them."

"I didn't think that you were "fucking around", Kuroo-san." Akaashi replies. "Konoha-san already told me about them."

"Good. It's not like you have the strange case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde on your hands, but- hey, quit looking at me like that, I already told you I read!" Kuroo explains. "I really hope you can keep up, though."

"Bokuto-san is my friend." Akaashi replies defensively. "So whatever mood swings he has, I'll do my best to help him through them."

"I'm glad to hear you say that." Kuroo nods, then smiles softly. "He's my best friend, and I'm really glad you of all people ended up as his roommate."

"Thank you, Kuroo-san." Akaashi replies awkwardly, because really, what exactly is he supposed to answer to that?

"Now, listen carefully to what I'm about to say," Kuroo begins, and Akaashi nods his head silently, to show him he's listening carefully. "You are an official member of Bokuro time, so we need to come up with a different name."

Akaashi sighs. He doesn't know why he actually expected something important to come out of Kuroo's mouth. Then Bokuto joins the two and Akaashi quietly listens as they start brainstorming for a new name for themselves.

"How about Akabokuro?" Kuroo suggests.

"No, I want my name to be first!" Bokuto replies.

"How about Bokuroaka?" Kuroo tries and Bokuto nods his head in approval. "Do you agree with it, Akaashi?"

Akaashi says "yeah", because he really doesn't care about it at all?

After Bokuto changes out of his towel, he pulls up his chair with his laptop and asks Kuroo if he would mind having a marathon of The Hobbit. Because, he explains, Akaashi and him finished their Lord of the Rings marathon on Thursday. Kuroo doesn't mind, but as Bokuto goes to turn off the lights, he exclaims.

"Brooo, I have a better idea!"

"What is it, bro?"
"The Hobbit only has three movies." Kuroo says. "You two can watch those during the week."

No, Akaashi thinks, we are really not going to do that.

"So what do you suggest we watch now?"

"Let's do Star Wars!" Kuroo grins. "There's six of them!"

Oh no, Akaashi thinks.

"Brooo! Let's totally do that."

Then it hits him.

"Guys!" He yells in excitement so loudly, that Bokuto and Kuroo blink in surprise. "We should reserve tickets for the December premier of "The Force Awakens"!"

"Oh my God, yes! Akaashi, you're so smart!"

"Fuck yes, let's do that!"

After googling the closest cinema to Fukurodani, Akaashi calls, ignoring the Chewbacca noises both Bokuto and Kuroo are making in the background.

Then they start the movie and Akaashi once again finds himself sandwiched between the two. But he doesn't care, because he loves Star Wars enough to suffer through the loud comments coming from both his left and right side.

Once they're done with the original three, though, Akaashi feels his attention slipping from the screen, because his eyelids grow heavy and he wants to sleep. He's glad that there's no Lake Walk in the morning and after an entire week of getting up early, he can finally sleep in!

Yes!

A couple of times, Bokuto tries to shake him awake, yelling "Akaashi, look! Look, Akaashi!", but Akaashi is too tired to look, and eventually he's allowed to fall asleep without being interrupted.

But then his head slumps to the right, and he feels a hand burying itself into his hair, gently stroking him. It's nice, though, soothing, and it reminds him of his mother playing with his hair until he falls asleep when he was younger.

Then, he gets a painful elbow right between his ribs, instantly waking him up, as well as making him cough.

"Ouch! What was that for?" He complains sleepily.

"Akaashi, you fell asleep on Kuroo!" Bokuto grunts. "Come on, get up and watch!"

Akaashi doesn't see what the big deal is, but Bokuto pulls at the edges of his t shirt until he's up. He blinks and wipes the sleep away from his eyes, when he realizes that it was Kuroo that was stroking his hair?

Oh.

"Bro, just let him sleep. I don't mind if he falls asleep on me again."

"Well, I mind!" Bokuto complains.
"Why?" Kuroo asks.

"Because! We're watching the movie and I want him to watch with us!" Bokuto replies.

"You sure that's all it is, bro?"

Akaashi doesn't need for the lights to be on, he can hear Kuroo's smirk spread all over his face in the darkness.

And so does Bokuto.

"Yeah, that's all it is! What else it it supposed to be?"

"Dunno, bro, just making sure." Smirk again.

Then they start the next movie and Akaashi really can't believe he's still awake, because he can hear the roosters from the windows? After stealing a glance on each of his sides, he notices that both Bokuto and Kuroo are wide awake, watching. Sighing internally, he watches along and every time he catching his eyes closing, he slaps his cheeks awake.

At seven thirty Bokuto pauses the movie and all three of them head downstairs for breakfast. After they take their trays into Dining Room B Akaashi takes his usual spot at the left, while Bokuto sits next to him. Kuroo sits on the other side, across from the both of them.

Despite the fact Akaashi is really sleepy, he notices the inexplicable tension in between. So he decide to break in the only way he knows how to.

"I challenge you two to a pancake eating contest!"

The second he says that, Bokuto and Kuroo fork their stacks and without even cutting them, stuff them into their mouths. Akaashi's chin triples in disgust as he pushes his neck as far away as it would go, because really, the picture is not at all pretty.

He definitely regrets speaking, when clearly, he should have kept his mouth shut.

By the time Konoha and Sarukui join them at the table, there are no pancakes left in the kitchen and they both complain about it. Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi all exchange glances and suddenly they're all grinning silently.

So in the end his plan worked, Akaashi thinks.

"You three look like shit." Konoha says eventually. "You stayed up all night, didn't you?"

"Yes! We had a..." Bokuto thinks carefully. "an all nighter!"

"Good job, Bokuto-san!"

"Well done, bro!"

"Glad to see you've learned the difference." Sarukui mumbles after swallowing his mouthful of brownie.

"Hey hey heyyy!"

"Quiet down, you loud owl!" Kuroo grunts. "I'm surprised Akaashi hasn't gone deaf, because of you!"
"Akaashi doesn't mind me being loud! Nyah nyah!" Bokuto pokes his tongue out at him. When Akaashi doesn't reply, a nudge in the rib follows. "Right, Akaashi?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

Kuroo snorts. "He's only said that, because he wants you to shut up."

"Did not!" Bokuto turns to Akaashi. "You didn't say that to make me shut up, did you, Akaashi? Of course he didn't." Bokuto replies, before Akaashi's given him an answer.

After Akaashi hears that volleyball practice is at 4:30 pm, he pockets a banana and a yogurt and heads upstairs. He has food now, so he doesn't care about skipping lunch. Just as he's settled comfortably in his bed, he hears Bokuto and Kuroo's loud voices through the corridor, announcing their arrival.

"Bro, you have no idea how uncomfortable the sleeping bag is." Kuroo complains.

"You can share my bed, bro?" Bokuto suggests.

"I'd rather share a bed with Akaashi." Kuroo says.

"Yeah, well Akaashi doesn't want that, right, Akaashi?" Bokuto asks quickly.

"No, Bokuto-san, I really don't." Then he hears a dangerous creak from above. "I swear to God, if you two break the bed, I'm going to kill you both."

Silence.

Akaashi does get a couple of hours of undisturbed sleep, at least until volleyball practice, which is more than he could have hoped for.

By the time they've finished warming up and stretching, he's wide awake. Bokuto demands the teams separate as yesterday, and even though Akaashi really doesn't want to be on the losing side again, he doesn't voice his objections out loud.

It's actually a miracle that they end up winning? And he finds himself at the side of the court with Bokuto and Kuroo as the losing team lines up for suicides. He doesn't join their loud sneers, though, and he's beyond happy that he didn't, because Yukie blows her whistle and tells the pair to line up as well.

"Oh fuck that shit, I'm not in Fukurodani." Kuroo laughs and remains next to the manager and Akaashi, while Bokuto groans loudly.

Kuroo's loud laughter echoes through the court as he watches Bokuto running, and Bokuto's cursing him the entire time. Akaashi's impressed that Bokuto can actually do that without coughing out a lung.

When they are dismissed and head for the kitchen, Bokuto blocks Kuroo and tells him that since he didn't do suicides, he isn't allowed to have any dinner. Kuroo takes a seat, but not before he pleads with Akaashi to bring him something to eat.

Akaashi feels obliged to bring food back, because if it wasn't for Kuroo's amazing blocks, he would've had to do suicides too. But as he takes his seat and hands Kuroo a plate, who smirkingly accepts, Bokuto gasps and his fork and knife drop loudly against his plate.

"Akaashi!"
Akaashi apologetically shrugs his shoulders, because Bokuto looks like Akaashi just stabbed him through the chest with a knife?

Kuroo doesn't help the matter, because he keeps up his smirk until he's completely polished his plate clean. The smirk continues even after they're done with dinner and head upstairs, so he can get his rucksack. He politely asks Akaashi to send him off downstairs and Akaashi does that, while silently cursing his parents for teaching him manners, because this is all their fault.

Study Hall begins and Akaashi starts with his homework. But after an hour of silence, he feels guilty, even though he didn't do anything wrong to actually offend Bokuto.

Still, he decides to make amends by writing a note in their own made up language. Then, for good measure, he puts a cute owl sticker that says "Sorry" at the bottom, and throws it over Bokuto's desk.

Eventually, he gets the note back with a simple "That's a cute owl sticker." He decides to try harder and draws two owls with small "Bokuto" and "Akaashi" pointing arrows.

"Akaashi! That's not fair!" Bokuto finally breaks the silence. "You're using your drawing skills to get me talking!"

And it worked, Akaashi thinks, as he feels the corners of his mouth turning upwards.

"Sorry, Bokuto-san."

Bokuto turns around, studying Akaashi's expression.

"Akaashi! Please don't take Kuroo's side over mine again!"

"But I didn't take his side? I just gave him dinner." He explains. "Which he deserved, because he helped our team win in volleyball."

Bokuto grunts. "You're doing it again!"

How childish are you?, Akaashi all but groans out loud. But after remembering Konoha and Kuroo's warnings of Bokuto's mood swings, he's gonna be damned before he ends up bringing one upon himself!

"Sorry." He adds, even though he doesn't really feel sorry, because wtf is the big deal?

"It's okay." Bokuto concludes.

"Bokuto-san, would you like me to help you with your homework?"

"Akaashi! About time you asked!"

The two of them move to the floor and Akaashi quietly corrects all of Bokuto's work. Once he's done, he patiently explains to Bokuto his mistakes and rewards him a couple of owl stickers.

Then he actually feels touched, because Bokuto asks for his help in reading lines for Theater and Drama. Automatically he agrees and accepts the big script Bokuto thrusts into his hands. He studies it for a couple of moments silently.

"Bokuto-san? All those lines that are highlighted in yellow, are they yours?"

"Yeah!" Bokuto grins.
"And uh... do you actually have to learn them by heart?"

"Of course."

Then why did you ask me to just help you reading through them, Akaashi thinks. But he doesn't dare asking that out loud, because it's more than a miracle Bokuto wants to do actual school work.

"Bokuto-san, when is it due?"

"Tomorrow."

Oh.

Oh fuck.

"Bokuto-san, it's really irresponsible of you for not doing this over the weekend!" He hears his voice scolding.

"Akaashi, does that mean you won't help me?"

Sigh. "Of course I will help you, Bokuto-san."

The bell rings indicating the end of Study Hall, but Bokuto remains on his spot.

"...Bokuto-san? Are you not going downstairs?"

"No."

Akaashi blinks in surprise. "Then would you mind if I go and get myself a coffee?"

Because it's going to be a really long night, and Akaashi wants to be awake in order to help.

Bokuto jumps on his feet at once. "Akaashi, I'll go get you one! Double espresso, yes? I'll get you two!" Then he bolts out the door.

Jared brings them their laptops and phones and after he leaves, Akaashi isn't surprised to see he has a message. He thinks it's from his father, but it's an unknown number. He reads it.

"Thanks for dinner, roomie! ;) I had a lot of fun this weekend, hope you did too! ;)

He inputs Kuroo's number into his phone, but doesn't reply. And when Bokuto returns with two plastic cups of coffee for him, he doesn't know why he feels guilty about it, like he just went behind Bokuto's back?

Bokuto takes a seat on the floor next to him and Akaashi tries to push all thoughts in the back of his mind, but it's not working.

And Bokuto does notice.

"Akaashi, is anything wrong?"

Sighing, he licks his lips. "Bokuto-san, did you give my phone number to Kuroo-san?"

"Yeah, why do you ask?" Bokuto suddenly scowls. "Why, did that stupid cat write something to you?"

Akaashi doesn't have time to reply, because Bokuto snatches his phone out of his hands. He reads
the message and his scowl grows even bigger. Akaashi doesn't care, because now it's out in the
open and they can proceed with the script without any interruptions.

But Bokuto doesn't agree. He takes his own phone and calls Kuroo.

"You!" He grumbles and it's the first time he doesn't greet Kuroo with a "bro". "Yeah, you! Why
are you texting Akaashi?"

Akaashi hears Kuroo's laughter coming from the other side, but he doesn't hear his reply.

"No! You can't! Why? Because he's my setter! No! Not Fukurodani's setter, he's my setter! I'm the
one that discovered his talent! What do you mean that doesn't make him my setter?! Of course it
does!"

Akaashi's had enough of this childish bullshit. He snatches Bokuto's phone and yells a
"Goodnight, Kuroo-san!" into the speaker, then hangs up and places it out of Bokuto's reach.
Then, he turns to Bokuto. "Bokuto-san!"

"What? I didn't do anything!" Bokuto pouts, crossing his arms.

"Yes, you did! And I would really appreciate it if you didn't do that again, because it was very
disrespectful." Bokuto doesn't reply, so he continues. "I don't understand why you're so angry?
Shouldn't you be glad your "bro" and I get along?"

Grunt.

"Bokuto-san, this is the first time in my life I have people that I can call friends." Akaashi says
softly. "And I don't want Kuroo-san and you fighting over my attention."

"Akaashi! I'm jealous, okay?"

Akaashi blinks. "But... why?"

What is there to be jealous of?

"Because I don't want you and Kuroo becoming better friends than you and I!" Bokuto explains,
and for the first time, it's him than can't keep up with Akaashi's gaze and looks at the floor.
"Kuroo's really cool and he's not annoying like me."

Akaashi's hand automatically reaches over and gently rubs Bokuto's shoulder.

"Bokuto-san, I don't find you annoying at all. And to me, you're way cooler than Kuroo-san could
ever be."

Bokuto perks up. "...You really mean that?"

"Yes, of course I do. " Akaashi smiles. "There's no question about it."

"Thanks, Akaashi. Not only for saying it, but also for not laughing at me and my dumb
insecurities."

"I would never laugh at you about this, Bokuto-san. I'm really grateful that you're so honest with
me."

"Me too." Bokuto finally smiles back.

"Now, let's get on with the script, so you can show it who's boss, Bokuto-san!"
It's nearly 2:00 am, when Akaashi notices that Bokuto is not paying attention to him and falling asleep. After two double espressos, Akaashi feels ready to run a marathon, though.

"Bokuto-san! Do you remember what you told me on my first night here?" After he gets a sleepy "mnoo", he continues. "You told me that we are owls! And owls are night creatures! So, please, Bokuto-san, act like one!"

Bokuto instantly wakes up, grinning. "Hey hey heyyyy!"

"Yes, exactly!" Akaashi encourages. "Hey hey heyyyy!"

Yeah, but their excitement is short lived, because Jared walks in and writes them both up for detention.

"Oh, shit." Bokuto whispers with an apologetic smile. "Akaashi, sorry for getting you into trouble."

Akaashi covers his mouth as he chuckles quietly. "It's okay, Bokuto-san. Let's take your desk lamp in my bed, so we can finish with your script."

After they cover themselves with Akaashi's blanket, they get on with the script. And by 5:00 am, Akaashi is so proud, because the script has become Bokuto's "bitch". They're both extremely tired, so Akaashi doesn't object to Bokuto falling asleep in his bed.

And even though Akaashi has detention, and he hasn't had enough sleep, he's not mad at Bokuto, when he feels himself being gently shaken awake at 7:00 am. Because they're friends, and that means sticking through thick and thin together.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

I wrote this while drinking lots of wine, so it's probably not as funny as my drunken mind thought. Oops?

Akaashi has no idea how Bokuto, who's gotten the same amount of sleep as him, can be so damn lively. Because Bokuto is already out of the bathroom and dressed up, while Akaashi's still sitting on his bed, yawning. So much for catching up on sleep over the weekend, he thinks. He buttons his school shirt three times the wrong way, so in the end, Bokuto steps in and does it for him.

As he's brushing his teeth, he hears an announcement over the speakers.

"Bokuto Koutarou and Akaashi Keiji, report to the dean's office immediately."

Well shit.

"Bokuto-san, how much trouble do you think we're in?" He quietly asks as they walk downstairs, panic taking over his entire brain. You just stayed up after Lights Out, you'll just get scolded for that and nothing more, he thinks to himself, trying to calm down.

"Akaashi, we're not in trouble, relax."

"How can you be so sure? Why else would be called in the dean's office this early?"

"If we're in trouble we'd get called in at the front desk, because that's where the principal's office is. Seriously, Akaashi, the dean's chill, relax."

And before they walk inside, Bokuto winks at him.

The dean's sitting at his desk and makes a hand gesture for the both of them to take a seat. Akaashi has just about forgotten how to breathe as he sits down, and he doesn't dare look behind to see what is taking Bokuto so long.

"So, I see you two got yourselves in detention already and you haven't even had your first class yet."

Akaashi feels his head nodding guiltily and blinks in shock as he watches Bokuto walk up to the dean's desk and sit at the edge of it. Then he crosses his legs and starts swinging his feet, all carefree.
Akaashi wishes they'd been asked to come into the office separately. And then, as if that isn't wildly inappropriate behavior so far, Bokuto opens his mouth.

"Senseeiii, quit acting so serious, you're gonna give our setter a heart attack." Bokuto sighs dramatically and if it wasn't for the "sensei" part, you would think he's talking to another classmate. "Can you believe Jared wrote us up when we were doing actual school work, huh? What a dick!"

"Language, Bokuto!"

The dean's eyebrows knit together and he stares at the both of them silently. Akaashi concentrates on calming himself with his breathing, because surely he can't be held responsible for Bokuto?

"Sorry, Sensei, but he is a dick." Bokuto shrugs. "Now come on, stop doing that thing you always do to the first years to scare them with your authority."

Ohmygod, Bokuto, stop saying the word dick and shut the fuck up, please! he tries to telepathically pass to Bokuto's thick skull.

"Seriously, Sensei, this can't be good for Akaashi's health, just look at him!" Bokuto points, grinning.

To Akaashi's surprise, the dean throws his head back and laughs???

"Ah, Bokuto! You better not tell the rest of the first years about that! Sorry, Akaashi, I couldn't resist." Chuckle. "To this day, Bokuto remains the only first year that I wasn't able to scare by calling them into my office." He explains, which makes Bokuto's grin spread wider.

"So we are not here, because we're in trouble?" Akaashi asks.

"Of course you're in trouble! Hah, I'm just kidding. You're so gullible."

Last week, at about the exact same time, he was in the same office, and the dean was so formal? And now he's like laughing with Bokuto and making jokes at Akaashi's expense. Wtf.

"No, young man, you're not in trouble. Quite the contrary, actually." The dean smiles. "Over the past week that you've been here, I've read some teacher reports as well as heard from other students that not only are you doing great with your studies, but also helping others out with theirs. Well done, Akaashi!"

"Uhh, thank you, Sensei." Akaashi mumbles quietly, because this is like the last thing he expected to hear.

"Akaashi's the smartest!" Bokuto says proudly.

"Indeed! If after only five school days he managed to help you get an A in your AP English Literature class."

"I got an A on the vocab quiz?" Bokuto blinks, then throws his fists into the air. "Hey hey heyyyy! I'm the best!"

"Well done, Bokuto-san."

Bokuto just looks so happy and proud, like it's the first time in his life he's ever gotten an A? And it might as well be, excluding gym class obviously.
Good, Akaashi thinks, he should be proud. He studied hard and prepared for it.

"Bokuto, don't tell Mr Burns I spoiled you the surprise, I'm sure he'd want to announce it class."
Then he claps his hands for their attention. "Akaashi. I read detailed reports from both Bokuto and your volleyball manager that you've been doing excellent in volleyball too."

"Sensei, just wait until you see him during our first game!" Bokuto says excitedly. "We're sooo gonna kick ass! Hey hey heyyy!"

"I'm definitely looking forward to seeing that." The dean then conspiratorially whispers. "I know I shouldn't pick favorites, but volleyball's definitely my favourite team to watch."

"Of course it is, we're the best!"

"You're an excellent example of what we want our Fukurodani students to be, Akaashi." The dean says smiling. "Which gets me to my next point. I want to appoint you as a tutor."

"A tutor?" Akaashi echoes.

"Yes. We do have a couple of second and third year tutors, and I believe there's one from your year, who help the rest of the students with their studies. And since you are good at explaining, I want you to join them. We're almost at the middle of our first term and there are going to be midterm exams coming up shortly. A lot of GPAs will drop and the students that need help with raising them, would be put in detention, where you and the rest of the tutors would help them. Of course, you'll only be appointed for helping out with the classes that you take and not others. But I sense your AP Math teacher will need dire assistance from you. All of the teachers offer an hour of help to their students once a week, but it's more of a quick Q&A rather than helping out with homework or preparing for tests. So. What do you say, Akaashi?"

"Wow, thank you, Sensei. I would love to help."

"Wait a second!" Bokuto grumbles. "What about volleyball? If Akaashi gets stuck after school helping out some idiot, he'll miss practice!"

"Calm down, Bokuto, I'll get to that too. Akaashi, as a tutor you get special privileges of course."

"What privileges does Akaashi get?" Bokuto asks.

"He gets to join parent teacher meetings and tell them how their kids are doing."

"Boooring."

"I'm not finished, Bokuto. He also gets to join teacher conferences and discussions. So, if a student faces suspension or expulsion, Akaashi's decision and vote gets counted in like the teachers'."

"Boooring."

"And he gets these." The dean pulls a stack of papers out and hands them to Bokuto.

"Nooooo wayyyyyy!" Bokuto blinks in surprise, then grins. "Akaashi! You get detention slips! Which means you can actually write people up! Holy shit this is the best! There's a guy in my Theater and Drama class who's really annoying and it'll be so cool if you give him a detention!"

"And this is exactly why those are only given to responsible students that become tutors, Bokuto. Akaashi, I'm not even going to bother explaining that you shouldn't abuse your authority, because
I know you won't. Most of our tutors don't really use them, because the RCs do it, but you should keep yours just in case."

"Hell yeah he'll keep them! Akaashi, with me as Captain and you with your detention slips, we would rule the school! Akaashi, we're untouchable! Like Batman and Robin! Dibs on Batman! Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"Bokuto-san, please calm down. Uhhh, Sensei? I do have the same question as Bokuto-san, though. What about volleyball practice? I'm not up to par with the rest of the team and I would really like to catch up and not be the teams..." He decides to borrow Kuroo's word for it "dead weight."

"Dead weight?" Bokuto snorts. "Akaashi, where the fuck did you ever hear that word?"

"Language, Bokuto!"

"Yeah, yeah, sorry."

"Anyway."
The dean looks back to Akaashi. "Since you're going to be a tutor, you won't have actual Study Hall. You can use your phone, laptop, go out and wander the halls, whatever you want as long as you don't disrupt the others. But you're the only tutor that's a boarding student, so a lot of the dorm residents will be coming to you for help. They would ask an RC to send you over to their room for assistance. And you don't have an actual Lights Out hour, so you could do your actual work either during Study Hall or later on, whatever, it's your call. But back to business. I know Jared wrote you two up, but I'm freeing you both off detention today. Well, Bokuto at least. Because you, Akaashi, starting today will be tutoring after school. And once you're done with that, you can go join the volleyball team. I know you'll miss most of practice, but this is exactly why I'm giving you this." The dean hands a key to Bokuto.

"Detention slips, no Study Hall and now this? Oh my God, Akaashi, do you know what this is?"

Judging by Bokuto's excitement it must be the key to the goddamn universe?

Oh. Which means-

"The key to the gym?" He asks, although he is sure of it.

"Yes!" Bokuto grins.

"Akaashi, get your copy of the gym key, please, because if it remains in Bokuto's hands any longer, he won't pay attention to what I'm going to say next." Bokuto drops it into Akaashi's open palm and they both await for the dean to continue. "Your gym key means you can go and practice there any time you want."

"Ehhh? Even if he wants to practice at like 3:00 am?" Bokuto blinks.

"Sure, if he wants to. But I'm sure he would prefer to sleep instead, because Akaashi's brain doesn't work like yours." Chuckle. "Bokuto, since you're the ace and your manager said you both work great as a duo, you will be allowed to join Akaashi for his practice too."

"Hey hey heyyyyyy!" Bokuto hoots happily.

"Your Study Hall can start at 7:45 pm. And no don't give me that face, you should be glad I'm allowing you to skip 45 minutes of Study Hall. But you better prepare Akaashi by your first game, you got that?"
"You bet I will, Sensei!"

"Good. I can't wait to see you play!" The dean grins. "Oh, Akaashi? I suggest you use Bokuto not only for your practice as setter and spiker, but also for improving your serves and receives. Use your time with him as best as possible and when he goes up for Study Hall, you can remain at the gym to do your running. And that's it. Now off you go to have some breakfast before your school starts. Oh no wait, there's one thing I forgot - I'm going to talk to Rob and Jared to open up the kitchen for you whenever you're done practicing. Okay, I'm done. Now go."

The second they are out of the dean's office, Bokuto's arm drapes over Akaashi's shoulders.

"Akaashi! Didn't I tell you we won't be in trouble?"

"Yes you did, Bokuto-san. But we better hurry up, because there's only a few minutes left until the warning bell."

They don't bother with actual trays and since there's nobody at their table, they quickly munch on some toast and bananas.

"Awww man, I was looking forward to telling everyone at the table about our meeting." Bokuto grumbles.

"You can tell them during lunch?" Akaashi suggests.

"Mmm yeah but that means having to wait for four hours until then and I wanna tell them all no- I know!" Bokuto grins. "Let's go ask Jared to use the speaker and announce it!"

"Please let's not do that."

"Akaashi, but I really really want to, please?" Sigh. "I suppose I can tell the others at lunch and try to join the dean in his office before he begins with the after school announcements."

Akaashi doesn't want to be included in any after school announcements, but he does find the idea of Bokuto fighting with the dean for the microphone sort of amusing. Sort of.

Then the warning bell rings and after waving a quick goodbye at Bokuto, he runs to the History classroom. As he takes his seat next to Ayame she begins to ask him something, but the principal loudly closes the door behind him and whatever she wanted to ask would have to wait until after class.

The second the bell rings, she turns to him.

"Akaashi, did you get the good news already?"

"Uhh... what good news?"

"Didn't the dean call you into his office this morning to tell you you're appointed as a tutor?"

"Uh- how do you know about that?"

"I heard your name being suggested by a couple of teachers during the meeting on Friday after school."

"Oh, so you're a tutor too?" She nods. "Great, we'll see each other during detention too then."

"Yes, definitely. Actually after the meeting I handed one of your RCs a note for you? I don't know if you got it..."
"Oh yeah, I did. Thank you for it."

"So how was your first weekend here?"

Akaashi snorts. "Short. But at the same time long." It probably doesn't make any sense, at least to her, but he doesn't feel like getting into details, so he asks about hers.

"It was good, thank you. I had to go grocery shopping with mom and babysit my little sister."

"That's nice."

Akaashi heads for AP Calculus next. As he listens to the teacher explain the lesson, he concentrates extra hard.

After all he's going to be a tutor and he might have to explain this to some of his classmates. A tutor! He can't believe it, after just a week here. And he is really happy about it, even though it's a lot of responsibility. Not because he gets privileges, or because it'll look good in his resume when he applies for universities (although that's a big plus), but because he genuinely enjoys seeing the invisible lamp turn on above someone's head as they get the explanation and give a correct answer. It's just a great feeling to him, knowing that he could help someone that's in need. It's like... being a superhero in a way. Probably less cool than an actual superhero, but still-

He remembers Bokuto's "Akaashi, we're like Batman and Robin" and sighs to himself, because it's only been a week and he already catches himself sharing the same thoughts as Bokuto.

And that's not exactly something to be proud of.

Still, though, becoming a tutor is a lot of responsibility. And he's definitely going to have to learn to manage his time better, because if he spends all of his Study Hall helping others or practicing volleyball, when the hell is he going to do his? As well as get sleep!

God, first change that needs to happen is for him to restore his regular sleeping pattern. The rest will come easy, if he works hard. And Akaashi is a hard worker, always putting a 100% in it. He will be damned if he's given such a cool title, a tutor, and lets down his teachers or fellow students, no way.

...Maybe not a superhero, but like a Harry Potter prefect!

Dammit, Akaashi, focus.

And then he remembers Bokuto. Who is still his roommate. Who will go through a 45 minute shorter Study Hall, homework unsupervised, all work probably left until after Study Hall.

Akaashi makes a mental note that the first thing that needs to change isn't his sleeping pattern, but Bokuto. Second year and senpai or not, Akaashi is a tutor now. Although he's pretty sure that if he plays the authority card over Bokuto, Bokuto will become even less cooperative. He will have to come up with ways that would motivate his lazy roommate. Because really, if he got an A in his vocabulary quiz, it just proves that Bokuto tests well and he can improve his grades if only he wasn't so damn lazy! If he doesn't listen, Akaashi wouldn't mind giving him some tough love, to be honest.

Because, if Bokuto can yell at him during volleyball practice, Akaashi can yell at him when it comes to school work. Yes, it all evens out and is totally fair.

During Physics class Ayame passes him a note.
"Would you like to have lunch together today?"

Oh yeah, she did ask about that in her letter. He thinks over his three options. One - he says no, but that's rude. Two - he joins her wherever she sits, but Bokuto will probably hunt him down and drag him back to the volleyball table. And three, which is the option he decides to follow through, is inviting her to join them at the volleyball team's table. It's a big enough table, and he doubts anyone would mind he brought a non volleyball player to eat lunch with him.

"Yes. Would you like to join me at the volleyball team's table for lunch?"

As he hands her back the note, he watches her eyes go huge as she reads it.

"Are you sure that's going to be okay?"

"Yes."

"Then yes. Thank you."

When the bell rings, they line up together and Akaashi asks Ayame if she has any tutoring tips to give him. She starts explaining how he has to be patient and polite and not laugh at the questions, no matter how dumb they might sound. He nods in agreement, even though all she's described so far is... well, having manners? Because he would never yell or laugh at someone for not understanding something.

He suddenly remembers his thoughts from English class, how he thought it's kind of annoying that the students that were appointed the big roles to read out loud were being slow and reprimands himself for being so... arrogant? Hm. He doesn't know if that's the correct term for it, but still, makes a mental note not to have such thoughts anymore, especially when he doesn't know if someone from his class might be dyslexic.

Akaashi is so busy in thought that he doesn't remember to tell Ayame not to take the seat on his right. But she does, since they are the only two at the table and doesn't know better.

Akaashi's just about to dig in, when a part of the volleyball team join them at the table, throwing him curious glances. Sighing, he begins with the introductions.

"Ayame, these are Konoha-san, Sarukui-san, Washio-san, Komi-san and Saito-san." He points at each in order. "Everyone, this is Ayame."

"Nice to meet you, Ayame." They reply in unison.

"Thank you all and nice to meet you too!"

Again, just before Akaashi begins with his lunch, something close, too close for comfort, appears on his right side. With the corner of his eye he sees Bokuto's curious head blinking at him then turning to the other side.

"Who are you and why are you in my seat?" He asks Ayame.

"Bokuto-san! Please don't be so rude."

"Rude?" Bokuto echoes. "Akaashi, I'm not being rude, I just asked who she is and why she's sitting in my spot, what's rude about that?"

"Excuse me!" Ayame quickly apologizes and gets up on her feet.
Akaashi gets up too and after asking from the table from across if he could take a chair, he pulls it to his left and waits for Ayame to sit in it, before gently pushing it closer to the table.

"Thank you, Akaashi."

"Awww, isn't Akaashi a gentleman?" Konoha asks and wiggles his eyebrows.

"Yes, he is." Ayame nods.

"So, who are you?" Bokuto asks as he takes his seat.

"I'm a first year, just like Akaashi and my name's Ayame."

"Hey, Ayame. Bokuto mumbles, mouthful of food. When Akaashi's elbow lands between his ribs, he wheezes out. "Nice to you meet you."

"You, too. Of course, you don't need to introduce yourself, everyone here at Fukurodani knows who you are, Bokuto-" Before she can finish the honorific, everyone at the table, now including Akaashi, violently begin shaking their heads in warning. "-senpai."

Too late.

Bokuto's eyes go all big and shiny, not only for the senpai part, but for the compliment? Which instantly fuels Bokuto's ever so hungry ego.

"Why yes, I am known by everyone around here." He adds, grinning, while everyone at the table groans.

"Because you're really loud." Washio replies.

"I know, Bokuto-senpai, you're the most popular person at Fukurodani."

"Ayame, no. Eat your lunch, please." Akaashi whispers.

"But also, you're really popular outside the school too." She adds, but to Akaashi's surprise, Bokuto doesn't go all "Hey hey heyyyy!" when he hears that.

In fact the entire table goes quiet?

That's really weird, Akaashi thinks. He makes a mental note to ask Ayame or Sarukui during Studio Art.

He could ask Bokuto about it, because they're friends, but after one look at his expression, Akaashi can see this isn't a topic Bokuto enjoys talking about. Which is all the more weird, because Bokuto loves attention.

"So, Ayame." Konoha clears his throat. "Do you like volleyball?"

"Oh, yes, Konoha-senpai, I love it."

"Yeah? That's awesome! You should join our manager then, I'm sure she'll appreciate the help." Konoha says.

"I'm sorry, I can't. I'm already a member of the volleyball team's cheerleading squad."

Everyone perks up at that.
"Hey hey heyyyy!" Bokuto's hoots happily.

"Actually I just made Vice Captain last week." She explains, followed by even louder noises of approval.

"Didn't you say you were a first year?" Komi asks.

"Yes. I know it's quite unusual for a first year, but I have years of cheerleading experience, so the Captain appointed me as Vice Captain and nobody from the squad minded. But even if they did mind~" She continues.

"They had no say in it." Bokuto finishes for her. "Captains always get the last word."

"Look at you being all authoritative." Konoha smirks.

"Speaking of, aren't you supposed to appoint a Vice Captain too?" Sarukui asks.

"Yeah. I already gave my suggestion, but Yukie's still thinking about it."

"Bokuto-san, I thought you just said "Captains always get the last word"?" Akaashi adds smartly, earning a couple of chuckles in return, and a "Hnnmnh!" from Bokuto.

"Nice meeting you all." Ayame waves and stands up. "Oh. Akaashi! Sarukui-senpai! Would the two of you be okay if I ask Mori-sensei for us to do the banners for the volleyball team during Studio Art?"

"Oh, that's a great idea!" Sarukui says enthusiastically. "Good thinking, Ayame."

"Yeah." Akaashi agrees.

"Okay great! Bye, everyone." She nods her head and carries her tray back into the kitchen.

"She sure's nice." Konoha says.

"Yeah, and she's really smart too." Akaashi replies.

"Oh hooooo!" Bokuto claps his hands together. "Speaking of smart, did I guys tell you Akaashi is Fukurodani's newest tutor?"

"No, you didn't." Washio replies. "You did tell us from the first period on about your new bragging rights, though."

"I believe Bokuto's exact words were "I'm Batman"." Konoha snorts.

"Of course they were." Akaashi chuckles.

"And we kind of figured you acquired them, because of Akaashi's brains." Komi adds. "And congratulations, Akaashi."

"Yeah, congrats, man."

"Thanks, guys."

"You actually tutored me on your first day here, remember?" Konoha grins. "We were both stuck in detention."

"Of course I remember." Akaashi smiles. "You're actually the first student that welcomed me to
"Akaashi!" Bokuto grumbles. "What about me? Wasn't I welcoming?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san, you were. But I met you during Study Hall, while Konoha-san and I met just after lunch."

"Yeahhhh!" Washio laughs. "You're the one that spilled the spaghetti over the floor and Bokuto tipped over!"

"What? Akaashi! Is this true? Was it you, really?"

Oh no. Turns out they do remember him as spaghetti guy?

"Uhhh, yeah, that was me, Bokuto-san."

Bokuto grins. "Ah! So you're the one that got me out of all of my afternoon classes! Do you all hear that? Akaashi had my back before we even met! Hey hey heyyyyy!"

Despite the fact he actually embarrassed himself, he isn't surprised that Bokuto would find a way to put a positive spin on it and make him sound as the hero of the day. And even though he's thought this many times before, he thinks yet again, just how lucky he got to end up at Fukurodani, and most of all in room number 12, as Bokuto's roommate.

Even though Bokuto's kind of a pain in the ass during Study Hall. But he's Akaashi's pain in the ass.

Then, just as that thought passes his mind, he finds himself thinking of Kuroo and how he can bet a chunk of gold that if Kuroo was here he would comment on his "pain in the ass" thought he just had.

But why would Kuroo hear his thoughts, and most importantly, why is he even thinking of Kuroo, as well as Kuroo's dumb and obscene way of thinking?!

The warning bell rings, and he heads for Dining Room A. Then he remembers that he doesn't have an official Study Hall anymore, so he heads up to his room.

Oh no.

First he shares thoughts with Bokuto, then he shares hypothetical thoughts with Kuroo and now he's abusing his newly acquired power as tutor?

Get your shit together, Akaashi. Do not let yourself be pulled to the Dark Side!

So, after that, he clears his mind and begins tackling his homework for tomorrow.

When he's done, he congratulates himself on taking two AP Classes this year, which resulted in this free period, because he gets to use it as his hour of peace and quiet, when he can concentrate on his own work, without any interruptions.

There's nothing left of him to do for the next ten minutes, though, because he's completely finished with his work. So he takes his laptop out and checks his facebook.

He blinks at the 40+ unread notifications? Because he either got hacked or spammed.

Yes, he got spammed. From Bokuto and Kuroo.

Rolling his eyes, he starts going over them even though they are bound to be dumb. And they
really are dumb.

There's a lot of "likes" on his old photos from Kuroo. Then on a particular one of him at the beach with sunglasses on and sort of pouting at the camera, which his mother took during a family vacation they had over the summer, there's a crazy amount of comments.

Kuroo Tetsurou: Lookin' good, roomie! B)
October 19, 2015 at 11:52pm · Like · 1

Bokuto Koutarou: Brooo, I was just wondering who was the fucking creep that keeps liking Akaashi's old photos and flooding my newsfeed lol.
October 20, 2015 at 8:33am · Like · 1

Kuroo Tetsurou: Bro, don't act like you ain't creepin' too ;) lol
October 20, 2015 at 8:45am · Like · 1

Bokuto Koutarou: Bro, at least I creep in ninja mode :D
October 20, 2015 at 9:00am · Like · 1

Kuroo Tetsurou: I'd rather show Akaashi that I appreciate his pics ;)
October 20, 2015 at 9:04am · Like · 1

Bokuto Koutarou: Good thinking, bro! :D
October 20, 2015 at 9:10am · Like · 1

Then there's a bunch of "likes" from Bokuto.

Akaashi finds himself glad that he doesn't have any family members or old friends on Facebook, because this is fucking embarrassing to have on display.

And then he sees a New Message, which is a thread, consisting of Kuroo, Bokuto and Akaashi.

Conversation started October 20.

Kuroo: So u still mad, bro?
Bokuto: Nah, bro. Sry for overreacting yesterday.
Kuroo: It's ttly cool, bro. I would've been jelly too tbh, Akaashi's mad cool B)
Bokuto: Right? I told u!
Kuroo: Ye, but I had to check with my eyes. Eventho I ttly trust your judgement, bro.
Bokuto: Thx, same.
Kuroo: Where's he btw?
Bokuto: Class lol.
Kuroo: Lol we are too tho.
Bokuto: Ye, but he actually pays attention?
Kuroo: Lol nerd.
Bokuto: He's actually head nerd now! Dean told us this morning he's a tutor.
Kuroo: Oh ho hoo? Congrats Akaashi!
Bokuto: Ye. He's real good at explaining shit too, man, I got an A in AP Eng Lit!
Kuroo: Duuuude, we gotta toast that shit.
Bokuto: Ye, bro. Yano, if Akaashi was actually my teacher, I might pay attention in class.
Kuroo: Same. If he ends up as a teacher, he's gonna make his students very lucky lol
Bokuto: Ye, we'd be too old to repeat school :(  
Kuroo: We could always call him up for a private tutoring session tho?
Bokuto: LOL yeah >:D 
Kuroo: Or if he would like we could reciprocate the tutoring in something we're good at? ;)
Bokuto: Volleyball?
Kuroo: Not just volleyball (icator)

What the fuck?! And wtf is up with that smiley face?! Wtf does it even mean?????

Despite himself, Akaashi finds himself replying, just as the bell rings.

Akaashi: Stop spamming me! And pay attention in class, you both need it!

During English, Mr Burns hands back the quizzes and has the entire class clap their hands in congratulating Bokuto for his A. Who accordingly acts all surprised like it's the first he hears it.

No wonder he's in Theater and Drama, Akaashi thinks, and makes a mental note to ask Bokuto how it goes next period. Because if Bokuto doesn't nail it, after staying up pretty much all of last night studying it, he's going to make Bokuto eat the script. Not metaphorically, literally, just shove the whole goddamn script down that big and loud mouth of his.

"Now, you all know Monday means?" Mr Burns asks and when he gets a "pop quiz" in reply, he nods his head and writes down a couple of questions over the board.

When he starts collecting their papers, Akaashi glances over at Bokuto's, nodding in approval, because it's not blank, but has actual (and as far as he can see correct) answers. Then he remembers that Bokuto read sparknotes last night and scowls, because he should actually read the damn book. But he scowls only slightly, because it's Bokuto.

Then, glancing at the half asleep class behind him, Akaashi wonders if anybody other than himself does the actual book reading. Probably not, but he remembers not to have "arrogant" thoughts.

The warning bell rings, but Mr Burns asks for Akaashi to stay behind.

"Am I in trouble, Sir?" He asks, because he's always paranoid.

"No, of course not. I wanted to congratulate you on becoming a tutor." Mr Burn smiles.

"Thank you, Sir."

"I also wanted to say thank you, Akaashi. Ever since the beginning of the school year in September, Bokuto's never handed me anything more than a couple of sentences scribbled during lunch break for homework, and now that you're here, he's not only prepared for class, he actually pays attention! You're a very good influence on him, Akaashi."

Akaashi feels the tips of his ears burning and mumbles a "Thank you, Sir".

"Keep up the good work!"

By the time he makes it to Studio Art and sits next to Sarukui, Ayame has already asked Mori-sensei if the three of them could do the banners for the volleyball team and he's agreed.

The other two tell Akaashi that since he's the best artist, he can do a bigger drawing of the volleyball team, just like his homework for today, while they will do some banners with the school's name and writing like "Hoot Hoot Hoot! Let's go Owls!".

As he begins drawing, he gently nudges Sarukui to get his attention.

"Sarukui-san?" He whispers. "How come Bokuto-san got all quiet today during lunch when Ayame said he's popular outside the school too?"
"Oh. So you noticed that, huh?" Sarukui whispers back.

"It was kind of hard to miss. But if it's too personal and you don't wanna tell me, it's okay, because I know I'm out of line for asking you in the first place."

"No, it's alright. Bokuto doesn't like talking about his parents."

"Yeah, I noticed that too."

"It's because... uhhh, I don't really know how to explain it, because it's complicated. So I'm gonna give you the short story. But I'm sure Bokuto will open up to you and tell you all about it eventually. So... his parents are kind of a big deal. I mean it like...they're popular? His mom's a fashion designer and that's why during school vacations he travels with his parents overseas. And his dad's a surgeon. I think cardiovascular? I don't remember, because Bokuto's only said it once. But he's like a total pro, famous athletes go to his hospital - yeah, I forgot to add Bokuto's family owns the hospital his dad works at."'

"Wow. I really don't know what I was expecting, but certainly not that." Akaashi whispers.

Well shit.

Akaashi remembers clearly how Bokuto told him he couldn't afford the boarding house last year, which is crazy, because his parents must be filthy rich! A fashion designer and a surgeon with his own hospital???

"Yeah, I know. When I heard I was surprised too, because he's totally down to earth and not spoiled at all. It's really weird. But that's all the information I have."

"Thank you."

Just when Akaashi thought he had Bokuto sort of figured out, this brand new information made him completely confused? Just like Sarukui said, Bokuto, who loves attention so much, doesn't brag at all about his famous parents and how successful they are?

And then it hits him why.

Because, he thinks, it's his parents success and not his own. Bokuto only ever brags when it comes to volleyball and volleyball alone. Nothing else. And he probably didn't join the boarding school until he got a scholarship on his own, because of his volleyball skills?

Holy fucking shit.

Akaashi finds his chest burning in pride and brand new dose of respect for Bokuto, because he assumes that normally people in his position wouldn't care if they were funded by their parents? And Bokuto's gotten himself not only a free ride at Fukurodani, but also made Captain, all because of his volleyball.

When the bell rings, Akaashi wants nothing more than to sprint over to Bokuto's Theater and Drama class and give him a big hug. And then, since Akaashi is Akaashi, ask how the play went. He remains seated at his desk, though, awaiting the announcements.

"Good afternoon, owls! Congratulations on surviving yet another Monday. Now, the following students please report for deten- no!"

There's loud noise, then a very familiar voice.
"Hey hey heyyyyy! How's it going? Yeah, Sensei, I'll give the mic back in a sec, but first I wanna say YO, AKAASHI!" The mic plus Bokuto is a really dangerous combination. "Akaashi! Congrats on becoming the smartest newest Fukurodani tutor, all of the volleyball team says hey and - I'm not finished yet -"

"If you want to talk to your roommate, Bokuto, talk to him. Don't use the mic for announce-"

All heads around Akaashi are laughing and listening to the whole thing, and his cheeks begin heating up.

"No wait just one more thing, I promise. YO, AKAASHI, you still listening?"

"Bokuto! The entire school's listening!"

"Akaashi, I just wanna say thanks for being the best roommate ever! Oh and also for being the volleyball team's new-"

"Okaay, you've had your fifteen minutes of fame, Bokuto, now get out of here, before I write you down for detention. Again!"

Akaashi's actually chuckling with everyone, because Bokuto really did make good of his word today before first class. And it was just as funny (even if slightly embarrassing) as Akaashi imagined it in his head.

"Well that was certainly a very entertaining announcement." Ayame laughs as the two of them walk over to Dining Room A. "Is it always this much fun when you guys live together?"

"I'd say it's too much fun." Akaashi replies, smiling.

"You should do that more often."

"Do what? Have more fun? No, I think-"

"Noooo, smiling! You should smile more often, Akaashi, because you look really cute!"

Well then. We're back to flaming cheeks.

Akaashi doesn't know if Ayame is just being nice or actually flirting with him? But if it's the latter he doesn't how how to deal with that?

But Ayame says nothing else, so in the end, he decides it's because she is being nice. And Ayame is nice. Nice enough that she got the entire volleyball team's table's nod in approval.

There's nobody in detention yet, at least not anyone that requires tutoring, so Akaashi takes a seat and checks his facebook. And he isn't surprised to see the red bubble notifying him he's got messages awaiting to be opened.

Kuroo: Excuse u, almost all of my classes are advanced.
Bokuto: Yeah, bt do u take AP Eng Lit, bro?
Kuroo: My Lit might be in Japanese, but I assure u, bro, it's very much advanced.
Bokuto: So what kinda books do u read lol
Kuroo: Lol bro if u asked me that, ur Akaashi is showing ;)
Bokuto: Lol can't be tamed.
Kuroo: Oh ho hoooo (°皿°)

No, but seriously, wtf is up with that smiley?!
Akaashi: If you two are going to continue spamming me with nonsense, at least use proper grammar, please!

Then he locks his phone and places it into his backpack, so he doesn't go weak and check it, when he has school duties to attend to.

Although if he has to be completely honest with himself, despite his grumbling, now that he's made this many friends, he totally gets what the facebook hype is about.

Ayame is looking at her own phone, and since she was the one that invited him to eat lunch together, he decides to return the gesture and asks if he could friend her in facebook. She nods her head enthusiastically and chuckles, saying that she was just about to ask him that herself.

And just as he thinks they are even, she fires a question at him.

"Akaashi, do you have a girlfriend?"

He blinks once, twice, three times and he still doesn't know what to say?

Ayame instantly adds. "Or boyfriend?"

"No, I don't." And for good measure, just so clarify completely. "Neither, I mean. What about you? Are you in a relationship?"

"Yes. I have a boyfriend."

Oh good. That means she wasn't flirting with him, but being nice.

Nice!

"Is he from our school?"

"No, he goes to Nekoma."

"Really?" He sort of smiles, because he, too, knows someone that goes there. "Does he play on their volleyball team?"

"No, he plays basketball."

"I see."

"I used to go meet him there to watch their practice, but there's a guy at the school that kept flirting with me, so now he comes to meet me here."

"Sounds like someone I know." Akaashi snorts.

"Oh? Oh yeah, now that you're on the volleyball team you must know him or at least have heard of him? His name's Kuroo Tetsurou. Do you know him?"

"Yeah. That name does ring a bell or two."

"So are you like friends or-"

"Excuse me? Hi. I was told at the front desk I could get some help from you two." A girl says.

"Hi. Please, take a seat." Ayame greets her with a smile. "So what class do you need help with?"
"AP Biology."
"Akaashi, do you- no, we take Physics together."
"I can help you." Akaashi says. "Even if it is advanced."

The girl walks over and takes a seat next to Akaashi.
"Do you need help with actual homework or understanding something?" He asks.
"Uhh, both. Sorry."

"No, don't apologize. This is why we're here, right?" He smiles politely. "Now, show me what's giving you trouble and let's tackle it together, shall we?"

As the girl begins explaining, another student walks in and asks Ayame for help in Japanese. Then two of them move to the other desk, while Akaashi quickly reads over the Biology lesson.

After half an hour the girl thanks Akaashi and leaves, while he makes a mental note to take AP Biology next year, because even though there's a lot of shit to read and terms to learn, it's got to be better than AP Chemistry. And to be honest, he would rather leave the regular Chemistry class for his third year. Definitely not the advanced class, though.

Then another student asks for Akaashi's help in Spanish.

"Oh, shoot. I'm really sorry, but I don't take that class and can't help you, because I don't even know a word in Spanish."

"Oh, no wait, Dining Room B is where I'll get help in Spanish and Dining Room A is English." The boy says. "Could you help me with my English, please?"

"Yes, of course. Please take a seat."

The boy has to write an essay in English, which is easy, but it takes a long time. Then, when he's finished rereading it for any mistakes, he hands it back to the boy, who thanks him and leaves.

And then there's no one else left for tutoring. Akaashi's just about to go upstairs and change into his volleyball uniform, when the bell rings.

Holy shit, it's 6:30 pm already?

He quickly takes his backpack, deciding that he'll eat actual dinner later and gets a couple of onigiri in a napkin and two bananas, because he knows Bokuto won't go out of the gym. He realizes that onigiri and bananas will probably be the two things that he eats the most around here. Just as he's walking up the stairs, Rob stops him.

"Hey, my man, how's it going?"

"Good, how are you, Rob?"

"Great, thanks. Listen, can you help me out?"

"Uhhh okay. What can I do for you?"

"Well the dean told me Bokuto and you will be having dinner later, but I really don't feel like going up and down the stairs, so would it be okay if I gave you the key for the kitchen and uh... sort of pretend I was there with you guys?"
Akaashi instantly accepts. "Yeah, no problem."

"I know you're the responsible one, so please promise me you won't have a food fight in there? Or start a fire or something else dangerous Bokuto might come up with?"

Akaashi's lips curve up. "I promise, Rob. I'll make sure we don't leave a mess behind."

"Thanks, man, you're the best."

His stomach growls hungrily as he changes into his gym clothes, but he doesn't want to start eating without Bokuto, because it won't be fair.

"Akaashi, hey!" Bokuto waves as he walks over to the middle court. "Oh, thank God you're smart enough to bring some food."

As the two of them sit down and eat, Akaashi asks how practice went.

"Ugh, without you? Horrible! It was so bad, Yukie had us doing suicides almost the entire time."

"That sounds terrible. How come, though?"

"Saito didn't show up for practice again. So we had puke guy setting."

"Suzuki."

"What?"

"Puke guy's name is Suzuki Kazuya."

"And did I fucking ask you that?" Bokuto grunts. "Sorry, Akaashi, that was rude. I'm just still kinda mad for practice... It was hell without having you around. And I don't just mean that, because of your amazing setting skills."

Akaashi feels his cheeks grow hot.

"Thank you, Bokuto-san."

"Yeah!" Bokuto's face lights up at once.

"And I have something else that might cheer you up."

"Oh hoooo? Akaashi, tell me, what is it?"

Akaashi shows Bokuto his brand new set of two keys.

"I know one of those is for the gym. What about the other one? Come onnnn, Akaashi, tell meeeeee!"

"It's for the kitchen."

"Eh?" Bokuto gawps. "How the fuck did you get a hold of that key?"

"Rob gave it to me. See, Bokuto-san, there are merits to being "a nerd." during Study Hall."

"And have you been talking to Kuroo again?"

"Yeah, how did you know?"
Sigh. "It shows with your vocabulary."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that before, I didn't hear you swear once, and now you're-"

"Oh, that." Bokuto laughs. "No, I always swear. But I made sure I didn't before, because I wanted to make a good first impression."

"That's nice of you. And maybe you could keep it up in the future?"

"Fuck that shit."

Well there goes that.

"Come on, Akaashi, let's get you warmed up!" Bokuto says and starts running with him.

"Bokuto-san, why are you warming up with me after doing suicides?"

"Because, Akaashi!"

"Because Akaashi what?"

"You stay with me when I can't sleep, I stay with you when warming up." Bokuto replies.

Akaashi nods his head, then jokes. "Conditioning, huh?"

Bokuto laughs. "That's right. Speaking of, you're in way better shape than last week. You're doing laps and talking at the same time! Good job. Give it another two weeks and it'll start showing on your body too."

"Is there anything wrong with my current body?"

"Yeah! You're tall, which is good for volleyball, but you're so skinny!"

"You know, Bokuto-san, if I was a girl you'll be complimenting me on being skinny."

"Are you a girl?"

"No."

"Then I'm not going to compliment you on it! You need to eat more! Although I've seen that you no longer eat like a seven year old."

"No, I don't."

"Okay, now quit yapping and start stretching!"

"Yes, Bokuto-san!"

Once they're done with stretching, Bokuto scratches his head.

"Hmmm, since it's just the two of us... what do you prefer practicing - serving or receiving?"

"Serving."

"Prepare for receiving."
Akaashi chuckles. "Reverse psychology, huh?"

"I don't know what that means, but I also don't care. What I care about is your honesty, because I really need it, especially on the court."

"Bokuto-san, you do have my honesty."

"Then why did you say serving? Yukie told me your serves are good."

"But... you asked me what I prefer practicing? That's why I said serving."

"Oh yeah. Ooops, my bad. Now prepare for receiving. No, not like when we're separated in pairs during practice. Akaashi, I'm going to the other side of the court and I'm going to give you a serve like we're in an actual game, okay?"

Sigh. "Yes, Bokuto-san."

The second Bokuto hits the ball, Akaashi hears the whooshing sound it makes and his automatic reaction is to jerk to the side, because that thing could've knocked him out cold.

"Akaashi! What the fuck was that?" Bokuto grunts. "I said receive, not hide from the ball!"

"Bokuto-san, could you remember the fact I'm still new and really bad at receiving and maybe hit the next ball with less force?"

"No!" Bokuto smirks. "I will show you no mercy!"

And Bokuto doesn't show him any mercy, none whatsoever. In fact, Akaashi thinks that Bokuto's serves are way harder than during a practice game. Because the ball keeps whistling dangerously at him whenever Bokuto lines up and serves.

And let's not even mention the fact Bokuto never directs his serves at him, no, Akaashi has to cover the entire side of his court.

An hour later, Akaashi's hands are burning and pulsing and he's never had his hands do that before? And it looks like they need some ice on them right about now?

But he keeps his mouth shut and suffers through the rest of Bokuto's serves.

Then finally, fucking finally, Bokuto stops and motions with his hand for Akaashi to join him on his side of the court.

"Akaashi, show me your hands."

Akaashi puts them up for Bokuto inspection, who seems pleased with the result.

"Does it hurt?"

"You think?!

"Good!" Bokuto grins. "That means you did a good job."

"I don't know how Komi-san can do it, being Libero is the worst position ever."

"Nah, you'll live. Now line up for serving, while I go to the other side for receiving. But that's not all you're going to do." Bokuto grins. "No, after I receive, I'm going to set the ball back up and serve it to you and you have to receive again."
"But we just finished practicing receiving." Akaashi hears himself whining.

"Not like this, though. Now come on, Akaashi, serve!"

Sighing, Akaashi takes a ball and lines up. But his hands are numb, and hitting the ball feels like an impossible task? His palm does manage to graze the ball, but that's it.

"Akaashi! That was pathetic!"

"I'm trying, Bokuto-san!"

"Try harder then!"

Akaashi makes a mental note to take his revenge for this during Study Hall. Oh yeah, he's not going to show Bokuto any mercy!

Just as he thinks that, it kind of gives him power to actually hit the ball with force, which results in a decent serve.

"Nice serve!" Bokuto yells as he receives and sets it up real high, then spikes it back down.

Akaashi's feet automatically move forward and he manages to receive it, and Bokuto yells at him again.

"Don't stop! Set it back up and spike it!"

Akaashi does set it back up, but he doesn't have the strength to spike it. So, after a quick glance at Bokuto, he dumps the ball to the side. But Bokuto clearly expected him to do it, because he does a dump shot of his own and Akaashi can't reach it.

"You knew I was going to do that." He half grunts half asks Bokuto, who walks over to him, grinning.

"Well duhh, you're my setter. It's my job to read your thoughts on the court before actually moving."

"Wow. You really are amazing, Bokuto-san."

"Hey hey heyyyy!"

They do three laps to cool down, then after making sure the balls are back in place and the lights are off, Akaashi locks up the gym.

As they enter the kitchen, both Bokuto and Akaashi start exploring the whole place, rummaging through every single cupboard and oven, which during the day is off limits to students. They exchange glances and both decide to eat dinner right there, like kings!

"We should call Kuroo." Bokuto laughs. "Hey, bro, whut up? Wait, lemme put you on speaker."

"Hey, bro. Hey, roomie."

Akaashi's too busy eating to actually tell Kuroo not to call him that.

"What are you doing?"

"Kenma was sick today, so I went over to give him his notes and all that jazz. I'm just leaving
now."

"That was kind of you, Kuroo-san." Akaashi mumbles.

"I'm always this kind."

Akaashi snorts.

"Anyway, what are you owls up to now? Don't you have your Study Hour bullshit goin' on?"

"Not today, bro." Bokuto says.

"Yes, today, Bokuto-san. You have to head upstairs in five minutes."

"Head upstairs? Aren't you two in your room?"

"No. Bro. Bro, guess where we are right now."

"At the gym?"

"Nope. Good guess, though. We're in the kitchen, bro."

"What? How did you get in there?"

"Akaashi got the key, bro. Akaashi got the fucking key!"

"I'm coming over."

"No! Kuroo-san, please don't." Akaashi doesn't get a reply. "Bokuto-san, please tell Kuroo-san not to come over. You need to go upstairs now! And I need to see if any students need help. Then I'll come back and check your own work, Bokuto-san. Are you even listening to me?"

"Bla bla, boring, bla. Yeah, Akaashi, I'm listening."

"I'm listening too." Kuroo says.

"That's nice. Now, please, head up-"

"Akaashi, you don't realize what an opportunity this is. We can see Kuroo and then do our work. He'll be here in a bit. Right, bro?"

"Totally. Ten minutes tops."

Akaashi sighs. "Kuroo-san, if you like being here so much, why don't you just transfer?"

Kuroo laughs. "Because, when we clash horns over the volleyball court, I want to be on the winning team, and that's Nekoma."

"Yeah, you wish." Bokuto replies.

"Please, Bokuto-san!"

"Akaashi! Why are you being like this? Kuroo will be here any moment now."

"So what? You do realize the front entrance is locked up and neither of us have magic keys to ope- Bokuto-san, what are you doing?"
Bokuto completely ignores him. "Okay, bro, when you get here, go to the left side and-"

"Bro, I know where your kitchen is. I'll knock on one of the windows. Although we're talking on the phone, so if I get mixed up, you can help."

"Totally."

"Bokuto-san, I'm going to get in serious trouble for this!"

Bokuto rolls his eyes. "Akaashi! You have nerd superpowers now, so please, use them for good and go upstairs and tell Rob that we need a little bit more time with volleyball practice, okay?"

Now I know what Anakin felt like, Akaashi thinks.

He does find Rob, but the first thing he asks of him is if there are any students that have asked for his tutoring.

"No. Not yet anyway. Why?"

"Because...Bokuto-san and I really need a just a bit more time with volleyball practice, if that's okay? I promise that he'll have all his school work done before tomorrow."

"I know, Akaashi, and it's cool with me. Go do your thing. But when you two do come up, please make sure to be quiet, so none of the students hear you? Cause, you know, I might get in trouble for it."

"I promise not to get you in trouble. Thanks, Rob, I really appreciate it."

For someone who doesn't like promising things in general, Akaashi definitely heard himself promise two things, actually, in the past sixty seconds. And he also got to throw in a big fat lie in there, for good measure.

As he walks into the kitchen, scowling, his face instantly changes into a gleeful expression, because he gets to witness Kuroo being stuck through one of the windows. At this point he really can't help himself, it's just so fucking funny, he throws his head back and laughs.

"Shh, Akaashi, that's totally uncool!" Bokuto grumbles. "Now, please come help me get Kuroo out."

"Couldn't you tell the window is too small for Kuroo's big ass full of nothing head? Are you two seriously this dumb? " Akaashi quickly adds. "Don't answer that, it was a rhetorical question."

"Ooo look at me, I'm Akaashi, I use big smart words, while everyone else is too stupid to understand them." Bokuto mimics.

"If you two don't get me out of here, I'm taking the fucking window with me!"

And he sounds so serious, that Akaashi quickly speaks up, before it's too late.

"Kuroo-san, please don't do that. We'll get you out. Oh, I know!" Akaashi goes over to the counter and comes back with a bottle of oil. "This will help grease your head out of there."

Kuroo's head painfully twists to look at what Akaashi's holding.

"Oh Hell no! If you get this thing anywhere near my hair, I'm going to start screaming! I'm not kidding, I will do it."
But by the time he's finished with his warning at Akaashi, Bokuto's taken the oil bottle into his own hands and proceeds to pour it over Kuroo's head. Akaashi doesn't know why he feels himself reaching for his phone (it's the Dark Side) and starts recording a video as Bokuto begins spreading the oil over Kuroo's head, gently shushing him like one would do to a baby.

Five minutes later, the floor is a complete mess, but at least Kuroo's out of the window.

Kuroo takes one look at them, noting they are both holding their chests, probably cracking a rib or two, while trying to hold back their hysterical laughter.

"Fuck you, owls! Fuck you and your fucking oily school with tiny kitchen windows!"

Akaashi's eyes are full of tears and he doesn't know how he ended up on the floor, but just like Bokuto next to him, they continue laughing as quietly as possible.

"Akaa-aaaa-aashiiiii!" Bokuto manages to croak out. "Did you get the whole thing on your phone?"

He can't answer, so he just nods his head, hoping Bokuto can see him.

Eventually they do get up and manage to wipe the floor clean, but every time they look at each other, they crack up all over again. But this time, it's only mild chuckling.

"Why was Kuroo-san trying to get his head in anyway?"

"He wanted to get a better look at the food and show me what he wanted." Bokuto laughs. "Poor bro. He left without even getting anything to eat."

Akaashi locks up the kitchen and before they head up the stairs, he instructs Bokuto to be extremely quiet. He hands the key back to Rob, who, thank God, is reading a book and not looking at him, and he barely makes it to their room, closing the door behind him, when he collapses on the floor again, clutching his stomach.

"Akaashi, please send me the video."

"Bokuto-san, I will send it to you, but only after you're finished with your homework!"

At once, Bokuto is at his desk, pulling out his agenda and opening up his books. Akaashi heads for the bathroom, while quietly chuckling to himself. He's never laughed this hard in his life. Then again, he's never seen something this funny before.

He begins checking Bokuto's work, while Bokuto takes a surprisingly quick shower, only taking like fifteen minutes? Impressive.

"Bokuto-san, you're all good for tomorrow." He nods in approval, then sends the video, as promised. "And now that you're done, tell me how your Theater and Drama class went."

Bokuto begins explaining animatedly, and even though the bell rings, he doesn't get out of his chair, he stays behind and tells Akaashi all about his amazing acting, all thanks to Akaashi of course.

Akaashi gets into his bed and watches Bokuto turn off the lights, then go up in his own bed.

"Bokuto-san, no movie tonight?"

"Nah. You're my setter, and you need a goodnight's rest."
"But what about you? Will you be able to sleep?"

"Yeah, I'll just play a game on my phone."

"Oh. Okay. Goodnight then."

"Night."

He appreciates Bokuto's thoughtfulness, but a part of him really wants for Bokuto to come back down, so they could - okay, maybe not watch a movie - but like talk or something?

But since Bokuto remains silent, and very much up in his own bed, Akaashi turns on his side and falls asleep.
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Akaashi’s biological clock must have grown accustomed to getting not enough sleep, because he’s wide awake and it’s barely past 5:37 am. He checks his phone and notes there’s only one message from Kuroo on their facebook thread telling them "Fuck you, guys" again. He replies a "Kuroosan, oil is actually good for the hair.", then leaves his phone.

After a few minutes of wondering what to do, he decides to head to the gym. He’ll have plenty of time to do his running and maybe practice some serves before breakfast.

As he puts on his gym clothes, he realizes this is his last clean t shirt. And then he remembers he doesn't even know where they're supposed to do laundry? Which he definitely must do soon, because he'll be out of clean underwear too.

He scribbles down a sticky note on his desk, then quietly tiptoes out of the room.

After a couple of laps, Akaashi quickens the pace of his jog. Bokuto was right. His stamina has most certainly improved over the past week. And even though there is nobody around to encourage or scold him, he grits his teeth and pushes his legs into a sprint. It's for his own good and he knows it, even if it doesn't feel like it right now.

After five laps of sprinting, though, he feels a familiar pain creeping up between his ribs and his breathing is more difficult. He feels like dying now, but he remembers Bokuto's instructions in his head to always cool down, so determinedly he tells himself to do one more lap of jogging, before he allows himself to die. And even though he wants nothing more than to lie down on the cold ground until he stops panting and sweating, he sits down and does a couple of stretching sets for his arms and legs. Because "Akaashi! Improper warm up and stretching might result in serious injury!".

Akaashi wonders if Bokuto learned that from his father.

He takes a glance at his watch and since he still has time, he gets up, pulls at a net full of balls and lines up for serving.

It's really insane how his entire life turned 360 degrees in such a short period of time. Because really, he is here, in the gym, this early in the morning, without even having coffee first, on his own accord, without anyone pressing a gun to his head?

Yes. This is his life now. School, volleyball, volleyball, school. And he genuinely enjoys it this way. He's already excited for P.E. tomorrow morning, because he'll get to practice with the rest of the team!

He has a team now. And most of the people on his team are his friends. Others? Not so much. But you won't hear him complaining and crying about it.
After he is all out of balls, Akaashi wipes his forehead with the back of his hand, feeling pleased that every single one of them is on the other side of the court. He puts his right palm up for inspection and smiles at how red it is. He can feel it throbbing without even looking at it, but the color just adds up to the pride he feels blossoming inside his chest.

Fuck yeah.

Akaashi quickly gathers up the balls, locks up the gym and heads up to his room. As he's taking the last set of stairs, he sees Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui standing at the top, grinning at him. Well, Bokuto's grinning, while Konoha groans. Bokuto extends his palm and clears his throat loudly.

"Your money, please."

"What's going on?" Akaashi asks in confusion as he watches Konoha reach for his wallet.

"When Bokuto saw your bed empty he came to our room and the two of them made a bet." Sarukui explains. "Konoha said you'd be at the library this early in the morning, while Bokuto said the gym."

"Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"Awww, man! I guess it really is true that when you live with someone, you start to mirror each other's behavior." Konoha grumbles. "What next, Bokuto'll become a tutor?"

Akaashi snorts. "Konoha-san, let's not get carried away."

"Akaashi! What is that supposed to mean?" Bokuto scowls, but Akaashi's already walking away and enters their room.

Of course, Bokuto follows.

"Akaashi, if I wanted to be a tu-"

"Bokuto-san, where is the laundry room?" He interrupts.

"Laundry room? Why would you need to know where it is?"

"To do my laundry maybe?"

"Akaashiiii, we don't do our laundry. The cleaning ladies do it for us."

"Cleaning ladies?" Akaashi blinks. "What cleaning ladies?"

"Well you haven't seen them, because they work when we're in class." Bokuto explains. "But didn't you wonder who cleans our rooms and empties our trash cans from under our desks?"

"Oh yeah, I didn't realize that. So how can I get my laundry done?"

"Where have you been putting your dirty clothes so far?"

"In a plastic bag in my part of the wardrobe." Akaashi pulls it out. "Here."

"If you bothered to look into my part, you would've seen the hamper." Bokuto says and slides the door open. "See? There it is."

Akaashi watches as Bokuto empties his plastic bag inside a scary looking pyramid of already dirty
"Bokuto-san? Have you not done any laundry since the beginning of the year?"

Bokuto roars in laughter. "Nope."

So that's where the stench has been coming from, Akaashi thinks. He genuinely wondered if Bokuto had forgotten some sort of food inside his wardrobe, because seriously! He's been airing the room like crazy, and his wardrobe too. Clearly, he should've done the same with Bokuto's.

"So now we leave it at the edge of your bed and the nice cleaning ladies will do it for us." Bokuto says.

Akaashi doesn't know how much these cleaning ladies are being paid, but surely it's not enough. Before he heads into the bathroom, he yells.

"Bokuto-san? Please do me a favor and buy yourself a nice smelling soap, which you can put inside your wardrobe."

"Yeah, yeah, okay."

Once he's done with the shower, he walks out and blinks at Bokuto, who is still in the room, sitting on his bed.

"You're still here?"

Bokuto snorts. "Well duuh. Of course I'm still here. Now hurry up and get dressed, so we can go eat." Then, without saying another word, Bokuto turns his back to Akaashi and doesn't look until Akaashi says "Let's go."

As they head down, Bokuto turns to him.

"Akaashi? I'll buy a soap or whatever, but... please don't go practicing without me again."

"Oh? I'm sorry, Bokuto-san. I thought you would prefer sleeping in."

"Noooo! Now you can be my running partner!" Bokuto grins. "Isn't that awesome?"

"Sure. As long as you don't expect me to keep up with you."

They join the rest of the team at the table and Akaashi quickly finishes his plate and goes back to the kitchen for seconds. When he returns, Konoha laughs.

"Daaaaamn, Akaashi! Did you get bitten by a hungry wolf?"

Akaashi feels the tips of ears burning. First they comment on how little he eats, now they comment on how much he eats?!

"Shut up, Konoha! Don't you see your dumb questions are making him uncomfortable?" Bokuto grumbles, which takes both Akaashi and Konoha by surprise.

Nothing gets past him huh, Akaashi thinks. He wonders if their living together results in Bokuto being able to read him so easily? Because really, Akaashi hasn't made a single comment about it or pulled a face, and yet Bokuto already knows?

...How does he do it?
"Akaashi, am I really?" Konoha asks. "I'm sorry, man, I was only joking."

"No, it's fine." Akaashi replies.

"No seriously, dude, I am sor-"

"This is so lame." A groan comes from the other side of the table - Saito. "Who cares about that sort of thing?"

"Clearly not you, Saito-senpai." Sarukui replies.

Saito rolls his eyes and takes his tray back to the kitchen, but Akaashi notices the way Bokuto purses his lips together and his eyes silently follow the other Fukurodani setter.

"Do you guys not get along with Saito-san?" Akaashi asks Konoha and Sarukui. It is bad manners to talk about someone who isn't present, but he is kind of curious.

"We do, but only when we play volleyball." Konoha replies. "You should've seen how pissed he was last year when Bokuto made Captain, duuude."

Sarukui nods. "It was crazy. Since he's the only senior, he expected the title to automatically go to him."

"How do you become Captain, though?" Akaashi asks and Bokuto grins.

"You wanna make Captain?"

"Of course not. I mean it is prestigious, but having all that responsibility?" Akaashi shakes his head.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Bokuto says and as Akaashi's mouth turns into a surprised "o", he looks really pleased with himself and laughs.

"Did you two hear what he just said?" Akaashi asks.

"Yeah, Bokuto tends to say stuff we don't understand." Sarukui smiles. "But you seem to be fluent in Bokuto, so care to translate?"

"Bokuto-san just quoted Shakespeare."

Konoha and Sarukui exchange glances.

"Told you they're already mirroring each other's behavior." Konoha sighs. "Saru, I believe this is our cue to leave. Look at how turned on Akaashi is right now."

"What? No! No, I'm not - this isn't-" Akaashi starts stammering, while Sarukui and Bokuto laugh and he doesn't know if they are laughing at him or at what Konoha said? And does Bokuto really think that's true, because it really isn't and oh God this is so fucking embarrassing.

When Konoha and Sarukui leave the Dining Room, Bokuto pats Akaashi's back.

"Akaashi, calm down, Konoha was just teasing you." He grins. "He likes to do that, especially when he knows he'll get a funny reaction in return. And that was really funny."

Akaashi snorts. Of course Bokuto considers it funny, the joke wasn't at his expense.
"But jokes aside, did you mean what you said? About not wanting to make Captain?"

"Yes, I did." Bokuto makes a motion with his hand for Akaashi to explain further. "Just like you said, it's a heavy burden to carry. Being a leader for an entire team, that's a lot of responsibility."

"Akaashi, you are one of the most responsible people I know." Bokuto says softly. "Now come on, finish up your breakfast, because you have the principal first period. Ughh. Poor you."

Akaashi quickly stuffs his mouth with his last piece of french toast and heads after Bokuto into the kitchen, then for his History classroom.

Even though Akaashi should be listening, he finds his mind wandering, not able to concentrate on the lesson in front of him. Why is Bokuto being so nice to him? Sure, they are roommates and it's great that they're getting along so well. But Bokuto is like... extra nice?

Why would he do that?

Is it because Akaashi helps him out with school? Or because he's a setter on the team? Because if that's the reason, he should probably have a word with Bokuto and tell him he doesn't owe Akaashi anything.

And during Japanese he starts wondering why Bokuto pointed out how he's one of the most responsible people he knew? What did that have to do with the Captain's job they were talking about?

Bokuto isn't exactly subtle - not by a long shot - so the more Akaashi thinks about this, the more he worries. What if Bokuto was thinking two years from now, when he graduates and wants Akaashi to take over the Captain position? No, that's just silly.

His question about how one becomes Captain, at least here at Fukurodani, remained unanswered, though. Does the team elect him or does the previous Captain pass on the title to whomever he thinks is best suited for the job? Or does it go to the best player on the team?

Clearly it doesn't get passed on by seniority. But that doesn't exactly help with Akaashi's deductions.

Then it's lunch time and he is too busy eating his fish tacos to bother with mysteries.

"Akaashi, look! Look at me, Akaashi!" Bokuto demands his attention and since Akaashi doesn't look, he starts shaking Akaashi's shoulder. "Loook!"

He turns his head to the right and sees that Bokuto has dumped the insides from one of his tacos inside his plate and is using it to cover his mouth.

"Guess who I am!" Bokuto asks. "Come onnn, Akaashi, guess!"

"Donald Duck."

"Hey hey heyyyyy! What about now-"

"Bokuto-san, please let me eat." Akaashi mumbles, mouthful of food.

Konoha laughs. "Who's the one making him uncomfortable now?"

Bokuto grunts and gets back to his lunch.

During Study Hall Akaashi feels irritated with himself for not paying better attention in class,
During Study Hall Akaashi feels irritated with himself for not paying better attention in class, because now he has to reread the lessons before being able to do his homework. And even though he scolded himself to listen more carefully in class, during English, he decides to pin half of the blame on Bokuto and slides him a note.

"Because of you I couldn't concentrate during the first four periods."

Bokuto blinks at the piece of paper, then instantly replies.

"Why? What did I do? : ("

"You didn't tell me how you became Captain."

"That's why you couldn't concentrate?"

"Yes. I've been worrying all morning that you have this crazy idea of wanting to groom me as Captain. Please tell me I'm wrong, so I can relax."

He nudges Bokuto between the ribs, because Bokuto's chortle carries over the reading that is happening.

"Bokuto, would you like to share with the rest of your classmates what you find so funny?" Mr Burns asks, but his voice sounds amused.

"I'm sorry, Sir." Akaashi hears himself answering. "I just told him why I dislike the novel."

He normally wouldn't take the blame for Bokuto, but he was the one that initiated the note passing, so he feels it's only fair to cover for him.

"Oh? Not a fan of Boccaccio, I take it?"

"I've only read bits of Decameron, Sir, but I do know this one and..."

"And? Please, speak your mind, Akaashi."

"Well, in my opinion there are uhh... over the top obscenities."

Mr Burns laughs and he's the only one in the class who does, of course. Because, clearly, nobody else has been paying attention to the euphemisms. Or the book in general.

"I have to agree with you there. I'm not too fond of the book either, but it is in the syllabus." Mr Burns shrugs. "So let's get back to it, shall we?"

The reading resumes and Akaashi gets back to his note.

"Akaashi, I have no idea what you just said, but I know you totally saved my skin."

"You make sure you remember that next time you tell me it's a waste of time to read ahead of the class."

When the bell rings, Akaashi heads for Studio Art, and once again realizes Bokuto didn't give an answer to his question! Damn it.

But there's Sarukui next to him, so he asks him quietly.

"The previous Captain as well as the team together decided he's best for the job. Why do you ask?" Sarukui whispers.
And although Akaashi was honest with Bokuto in his note, he feels a bit too silly to say it to Sarukui, so instead he just settles for "just curious" and gets back to his drawing.

Then the dean begins with the announcements.

"Good afternoon, owls. Volleyball team, your Captain has requested a team assembly at the gym, so don't keep him waiting. And now, may the following students come to Dining Room A and B for detention..."

Akaashi and Sarukui are the first ones to make it to the court, besides Bokuto and Yukie, who are already there. Then Konoha, Washio and Komi come in and shortly after the rest of the team join them.

"I see everyone's present? Good!" Bokuto begins. "There was a mix up with the schedules and we're not going to play against Johzenji next week." Groans all around. "Don't worry, I have good news. We get to play this Friday against ICST - International Christian School of Tokyo!" Bokuto adds quickly and grins. "We've never played them before, so this is going to be interesting. Our game's scheduled to start at 4:00 pm, but make sure you remind your teachers during your last period to let you go half an hour earlier, so we can get changed and welcome them to the gym. This is gonna be our first game for the season, so you all better be present! Are you excited, owls?"

Bokuto's question is answered by happy hoots echoing through the entire gym and Akaashi finds himself joining in the excitement.

"Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"Bokutooooo! Aren't you forgetting something?"

"Hm? Oh yeah, thanks Yukie." Bokuto grins. "Akaashi, I spoke with the dean and you're free from your nerd duties for the rest of the week, so you can practice with the rest of us."

Yukie clears her throat. "You're forgetting something again."

"Eh?"

Sigh. "The announcement for Vice Captain, remember?"

"Oooo yeah!" Bokuto grins. "Team, I present to you our new Fukurodani Vice Captain - Akaashi Keiji!"

Oh no.

It seems his worries weren't as silly and unfounded as he would have liked. What sort of crack pipe has Bokuto been smoking from, seriously?

He blinks in surprise, while Konoha, Sarukui, Washio and Komi walk over to him, grinning, and pat his back, congratulating him.

Then Saito speaks up.

"Are you serious?" He laughs, but it's not a ha ha funny laughter, no, there's absolutely 0 humor behind it. "Do you want our school to become a laughingstock? Bokuto, get real! Akaashi, no offense to you, but you're not the right person for the position."

Bokuto snorts. "And you think you are the right person, don't you, Saito?"
"Damn right I do."

"Of course you do. But I don't."

"Just because Akaashi is your new best friend, or whatever, doesn't mean you should appoint him as Vice Captain."

"Do you think that I would put personal preferences before the team's best interest?" Bokuto asks and crosses his arms. "Alright, let's vote then. Yukie, the both of us said yes to Akaashi being Vice Captain, yeah?" She nods. "Good. That makes two votes. Konoha who do you vote for?"

"You know I go with the Captain's decision." Konoha grins. "Besides, I also think Akaashi will be perfect for the job."

"Same here." Sarukui says.

"And here." Komi adds.

"Count my vote for Akaashi also." Washio smiles.

Then, to Akaashi's surprise, the other first years - including Suzuki Kazuya - puke guy! - nod their heads in approval and cast their vote for him.

"Which leaves you and Akaashi, but I already know he won't vote for himself." Bokuto finishes. "Which means there's only you, Saito. So, congratulations, Akaashi!" Bokuto grins.

Akaashi feels overwhelmed, so touched and grateful that everyone considers him worthy of the position, even though he hasn't even had his first game yet???

"Thank you very much!" He says and bows his head to the entire team. "I promise to do my best!"

"Now, go get changed, so we can get started with practice!" Bokuto grins.

Everyone heads for the locker room and Akaashi decides it's best to leave talking to Bokuto for later. Because the idea of killing him does seem rather appealing, and he wouldn't want to have witnesses around.

Akaashi didn't bring his gym clothes here though, because he expected to tutor after school, so he quickly goes to their room to change. And by the time he's back, the warming up laps have began. He quickly joins, and since he doesn't want to be singled out as the last one, instead of jogging, he starts sprinting.

He's already broken out into a sweat by the time they spread out and start stretching, but at least he's not left behind. And when he looks up at Bokuto, he's rewarded a wink.

Yeah, let's see if you'll still be winking during Study Hall, he thinks and smirks. And Bokuto very clearly misinterprets the smirk as a good sign, because he grins back.

When they pair up, Bokuto surprises him yet again.

"You wanna kill me, don't you?" Bokuto chuckles. "It's written all over your face."

"I guess you really are good at reading your setter."

"That's my job."
They start passing the ball back and forth and Akaashi tries not to set as much as he would like to, but goes for passing the ball back to Bokuto with receives.

"And you seem to be able to read my thoughts too." Bokuto adds with a grin.

And Akaashi finds his lips curving up. "That's my job, Bokuto-san."

"Today you shouldn't go practicing serves at court one, though. I want you by my side throughout the entire practice, okay?"

Akaashi nods and turns into Bokuto's shadow for the next half an hour. Then Bokuto separates them into two teams and they begin playing.

Akaashi isn't surprised that they're on the same team. And he silently congratulates himself for practicing serving so much, because every single one of them make it over the other side of the net. But he still needs to practice on adding more force to them, because they are all weak and get received.

Bokuto's team ends up winning, but Akaashi lines up with the rest of the losing team for suicides.

"Akaashi?" The manager blinks in surprise. "You don't have to do suicides, your team won."

"Yukie, he knows that." Bokuto grins and lines up next to him. "Come on, everyone, follow your Vice Captain's example!"

And when the whistle blows, every single member of the Fukurodani volleyball team does suicides, followed by cooling down laps.

Then everyone leaves and after Bokuto yells a "bring me some food back" at Akaashi, he follows Konoha and Sarukui into the kitchen. His expression must be easy enough to read, because Konoha nudges him.

"Akaashi, why the long face? Aren't you happy you're Vice Captain?"

"I am incredibly flattered, Konoha-san, and I thank you as well as Sarukui-san for the vote of confidence, but I don't know if I'm the right person for the job." He mumbles.

"Eh? Of course you are!"

Sarukui nods. "If you can get Bokuto's ass to do school work, you'll be perfect as Vice Captain, because he'll listen to you."

"Yep. You're his official baby sitter." Konoha grins.

Akaashi doesn't really see or think it's just as easy as that, but he sees no point in trying to convince them otherwise, especially because it might make him sound ungrateful and he really doesn't want that. So after he gets a couple of onigiri and bananas, he heads back to the gym.

But he doesn't hear the familiar sound of balls being slammed. Instead, as he walks over to the second court, he sees Bokuto sitting in the middle, his knees pressed up against his chest and his face buried between them.

"Bokuto-san?" He asks softly.

But since Bokuto doesn't reply, or even move, Akaashi quietly sits next to him and starts eating. When he's finished, he continues being silent and eventually Bokuto's left eye peeks at him.
"Akaashi, aren't you gonna say something?"

"No."

"No?" Bokuto looks up. "What do you mean no? Aren't you curious?"

"Yes, I am."

"So ask me what's wrong!"

"Bokuto-san, what's wrong?"

Bokuto buries his head back between his knees. "I don't wanna talk about it."

Akaashi sighs internally. God, he's such a drama queen.

He decides his best option is to not say anything until Bokuto's finished sulking, so he gets up and starts practicing serving. But even after he's done two nets full of balls, Bokuto hasn't so much as moved. He collects them all and puts them into the back room, then takes his seat on the floor next to Bokuto.

The two of them sit in silence, and even though in the back of Akaashi's mind he's thinking how they are wasting precious practice time, or time they could use to study, he doesn't move. He realizes this must be the one of Bokuto's "moods" Konoha and Kuroo told him about.

"While you were in the kitchen, my dad called." Bokuto mumbles and it is so quiet that for a second he thinks he only imagined it? But then Bokuto continues talking. "And that made me realize how much I fucked up today."

Akaashi doesn't know what to reply, so he keeps his mouth shut.

"My whole life... I've spend my entire life hating how my parents made me feel. And yet today I did the exact same thing to you. I guess I really am my father's son, huh." He laughs, but it's so unlike the happy laughter Akaashi is used to, that the hairs on the back of his neck stand up.

Bokuto just sounds so sad, and his posture, which is always so big and proud, now looks like a small child, awaiting to be scolded. "I can't even begin to tell you how sorry I am, Akaashi. If I were you, I would hate me right now!"

Automatically Akaashi's hand settles on Bokuto's lower back and begins moving it gently, ever so gently, up and down, up and down.

"Bokuto-san, I don't hate you." He says softly. "I could never hate you."

Bokuto snorts. "Yeah, right. You're only saying that to make me feel better. And you shouldn't, because I don't deserve it."

"Why don't you let me decide that for myself? Besides, did you forget what you told me yesterday when we were practicing? Honesty? I would never lie to you, not on the court and not off the court. Just like I know you wouldn't lie to me." He says and the tips of his mouth curve up. "You might be a lot of things, Bokuto-san, but a liar isn't one of them."

And his voice sounds so certain of it, that Bokuto looks up. "How do you know that?"

"Bokuto-san, don't think you're the only one who can read me, because I can read you too. And I don't need to use my "nerd superpowers" to say that." He has Bokuto's full attention now and he can see that praising is the right way to go. "You're my Captain, my roommate and my best friend.
And I look up to you, because you're my favourite senpai."

"I am?"

"Of course you are."

Bokuto's sullen expression is instantly replaced by the big grin Akaashi's used to. There's still no "Hey hey hey!", but it is an improvement from minutes ago.

"Now eat your dinner." Akaashi points at the napkin and Bokuto nods.

"Thank you, Akaashi." Bokuto mumbles, mouthful of onigiri. "Not just for the food, I mean. For being there for me when I need you."

Akaashi feels his face heat up at once. Bokuto didn't say "when I need it", no, his exact words were "when I need you". Other than school or house work, he's never been needed before.

Bokuto might be loud and sometimes a bit irritating, just a bit though, but he has this certain spirit, or positive energy about him, or whatever you wanna call it, that makes you want to be his friend. And he has friends, so many, he's always surrounded by people.

And so, for Akaashi to hear that of all those friends, he is considered the one Bokuto needs, is such an amazing feeling, so flattering and just... wow! He finds himself speechless.

But now that Bokuto is back to his usual self, he continues talking.

"I'm sure someone from the team already told you a bit about my parents." Akaashi nods. "Kuroo's the only one that's met them, but I'm pretty sure he didn't tell you anything?" Akaashi nods. "Right. You might have already guessed I don't have any siblings?"

"Bokuto-san, I would love to know more about you and your family."

"Maybe after I explain, you'll understand why I am the way I am." Bokuto chuckles. "My parents didn't have a lot when growing up. They both made names for themselves on their own without any help. So I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth - is that how the saying goes?" Akaashi nods. "Right. You might have already guessed I don't have any siblings?"

"Why do you say that?"

Bokuto snorts. "Only child syndrome, hello? I'm used to getting things my way. Anyway. My dad and my mom both have brothers and sisters, and I have a lot of cousins. Like a lot! And since none of my aunts and uncles have accomplished as much as my parents, there is this pressure on me to do better, way better, than my cousins, who didn't have the same privileges that I do. And it's so hard, because my parents keep bragging to my entire family, as well as their colleagues and friends, how amazing I am and how well I do this and that and it's so much! Like... If someone else fails in class or whatever, their parents might be like yeah okay, just do better next time. But my parents! They set these really high standards for me, which make me feel so shit, because I'm supposed to set an example or whatever? But it just makes me feel like no matter what I do, it's never good enough. I'm never going to be good enough for my parents' standards. I ignored my studies, even though they got me private tutors to help me and spent even more money on my education. And that changed nothing in my grades, I just started feeling more and more guilty, you know? So, after constantly being called the black sheep of the family and how disappointed everyone is from me, I stopped trying. I just didn't care about anything anymore." Bokuto says miserably. "Except for volleyball. That's the only thing I've ever done on my own, without any help. That's why I practice like crazy. It's the only thing I'm actually good at. Take away the..."
volleyball, and I'm a complete failure."

"Bokuto-san, you're not a failure. You're being too hard on yourself."

"No, Akaashi, I'm not and that's the problem!"

"You are top five in the country. If that's not a success, I don't know what is."

"But that's all I have going for me, can't you see?"

"That's not true."

"It is true! And even though I hate that feeling, I did the exact same thing that I hate to you today! Don't deny it, Akaashi, I saw the way you looked at me when I said you're Vice Captain! I saw it and still decided to get things my way, completely ignoring the way you feel!" Bokuto's voice cracks and Akaashi watches as his eyes water with tears.

Akaashi has no idea why these eyes could pull at his heartstrings like this, but they do, God they do. And he stares at Bokuto's face, studying it as if it's the most important thing in the world. Bokuto's smooth, poreless skin. The big golden, faultless eyes. The long, cascading black lashes. Lashes so long, that Akaashi fears they'd wrap themselves around him, tangle together and never let go.

Without fully comprehending why his body is moving on its own, he sees his hand reach forward and wipe away the pieces of sadness leaking out of Bokuto's eyes. Then he feels Bokuto's hands clutching at the edge of his t-shirt, pulling him closer, burying his head into Akaashi's chest.

"Akaashi, please forgive me!"

Akaashi wraps his arms around Bokuto and lets him cry, gently rubbing his back and whenever his hands go up, his fingertips feels the hot skin of Bokuto's neck. He doesn't know why his mouth feels parched, like he's been eating sand, or stranded in the desert for days. But he licks his dry lips and manages to croak out.

"Bokuto-san, there is nothing to forgive."

"You're lying."

"No, I'm not. I was a bit mad earlier, because a little heads up would've been nice. But I'm not anymore." Akaashi smiles, even though Bokuto can't see it. "I was just terrified, because I don't want to disappoint the team with my incompetence."

"But you're not-"

"Please, Bokuto-san, I'm not being humble. I know my capabilities better than anyone. So please, don't feel like you owe me an apology."

Bokuto pulls away and sniffs loudly. "Really?"

"Yes, really. In fact, I'm really grateful that you consider me worthy of such a position. So... thank you, Captain."

A ghost of a smile passes Bokuto's lips and Akaashi continues.

"I promise to do my best, so you wouldn't regret your decision."

"Of all the decisions I've made in my life, this is the one I will never regret."
"No pressure there." Akaashi rolls his eyes, which makes Bokuto laugh.

Then he quickly gets up on his feet. "Come on, let's get back to our room, because you need to help out your Captain with his homework."

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

The two of them have to leave showering for after Study Hall, because the second they make it up to their floor, Jared starts grumbling how late they are.

"God, Jared, calm down, man. Don't have a cow!" Bokuto says, which earns them at least five more minutes of Jared's complaining.

When he closes the door behind him, Bokuto turns to Akaashi and grins.

"Now you see why nobody likes Jared."

Akaashi helps Bokuto with all of his homework and then, even though Bokuto complains that tomorrow's Wednesday and they have no English, Akaashi insists they learn half of the words for the vocabulary quiz on Friday.

When he closes the book, he's about to get up, but Bokuto's hand tugs at his shirt.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"To take a shower."

"No, later. We have more important things to do."

Akaashi raises an eyebrow. "Such as?"

"Sit back down and I'll show you."

Then he pulls out a stack of papers from his backpack and puts them between the two. Akaashi curiously looks at them and realizes it's diagrams of a court, with numbers and arrows, creating a big mess of doodles all over the place.

"Do you know what this is?" Bokuto asks.

"Uhh... volleyball?" He replies stupidly.

"Akaashi! It's not just "volleyball", it's our strategy for Friday!" Bokuto grins. "You better study them carefully and remember them."

Yeah, that's great and all, but he can't really decipher any of it?

"Bokuto-san? Some help would be appreciated."

"What do you not understand?"

"I understand nothing." He replies and scowls as Bokuto laughs.

How rude.

"Hahahah! My father's a doctor, so I must've inherited his terrible handwriting."
"Yeah, I guess so."

Bokuto starts going over the notes, explaining everything so animatedly, that Akaashi finds himself nodding and listening, even though he got it all from the first time. But Bokuto is just so into it, that Akaashi doesn't want to stop him, when he looks this happy.

"Akaashi!" Bokuto snaps his fingers in front of Akaashi's face. "Hellooo, earth to Akaashi?"

"What is it, Bokuto-san?"

"Dude, you don't have to dumb yourself down to keep me talking, I know you got it like fifteen minutes ago." Bokuto grins.

Oh shit.

Bokuto is really good at reading him, and as Akaashi's cheeks heat up, he makes a mental note to be more - much more - careful in the future.

"Mmmm, I think I finally got it now." He mumbles, while Bokuto laughs.

Before he can embarrass himself any further, he bolts for the bathroom. He curses himself for being so... dumb? Why, why would he do that? Why would he pretend not to get it?

I was just letting him return the favor for all the tutoring I've given him, Akaashi decides. Yes, that must be it. There's no other explanation for it.

Once he's done with his shower and into his pjs and t shirt, he sees that Bokuto is out of the room - probably getting himself hot chocolate - and lies in his bed and calls his parents. His dad puts him on speakerphone and the two instantly begin asking him how he's doing, how school's going, and volleyball too. He tells them all the news - that he's tutor now, as well as Vice Captain of the volleyball team. Both of them congratulate him and tell him they're so proud of him. Then they tell him about their work and that they're fine too and they'll come visit once their schedules aren't so hectic.

Since he hears Jared and Bokuto's voices echoing in the hallway, he quickly tells his parents to take care and that he loves them too, because he doesn't feel like explaining where all the noise is coming from.

And right on time, because Bokuto barges into the room, two cups of hot chocolate into hands. He hands one to Akaashi, who accepts it with a thankful nod, then goes back to the open door and yells.

"Jared's a jerk! Hey hey heyyyy!"

Of course, Jared comes in and threatens to write him down, while Akaashi finds himself apologizing for Bokuto's behavior. With a grunt, Jared leaves and slams the door behind him.

"Bokuto-san, was that really necessary?"

"Yes, yes it was. He was being too bossy and I had to remind him that nobody likes him."

Sigh.

"Akaashi, quit hogging the bed like that and move."

Before Akaashi can so much as move a muscle, Bokuto sits on his stomach.
"Um. You're sitting on me."

"I told you to move."

Akaashi scowls and pushes Bokuto off of him. "I'm not letting you sit on my bed in your gym clothes. Go shower."

"Okayyyyy, mooooom." Bokuto rolls his eyes and starts undressing. "Call Kuroo."

"Call him yourself."

"Akaashi, I'm going to take a shower! Come on, call him and ask what he's up to."

"Probably nothing good." Akaashi replies, but Bokuto's already in the bathroom. But still, he finds himself dialing in, because he hasn't heard from Kuroo since the kitchen incident and he wonders if he's still mad about that. And not even after the first ring, Kuroo picks up.

"Is this the reaaal liiiife? Is this just faaaantasyyy? Cau-"

"Kuroo-san, please don't sing."

"Oh ho hooo, you make Vice Captain owl and suddenly my singing isn't good enough for you?"

"Your singing isn't good enough for anyone."

"I'll let that slide, but only because you haven't heard me during karaoke night."

"I'd rather not hear that. Ever."

"Ouch. Hm, you're lucky you're pretty, roomie, otherwise-"

"Please don't call me that."

"Alright, alright. What's up? You missed me, didn't you?"

"No."

"What do you mean no? I know you did, don't deny the truth!"

"I'm not. Bokuto-san asked me to call you."

"Where is that loud owl of yours anyway?"

Akaashi ignores the "loud owl of yours" comment and answers a "In the shower."

"Ah. And what about you? Did you finish with your shower?"

"Yes."

"Did you remember to wash behind your ears?"

Akaashi sighs. This is exactly why he should have waited for Bokuto to be done with his shower and call Kuroo himself.

"Anyway. You two owls ready for your first game this Friday?"

"Kuroo-san, do you know everything that goes on in our school?"
"Yes, I do actually. And if you checked your facebook more often, you'll also know that Bokuto farted today in his Biology class."

"I didn't need to know that, but thank you for sharing."

"You're welcome. Seriously, though, you need to check your facebook more often or you'll be out of the loop."

"Why don't the two of you just message each other without involving me?"

"Because you're part of Bokurokaashi? Is that that what we called ourselves?"

Sigh. "Don't know. Don't care."

"My my, there's no need to be so rude, roomie."

"I really wish Bokuto-san didn't take this long to style his hair."

Kuroo roars in laughter and he's so loud, Akaashi puts the phone away from his ear. He really doesn't see what's so funny about that? He decides to put Kuroo on speaker, because he doesn't want any more surprise laughter that might results in him going deaf.

"Oh my God! You crack me up so much!" Kuroo says once he's stopped laughing, but Akaashi can hear his grin even through the phone. "Surely, not even you could possibly think Bokuto takes this long in the bathroom just to do his hair?"

Akaashi doesn't reply, but he does understand Kuroo's implication and he really really doesn't want to think about it.

"Awww, you're being shy again, aren't you?" Kuroo laughs. "I bet your face is really red right now."

Again, he doesn't reply.

"Akaashi, Akaashi, your silence speaks volumes."

"Kuroo-san, please don't do that."

"What am I doing?" His voice sounds innocent, but Akaashi knows better than that. Kuroo doesn't have a single innocent thing about him, not one.

"You're making me uncomfortable on purpose."

"And is it working?" He purrs into the phone, while some intelligible noise escapes Akaashi's throat. "Mmm, I guess it is."

"I'm hanging up now."

"Nooooo, don't hang up, please? I promise I'll stop."

"I don't trust you."

"Ahhh, I see. Your parents must have taught you well."

"What do you mean?"
"You know better than to trust a pretty face." Kuroo laughs.

Akaashi presses the red button and ignores his ringing phone.

Fucking Kuroo. Why does he have to be like that, why? And always with the damn innuendos! What the fuck is that all about?

"Why didn't you call Kuroo?" Bokuto asks as he steps out of the bathroom.

"I did. But I'm never calling him again."

Bokuto laughs. "On a scale from one to ten, how uncomfortable did he make you feel?"

"Twelve."

Bokuto laughs harder. "I can see. You're doing that thing with your hands."

Akaashi blinks. "What thing?"

"That." Bokuto points at Akaashi's hands. "You're always fiddling with your fingers when you feel uncomfortable or nervous or confused. I've seen you do it in practice many times."

That's weird. Akaashi's never realized it before. Huh.

Before he can reply, Bokuto snatches his ringing phone and laughs at the seven missed calls. Then he dials, while Akaashi grumbles that he doesn't want to waste his free minutes on Kuroo.

"Akaashi, chill, I'm calling on Viber." He grins and puts the phone on speaker.

"Well about damn time you picked up your phone, Pretty Boy."

"Yo."

"Oh, it's you and your ugly ass." Kuroo chuckles.

"Hey! Who you callin' ugly?" Bokuto grumbles.

"I'm kidding, bro. What'cha two up to?"

"I just finished showering and Akaashi and I are gonna watch a movie."

"We are?" Akaashi scowls.

"Ooo, what are you guys gonna watch?" Kuroo asks.

Akaashi might have manners and he is polite, but if Kuroo decides to give them a visit to watch a movie together - on a fucking school night - that's where he draws the line.

"Nothing. We're watching nothing." He replies.

Both Bokuto and Kuroo ignore him.

"Dude, I feel like watching Wayne's World." Bokuto says.

"Oh my God, yeah!"

Then the two of them start yelling together. "Wayne's World! Wayne's World! Party time!"
Akaashi blinks in confusion as Bokuto pretends to have a guitar in his hands, while Kuroo's voice does a "trrr rrr rrr!" noise.

"Bro. Bro, this is serious." Bokuto suddenly stops and takes a picture of Akaashi, which he instantly sends to Kuroo. "Do you see that?"

Kuroo gasps. "That's the face of a person who has never seen Wayne's World."

"Totally." Bokuto shakes his head sadly. "Akaashi, you're lucky you have us as friends to educate you and make you cool."

Akaashi rolls his eyes so hard, he can see the back of his own head. But, since he knows there's no way out, he demands for Bokuto to get dressed first, and then they can watch the stupid movie. And Kuroo remains on the other side of the line, watching along with them, from his own laptop at home.

Not even a minute into the movie and Akaashi's already told them both to shut up and be quiet, because they keep quoting stuff or going like "dude, I love this part".

Then things get even worse, because Wayne and his buddies start singing Bohemian Rhapsody and needless to say, Bokuto and Kuroo join in.

When the ending credits begin to roll, Akaashi realizes that he's made it through all of Dante's circles of hell - all nine of them.

"Dude, now's time for Wayne's World 2!" Kuroo says and as Bokuto begins loading a new stream, they hear a female voice yelling at the other end of the line. "Okay, mommm, I'm sorry. I promise to be qui- noooo. Please? Okay. Sorry you guys, my mom took my laptop. Don't you dare watch part 2 without me, though!"

"We won't bro, I promise." Bokuto replies, while Akaashi sends a silent thank you to Kuroo's mom.

But unlike yesterday, sleep is not on Bokuto's schedule, because he gets off the bed and takes a bag of chips and skittles from his "goodie" drawer. He throws them at Akaashi and then pulls his desk lamp into the bed.

"Come on, Akaashi, move over and get the blanket over us, it's Jared tonight." Bokuto says and when Akaashi does as he's told, he stares at Bokuto expectantly. "We need to have the talk."

Akaashi's back instantly arches up, because the words sounds so serious? "The talk." What talk? Did Akaashi do something wrong?

"And about damn time we did, don't you agree?" Bokuto asks and pops a cheeto into his mouth, then shakes the bag in front of Akaashi. "Cheeto?"

"No, thank you. What talk do we need to have, Bokuto-san?" He tries to hide the nervousness in his voice, but Bokuto notices it - of course he does - and chuckles quietly.

"Akaashi, relax, man. The bro talk, you know?"

"I don't know what that means."

"Come on, you know. We already went over the family bullshit and all that, so it's about time we
bonded over the serious stuff."

"I still don't know-"

"The sex talk, man!" Bokuto grins. "You tell me about your first time, I tell you about mine, then we talk about the other times. Get it?"

Even though the only light is coming from Bokuto's desk lamp next to them, Akaashi feels like his face can light up the entire fucking school. And as he begins absentmindedly fiddling with his fingers, Bokuto points at them.

"You're uncomfortable right now," He says.

"Yes, I am."

"Why? We're best friends, aren't we? Don't you feel me close enough to tell me about it?" Bokuto clearly misinterprets Akaashi's silence. "Alright, I'll go first. It was last year, just after Nationals. We lost, and the entire team needed cheering up, right? So Kuroo took matters into his own hands and we went to this chick's place. I don't remember how exactly, because we drank a lot, but we ended up at this chick's place."

"All of you?"

"Nah, just Kuroo, the girl and me. She couldn't decide between the two of us who she liked better, so we ended up having a threesome." Bokuto grins. "Pretty cool, huh?"

Akaashi is quite aware of the fact his mouth is gaping, but this information is definitely not what he expected - or actually wanted - to hear?

"Hey, it's cool, though, because Kuroo and I took turns." Bokuto explains. "We didn't actually fuck each oth-"

"Bokuto-san, have you ever heard the phrase "too much information"?"

Akaashi wishes he had a time machine, which he could use right about now and rewind time, before he actually heard the story. Wtf, a threesome? With Kuroo?

Why? Why did Bokuto feel the need to share that with him? Why are they even having this conversation?

"Okay, okay. My second time was better, because Kuroo wasn't there, pushing me out of the way and trying to steal the spotlight." Bokuto laughs. "That asshole. Anyway, my third time was right on my birthday."

Akaashi quickly sees his opportunity and takes it. "When is your birthday, Bokuto-san?"

"September 20th. And I already knows yours is on the 5th of December. Akaashi, we totally have to check out for the weekend of your birthday and celebrate, okay?"

Akaashi nods, because his birthday is like two months away and surely he can get his parents to visit then, so he can go with them and that'll be a perfectly good excuse to miss out on the party that Bokuto's already planning for him.

"Promise, though!" Bokuto adds.

Sigh. "I promise."
"Hey hey heyyyyy!" Bokuto hoots happily, then claps his hands. "Okay, I told you about all my experiences - sexperiences, as Kuroo calls them. And good thing he isn't here, because his list is fucking endless. Although he has this notebook where he keeps track of them."

"That doesn't surprise me at all." Akaashi snorts.

"Akaashi, quit stalling and tell me!"

Akaashi licks his lips slowly and clears his throat. "Bokuto-san? You do remember that I told you I'm gay, right?"

"Mhm yeah, and?"

"...I've never been in a relationship before." He mumbles.

"Oh my god, same!"

And when Bokuto says it, it sounds so normal and not something to be embarrassed about? Akaashi actually feels himself relax a little bit.

"How come, though?" He asks curiously. Because really, why isn't Bokuto in a relationship? Or had one in the past?

Bokuto shrugs. "I don't know. I guess I don't have time for girls, when all I do is practice."

"What about our manager? She's a girl and interested in volleyball just like you?"

"Yukie? Duuuuude, nooo!" Bokuto chuckles. "She's like my sister or something!"

"So you don't have a type?"

"I haven't really thought about it." Bokuto taps his chin thoughtfully. "Kuroo always says the only thing I ever romance is a volleyball. I guess he's right." He grins. "Your turn!"

Akaashi does realize now that he's fiddling with his fingers and quietly mutters a "I've never had sex before."

"Oh, of course not."

Akaashi doesn't know why, but he asks. "Why did you say "of course not"?"

"Because, your first time will be way different than mine. And I don't just mean that about the threeso- Oh, dude. Akaashi, listen to me very carefully." Bokuto places his hand on Akaashi's shoulder. "No matter what you do, do not - I repeat - do not tell Kuroo you're a virgin." And for emphasis, he vigorously shakes his head.

"I wasn't planning on it."

"Good. Although he probably knows about it already."

Akaashi snorts. "How would he know that?"

"Kuroo can smell virgin from miles away." Bokuto says. "I'm not kidding, I've seen him in action. He's like... well I don't know like what exactly, because I've never seen anything like it. Whenever he sets his eyes or mind on someone he wants to fuck, he finds a way to fuck them."

Bokuto sounds so serious, that Akaashi actually laughs about it, because wtf? It sounds so
"Akaashi! Why are you laughing? I'm not kidding."

"Bokuto-san, let me remind you again that I'm gay."

"Yeah, as if that would make a difference to Kuroo?"

Akaashi blinks, and now it's Bokuto's turn to laugh.

"Kuroo couldn't give two shits when it comes to gender, believe me. If he finds someone hot, he goes for it, man. So don't tell me I didn't warn you." Bokuto grins, then his eyebrows knit together. "Wait, hold up a sec. Haven't you noticed already?"

"Noticed what?"

"Akaashi, wake the fuck up man! Kuroo totally wants to bone you."

"Excuse me?" Akaashi's voice rises and Bokuto shushes him.

"Shhh, Jared, remember?"

"Sorry."

"Akaashi, you're super smart. How have you not figured it out already? He's been flirting with you like crazy?! Are you that blind?"

Akaashi gulps. "I just though he likes making people feel uncomfortable?"

"He does, yeah." Bokuto nods. "Because he likes to play with his food before eating it. That sly cat!"

"Well, I don't really care what Kuroo-san expects, but I'm not going to turn into his "food"."

"Yeah, that's what they all say."

"Hey!" Akaashi grumbles. "Take that back!"

"No, can't do. If Kuroo wants you, he'll find a way to charm you. I don't know how he does it - I wish I did - but, he's like a fucking... scammer!"

"Do you mean a magician?"

"Yes! Exactly! He'll like... Houdini you into his bed or some shit."

Akaashi snorts. "I seriously doubt that."

"Don't. There's nothing he loves more than a challenge."

"Bokuto-san, I appreciate the warning, I really do, but it's unnecessary. So please, can we change the topic?"

"Alright. You've been here for almost two weeks now. Any guy catch your attention? What about our team, huh? We're all a bunch of studs, right?" Bokuto wiggles his eyebrows playfully. "Right, Akaashi?"

"Bokuto-san, when I said we should change the topic, this isn't what I had in mind."

"Please stop."

"Hey! What about me?"

Akaashi blinks stupidly. "What about you?"

"Akaashi! Don't you find me attractive?"

Akaashi isn't used to this sort of directness, but of course, Bokuto would fire up a question like that at him, of course.

"You are...handsome, I guess?"

"You guess?" Bokuto echoes. "Akaashi, what the fuck?"

Bokuto doesn't waste any more time, he jumps off the bed and takes off his t shirt. Akaashi stares at him as he puts his hands up, in a very Popeye manner.

"See those guns, Akaashi? Huh?" Bokuto nods his head at both his arms. "Do you see them?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

"Well?"

"What would you like me to say, Bokuto-san?"

"Tell me how attractive I am!"

Sigh. "You're very attractive, Bokuto-san."

"Hey, you're only saying that to make me shut up! You have to mean it when you say it!"

Louder sigh. "Bokuto-san, you are the most handsome and attractive guy from Fukurodani."

"That's more like it." Bokuto grins. "Wait a minute. What do you mean from Fukurodani?" He scowls. "Do you find Kuroo more attractive than me?"

"What happened to me being your setter and needing to get rest?"

"You can sleep in class tomorrow, like I do. Answer my question, please!"

Akaashi closes his eyes and lets his upper body fall onto his pillow.

"Oi, Akaashi, don't sleep! Tell me!"

"Do you promise to shut up if I answer your question?"

"Scouts promise."

Akaashi eyes him suspiciously. "You were never really a scout, were you, Bokuto-san?"

Bokuto grins. "Nope."

"Then, sorry, no answer. Goodnight."
Bokuto doesn't reply or say anything, but Akaashi knows better than to let his guard down. Any second now, Bokuto would do something and-

Just like he expected, Bokuto throws himself over Akaashi and straddles his hips, before Akaashi can so much as gasp from all the weight over him.

"Bokuto-san, get off!"

"Not until you answer!"

The two of them exchange glances, Bokuto smirking, while Akaashi scowling. Then they begin wrestling and the only sound is from the creaking bed beneath them, as well as their panting breaths and guttural grunts.

Akaashi is faster than Bokuto must have envisioned, because his hands manage to land a few punches on Bokuto's bare chest, before his wrists are snatched in a tight grip, forced above his head. Since he can no longer use his hands, Akaashi starts kicking with his legs, trashing, and any second now the bed will fucking break and he will kill Bokuto for it, but Bokuto just continues smirking from above, and the smirk is so damn annoying that Akaashi wants to wipe it right off his stupid face! So, even though it's totally against the rules, Akaashi's knee jerks up between Bokuto's legs. But before it can reach its target, Bokuto's thighs lock it between them like they're made of fucking iron?

As if that's not enough of a victory for Bokuto, he rocks his hips down, shaking Akaashi as well as the entire bed with him.

"Akaashi, you're playing dirty!"

Akaashi finds himself unable to move, and that's not just because Bokuto is above him, stilling both pairs of limbs, no, he genuinely finds himself unable to do anything, other than hold Bokuto's gaze. And suddenly Bokuto's face is so close - like way too close - for comfort and he wants to yell angrily just what the fuck does Bokuto think he's doing, but his mouth, just like the rest of him, has frozen.

Akaashi feels his face burning from the tips of his toes all the way up to the ends of his hair and his heart is hammering loudly into his chest, and he desperately hopes that's just his imagination and that Bokuto can't actually hear it go thump-a-thump, because that's just plain embarrassing. And then things go from bad to worse, because he feels his body moving - no, parts of his lower body - moving, as the blood pools straight to his groin! And it's not like he wants that, not at all, and if Bokuto doesn't move, any second now he will realize what's going on and this will become the most mortifying moment of Akaashi's life!

He shuts his eyes and yells. "You're more attractive than Kuroo-san!"

What feels like ages later, even though it couldn't have been more than seconds, Akaashi feels Bokuto let go of his hands and get off the bed. At this point Akaashi doesn't even dare to look down and see if his boner is visible, because he's more than a 100% certain Bokuto felt it.

Fuck.

Akaashi feels so fucking embarrassed that he just turns on his side and after facing the wall, he closes his eyes and doesn't make another sound.

He hears Bokuto go into the bathroom and after brushing his teeth, he walks out and heads up for his own bed.
The minutes seem to be ticking, but sleep doesn't come. Eventually, Bokuto breaks the silence. "Akaashi?" He whispers. "Akaashi, are you still awake?"

Akaashi doesn't know what Bokuto could possibly want now, but he decides he's had enough bonding with his roommate and keeps his mouth shut.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

I'm like 99.9% drunk, but I wanted to get this posted today, so... happy valentine's day, y'all :D

Akaashi doesn't know who he feels more annoyed with - himself for not waking up before the bell, or Bokuto, because as he gently shakes him awake, Akaashi sees that he's still topless.

As if his bed has just caught fire, he jumps out of it and heads straight for the bathroom.


What did Akaashi ever do to him to deserve this, huh? Nothing!

He catches his scowling reflection in the mirror and splashes some cold water on his face. He shouldn't be this defensive, when he doesn't know how Bokuto will react. What if he got mad?

No, that's not Bokuto, he wouldn't get mad over something as insignificant as a boner against his thigh, right? And maybe he didn't even feel it at all?

Get real. He felt it alright.

But it's not like it's Akaashi's fault, though? What the hell did Bokuto expect to get when he was all topless like that, pressing himself against Akaashi's hips, huh? Fucking candy grams?!

No, Akaashi's not to blame, because it's not his fault his body reacted the way it did. He's a fucking teenager and he get urges just like everyone else? That's natural, hello!

He takes a deep breath and tries to smile. Good, a bit of a smile is the safest approach, right? Maybe they could just laugh it off?

"Oi, Akaashi! If you're taking a shit, hurry up, man, I need to pee like a fucking race horse!"

He exits the bathroom and despite himself scowls.

"Bokuto-san, must you be this vulgar?"

Bokuto laughs.

"Please don't laugh in my face before brushing your teeth."
"Aren't you a ray of sunshine in the morning?" Bokuto grins and turns his back to Akaashi. He just drops his shorts and boxers and Akaashi is staring at Bokuto's bare ass.

Why? Why does he keep doing that?

"Bokuto-san, please close the bathroom when you're using it!" He grunts and closes it for him.

Akaashi begins putting on his gym clothes, thinking how this isn't exactly how he expected their conversation to go, but hey if Bokuto doesn't want to bring up the wardrobe malfunction from last night, all the better. Yeah. It's like it never happened.

He perks up at that, but as he starts making his bed, his scowl is back on his face.

"Bokuto-san! Look at this!" Akaashi points accusingly at his white blanket, which is now covered with traces of Bokuto's cheeto fingers. Yuck!

"Akaashi, just turn it over, it's no biggie." Bokuto winks.

"Yes, because turning it over will make it clean!"

Bokuto groans, then nudges Akaashi to the side. He watches silently as Bokuto proceeds to change their blankets and turns to him with a grin.

"There, happy now?"

Sigh. "Let's just go to breakfast."

As they head downstairs, Bokuto pokes his ribs and whines. "Akaaaaaashi, why are you being so mean to me today?"

"Because you're annoying."

Akaashi realizes a bit too late that he should've chosen his words more carefully, because Bokuto sulks not only during breakfast, but during P.E. class too. He's all over the court and he's making rookie mistakes - mistakes that even Akaashi doesn't make. He sucks at receiving, at serving and even his spikes are way off. And since the ace is playing like crap, everyone else's mood turns sour as well.

Akaashi realizes this is his fault and even though he really doesn't want to, he's Vice Captain and has to take one for the team. So, he motions to Yukie for a time out and pulls Bokuto to the side.

"Bokuto-san, I'm sorry for what I said."

Bokuto grunts.

"Really, I didn't mean it. I was just... really embarrassed."

Bokuto blinks. "Why?"

Sigh. "You know why."

"If I did, would I be asking?"

Akaashi takes a deep breath. "Please use your skills to read your setter, so I don't have to say it out loud."
Bokuto crosses his arms and studies Akaashi's face carefully.

"I got nothing."

Then.

"Does this have anything to do with what I said about Kuroo? That he wants to fuck you?"

"Shhhh, please!" Akaashi shushes. "And no, it's not that."

"Because lemme tell you, everyone already knows that."

Everyone?!? Well that's just great, isn't it?

"Guys?" The manager yells at them. "Can you wrap it up, so we can get back to the game?"

"We'll talk about it later, okay?" Akaashi mutters.

Even though he really doesn't want to talk about it at all. Ever.

"Akaashi! I want to know now!" He blinks as realization dawns on him. "Is it about the fact you got hard when we were in your bed?"

"Bokuto-san, please be more quiet!" Akaashi says through gritted teeth, while his face burns with the intensity of a thousand suns.

"Akaashi, there's no reason to be embarrassed about that! It happens to me like all the time." Bokuto says and pats Akaashi's back. "God, you had me worried that it was something serious."

"So... can we keep it between us?"

Bokuto nods. But there is just something about the way he nods his head a bit too quick that makes Akaashi wonder...

"You promise not to tell anyone? Especially Kuroo-san?"

Bokuto pulls a guilty face. "...I promise not to tell him again?"

Akaashi closes his eyes and shakes his head. Why? Why did he expect anything different?

"Bokuto-san, you can't tell him everything!" He scowls.

"Why not?"

"Because, Bokuto-san, he's... he's the enemy!" Bokuto stares at Akaashi so hard, that Akaashi decides to keep talking. "He's Nekoma! He's going to use everything you tell him to his advantage when we play against each other!"

"He wouldn't do that, he's my bro." Bokuto replies, but he doesn't sound too convinced about it either. "Right?"

"Yes, he would! Cats are masters of deception! Now, please, Bokuto-san, play like the professional that you are!"

"You got it, dude!"

And since Bokuto goes back to being Bokuto on the court, everything goes accordingly, with all
“Did you see my amazing spike, Akaashi”s, followed by “It was amazing, Bokuto-san”s and of course the “Hey hey hey! I’m the best!”s.

Then they all head for the locker room and the showers. But before Akaashi can step inside, a hand stops him. Saito’s hand.

“Akaashi, a word?”

He blink in surprise. “What is, Saito-san?”

“Senpai. Saito-senpai. You can call your buddies ”san”s, but I’m your senpai, got it?”

Yeesh! What’s up his senpai ass?

“Yes, Saito-senpai.”

“I don’t know what you told Bokuto, nor do I really care, but it’s your responsibility to make sure he plays good on Friday.” He digs his nails hardly into Akaashi’s shoulder for emphasis. “You got that, Vice Captain?”

“Yes.” He shrugs the hand off. “I got it.”

Akaashi can sort of understand why Saito is so rude, especially after Konoha and Sarukui explained to him he was mad he didn’t make Captain, but it’s not Akaashi’s fault for being appointed Vice Captain? It’s not like he asked for it?

But since Akaashi takes his duties very seriously, he is going to make sure Bokuto plays like the ace that he is, and not go into his - well, dejected mode. And at this point he doesn’t care if he’ll have to beg Bokuto or praise him to the Heavens above, he’s just going to do whatever it takes for Bokuto to bring his A game on Friday.

After lunch, before his class starts, he checks facebook and isn’t surprised to see Kuroo’s messaged him a “’Sup, Hard-y boy ͡° ͜ʖ ͡°”. But he isn't exactly a newbie to being teased, in fact, he no longer feels bad for having so much experience with being teased his entire life, because now he knows better than to rise up to the bait, like Kuroo expects him to. He’d be damned before he lets that dumb cat provoke him and get his way, nope, not today.

Best way to deal with teasing? Ignore it. Pretend it doesn't bother you - even if it really does - and then the person will eventually get bored of it and stop.

Even if Kuroo seems like a patient kind of guy when it comes to that sort of thing.

Fuck him.

All that matters is their upcoming game!

Akaashi is really surprised with himself, because he’s never been this excited before, especially for something sports related?

And he isn't the only one. There’s talks about the volleyball game during lunch, during class, in the hallways - everywhere. And it’s not just the students, it’s the teachers too!

During Studio Art on Thursday afternoon, Mori-sensei lets Ayame, Sarukui and Akaashi go to the gym and hang the banners they made for the game. Akaashi blinks in surprise, because the gym looks completely different than he’s used to seeing it. All the curtains have been pulled, so all three courts are visible now and not just the middle one.
"Does the whole place fill up with people?" He asks Sarukui.

"Yep. The entire school'll be here to cheer us on. As well as volleyball enthusiasts, scouts, parents. Didn't you invite yours?"

"No."

"Why not? It's your first game, wouldn't they want to see you play?"

"They're busy with work. Besides, it's not like I'll get to play."

"Uhhh have you not been paying attention during practice?" Sarukui laughs. "Didn't you realize both Bokuto and Yukie had you practice with the starting players?"

"Well yeah, of course. But it wasn't just me, all of the other first years got to play their positions with the starting players too."

"That's true, but you're different, Akaashi." Sarukui grins. "I'm pretty sure Bokuto'll sub you in before even half time, because he'll want you to get experience."

During Study Hall, just as Bokuto and Akaashi start studying for their vocab quiz, Rob announces that two girls are coming in, because they need Akaashi's help with Math. Yukie and her roommate come in and Akaashi joins them on the floor and starts explaining. Just before the bell rings, Bokuto grunts.

"Oi! Why didn't you two dummies come for help earlier, huh? I need to prepare for my English vocabulary quiz!"

Yukie's roommate bursts in laughter. "Did Hell just freeze over or what?"

"Well, Bokuto," Yukie begins and winks at Akaashi. "we were too busy thinking of how amazing you will be tomorrow on the court and that's why we couldn't concentrate on our work."

Bokuto instantly perks up at that, while Akaashi exchanges a smirk with their manager.

It's just after 10 pm, when Akaashi is once again surprised by Bokuto. Because Kuroo calls, but Bokuto doesn't return the call until they are finished quizzing each other.

"What's up, bro?"

"Why you takin' so long to answer me, dude, isn't your Nerd Hour already over?"

"Akaashi and I were studying."

"Oh ho hooo, is that what you kids call it these days?" Kuroo chuckles. "Anyway. I'm calling, because Kenma and I went to check out ICST after school today."

Bokuto laughs. "Kenma came with you?"

"Okay, I might have dragged him along with me, but that's not the point. Oh, he says hi by the way."

"You guys are together?"

"Yeah, my parents are out of town, so I'm staying over at his."

Poor Kenma, Akaashi thinks. Then again he isn't all that surprised that Kuroo's parents don't trust
him to stay home alone.

"Put him on speaker." Bokuto says.

"So what did you find out about their team, Kuroo-san?"

"Well we didn't get to stay for long, because some dudes asked us to leave. How rude, right? Pfff."

An unfamiliar voice, which must be Kenma, mumbles. "They asked us to leave, because you kept pestering the girls there."

"Bro, did you get to see the team at all, or were you too busy checking out the school for hot people?"

"You know me so well, bro." Kuroo laughs. "They have some decent looking chicks there. And some of their guys weren't too bad looking either. But anyway, their team didn't look like they're strong. I'm sure you-"

"You were watching their junior varsity team, and not the varsity team, which Fukurodani will play against tomorrow." Kenma mutters.

"What?" Bokuto asks surprised. "You mean they have two teams? Whoaaa, just how big is their school?"

"Probably twice the size of yours." Kenma replies.

"So did you get to see their varsity team?"

"Yes. Their shortest member is about your height." Kenma explains. "Don't pay attention to what Kuroo said, you guys are going to have a tough time on the court tomorrow."

Akaashi scowls silently. If their shortest member is like Bokuto, they'll be facing fucking giants tomorrow.

"In that case good luck, owls, you'll need it." Kuroo laughs.

"Luck is for losers!" Bokuto replies. "We don't need luck, bro, we got skills."

"I didn't see it for myself, but if Kenma says so, they gotta be pretty skilled too. Don't forget they're an International school, so they got players from all over the world."

Akaashi gulps quietly, but Bokuto doesn't look even a tiny bit disturbed by this brand new information. In fact, he looks really excited.

"I hope they have some players from the States!"

"They probably do. And you better beat them, bro. We got practice after school, but we finish before your game'll start, so I'll come watch you guys. After all, I do wanna see Akaashi's debut on the court." Kuroo adds. "You are gonna let him play, right?"

"You bet!" Bokuto grins. "Alright, Kenma, bro, thanks for the info, but I'm hanging up now. We need to get some sleep."

"Mmm are you two actually going to sleep or...?"

"What we do is none of your business, Kuroo-san." Akaashi hears himself reply and after a very
loud gasp by Kuroo, he presses the red button on Bokuto's phone.

Bokuto blinks, then roars in laughter.

"Ooo hooo!" He puts his hand up in the air and Akaashi returns the high five. "Akaashi! That was so cool!"

Akaashi accepts the compliment with a tiny smirk.

He genuinely doesn't know what came over him that made him say that, but he feels proud of himself that he did. Hah! For once he managed to answer with a comeback on time and not hours, or days, later.

When they're both in their beds, Akaashi clears his throat.

"Bokuto-san? Why do you want their team to have Americans? Does it matter where they're from?"

"American's high school sports system is like the best in the world. So the team we're gonna play against is gonna be really tough to beat!"

"Does that make you nervous?"

"Nervous? Hell no, it makes me all the more excited!" Bokuto replies and even though they're laying in the dark, Akaashi can hear his grin from up above. "And did you hear, they're all tall! How cool is that, huh?"

"Wouldn't that make them even tougher opponents?"

"Damn right! Hey hey heyyyy!"

Akaashi smiles. "Bokuto-san, you really love a challenge, don't you?"

"Akaashi! For a smart guy like you, isn't a challenge the best thing ever?"

"Well yeah, but what if."

"Oh no, I'm not going to listen to any loser talk, you hear me?" Bokuto replies. "We beat Date Tech High last year. If we can beat the Iron Wall, we can beat these International Christian guys too! And you're forgetting a very important asset we have that we didn't last year!" When Akaashi doesn't reply, Bokuto shakes the bed. "You, Akaashi, I mean you!"

"Yeah, I got that." He licks his lips. "So you're really going to let me play?"

"Let you play?" Bokuto laughs. "Oh, shit! I forgot you don't like surprises! So I better tell you now that you're a starter."

"WHAT?!"

"Mhm. Tomorrow you're getting Jersey #5."

"But... but that's Saito-sa - I mean Saito-senpai's Jersey!"

"Not any more it's not."

"Bokuto-san, you do realize you're going to bench a third year, who is experienced, in exchange for someone who hasn't played volleyball for more than two weeks, right?"
"Akaashi! I might come off as an idiot, but I'm not, okay?"

"I didn't say you were, Bokuto-san."

"Well for a second there it sounded like you were questioning me as Captain. But I promise you, you shouldn't."

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

"Akaashi, I'm serious. I don't think you realize just how good of a setter you are." Bokuto chuckles. "I have incredible trust in you, and so does the rest of the team."

Akaashi feels a lump of emotions stick in his throat. Why do they all trust him so much? A starting player, really, him? What if he completely fucks up tomorrow?

Bokuto must have been following his train of thought, because he shakes the bed again.

"Akaashi! Don't doubt yourself or your abilities, do you hear me? It always shows on the court."

"Yes, Bokuto-san." Then he adds, quieter. "But I'll be a liar if I said I wasn't nervous."

"Only a fool wouldn't be nervous!" Bokuto replies softly. "And you're no fool, Akaashi. You always impress me on the court, because you have amazing instincts. Trust them tomorrow. I might be the ace, but I only shine as bright as you make me."

"Then tomorrow I'll make sure you shine brighter than the sun, Bokuto-san."

"That's what I wanna hear." Bokuto says happily. "Wasn't there this saying - to be prepared is half the victory, or some shit?"

"Yes, there is actually. Since when do you know famous quotes, Bokuto-san?"

"Since you became my roommate. I guess your nerd stuff is rubbing off on me." Bokuto replies, then teasingly adds. "Just like other things, right, Akaashi? Hahaha!"

Just when they were having a nice moment, why did Bokuto have to ruin it like that?

So rude.

"You're hilarious, Bokuto-san."

"Hey, man, I'm just keepin' it real."

Snort.

"Okay, sorry, no more teasing." Bokuto replies after a while. "You remember how I told you I hate the pressure that I get from my family?"

"Yes."

"The only time I can actually accept it is when I'm on the court. And I know the stakes are even higher then, because it's expected of me to lead the team to victory, but that's like... the time that I feel closest to everyone, you know? Because the entire team is under the same kind of pressure as me. Okay, maybe not as much, but you know what I mean?"

"I understand what you mean."
"You'll be under the same pressure tomorrow."

"Bokuto-san, please don't remind me."

"Akaashi! I'm not saying it to make you feel worse, I'm trying to say that you won't be the only one that's under pressure. Capish?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san, capish."

"Now get some sleep."

Akaashi always follows the orders that he's given, so he turns on his side and after burying his face into his Bokuto smelling blanket, he lets the familiar scent lull him into sleep.

* * *

The 7:00 am morning bell is followed by an announcement from the dean.

"Rise and shine, owls! It's a beautiful day outside, with the smell of victory in the air." Chuckle. "Do not forget that today is our first volleyball game of the season, so you all better show some school spirit and support for your team. Who who who, who's gonna win?"

Both second and third floor fill with the yells of Bokuto, Konoha, Sarukui, and many, many more, but those three are the closest, and loudest.

"Fukurodani!"

"Oi, Sleeping Beauty! You heard the dean, get up!"

Akaashi swings his legs off the bed and yawns loudly, not even bothering to cover up his mouth. And Bokuto is in front of him in his boxers, pulling on his long ass knee pads.

"Bokuto-san? Why-" He yawns again. "Why do you wear those?"

"They're really cool, right?" Bokuto grins.

"Why do you wear them, though?"

"Because, Akaashi! Every famous athlete has a trademark something, right? Well, this is mine!" Bokuto grins.'

"Your trademark something is leggings? Okay."

"Oi, they're not leggings! They're badass knee pads, see? See, Akaashi?" Bokuto jumps from foot to foot in front of Akaashi's face as if Akaashi can't see? "I bet you want to wear them too to be cool like me, right?"

"I don't think leggings are cool, Bokuto-san." Akaashi replies and heads for the bathroom.

"They're knee pads!" Bokuto yells after him. "And hurry up, they'll be here any minute now!"

"Who's they?" Akaashi mumbles, mouthful of toothpaste.

In reply he gets something that sounds like a sneaker being thrown against the bathroom door.

"Bokuto-san, don't rush me!"
Akaashi exits the bathroom, but his scowl is instantly wiped off his face, because Bokuto is standing in front of him in his volleyball uniform, grinning proudly. Akaashi blinks, because this is the first time he's seen it, other than in photographs, and it looks awesome, but why is Bokuto wearing it now when they have school?

"Bokuto-san, why are you wearing your volleyball clothes?"

"Because I'm the Captain!" Bokuto grins.

"Yes, and especially on game days, Bokuto loves to remind us all how important he is." Yukie says with a smile as she walks into their room, followed by Konoha and Sarukui.

"Shirofuku-san!" Akaashi blinks. "Uh... what are you guys doing here?"

"Akaashi, I already told you to just call me Yukie." She says and pushes him into a sitting position on his bed, next to the other boys. "And I'm here to paint your faces." She explains and before he can say another word, she starts painting his cheeks into a flag consisting of black, white and gold. Then she proceeds to do Konoha and Sarukui. And before she starts with Bokuto, he grins.

"Yukie, you know how I want mine!"

"I know, I know."

Akaashi, who is still in pyjamas and t shirt watches as Yukie paints Bokuto's entire face in the school colors. Of course Bokuto wouldn't want just tiny flags on his cheeks, no, his entire goddamn face has to be covered.

"Alright, you're all done. And Bokuto! Make sure you don't smear any of it on your uniform!" She warns before she leaves.

"Bokuto-san?" Akaashi stares at his roommates back. "Aren't Captains supposed to be wearing Jersey #1? Or is that another trademark of yours?"

"They are supposed to." Konoha grins. "But not our Captain."

"The first Jersey I was ever given was #4 and since then I always stick with the same number." Bokuto grins. "It's a memento of my first victory."

"Akaashi, you should probably get dressed." Sarukui says.

And the second that he says that, Akaashi finally understands why everyone's been saying that the setter and the ace share a special bond. Because right then, Bokuto and him exchange glances and without saying even a word, they understand each other.

Bokuto's amber eyes tell him that if he would prefer it, he'd usher Konoha and Sarukui outside and look away until he's changed, while his eyes reply that no, that won't be necessary, because he's already getting used to changing and showering in front of his teammates.

The feeling of that understanding makes Akaashi's insides warm up.

Now if only they could do the same during their game too. And even though he's terrified and excited at the same time, he's beyond sure that they will. Because it's them, Captain and Vice Captain. Ace and setter. And it doesn't matter that he's inexperienced in games, because he has his teammates to rely on, who in return, will rely on him. And just like Bokuto said, they are prepared, which means half the victory is already theirs.
Although he probably shouldn't get too cocky about that, since he knows it's very dangerous to underestimate your opponents. But he also knows that Bokuto will just tell him something along the lines of "Akaashi, it's not cocky if you believe in your own abilities."

Yes, but then Konoha speaks up, which makes the warm and fuzzy feeling in Akaashi's stomach disappear.

"Bokuto, which Jersey number are you giving Akaashi?"

"Number 5." Bokuto replies, and both Konoha and Sarukui exchange glances.

"Well fuck me, man!" Konoha shakes his head. "We're in for a Saito shitstorm when he finds out." Then he chuckles. "Good for you Akaashi, you deserve to be a starter."

"Thank you, Konoha-san." Akaashi mumbles and realizes his hands are slightly shaking as he buttons up his school shirt. Fucking Hell, he forgot about Saito and the fact he's not only getting his position, but jersey number too.

As if it wasn't enough of a slap in the face for him that Akaashi got the Vice Captain position.

"I told you yesterday that you'll play, didn't I? And a starter!" Sarukui grins at him. "I'm so excited!"

"For the game or for the Saito drama that's bound to happen in the locker rooms?" Konoha asks, grinning.

"Both."

"Saito can kiss my Captain ass." Bokuto replies with a smirk.

He doesn't seem disturbed in the slightest bit. And although Saito isn't bigger than Bokuto in built or height, there's just something about him that makes Akaashi feel a bit uneasy.

Not that he thinks they would get into a fight - other than a verbal one maybe. God, hopefully not at all. Because Akaashi hates confrontations and attention and it sounds like he'll be getting a big dose of both.

Before they head downstairs for breakfast, Bokuto dons his Fukurodani jacket over his shoulders, and Akaashi feels as if he's in the presence of an actual superhero. And it's not because it looks like a cape, or because Bokuto's entire face is painted as if he's going to war, no, it's Bokuto himself. His posture and especially of all his eyes, they're full of determination.

Akaashi doesn't say anything, but he definitely thinks that Bokuto has never looked this cool before.

When they get into the kitchen, the dean high fives all four of them and congratulates Bokuto on the school spirit he's showing. And as they make it to their table, Akaashi realizes that almost everyone has painted faces - mostly cheeks, though. Only a couple of people are like Bokuto.

Akaashi finds himself playing with his omelette, instead of actually eating it, because after seeing Saito as well as everyone around, his stomach feels a bit queasy.

There's gonna be so many people there, holy shit. What if he messes up in front of everyone?

"Akaashi, eat up." Bokuto says. "You'll need your strength."
"Because it takes so much strength to warm up the bench? Heh." Saito guffaws from the other side.

Akaashi purses his lips together, before he can actually say something like "Ha ha, jokes on you, though". Then he silently scolds himself for being so petty.

When he looks up from his plate, Akaashi is startled, because he's greeted by a pair of breasts. Ayame waves a hello with her pompoms and she's all dressed up in her cheerleading uniform, grinning from ear to ear.

She wishes them all good luck today, then bends down, kisses Akaashi's cheek and leaves.

Konoha's fork clatters against his plate. "How come you're the only one who gets a kiss?"

Sarukui stares into the distance. "God, I love cheerleading."

"Oi, you two slobbering idiots over there." Bokuto grunts, but his voice just sounds amused. "Finish up your breakfast, so we can go to Biology."

It seems that it's not just the Captain that gets to walk around the school in his volleyball gear during classes.

And it's kind of funny, because whenever a cheerleader from the volleyball squad passes into the hallways, they are instantly followed by guys twisting their heads and necks to look at them. And Akaashi's never seen cheerleaders in their uniforms, other than in movies, but damn are those things provocative!

Good thing a certain someone isn't around or the cheerleaders will have to ward off predatory felines, he thinks.

Even though from Bokuto's words, as well as everyone else on the volleyball team's, Kuroo is someone they all aspire to be like when it comes to the ladies. Akaashi's only explanation to that is pack mentality. Moronic pack mentality, but pack mentality nonetheless.

He's not a bad looking guy or anything - quite the contrary - but come on, if you consider Kuroo a role model, even if it's just for picking up girls, you need to look at your life and your choices and reconsider them, because you need help.

But it seems Akaashi's the only one who thinks so.

The student body isn't the only one that's been swept by the euphoria of their upcoming game in the afternoon, the teachers are too. Even the principal himself lets the class goof off a bit and wishes Akaashi good luck as he walks out of the History classroom. Same goes for the AP Calculus teacher.

Lunch time arrives way too quick in Akaashi's opinion. There's just two more classes and a half and it's game time. During Study Hall he doesn't even bother with opening his books, he just paces around the room and tries not to bite his nails, because he's already feeling the nerves.

During English, Mr Burns tells them that they won't have the quiz, because it's game day and he doesn't want to be an asshole - although those aren't the exact words he uses.

And Bokuto is the only one in the class, who grumbles about it? Because "Siiiiir, why didn't you tell us that yesterday, I wouldn't have wasted my time in studying words I won't be quizzed on!"

"Bokuto, knowledge is power." Mr Burns replies.
"When one of the vocabulary words helps me get a point, I'll agree with you, Sir."

Chuckles all around, including Mr Burns too. All except for Akaashi.

When the bell rings and he heads for Studio Art he's shaking like a leaf. Mori-sensei tells Sarukui and him that he knows they should head out of class earlier and let's them talk quietly.

"Dude." Sarukui grins. "You look like you're gonna be sick."

"I feel that way too, Sarukui-san."

"Don't worry, first games are always this nerve wrecking. I remember my first time playing last year, I was soooo bad." He grins, then sees Akaashi's face and stops. "Akaashi, don't worry, man, you know your stuff. Lighten up and stop being so nervous."

"Gee, how did I not think of that?" Akaashi scowls. "Thank you, Sarukui-san, you cured me."

Sarukui laughs quietly. "Hey, if you can make jokes about it, you're good."

At 2:55 pm, they leave the classroom with loud cheers around them and head for the gym. Akaashi can hear his heartbeat in his ears and starts taking deep breaths. Sarukui laughs.

"Akaashi, you look like you're heading to your deathbed, instead of a game!" He grins. "Do you need me to hold you hand?"

"Would you laugh at me if I said yes?"

Sarukui laughs again and pats his back.

When they enter the locker room, Akaashi realizes he's the only one that isn't smiling and feels terrified. He tells himself to stop being such a baby! Because he's about to be given his Fukurodani uniform and that uniform must be worn by someone who stands proud to have their school name on their back, not a coward.

He makes a promise to himself that the second he steps on the court, he will give his 100% and nothing less. Yes, like he promised Bokuto last night, he will make sure the ace shines brighter than the sun!

Yukie tells everyone to go clean their faces - especially Bokuto.

"I just don't see why we can't keep the paint on during the game too?" He grumbles as he splashes his face with water. "Just imagine how even more fearsome we'll look!"

"Careful with the white, Bokuto!"

"I'm not an idiot, Yukie!"

"That is debatable, Captain." Konoha cackles.

"Konoha, shut up, you look like that fucking hyena from the Lion King."

Akaashi feels the corners of his lips curving up. This isn't too bad. He isn't going to be alone on the court. And he should let loose and actually enjoy himself, instead of worrying about messing things up. Mistakes are bound to happen, that's inevitable. He just hopes his ones wouldn't cost the team too much.
"Alright, owls, line up." Bokuto says and crosses his arms. "When you hear your name and jersey number, accept your uniform from Yukie and change. Washio Tatsuki, number 2. Sarukui Yamato, number 3. I'm number four, so next up." Before Bokuto says anything further, Saito goes up to the manager. "Saito, what are you doing? Did you hear me call your name?"

"No, but it's my jersey."

"No, it isn't. Akaashi Keiji, number 5."

Saito shakes his head with a smile. "You have got to be joking."

"Do I look like I joke about volleyball?" Bokuto nods his head at Akaashi. "Come on, Akaashi, off you go to cha-"

"First you give him the Vice Captain position, and now my jersey number? What's next, my starting position?"

"I'm glad we're on the same page."

Akaashi decides its best not to make Bokuto repeat himself, so he goes up to Yukie and gets his uniform. The second that he turns his back and starts changing, he expects for Saito to hit him, and the same thought must be passing through everyone else's heads too, because Konoha and Sarukui move closer to him and sort of shield him with their bodies.

But both Saito and Bokuto remain in their spots, staring at each other, unmoving.

"Bokuto, get real. You can't do this."

"Just watch me."

"You're subbing me - a fucking senior - for a first year, who hasn't even had his first game yet? Are you fucking shitting me? Yeah, he's good on offense, I'll give him that, but he sucks at defense. You cannot honestly tell me that you're going through with this. This is fucking bullshit, you hear me?" Saito's voice rises in anger.

"Listen to me carefully," Bokuto says and even though his voice remains calm, his eyes flash dangerously. "I've been putting up with your bullshit attitude, because you were the only setter we had. Guess what? We have a new one and he might not have your experience, but in the past two weeks that Akaashi's been here, he's done more for this team than you have in all of your three years of being here. When have you ever remained after practice to work with me? I'll tell you when - never. When did you ever stay after classes to help some of your teammates with their school work, so they don't miss practice in detention? Never! You've never done anything for this team other than set. And you know what? That is your fucking job, so don't expect me to give you a pat on the back. For the past two weeks, you've come to practice six times, including P.E. class. While Akaashi has been busting his ass harder than anyone in here to catch up to the rest of the team, as well as helping people with their studies, so they don't skip practice. You don't show up for practice, don't work with the team, and expect me to keep you in my starters? No, man, that's not how it goes. And no, I really don't give a shit that you're my senior? You're only my senior at school, in class, in age. But not the court, you're not. When you become top five in the country, that's when you can give me fucking lip. Got that, Senpai?"

The locker room is so quiet, that if a pin drops, it'll echo.

Akaashi thinks that the last dig with the senpai was a bit too much, even for Bokuto. But he makes no comment on it, because it's not his place.
Whatever Saito wants to say - and he really looks like he want to say something - he keeps to himself and makes a motion with his hand for Bokuto to proceed.


Saito mumbles something, but it's too quiet.

"A bit louder, Senpai?"

Dammit, Bokuto, just stop it already, Akaashi scowls.

"I said I'm staying. Captain."

"Yukie, give him his jersey."

"Don't I get a special announcement?"

"Not unless you earn it."

Saito snorts. "Fuck this. I don't need this bullshit." He swings his backpack over his shoulder and heads for the door. "Good luck making it to Nationals without me."

"We'll make sure to send you a postcard." Bokuto yells after him, while Yukie slaps his shoulder. "What? I hate people who think they're the shit, when they're just shit."

"Yeah, I get that, but what if Akaashi gets injured? Who's gonna switch with him, huh? Did you think of that?" Yukie groans. "Oh my God, I could kill you right now!"

"Yukie, chill. Yo puke guy - if something happens to Akaashi or he tires out, you sub him, got it?"

"Yes, Captain!"

"Good." Bokuto claps his hands and grins. "Wasn't that amazing? Akaashi, did you see how I told him to fuck off and he went running with his tail between his legs?" He throws his head back and laughs.

"Yes, Bokuto-san, we all saw."

"Yeah, we all know what a drama queen you are, Bokuto." Konoha smirks.

Bokuto takes it as a compliment. "God, I live for this stuff!"

Akaashi should be even more worried now, because there's no experienced setter that could take on half of the pressure? But instead, he feels more relaxed, now that Saito's looming presence isn't here. And the entire team's mood changes after Saito took his leave. Everyone looks calmer, especially after Bokuto's loud laughter.

"Yukie, where is that coach of ours?"

"He's meeting us at the front. And we should go there right now, before ICST get here. Come on, you guys, follow your Captain."

Bokuto takes the lead, followed by Akaashi, the Vice Captain, and the rest of the team.
"Man, I just wish I had some popcorn with me, that was so awesome." Akaashi hears Konoha's chuckle coming from somewhere behind.

"Oi, the laughing hyena, I can hear you." Bokuto grins.

"Bokuto-san, you're laughing too."

"Akaashi, you're supposed to take my side!"

They arrive at the front and meet their coach, who waves a hello at them and introduces himself to the newcomers. In Akaashi's opinion he looks kind of bored, and he sounds like it too. Then again he's probably here not because he wants to, but has to.

The bell rings and following an announcement from the dean, there's loud noises coming from the back of the school.

Before their opponents can arrive, Akaashi realizes he should probably give a warning. It's mostly for Bokuto's sake, but just to be sure, he decides to address the entire team.

"Hey, guys?" All heads turn to look at him and he clears his throat. "Please bear in mind that the school we play against is a Christian school."

Bokuto shrugs. "So?"

"So, please refrain yourselves from using phrases like "Oh my God."

"Good thinking, Akaashi." Yukie nods. "He's right, you guys. Bokuto, that goes especially for you!"

"Oh my God, chill." Bokuto groans, then realizes what he just said. "Alright, I'll do my best not to say it."

Shortly two big buses pull up at the front and students start filing out. Bokuto instantly takes his position next to their coach, who welcomes them all and thanks them for coming. Then they all head for the locker rooms, where they can change. Since Fukurodani's team is all dressed up and ready, they head for the court, while the coach and Yukie stay behind to show them where to go next.

As they all walk onto the middle court, Bokuto first, winged by Akaashi and the rest of the team, there's unimaginably loud noises coming from above, cheers, and whistles and claps and there's even a freaking announcer!

"Good afternoon, good afternoon!" His voice booms from the speakers. "Thank you all for coming. While we await for ICST, please give a warm welcome for our cheerleaders!"

Instantly, the cheerleaders spread out on the court and when the music plays, they start with their routine. Akaashi notices how every single pair of eyes of his teammates are stuck like glue to their backs, watching them dancing and doing their cheers. He watches them too, but then takes a look at the stands above and Sarukui had been right - the entire place is filled up. He instantly sees Kuroo, right at the front, hands over his mouths and yelling with the rest of the crowd for the cheerleaders.

Of course.

To his own surprise, though, he realizes he no longer nervous. Even when the ICST team shows up on the court after the cheerleaders leave. And even though they're all tall giants, as he expected
them to be, he doesn't feel nervous, only excited.

"Please give it up for The Bulldogs and The Owls!" The announcer is talking again, and then there's upbeat music, while both teams start warming up.

Akaashi drones out the cheers, the music, the announcer, all of the noise and clears his mind of everything, except for Bokuto's orders. Laps. Stretching. Spiking, receiving and setting.

When the music stops, Akaashi follows the rest of the team on the court and they get into positions, but then the announcer is joined by another person, who Akaashi recognizes as the other team's coach, who demands their attention.

"May I please ask you all to give a moment of silence, during which we would all pray?"

All of Fukurodani's members curiously look at the other team, who bow their heads and present their hands for praying, and they all mimic them.

"God our Father, You have created us to strive for the best. Grant to all athletes, coaches, and fans, strength to pursue excellence during this event. We pray for the safety of these athletes; Protect them from injury and harm. And finally, we pray for your grace, that you would provide us with the endurance to pursue our heavenly prize: eternal life in Your Son. Amen."

"Amen." The other team repeats, while Akaashi steps on Bokuto's foot, because he's looking at Kuroo and they're both grinning.

When the prayer's over, all of them put their hands forward and Akaashi follows.

"Who who who, who's gonna win?" Bokuto yells.

"Fukurodani!" They yell back.

Bokuto heads to the middle of the court and shakes hands with the other Captain. Then they're both joined by the referee, who throws a coin and announces that Fukurodani are to go first.

The second that Konoha lines up with the ball, a buzzer goes off and the game begins!

"Nice serve, Konoha!" Bokuto claps his hands in encouragement as Konoha does an incredibly powerful jump serve.

Before the ball's even made it over the net, Akaashi moves into position and he realizes Bokuto and Sarukui had been right - he does find his feet at once. But the other team doesn't move at all.

There's a beeping noise from the scoreboard and Akaashi watches the 0 turn into 1.

"Nice one, Konoha." Sarukui grins.

"And the first point goes to Fukurodani!" The announcer yells, followed by cheers.

Konoha lines up and serves again, and this time only the libero of the opposing team moves. He receives, but it's really weird, because instead of passing it to one of his teammates, he lets the ball go back to the side of the court.

"Chance ball!"

After a receive, Akaashi sets for Bokuto, who earns their team the second point.

"Hey hey heyyyyyy!"
Akaashi isn't happy at all, though, because there's got to be a reason for the other team to be acting like this. He notices how they all look at their Captain and nod their heads in unison. He doesn't know why they practically handed them those two points, but they must have been using that time to study Fukurodani's positions. Still, it's a bit puzzling, because the Bulldogs can't possibly know how they're going to play?

Well, whatever.

Konoha serves for the third time and this time it isn't just their libero moving. The ball goes back and forth, back and forth, and even though they're in the lead, Akaashi isn't happy about it.

When the score is 8-3, there's a time out and both teams huddle up.

"Man, winning against these guys'll be a piece of cake." Bokuto hoots happily.

"I don't really get what they're doing, but I don't like it." Yukie says. "They must be scheming something, because if they aren't. this game's a joke."

"I think they were studying our formation and movements until now and..." Akaashi scowls.
"And I think they're trying to tire us out." All eyes turn to him. "Obviously they're not playing at full capacity. They could have easily returned our spikes-"

"Hey!" Bokuto grunts.

"I'm sorry, Bokuto-san, but I really think that their strategy is to tire us out. Look at them." All heads turn to the other side of the court. "They haven't even worked up a sweat yet."

"Well that's a really stupid strategy. Good luck to them catching up to us!" Bokuto replies. "We're in the lead by 5 points."

The time out's over and they all get into positions.

And this time, when the game resumes, the Bulldogs are no longer fucking around. They make Bokuto eat his words, because they not only catch up to them, they take the lead. They earn almost all of their points simply by blocking and it's crazy, because Fukurodani is good at receiving. But apparently not good enough.

They must have an incredibly good coach or schemer on their team, because they manage to read Fukurodani's movements every single time. Akaashi finds that incredibly annoying and he isn't the only one.

"About time you guys started playing!" Bokuto yells at them and grins.

And even though the Bulldogs take the first set, Bokuto is still in high spirits.

"It's alright you guys, we got it under control. We'll get them in the second set."

They're all playing at full capacity now and Akaashi's sweating heavily, but he feels very pleased with himself, because he make a dump shot and earns his team a point.

"Nice one, Akaashi!"

As Bokuto serves, he yells. "Eat my serve, you dogs!"

He does earn them another point, followed by a "Hey hey hey!", but Akaashi tells hims to calm down. He quickly asks Sarukui if Bokuto always keeps his mouth running like this during a game
and he isn't surprised when Sarukui nods.
"He's only getting started."

And it is true.

When Bokuto makes a successful spike, he yells again.
"Welcome to Japan, bitches!"

"Bokuto-san, please don't be so vulgar."

The Owls take the second set, but the Bulldogs sure make them work for it.

Then the buzzer goes off and there's half time.

"Fucking Hell, these guys are reading us like a goddamn open book!" Bokuto grunts.

"Bokuto-san, please calm down."

"I am calm!" He replies and chugs half of his water bottle.

He isn't though.

"So what do you suggest we do about it, Captain?" Konoha asks.

Bokuto goes uncharacteristically quiet and then yells.

"I got it!" He grins. "We all need Akaashi's face!"

All eyes turn to Akaashi, who licks his lips and explains.

"What Bokuto-san means is that all of you show your emotions. You have to keep your faces calm and composed. You all know when I'm going to set for you, and before I even do that, you either smirk or pull some sort of face, which shows them where the ball is going."

"What? Do I really do that?" Konoha asks.

"Yes, Konoha-san, especially you."

"Oh. Shit. Sorry, you guys, I didn't realize."

"It's alright, man." Bokuto pats his back. "They can read us spikers, but they haven't been able to figure out Akaashi yet. And look, he's doing the finger thing he does!" He points. "Akaashi do you have a plan?"

"I have an idea, but..." Akaashi stops.

"Come on, Vice Captain, we're open for suggestions." Bokuto winks.

"Well I'm not sure how good of an idea it'll be and if it will work at all, because we haven't practiced it at all, but-"

"Just get to the point!" Yukie urges.

"I think we should do a synchronized attack." Akaashi blurts out. "Whenever you receive the ball, you should all move forward as if I'm going to set the ball for you. But you need to watch your
steps, of course, so you don't collide with one another."

"And how would we know who you're setting for?" Sarukui asks.

"I always know when Akaashi will set for me." Bokuto replies.

"Good for you." Konoha says. "But what about the rest of us? Akaashi makes minimal
movements, so it'll be kind of hard to tell who he actually sets for."

"I can yell out your name?" Akaashi suggests.

"That's good, they don't know your names." Yukie nods. "I'm sure they will learn them
eventually, but let's go with Akaashi's suggestion."

They do another Fukurodani chant and get back to the court.

Akaashi's strategy gets botched up on the very first try, because even though he yells at Sarukui,
Konoha and him clash against each other, resulting in a point for the Bulldogs.

"Don't mind, don't mind." Bokuto claps. "Next time."

It must be extremely tiring to move back and forth over the court, but it seems to be working,
because Akaashi sets for Konoha twice in a row and he earns points both times.

"Akaashi, I'm jealous!" Bokuto grunts. "Stop making Konoha look cool and give me a toss too!"

"Bokuto-san, the opposing team is completely onto you! There's no opening!"

"Just give it to me, I'll make it!" Bokuto replies and he sounds so confident, that even though
there's blockers right in front of him, Akaashi sets the ball into his direction.

It's absolutely unbelievable, the way Bokuto's arm twists and does a spike across the other side of
the court.

"What an insane cut shot!" The announcer yells, followed by loud cheers from the crowd.

"Akaashi! Akaashi, did you see that?"

"Bokuto-san, that was incredible!" Akaashi is gawping and everyone else is too, because just how
flexible are Bokuto's shoulders and arms to be able to pull that off?

"I told you I'll make it! I'm the best! Hey hey heyyyy!" Bokuto yells happily. "Bring it on,
Christians!"

"Bokuto-san, please don't say things like that."

Akaashi realizes he shouldn't have warned Bokuto not to say things like "Oh my God" before the
game, because just like a child being told by their parents not to say a bad word, Bokuto proceeds
to yell out things like "Aw my Lord, did you see that?" and "Say your prayers, Bulldogs!"

And Akaashi finds himself bowing his head to the other team in a silent apology for his Captain.

The Bulldogs serve and Bokuto throws himself into the air and he receives it, but falls to the floor
yelling.

"You jerk, what kind serve was that? Jesus will punish you, you sinner!"
After Fukurodani get another point, Akaashi scolds him, yet again, for being so offensive.

He feels really tired, though, because he's been playing this whole time and although everyone else is tired too, his stamina isn't as good as theirs. He loves playing and he wants to continue, but he knows that if he doesn't get a couple of minutes of rest, he'll start messing up.

So he asks for a change, and as he passes Suzuki Kazuya, they clap their hands against each other and finally he's on the bench where he could catch his breath.

"Good game, Akaashi." Yukie grins. "You can rest up now, but be quick, because I want you back in there as soon as possible."

Akaashi accepts the pats on his back from the other first years, but he doesn't join in their "Let's go Owls, let's go!" chanting. Instead, he carefully studies how the Bulldogs move across the court.

The synchronized strategy Fukurodani's been doing until now doesn't seem to work, though, because Suzuki Kazuya's aim isn't as precise as Akaashi's and that quickly starts to show.

When the score turns to 15-18 for the Bulldogs, Bokuto roars for Akaashi to get his ass back on the court. And even though he doesn't feel fully rested, not at all, he takes back his position with determination, because he is needed.

Not that he wants to toot his own horn or anything, but his abilities as setter are better than Kazuya's.

Fukurodani quickly even out the score and manage to take the third set.

Both teams are sweating profusely, but all players on the court are giving their best, because this will determine if the game continues into a fifth set.

Akaashi makes a mental note to practice serving like crazy, because even though his blocking skills need improvement, Bokuto's serves have such an incredible power, that he earns their team four points in a row. Four fucking points just by serving!

Akaashi doesn't know if the Bulldogs have American players or not, but nothing seems to be able to stop Bokuto when he's in the zone. He really is a force to be reckoned with and during the fourth set he shows to everyone exactly why he is the ace of the team, as well as a player on a national level.

They're just a point away from winning and Akaashi decides to give his toss to Bokuto, because he did promise to make him shine brighter than the sun and Akaashi keeps his promises.

"Pray to Jesus-sama and eat my spike!"

Akaashi really doesn't know how Bokuto can talk and play at the same time, but he doesn't even bother scolding him for being so offensive, because the score is 25-21 and the buzzer goes off.

The roar of the crowd is deafening and all of Fukurodani's members are yelling happily. And Akaashi's feet automatically move forward and he jumps into Bokuto's open arms. The two of them embrace and both join in the happy cheers all around. Akaashi has never felt this happy before and even though Bokuto is completely drenched in sweat, he pulls him even closer and buries his head into Bokuto's neck.

Sarukui jumps from behind and pulls them both into a hug, then there's Konoha and Komi and Washio and basically everyone joins in. Bokuto falls to the floor and drags Akaashi along with him and they're all the ground, but who cares about that, when they won! They fucking won!
"Ladies and gentlemen, the final scoring is: 28 - 30, 25 - 23, 25 - 19, 25 - 21, for the Owls." The announcer's voice booms through the speakers. "Congratulations, Fukurodani!"

Eventually Yukie tells them all to get up and stop acting like children, because the other team is waiting. They all get up on their feet and line up, but before they can bow their heads and thank them for the game, the Bulldogs's Captain moves forward and extends his palm towards Bokuto. Bokuto is a bit confused, but quickly does the same and after they clap their palms against each other, the rest of the Bulldogs do the same and all of Fukurodani's members remain in their places, while they clap their hands against one another, repeating a "nice game" or "good game" as they go.

Then they all bow their heads as their coach takes the microphone and says another prayer.

Bokuto's once again grinning and Akaashi elbows him in the ribs, because yes, he is also happy that they won, but that doesn't mean Bokuto should be so disrespectful to their traditions and stuff.

Yukie and their coach follow ICST into their locker room to send them off, while Fukurodani's team remains on the court.

Sarukui ruffles Akaashi's hair, while Konoha kisses the top of his head and Akaashi is grinning at them both, when suddenly there's blinding flashlights and the sound of camera's clicking.

"Oh boy, here we go." Konoha mutters.

Bokuto is swarmed by people - reporters and paparazzi, whatever you wanna call them - and they all demand his attention and answers to their questions.

"I thank you all," He hoots. "but I couldn't have done it without the rest of my teammates, and especially without the help of our newest setter and Vice Captain! Akaashi, come here!"

Konoha and Sarukui's hands push him forward and he's blinking like a very confused owl, while Bokuto swings his arm over his shoulders, as proud as a peacock and grins for the cameras as they're being photographed.

One of the reporters pushes a microphone into Bokuto's face and Akaashi quickly uses it as an opportunity to get away. He heads for their locker room and is followed by the rest of his teammates, except for Bokuto.

"Does this always happen after a game?" He asks curiously no one in particular.

"Yep. Wherever Bokuto goes, he's followed by his posse." Konoha chuckles.

"I kind of feel bad for him." Komi says as he takes off his uniform. "He can never really let loose like the rest of us when we go out to celebrate."

"How come?" Akaashi asks.

"Because fame comes with a price." A familiar voice replies.

"Look how the cat dragged itself in." Konoha snorts as Kuroo walks into their locker room and leans against the door, smirking.

"Hey, owls. Nice game."

"Yeah, we know." Sarukui replies.
Kuroo winks at Akaashi. "'Sup, Angel Eyes? You were killin' it out there."

Akaashi scowls, while the rest of his teammates chuckle.

"Kuroo-san, please don't call me that."

"Eh? You don't want me to call you roomie, you don't want me to call you Angel Eyes, what should I call you?"

"How about just using my name?"

"Ah, Keiji, my b-"

"No." Akaashi scowls even more. "Akaashi. Call me Akaashi."

"No way, everyone else calls you that. And we all know I'm not just anyone." Kuroo smirks, and Akaashi feels irritated, because there are wolf whistles around and aren't Akaashi's teammates supposed to be on his side, instead of encouraging Kuroo? Wtf?

"Hey, first years! We're going out to celebrate." Konoha yells. "We're meeting at the front of the school at exactly 8:30 pm, so you all better make yourselves scarce, because you're either punctual or you get left behind."

All of the day students quickly leave, while the boarding students, which are Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi remain in the locker room. As well as Kuroo.

"So, are you guys waiting for your Captain here or what?" Kuroo asks.

"We're waiting for you to leave." Konoha sneers.

"How rude. You know I'd never miss a Fukurodani victory party." Kuroo grins. "Actually, even if you guys lose and need to drown your sorrows, I'm always there along with ya."

Sarukui rolls his eyes. "Ugh, don't we know it."

The four of them head up to the boys dorm and Konoha and Sarukui exchange glances with Akaashi, as if to say "sorry, he's all yours", and go into their room, while Akaashi, scowling, enters his room and of course Kuroo follows him inside.

"Kuroo-san, how did your rucksack get in here?" Akaashi asks.

Kuroo lays down on Akaashi's bed. "How do you think it got there?"

"...Did Bokuto-san give you a spare key to our room?"

"Aw, Angel Eyes, you're so smart."

Akaashi grunts. "Why didn't you wait for Bokuto-san?"

"Why didn't you?"

"Because I'm going to take a shower."

"Need some company?" Kuroo smirks.

"No, I do not."
Akaashi pulls out a pair of boxers, jeans and a t shirt out of his drawers and heads for the bathroom. He normally doesn't lock it when he's in there, but he decides to do it now, because he most certainly doesn't trust Kuroo.

After a quick shower, he begins to change and hears that Bokuto's back in their room. Hallelujah.

When he's all dressed up, he walks out of the bathroom and joins them.

"Ah, about time, Akaashi!" Bokuto pats his back and rushes inside.

And once again Akaashi's left alone with Kuroo.

He sits at his desk, while Kuroo stares at him silently.

"I didn't see that third year setter of yours anywhere on the court, so I assume he quit the team?"

"Yes."

"Bokuto was very smart to put you as a starting player. Because if it wasn't for you, Fukurodani wouldn't have won." He says. "There's no need for you to be modest, because we both know that's the truth."

"We won, because we all worked together as a team."

"That's right, you did." Kuroo clicks his tongue. "But I've witnessed enough Fukurodani games in the past to know your team mostly relies on power, rather than strategy. I knew you were smart, but I was genuinely impressed by your quick thinking today."

"Uhhh... Thank you."

"I'm not just giving you a compliment to make you feel good about yourself, I mean it." Kuroo says. "And you should feel good."

"I already said thank you."

Akaashi quickly busies himself with looking at his nails, because he know Kuroo's about to make a comment that's bound to make him feel uncomfortable.

And of course, he does.

"I know how to make you feel even better."

"Kuroo-san, please stop that."

"What am I doing?" He asks innocently.

"You know what." Akaashi scowls. "Go pull your Jedi mind tricks on someone else."

Kuroo smirks. "So... did you figure it out all by yourself, or did you get some help from Bokuto?"

"I don't know what you mean by that, but-"

"We both know what I mean."

Akaashi swallows hard, but doesn't reply. Why should he? That's exactly what Kuroo wants him to do, isn't it? Or maybe Kuroo is expecting him to remain silent?
God, Kuroo's obvious, but at the same time he isn't? Like, he's obviously flirting with Akaashi, which he wouldn't have realized if it wasn't for Bokuto's warning, but at the same time it's like... what is he expecting?

Luckily for him, Bokuto comes out of the bathroom and starts going through his clothes, picking what to wear. Akaashi looks away as he changes, even though he knows perfectly well that Bokuto doesn't care about that.

"Man, I feel so tired!" Bokuto's voice reaches his ears.

"You were awesome out there, bro." Kuroo says. "I was just telling Akaashi how amazing he played too."

"Right?" Bokuto laughs. "Akaashi, you were fucking epic, oh my god!"

"Bokuto-san, I warned you not to say stuff like that, but you continued to do it during the entire game."

"Who cares about that?" Bokuto laughs again. "No prayer could've saved them from my awesome spikes!"

"Still, it was very impolite and disrespectful."

"Bro, does Akaashi remind you of someone when he's talking like that?"

"Totally, bro."

The two of them laugh, while Akaashi doesn't really know what's going on, but before he can ask, Bokuto explains.

"Akaashi, you're like this one player we know from Karasuno."

"Manners aren't the only thing they share with Daichi, though." Kuroo grins. "They're both smart and hot, too."

"I concur."

Akaashi doesn't know who this Daichi guy is, but he'll probably find out for himself in the future. Because he really doesn't want to ask for further explanations.

"Akaashi, you should take a jacket with you. It's a bit too chilly outside for just a t shirt." Bokuto says as he inserts his key into the door and Kuroo follows him outside.

"Bro, don't you worry about him," Kuroo smirks. "I can keep him warm."

"I wasn't talking to you, you horny asshole."

"My feelings, bro!" Kuroo gasps. "I think you sound a bit jealous?"

"Bitch, I might be!" Bokuto replies and they both roar in laughter.

Wtf? No, seriously, wtf are they even talking about?

Akaashi sighs loudly and pulls his leather jacket out of the wardrobe. As he puts it on and walks out into the hallway, both Bokuto and Kuroo exchange glances.
"Akaashi! You have a leather jacket? Oh my god, you look so cool!" Bokuto gawps. "Please let me borrow it!"

"I don't think it's big enough for you, Bokuto-san. But if you can fit in it without pulling a Hulk, then sure, you can borrow it."

"Angel eyes, leather and a Marvel reference." Kuroo shakes his head dramatically. "I don't think I've ever been this turned on."

"Please don't make me regret going out with you two." Akaashi grumbles, and the three of them head downstairs.
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

I was rewatching The Breakfast Club and was overcome by feels, so I wrote :3

After they sign out at the front desk, the entire team is already waiting at the front of the school, except for Konoha and Sarukui.

"Where are the hyena and the monkey?" Bokuto asks. "I have a very important announcement to make. Yukie? Come, I wanna tell you first."

The two of them go to the side and Bokuto whispers something in her ear, which makes her yell in excitement.

"Really? Oh my God, I'm so stoked!"

"I know, right?" Bokuto grins.

"Aren't you going to tell us too?" Komi asks.

"When the entire team's here, I'll tell you guys. I don't want to repeat myself."

Akaashi decides to try an approach, which he knows might work on Bokuto.

"Bokuto-san? If you tell us now and then say it again when Konoha-san and Sarukui-san are here, you'll get twice as much attention?"

"Akaashi! Stop spending so much time with Kuroo, because you're starting to play mind games like him."

Akaashi scowls, because it's actually Bokuto's fault that Kuroo's always around? But he decides not to say that out loud, because there will be two results - 1. Bokuto will defend his bro, even though he was the one who just made such a comment? or 2. Bokuto will sulk and say that he just wants the two of them to get along and is that too much to ask? Or something along those lines. But both results are annoying and Akaashi doesn't want to deal with any of that right now.

Kuroo laughs. "Well well well, you guys finally have a wise owl among you."

"Are you implying we're all dumb, bro?"

"I said no such thing."
Komi snorts. "You implied it, though."

One of the first years clears his throat. "Sorry, can I ask where we are going?"

"Yes, you can." Bokuto replies, but doesn't elaborate.

"So... where?" He asks again.

"You should have asked "May I ask where we are going?"." Bokuto replies and everyone groans, except for Akaashi, who actually chuckles quietly. All eyes turn to him in surprise, because why is he laughing at Bokuto's dumb joke? So silly.

But it's exactly because it's silly and Bokuto made a teacher joke, which actually makes it funny?

"That thing I said about the wise owl?" Kuroo shakes his head, while looking at Akaashi. "I take it back."

"Isn't it ironic how Konoha warned us all to be right on time, and yet he's the one that's late?"

Washio grunts.

"He's always late." Komi replies.

Bokuto quickly heads inside to get Konoha and Sarukui so they can go - wherever it is that they're going.

The longer they wait, the more irritated Akaashi feels, because he's getting really, really hungry. And his stomach starts growling loudly.

Kuroo turns to him. "I have something you can eat?"

"I swear to God, Kuroo-san, if you grab your crotch right now and tell me "eat this", I'm going to kill you."

All of Fukurodani's members laugh, while Kuroo blinks in surprise, because clearly he didn't expect Akaashi to just snap at him like that? He pulls out a pack of wafers from his jacket and hands it to him.

"Oh. Thanks."

"Honestly, Angel Eyes, why do you always assume the worst of me?"

"Because you are the worst." Akaashi replies, munching.

Komi grins. "Don't fuck with Akaashi when he's hungry."

"Yeah, I got that." Kuroo nods.

After a couple of minutes Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui join them and they all start walking in lines of two on the sidewalk. Bokuto and Kuroo take the lead, while Akaashi decides to stay behind, because he doesn't want to snarl at either of them and he can't be sure with himself that he won't, because he's still hungry.

As he throws the empty wafer wrapper into a trash can, he feels someone tap his shoulder and turns around. Suzuki Kazuya.

"Akaashi?"
"What is it?" Akaashi asks curiously, because what could he want with him?

"I owe you an apology." Suzuki says. "I know you heard me that time in the locker room when I was talking shit about you."

"Oh... It's okay."

"No, it's not, but I'm really sorry about it. You came out of nowhere and suddenly you became like the new star of the team, and I got really jealous... And then today when Bokuto-senpai and Saito-senpai were talking, I realized I was the same jerk to you, and I don't even know you."

"It's alright, it's in the past."

"So you forgive me?"

"Of course, everyone makes mistakes." Akaashi smiles a bit. "We're on the same team and we owls gotta stick together, right?"

"I would really like it if we could be friends?"

"I'd like that too."

"And maybe if it isn't too much to ask, you could help me improve with my setting?"

"Of course I will."

"Thanks, man." Suzuki smiles. "You're really nice. I can see why Bokuto-senpai relies on you so much."

"As your friend, I should tell you to never call him senpai to his face."

Suzuki grins. "Yeah, I know. When the school year started, I made the mistake of doing that a couple of times, so I don't anymore. I only do it when he's not around."

The two of them catch up to the rest of the team (and Kuroo) as they await for the green light to cross. Then Bokuto suddenly yells excited.

"Oh my God! Bimbo!"

"Where, bro?" Kuroo starts twisting his head left and right.

Akaashi sighs. "Bokuto-san, that's Dumbo." He points to everyone at a poster in the distance of an elephant with the big words "Safari Circus" all around it.

"Let's go to the circus!" Bokuto hoots happily. "I haven't been to one in so long!" He quickly runs ahead, even though the light is still red, and reads it. "Awww man, it's next Saturday! We can't go then!"

"Why can't we?" Sarukui asks. "I'd like to go too."

"Of course you do, monkey." Bokuto grins. "But as I already told everyone else, while we were waiting for Konoha and you, I have an important announcement."

And even though Konoha keeps asking Bokuto what the announcement is about, and tries to play the cold and warm guessing game, Bokuto doesn't reply until they all go inside a small Irish Pub, take one of the big corner tables and give the waiter their orders. And even though their pizzas and burgers haven't been brought yet, when they all have their drinks, Bokuto stands up.
"A toast to our first victory!" He grins. "And here's to many, many more! Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"Hear hear!"

"Now, announcement time, you guys." Bokuto remains standing and when he sees that all eyes are on him, he grins even more. "After our game today I got a couple of phone calls and you all better clear your schedules for next weekend. First off, we won't have school on Friday."

Everyone starts cheering. "Wait, wait, there's more! On Friday and Saturday we will have practice games against-" Bokuto winks at Kuroo -" Nekoma."

"I hate how you always know these stuff before our own coach or Captain tell us." Kuroo grunts.

"Wait, bro, there's more. We will also be joined by two more teams from the Miyagi prefecture." Everyone except for Akaashi and the other first years start clapping their hands in excitement.

"Bro! Do you mean...?"

"Yeah, bro. Those teams are Karasuno and Aoba Jousai."

Akaashi has heard both those names before. He remembers clearly Konoha mentioning Aoba Jousai when they were talking about setters, and how their setter is a prodigy. And Karasuno, he heard just like an hour ago, when Bokuto and Kuroo were telling him how he reminded them of a player from there.

"Do you know what this means?" Bokuto yells. "I'm calling a Rat Pack!"

Kuroo jumps on his feet in excitement and almost turns the table over. "Broooo, a Rat Pack! About time!"

Akaashi, who'd ended up sitting between Bokuto and Konoha, turns to his left and asks.

"Konoha-san, what's a Rat Pack?"

Konoha sighs. "You know that famous group of actors during the 60's?" Akaashi nods." Yeah, well, there are two players, one from Karasuno and the other one from Aoba Jousai, who Bokuto thinks will make Captains next year and-"

"I don't just think it, I know it." Bokuto replies. "Just like I know my bro over here'll be Captain next year."

"Damn right." Kuroo smirks. "Bokuto has a sixth sense when it comes to that sort of thing."

"Anyyyyyway." Konoha gets back to explaining. "The four of them call themselves - well, no - Bokuto decided to call the four of them the Rat Pack."

Bokuto nods. "Too bad Shiratorizawa won't join us too, because they have this player we met at Nationals that I'm sure will be Captain next year and he can be our fifth member of the Rat Pack."

"You mean Ushiwaka?" Kuroo asks. "Dude, no."

"Dude, yes! He might come off as this serious guy-"

"Because he is."

"-but I'm sure he'll fit right in with the rest of us."
"Aw, man, Oikawa would just loooove that." Kuroo laughs.

The waiter brings their food and everyone digs in. Except for Bokuto, who still remains standing and asks for their attention again.

"Excuse me, I'm not done yet!"

"Just spit it out, Bokuto." Yukie mumbles, mouthful of hamburger. Akaashi has never seen anyone actually being able to talk with cheeks this full of food, and it's really impressive how Yukie manages to do it.

"Next Saturday is Halloween. And my parents will be out of the country, so... we're gonna have a Halloween party at my house!" Bokuto grins. "And of course, we'll invite all the other volleyball teams."

Everyone else on the table is sharing curious glances and clearly, this must be the first time they're all being invited over at Bokuto's home. Maybe except for Kuroo, because Akaashi remembers Bokuto telling him he's met his parents.

"Don't forget to invite the hot chicks from your school, bro." Kuroo reminds him.

"Totally, bro. And you invite some from your school too."

"Of course."

"Aren't you guys excited?" Bokuto turns to the rest of them. "Halloween party without parental supervision?"

"Bro, you better warn everyone not get too rowdy, though - especially from the other teams - because your house is awesome for parties and if we trash it, we won't be able to party there again." Kuroo says. "Actually, your house is perfect for house parties, I can't believe we haven't had one before?"

"Me too! But ever since Akaashi told us-" Bokuto grins at Akaashi then stops. The two of them exchange a glance and Akaashi shrugs in a way to say it's okay to say whatever he wants to say. "- his previous house party experiences haven't been awesome, I wanted to fix that. So you all try and check out if you can, otherwise you'll have to go home for curfew."

"Wouldn't the other teams have curfews too?" Akaashi asks. "Surely they won't come without their coaches?"

"Karasuno don't really have an official coach. As for Aoba Jousai, well, I'm sure they'll find a way to sneak out." Bokuto grins. "And Nekoma all live here, so it's all cool."

Akaashi clears his throat. "This is great, Bokuto-san, but I have to remind you all that after next weekend, we have our Midterm exa-" Everyone starts groaning, but Akaashi ignores them and continues, "-ms, so you all better prepare for them."

"Tut, tut." Kuroo shakes his head. "Way to suck the fun out, Angel Eyes."

"Kuroo-san, let me remind you that nobody here except for Bokuto-san likes you."

Kuroo gasps, while everyone on team Fukurodani, except for Bokuto of course, nod their heads in agreement.

"But that's not true, you like me!"
"There is a difference between tolerate and like." Akaashi replies and stuffs his face with his last slice of pizza.

"Bro, I feel offended by your team." Kuroo says and eyes Akaashi up. "And since when did you get such a smart mouth on you anyway?"

"Since I realized this is the only way to make you shut up, Kuroo-san."

Kuroo sighs. "So much for the shy and polite boy that joined our ranks two weeks ago. What happened to him?"

For once Akaashi is the one doing the teasing, and not getting teased himself, and he doesn't know if it's the second beer that's giving him confidence to continue talking in the same manner.

"He's gone." Akaashi replies. "Just like you should be."

Everyone chuckles, but nobody does as loud as Bokuto, who yells a "Akaashi, nice kill!" then throws his head back and roars in laughter, clutching his stomach.

Akaashi decides to stop with the teasing, though, because it's best not to play with fire, because he'll be the one that ends up burned. But he realizes that a bit too late, because Kuroo's smirk is back on his face, bigger than ever.

"Bro, control your setter or I'll make him shut up in the usual way that I make people shut up."

And as if that's not clear enough of an innuendo, he stares at Akaashi and slowly - and very obscenely - licks his upper lip.

As Akaashi's cheeks splash in deep red, he instantly soberes up and scolds himself for being so dumb and trying to beat Kuroo at his own game. Why would he even try to do that? He's nowhere near Kuroo's league when it comes to teasing, so it's in his best interest to keep his mouth shut and not pull the devil - well, the cat - by the tail.

Bokuto grins. "Akaashi, even Buddha might get upset if his face is hit three times."

"Akaashi's been your roommate for two weeks and you become a fucking dictionary full of big words, famous quotes and idioms?" Konoha grunts at Bokuto, then turns to the others. "I'm starting to get the feeling that if you look at Bokuto's stupidity from a slightly different angle it's actually kind of genius and that really pisses me off."

Bokuto pokes his tongue out. "Don't get bitter, get better."

"Ugh, see what I mean?" Konoha points at him accusingly. "Man, where's our waiter? I'm way too sober for this shit." He gets on his feet. "Does anyone else want another beer or something?"

"Be careful." Sarukui yells after him. "You already had four and the fifth one is gonna show on the breathalyzer."

Oh crap. Akaashi forgot all about that. He quickly counts the empty bottles around the table and realizes everyone except for Konoha and Bokuto has had three. In fact, Bokuto's only had two?

He leans over to his right and whispers. "Bokuto-san? How come you didn't drink a third one like the rest of us? Would it show on the breathalyzer?"

Clearly his whisper isn't quiet enough, or Kuroo has better hearing than he thought, because he leans behind Bokuto's back and answers.
"Your Captain here doesn't drink much when we go out. But it's cool, because I have beers waiting for us back in the room."

"Thanks, bro." Bokuto grins then turns to Akaashi. "We usually come to this pub, because it's small and not popular. If we hit the town and go some place fancy, I'll get snapshots of me in the newspapers tomorrow calling me an alcoholic or some shit and my parents will kill me."

"Wow. That sounds... awful." Akaashi mumbles. He finally understands what Komi meant in the locker room after their game.

"My parents don't really care if I get drunk somewhere in private, just as long as I don't get caught in school or embarrass them in public." He replies softly.

"Which is exactly why we're gonna get piss drunk next Saturday, bro." Kuroo pats his back and grins.

Bokuto instantly perks up at that. "Totally, bro!"

Yukie asks everyone if they're finished eating and when they all say yes, she pull all the plates in front of her and starts eating all the leftovers. She sure has appetite, Akaashi thinks and presses his lips together to hide his smile.

Konoha comes back with two beers and when everyone quizzically looks at him, because they soon have to get going for their curfew, he grins and starts chugging.

Akaashi gawps at him, because he sees actual tears streaming from the corner of his eyes, due to the fizzy texture of the beer, but Konoha continues until the first bottle is completely empty. Grinning, he wipes at his eyes with the back of his hand and does the same thing with the second, while Bokuto and Kuroo encourage him with "Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!"

He sets down the second bottle with a clatter against the table and burps loudly.

"Dude, you're my hero." Kuroo grins.

When they call the waiter for the bill, Bokuto scratches his head and turns to Akaashi.

"Akaashi? Would you mind paying for mine? I forgot my wallet back in our room."

Akaashi nods, and when he takes out the money, Washio turns to him.

"Don't fall for that one, Akaashi. All of you, first years, don't fall for it. Bokuto always does that and never returns your money."

"That's true, Bokuto owes me so fucking much already!" Yukie nods in agreement.

"Hey, I just forget, you guys, calm down." Bokuto replies. "Besides, I'm your Captain, you should treat me every once in a while."

"It's not your birthday." Sarukui snorts. "And it should be the other way round, Bokuto, the Captain is supposed to treat his team!"

"Bokuto-san, do you promise to pay me back?" Akaashi asks and Bokuto nods his head quickly.

"The second that we're back in the room, I'll do that."

"Uh huh." Komi snorts. "Akaashi, you'll never see your money again."
Akaashi does appreciate the warning, but he knows that if he was in Bokuto's situation and forgot his wallet, Bokuto would pay for him. And besides, they live together, so he can remind Bokuto for the money until he turns blue in the face and gets them back.

When they all leave the pub and start walking back to school, Komi laughs.

"Hey, you guys, do you think Saito will join us at the table on Monday morning?"

"He can't sit with us!" Bokuto grunts.

"Myyyy my, Bokuto, aren't you a mean girl." Kuroo chuckles.

Akaashi doesn't get the reference, but he doesn't ask, because Konoha has draped one of his arms over his shoulders for support, while the other one's over Sarukui's and it's kind of hard to keep walking under Konoha's weight. And it's not because Konoha's that heavy or anything, but he keeps swaying on his feet, unable to walk in a straight line.

"You guys don't need to go to a circus, you're all a freaking circus, just look at yourselves." Yukie tuts, then starts walking faster ahead of them.

"Oi, Yukie, what's the rush?" Bokuto asks.

"I wanna make it to school before you guys can get me in trouble for being drunk." She yells back.

"You're our manager! Get back here! All for one and one for all!" Bokuto quotes and Akaashi gasps.

"Bokuto-san! I thought of a better one! How about owl for one one for owl?"

Bokuro roars in laughter and ruffles Akaashi's hair. "Oh my god, Akaashi, you're so smart and funny! Hahahahaha."

Akaashi smirks feeling pleased with himself.

"Ugh, now there's two of you with the lame puns." Kuroo rolls his eyes.

"Can someone explain to me what's going on?" Sarukui asks.

"Bokuto-san just quoted The Th-" Akaashi begins, but Bokuto interrupts him.

"The Three Mosquitoes."

Kuroo laughs. "So close, bro."

"Bokuto-san, I'm totally going to write that on the Wall of Shame."

"Ooo, I need to check the Wall in case there's been more Bokutoisms added on there." Kuroo grins.

Bokuto ignores them. "So, Halloween party next Saturday, what are you all gonna dress up as?"

"Do we really have to dress up?" Washio grunts.

"Hell yeah we do!" He turns to Kuroo with a grin. "Bro, please put on a hat!"

Akaashi can't help himself, he just stops walking and so do Konoha and Sarukui with him, and he
actually laughs so hard, that his voice echoes through the quietness. All eyes turn to him quizzically, because they've never heard him laugh this much before?

When he's able to compose himself, he asks. "Did you guys not hear Bokuto-san?"

"Yeah, and?" Yukie voices out everyone's question.

"He was making a joke about Kuroo-san? You know, Doctor Seuss? The cat in the hat?" He laughs again.

"Yeah, we got that too, but it's not funny at all?"

"I think it's hilarious." He replies, but nobody else seems to think so. Except for Bokuto himself, who rewards him with a big grin and a wink.

When they approach the school, the day students bid them good night and good luck, and head home, while Bokuto, Yukie, Sarukui, Konoha, Kuroo and Akaashi keep a safe distance and try to come up with a plan that could make them get Konoha inside without getting caught for being drunk.

"He can pretend to be talking on the phone?" Yukie suggests. "So one of us could sign him in and-"

"That doesn't work, he'll still get checked with the breathalyzer." Bokuto replies, then smacks his forehead. "I got it! I still have that rope in our room!"

All eyes turn to Akaashi, because he's Bokuto's translator.

"What Bokuto-san means is that we can use the rope to get Konoha-san up into our room without being checked at the front desk. We should all rush inside together and sign him in and there's enough of us to get away with it? Yukie, maybe you could start chatting up the RC at the front to distract her?"

"That's great, you guys, but how the hell are we going to get him to climb up, though?" Sarukui bites his lip. "He can barely walk, climbing rope to the second floor is gonna be impossible?"

"I don't have to sign in like you guys." Kuroo says. "You all head in, check in, get breathalyzed or whatever, while Konoha and I will go to the back of the school and wait. Then you can drop the rope from the window and I'll help him up."

"Bro, thanks for not just having my back, but all our backs." Bokuto replies and squeezes Kuroo's shoulder. "You're the best, you know that?"

"Yeah, I know, bro. And I also know you'd do the same for me." Kuroo gently pats Bokuto's cheek. "Now, come on, let's get started on mission "get the owl back in its cage without getting caught".

Yukie goes inside first, followed by Bokuto, Sarukui and Akaashi. Luckily Masha is at the front and the manager instantly starts chatting her up.

Sarukui quickly signs Konoha in with himself, but before the three boys could head upstairs, Masha waves at them.

"Not so fast, you guys, you know the procedure - you go out on the weekend, I have to check you with the breathalyzer." She says and gives it to Yukie first. "Yukie I'm really sorry to say this, especially in front of the boys, but please blow."
Bokuto laughs and Sarukui chuckles, but Akaashi can only force his lips into a tight smile, because the difficult part of getting Konoha inside is just getting started. He can laugh about it later, when and more importantly - if - they manage to pull it off without getting in trouble.

When all of them are in the clear, Yukie wishes them good luck and heads up to the third floor, while the three of them enter Bokuto and Akaashi's room and as Bokuto and Sarukui tie the rope on the bed, Akaashi opens the window and waves his hand at Kuroo and Konoha who are down below to come closer to the wall.

For about five minutes, they proceed to watch Kuroo trying his best to get Konoha to grab the damn rope and climb it, and even though he gets Konoha on top of his shoulders, it's futile.

Since it's really late, and they have to be extremely quiet, Kuroo shakes his head and calls Bokuto on the phone, who instantly puts him on speaker.
"Bro, this isn't gonna work, he can't climb on his own. I would wrap the rope around the two of us, but I'm way too heavy for you guys to lift us up." He says and Bokuto and Sarukui both turn to stare at Akaashi.

"Oh, no, not me." Akaashi shakes his head. "I can't climb."

"Akaashi, you don't have to climb! You're the lightest one here, so go down, while Kuroo comes up and then the three of us will be strong enough to pull you and Konoha back up in here."

Akaashi sighs, because he knows that's their best option, but that doesn't mean he's happy about it.

Kuroo shushes for Konoha to be quiet, then quickly climbs up through the window, while Akaashi takes a deep breath.

"Just so you guys know, I'm scared of heights." He grumbles. "But I'm gonna take one for the team."

"That's why I made you Vice Captain, Akaashi, you're a real trooper." Bokuto grins. "Just don't look down and you'll be fine."

Akaashi scowls, because it's easy for Bokuto to say it from the safe confinements of their room and the floor beneath his feet.

Still, Konoha's in trouble and he needs help, so after wrapping his hands tightly around the rope, gripping it until his knuckles turn white, he shuts his eyes and starts descending slowly, trying not to think of how if his sweaty hands slip, he might break his ankle or something even worse like his neck.

Get your shit together, Akaashi, you'll be fine.

He's so close to the wall that he uses his feet for support as he continues sliding down and even though his palms are burning in pain, he opens his eyes to make sure there's not much space left and he's very pleased that he can let go and easily land on his feet.

He looks up and sees three heads poking out of the window from above, followed by three thumbs up.

Yeah, but now comes the real hard part. He gently pushes Konoha right in front of him and starts wrapping the rope around their middle. When he makes an incredibly tight knot, he gives a testing tug, then puts his thumb up for Bokuto, Sarukui and Kuroo to start lifting them up.

Akaashi prays that the rope wouldn't break and they've just about passed the top of the window of
We are sorry, but we cannot provide a natural text representation for the image you provided.
"You guys are multiplying." Sarukui shakes his head. "I have to go, I don't think I can take any more owl puns for tonight."

Bokuto picks up Konoha over his shoulder like he doesn't weight any more than a feather and follows Sarukui out of their room.

Since Akaashi's finally alone with Kuroo, he uses it as an opportunity to ask something that's been making him feel a bit guilty since a few hours ago. So he takes a seat on the floor and clears his throat.

"Kuroo-san?"

"Mmm?"

"You know that I was only joking when I was saying those things at the Irish Pub, right?"

"Dude, chill, I can take a joke. I'm actually happy to see like everyone else that you're coming out of your shell." Kuroo smiles and Akaashi nods in agreement. But of course, because Kuroo is Kuroo after all, he adds with a smirk. "But I wasn't joking about what I said."

Akaashi sighs. "No, I suppose you weren't."

Bokuto comes back with a grin and tells them that he left Sarukui to take care of Konoha's dirty clothes, but the important part is that they got away with it. Then he kneels in front of Akaashi and gently pushes his chin upwards.

"Akaashi, how's your nose?" He asks.

"Oh, so now you're worried about me?" Akaashi snorts.

As Bokuto inspects Akaashi's nose, his face is suddenly so close that Akaashi can feel Bokuto's hot breath against his cheeks. He quietly gulps and tries to turn his face to the side, but Bokuto's fingers remain on his chin.

"Oi, stay still and don't move." He gingerly touches the bridge of Akaashi's nose. "Does it hurt here?"

"No."

"Well I can't be too sure about it, but I don't think it's broken." Bokuto concludes and releases him. "Too bad we don't have some ice to put on it, though."

"Bokuto-san, I'm fine." Akaashi mumbles and with the corner of his eye sees that Kuroo's staring at them both, but doesn't say anything. And since he doesn't like the silent way Kuroo was looking at them, he blurts out the first thing that comes to his mind. "Money."

"Eh?"

"You owe me money." He explains.

"Do you mean I owl you money?" Bokuto tries, but Akaashi doesn't appreciate the pun. Okay, maybe a bit, but only on the inside.

"No, I don't. Don't you remember saying you'll give it back the second we get back in the room?" Akaashi puts his palm in front of Bokuto expectantly.

Sighing, Bokuto pulls his wallet out of his backpack and opens it. He stares at it hard, as if he's
Sighing, Bokuto pulls his wallet out of his backpack and opens it. He stares at it hard, as if he's trying to will some money into the empty pockets of it?

"Well, it seems I don't have any cash on me." He pulls a guilty face, then pats Akaashi's knee reassuringly. "But don't worry, I'll give it back. A Lannister always pays his debts." He adds with a grin.

"A who?" Akaashi asks in confusion, because he understood nothing of the last part.

"Heyyyy, you just sounded like an owl!" Bokuto grins. "A who a whooo!" He echoes and laughs again.

"Dude." Kuroo puts his hand on Bokuto's shoulder. "Angel Eyes here doesn't know what a Lannister is or that they always pay their debts. You know what that means?"

The two of them lock serious glances, curt nods, then both explode in happy yells.

"Game of Thrones marathon!"

Akaashi sighs quietly, because this means less sleep. But he's too tired to argue and obviously there won't be a point in objecting, because both Bokuto and Kuroo looks as excited as children for whatever they're going to marathon.

All three of them change into the clothes they use for sleep, then Bokuto starts setting up his laptop, while Kuroo pulls three beers out of his rucksack. Akaashi accepts it with a nod and Kuroo grins.

"For a second there I thought you wouldn't take it."

"Yeah, for a second I thought so too." Akaashi scowls. "You guys are bad influence."

"I refuse to have such negative talk in our room." Bokuto replies with a grin. "You guys have to keep me company when I drink, because drinking alone sucks."

"I'll always drink with you, bro."

"Akaashi?"

Akaashi shrugs. "What do you need me for? You have Kuroo-san to keep you company when you drink."

"But Akaashi! The more the merrier! Right?" Bokuto gently nudges him. "Right, Akaashi?"

"As long as you guys don't throw up on me, then okay."

"Pfffff, Konoha's a lightweight, don't compare us champs to him." Kuroo replies.

"That's true." Bokuto agrees. "Oi, Akaashi, you better drink with us next weekend at our party!"

"Bokuto-san, you know I don't like being pressured, just like you don't."

"Yeah, but I'm not pressuring you, I'm..." Bokuto searches for the right word. "I'm encouraging you!" He grins. "I'm not saying you need to get drunk to have a good time or anything, but it's nice to let loose every once in a while? And you sure as Hell need it, you're always so composed and mature and stuff. Don't you get tired of doing what's expected of you all the time?"

"Well someone needs to be responsible."
"Yeah and next week you can let someone else be the responsible one?" Bokuto grins.

"Like whom?"

"I can be responsible?" Kuroo suggests and Akaashi snorts so hard that the tiny pieces of paper inside his nostrils nearly fall out.

"Let me get this straight. Bokuto-san's going to throw a house party without any parental supervision. There will be alcohol and a lot of students, like a whole lot of different teams and students and stuff? And you're going to be the responsible one?" He snorts again. "Yeah, right. Because you should totally be left in charge when there'll be drunk girls and guys around."

"Akaashi, I resent that!" Kuroo scowls and Akaashi notes this is probably like the second time Kuroo actually calls him by his name? He must be serious then. "I've never in my life taken advantage of a drunk person, nor would I ever! I can't believe you would think so lowly of me, man. That sucks."

Akaashi realizes that maybe he did judge Kuroo a bit too harsh, because after all didn't he help them get Konoha inside?

"You're right, I'm sorry about that. Please excuse me for the rude accusations."

Kuroo grins. "Apology accepted."

"Akaashi? You do realize that you're going to be checked out next weekend, right?" Bokuto asks.

"I am?"

"Well duhh." Akaashi doesn't see what's so duhh about it? "I'll tell my dad to call the dean and say we're gonna have a small get together to prepare for our midterm exams, so you can stay at my house and not worry about stupid shit like curfews and breathalyzers."

"What about Konoha-san and Sarukui-san?" And then he remembers the manager. "And Yukie?"

Bokuto bites his lip. "Hmmm, with Yukie it won't work, because she's a girl. But I'll ask dad for Konoha and Sarukui to get permission as well, because they're the only ones from the team that won't be checked out too and they'll miss out from all the fun." Bokuto grins. "So it's settled."

"Bokuto-san, are you sure this is going to be okay? I mean, we're going to be a lot of people there?"

Kuroo laughs. "Dude. Their house is like a fucking mansion. We'll all get our different guest rooms and shit."

Akaashi blinks. "Wow."

Then suddenly Bokuto pulls a face, which Akaashi can only describe as "discomfort", and both Kuroo and him notice that.

"Well I think that's a great idea, Bokuto-san." Akaashi adds quickly. "I know we will be playing volleyball all weekend, but maybe before the party on Saturday night our team can do some study-"

He can't even finish the sentence, because both Bokuto and Kuroo are roaring in laughter at the mere suggestion? Studying? On Halloween? On a Saturday, before a party? That's insane.

"Okay fine. But I'm putting on my Vice Captain hat on this upcoming week and I'll make sure the entire team has a cramming session and prepare together, okay?"
Bokuto quickly nods and gives Akaashi a salute as if he's an actual Captain?

"Aye aye, Vice Captain!"

"Can we get started on episode 1 already?" Kuroo groans and presses play.

"Akaashi, for someone who loves reading, I can't believe you haven't read the books the show's based on? I mean even I have read them!"

Akaashi shrugs. "If I like the series, I'll buy the books."

It's a bit confusing at first, because there's so many characters and things happening at once, but before even the end of the first episode, Akaashi's attention is fully on the laptop and he's the one who presses play for episode two. And then three, and then four. And then it's just him watching, because both Bokuto and Kuroo have fallen asleep in his bed. He rolls them both to the inside and makes sure Bokuto's not lying on his back, because he tends to snore a bit and he doesn't want to be interrupted while watching.

So he sits crossed legged on the floor, helps himself to another beer can out of Kuroo's rucksack and watches the next episode. He's so fucking into it, that even after finishing all the beer, he makes a mental note to tell Kuroo to bring more next time, then settles for his water bottle and he knows that he should probably get some sleep, because he hears the damn roosters, which means it's morning already, but who cares about sleep when there's just three more episodes until the end of the season.

After the ninth episode, he silently fumes at the black screen, then when his anger can no longer be contained, he yells.

"What the fuck, they killed Ned Stark?"

Both Bokuto and Kuroo jump in alarm and blink sleepily at him.

"Akaashi, you're still watching?" Bokuto croaks out, while Kuroo yawns, then gets back on his stomach and covers his head with the pillow.

"Yes, I'm still watching. Bokuto-san, can you believe they killed him? They actually killed him!"

"Bro, we created a fucking monster." Kuroo's muffled voice comes from underneath the pillow.

"Shut up and get back to sleep. I have one more episode." Akaashi scowls. "The Starks better get their revenge."

He doesn't know why, but both Bokuto and Kuroo laugh.

"I swear to God if either of you spoil me, I'll kill you like they killed Ned Stark."

Silence.

"I still can't believe they killed him."

Halfway through the last episode, Kuroo asks.

"Yo, Angel Eyes, can you wake me up five minutes before the end of the episode?"

"Yes. Now shush."
Akaashi checks the timer, then tells Kuroo the episode's almost over. He instantly puts his head up and asks Akaashi to lower the screen a bit. And he nudges Bokuto to wake up and watch too.

Akaashi doesn't know what's supposed to happen right now, but since the both of them are staring so carefully, it must be really good.

"Duuuuuuude. Dragons."

"Dude. Titties."

Bokuto and Kuroo exchange smirks and nod in agreement, that yes, dragons and titties.

Akaashi rolls his eyes, because what else could he possibly expect from either of them? Honestly. Although he silently agrees that the dragons are pretty cool.

"I'm going downstairs for breakfast." He announces, and both Bokuto and Kuroo decide to join him.

The three of them head down without even bothering to change out of their pyjamas. Well Akaashi's actually the only one with pyjama pants, while the other two are in shorts, but who cares?

"Good thing we have games and practices now so we don't have to sign up for the dumb weekend activity shit." Bokuto grins as he starts piling up his tray with food. Kuroo does the same and they go into Dining Room B. "Akaashi, you coming?"

"In a minute."

Akaashi is so hungry and his brain is too tired to pick, and why should he actually have to choose when he can get a bit of everything? So he gets some cornflakes with milk, a couple of toasts with ham and cheese, a couple more with butter and blueberry jam and a few more with chocolate and bananas. Then a strawberry yogurt and a bowl of canned peaches. And since he doesn't want to go back and forth, he adds three cups of coffee onto the now full tray and heads to the volleyball table.

Bokuto and Kuroo both stop talking as they look at the mountain sized stack of toasts on Akaashi's plate - as well as everything else on there.

"I can bet you money you can't eat all of that." Kuroo says and Bokuto's eyes shine at the opportunity to make some quick cash.

"You're on, dude."

"How much should we bet?"

"As much as Akaashi paid for me last night?"

"Fine."

Akaashi starts eating without sharing a wink with Bokuto even though he really wants to, but he knows that if he does, he'll give them both away and he definitely wants to get his money back, but not as badly as he wants to see Kuroo lose.

He decides to change the topic, though, because Kuroo is a master at mind games and might see through their scam. But Bokuto's way ahead of him.
"Akaashi, now that you're done with season one, which is your favourite house?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Kuroo snorts. "Angel Eyes here is totally predictable."

"Oh yeah? Which house do you think's my favourite then, if I'm so predictable?" He asks and starts tearing his toast into pieces, which he pops into his mouth.

"Both of you guys are so easy to read, I don't even have to think about it?" Kuroo grins. "You both love the Starks."

Bokuto grunts. "Yeah, but that's because I've already told you they're my second favourite!"

"No, it's because you're both like them? You know, loyal to a fault and all that?"

Akaashi takes a sip of his coffee. "You say it like it's a bad thing?"

"It is." Kuroo shrugs. "Loyalty's great, but not to the point where you let your morals get you killed."

"Kuroo-san, let me guess. Your favourite house is the Lannisters?"

"Correct."

"Of course it is." Akaashi rolls his eyes. "You cats are all the same."

"Hey, I'll have you know that the Lannisters are totally badass. And it's not just because their house sigil is a lion, it's just because they are actually badass? I'm not gonna spoil you or anything, but come on, just look at Joffrey?"

"Ugh that little shit, I hate him." Bokuto grunts.

"Yeah, but every good story needs a good villain. And when you think about it, it's not Joffrey's fault for being a little shit? Look at how f**ked up everyone in his family is." Kuroo grins.

"I've read that people's favourite characters are mostly ones they can relate to in a way." Akaashi says and tries to keep a straight face. "Joffrey's a villain, so of course you would relate to him. Since you're a villain too."

Kuroo pokes his tongue out. "Nyeah nyeah, you shouldn't believe everything you read. Besides, I didn't say he was my favourite character. I just said house Lannister is my favourite. While you guys are rooting for the Stark and that's so lame, because the writers and shit want you to root for them."

"I like the Martells best, but the Starks come second." Bokuto chips in.

"No spoilers, Bokuto-san."

"Akaashi, chill, I just said another houses name."

"So, Kuroo-san, you dislike them just because-"

"No, I didn't say I dislike the Starks, I just said they're the obvious choice you, as a viewer, go with. And I don't like to be "told" who to like, you get what I'm sayin'? Only dead fish go with the flow." He adds wisely.

"Only dead fish go with the flow." Akaashi echoes. "Wow, that was very poetic and insightful."
"I know you were being sarcastic, but you're welcome."

Before they can continue with their discussion, Sarukui and a surprisingly chirpy looking Konoha join them at the table.

"Konoha-san, how do you feel?"

"I feel great, dude, thanks!" He grins. "Oh, by the way, sorry about puking on you last night."

"Can we please have less puke talk while eating?" Bokuto asks.

"Dude, I didn't think you were the type to get easily disgusted?" Kuroo's eyebrows rise in surprise.

"Me? Naw, bro, someone can take a shit on the table while I'm eating and I'll be cool with it, as long as it doesn't spray on me." Bokuto roars in laughter as everyone around pulls disgusted faces. "I'm just worried about Akaashi over here not being able to win our bet."

Akaashi snorts. "Thank you, Bokuto-san, because your graphic description didn't put me off my food at all."

"Akaashi, less talking more eating."

Bokuto then proceeds to explain to Konoha and Sarukui about the bet, which Kuroo and him made. Sarukui is able to keep a poker face, but Konoha doesn't get the fact they're trying to fool Kuroo and grunts.

"Yeah, Kuroo, dude, I totally made the same mistake as you. I made a bet with Bokuto that Akaashi was at the library, while he was actually at the gym and basically I got gypped." He grins. "Which is kind of what's happening to you right now, because Bokuto knows how much Akaashi can actually eat."

Bokuto slams his palm against the table. "Konoha! Will you just shush! Damn it!"

Kuroo shakes his head. "Bro, I expected something like this from the rest of the owls, but you bro? You're the one that betrayed me?"

"The Starks aren't so predictable after all, are they, Kuroo-san?" Akaashi asks innocently, while Bokuto roars in laughter and puts his hand up, which Akaashi high fives.

"You guys are ganging up against me and I don't like it. But it's okay, because next Friday Nekoma will crush you."

"Ha! In your dreams, bro."

The two of them start teasing each other, while Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi listen in silent amusement. Akaashi's all done with his food and actually heads back for another cup of coffee and a toast of butter with some honey, because even though he's full, Bokuto's eyes glinted at him, and he suddenly felt a strange craving for honey?

Kuroo gawps at him when he returns back to the table and is eating, again.

"Okay, scammed or not, I'm giving you the money, because this is fucking unbelievable. Angel Eyes, where the fuck do you put all that food?"

Akaashi pats his stomach happily and stuffs the last piece into his mouth. He feels a drop of honey
roll down the corner of his lower lip and brushes it with his thumb. He stares at it for a second or two, then puts his finger into his mouth and sucks it.

"Akaashi, I said sorry about throwing up on you, but I didn't say sorry for your nose." Konoha adds. "So... sorry for your nose?"

"It's fine, Konoha-san, I'm okay."

"You almost broke it, you dumbass hyena." Bokuto scowls. "You better be more careful, because I won't let any harm come to my setter."

"Our setter, Bokuto." Konoha corrects, but Bokuto shakes his head.

"No, my setter."

"We're on the same team." Sarukui says, but Bokuto repeats his own thing.

"My setter."

This could go on for hours, so Akaashi clears his throat.

"Kuroo-san? When we go practice, could you help me out with my blocking? I really need to work on my defense."

"No problem, Angel Eyes." Kuroo winks. "In fact, why don't we just go now?"

Konoha and Sarukui tell them that they aren't as crazy as the three of them and will wait for practice before joining them at the gym. And after a change of clothes, Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi head for the middle court.

"Bokuto-san, why did you bring a notebook with you?"

"Because last Sunday you told me if I ever leave my homework until the last minute of Study Hall again you'll kill me." Bokuto explains. "And I need your guys' help with my Theater and Drama Class."

"Both of us?" Akaashi asks.

"Mhm, definitely."

Since all three of them - especially Akaashi - are full from eating, they decide to wait a bit and sprawl down on the floor to help Bokuto with his homework. He explains that he's supposed to write a play - an original play - and if it's the best one, it'll be the one that the entire class will get to play out in front of the entire school.

Akaashi quickly takes the notebook and the pen from Bokuto's hands, because it's best if he's the one writing out the ideas. Firstly, because Bokuto's handwriting is a mess and secondly, because Akaashi knows that if he lets Bokuto be in charge of his own work and by some miracle their teacher picks it as the winner, he doesn't want to endure two hours of his free time watching Bokuto prance around on stage making light saber noises.

"So what genre do you want to go with?"

"Fantasy!" Bokuto replies quickly.

"Dude, awesome! You can have like dragons and titties like in Game of Thrones."
Akaashi sighs. "There will be no dragons and titties, because it's a school play, which means strictly PG stuff. And we could probably find a toy dragon, but-"

"Then no. Akaashi, scratch that, that's lame."

Akaashi explains patiently that he doesn't have to scratch anything, because he's only going to write down serious ideas.

"Okay, what do you want your play to have? Remember that you want to capture your audience's attention. What do you think would be interesting enough for that?"

Kuroo taps his chin. "You can't have a good story without at least one samurai."

"Ooo yeah! And ninjas!" Bokuto adds.

Akaashi clears his throat. "I was thinking something a bit more modern?"

"Zombies!"

"Not that modern, Bokuto-san."

"Yo, Angel Eyes, you keep shutting down our suggestions, why don't you come up with one of your own?"

"Well, we could go with drama? It is Theater and Drama class after all." He chews on his lower lip. "Or we could go for something romantic?"

"Yes!" Kuroo grins. "Let's go with romance!"

"You guyyyyys, I'll have to play the male lead and I don't want to end up kissing some butterface in front of the school?"

"Bokuto-san, don't be rude."

"Bokuto-san, don't be rude" Bokuto mimics. "Yeah, easy for you to say, Akaashi, you don't have to kiss a frog on stage, do you?"

"Nobody will be kissing a frog. Please calm down. Now, for your lead character, what traits should he have, what flaws?"

Bokuto and Kuroo remain silent in thought and Akaashi decides to explain further.

"In my opinion a story is always good when you can relate to it. So you can make your lead character resemble your own personality, Bokuto-san?"

"So he's gonna be cool. And popular." Bokuto says. "Oi, Akaashi! Are you writing this down?"

"I will, once we get the ball rolling."

"A ball!" Bokuto grins. "Why don't we just have a volleyball game on stage?"

Akaashi closes his eyes and silently counts to ten. Stay calm. As a tutor, you should never laugh at people's questions, no matter how dumb they are.

"Bokuto and the ball, the greatest love story of the 21 century." Kuroo smirks.

"Can we stop joking around and get to work?" Then for good measure, he adds. "Please?"
"Okay, so I'm the male lead. And?"

"Remember that your audience are your peers, Bokuto-san. We can write something every teenager can relate to? Like worrying about school, peer pressure, alcohol, drugs, sex, you know that sort of thing."

"I do like the part about sex." Kuroo says.

"Kuroo-san, nobody asked for your input, but thanks anyway."

Kuroo scowls. "Aren't you a mean tutor."

"No, I'm not. What I am is running out of patience and if you two don't start taking this seriously, I'm leaving until practice and Bokuto-san will have to do this on his own."

"Akaashi! Please don't leave me? Please?" Bokuto gives him this sad puppy dog eye expression, even though Akaashi was only warning them, to take him more seriously, not that he was actually going to leave?

"I'm right here, Bokuto-san. Now please put your thinking hats on." He drops the pen and starts fiddling with his fingers. "How about... how about we base the story on your own life, Bokuto-san?"

"Absolutely not! That's personal. I don't want people to know about my personal life or my family!" He grunts. "Even though they already do."

"Then how about we base the story on someone else?" Kuroo suggests, but Akaashi doesn't like the way he's smirking at him. "Say a new student arrives in the middle of the school year?"

"Ooo I like the sound of that." Bokuto joins in the smirk. "And he's nervous at first and shy, but slowly he starts to-

"Okay stop. Stop it." Akaashi scowls. "What makes you think I want my life to be on display for the entire school? Bokuto-san, you said yours is personal, but so is mine!"

"Well yeah, but it's not about you, Angel Eyes, this is a story about a character named...Atsushi?"

"Nice one, bro, let's call him Atsushi Keiichi."

"No! We will do no such thing! And his name won't be Atsushi Keiichi, do you hear me?"

Kuroo pulls the pen and the notebook away from Akaashi and starts saying out loud everything that he's scribbling down.

"The school year has already begun, when Atsushi Keiichi, a shy boy, arrives. He starts making friends and also starts playing on the-

"Basketball team." Bokuto adds. "Let's make it less obvious."

"Yes. Because that's the thing that might give away the fact you guys are writing about me, and not the similar name or that I'm the only transfer student that came after the school year started, no, it's the volleyball part that needs to be changed."

Bokuto logic. Go fucking figure.

"-basketball team." Kuroo writes. "You wanted romance, right? Alright, here's some romance for
you." Kuroo starts writing again. "As the school year continues, Atsushi Keiichi falls in love with - yo, bro, who does he fall in love with?"

"I don't care as long as I don't have to end up kissing some ugly ass toad."

"You got any hot chicks in your class?"

"Mehhh."

"You're the writer and this is your story, so you get to assign the roles. If your teacher disagrees, your teacher can suck it. So just find the hottest chick in your class and make your character fall in love with her. There. They suffer a lot, then they get their happily ever after. Boom, we're done."

Bokuto scratches his forehead. "Why does it have to be a chick?"

"Eh?" Kuroo asks. "What do you mean?"

"You said I should find the hottest chick in the class and make my character fall in love with her, right? But, why does it have to be a girl and not a dude?"

"Okay, ha ha, very funny, you guys, joke's over." Akaashi sighs. "You can stop now."

"Akaashi! You said we should make the story relatable, right? Don't you think being gay is something that a lot of teenagers can relate to? And as you said, there's peer pressure from it and all that jazz that would add to the drama."

"Why can't you guys get it through your thick skulls that I don't want to watch a play about my own life? I've lived my life - hey I'm living it - and I know better than anyone how it feels! So if you wanna continue writing this story, at least drop the gay part out."

Kuroo is no longer smirking. In fact, Akaashi has never seen him look this serious before.

"Akaashi, why do you get so defensive when it comes to your sexuality?" He says. "Are you embarrassed that you like guys? Do you think it's not normal or something to be ashamed of?"

"No."

"Then what's your problem?"

"I don't-"

"Yeah, you do seem to have a problem with it and I would like to know why?"

"Well excuse me, Kuroo-san, but not everyone is like you! Not everyone can be as open with their sexuality or confident like you are with yours? Did you ever consider that?"

"Yes, and that's why I'm really curious about why you just clam up the way you do when we start talking about it? You're surrounded by friends here, you can trust us both. So please, why don't you elaborate and confide in Bokuto and myself? If you don't feel comfortable around me, I'll leave you guys alone, but you're going to talk to Bokuto about it, alright?"

When Akaashi doesn't say anything, Kuroo sighs.

"Alright. I never thought I'd turn into a member of The Breakfast Club, but we did just have breakfast, and we're talking about personal shit, so, since you're being chicken, I'll go first." He licks his lips. "I joke around a lot and always laugh it off, but that doesn't mean I don't get insecure every now and again. Sure, I come off as confident, and I am, but not all the time. I'm not talking
about looks here, I'm talking about... feelings and shit. And that's exactly why relationships terrify me. I've never had a relationship longer than fucking and chucking someone? Just the mere idea of putting my feelings out there and getting rejected scares the shit out of me so bad, that I'd much rather not do it at all and just continue with the one night stands."

For the first time Akaashi sees that Kuroo genuinely looks unnerved. He's telling the truth and it's written all over his face. It's really crazy how Kuroo, who is basically Mr Sex on Legs, feels insecure that he'd get rejected?

"Well, Kuroo-san, maybe if you didn't tease people as much as you do or made them uncomfortable on purpose, you won't get rejected?"

Kuroo laughs. "Hey, man, everyone has a hobby, mine just happens to be making people uncomfortable. Is that wrong?"

"Yes. Nobody likes feeling uncomfortable. And you're doing it right now. You're laughing it off as a joke, while we're being serious?"

"What am I supposed to do then, cry about it?"

"No." Akaashi reaches over and pats his shoulder. "The way you are right now with Bokuto-san and I is really nice. You should be more open like this with people and show that you're not just playing mind games with them."

Kuroo rolls his eyes. "Alright, who's opening up the emotional floodgates next?"

"Akaashi, a few days ago you asked me why I haven't been in a relationship before, remember?" Akaashi nods. "And, bro, you always joke that I only romance a ball. But truth is I do want a girlfriend. I do want to have someone that'll cheer me on during volleyball games and stuff. But I want her to like me for me, you know? Not just because I'm Captain of the volleyball team and she just wants a good reputation - and don't look at me like that, bro, I know you want to make a joke right now that I have no reputation." Bokuto warns Kuroo with a finger, who silently shakes his head. "Oh, my bad. Anyway, I don't just mean because of me, but also my parents? What if I end up dating a girl who's only with me for the fame or using me for my parents' money?"

Kuroo clears his throat. "Then the joke's on her, because you're always broke as fuck."

"That's so true." Bokuto grins. "Neither of you guys know this, but I don't actually have an allowance? Like, I could ask my parents to give me money, as much as I want, and they'll give it to me. But I don't want that. I get even less pocket money than you guys probably do - together, because I don't want to be treated any different, or get all spoiled. I like the way things are right now, even if I am broke as fuck most of the time, because if I do ask my parents for more money, then they'll expect more of me, and they already expect the fucking world from their only son. And there's also my mood swings, which both of you guys know about already and have helped me through, for which I'm really grateful." Bokuto's lower lip quivers, but he quickly composes himself. "But it'll be kind of nice if I share the same thing I share with you guys with someone that I can date, and kiss and do stuff with that you do when you're in a relationship."

"You can befriend the girl first and get to know her and what she's like before dating her? So you know she's not using you?" Akaashi suggests.

"Yeah, but I have this thing where I think that I'll never be good enough? Not just for my parents, but for everyone? And if I do get a girlfriend, my insecurities will probably ruin the relationship." He chuckles humorlessly. "Look at me, I've never even had a girlfriend and I'm already hypothetically thinking of our break up."
"Bro, of course you're good enough. If anyone thinks or says otherwise, fuck them. Metaphorically. Although if she's hot, fuck her literally, right in the ass, then chuck her."

Akaashi sighs. "You just can't go five minutes without making an obscene joke, can you, Kuroo-san?"

"Who's joking?" Kuroo smirks. "I'm serious here."

"Whatever." Akaashi turns his attention to Bokuto. "I can't believe I'm going to say this, Bokuto-san, but I actually agree with what Kuroo-san just said. Not the fucking part, but the part where he said you're good enough. Of course you're good enough. I don't know your parents, but... but parents aren't perfect? They make mistakes too. Maybe they've forgotten what it's like to be young and how difficult being a teenager really is? I'm sure your parents have your best interest at heart, and don't put all the pressure on you on purpose to make you feel guilty. Every parent wants to see their child succeed in life. And since your parents have both accomplished so much, they expect the same thing of you. Which you already have? I mean look at you. You play volleyball at a national level and you're only seventeen. Isn't that impressive and a crazy big accomplishment, which you achieved all on your own, through your hard work and dedication?"

Bokuto nods his head. "What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Well, you're the perfect student, sports come natural to you, you have a good relationship with your parents."

"Also he's a really good looking dude." Kuroo adds.

"Yeah, that too. You're like a fucking model child for every parent. What kind of insecurities could you possibly have?"

Akaashi actually laughs at that. "Thank you, Bokuto-san, and Kuroo-san, but you don't know what goes through my head."

"We don't, hence why we're having this conversation." Kuroo says.

"Yeah, Akaashi, tell us. It's your turn anyway."

"Come on, Angel Eyes, us bros poured our hearts out, don't be so cruel to keep us waiting."

"I'm full of doubt." Akaashi blurts out. "About everything. All the time. My mind's constantly screaming at me before I do something - even the simplest task - and it just starts listing all the things that could possibly go wrong and then I'm shaking in fear and full of anxiety. Also, I'm terrible with first impressions. And second. And third. In fact, until I feel calm and know the person I'm talking to, I'm total shit. I can't make small talk. Meeting new people always makes me panic, especially if I'm alone and not surrounded by people I trust. I suck at talking in front of an audience and hate attention. I'm shy and I really wish I wasn't because I know that it makes me miss out on opportunities and-"

"You overcame your shyness with us, though." Bokuto grins.

"Yeah. Remember last night, the way you were teasing me and implying I'm not wanted?" Kuroo laughs. "There's nothing shy about that sort of behavior, man."

"That's because I've spend enough time with you two to consider you a part of my comfort zone. Except for the times when you-" He points at Kuroo accusingly. "purposefully push me into my
discomfort zone."

"I apologize in advance for all the times in the future that I'll do that to you." Kuroo winks.

"Or you could just not do it at all?" Akaashi suggests, but the corners of his mouth are giving away a tiny smile.

"Hey, you're a pretty quick learner at returning the ball in my court. I like it."

"Akaashi? We started this conversation because of your sexuality, right? Well, you're still avoiding the topic." Bokuto reminds him. "Other than Kuroo and myself, who else knows that you're gay?"

"My parents."

"And? How did they take it when you came out to them?"

Akaashi shrugs. "They're cool with it."

"Do they love you less, because you're gay?" Bokuto asks and Akaashi shakes his head. "Kuroo and I didn't treat you any different when you told us, did we?" Akaashi shakes his head again. "So what's the deal with the secrecy then?"

"Just because I don't go around the school yelling into the hallways that I'm gay, doesn't mean I'm secretive about it? If anybody asks me, I won't lie about it?"

"Yeah, because people just come up to you and ask hey are you straight or are you gay?" Kuroo snorts.

"What do you guys want me to do?"

"For starters, let us do the play with a gay male lead." Bokuto puts his chest forward and presses his thumb against it. "I'm gonna make an amazing Atsushi Keiichi!"

Akaashi rolls his eyes. "Alright, fine. But on one condition."

"What?" Both of them ask in unison.

"Change his damn fucking name."

They hear footsteps and voices approaching the middle court and realize it's time for volleyball practice.

And, since Bokuto takes his acting very seriously, apparently, he gets up on his feet, then walks away from Akaashi and Kuroo and then slowly walks back and puts his hand up in the air, just like John Bender at the end of The Breakfast Club and freezes. And both Akaashi and Kuroo are laughing, while the rest of the team look to one another in confusion, wondering what sort of shithuckery Bokuto's up to now.
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

On Monday morning, the first thing Akaashi does as Bokuto and him go downstairs for breakfast is ask to speak with the dean. When they go into his office, the dean congratulates him on their game on Friday.

"Now, what can I do for you, Akaashi?"

"Since the midterm exams are next week, I was wondering if it would be alright for me to tutor an hour after school in detention, and then go to the gym and help prepare the volleyball team with their studies?"

The dean beams. "That's a brilliant idea! Some of your teammates most definitely need that. As you know, everyone can check their GPAs on our online website with their usernames and passwords. It's confidential, so I can't give you their results and test scores, but what I can do is print out who struggles with what subject the most and you can work with them on those. How does that sound?"

"That will be very helpful, Sensei, thank you."

Not only that, the dean promises to have someone from the staff bring a blackboard in the middle court, which Akaashi can use to explain everything on it, since most of the students struggling with their studies are the second years. Which is pretty much the entire team.

After school and detention, when he heads to the gym, everyone is really surprised to see him there this early.

"Hey heyyyyyyy! Look who's joining us for practice!" Bokuto hoots happily.

Akaashi practices with everyone for exactly one hour and at 5:30 pm, he stops the game and asks them all to do suicides and then cool down laps.

"Akaashi! What are you doing, we have one more hour to play!" Bokuto says, but Akaashi shakes his head and explains.

"Bokuto-san, I already told you over the weekend that I'm going to help you all prepare for the midterm exams." He says and rolls the blackboard in the middle of the court. Just as he expected, everyone starts groaning and whining that why, how could he do this to them and why is he so mean? "I already spoke with the dean and he gave me the thumbs up to proceed. So, if you could all please take out your Math books-"

"Akaashi!" Nobody looks as offended as Bokuto. "Superheroes are supposed to use their powers for good!"

"Bokuto-san, this is for your own good. Would you rather have bad grades, get stuck in detention
and miss out practice? You're the Captain, you should be more responsible and think of these things ahead." Then he turns to the other first years. "You guys don't need any help, so you could practice in the other two courts, go home, or stay and study as well."

Nobody leaves, though. Everyone takes out their books and notebooks and sprawl out on the ground.

"Akaashi?" Yukie asks. "This is really great, but you're not in our class. How could you know what we need to prepare for?"

Akaashi shrugs modestly. "I asked some of your teachers during lunch to tell me about the material you need to prepare for and during my free period I created a study guide for you guys."

Konoha shakes his head. "This is a payback for Friday night, isn't it?"

"Guys!" Yukie grunts. "Akaashi's gone out of his way to help us out, so how about showing some gratitude instead of being so rude, huh?"

Everyone mumbles a "thank you, Akaashi".

After he creates a couple of diagrams and word problems on the board, he waits for them to solve them and quietly approaches Suzuki.

"Did one of my teachers complain about me?" He asks worried.

"No, it's nothing like that." Akaashi smiles. "Are you busy after 6:30 pm today?"

"Not really. Well my parents will be expecting me for dinner, but I could call them and tell them I'll be home later. Why?"

"Bokuto-san has permission to stay in the gym until 7:45 pm and I thought I'd be good for you to remain and practice with us. You told me you needed some help with setting? You can eat with us dinner afterwards and then go home."

Suzuki perks up. "Oh, thank you, that'll be great!"

Bokuto raises his hand, but since Akaashi isn't looking at him, he yells.

"Akaashi! Make yourself useful and come check if my answers are correct instead of chit chatting over there."

Akaashi goes to check everyone's work, starting with his impatient roommate.

"Bokuto-san, it's really impressive -" He begins and Bokuto grins, expecting praise -" how all of your work is wrong, and yet you got the right answers?" He scowls. "Did you copy them off Yukie?"

Bokuto gasps, offended, while Yukie nods. "Yeah, he did. I thought he was just checking if our answers are the same, but apparently he was cheating. Shame on you, Bokuto!"

Akaashi can't say he's too surprised. After all Bokuto expected to be playing volleyball and he's too full of energy to concentrate on studying. But Akaashi is having none of that.

"Bokuto-san, you know we'll stay here until later and practice, so please concentrate."

"Okay, fine. But help me where I went wrong."
"Let me just write some new questions on the board for everyone else, and I'll get back to you in a bit."

Apparently tutoring this many people at once is very difficult, because he'd planned on doing Math and Japanese on Monday, but there's no time for Japanese, since the bell rings at 6:30 pm and they've barely gone over the Math problems. He's glad that Bokuto is his roommate, because he can work with him during Study Hall.

"Bokuto-san, do you mind going to the kitchen and getting us something light to eat?" He asks.

"But you usually do that, why should I go?"

"Because Suzuki-san is staying with us to practice too and I want to give him some pointers on setting."

Bokuto trudges his feet forward and mumbles something under his breath, which is too quiet for Akaashi to hear, but it's obviously complaints.

Whatever.

"Akaashi-san-"

"Please, just call me Akaashi."

"Oh, and you call me Suzuki."

"You've been here longer than me, so you've seen how everyone plays, right?" Suzuki nods. "You and I are the only setters, but I don't think that's your preferred position, is it?"

Suzuki chuckles. "Am I that obvious?"

"I just assumed you'd rather be a Middle Blocker. But I think you're a good setter too."

"Not as good as you, though."

"You shouldn't compare your skills to mine, because everyone on the team is really good at specific things. You're way better at receiving and blocking than I am. So if you practice a bit more on your setting, you'd be amazing at it too. And since we have practice games on Friday and Saturday, it'll be great exercise for the both of us. For everyone, actually."

"You really think Bokuto will let me play instead of you?"

"Of course. My stamina is nowhere near yours, and I'd be dead before even the second game."

"I was so wrong about you." Suzuki chuckles. "You're really humble."

"Thanks." The tips of Akaashi's ears turn pink from the compliment. "Now, here's what I've noticed so far."

He starts explaining that every member has a preferred toss. Like for example, Konoha is better with the ones that are further from the net, Washio can slam it from the back line, and so on.

"What about Bokuto-san?" Suzuki asks. "It seems like he can spike from just about anywhere."

"Damn right I can." Bokuto grins as he approaches. "Here you go." He hands them two bananas.

"What about the onigiri?" Akaashi scowls as he begins peeling his banana. He can see bits of rice
stuck on Bokuto's left cheek.

Bokuto shrugs. "I got hungry on the way."

Akaashi makes a mental note to always be the one going to the kitchen to get snacks, because Bokuto is so not like him to wait for them to eat together. Rude.

"Bokuto-san can spike from almost anywhere, yes." He says as he munches on his banana. "But his best spikes are always from the front, not particularly high and really close to the net."

Bokuto nods in agreement.

"Bokuto-san?" Suzuki asks. "You're really tall, why don't you like high sets? Isn't a set really close to the net more dangerous to get blocked from the other team?"

"No-"

"That often happens to him." Akaashi says.

"Oi, Akaashi! You're supposed to say "no, of course not"!"

Akaashi sighs. "It is true, though. Especially when there's been a rotation and the highest members of the opposite team are at the front. Like our game on Friday? They were all tall and you kept getting blocked each time we tried it. But during practice, I've noticed that he can slam it the hardest when it's really close to the net, and almost nobody can receive them, except for Komi-san. You'll see what I mean when we play."

The three of them start practicing, with Suzuki setting for Bokuto, and Akaashi receiving on the other side of the net.

But Bokuto complains after every set.

"This one sucked!"

"No!"

"Stop giving me crap tosses, dammit!"

"Akaashi, switch with him and show him how I want them!"

When Akaashi shows, Suzuki nods that he understands. But Akaashi knows from his own experience that it's way easier to get it, than actually do it.

"Not like that! Akaashi, show him again!"

"Bokuto-san, stop criticizing so much!" Akaashi scowls. "It's discouraging!"

"I'm trying to help him learn!"

"In that case give him some constructive criticism. That'll help, instead of just saying "this sucks". Tell him which ones are too high, or too low, or too far from the net."

"Fine." Bokuto grunts.

It's really rich for Bokuto to be complaining, because if their roles were reversed and anyone was to tell Bokuto "this sucks", all he'd do is sulk and stop cooperating. Or say something along the lines that he's top five in the country for a reason.
Because even though that's the truth, ace or no ace, Captain or no Captain, there's always room for improvement.

Slowly, Suzuki seems to improve, while Akaashi suffers with receiving Bokuto's powerful spikes. Whenever Bokuto does a straight and Akaashi tries receiving, the ball always goes out of bounds. And it's really hard, because he's the only one on the other side of the court and covering that much ground is fucking impossible. Especially since Bokuto seems keen to make him run all over the place.

"Okay that's enough." Bokuto grins. "Now the three of us should practice serving."

Remembering their game from Friday, Akaashi couldn't agree more. He definitely needs to practice serving more and more, because even though he's able to get almost all of them over the net, they lack power.

"Akaashi! Wednesdays during P.E. are the only time you get to practice with the team, but two or three times during the week and over the weekend you and I are going to the weight lifting room, because running alone isn't going to help. Your setting is great and you can give a good toss even when the ball is really low, but you need to get some muscles in your damn chicken wings."

Akaashi scowls, because he doesn't appreciate having his arms compared to a chicken, but Bokuto's words definitely have truth to them.

After a quick dinner, Suzuki leaves, while Akaashi and Bokuto go up to their room for Study Hall. Since Jared's on duty (ugh), they have to leave showering for after 9:30 pm. Akaashi finishes with his homework, then proceeds to check Bokuto's. He explains the Math problems, which Bokuto was having difficulty with and is pleased that they're done just before the end of Study Hall.

On Tuesday, Mr Burns tell them they're moving onto poetry and then the worst thing happens. He has each student pick an author on which they'll all have to do a presentation.

Oh no.

Akaashi had been dreading that moment since his first day, when the dean told him they'd have to do presentations in pretty much all of their classes.

"Bokuto, which author do you pick from the board?"

"That one there!" Bokuto points at the very first name in the middle.

"Oh, Edgar Allan Poe? Excellent choice." Mr Burns write it down, then turns to Akaashi. "And what about you, Akaashi?"

"Umm..." Akaashi quickly goes over the remaining names on the board and he wants to cry, because he doesn't know any of them. Fuck. That means extra research. "Robert Frost."

"Another good choice."

When everyone's been assigned an author, Mr Burns tell them to prepare their note cards carefully and then asks for the order in which they'll start with the presentations.

Nobody raises their hands to volunteer and Akaashi decides it's best for him to go first. That way, the torture will be over quicker and also, since he goes first, he won't have anyone to be compared to. Because if he goes after someone that's really good, his presentation might look even worse
than it actually is.

"I'd like to go first, Sir." He says and Mr Burns clearly misinterprets his choice as over eagerness to present, because he grins.

Pfft, yeah, as if.

"Okay, so presentations start this Thursday."

Everyone gasps in horror.

"So soon?"

"I'm doing you guys a favor." Mr Burns smiles. "I know next week you'll all have midterm exams, so I'll start you guys off in two days. That way, next week you won't have to fret about English."

Yeah, but that also means they have less time to prepare.

Fucking Hell.

If Akaashi knew that from before, he would've volunteered to go last on Friday, so he'd have one more day of preparation. Not only that, everyone would be too bored after suffering through two hours of presentations to pay attention to him.

Well, the milk's already been spilled, so there's no point in crying over it.

During Studio Art, Ayame changes her usual spot and sits on Akaashi's left. Mori-sensei tells them that they are going to work with clay.

"Do any of you have any experience working with it?" When everyone shakes their heads, he smiles. "I'm going to show you an example of how to do a bowl and a vase and you can pick which one to do. Take off your blazers and roll up your sleeves, because things are bound to get messy."

Akaashi would rather keep his blazer on and roll its sleeves, because dirt would be way more visible on the white than against the gray. Then again they only have one blazer, and a lot more school shirts, so it's probably best that way. So he takes it off, along with his blue tie and folds them neatly on the back of his chair.

As they start working, he glances at Ayame and is about to ask if she's enjoying herself, when he notices that instead of her usual smile, her face looks sad and her eyes are really red and poofy, like she's been crying a lot.

"Ayame, are you alright?" He whispers quietly.

She shakes her head.

"What's wrong?"

"My boyfriend came over last night and told me he cheated on me."

"Oh." It's really dumb, but he doesn't know what to say to comfort her. "I'm really sorry to hear that you guys broke up."

"We haven't broken up yet."
Akaashi blinks. "He cheated on you and you're still together?"

"I don't know what to do." Her lips quiver a bit, but she looks determined not to cry. "He apologized over and over and said he had too much to drink and- what? You don't approve?"

"No."

"Everyone makes mistakes."

"That's true. But being drunk is such a trite and shitty excuse. It's not even an excuse."

"Have you ever been drunk?"

"Yes."

And it's true. Akaashi has been drunk, in the past, but when being at home, alone, without his parents. And that is exactly why he would never touch rum in his life again. Just the mere idea or scent of it, makes his insides feel queasy. Yuck.

"And?"

"I've never been black out drunk, but I don't think alcohol changes your morals, it just makes your tongue more loose. And maybe your actions too, but... if you cheat when drunk, you've probably had thoughts of cheating when sober too. I'm sorry, I don't know your boyfriend at all, but that's just what I think."

"But... he came clean to me."

"You think just because he was honest about it, you should forgive him for it?"

She shrugs.

"Again, I don't know him, but I think he only came clean to rid himself from his guilt."

"We've been together for so long and... and I'm so used to being with him that I just-" She takes a deep breath - "I can't imagine not being with him, you know?"

Akaashi doesn't know.

"I think I love him enough to forgive him for it."

Akaashi snorts. "And how much does he not love you to do that to you?" He glances at Ayame, who is about to cry again. "I'm sorry. I know this is not what you want to hear right now, but that's just what I think."

"What would you do if you were in my position?"

Uh oh. That's a bad question.

"I'm not in your position, so I really don't know. Because you're the one that's going to deal with the consequences and not me."

"But what do you think?"

"I think - and please, that's just my opinion - you should dump him. I've never been in a relationship, but I don't think I could forgive someone if they cheated on me. I'd rather be alone, than with someone whom I've trusted and they betrayed me. But if by some chance I do manage
to forgive, I wouldn't forget and I'll never be able to trust them again. And I definitely don't want to put myself through the torture of wondering if they'd do it again. What's the point of being with someone if you don't trust them?"

She nods her head sadly. "That's what my girl friends tell me too. But whenever I remember all the good times we've had together, I just..." Sigh.

Akaashi often remembers quotes from things that he reads. And when something sticks with you, it's usually worth remembering.

"Nostalgia is a dirty liar that insists things were better than they seemed." He quotes. "I know this isn't what you want to hear, Ayame, but as your friend, I'm not going to lie to you just to make you feel better."

She sighs. "Why do guys cheat? I just don't get it."

"I don't think it's about gender. Guys cheat, because they can. Maybe it makes them feel more wanted and more macho, you know? As for girls... I think they cheat when they're unhappy and look for that something that's missing in their relationship. At least that's what I've read, I don't know."

"Do you think he cheated on me, because I wasn't good enough for him?"

"No!" Akaashi replies loudly and Mori-sensei shushes him. So he whispers. "You should never blame yourself or think like that."

Although if Akaashi was in her place, he would probably feel the exact same way and blame himself for it, he thinks. It's wrong, but that's how brains tend to work - it's human nature.

"Your boyfriend cheated on you, because he's an asshole." He's about to squeeze her shoulder gently, when he realizes his hands are dirty. So instead, he smiles at her softly. "You're a great girl, Ayame, you're so smart and funny and beautiful, any guy would be lucky to have you. In fact, on Friday when you kissed my cheek for good luck, the rest of the volleyball team were so jealous."

Sarukui must have been listening to their quiet conversation, because he extends his head behind Akaashi's back and nods. "He's telling the truth, you know. And besides, owls are better boyfriends than cats."

Ayame's lips turn up at the corners. "Thanks, you guys."

"Did you hear about the Halloween party on Saturday?" Sarukui asks, but Mori-sensei tells them if they can't keep quiet, he'll separate them.

"No, what party?"

Since Akaashi is closer, he quietly explains that Bokuto plans on throwing a costume party in his home and that a lot of people would be going, not just Fukurodani students. And hot chicks are especially welcome, but he doesn't add the last part, because he is neither Bokuto nor Kuroo.

"Oh, that sounds great. I was planning on staying in my room and stuffing myself with sweets from my sister's trick or treating, but this sounds like a better way to spend the weekend." She smiles. "Do you think I could invite some of my friends too or is there a limit?"

Sarukui's head pops from behind again. "Are they girls?" When she nods, he looks like he's going to cry with joy. "Yes, please, invite all your friends."
When the bell rings and the announcements begin, Sarukui's elbow nudges Akaashi and he whispers conspiratorially.

"Hey, Akaashi? Do you mind if I tell the rest of the guys the good news during practice? By Saturday she would've dumped that asshole boyfriend of hers and that means she's fair game."

"Suit yourself, Sarukui-san." Akaashi rolls his eyes. "But please don't go over the top, especially Konoha-san. She's really nice and I don't want her to be hurt again."

Apparently the English class isn't the only one that has to prepare presentations, because everyone on the floor is allowed to use their laptops. But Akaashi tells Bokuto that first they're going to write their homework, and then work on the presentations, because they can do it even after lights out.

"Akaashi, I nearly forgot to tell you!" Bokuto grins. "My Theater and Drama Class teacher gave us back our plays today and he picked mine! Can you believe we'll get to do my play in front of the school? I'm so excited!"

"Well done, Bokuto-san." Akaashi smiles. Then he remembers that after Saturday's volleyball practice he went to take a nap, and on Sunday he completely forgot to check what Bokuto and Kuroo had come up with. Well shit. "You changed the name, though, right?"

Bokuto nods. "Yeah. And it's good that we both do our English presentations on Thursday, so you can help me learn my lines for Friday."

Oh joy.

"I will. But we're going to start going over them before and not leave everything for Thursday night, okay?"

"Okay."

They both lie down on the floor and start their research on their given authors. Bokuto's terrible handwriting takes up too many note cards, because he's already made a big stack, so Akaashi takes them for inspection.

"Bokuto-san? Would you like me to do those for you? You're putting on useless information on there and you should stick to the most important parts."

Bokuto immediately nods his head.

Akaashi realizes that he'll probably end up doing two presentations, instead of one, and he wonders how Bokuto has done them in the past. After he writes down a summary of Edgar Allan Poe's life, important dates and so on, he asks Bokuto which poem he's chosen to present.

"I googled him and apparently his most famous work is The Raven, so maybe I should go with that one?"

Akaashi reads it over and asks what Bokuto thinks of the poem.

"It's crap."

"What I meant wasn't what you literally think of the poem, Bokuto-san, but to give me your analysis."

When Bokuto shakes his head, Akaashi asks if Bokuto has noticed the repetition of "nevermore"
and why he thinks that is.

"Probably, because they didn't have Thesaurus back in the day and he couldn't find a synonym for it?" Bokuto says wisely, as if he's made the biggest discovery of the century.

"No. What about the raven? Why do you think he used a raven?"

"How the fuck should I know? It's not like I can read the dude's mind?"

Akaashi begins explaining slowly and after a while, Bokuto grumbles.

"What the fuck? How are you coming up with this shit? Maybe this Edgar guy just likes fucking birds?"

Akaashi sighs. "Maybe we should do another poem. Look at this one, it's noted as his last complete poem. Annabel Lee."

"Alright, let's do that one."

"Read it out loud for the both of us, please."

As Bokuto starts, Akaashi quickly pulls his agenda and turns it to the back, where he scribbles down a line from the poem. Bokuto stops reading and looks curiously at him.

"What are you writing there?"

"Oh. Uhhh I like to collect quotes that leave an impression on me."

"Which one?"

"We loved with a love that was more than love."

"Oh hooo!" Bokuto smirks. "Akaashi, I didn't think you were the romantic type."

Akaashi's cheeks heat up. "I'm not. I just like the phrasing of it."

"Uh huh. I bet you're gonna serenade your future boyfriend with something like that."

"No, I won't. I don't sing."

"Fine, then you might use it in a love note or maybe a Valentine's Day card?" Bokuto wiggles his eyebrows.

Akaashi scowls. "Just let me finish with your notes, so you can start studying. And when you're done, I'm going to ask you to give me a presentation."

"Fine."

When Bokuto quietly begins studying, Akaashi reads a couple of Robert Frosts's works and settles for "The Road Not Taken." And when he's done with his own note cards, he begins memorizing everything - names, dates of birth and death, literally everything.

From previous experiences, he knows that he gets extremely nervous during presentations, his voice trembles and he goes a bit too fast or too quiet for the class to follow. So the only thing that can make him stand out with his preparation is to know everything by heart and not rely on any of the note cards. Of course, the problem with memorizing stuff by heart is that if if you forget a part, you get completely stuck, which is why he always carries them in his back pocket just in case. So
far it hasn’t happened, but there’s always a first time for everything, and he won’t leave it to chance.

He goes into the bathroom and while staring into his reflection, begins practicing quietly.

On the third time, he is interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Akaashi, why are you talking to yourself in there?"

"I'm practicing."

"Well get outta there and practice on me."

"No."

"What do you mean no? You told Kuroo and I you hate attention, so presentations must make you really nervous. Come on, I'm gonna present to you and you should do the same with me."

Akaashi decides that Bokuto is right. He feels calm around Bokuto, so it wouldn't be so bad.

"Do you want me to go first?" Bokuto asks and after he nods, he takes a seat on his bed.

Bokuto stands up tall and proud in the middle of the room and begins. Even though he has his notes in his hands and glances at them every now and again, his eye contact with Akaashi and the rest of of the imaginary class is unwavering. And his voice is so smooth, and at the same time conversational, that Akaashi is gawping at him, because it's so damn impressive how good of a public speaker someone as goofy as Bokuto can be.

Wow.

He wonders if Bokuto is this good at it due to all the practice he's gotten from volleyball interviews and such, or simply because he has a gift for it. Akaashi thinks it's the latter. Because goofy or not, when they play volleyball, Bokuto always manages to motivate the team and that's exactly what a brilliant ace does - he inspires his allies.

When he's done, Akaashi claps his hands.

"Bokuto-san, that was amazing."

"Well duhhh, I'm like the best in my Theater and Drama Class. Presentations for me are the easiest way to score a good grade." Bokuto grins. "Especially since you wrote my note cards."

The two of them trade places and as Akaashi stands in the middle of the room, even though the only one to present is Bokuto, he starts trembling and sort of hides behind his note cards, even though he's pretty much memorized them all.

"Akaashi, relax a bit. You're too tense. It's just me here."

Akaashi nods and continues, but Bokuto keeps interrupting him and giving him pointers.

"You're going too fast, slow down a bit."

"You're mumbling, I can't hear what you're saying."

In the end he finishes lamely with a "So... that's it."

"Noooo." Bokuto shakes his head. "You should never finish a presentation like that, it's terrible."
"Bokuto-san, I know, but I just get so nervous that I can't wait to get it over with."

"Do it again. And again. And again. Use me for practice as much as you need."

And so he does. And he's really surprised that even though he keeps repeating the same thing over and over again, he has Bokuto's full attention the whole time. Even after the bell rings at 9:30 pm, Bokuto doesn't so much as move a muscle, but keeps watching him.

After a few more times, Akaashi puts his notes on his desk and starts going without them.

"Shit, you're doing it without notes?" Bokuto grins when he's finished. "Akaashi, you're so smart!"

"The only problem is that I don't know what to do with my hands."

"You fiddle with your fingers." Bokuto grins. "Instead of doing that, you should use them to gesture your words." Bokuto shows what he means with his own hands. "See? Just be casual about it and you're golden. Now go take a shower, so I can go after and we can start with- oh crap!"

"What is it?"

"I just remembered that my parents are leaving for Italy on Friday morning, so I'll be having dinner with them on Thursday night." Bokuto explains. "Which means I'll skip Study Hall and have to be prepared before then."

"It's alright, we have tonight and tomorrow night."

"Thanks, man."

After Akaashi showers, he isn't surprised to see Konoha and Sarukui are in their room, and just like Bokuto, are sitting on his bed.

"What's up?" He smiles.

"Bokuto called us in here, so you can practice with your presentation on us too." Konoha grins.

Akaashi scowls at Bokuto. "Why?"

"Practice makes perfect, that's why. If Rob was on duty tonight, I would've gotten him too, but I don't want Jared, and you probably don't either." Bokuto says. "Which is probably why I should get him?"

"No, I'll do it, but please no Jared."

The three of them listen, while Akaashi does his presentation. He's a bit more nervous than when he practiced with just Bokuto, but still infinite times better than before. When he's done, all three of them give him the thumbs up.

"Thanks, guys."

"You help us, we help you." Sarukui grins. "Now, come on, Konoha, we have to get back to cramming for the stupid Bio test."

"Yeah, see you losers tomorrow." Konoha waves and they leave.
Before Bokuto heads for the bathroom, he gives Akaashi his script. And since Bokuto takes too long with his showers, as always, Akaashi has enough time to read through the entire thing.

He is kind of surprised that the script Bokuto and Kuroo have come up with is genuinely good. Except for the bits that have obscene language, which the teacher has crossed out with a red pen and substituted with appropriate words.

Bokuto puts on his shorts, but keeps his t shirt in his hands.

"Akaashi? Would you mind giving me a back massage, while I study my lines?"

When Akaashi scowls, Bokuto explains that the teacher made copies for the entire class, but he only has this one, so he needs to learn them before he can act it out, while Akaashi reads.

"No. You'll be distracted and won't concentrate on studying."

"Akaashi, I can totally do it, I promise. Please? My shoulders are really sore."

"It's not my fault you didn't stretch properly."

"Come on, would it kill you to massage me a bit?"

No, it wouldn't kill him. But that doesn't mean he's happy about it.

"Fine. But if you're slacking, I won't give you any tosses tomorrow."

With a grin, Bokuto dives into Akaashi's bed and lies down on his stomach. When Akaashi kneels in front of his bed, Bokuto blinks.

"What are you doing on the ground?"

"You said you wanted a massage?"

"Exactly. Just sit on my ass and start massaging me."

Akaashi swallows hard.

Massages are kind of intimate, and Bokuto's topless and if he is to sit on Bokuto's ass, if he gets even a tiny bit excited, it'll show at once. And he definitely doesn't want that. He refuses to go through the same kind of embarrassment he's already experienced.

So, he does sit, but a bit lower, on Bokuto's thighs, and the second that his hands touch Bokuto's warm skin, his back arches into the air.

"Oh my God, Akaashi, how fucking cold are your hands?"

"Do you want a massage or not?"

"Yeah, but they feel like ice!"

Akaashi shrugs. "They're always cold."

"Even is summer?"

"Sometimes, yes."

"Alright." Bokuto sighs and lies down again. "They'll warm up eventually."
"If you think I'm going to give you a long massage, you're wrong."

"Excuse me, I'm trying to read here."

"Sorry." Akaashi mumbles and starts pressings his thumbs in circles between Bokuto's shoulder blades.

"Ahhhh that feels so good."

"No distractions." Akaashi scowls. "Why don't you read your lines out loud? It should help you memorize them faster, because you'll be using both your eyes and ears."

Bokuto starts reading, while Akaashi continues massaging him. After a while, he realizes that his hands can't reach the top of Bokuto's shoulders and his neck, so he slides forward.

On the many occasions that he's seen Bokuto's bare ass, or walking around in just his boxers, Akaashi has noticed that he's got a nice bubble butt, but now that he's sitting on it, he can actually feel just how pert and bouncy it is. He's kind of tempted to start drumming on it to hear a happy tap tap tap. But of course he doesn't.

Bokuto's skin is so soft under his fingertips and so warm and he just had a shower so he smells really nice too, so Akaashi starts thinking of disgusting things, like dirty socks and old people and basically anything that isn't even remotely sexy.

When his fingers get really numb, he gently taps Bokuto's lower back to say "I'm done" and gets off.

Bokuto rolls off the bed and stretches. "Ahhhh, that was so good. Thanks, Akaashi." Bokuto grins. "Just give me a few more minutes, I'm almost done."

Akaashi blinks. "Already?"

"Yeah. Since Kuroo and I wrote it together, I remember pretty much all my lines."

When Bokuto's done, he scribbles down stars next to some of the lines and grins at Akaashi.

"There. The lines which you have to read are the ones with the stars next to them."

"Yeah, I got that."

He's just about to sit down, when Bokuto shakes his head.

"No, you can't sit. You have to act with me."

Akaashi sighs and leans against the stairs of Bokuto's bed. "Alright, let's do it."

"Akaashi, if you don't want to help me, that's fine, but don't just half ass it."

Akaashi is scowling now, because if he wanted to act, he would've taken the class himself. But since Bokuto was so patient with him when he was practicing his presentation, he stands up straight and awaits for Bokuto to begin.

Bokuto is in character at once. He starts pacing the floor and gestures with his hands and his face pulls different kinds of expressions after delivering a line. Apparently Bokuto's childish antics and drama queen outbursts come in very handy when it comes to Drama class.
But instead of trusting his instincts, like he does on the court for example, he constantly asks Akaashi for pointers and ideas how to deliver a line, as if Akaashi is George fucking Lucas or some shit? Of course, he finds Bokuto quite endearing when he does ask for his opinion, or guidance or - mostly seeking praise - just like in volleyball. But when it's on a topic he's unfamiliar with, such as acting, he doesn't want to seem uneducated to Bokuto, so he just starts making up all sorts of bullshit, hoping they sound believable enough.

So far Bokuto not only hasn't called him out on any of it, he actually listens to whatever falsely made up advice Akaashi gives him. He does feel a bit guilty, as if he's abusing his "nerd superpowers", but only for like the first couple of minutes. After that, bullshitting his way through the script becomes a new hobby for Akaashi.

Then Bokuto says something that makes the hairs on the back of Akaashi's neck stand up.

"Akaashi. I'm going to kiss you now. And you have to slap me afterwards, but don't do it too hard, okay?"

Akaashi blinks. "W-what?"

"The script?" Bokuto points. "Look, there's a kissing scene and a slap."

All of his blood seems to go straight to his face, right in his cheeks and the tips of his ears and he's having difficulty looking at Bokuto, because the golden eyes are piercing him right to his very core.

He clears his throat. "Bokuto-san, do you know which actors are the best?" When he looks up, he's glad to discover that Bokuto's eyes are no longer staring at him with such intensity. Instead, they look curious. "The ones that improvise! Because everyone can rehearse a kiss or a slap, but only a true talent will make it on the first try."

"Woahhhh, Akaashi, you're so smart! Thanks to you, I'll become the best in the class!"

More like the other way round and thanks to him, Bokuto'll flunk the class.

No, he wouldn't flunk it, of course. Bokuto is a natural at acting. And since he's not a virgin, he must have experience in kissing and knowing how to do it.

Unlike Akaashi.

He feels really proud of himself for coming up with an excuse like that right on the spot. Because if he hadn't, Bokuto would have kissed him?

And it's not like Bokuto is ugly or anything? So he wouldn't exactly hate it if Bokuto kissed him, not really, but you can call him a cliche or whatever, because he wants his first kiss to be meaningful and real, not for some dumb play. (No offense to Bokuto's play, which isn't dumb.)

After all the movies and books and songs Akaashi's read and seen and heard, he thinks a kiss is a big deal between two people, who are attracted to each other and are unable to express with just words how much they mean to one another? Or is that just romance bullshit Hollywood movies and love novels create to give people like himself an incredibly high and not all realistic standard for a kiss?

What the fuck does he know about romance anyway?

On Wednesday night during Study Hall, Bokuto and Akaashi move to the floor and begin going over half of their vocabulary words. Bokuto had been chewing grape gummies and Akaashi
snatches the pack away and hides it behind his back, way out of Bokuto's reach.

"Bokuto-san, no snacking while studying. It's distracting."

When he demands an explanation of the word "copious", Bokuto replies, and his breath carries in the small distance between them. Akaashi can smell syrupy fruit and automatically licks his lips, despite the fact they are not at all dry.

After they finish quizzing each other, Bokuto asks Akaashi to go over the play again and he nods. As they both get up on their feet and begin, Akaashi tries to put some acting with his lines, even though he feels really silly about it. Because acting is so not something he's good at? But since Bokuto is putting so much effort in his work, Akaashi decides to at least try and do the same. He doesn't want Bokuto to tell him again that he's half assing things.

Then the kissing scene comes and Bokuto's expression becomes pleading.

"Please, Akaashi? Just one kiss? I've never kissed a guy before-"

Akaashi scowls. "It's the same as kissing a girl."

"Yeah, but I haven't done it in so long? The guy I'm supposed to kiss with has a girlfriend and they probably practiced so much already. I don't want to be terrible."

"Bokuto-san, calm down. You'll be great."

"Akaaaashiii, you're my best friend. Best friends always help each other, right? Come onnn, it's just a quick kiss? Please? It'll be over before you even know it? Then you can slap me and we can continue?"

Akaashi sighs. "Okay."

"Really?" Bokuto's entire face lights up at once.

"Yes. Now do it before I change my mind."

He feels really awkward and embarrassed, so he closes his eyes. And when he feels Bokuto's warm mouth pressing against his, a whirlwind of emotions take over and he really doesn't know why, but he feels his own lips reciprocating.

Somewhere in the very back of his mind, a voice, a very tiny voice of reason tells him to stop it, just stop it already. Because friends don't just kiss one another like this. It's for Bokuto's play, though. And as a friend, Akaashi cares very deeply about Bokuto's good grades.

Akaashi knows that he should probably stop - like a minute ago - but at the same time his lips continue moving and he can't stop? Why can't he stop? It's not that fucking hard, just stop.

Bokuto pulls away eventually and Akaashi's eyes open up instantly, studying his expression expectantly. Like what, was that a good kiss for Bokuto too or?

Slowly, he watches as Bokuto's eyes flutter open and then he traces his bottom lip with his forefinger, because Akaashi might have bitten it a little bit. Okay, so he might have bitten it a bit harder than just a little bit. Bokuto blinks, shakes his head and blinks again. Then he laughs.

"Akaashi, you should definitely consider taking up acting class next year."

He puts his cheek forward and Akaashi ever so lightly taps it with the palm of his hand.
Then they go back to acting and even though Akaashi already knows the script and what happens next, when Bokuto - no, Bokuto's character - starts confessing his love, Akaashi doesn't have to act like his own character, no, he is genuinely blushing and it's no act.

Get your shit together.

But even after brushing his teeth and settling in bed for sleep, the taste of grape gummies on his lips overpowers the spearmint one.

This was just a friendly favor, that's all it was. Nothing more, nothing less.

Bokuto is still the same Bokuto, and Akaashi is still the same Akaashi. Nothing has changed. Nothing.

Okay, the only thing that changed is that he got his first kiss. There, that's all the change that happened.

But why him? Why didn't Bokuto ask Kuroo for example? Okay, so Kuroo's not in the school, but what about Konoha or Sarukui?

Does he feel bad that Bokuto asked him? Or does he feel flattered that Bokuto chose him? Should he care that his first kiss was for a play?

Why couldn't it be real?

This newest of questions alarms Akaashi as soon as it forms, but he can't stop repeating it to himself.

Why couldn't it be real? Why couldn't it be real? Why couldn't it be real?

Oh for fuck's sake, Akaashi. What is wrong with you?

Why would he want it to be real anyway? Why? It's just Bokuto. And Akaashi doesn't remember ever thinking about Bokuto in that sort of way, so why is he doing it now?

It's absolutely unacceptable. Friends don't think about stuff like that.

Judging by the light snoring coming from above, Bokuto is sound asleep, and Akaashi should follow his example. He has school and practice and a lot of studying and also a presentation. But his mind is a jumble of thoughts that refuse to just shut down.

Eventually in the early hours of the morning tiredness takes over and he does drift off, his last thought being that no, he doesn't regret his first kiss being sacrificial to Bokuto's education.

He starts to regret it when they head down for breakfast and they all see Bokuto's mauled mouth. The entire volleyball team demands to know who's the girl and in order to make his mouth this red, she must've been real hungry?

Akaashi busies himself with his breakfast, ignoring his flaming face.

"Who would kiss a dumbass like you?" Konoha grins.

Bokuto pokes his tongue out. "Takes one to know one."

"No, but seriously, when did this happen?" Sarukui asks. "And why?"

"I was practicing for the play in my Theater and Drama Class."
"Wait a minute, yesterday was Wednesday? We don't have electives on Wednesday. And we haven't had the class today!" Konoha gasps. "It happened last night then?"

"What are you, a detective now?" Bokuto sneers.

"No, I'm just really curious what girl is crazy enough to kiss you?" Konoha laughs. "And I'd also like to know if she has a sister? If she does, make sure you invite them both to your party on Saturday."

Bokuto tells him to fuck off, then turns his attention to Akaashi.

"What's up with you and honey?"

"What do you mean?"

"Lately all you've been eating for breakfast is buttered toast with honey?"

"I like it. It's sweet."

"So are chocolate and jam."

"Is it a crime to eat honey every day?" Akaashi snaps.

"No, I was just wondering." Bokuto blinks. "What's with the hostility?"

I didn't get enough sleep because of you, you idiot, Akaashi thinks irritably.

"Maybe you and this mysterious girl were keeping Akaashi up all night? Or did you sneak up to the girl's floor?" Konoha wiggles his eyebrows. "Bokuto won't say, but why don't you spill the beans? Come on, Akaashi, we're all dying to know."

Akaashi shoots Konoha with such a look that he doesn't say another word. In fact, as the other members of the volleyball team pass him through the hallways they try not to look him directly in the eye, maybe too afraid that he'll take it out on them by quizzing them for the exams? Or worse - not help them at all?

He's not in the mood to talk, though, at least not right now, so he doesn't mind.

But the problem with not talking is listening to the voices around.

For a school as big as theirs, with this many students, he doesn't understand why everyone is so engrossed in gossip about the color or size of Bokuto's lips. They are very pretty and soft, of course, but that is so not the point?

Akaashi forgets the point he was trying to make, but it doesn't matter, because it's just thoughts in his head and it's not like Professor X will show up and demand answers. And even if he does, Akaashi has no answers to give.

He's so busy being irritated with everyone around that he doesn't even panic about his presentation on Robert Frost. He breezes through it like it's a piece of cake - he doesn't stutter, he doesn't feel nervous, he doesn't forget his words or reach for his notes and he doesn't finish with a "yeah, that's it". Everything is smooth sailing.

Akaashi does turn his attention to Bokuto when he gets up on the board and begins his own presentation. He also notices that Bokuto takes a lot of time explaining the "we loved with a love that was more than love" part, even though Akaashi made no notes about it?
Bokuto must have researched it on his own, he realizes, and for some dumb, inexplicable reason his heart starts beating faster than usual. Why is Akaashi so dumb?

During Studio Art, Ayame tells him that she dumped her boyfriend and she feels much better. He nods his head, but his mind is elsewhere.

When he's done tutoring in Dining Room A and then the volleyball team in the gym, everyone leaves for dinner or home, except for Bokuto and him.

"Weren't you supposed to go have dinner with your parents?" Akaashi asks.

"Yeah, I'll go in a minute. I just wanted to tell you something to cheer you up, because you've been really quiet today."

"I'm always quiet."

"Yeah, but today it's different." Bokuto says, which makes Akaashi's insides churn. Could Bokuto know what Akaashi's been thinking about? No. No way. Even he himself doesn't know, how could Bokuto possibly know? "I realized it before we started practice today. Akaashi, you're as much of an airhead as me." Bokuto laughs.

Akaashi scowls. "And you thought an insult would cheer me up?"

"Noooo." Bokuto laughs again. "Tomorrow's Friday!"

"Yeah, that happens after Thursday."

"What I mean is we prepared for the vocab quiz and for my drama class and tomorrow the volleyball team doesn't have school! We get to play all day, remember?"

Akaashi blinks. Bokuto's absolutely right. He completely forgot!

How could he possibly forget that?

Bokuto grins proudly. "Did I cheer you up or what?"

Instead of being happy, Akaashi is scowling. If he hadn't forgotten about it, they wouldn't have kissed for the stupid play and he wouldn't have lost sleep over it. And he wouldn't have had to endure the gossiping and questions about the state of Bokuto's lips during the entire day.

What the fuck, Akaashi.

"Well, I better go now. My parents don't like it when I'm not punctual." Bokuto says after glancing at his watch. "But this is so great, because we get to play volleyball the entire weekend, then party and I also get more time to practice with you for Theater and Drama on Monday."

Bokuto winks, waves a quick goodbye and leaves.

Akaashi remains rooted on the spot, thinking about what Bokuto'd just said and, once again, unable to calm his racing heart. What did he mean when he said that they'll have more time to practice? Did he mean going over the lines again and... and kissing again? Is that what Bokuto meant? And is that why he winked at Akaashi?

What does it fucking mean, dammit?

Ugh.
Being a teenager sure is hard.

As he gets the net of balls and starts practicing serving, his irritation ebbs away and it's not just because he gets almost all the balls in. But he ignores all feelings and concentrates on his serves.

More. Once more.

Then he runs as if someone is chasing him even though there's nobody else around. Maybe he's trying to outrun his own thoughts?

Who knows?

Certainly not him.

It's nearly 8:30 pm when Yukie joins him in the middle court.

"I knew you'd be here." She grins as he wipes the sweat off his face with a towel.

"Do you need something?"

She nods. "Yeah. I could use your help."

"Oh? Okay, sure."

"As you know we're hosts this weekend and need to prepare some stuff for Aoba Jousai and Karasuno's teams for tomorrow."

Akaashi looks quizzically at the manager. "You mean... What do you mean?"

"They'll be staying in our school."

"What?" Akaashi blinks. "But the dorms are full, where would they stay?"

She grins. "Have you not seen the forest on the left side of the gym?"

"Yeah, but I didn't think that's school property?"

"Come, I'll show you."

After locking up the gym, Akaashi follows Yukie and realizes there's a small path between the trees. It's a bit too dark, but she's carrying a torch and explains that tomorrow during the day the staff will put some lamps. After a couple of minutes of walking through the woods, he sees a massive building, almost as big as the main one! What the Hell, just how big is Fukurodani?

She laughs at his expression. "Yeah, I was just as surprised as you when I first saw it last year. We use this building when teams come over to practice or during Jamboree tournaments. The teams that stay here love it especially because there are no fences around the school, which makes it easy to sneak out and go party." She grins. "Which I'm sure they'll do this Saturday."

Yukie and Akaashi enter and she starts showing him around. "The teams share the big rooms and the toilets and showers, while their coaches and girl managers get separate rooms with their own bathrooms inside. We haven't used this building since summer camp, but the cleaning staff has been preparing the place for the past week. Not just cleaning, but also laying new sheets for the mattresses, blankets, pillows, towels in the bathrooms. What you and I have to do now is go into the kitchen and stack up the fridges in all of the rooms with drinks and snacks and stuff. Oh and I left the posters with the team's names which we have to hang too."
"That's sounds very expensive. I didn't think the school would give this much money for-"

Yukie shakes her head. "The only thing our school pays for is when we go on school trips and away games and tournaments."

"So how can we afford all this?"

"The student body raises the money on their own. I mean each sports team's manager is responsible for getting the funds we need." She sighs. "I'm kind of jealous that the basketball team has three managers, while I have to do it all on my own, but everyone on the team tries to help me out, which is nice. And I'm especially glad that we have you now, because if Bokuto was here, he'd complain and eat most of the snacks." She grins and Akaashi nods. Of course Bokuto would. "I want things to be perfect, because last year I heard the coaches of Aoba Jousai talking to each other that it's kind of irresponsible to leave the welcoming and settling part just to me and since it's not official games, but practice, our coach isn't going to show up at all. And I'm very proud of our school, because unlike theirs, our teachers don't hold our hands and baby us, they let us deal with things on our own. So I don't want to hear the coaches complaining about it again, because it felt like a slap in my face, as if I'm incapable of managing things and not being a good host."

"Yukie, you're the best manager Fukurodani could hope for and so much more. You really are amazing." He says and she grins proudly. "So uhh... about raising the money, how do you do it?"

"Oh, we do all kinds of stuff. Bake sales, candy grams, calendars of the teams, kissing booths, that sort of thing. But we get the most money when there's an auction."

Akaashi doesn't like the idea of calendars, because he's seen in movies that usually the calendars involve guys being photographed topless. And kissing booths don't sound too good either. But the worst thing is the auctioning part.

"What exactly do you auction?" He asks scowling, even though he knows the answer.

"You guys!" She laughs. "You'd be surprised how many students come from outside the school and pay real good money to go out on dates with you."

Akaashi sighs. "I was afraid you would say that."

"Awww come on, it's for a good cause. You just have to take someone out on a date to a restaurant or a movie or something."

"And do you get to be auctioned? Or any of the girls from the sports' teams?"

"Of course not." She smirks. "It's totally unfair to sexualize girls like that."

"Oh, and it's fair to sexualize guys?"

"You know it's different. When a guy pays to take a girl out, they always expect something in return, and we're having none of that shit here. But we do participate in the kissing booths."

As they start making the rounds from the kitchen back to the building, back and forth, she starts telling him about the auction they'd had last year.

"Oh my God it was so funny! A guy paid so much to take Konoha out and he was begging for me and the rest of the team to chip in all of our money and buy him off, but we didn't have enough."

"So he went on a date with the guy?" Akaashi asks surprised.
"Yeah, he did."

"Konoha-san isn't gay, though, is he?"

"No, but rules are rules. The guy paid, so Konoha had to go out with him."

Akaashi chuckles. "What about Bokuto-san?"

"Oh, a lot of girls were fighting over him, but he'd made an arrangement with Kuroo from before, who bought him and Bokuto swore and promised he'd give the money back, but of course he didn't. She laughs, then turns to him. "Why? Do you plan on making a deal with Kuroo too?"

Akaashi doesn't even have to think about it. "Nope."

"Huh. I thought you would."

"Why would you think that?"

She shrugs. "Because you spend a lot of time together and get along, so I thought, you know, better the devil you know."

Akaashi snorts. "I'd rather take my chances with a stranger."

Yukie nods. "Good thinking."

When they finish preparing everything, they go back to the main building, and as they head upstairs, Yukie quietly asks.

"Rob's on duty tonight, right?" Akaashi nods. "Do you mind if I ask him to stay in your room a bit? My roommate's talking to her boyfriend over the phone and I wanna give her some privacy."

"Sure, but he'll probably stay too."

"Nah, we can get Konoha and Sarukui too and tell him we're devising a strategy for volleyball. Rob's the most chill of all the RCs. Just watch." She winks and they head down the hallway, where Rob's sitting on the couch and reading a book."Hey, Rob, how are you?"

"Good. Tired as hell, though." He yawns. "Do you need something?"

"Yes, please. Could you tell Hannah that the volleyball team's having a little get together in Akaashi and Bokuto's room and I'll be back upstairs before 10:30 pm?" She asks sweetly.

"I can do that. But please don't be late, because I don't feel like supervising you guys. I just wanna sleep. Is that okay?"

They nod their heads and after getting Konoha and Sarukui, Akaashi sits on the floor, while the other three start rummaging through Bokuto's goodie drawer. Each one takes a pack of something to eat and then join Akaashi on the ground.

Akaashi doesn't ask, but Yukie tells him it's totally okay to eat Bokuto's food, since he owes them all money.

"I'm still really curious about the mystery girl who kissed Bokuto." Konoha asks. "Akaashi, he's not here now, so you can tell us."

Akaashi shakes his head, because his lips are sealed. Kissed, but sealed. And he is not one to kiss and tell.
He clears his throat. "So what can you guys tell me about the three teams tomorrow?"

Yukie, who's hand is greasy from eating chips, grabs his shoulder and shakes him gently. And even though her hands are dirty, he doesn't mind, because his t-shirt is all sweaty and he's gonna put it for laundry anyway. Since her mouth is stuffed with food, he waits for her to swallow.

"Oh my God, Akaashi, I'm so so so sooo excited!" She says happily. "We're gonna have so much food during the weekend! Ahhhh, I love it."

Akaashi isn't surprised to hear that at all.

"You know, Akaashi, last year during the festival we had, Yukie beat everyone in the hot dog and pie eating contests." Sarukui grins. "And this one time, I saw her eat three onigiri at once."

"That's a talent." Akaashi replies, even though once again, he isn't surprised.

"Yukie, you might have some competition from Akaashi this year." Konoha laughs. "No wait, you guys should totally pair up and do the team challenges that involve food!"

"I can do that." Akaashi nods.

"Same." Yukie grins and reaches for a donut from the pack in Sarukui's lap. She places it on her forefinger and admires it as if it's a diamond ring. Then she eats the whole thing in one bite.

All three of the boys are gawping.

"Yukie, you don't have a gag reflex, do you?" Konoha asks and she shakes her head. He whistles. "Your future boyfriend is gonna be one lucky dude."

She slaps his shoulder. "Ugh, Konoha, you're such a pig. I'll make sure during the auction this year I sell you to a guy again, even if he isn't the highest bidder."

"Noooooo, please don't do that." He turns to Akaashi. "I went on a date with a guy last year and not only did he bring me a rose, but he wanted to hold hands!" Konoha shakes his head in horror. "I can't go through that again."

"Yeah, I heard about that." Akaashi nods. "I didn't know about the rose and the hand holding, though."

"It was so embarrassing." Konoha says.

Akaashi shifts uncomfortably. "Do you mind if someone's gay?"

"No. What I do mind is when a guy keeps trying to grab my ass when I've already said no ten times." Konoha scrunches his nose. "Why do you ask?"

"I'm gay." Akaashi replies quietly, because he doesn't want to hide it anymore, at least from his teammates. As Bokuto and Kuroo said, there's nothing to be ashamed of. And he doesn't think they would treat him any different.

In fact, Konoha and Sarukui exchange a glance and high five each other.

"Why are you guys so happy?" He asks curiously.

Konoha throws his arm over Akaashi's shoulders, just like Bokuto often does. "Because, man, you're a good lookin' dude and you're smart and since you play for the other team, it means less
competition for Sarukui and I! Especially with the upcoming party on Saturday!" He fists the air victoriously. "Wooo hooo hooo!"

"You know, you guys, I'm not just excited about the food. There's gonna be shirtless boys and muscles and just ahhhh." Yukie sighs dreamily. "I'm especially excited about Oikawa!"

Konoha and Sarukui gasp in horror as if she just punched them.

"Yukie, no, not him." Sarukui says sadly.

"Anyone, but him." Konoha adds.

"What's wrong with Oikawa?" Akaashi asks. He knows by now that he's the prodigy setter of Aoba Jousai and also a member of Bokuto and Kuroo's Rat Pack. In fact, he's been really curious to see him on the court.

"It'll be way quicker if you ask what's not wrong with him." Sarukui says, but since Akaashi shrugs his shoulders in confusion, he explains. "There's a reason why Bokuto and Kuroo get along with him so well. Because they're all equally horrible."

"I don't think Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san are that bad." He replies, but after three pairs of eyes look at him, silently judging, he quickly adds. "Once you get used to them, I mean."

"Yeah, no. Imagine Bokuto and Kuroo as one, then add a lot more arrogance and pettiness and you've got yourself an Oikawa Tooru." Konoha says. "Oikawa's literally the worst, man. Good thing Aoba Jousai has Iwaizumi to keep him in order."

"Who's Iwaizumi?"

"He's kinda like..." Sarukui thinks about it for a moment. "He's like you. You're Bokuto's babysitter and Iwaizumi is Oikawa's."

Akaashi nods. "I see. What about Nekoma and Karasuno?"

"We haven't played either this year, but Bokuto said Kuroo's childhood friend joined Nekoma as a setter, so he must be Kuroo's babysitter."

"Oh, you mean Kenma-san?"

"You know him?" Sarukui and Konoha ask together.

"I've only heard about him and we spoke on the phone once."

Sarukui shakes his head. "Poor Kenma."

"Yeah, poor guy." Konoha nods. "As for Karasuno, well, they have Sawamura Daichi."

Akaashi remembers that name too - the fourth member of the Rat Pack.

"Even though Karasuno has a third year Captain and a few more third year players, during summer camp, Bokuto and Kuroo started calling Sawamura Dadchi." Sarukui snickers.

"Of course they did." Akaashi sighs. "So from what you told me, every team has a babysitter."

Yukie, Sarukui and Konoha nod their heads.

"Akaashi, if only we had you last year..." Yukie says. "Neither of us were able to tame Bokuto or
make him cooperate when he becomes a drama queen on the court. And even though you've only been with us for such a short time, you're already able to read his moods and handle him. Are you like magic or something?"

"He must be." Konoha grins. "You know that show on the National Geographic Channel about that dog whisperer? Akaashi is like the owl whisperer."

They all laughs.

"It's not that hard, though." Akaashi replies. "Bokuto-san is easy to read when we play."

"Yeah, for you." Konoha snorts. "You're - as he says - his setter."

The tips of Akaashi's ears turn pink, so he clears his throat. "Speaking of volleyball, I've been working with Suzuki this past week and tried helping him with his setting. Did you guys notice his improvement during practice?"

"Ehhh." Sarukui shrugs. "He can differentiate between what tosses each of us prefer, but the problem is that we can't read who he's going to set for, you know?"

"Oh. I see." Akaashi goes quiet for a moment, then turns to the manager. "Yukie? Maybe we could come up with some hand signs or something for him to use when."

"Ahhhh, that's brilliant, Akaashi!" She slaps her forehead. "I've been so busy coming up with different strategies for you guys, I didn't think of that!" She leans over and kisses his cheek. "You're a genius!"

Konoha crosses his hands and pouts. "Oh great, Akaashi's the gay one, but he's always the one that gets kisses from the pretty girls. That's not fair."

Yukie laughs, then motions for Konoha and Sarukui to lean in and she pecks both their cheeks too.

"Better?" She asks, grinning, and they both nod. "I should head upstairs, because it's almost 10:30 pm and Hannah isn't as nice as Masha and I don't wanna get Rob in trouble. See you guys tomorrow."

When she leaves, Konoha and Sarukui rise up to leave too. But then Konoha grabs Akaashi's shoulder and with a very serious expression turns to him.

"Bokuto already told us his dad will speak with the dean and we'll all be checked out for the weekend. But I have a very important question to ask you."

"Okay?"

"Will you be a wing man for Sarukui and I on Saturday night?"

Pffft. Akaashi doesn't know why he actually expected for Konoha to ask something serious.

"That depends what you want me to do."

"I already told the team Ayame's single, so you could ask her if she finds anyone on the volleyball team handsome or something?" Sarukui suggests. "Or you could throw in a good word for us, you know?"

Akaashi sighs. "Sure. I'll see what I can do."
They grin, pat his back and tell him he's the man. Then they leave and he goes to the bathroom for a much needed shower.

After he's tucked himself in bed, he realizes how empty the room feels without Bokuto in it. He had company so far, but now that he's alone, the quietness is deafening and he's back to thinking about Bokuto, the kiss and Bokuto's words about practicing more. And he most certainly needs a distraction from all three.

He gets his phone and dials Kuroo's number.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen, he thinks with a sigh.

It's even worse, because Kuroo doesn't answer and he feels bad about it? What the fuck.

The mighty have not only fallen, they have gone from the bottom to a place even lower than that.

Maybe it's for the better that Kuroo's asleep, though, or busy doing something else. Because Akaashi doesn't know if Bokuto has told him about the kiss and he doesn't want to talk about it or especially be teased about it. He did tell Bokuto this one time not to tell Kuroo everything, but with Bokuto, you never know.

Just like the night before, Akaashi spends hours in bed, tossing and turning, unable to fall asleep. The unusual silence is really bothering him, but he doesn't feel like watching a movie. He tries sleeping on his back, on both his left and right side and in the end settles for lying down on his stomach. The sheets are already warm, so he moves around until his legs find some cool spots. He remembers Bokuto being in the same position when he was giving him a massage. Then his hips start moving on their own accord and all of a sudden he is humping the mattress with inexplicable hunger, but who cares, because he's alone and it feels so good.

When he hears his own moan of pleasure echo into the quiet room, he feels even more turned on. And since he knows where things are heading and he doesn't want to make a mess, he goes into the bathroom and takes care of things. Then he collapses back in bed and goes out like a light.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

I might have gotten some lines directly out of the manga. But I say that with pride and not regret c:

It's 6:43 am and Akaashi's phone insists on ringing. He forgot to mute it, unfortunately, and blindly grasps for it, but some time during the night it must have fallen under his bed. With a loud grunt, he slides off the bed and after some effort, manages to get it out. He doesn't even need to check the screen to know it's Kuroo.

There is a reason why people say before you make a decision, you should sleep on it, no matter how big or small it is. And it is a very wise saying. Too bad Akaashi didn't follow it and called Kuroo last night on a whim. Because now he has to deal with the consequences of his dumb actions.

When did he become so dumb?

He's too lazy to move yet, so he remains lying on the floor and puts the phone over his ear.

"What?" He croaks.

"Damn, Angel Eyes, you sound like a Slipknot song." Kuroo laughs.

"What do you want?"

"I was reading a book last night and fell asleep and when I woke up, I saw I got a missed call from you."

"Really?" Akaashi yawns. "Weird."

"Well I already know Bokuto was with his parents, so you must've gotten pretty lonely and decided to call good ol' Kuroo, didn'tcha?"

"No."

"Yes, you called me at 11:37 pm."

Akaashi decides to lie, because why not? He himself doesn't know why he even tried calling? And after all he really doubts that Kuroo would check if he's telling the truth.
"Some of my teammates and I had a get together in our room and Konoha-san tried prank calling you."

"Man, that annoying owl is going to get it today. I'm going to block every single one of -" Kuroo goes quiet for a moment. "You're lying."

"No."

"Yeah, you are. If he wanted to prank call, he would've used his own phone or someone elses, because he knows perfectly well I have your number."

Oh.

Apparently he isn't as good of a liar as he thought. Good job, Pinocchio.

"Alright, fine, it was me."

"Ha ha haaa, you still have a lot to learn, my sweet summer child." Kuroo laughs. "Was it that hard to admit you wanted to hear me?"

"Yes. I already regret my decision."

"Awww why you gotta be like that? You have such a mean streak."

"You and Bokuto-san ruined me."

"Oh no, we didn't." Kuroo tuts. "We might have ruffled your feathers a bit, but you always had the wings to fly."

"Whatever."

"You know, I would've come and kept you company last night, but then I would've had to go back to my school in the morning, because our coach wants us all to come to Fukurodani together as a team."

"I'm surprised there's someone whose orders you listen to, Kuroo-san."

"Hey, I also listen to my Captain. And my mom."

"Good for you."

"Is Bokuto already back?"

"Does it sound like he's back?"

Kuroo laughs. "I guess not."

"What time are you guy meeting at your school?"

"In like an hour. Which means we'll be at Fukurodani by 8:30 am."

"What about the other teams, do you know?"

"Hmmm, I talked with Oikawa and Sawamura over facebook yesterday and they said they're taking the train together. I don't know what time they're leaving, but if they don't kill each other on the way, they should be joining us around lunch."
Akaashi snorts. "And why would they kill each other?"

"Because all four of us are really competitive teams. Except for Karasuno," Kuroo chuckles.

"That's not what I heard about them from Bokuto-san."

"I was joking. Hmmm how do I explain. Well from all teams, Nekoma and Karasuno have the most in common, I guess, because both school used to be really great in the past. Last year was a pretty bad year for both teams, but this year we're so much better. I don't know about Karasuno, we'll just have to wait and see."

"What about Aoba Jousai?"

Kuroo sighs. "I hate to admit it, but they are definitely a force to be reckoned with. And it's not just because they have Oikawa as a setter, the entire team is damn strong. I'm looking forward to playing against them, though."

"Me too. I'm excited to play against all three teams." Akaashi glances at his watch. "I better go and start getting ready."

"Yeah, especially if you plan on eating a ton of food." Kuroo laughs. "See you later, Angel Eyes."

Akaashi hangs up and goes into the bathroom. After brushing his teeth, he settles for dressing up in a white pair of shorts, a blue t shirt and the Fukurodani jacket. Since they're just having practice games, they probably wouldn't be using their official jerseys.

Just then he hears Bokuto's loud laughter echoing through the hallways and not even a minute later the door swings open.

"Hey hey heyyyyyy!"

"Welcome back, Bokuto-san."

"Akaashi, did you miss me?"

"Uhhh... it was very quiet without you."

Bokuto throws his arm around Akaashi's shoulders and gives him a one handed hug.

"I missed you too!"

"How was dinner with your family?"

"It was alright." Bokuto replies. Clearly, he doesn't want to dwell on the topic, and Akaashi doesn't mind changing it.

"Are you excited?" He asks, even though he knows there's nobody more pumped than Bokuto.

"Damn right I am. You are too, right?" Akaashi nods. "Oh ho? Nice shirt, it really brings out the color of your eyes." Bokuto grins. "Just wait until Kuroo sees you, he won't stop calling you Angel Eyes."

Akaashi sighs. "He doesn't anyway."

They're just about to head out the door, when Bokuto blocks his way. "Where are your knee pads?"
"In my jacket." Akaashi takes them out of his pockets and shows them to Bokuto. "See?"

"Put them on."

"Why? We're not playing for another hour."

"Just put them on." Bokuto repeats.

Akaashi pulls a face, while Bokuto snatches them out of his hands and kneels in front of Akaashi. He takes off Akaashi's shoe and takes a hold of his left leg. Akaashi doesn't know if Bokuto's doing it on purpose or not, but his fingers glide over Akaashi's skin, gently tickling at his knee cap, and there's a reason why it's called a knee jerk reaction. Akaashi's foot instantly connects with Bokuto's face, which makes him fall backwards on his ass with a loud thud.

"Fucking owww!" Bokuto grunts. "Akaashi, are you trying to bend it like Beckham?"

Despite himself, Akaashi snickers quietly. "Sorry."

"You're not at all." Bokuto mutters. "Give me your foot and no kicking please."

Akaashi doesn't know why he doesn't put his own knee pads on, but lets Bokuto do it for him, because if he had, they'd already be eating breakfast. But he doesn't mind, because they're not in a rush.

"Bokuto-san, why do you want me to wear them now before we're even on the court?"

"Because I know you don't like wearing them." Bokuto rises to his feet and grins. "But the more you wear them, the less you'll hate them."

Bokuto logic strikes again, but Akaashi is already used to deciphering whatever Bokuto's trying to say. And he understands that what Bokuto means is the more he wears his knee pads, the more he'll get used to the feeling and wouldn't mind them so much.

"Akaashi, you have really smooth skin. How come you barely have any hair on your legs?" He asks as they head down.

"I don't know."

"Do you shave them?"

Akaashi snorts. "No. I don't shave anywhere."

"Really? Not even your dick?" Bokuto asks and Akaashi makes a sort of guttural noise of embarrassment.

"Bokuto-san, why do you have to be so vulgar?"

"What? Dick isn't vulgar at all! Would you rather have me say cock?" Akaashi scowls harder, which makes Bokuto all the more cheery. "Okay, what should I call it then? You don't like dick - even though you're gay, so you gotta." Bokuto throws his head back and roars in laughter, while Akaashi leaves him behind and hurries down the stairs. "Oi, Akaashi, wait for me!"

"No."

As they begin filling their trays with food, Bokuto's elbow nudges Akaashi between the ribs. "Okay, okay, how about penis? They use it in books? Penis is appropriate, right? Right,
Akaashi?

Akaashi pretends that Bokuto isn't there or that he's suddenly gone deaf, because his loud voice is carrying over the kitchen and students are beginning to stare. And even though his toast pieces aren't as warm as he would like, he quickly piles them on his plate and goes to the volleyball table, which is grins all around, because they're the only students at Fukurodani who don't have to go through seven sixty minute hours of classes.

When Nekoma arrive, both teams go into the gym and start warming up. The younger of their coaches suggests to be the referee, while Yukie has to keep score of the game.

As they stretch, Akaashi quietly asks Bokuto which of the members is Kenma.

"And please don't point." He adds quickly. "Just describe him."

"The blonde one on Kuroo's left." Bokuto replies.

"Do you think he'll play today?"

Bokuto nods. "Yeah. I'm sure their coach will put him in even though he isn't the starting setter."

The Captains shake hands and since Nekoma win the coin toss, they decide to receive first.

As they begin playing, Akaashi realizes why they chose to start with receiving rather than serving. It seems that Nekoma is a team that's really great in defense. Their Libero is a second year, just like Komi, and he's just as good. And even though the Nekoma blockers aren't all as tall as Kuroo, their abilities are the same as his.

Which is beginning to be troublesome.

The advantage they do have, though, is that after seeing a couple of tosses from the Nekoma setter, Akaashi can read his movements. Just to be certain, though, he watches him for a little while longer, which costs Fukurodani a point.

"Akaashi, where's your head at?" Konoha's voice comes from behind.

"Konoha, shut it." Bokuto grunts, because he must know that Akaashi is currently trying to come up with a strategy.

Bokuto's mood has turned slightly sour since the beginning of the game, though, because most of his spikes get blocked. And it certainly doesn't help that Kuroo keeps yelling things out that provoke and distract Bokuto.

"Oh ho hooo, spike denied!"

"You mad, bro?"

As Bokuto lines up for a serve, Akaashi tells him to calm down. He gets a huff in return that he is calm. But he really isn't. And even though his serve has a lot of power to it, it doesn't go over the net - in fact, it barely misses the back of Konoha's head with a dangerous swooshing noise.

"Awww, man, I can't believe I missed!" Bokuto whines as he drops to his knees.

Everyone around tells him it doesn't matter and that they'll get it next time, but Kuroo's laughter echoes through the court.

"Tsk, you're missing serves too? That's not very ace like, bro."
Akaashi quickly motions for a time out and when Nekoma's coach blows his whistle, Fukurodani's members huddle around Yukie, while Akaashi has to drag and push Bokuto from his spot on the floor as he refuses to move. And even though he hears members of Nekoma chuckling from behind, muttering things like "what a baby", he ignores them even though it is true and Bokuto is indeed acting like a baby. But Akaashi doesn't appreciate the fact the opposing team is making fun of their Captain. Only his own teammates and himself can make fun of Bokuto, not others. And he's going to remember that and make sure Nekoma pay for laughing.

"Bokuto-san, could you please get up?" He gently pats Bokuto's back. "I have a plan and in order for us to take the lead, we'll need our ace."

Bokuto rises on his feet at once, while the rest of Fukurodani's members exchange silent smirks with Akaashi as if to say "nicely handled".

"So what's the plan, Vice Captain?" Sarukui asks.

Unlike last week during their game against the Bulldogs, Akaashi doesn't wait to get permission from Yukie to start talking, he just does. Not because he's being disrespectful, but because he knows they share a mental harmony.

"Earlier, I wasn't being careless when I lost us the point, because of my crappy toss, I was watching their setter. But I now know how he moves." He smirks.

"How can you know, though?" Konoha asks curiously.

"Because Akaashi is good at noticing things that we don't." Washio replies.

"Thank you, Washio-san. But it's easy. Their setter looks directly at where he wants the ball to be spiked on our side of the court and sets up a toss for where his eyes had been seconds before he moves." He smirks.

"Akaashi, you're sure of this?" Bokuto asks.

"I'm a 100% positive, Bokuto-san. He's really quick about it, but so far he hasn't done a feint, so we should assume that's how he'll keep playing."

"Good work, Akaashi. Since you've figured him out, could you yell out the name of whoever is closest to the place where the ball would be spiked?" Yukie asks and he nods. "That way everyone will know and be prepared for it. Nekoma will hear it too, and probably come up with a different strategy, but I think we'll get a couple of points in before they switch it around. As for your offense... Bokuto, I know you're not going to like what I'm going to say, but you have to stop with the cross court spikes and go for straights."

Bokuto's eyebrows knit together. "I don't really like doing those."

"We know that, and so does Kuroo." Yukie replies. "And he obviously told his teammates about it, because they keep blocking you. Use straights and, trust me, you'll earn us points from it."

"There's always at least two blockers in front of Bokuto, though." Konoha mutters irritably. "So even if he does a powerful straight, he'll get blocked."

"No, he won't." Akaashi says reassuringly. "Bokuto-san, we'll be sure to clear a path for you."

"Woah, Akaashi, you are the man!"
"I'm kind of surprised Coach Nekomata or their Captain haven't stopped Kuroo from yelling things out." Yukie says. "It's getting annoying."

Akaashi snorts. "Kuroo-san's provocations are working, and that's exactly why nobody is going to stop him from doing it." Then, even though he knows he should thread carefully when it comes to Bokuto, he can't stop himself from adding. "Bokuto-san, didn't I tell you pain in the ass Kuroo-san will use whatever you've told him about us against us?"

"Damn cats." Sarukui grunts. "Damn cats and their cheap tricks. I wanna make them pay."

"Don't worry, Saru, we will." Bokuto says with a smirk. "If that's how Kuroo wants to play, that's how we'll play." He throws his head back and laughs, while everyone stares at Akaashi for a translation of Bokuto's sudden mood change. Except he doesn't know what Bokuto means either and shrugs. "Akaashi, take off your knee pads."

"What?" Akaashi blinks. "I thought you said safety comes first and-"

"That was before, this is now. You're better at squatting without them anyway."

"I don't get it. What was so funny, Bokuto?" Konoha asks as Akaashi quickly removes his knee pads.

"Kuroo knows me, but I know him too. And during the next three rotations, he's going to be at the front." His smirk becomes even broader and since he is staring directly at Akaashi, Akaashi is starting to understand what he's getting at. And he doesn't like it. "If there's one thing Kuroo can't resist, it's a good leg. And lucky for us, Akaashi has two of those." Bokuto laughs, and now everyone laughs with him, except for Akaashi of course. The idea of being used as a sort of bait for Kuroo makes him irritated. And he doubts it'll work anyway, because even Kuroo wouldn't be stupid enough to ogle anyone's legs while playing a game. "Oh, Akaashi, one more thing." Bokuto's eyes inspect the back of Akaashi's shorts and he nods in approval. "Yeah, Kuroo likes asses too, so try to set the ball with your back to him and maybe put your ass out a little bit when-"

"Bokuto-san, are we playing volleyball or are you giving me tips on how to seduce Kuroo-san?" Akaashi asks, and he's so busy being annoyed with Bokuto's idea that his face doesn't even go red in embarrassment. "Because I'd rather beat Nekoma fair and square, instead of stooping down to their level with lame tactics."

"But they started it." Komi grins.

And Akaashi thought Komi was one of the more mature players they had. Yeah, right.

Damn pack mentality.

"Wouldn't you guys agree that victory will taste sweeter if we beat them without-" Akaashi tries once more, but Konoha interrupts.

"Fuck that, Akaashi, victory is victory. We'll kick their asses, while you try and twerk yours a bit." He adds, laughing, and moves out of the way before Akaashi's hand can swat at him.

"Alright, owls, hands in the middle." Bokuto grins and then yells. "Who who who, who's gonna win?"

"Fukurodani!"

As their game resumes, even though Akaashi had been extremely skeptical about Bokuto's approach, it becomes evident that he'd been right about Kuroo's weakness. It's not like Akaashi is
doing anything sexy or going out of his way to set with his back at Kuroo or his ass out as Bokuto had suggested, no, he just sets the ball right in front of Kuroo, close enough to the net for Bokuto to spike it just the way he likes it, but not close enough for Kuroo’s fingers to tip it over and boom! A point for Fukurodani.

And then again.

Nekoma’s players clearly don’t know what is happening and why their defense isn’t working like before, while everyone from Fukurodani is laughing. And since they take the lead, Akaashi is no longer questioning the way they are gaining their points (thanks, Kuroo), because at the end of the day, a team should always use all the advantages they can get against their opponents. Cheap tricks or not, winning is winning.

Unfortunately, though, as Yukie had predicted, Coach Nekomata switches out the starting setter with Kenma, who quickly helps Nekoma even out the score.

Despite the fact Akaashi doesn't like losing, he can't help but admire the way Kenma sets, because just like himself, Kenma doesn't give away what he plans on doing. He barely moves, he feints and worst of all - he does a quick dump shot right in front of Akaashi.

And even though Akaashi dives for it, the ball reaches the floor faster than him. He genuinely did not see it coming, because he didn't expect Kenma to be this daring without even so much as glancing at him or their side of the court?

Kenma is also a better blocker than Akaashi, even though he's way shorter.

And their serves seem to be the same - both lacking power.

However, Akaashi has the upper hand from the two when it comes to receiving, because he's eaten enough of Bokuto’s powerful spikes. And even though Nekoma has good Wing Spikers, none of them manage to land something as loud or as vicious as Bokuto does.

It's kind of funny that both Nekoma and Fukurodani start aiming their serves at both Akaashi and Kenma, especially when they are at the back line, because that is by far the worst rotation for a setter. A few times Akaashi can't get to his position in front of the net in time and yells out for cover.

"I got it!" Konoha yells back and gives a toss to Bokuto. "Blast it in their face, Captain!"

Bokuto does.

Whenever Bokuto's spike goes through Nekoma's defense and earns Fukurodani a point, he starts pulling all these terrible dance moves and Akaashi has never seen a worse dancer than himself - hence why he never does - until now. But Bokuto is not at all disturbed by the fact he can't properly moonwalk, or do the robot, or do the hammer dance. In fact, he looks pretty darn happy about his dancing abilities, so Akaashi quickly puts two and two together. Bokuto isn't disturbed because Bokuto is oblivious to the fact he can't dance for shit.

But since their Captain is on a roll and in such good spirits, nobody on team Fukurodani tells him it's embarrassing. Well, that's what everyone except for Akaashi thinks. Of course, on the outside he doesn't show that he finds Bokuto busting moves all over the court quite amusing.

And even though Nekoma take the first set, Fukurodani take the second and Bokuto starts breaking out in song too.

"Come on and SLAM!" He pretends to spike a ball. "And welcome to my jam."
"It's "the" jam, bro." Kuroo corrects with a small smirk.

"I know it is, but you cats are in my jam." He smirks in return, which wipes Kuroo's smirk clean off his face.

"Bokuto-san, I have a better song."

"Oh yeah?" Bokuto grins. "Which one?"


The result Akaashi gets from his little change of lyrics is deafening. Everyone roars in laughter and start chanting the same thing, with Bokuto singing the first part and the others the second.

"Yo, Salt-N-Pepa over there!" Kuroo's voice reaches them and Akaashi points at himself quizzically. "Yeah, you. And your Salt buddy." He points at Bokuto. "You guys shouldn't be celebrating, because we plan on winning this game."

Bokuto grins. "Sounds to me like you're the salty one, bro. Heh."

"You wish."

They end up playing five sets and despite the encouraging chants the owls have from the bench members and the manager, they end up losing. And the penalty for losing is suicides. Awesome.

But even though they lost, Bokuto is in pretty good spirits and claps his hands encouragingly that it's all good, because they are going to even things out in the second game.

Shortly after they start playing, Akaashi feels exhausted and switches out with Suzuki. Yukie slides over the bench next to Akaashi and tells him that during the first game she told Suzuki what hand gestures to use behind his back before setting.

"But do the others know what his hand gestures would mean?" He asks.

"Yes. We used to do them before you joined us, because nobody could read Saito's tosses." She explains. "As Bokuto said in the locker room before he left the team, he never stayed behind and practiced with everyone else, so we had to come up with them. Would I be a horrible manager if I tell you that I'm kind of glad he's gone?"

"No." Akaashi smiles. "And would I be a horrible Vice Captain and starting setter if I agreed with you?"

She grins.

Fukurodani take the first set and as the teams switch sides, Bokuto nods his head at Akaashi to come play. But he shakes his head and remains on the bench. Bokuto pouts a little, but shrugs his shoulders as if to say "suit yourself."

Because sure, Akaashi would like to play again, but so does everyone. Every single member of team Fukurodani, no, every single volleyball player - or any game player in general - loves to be on the court. That's why they join teams and play. There's nothing like the rush that you get the second your feet are inside the lines and the whistle blows.'
And since Fukurodani is doing well without him and Suzuki is enjoying himself, just like everyone else out there, Akaashi decides not to be greedy and take over. After all the hard work Suzuki put during the first set, it'll be awfully unfair to switch him out now and kind of steal his spotlight.

During their game against the Bulldogs last Friday, Akaashi quickly realized that the setter's position isn't as flashy as being a Wing Spiker or a Middle Blocker, because setters don't get a reaction from the crowd. But he doesn't care about that, because he's never been one to vie for attention. There's a certain kind of pride he feels whenever he gives a toss that is followed by a successful spike, because as Bokuto said the ace - and everyone else - only shine as bright as their setter makes them. And Akaashi enjoys making his teammates all shine bright like diamonds. Even though diamonds don't actually shine, but reflect.

Well, whatever.

Point is, he enjoys making his teammates reflect light bright like diamonds.

"You're already rested up and ready to play." Yukie says with a smile. "But I like the fact you're being fair towards Suzuki. You're a great Vice Captain, Akaashi."

"Thanks."

"Besides, Fukurodani will most certainly need all of your strength when the other teams get here. Especially Aoba Jousai." She glances at her watch. "They should be arriving soon. It's almost lunch time."

"Already?" He blinks.

"Time flies by when you're all caught up in the game, doesn't it?" She chuckles. "Way better than being stuck in class on a Friday, huh."

He nods in agreement.

Yukie's knee playfully bumps against Akaashi's.

"Can I tell you a little secret?" She whispers with a grin.

"Sure. I'm good with secrets."

"Guess what I did this morning before breakfast?" He shakes his head, because he doesn't have the slightest clue. "I'll give you a little hint - I went into the wing building."

"Did you eat the snacks we left for Karasuno and Aoba Jousai?"

"No, but I can understand why you would assume that." She snickers. "I had some milk bread stashed up in my room and left it in the fridge." Since Akaashi doesn't understand what's so special about it, she continues. "I remember from their visit last year that it's Oikawa's favourite."

He doesn't really know what to reply to that, so he settles for a short "Oh."

"Yeah. I have such a major crush on him." She says and her cheeks turn pink.

"I got that."

"Eh? How do you know? Did I tell you already?"

"Uhh yes? Not in those exact words, but last night when Konoha-san, Sarukui-san, you and I
were in our room you told all three of us that you're excited to see him."

"Oh. Right." She chuckles. "I forgot. My brain doesn't function properly when I'm hungry. And I'm really fucking hungry right now."

"Me too. Do you think there'll be food left even though lunch hour is over?"

"Of course." Yukie grins. "The kitchen staff have prepared all kind of dishes especially for us, since they know we are hosts for the weekend."

Fukurodani win the game, because they take the second set too. And after Nekoma finish with their suicides, both teams head into the main building and line up in front of the kitchen.

And even though Akaashi wants nothing more than to sprint ahead of everyone, he remains behind and waits for Bokuto, Kuroo and Kenma.

"Kenma, Akaashi, about time you two officially met." Kuroo grins as they shake hands.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Kenma-san."

"You don't have to call me "san", I'm the same age as you." Kenma says quietly.

Akaashi nods.

Kenma seems shy, so they have another thing in common other than their volleyball positions, Akaashi thinks. And even though he doesn't know him yet, he decides that he already likes Kenma.

"Bro, we won the first game, so we're stronger than you." Kuroo says and Bokuto shakes his head.

"No, bro, we completely destroyed you in the second game."

"Yeah, but our first game had five sets, that was way harder to win. So victory is ours."

"You only got three of the five."

"Yeah, but three is more than two."

"But two is more than zero."

"Yeah, but three is more than two." Kuroo repeats.

"We gave you the first game as a freebie, so we don't lose you guys as our customers."

Kuroo laughs. "Yeah, right. You guys lost even though Angel Eyes played the entire game."

"Which brings me to my point that we slayed you in the second game and he only stayed in for like five minutes." Bokuto says. "We had complete victory over you."

"We'll see about that after lunch."

"Absolutely."

And then, as if they weren't just bickering like the five year old kids that they actually are, they grin and wrap an arm over each other's shoulders.
The line for lunch is taking forever and Akaashi's stomach rumbles for his attention. Ugh, he's so damn hungry. He glances to his right and sees that Kenma has pulled a game console out of his jacket pockets. And since Bokuto and Kuroo are back to talking to each other and Akaashi has nothing better to do, he silently watches Kenma playing.

Then, before he can stop himself, he says.

"No, go back, there's a treasure chest in the bottom left corner."

Kenma looks up from the game and blinks. Up this close, Akaashi can see that his eyes are honey colored too. Kind of like Bokuto's, but at the same time totally different.

"You've played it before?" He asks quietly and Akaashi nods.

Before he came to Fukurodani, he used to play on his game console his parents got him for one of his birthdays. He doesn't remember which one it was exactly, but a while back. When you don't have a social life or friends, and busy parents that are always on the go, books and video games become your escape from boredom.

In fact, during the holidays, every Sunday morning, Akaashi and his dad used to have this sort of tradition and always play together. His mom never got the deal with the video games and told them that it's a complete waste of time, and bad for their eyes too, while his dad joked that she's just jealous, since she's terrible with technology and can't play.

"Kuro bought it for me two days ago."

"That was nice of him." He replies. "And it sounds like a different person than the Kuroo-san I know."

"He treats me different than everyone else."

Kenma doesn't say that in a bragging way, but rather in a way that simply states that their relationship is different and shouldn't be compared to everyone else.

Like Akaashi just did seconds ago.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to offend-"

"No, that's not what I meant. You can offend him all you like."

The corners of Akaashi's lips curve up.

Usually when he meets new people his palms get sweaty and he feels really awkward, but it doesn't happen with Kenma. He doesn't feel the need to fill the silence between them with small talk and it's not just because he's bad at small talk. He feels at ease just silently watching Kenma play his game.

And Kenma seems to feel the same way.

Since Bokuto and Kuroo have already left the kitchen, too busy jabbering away at each other in excitement that their Rat Pack will finally be reunited, Akaashi stays behind and waits for Kenma. He almost feels embarrassed at the way his tray is overflowing with food, while Kenma has a lonely plate on it with some french fries, some sun dried tomatoes and a slice of apple pie on the side.

When they go to Dining Room B, they are both equally surprised to see that the tables have been
pushed together to form a big one, and members of both teams are sitting between one another, with Nekoma's two coaches right in the middle. There are no seats left, of course, but before Akaashi has time to panic about how to proceed with things, Bokuto takes two chairs from behind and motions for the setters to come sit next to him.

"Ah, so now all the owls and the cats are here, eh?" Coach Nekomata smiles pleasantly at everyone. He isn't talking particularly loud, but all players went silent the second the older coach of the cats opened his mouth to speak. "Wonderful. I speak for my entire team when I say thank you for inviting us here with you this weekend. I might be the coach of Nekoma, but I have to say I was very impressed by all of you on the court today. And of course a special thank you to your wonderful manager, who has whipped you Fukurodani boys into a very good shape." He smiles at Yukie, who bows her head in appreciation. "That tosser of a coach you kids have doesn't know what talent he's missing." Bokuto is the first one to roar in his usual loud laughter, followed by Coach Nekomata, and basically everyone around. "Now, let's all have a nice meal together."

The second that he finishes talking, nobody is as fast as Yukie and Akaashi in stuffing their mouths with food. At this point, Akaashi doesn't even bother with worrying how he might look to everyone around, because it's food time, finally, and until his plates are completely empty, he refuses to acknowledge anything or anyone. But after satiating the worst of his hunger, he slows down a bit and chews his food happily, while taking in his surroundings. He is a bit surprised to see that Konoha and Sarukui aren't sitting next to each other. Actually nobody except him is sitting next to a fellow owl. He likes that, though, because it's nice to see that despite the fact they are rivals on the court, they can sit and eat a meal together, conversing quietly with one another.

"Oi, Kenma." Kuroo's voice comes from Bokuto's left. "You better eat more than that."

Bokuto gasps. "Kenma! Did you not see the yakiniku? You better eat some meat."

"Bokuto-san, leave him be." Akaashi shushes him quietly, because despite the fact he knows Bokuto and Kuroo better and longer than he knows Kenma, neither of them, clearly, know how awful it is to become the center of attention when you want no part in it. But how could they possibly know or understand when they are both the loud and boisterous type that love to be surrounded by people and showered in attention?

Okay, they understand it with words, but it's different when you actually experience it.

Almost everyone has finished eating and moved onto desserts, when Bokuto's phone rings.

"Irihata-Sensei! Where are you?" He asks. "Noooo, you were supposed to take a right turn on-yeah, exactly. Okay. Mhm. Yes. Okay. See you in a bit." Bokuto grins. "Alright, everyone, let's go welcome Aoba Jousai and Karasuno."

Even though Bokuto, as the Captain and leader of Fukurodani, is the official host, he motions for Coach Nekomata to take the lead. He might be oblivious to some things and he's a bit silly at times, but he clearly has respect for his elders, which makes Akaashi's chest swell with pride.

Both teams line up behind the two Nekoma coaches, Bokuto and Yukie, as a big double decker bus pulls up at the front of the school. Just before the doors open up, Bokuto quickly turns his head, finds Akaashi and gives him a wink. Then his attention is back to the front and he starts greeting and welcoming the coaches that come out first, followed by the students. Akaashi is pretty tall so he doesn't have to go on his tiptoes, like Kenma on his left, to take a better look at his soon to be rivals and future acquaintances. Kuroo, who is on Kenma's other side, seems to be really eager to go at the front like Bokuto and probably greet the other two Rat Pack members, which Akaashi still doesn't know who they are, but he remains on his spot, just like everyone else. And even though Akaashi is getting more and more curious by the second to see the Aoba Jousai
setter he's heard so much about and Karasuno's unofficial babysitter, he would rather eat his
clothes straight out of the hamper than set a poorer example than Kuroo.

After the coaches of Aoba Jousai exchange pleasantries with the coaches of Nekoma, Bokuto and
Yukie, everything becomes one big hot mess, because the players of Aoba Jousai and Karasuno
start pushing each other and yelling over one another, trying to get their suitcases and luggage off
the bus. The Fukurodani manager blows her whistle and claps her hands together.

"Everyone, welcome to Fukurodani." Her voice booms loudly and everyone stops talking and
moving at once. "We are all extremely happy to have you guys travel all this way to play with us.
So if you could please take your stuff and follow Bokuto and I, we're going to show you where
you'll be staying for the next two days." She smiles. "And if you have any complaints about
anything, please come talk to me."

To be honest, Akaashi isn't surprised that all the boys around are staring at Yukie as if she's a
goddess, because she is incredibly pretty, of course, but also, she's the only girl around, other than
the black haired girl with glasses that he saw a few seconds ago and since he saw the back of her
jacket, he already knows she is Karasuno's manager.

He doesn't know where she disappeared to, though, because she was almost in front of him mere
sec- oh, he sees her. Well, a part of her, because she is surrounded by two boys. One of them has
a shaved head, while the other one is really - like really - short, and they're shooting dirty glances
at all the other boys, who so much as dare to look at their manager. It's a bit ridiculous, but after
Akaashi sees Konoha and Sarukui trying to approach her - try being the key word - the Karasuno
boys' dirty glances turn lethal.

Yeah, he's is not getting anywhere close to those two, and since they seem to be like a packaged
deal with their manager, he's not going anywhere near her either.

He takes a quick glance around and since Kenma is the only one, other than him, that hasn't
moved, he nods his head back at the school and Kenma nods back. The two of them leave all the
commotion behind and quickly head inside the gym. Akaashi leads the way to the middle court
and opens up the storage room, where the two of them climb onto the pile of mats in the corner
and sit next to each other.

"Kuro told me you're the Vice Captain." Kenma says and Akaashi nods. "Shouldn't you be
introducing yourself to everyone else?"

"I don't know, really." He admits. "Bokuto-san and Yukie don't seem to need me, so I'm perfectly
fine being here, away from all the noise and people."

Kenma blinks. "You're not at all what I imagined from Kuro's descriptions."

"Why, does he talk shit about me?" Akaashi jokes.

"No, he only talks shit about people when he's in front of them. He's not two faced."

"Yeah, him and Bokuto-san are both the confrontational type."

Kenma nods and they stay silent for a while.

"You're so... normal." Kenma breaks the silence. "Why would you spend all your free time during
the weekend with Kuro and Bokuto?"

"I guess I have masochistic tendencies."
This is the first time he hears Kenma laughing, and it's the same as the manner in which he speaks - soft and quiet.

"They're both okay, but when they're together, they're too loud for me." Kenma says.

"I know what you mean. But since I'm a boarding student here, I have nowhere to run." Akaashi replies with a small smile, because he is only joking.

"You're probably wondering how someone like me became friends with someone like Kuro."

"It might have crossed my mind, yeah. But since Bokuto-san and I are friends, and we're complete opposites, I can understand, I guess."

Kenma shrugs. "We've been friends since I could remember. We live in the same neighborhood, so we went to the same schools. I don't know how or when we became friends, really, we just sort of did. He's the one that got me into volleyball in the first place. He would watch professional games on TV and then show me the moves he learned. Then he pestered me until I finally joined our middle school's team. And we've been playing together ever since."

"I saw that on the court earlier. You two are so in sync with each other, it's insane."

"Kuro said you only just started playing volleyball?" Akaashi nods. "I hear a lot of things when playing. "Setter is a position for more talented people". See, I'm not very athletic. I like volleyball, despite what other people think. What I don't like is getting tired or sweaty."

"Well, you're an amazing setter. The way you did that dump shot in front of me today. - was really cool."

Kenma grins. "Dump shots are my specialty, because they require the least effort."

"I manage to get a few in when we practice with each other, but during an official game? One, if I get lucky."

"It's not luck, though. You have intuition on the court."

"Thank you. Coming from a setter like you, that really means a lot to me."

Just like a cat would do with its paw, Kenma's hand makes a quick movement, as if to say "please, you're flattering me."

"To be honest, my hands are really itching to play against Aoba Jousai's setter." Akaashi admits. "You know him?"

Kenma shakes his head. "Only from what Kuro's told me about him."

"Oh yeah, I forgot you're a first year like me. I don't know who is going to play against whom next, but I hope I can watch your team play against them first."

"So you can see the way he plays and prepare for it?"

Akaashi laughs. "Yes. But also, because I really wanna see his face when you do one of your dump shots." He hears his name being called in the distance by a familiar voice and jumps to the ground. "Sounds like our break time is over." He rolls his eyes. "Oh joy, now we have to go socialize with people. Ugh."

Kenma snickers.
Bokuto proceeds to introduce him to Oikawa Tooru and Sawamura Daichi. When it comes to reading people on the court, Akaashi considers himself a pretty good judge of character. And even though the four of them, plus Kuroo, are standing in the middle court, they aren't currently playing. Considering the fact that he knows from personal experience that first impressions aren't always correct, he still decides to be a bit wary around Oikawa, because the first thing he'd said to him was "Eh? So I finally meet Fukurodani's newest member Bokuto-chan and Kuroo-chan have been making a fuss about. Didn't you already know the position of pretty setter is taken by me?" Then he'd flashed his pearly whites and the smile struck Akaashi as not at all genuine. He can understand why girls, like Yukie, seem to go gaga over him. With his peach skin and his high, sharp cheekbones, he looks straight out of a TV commercial. And he seems perfectly aware of just how handsome he is. Akaashi can also understand why Konoha and Sarukui had called him arrogant, because he does seem a bit condescending and very self confident.

The strange thing is Karasuno's Sawamura Daichi, though, because he's polite, kind and also very humble - nothing like the other three of the Rat Pack. Akaashi decides that volleyball must be the only thing he has in common with them.

Akaashi'd told him "It's a pleasure to meet you, Sawamura-san." and the look of surprise he got when Sawamura heard him being addressed as "Sawamura-san", made him almost feel bad for the guy. So far the only good treatment he's gotten from the owls must've been from Yukie. Poor Sawamura.

Then again Sawamura doesn't live with Bokuto, nor does he see Kuroo for the entire weekend, so he'll never experience Akaashi's struggle. And Akaashi doesn't feel too sorry for him.

He feels sorry for Aoba Jousai's Iwaizumi Hajime, though. Out of all four teams, Akaashi thinks Iwaizumi has the most responsibility to deal with. Bokuto'd told him Oikawa and Iwaizumi are childhood friends, like Kuroo and Kenma, so that explains why Iwaizumi has nerves of steel. He's used to Oikawa's behavior by now and he obviously doesn't put up with any of the shit Oikawa tries to pull.

Akaashi doesn't know how it's decided, but Fukurodani get to play Aoba Jousai first on court 3, while the cats face off with the crows on court 1. To his disappointment, he sees that Oikawa isn't warming up with the rest of his team, but takes a seat on the bench next to his coaches.

As they begin playing, it becomes very clear that Aoba Jousai, just like Fukurodani, are a team that heavily rely on their offense. And the best defense is a good offense.

Akaashi doesn't dare take his eyes off the game to see what kind of team Karasuno are, even though he's really curious. But he reminds himself that he'll see for himself when they play the crows later. Now? Now he needs his concentration on 110%. Because even without their star setter, Aoba Jousai aren't fucking around. No, they're here and they're playing to win. So is everyone else, of course. But not everyone can, no matter how badly they want it and fight for it. There's always a winner and a loser.

When the score is 21-22, with Aoba Jousai in the lead, there's a switch and Oikawa takes the first year setter's place at the line for a serve. He twirls the ball on his finger, then dribbles it a few times. Akaashi's gut tells him to prepare for receiving, because he just knows Oikawa is going to aim directly for him.

And he's absolutely right.

He does receive it, just barely, but the ball is inside and that's all that matters. After yelling for
cover, Sarukui makes a toss for Konoha, who spikes it, but gets blocked.

"You must have practiced a lot with Bokuto-chan." Oikawa yells from across the court to Akaashi. "But receivers don't improve overnight."

Oikawa twirls the ball in the same way as before and Akaashi can tell from his smirk that he plans on challenging him as setter vs setter, my serve against your receive. And even though Akaashi doesn't like his smirk, he isn't petty or prideful to rise up to the bait, because he isn't playing alone against Oikawa. Akaashi is a team player, who acknowledges his strengths and more importantly his weaknesses.

So when the second serve is once again directed at him, he yells "Komi-san!" and dodges out of the way. He hears Oikawa calling him "chicken-chan", but pays no attention to him, and sets the ball just the way Bokuto likes it, who spikes it successfully.

Oikawa is deemed prodigy from his peers for a reason, because as he sets, Akaashi has never before seen such incredible ball control and power. Even if you combine Akaashi and Kenma's setting abilities together, they'd still be a far cry from being the same level as him.

Fukurodani end up winning, but as Aoba Jousai line up for suicides, the victory doesn't taste sweet to Akaashi. Oikawa is a monster, who basically owned his ass on the court. Bokuto is able to read his thoughts, though, because he swings his arm over Akaashi's shoulders and smiles.

"Akaashi, don't compare yourself to him. He's been playing for years. And it's because of his hard work and endless practices that he's gotten to this level. Come on, Akaashi, cheer up. Iwaizumi got in more spikes than I did, but you don't see me pouting about it." A small smile crosses Akaashi's lips, which makes Bokuto grin. "There, that's much better. Let's go watch the others, because they're in their last set."

Akaashi nods and follows Bokuto to the sidelines, where Nekoma and Karasuno are playing. He decides that Bokuto is right, and instead of being bitter and childish about it, he should be more positive. They are all here to practice and improve, and maybe make some new friends.

So he swallows his pride, walks up to Oikawa and congratulates him on the good game.

"Oikawa-san, I heard a lot of things about your amazing skills, but I never would have believed it had I not seen it with my own eyes. You really are incredible."

Oikawa blinks in surprise, then grins.

"I know." He laughs. "To be honest I wanted to play from the very beginning, but the doctor told me not to over do it, since I had a small injury last time we played. I hope Iwa-chan won't make me go to the bench, because I really want to play against Nekoma. Karasuno not so much, because they won't be a challenge for our team."

Akaashi scowls a bit, because he finds Oikawa's remark of poor taste. Yes, Aoba Jousai are a very strong team, but that doesn't mean the crows should be underestimated.

After Nekoma win and Karasuno finish their penalty, they take a short break before the next games begin. Oikawa nudges Akaashi and makes a motion with his hand to follow him. They walk over to the empty third court and Oikawa passes a ball to Akaashi.

"Show me how you serve."

Feeling a bit self conscious, Akaashi lines up and serves. It's not his best, but it's still pretty good.
"How do you practice serving?" Oikawa asks.

"What do you mean?"

"At Aoba Jousai, we line up cones or empty water bottles on the other side of the court and try hitting them with the ball." He explains. "It's because of those practices that my aim is this precise. You should try it, it really helps."

"Thank you." Akaashi says, because he didn't expect that at all. And since he is curious, he asks. "How come you're helping me when I'm not on your team, though?"

"Because there is nothing better than beating a powerful team. And you and your other first year that played are your team's weakest links." Oikawa grins. "When we get to play an official game, you two better have improved by then, and give it your best, otherwise it's not fun to beat you as you are."

Akaashi is seriously scowling now, because did Oikawa forget their team is the one that just lost? And yes, both Minami and him have the least experience from the other starting players and have the most to improve, but who is he to decide that they didn't give their best? What the fuck. So very rude.

They are joined by the Karasuno setter, who introduces himself to Akaashi as Sugawara Koushi.

"Well well well, if it isn't Karasuno's Mr Refreshing." Oikawa grins, then starts pointing out all the things the crows did wrong, which resulted in their loss against the cats, and Akaashi realizes he shouldn't take Oikawa's words personally, since he is this way with everyone.

While Oikawa continues rambling, Akaashi and Sugawara exchange amused glances, because neither of them asked for his expertise. And even though Akaashi doesn't want to appear disrespectful to his senpais, his mouth just opens up and he can't stop himself from talking.

"Opinions are like assholes. Everyone's got one and everyone thinks everyone else's stinks."

Sugawara rewards him with a very infectious and big grin, while Oikawa snorts, turn on his heel and leaves.

Fukurodani get to play Nekoma again and halfway through their first set, the gym starts filling up with Fukurodani students, since classes are over. As they switch courts and have a break, the Fukurodani cheerleaders come out in their uniforms and pom poms and do their routine. And when the game resumes, their cheerleaders move onto the empty middle court and whenever the owls score, they get incredibly loud cheers.

"I'm so going to transfer to Fukurodani." One of the Wing Spikers from Nekoma says and Akaashi doesn't know his name, but he remembers him from earlier, being the loudest on the court, excluding Bokuto and Kuroo, and you can't exactly forget someone with such a funky hairdo.

"You're not going anywhere, Taketora." Kuroo grunts. "You wanted to become Nekoma's ace next year, remember?"

The guy shakes his head, eyes firmly glued to the cheerleaders.

Since the owls are on the side of the court that is closer to the tribunes, they can all hear the voices coming from the students above. Some of the girls are complaining that they missed Oikawa playing against their team, but they could move to the other court and watch him play against Karasuno. And nobody looks more pissed about it than Konoha, but Sarukui has a pretty similar
expression on his face.

Even though Kenma had been playing from the very beginning and gets a couple of dump shots in, poking his tongue out at Akaashi after each one, the cats end up losing.

And after a short break, it's finally time for the battle of the birds - owls vs crows.

"Listen up, you guys, I know we're all tired, but I want every single one of you to play like you have until now." Bokuto says as they huddle in. "Karasuno haven't won a game yet, but that doesn't mean they should be underestimated. Animals are most dangerous when wounded, so keep your guards up, alright?" They all nod.

"Karasunoooo, fight!"

"Let's do our new chant, shall we?" Bokuto grins and yells. "Who let the owls out?"


"Who's gonna win now?"

"Fu-fu-fu-fu-fukorodaniiii!"

The crowd seems to approve very highly of their team's new greeting, because as they begin playing, they start chanting the same thing from above.

After a few minutes of carefully studying their opponents, Akaashi is still unable to determine what kind of team Karasuno are, because nobody from them particularly stands out with their skills. Their Libero is good, Middle Blockers, Setter, everyone on the team is good on both offense and defense and they seem to work pretty well together.

Neither of them have an official coach, and Akaashi wonders if they, too, rely on their manager and someone from the team to come up with their game strategies. He did hear earlier from someone that only Aoba Jousai and Fukurodani have practices every single day, including the weekends, while Nekoma practice five times a week and Karasuno, only three times.

And that soon begins to show. The gap between the scores is pretty huge, but every single member of Karasuno fights on, with determined expressions on their faces. Akaashi admires that, because even though their loss is going to be inevitable in a few more minutes, they don't stop or give up. Not once.

And when they line up for suicides, they all hold their heads up high and have this pride about them, which makes Akaashi admire them all the more.

They might have lost the game, but Karasuno are not losers.

"Oh ho hooo, another penalty?" Kuroo smirks from the side. "What's the matter, Karasuno, you guys really seem to love those, huh?"

"Kuro, shut up. We only had two wins today." Kenma says quietly.

"Yeah, and that's two wins more than they have."

Kenma rolls his eyes and after waving at Akaashi, he joins his team in packing their things. Coach Nekomata thanks Bokuto and Yukie again and the cats leave the gym, except for Kuroo, who remains next to Akaashi.
"Are you the one responsible for locking up the gym?" He asks and Akaashi nods. "Let me give a little help with that." He grins, then starts clapping his hands and yelling. "Alright, everyone, quit dragging your asses and go, leave. Come on, hurry up. Move it, move it."

A couple of heads turn to look at the source of the noise and if Akaashi was shorter, he would have hid himself behind Kuroo, because Aoba Jousai's coaches seem very displeased and his cheeks turn red in shame. They might know that they aren't on the same teams, but since they are together, they must associate Akaashi with that dumb cat.

Fucking Kuroo.

When they head to the main building, Akaashi is very pleased to see there's no line in front of the kitchen. But Kuroo's hand stops him.

"Did you forget we're staying at Bokuto's for the weekend?"

"No, I didn't. I want to eat first, though."

"Don't bother. His parents know that we're gonna be staying there, so they must have stacked up their fridge with all kinds of stuff."

Just to be safe, though, Akaashi gets a chicken drumstick and eats it as they go upstairs.

"Angel Eyes, I have a question for you."

"No." Akaashi mumbles, while chewing.

"You haven't even heard my question yet."

"It's still a no."

Konoha, Sarukui and Bokuto are all waiting for them inside the room.

"Come on, Akaashi, pack up your shit and let's get out of here." Bokuto grins.

"Can't we shower first?"

"No. You can shower at my house."

Sighing, Akaashi empties his backpack from his school books and puts his pyjamas and his toothbrush inside.

"We might catch a cold like this, you know." He says, but nobody pays attention to him.

Still, he changes out of his shorts and puts on long sweatpants, then the four of them go downstairs and Masha, who is on duty at the front desk, tells them to have a great weekend.

They walk to the nearest bus stop and after a couple of stops, get off and switch to another one. And another one. Then they get on the train.

"Bokuto-san, how far is your house?" Akaashi asks, because he'd like to know how much time it'll take to get there, since they'll be coming back in the morning. And they've already been traveling for nearly half an hour, which means less sleep tomorrow. Fucking hell.

"Don't worry, just a bit more." Bokuto grins. "So I invited Dadchi and Oikawa to join us tonight, but Dadchi decided to stay with his team."
"Surely Oikawa wanted to come?" Kuroo smirks.

"Damn right he did, but Iwaizumi was having none of it. I invited him too, but he said some shit like they're tired from their journey and will all come tomorrow for the party."

Konoha seems very pleased that he won't be spending any of his free time with Oikawa.

"Oh no." He gasps suddenly. "Yukie! She's the only one from our team that's going to be there with the rest of them. How could we do this to her?"

"Don't worry, Konoha-san, she'll be alright." Akaashi replies. But he doesn't dare adding that Yukie is probably going to be very happy that she gets to stay where Oikawa is.

They get off on the last stop and start walking. Akaashi has been to this neighborhood a couple of times with his mother, because one of the biggest malls is close by and she always drags him there for Christmas shopping.

"We can get your Halloween costumes for tomorrow from here." Bokuto points vaguely at the busy streets.

"Would we have time for that?" Sarukui asks. "What time did you tell everyone to come?"

"Around 8:30-9:00 pm." Bokuto replies. "And we play until 6, so we're gonna have time for that and also to buy stuff for the party. I'm so excited, you guys, I've never thrown a house party before!"

"Bro, don't worry about that." Kuroo says. "You've provided us with the venue, we're going to provide the snacks and the alcohol."

"Who's "we"?" Konoha asks.

"The four of us."

"Pffft! You think I'm gonna pay with my own pocket money for stuff, which Oikawa's going to eat and drink? Yeah, that's not gonna happen."

"If it was just Oikawa, it won't be so expensive." Sarukui adds. "But Bokuto invited most of our school, and a lot of people are bringing their friends, and there's your team, as well as Aoba Jousai and Karasuno. Holy shit, there's gonna be so many people."

"Tch, you owls are so cheap. Akaashi, you agree with me, don't you?"

With a sigh, Akaashi nods, because he thinks Kuroo's right. Normally the host always provides those things, but knowing Bokuto's small allowance, he won't be able to buy anything more than two packs of chips, an orange juice and a piece of bubblegum.

"There, see? That's a good friend right there." Kuroo smirks. "You two better follow your Vice Captain's lead."

"Or what? You'll beat us up?" Konoha leers.

"No. But I will tell Karasuno's manager that you guys are cheap."

Both Konoha and Sarukui gasp in horror and mumble that okay, fine, they'll give some money too. And normally, Akaashi would step in and take their side, especially since he knows Kuroo's blackmail was a lie, because even someone as sneaky as him probably hasn't gotten past the
Karasuno manager's protection squad. But he'd rather share by four than just two, so he keeps his mouth shut.

Bokuto stops at a stone wall with iron gates and door in the middle in front of what must be his house and fishes out his key. Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi are all gawping, because it's really big and grandiose looking. It's probably even more impressive on the inside.

There's a small staircase that they have to climb and on each side of it at the top, there's nicely trimmed green grass, beautiful flowers - despite the fact it's almost November and those flowers aren't in season - and two lemon trees.

Bokuto presses the top button on a small remote control, or whatever it is he's got in the palm of his hand, and just like some garage doors have that automatic option, the same kind, but much smaller, starts sliding up. Then there's the main door, which Bokuto opens with another key and swings it open.

"Hi, MTV, and welcome to my crib." He grins and ushers the four of them of them inside.
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Akaashi is really glad that Konoha is there, because he asks for Bokuto to give them a tour of the house. Which Akaashi really wants, too, but he doesn't want to come off as nosy.

The house is like a five start hotel, if not better. The entire first floor is a massive living room, dining room and kitchen. The second floor has two guest bedrooms, Bokuto's parents' bedroom, which has its own bathroom inside, and Bokuto's room. Akaashi wants to stay and explore it, because he's really curious to see the room in which Bokuto grew up, but he can do that later, when he's alone.

Next to Bokuto's room is his own bathroom, which is about the size of their room at Fukurodani, and most of the space is taken up by a jacuzzi.

"Well fuck mee, you have your own fucking jacuzzi!" Konoha gawps. "And look at how huge it is, I bet it could fit all five of us at once. Right, Bokuto?"

Bokuto shrugs and mumbles a quiet "probably".

The third floor has a cigar room, which Bokuto explains is the only place in the house in which smoking is allowed. It has two big leather armchairs, a glass table in the middle and the left side of the wall is a giant bookshelf full of books. The right side has a big cupboard with different but very expensive looking bottles of alcohol and big fancy glasses. Shit. This is all so much.

"Your parents both smoke?" Konoha asks and Bokuto nods. "But isn't your dad a doctor?"

"That's exactly why he smokes."

"That makes no sense." Konoha replies, but to Akaashi it makes perfect sense.

With the stressful jobs that Bokuto's parents have, it's really no wonder that the both of them are smokers.

Next to the cigar room, there's a pool table and different kinds of gym machinery, obviously used for exercise. It's basically Bokuto's own lifting room. And in the corner, there's also a sauna.

"Bokuto can we use the sauna, please?" Sarukui asks and Bokuto nods.

"Of course. You guys don't have to ask me about anything, just make yourselves at home."

"You got it, dude." Sarukui grins. "So our tour ends here, huh?"

"There's a swimming pool we have in the back garden and we have a ground floor, where my parents have their wine collection, which leads to the garages, but yeah, that's it."

"That's it? Dude." Konoha hoots. "You could live here, but instead choose to be in our stupid ass
boarding house?" He shakes his head. "You're insane. You literally have everything here!"

"I like my room in Fukurodani." Bokuto shrugs. "Especially now that I have Akaashi."

Then Bokuto winks at him.

Why does he have to say stuff like that, why? And more importantly, why are Bokuto's words having such an impact on him?

It's ridiculous.

"So what do you guys wanna do now? Shower, eat?" Bokuto asks.

"Eat." Akaashi replies.

Bokuto grins. "Good. Let's go downstairs."

As they reach the second floor, Bokuto scratches his forehead.

"So, about the sleeping arrangements. Uhh, where do you guys want to-"

"Dibs on one of the guest rooms!" Konoha says quickly.

"Same!" Sarukui adds.

That leaves Bokuto's parents bedroom and Bokuto's room.

"Akaashi, what do you prefer - to share my parents bedroom with me or to stay in my room?"

Kuroo gasps. "I'm offended, bro. Where's the third option where I get to share a bed with Angel Eyes?"

Bokuto laughs. "Ask Akaashi if he prefers-"

"No, Akaashi does not." Akaashi replies. "Could I stay in your room, Bokuto-san?"

"Sure. But don't forget the party tomorrow night." Bokuto says. "If someone gets lucky, they can use whichever room they want, except for my parents bedroom, because I feel weird letting people hook up in there."

Akaashi doesn't have to think about it. "I'd rather share with you then."

Bokuto gives him two thumbs up, while Kuroo smirks.

"Well, I suppose this works out better for me too. Because since I'm staying in Bokuto's room, it means I also get his bathroom."

Konoha gasps. "You wouldn't dare hog the jacuzzi when there's a party!"

"Fucking watch me." Kuroo sneers.

"Bokuto, tell him he can't do that!" Konoha pleads, but Bokuto shakes his head.

"Sorry, Konoha, whoever gets my room gets my bathroom too. Rules are rules."

"Rules? What the fuck does that even mean? You're the owner, you decide the rules!"
"Hey, if you're nicer to me, I might share with you." Kuroo smirks. "Like Sarukui, for example. He's nice to me, so he can use it."

Sarukui grins and pats Kuroo's shoulder. "You can call me Saru."

"Fuck you, Kuroo." Konoha grunts. "And Saru, how dare you take this nasty cat's side over mine!"

"If your guest room had a jacuzzi, I'd side with you." Sarukui replies.

"Ugh, fuck you, guys. Fuck all of you."

"What did Bokuto-san and I do?"

"Akaashi, you don't get to talk, because both you and Bokuto are best buddies with him. Which makes you even bigger traitors than Saru."

Akaashi contemplates joking with Konoha that he won't put in a good word for him in front of Ayame, but decides against it. Konoha already looks miserable enough.

Bokuto leads the way downstairs to the kitchen and starts taking out different kinds of pots and pans.

"What do you guys feel like eating for dinner?"

Akaashi blinks. "You're going to cook for us?" Bokuto nods. "Bokuto-san, can you cook?"

"Akaashi! What kind of question is that? If I'm offering, obviously I can!"

Akaashi doesn't think it's obvious, because maybe Bokuto is just trying to be nice? But he's just so hungry, that he doesn't even care if Bokuto makes something that tastes awful, as long as it's prepared quickly.

"Bro, you should do that thing you did the last time I stayed here. What was it called?"

"Risotto."

Bokuto takes out all the ingredients he needs from the cupboards and fridge and begins to prepare his stuff, while Akaashi suggests giving him a hand, because even though he can't cook, he'd much rather help out with something light and easy than cleaning the dishes afterwards.

He doesn't know exactly how Bokuto knows what he was just thinking, because Bokuto laughs and tells him they have a dishwasher.

"But if you really wanna give me a hand, you could prepare the salad?"

"Bro, can I break into your dad's liqueur cabinet and get some of the good stuff?"

Bokuto nods. "Sure, bro, just don't-"

"I know, I know, don't touch the cognac."

When Kuroo disappears upstairs, Bokuto turns to Konoha and Sarukui.

"Since Akaashi's helping me, you guys can go and watch some TV, or I have some video games if you wanna play?"
Both of them nods their heads and move in front of the giant ass plasma TV and Akaashi really wants to join them and play on Bokuto's Nintendo Wii as well, but he's stuck in the kitchen.

"Bokuto-san, you could have told them to set the table for us." He mutters.

"That's alright, I can -Akaashi!" Bokuto gasps. "What did you do?!"

"You told me to make the salad?"

"Yeah, but I didn't tell you to butcher the vegetables like this!"

Akaashi scowls. "Well if you don't like my way, maybe you should do it yourself then."

"Give me the knife."

He's about to move out of the way, but Bokuto steps right behind him.

"No, no, stay where you are. I'll show you how to do it." He takes hold of Akaashi's hands and Akaashi's body shivers involuntarily. Bokuto chuckles. "Relax, Akaashi, I'm not going to cut you. I know what I'm doing."

He clearly misinterpreted that, because Akaashi isn't worried about having his fingers sliced off. It's just, he's getting really flustered, because Bokuto's crotch is pressing against him and his warm breath is tickling the back of Akaashi's neck and oh god, why does he have to be so close?

"No, but seriously, relax."

Yeah, if only it's this easy.

Somehow he manages to stop himself from shaking nervously and lets Bokuto's hands control his over the cutting board, like a puppeteer. And it's really amazing how quickly they begin dicing the tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce, with such precise movements, it's like Akaashi is watching a professional chef on the cooking channel.

Just then, Kuroo's whistle comes from the stairs. "Awwww do you two make a cute couple or what?"

Akaashi freezes, then gently pushes Bokuto and moves to the side, while Bokuto laughs. "Get your ass down here, bro. Ask what the other two wanna drink."

"I'm not their fucking maid, bro."

"I want what you guys are having." Konoha yells over.

"Me too." Sarukui adds.

"Angel Eyes, what about you?" Kuroo shakes a bottle of whiskey in front of him. "Want some?"

"Uhh, no, I'd rather have a beer if there's any."

"Sorry, we don't have beer." Bokuto replies.

No, of course not. A house this fancy obviously wouldn't have something as cheap as beer.

"Don't worry, though, we're gonna buy some tomorrow. Why don't you drink what we're having?"
"Okay."

Kuroo pours each of them a glass, while giving Akaashi a funny look. Akaashi finds it a bit weird, because he can't tell what it means, but to be honest, he would rather not know. So he takes his own glass and the other two and joins Konoha and Sarukui on the couch.

To give his hands something to do, Akaashi takes a small sip from his glass and to his surprise, he doesn't hate the taste, even though it has no ice in it. Last time he tried drinking whiskey, it burned his throat, but this one goes down smoothly, with only a slight tingling sensation that warms up his mouth.

And it's delicious.

"Akaashi, there's another controller if you wanna play Mario Kart with us." Sarukui grins. "I've been whooping Konoha's ass this entire time."

"Shut up, Saru."

Akaashi quickly joins as player 3. It's really funny how Mario Kart works, because you might be in the lead the entire time, but you always fuck up on the last lap. And that's exactly what happens to Konoha.

"Akaashi, stop shooting those fucking banana peels at me!"

"Konoha-san, don't be a sore loser."

"I'm gonna show you guys no mercy in the next round."

Once again Konoha is in the lead, but on the last lap he shoots a green shell, which rebounds and hits him.

"I hate this game." Konoha grunts. "Let's play something else."

"Oi, you three over there." Bokuto yells. "Dinner's ready. After we eat we can have a small tournament."

Akaashi gives his risotto a small bite and it tastes so damn good, that he's first to finish his plate and ask for seconds. And then so does everyone else and Bokuto couldn't look more proud of himself.

He should be, though. Where on god's green earth did Bokuto learn to cook like that?

"Bokuto-san, you should get one of those -" He's about to say "kiss the cook" aprons, but stops himself. He can't say that.

"Get what, Akaashi?"

"One of those... top chef hats."

After dinner Bokuto's suggestion for the gaming tournament is outvoted and they all head upstairs to the sauna. Bokuto clicks some buttons and while they wait for it to heat up, he goes to fetch everyone towels. Then they strip into their underwear and get in. Kuroo pushes ahead of everyone and lies down on the top bench, like a cat stretching in the sun, while the other four have to settle for sitting on the lower one.

"Whew, is it me or is it really hot in here?" Kuroo begins to fan himself with his hand.
"That's the point of a sauna." Konoha snorts. "And if you don't like the heat, you should leave."

"That's not what I meant, you silly owl."

Akaashi chuckles quietly.

"What's so funny, Akaashi?" Konoha asks.

"It's nothing, Konoha-san."

"Angel Eyes obviously agrees with me." Kuroo smirks. "And of course he does, I mean, just look at my thighs." Kuroo lifts his legs up in the air. "My thighs are sculptured by the Gods."

"And what Gods might those be?" Sarukui grins.

Kuroo thinks about it for a moment. "The volleyball Gods."

When the small timer on the wall starts going off, everyone except Akaashi gets up.

"Akaashi, you wanna stay more?" Bokuto asks.

He shrugs. "Sure, I don't mind. Why, what do you guys wanna do?"

Bokuto glances at Kuroo and they exchange grins. Then they start sprinting down the stairs and Bokuto yells.

"The last one to the pool is a loser!"

Konoha and Sarukui quickly start running too, while Akaashi sighs and shakes his head. And even though he doesn't plan on getting inside any pool whatsoever, he follows them into the garden. Because maybe Bokuto will do a bomb and he'll finally see him with his hair down.

But even though Bokuto is very much in the pool, his hair is not wet.

Damn it.

"Holy fuck, it's freezing!" Konoha laughs.

"It's November, Konoha-san. Did you really expect the water not to be freezing?"

"Akaashi! Come on, jump in!" Bokuto grins. "After a sauna, this is just what your body needs. It's called conditioning!"

"No, Bokuto-san, it's called pneumonia." He sighs. "How deep is the pool?"


Akaashi's eyebrows knit together. "We should probably seal it off for tomorrow night, because someone drunk might fall in or get pushed in. And if they can't swim."

"But you can swim, right, Angel Eyes?" Kuroo grins and starts spitting water out of his mouth like a fountain.

Ew, gross. Disgusting pool water.

"Yes, Kuroo-san, I ca- Why are you guys all staring at me like that?" Akaashi takes a few steps back as all four of them swim to the edge of the pool he's closest to. "You're not seriously thinking
of throwing me in, right? Right, guys?"

Yeah, but even he knows that's exactly what they're thinking of doing.

"Get him, boys!" Bokuto yells and they all push themselves out of the pool.

Akaashi thinks that maybe, if he enters the house they wouldn't go in and wet the nice floor, but none of them seem to care about that.

And he's quick, but they're quicker.

"Guys, this isn't funny. Four on one isn't really fair. Guys!"

As four cold and wet pairs of hands lift him up, laughing, he starts thrashing and kicking.

"Don't throw me in- I lied okay - I can't swim!"

They let go of him at once.

"Akaashi! You really can't swim?" Bokuto asks.

"No, Bokuto-san, I really can't."

"So why did you lie to us?" Konoha blinks.

"I don't know." He admits, face turning red. "And while we're on topic of things I can't do, I can't ride a bike either."

"Ehhhh? Really?" Sarukui gawps.

"Yes, Sarukui-san, really."

He knows he shouldn't be embarrassed, because there's nothing shameful about not being able to do some things, but he just can't help himself. What if they consider him weak? Is that why they're all staring at him?

Then Bokuto throws his arm over his shoulders and grins.

"Akaashi, this is just so great!" He says happily.

"How so, Bokuto-san?"

"Because now I can be the one to teach you how to swim and also ride a bike."

And just like that, Akaashi finds himself no longer embarrassed. In fact, picturing Bokuto teaching him how to do either of those things - in summer, though, because now it's really cold - sounds really nice.

"I'd like that, Bokuto-san."

They dry themselves off and move to the couch, where they can finally start their gaming tournament. Kuroo refills their glasses and hands one to Akaashi, who shakes his head.

"I'm going to shower." He says.

"Take it with you then." Kuroo grins. "It's not like there a rule about not drinking upstairs."
Akaashi accepts the glass and after making sure all four of them are glued in front of the TV, he heads up. He decides that now's the perfect time to snoop through Bokuto's room without getting caught.

While the rest of the house is in all in a light peach color, Bokuto's room is blue just like his bathroom. Not the annoying type of blue that makes your eyes hurt, but the soft type, like the sky on a warm summer day.

Akaashi turns his attention to all the framed photographs, and he finally sees what Bokuto's parents look like. With jet black hair, in a thick waterfall of curls falling over her shoulders, his mom's a true beauty. She's smiling and the shape of her lips, her entire mouth looks exactly like Bokuto's. Well, Bokuto's looks like hers. Akaashi wonders if that smile is just like her son’s, never leaving her face. Charming and infectious. The type of smile that you just have to return whenever it's unleashed upon you, because it's impossible not to. It's an impossible smile to resist.

Bokuto also has his mom's straight nose, as cute as a button, and the same sort of sculptured face, even though her cheeks are more hollow than his. She's very skinny, even though she's tall, and Akaashi wonders if that's what you need to look like when you're in the fashion business, surrounded by models the whole time, or if it's just the result of the stressful work environment.

The only similarity Akaashi sees between Bokuto's father and him is the color of their eyes, but even though they share the same color, they look nothing alike. Bokuto's are big and warm, whereas his dad's are serious and very stern looking, crows feet surrounding the corners of each one.

It might be just the photograph, but Akaashi thinks his mom looks way more approachable and kind than his father.

There's lots of photos of Bokuto as a child and Akaashi studies them all, but unfortunately he doesn't see Bokuto with his hair down. He has different baseball caps in each, and they're all turned backwards. And even though he closes his eyes and tries to picture Bokuto with his hair down, he just can't.

Stupid baseball caps.

He moves onto the rest of the stuff over the shelves and it's all volleyball trophies, medals, different prizes from different tournaments and games. And there's so many of them, he doesn't even bother counting.

Bokuto doesn't have a wardrobe, but an entire closet full of clothes. Most of them are sporty looking stuff, but there's also a lot of formal wear - three piece suits, that sort of thing.

Clothes are boring, though, and he doesn't feel like looking at them.

And that leaves Bokuto's bed, an armchair, his desk, his computer, some DVDs and a TV.

There's nothing more to snoop through, so he leaves, but as he turns off the light, he stops and looks at the ceiling. It's covered in those glowy sticker stars and Akaashi finds himself smiling, because he imagines a young Bokuto climbing a ladder and putting them there, his tongue out of the corner of his mouth in concentration, like he often does during volleyball games.

After he takes a shower and dresses up in his pyjamas and t shirt, he decides it's time to get the others and go to bed. But their voices aren't coming from downstairs. Instead, they're coming from Bokuto's bathroom.

Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui are all in the jacuzzi, each of them holding their glasses with
"Where's Kuroo-san?"

"He went to get his phone, so he can take a picture of us." Bokuto grins.

"I'm here." Kuroo's voice comes from behind. "I think you forgot something, Angel Eyes."

To Akaashi's horror, he sees that Kuroo is holding his glass. The glass he stupidly forgot in Bokuto's room.

Fuck.

"T-thanks. I must've forgotten it downstairs."

Kuroo gives him a funny look, the same kind of look from before, like when they were in the kitchen. And Akaashi really doesn't like that look. That look makes him feel nervous.

But Kuroo just nods. "Yeah, you did."

They both know that's not true, though.

"Angel Eyes, do you wanna take the photo?"

Akaashi quickly takes Kuroo's phone from his hands, while Kuroo joins the other three in the jacuzzi.

"Say cheese."

"Akaashi, please post it on facebook, and tag us all." Konoha says.

"You can do that yourself, Konoha-san."

"But my hands are wet!"

"Then you can do it later when they aren't." Akaashi replies, puts the toilet seat down and sits there.

"Akaashi! Aren't you going to join us?" Bokuto asks. "There's plenty of room for you too."

"No. You guys are stewing in each other's dirt." He crinkles his nose. "You're all still wearing the same underwear you wore during practice today."

Kuroo grins. "We can easily solve that by taking them off?"

"Let's not do that." Sarukui quickly adds.

"I can bet that if the jacuzzi had lots of hot chicks in, Akaashi would come inside too." Konoha grins.

"Konoha-san, I think you might have a slight gambling problem. Also, you're forgetting that I'm gay."

"Oh, yeah." Konoha scratches his head. "So what's your problem then? What, we're not hot enough for you and aren't your type, is that it?"

"Pfff, speak for yourself." Kuroo smirks. "I'm everyone's type."
"That's what you think." Konoha sneers.

"Please. If I wanted you, I could have you." Kuroo replies.

"Hah!" Konoha looks at everyone around and laughs. "Did you guys hear him? What a joker!"

Bokuto shakes his head. "He's not joking. So you better watch what you say, Konoha."

"It's true, I'm not." Kuroo's smirk becomes even wider. "I don't even have to use my hands or anything, just my tongue and-"

"Okay." Akaashi rises. "I'm going to bed."

"Akaashi, wait up, I'm coming too." Bokuto says and finishes his drink in one big gulp. "Woooh!"

"Boooo, you guys are so boring." Kuroo sighs.

"Kuroo-san, you should go to bed too. Konoha-san, Sarukui-san, the same goes for the two of you. Please, you need your rest for volleyball tomorrow - no, it's already today."

"Don't you worry about us, Akaashi, we'll be ready for the games and the party." Sarukui grins, then turns to Kuroo. "So, tell us more about those girls you invited for tomorrow?"

Bokuto puts on his bathing robe and follows Akaashi to his parents bedroom.

"Bokuto-san?"

"Mhm?"

"Do you mind taking a shower first?"

Bokuto laughs. "I was just about to do that. Can you go into my room and get me some clothes to change into?"

"Okay."

Akaashi quickly takes the first thing he sees, because he doesn't want Kuroo to catch him going through Bokuto's underwear drawer and call him a pervert, or something even worse, like give him that look again.

Then he goes back to their bedroom and starts flicking through the channels, since they don't have their laptops here and he already knows it's easier for Bokuto to fall asleep while watching a movie.

He settles for Boomerang, because there's Tom and Jerry and who doesn't like Tom and Jerry?

While he waits for Bokuto to come out of the bathroom, he sits on the edge of the bed and for some inexplicable reason, he feels really nervous. It's silly, because they've shared a bed before - a couple of times, actually - and it was much, much smaller than this one. It'll be the first time they're sharing a bed after that kiss and maybe that's why it feels so different to Akaashi.

He tries to calm down, because there's no reason to be nervous. It's not like anything is going to happen, but them sleeping next to each other.

And yet his heart keeps hammering loudly against his chest.
Bokuto joins him on the edge of the bed and while his body dries, they watch cartoons together.

"Akaashi are you cold?"

"No."

"Then why are you shaking so much? I can almost hear your teeth clattering."

Oops. "...I guess I am cold."

"Do you want me to fetch you something to wear? Or you'll warm up after we get under the covers?"

God, who says stuff like that?

He expects something like this from Kuroo, but Bokuto? Why? Why does he keep saying and doing things like this? Is it on purpose or is he doing it subconsciously?

Does it mean anything?

Akaashi thought he was a good Bokuto reader, but apparently not so much, because he has no answer to either of those questions.

And he really wants to know, but it's not like he's going to ask, no way Jose. That's complete insanity and as far as he's concerned, he hasn't lost his mind.

Not yet anyway.

But if things continue like this, he just might.

"I'll be fine, Bokuto-san."

"Akaaaaashi! Couldn't you find a tighter t shirt?" Bokuto grumbles. "I can't sleep in this, it's way too tight."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

"Ehh, it's fine. I'd rather sleep topless anyway."

Of course he would.

"You don't mind that, do you?"

Yes, he most certainly does mind. But what if he says so and then Bokuto asks what the problem is?

...He's already starting to lose his mind. Definitely.

Bokuto crawls into bed, gets under the blanket and pats the empty space next to him.

"Come on, Akaashi, get in."

"Bokuto-san? Could you move to the other side, so I can be next to the door?"

Bokuto nods and slides over. "Why, though?"

"I don't want to say." He mumbles and gets into bed.
"Come onnn, Akaashi, tell me! Please? I wanna know."

"Okay, but don't laugh at me."

"I won't."

"Yes you will, because it's embarrassing."

Bokuto grins. "I wanna know even more now!"

"The side that you're on, it's closer to the windows."

"So?"

Akaashi sighs. "Have you ever seen Friday the 13th?"

Bokuto throws his head back and roars in laughter. "Oh my God!"

"I knew you'd laugh at me."

"Akaashi are you afraid that Jason might come through the windows?"

Akaashi scowls. "If he does come, he'll get you first, Bokuto-san, and then I'll be the one laughing."

Bokuto shakes the entire bed in laughter. "This is hilarious. Akaashi, please promise me that we're going to have a scary movie marathon together."

"No."

"Please?"

Akaashi sighs. "Maybe for your birthday."

"But my birthday already passed and we have to wait until next year."

"Exactly."

"Nooo, yours is way closer!"

"That sounds like the worst birthday ever."

"We can have it for Kuroo's birthday? It's the closest."

"So he can laugh at me too?"

"Don't forget Kenma."

"So all three of you will be laughing at me. Sounds like a lot of fun, I can hardly wait."

"Okay then, it'll just be me," Bokuto grins. "You said it yourself earlier, it's already today. And today is Halloween. We should watch a scary movie right now!"

"No. Today is when I wake up. Halloween begins when I wake up."

Bokuto takes the remote control and checks the channels.

"Oooh hoooo, perfect! It just started."
"What just started?"

"It."

"What's it?"

Bokuto gasps. "You've never seen It?"

"Bokuto-san, what are you talking about?"

"The movie! It's called It! Stephen King's It?"

"Oh, Stephen King. Yeah, I'm not watching that."

"Come on, it's fun."

"You know what's more fun, Bokuto-san? Sleeping without being scared."

"We can sleep after, we don't have to go to the gym until 9 am, so we'll have plenty of time to sleep."

"Yes, but there's also breakfast and getting there, which took half an hour and I have to open up the gym, so we have to leave before even 8:30 am."

"Akaashi, that's just details."

"Okay, fine. What's the movie about?"

"Watch and you'll see."

"No, tell me first so I can mentally prepare myself."

Bokuto laughs. "It's about a clown."

"There's no way in Hell I'm watching the movie."

"You're scared of clowns?"

"You aren't?!!"

"Not really, no. They're funny."

"No, they are not. They're creepy as fuck."

Bokuto laughs again. "Don't worry, Akaashi, I'll protect you."

And before Akaashi can reply that no, he doesn't want to watch a scary ass movie about a scary ass clown, Bokuto slides over the small distance between them and wraps his arm around Akaashi's shoulders.

So. They're watching It then.

Since Bokuto has seen the movie a couple of times, before each scary scene, he gently squeezes Akaashi's shoulder, so he can cover his eyes and only listen to what's happening. But even though Akaashi knows he's a scaredy cat, he stills peeks through his fingers, because shit, a part of him really wants to see what's going to happen. And he's going to regret every single one of those
peeks later, he knows that perfectly well, but later comes later and when later comes, he'll deal with it... later.

To his standards, the movie is fucking terrifying, but maybe it's because Bokuto is next to him that he doesn't feel too scared. Actually, to his own surprise, he doesn't feel scared at all.

But he doesn't say that, because he likes having Bokuto's hand over his shoulders like this. And whenever he moves his left hand to cover his eyes, it touches Bokuto's bare chest and he likes that too.

This doesn't really feel like just friendship to him, but he can deal with that later too.

Or not deal with it at all? That's even better than later.

Bokuto's chest rises up and down with each breath and Akaashi finds the rhythm of it very relaxing. So when the movie is over and Bokuto flicks to another channel for another scary movie, Akaashi doesn't have any complaints to voice out, because he can feel himself falling asleep.

A couple of hours later, Akaashi wakes up and glances at his watch. It's still early, but after brushing his teeth, he hears voices coming from the kitchen downstairs and follows them.

Konoha, Sarukui, Kuroo and Bokuto are all sitting around the kitchen counter, talking quietly and the scent of something sweet baking in the oven fills Akaashi's nostrils. He doesn't know what it is, but it smells delicious.

"Morning, guys." He greets them sleepily.

"Looks like someone could use a cup of coffee." Kuroo chuckles and pours Akaashi a cup.

"Akaashi, guess what? I've been up for hours, making brownies for everyone." Bokuto says happily.

"Why didn't you wake me up?" He asks and yawns.

"Because I know you prefer sleeping in." Bokuto explains.

He feels disappointed that Bokuto didn't wake him up, so he could've kept him company while cooking. Especially since today's going to be a really busy day. He would have preferred to have some quiet time with just the two of them, than sleep in, alone.

Then Bokuto passes him the milk jug and unleashes his smile, that devastating smile that you just have to return.

And that's when it hits him.

Akaashi's thoughts from last night come crashing down on him and his brain goes into overdrive. His blood is racing, pumping furiously, competing with his heart. He's sweating so bad as realization owns him. The collar of his t shirt feels too tight, his rib cage is ten sizes too small. It literally hurts breathing.

"Akaashi, dude, you okay?" Konoha asks worried. "You look like you saw a ghost or something?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. Bokuto-san and I were watching scary movies last night, maybe that's why." He laughs shakily.
A beeping noise comes from the oven and Bokuto claps his hands.

"My first batch of brownies is done! You guys ready for me to rock your socks off?"

Bokuto's brownies are really rich and chewy and so damn tasty, that Akaashi thinks the saying is really true, that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

But there's nothing funny about that, since the joke is on him.

When they change and head back to Fukurodani, Akaashi tries to pay attention to their conversation, but he feels his brain is miles away from everyone else.

As all four teams start warming up and stretching, Bokuto pats Akaashi's shoulder.

"Akaashi, you seem tense."

"Do I?"

"Yes." Bokuto grins. "But don't be. We got this."

He doesn't know how exactly Bokuto is able to calm him with just a smile, but boy, does he. And it's kind of ridiculous, really, because that same smile can also makes his knees go weak.

Their first opponent for the day is Karasuno, and unlike yesterday, they end up playing five whole sets.

The crows are obviously hungry for a victory, but so are the owls.

Even though Karasuno are up a match point, Akaashi doesn't worry about the score and does a dump shot. He smirks as he sees two of his opponents jump to the catch the ball, but it's too late.

Then Bokuto is up to serve, and his smirk grows even wider.

"Everyone, their ace is serving!" Karasuno's Captain yells and they switch from two receivers at the back line to three.

After watching his Captain play for five whole sets, Akaashi already knows Bokuto's game is totally on point. And when Bokuto is in the zone, nobody can stop him.

" Fucking Hell, that was a spike, not a serve! " The shaved head guy from Karasuno groans.

When Bokuto lines up for another serve, Kuroo's yell comes from across the court.

" Yo, Dadchi, what's the matter? Your team not used to the way we Tokyo boys serve, eh? "

Bokuto laughs with Kuroo and even though Akaashi scowls, he doesn't say anything, because he doesn't want to break Bokuto's concentration.

However, after Fukurodani win and Karasuno finish their suicides, Akaashi feels obliged to go and apologize for his Captain's un-Captain-y behavior.

" Please excuse, Bokuto-san. " He bows his head to Sawamura. " When Kuroo-san and him are together, they're awful. "

" You don't have to tell me what I already know. " Sawamura chuckles. " Thanks to those ruffians, our team's skin is much thicker. " 
Akaashi can definitely see the glint of determination in Sawamura's eyes, which shows that Karasuno's member of the Rat Pack plans on making Kuroo and Bokuto eat their words for taking the crows so lightly.

They get to play Aoba Jousai next and Akaashi's delighted that Oikawa gets to play from the very beginning.

However, both Bokuto and Oikawa forget they aren't just playing against each other.

"Bokuto-san, please stop challenging Oikawa-san with your serves."

But Akaashi's warning goes from Bokuto's left ear to the right, with no indication of those words registering between his ears.

Luckily, Aoba Jousai has Iwaizumi, who kicks Oikawa's ass - literally, he kicks him right in the ass- and yells.

"Trashykawa, if you keep this up, I'll make the coaches sub you out!"

"But Iwaaaaa-chan, I can't turn down Kou-chan's challenge."

Akaashi snickers. Kou-chan, really?

"Yes, you can. Don't forget we're a team, you dumbass!"

Oikawa sighs, but he listens to Iwaizumi and that's more than Akaashi can say about Bokuto.

Which, to no surprise, leads to Aoba Jousai winning.

"Bokuto, you should've listened to Akaashi." Konoha mutters angrily as they line up for suicides.

And Akaashi, and everyone else from Fukurodani, couldn't agree more.

Despite the fact the owls just lost, Akaashi's mood is lifted, because he hears that Karasuno won against Nekoma. And when he sees Kuroo, he can't stop himself from chuckling, because he looks like someone force fed him an entire lemon, rinds and all.

They all stop for a lunch break, but unlike yesterday, nobody bothers pushing the tables together, because there's four teams now. Akaashi decides to follow Bokuto to whichever table he's going to sit at and sits next to him. Kuroo and Kenma join them and Bokuto yells at Sawamura and Oikawa to sit at their table too.

Sawamura looks like he wants to eat with the rest of the crows, but after exchanging a glance with Sugawara, they both walk over to their table, and so do Oikawa and Iwaizumi.

Akaashi busies himself with his food, but he keeps his ears open. Maybe someone will start a conversation about volleyball and throw in some pointers and good advice.

Fat chance.

"No, but listen, it makes so much sense? Because "rising up to the challenge of our rival" could be like... birds flapping their wings? And the part where it goes like ""stalks his prey in the night", uh, hello? Owls are night creatures and birds of prey. So I think the song would be way better if it's "Eye of the Owl" instead of tiger." Bokuto concludes.

"Same thing could be said about a crow, though. Have you seen that Hitchcock movie, The Birds?" Sawamura asks.
"Dude, totally!" Bokuto nods.

"You can't just change a classic song to fit your school mascots. It's "Eye of the Tiger", so obviously cats are the best." Kuroo smirks.

"Poor Oikawa and Iwaizumi." Bokuto says. "Do you guys even have a school mascot?"

"Yes, we do." Oikawa replies indignantly.

"Your leafs don't count, though." Kuroo grins.

"I am Aoba Jousai's mascot." Iwaizumi doesn't say anything, but he doesn't need to. He just shakes his head and Akaashi understands him perfectly well.

"So my bro over here already knows," Bokuto grins at Kuroo. "I'd like to add another member to our Rat Pack."

"Bro, no. Don't say it."

"Eh? Who do you consider worthy of joining us, Kou-chan?" Oikawa asks, while Iwaizumi rolls his eyes.

"Ushiwaka." Bokuto replies and Oikawa rises to his feet.

"No! You did not just say that to me!"

"Sit your ass back down, Shittycawa, and stop being so noisy."

"Who's Ushiwaka?" Sawamura asks curiously. "Do you mean Ushijima Wakatoshi?"

"Yes, Dadchi, him." Bokuto nods his head.

"What's he like?" Sawamura asks.

"He's awful." Oikawa grunts, then changes his voice and mimics. "You should have come to Shiratorizawa." Meh meh mehhhh."

"That's not true! He seems like a chill dude." Bokuto shrugs. "I think we'd all get along with him."

"You think wrong, Kou-chan."

"Hey, if either of you guys made to Nationals last year, you would've seen that I'm telling the truth."

Akaashi closes his eyes and shakes his head sadly, because Bokuto's words cause a deafening shitstorm.

"What did you just say?" Iwaizumi growls.

"Bro, that wasn't cool."

"Excuse you!" Sawamura scowls.

"Alright alright, I probably shouldn't have said that. Let me make it up to you guys." Bokuto
quickly says, rises to his feet and leaves the Dining Room.

All eyes turn to Akaashi for explanation, who shrugs and pops his last piece of bread roll into his mouth.

"Where did your Captain go, Aka-chan?"

Akaashi coughs. Aka-chan! Seriously?

...Well, at least it's Aka-chan and not Kei-chan, which would be even worse.

Kuroo laughs and pats his back.

"Thank you, Kuroo-san. Oikawa-san, I honestly don't know where Bokuto-san went. But he'll be back."

After a couple of minutes, Bokuto returns from the kitchen, carrying a plate full of brownies.

"A peace offering for you guys." Bokuto grins. "I made them just this morning."

Akaashi chuckles quietly, because nobody around the table dares to try one. They're all staring at the plate in Bokuto's hand suspiciously.

"They're really good, you guys should try them." He says and eats one. Then he passes the plate to Kuroo.

Kenma says he doesn't like brownies, but Sawamura and Sugawara take one each and after biting into them, nod in approval. Kuroo waves the plate in front of Iwaizumi and Oikawa and grins.

"Oikawa, you'd totally love them." He smirks. "They're space brownies."

"They're what?" Oikawa blinks, while Iwaizumi spits his mouthful into a napkin and grunts.

"Trashykawa, I swear to God, if you take what that cat is offering you, I'm going to break both your arms. You know I'll do it, we have another setter."

Kuroo throws his head back and laughs.

"Don't listen to Kuroo-san, they're normal brownies." Akaashi explains to Iwaizumi, who nods, but doesn’t reach for another one.

"Tetsu-chaaan, you got me really excited over nothing!" Oikawa whines, but takes a brownie, despite Iwaizumi's warning mere seconds ago. "Mmm they taste like... like they're out of space! Iwa-chan, try it!"

Before Iwaizumi can reply, Oikawa stuffs the rest of his brownie into Iwaizumi's mouth.

Akaashi wonders if Oikawa has a death wish.

But Oikawa definitely knows what's about to happen, because he ducks out of the way, and Iwaizumi's punch lands on Sugawara's unexpecting face.

Then it's a big mess, because Sawamura gets on his feet and yells at Iwaizumi, who quickly starts apologizing, and Oikawa is laughing, while Bokuto and Kuroo slam their fists against the table, chanting "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Akaashi dashes into the kitchen and asks for an ice pack. He hands it to Sugawara and after
exchanging a glance with Kenma, who nods, he leads the other two setters to their quiet spot in the storage room.

"Kuro's such an ass." Kenma says quietly.

"So is Bokuto-san." Akaashi turns to Sugawara. "Sugawara-san, how's your face?"

Sugawara winces. "It's seen better days, but thank you. The ice is really helping."

"I really hope this isn't Karasuno's last time coming to Fukurodani."

Sugawara laughs. "Don't worry about it. We'll come whenever we get invited."

Akaashi doesn't know the standard protocol of things, but since he's Vice Captain, his words must have some weight, so he tells Sugawara that their team, as well as Nekoma, are always welcome at Fukurodani.

"Thank you. But it's a bit harder for us, since we're not from Tokyo. And Karasuno is a small school, so we don't have the funding that you have here at Fukurodani."

Akaashi smiles proudly. "Actually, it's our manager that takes care of that for us."

Both Kenma and Sugawara blink in surprise, and he explains everything that Yukie told him.

"Your manager seems very popular with the boys, so I'm pretty sure that if she opens up a kissing booth, your volleyball team will make a lot of money." Akaashi says. Then he quickly adds. "Unless your Libero and your #5 are around."

Sugawara grins. "Naw, Nishinoya and Tanaka are harmless."

"Maybe for you and your team, Sugawara-san. Yesterday, Yukie asked me to bring your team water bottles and I approached your manager and those two were giving off this really... demonic aura." Akaashi shudders. "That's why Yukie's been bringing your water today."

Sugawara chuckles. "I guess you're right. But this is a great idea and I'll make sure to tell Daichi and my Captain about it."

Despite the fact they all play until 6:00 pm and all four teams have done their fair share of suicides, when the Aoba Jousai and Nekoma coaches leave the gym, everyone rushes at Bokuto's side and start shooting questions at him, where and what time's the party, should they bring anything, bla bla bla.

Akaashi very cleverly leaves the key for the gym to Yukie and goes for a quick shower in his room, because he doesn't want to stay sticky and sweaty, especially because they are going food and costume shopping next.

This is going to be his first Halloween costume party and at first, he thought dressing up would be a bit silly? But now that he's watching Konoha, Sarukui, Kuroo and Bokuto all try out different outfits, he decides he should join in all the fun they're having.

Kuroo's head pops out of his changing room and grins at Bokuto.

"Hit it, bro."

Bokuto starts playing Jailhouse Rock on his phone, while Kuroo comes out, dressed in a white suit bedazzled with gems all over the chest and does a runway strut in front of the big mirror.
Konoha and Sarukui double over in laughter and Akaashi shakes his head with a smile on his face. If someone can pull off the king of rock and roll, it's definitely Kuroo. Except for the hair.

"Hey there, pretty mama." Kuroo mimics Elvis's voice and finger guns at Akaashi. "Wanna be my Priscilla for the night? You gon' make one fine Priscilla, baby." He wiggles his eyebrows.

"No thank you, Big Daddy."

"Akaashi!" Bokuto gawps. "Why are you calling him that?"

Akaashi shrugs. "I was just trying to be in character."

"Lemme see what you're wearing." Bokuto studies Akaashi's clothes and he's so concentrated, that Akaashi doesn't have the heart to tell him these are his regular clothes. "Ooooh hoooo! I got it! You're the Gorillaz!"

Akaashi looks down at his chest, then back at Bokuto. "Bokuto-san, that's Paul Frank."

"Hmm, I don't know the band member's names, but I totally get it."

"No. The monkey is Paul Frank's logo and it has nothing to do with the band."

"Oh. Your costume's a bit hard to guess, you should try something else."

Akaashi sighs. "I don't know what to wear."

"Me too. I was thinking of Iron Man?"

Kuroo grins. "Let's see. You're both rich, so check. You don't have a Jarvis?"

"I have a volleyball."

"Sure, that works. You don't have Pepper Potts?"

"I have Akaashi."

"Yeah. Ah no, you don't have a drinking problem, so Tony Stark is a no."

"You don't have to resemble a character in order to dress up as him, Bokuto-san, you can wear whatever you want."

"Batman maybe?" Bokuto ponders. "But my face is my moneymaker, and I don't want to cover it up with a mask."

"Your arms and your abs are your moneymaker, bro, not your face."

Akaashi couldn't agree more on the first part. Bokuto's arms are so... shit, son.

"Hey!"

"You should go as Magic Mike." Kuroo suggests.

"No, he should go as Batman." Sarukui grins. "And Akaashi can be his Robin."

Konoha laughs. "Yeah, Robin's totally gay for Batman."

Akaashi's cheeks heat up at once. "I'm not going as Robin."
"Check me out, you guys." Kuroo says and walks out of his changing room, this time dressed up as a policeman. "Prepare to be fucked by the long dick of the law."

Akaashi sighs, while Bokuto hoots happily.

"This is so cool, bro! Hey, you guys! We should all dress up as police officers and go as a squad!"

"No, no, no, you losers are gonna be cramping up my style." Kuroo shakes his head.

"I don't wanna wear the same costume as you guys." Konoha grumbles.

"So what are you going as? The hyena from The Lion King?" Bokuto sneers. "You can have Saru as your monkey."

"Fuck that! I wanna be a pilot. Or a sailor. Ughhh I can't pick." Konoha sighs.

"What about you, Sarukui-san?"

"I don't know. Maybe Bokuto's idea about all of us going as policemen isn't so bad. And you, Akaashi?"

"I kind of wanted something Star Wars related? Maybe Darth Vader or Kylo Ren?"

Kuroo snorts. "More like Cry-lo Ren. No, don't do Star Wars, that's totally nerdy."

Akaashi shrugs. "I don't mind nerdy."

"Bro, you know what?" Kuroo turns to Bokuto. "We should get our setters those angel halos. And Sugawara, too. All the setters can be angels, bro."

Bokuto nods. "Yeah, but for Oikawa we should get the devil horns."

"Sugawara-san told me during lunch he's going to be an angel." Akaashi says. "And Kenma told me what his costume is too."

"He told you?" Kuroo's mouth forms a comical "O". "He didn't tell me! What is Kenma dressing up as?"

Akaashi smirks. "Sorry, Kuroo-san, my lips are sealed."

"Akaashi, you have puke guy's phone number, right?" Bokuto asks and Akaashi nods. "Call him and tell him Fukurodani are all going as police officers, so he can call the other first years and pass it on."

"Bokuto-san, I don't think there's enough time for-"

"Akaaaaash! Please do it. We should all go as a team."

"What about Yukie?" Akaashi asks.

"She's a girl. She probably wouldn't want to go dressed up like the rest of us. But just in case, call her too."

"Okay."

In the end, Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi decide to listen to Bokuto and go as policemen, while Kuroo, who refuses to be lumped in with the owls, goes back to his Elvis Presley costume.
"I think it suits you better, Kuroo-san."

Kuroo puts his forefinger over his upper lip. "Thank you. Thank you very much."

Akaashi chuckles. But his chuckle is short lived, because they all start piling up different kinds of snacks and drinks and decorations for the party and when he sees the bill, he wants to cry.

"Aw fuck, it's not even November yet and I'm already poor." Konoha sighs.

"Same." Bokuto grins.

"That doesn't count, because you're always poor. Which is so fucking weird, because your parents are so fucking rich!" Konoha mutters, but Akaashi quickly decides to change the topic, since he knows how Bokuto feels about the current one.

"The beer and the wine, we can get, because we're all over 16. But I don't know about all those vodka bottles." He bites his lip. "How are we gonna get those?"

Kuroo winks. "Don't worry about it, Angel Eyes, I got a fake ID."

Of course he does.

Carrying all the shit they bought to Bokuto's house is quite the challenge. Akaashi's arms feel like they are going to fall off, and Bokuto quickly takes half of his bags, despite the fact he's carrying two massive beer kegs.

"Bokuto-san, you're already carrying so much!"

"Akaashi, chill." Bokuto grins. "Compared to the stuff I lift in our weightlifting room, this is nothing."

All you need to do is take a glance at Bokuto's arms to know he's telling the truth, but Akaashi is still very impressed.

Bokuto, Kuroo, Sarukui and Konoha all go shower, while Akaashi stays in the kitchen and starts putting all the snacks in trays and plates. He prefers it this way, though, because he's more organized when he doesn't have to worry about Bokuto making a mess. And as Sarukui called him the "most artsy one", he quickly transforms the first floor into an epic party place.

Kuroo is the first to join him and since he's taller, Akaashi tells him exactly where to place the spiderwebs and hang up the "Happy Halloween" banners. Then he goes downstairs to the ground floor to bring the big speakers, while Akaashi takes a cold beer, sits at the kitchen counter and starts blowing up the black and silver balloons.

He definitely needs the pre drink - or like three - because he's getting really agitated and wants to be more relaxed. Especially since his brain keeps conjuring up different scenarios of how he can flirt with Bokuto. Because he can't be too sure, but that's what Bokuto's been doing, right? Flirting with him?

Why else would Bokuto give him all those winks and treat him differently than he does everyone else?

Akaashi doesn't want to ruin anything by overthinking things, like he always does, so he quickly downs his beer and takes another one.

"Damn, Angel Eyes, thirsty much?"
"Very much."
Kuroo smirks. "I hope you're not just thirsty for alcohol, though."
Akaashi has no clue what that means, but Kuroo's smirk and his eyebrow wiggle speak volumes.
"Kuroo-san? No, never mind."
"You think I should've gone with Bokuto's suggestion for being the cat in the hat?" Kuroo grins. "You and Kenma could've been my thing 1 and thing 2."
Akaashi sighs. "No. I don't want to be your thing. Besides, Kenma's costume is perfect for him."
"You're still not gonna tell me what it is, are you?"
Akaashi grins. "Nope."
"Alright. I'd keep you company with the beer, but you know how the saying goes."
"What saying?"
"Beer before liquor, never been sicker. Liquor before beer, you're in the clear."
Akaashi chuckles. "I didn't know it, but I'll keep it in mind."
"Too late for that, I'm afraid."

Konoha and Sarukui come down and help Kuroo with setting up the sound system. Akaashi had no idea Bokuto would have a microphone - he most certainly doesn't need one, because he's loud enough as he is - but it's gonna be even more fun with one. He pulls up a chair and puts the disco ball on the ceiling, which Bokuto begged them to get from the store, because what kind of lame ass party would it be without one?

Since he's too lazy to go upstairs, Akaashi decides to change into his costume on the spot.
"Daaamn, Akaashi, if I knew you were gonna strip for us, I would've kept some of money in my wallet." Konoha grins.
Kuroo nods his head in approval and smirks. "Oh yeah, baby, take it all off."
Akaashi puts both of his middle fingers up in their direction and both Konoha and Kuroo gasp in pretend shock.
When Akaashi sees Bokuto coming down the stairs, already in his police uniform, and a big smile on his face, he feels his heart flip flop in his chest. Well shit. He most certainly needs another beer to calm down.
All five of them gather around the kitchen counter and clink their glasses and beer cans together.
"Wait, wait, don't drink yet, we're missing the music!" Kuroo says and presses the play button on his laptop. "Okay, now we're good to go. Cheers!"
"Alright, bro!" Bokuto grins.

Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi exchange glances, because Bokuto starts backing up against Kuroo, who moves his hips in rhythm.
"Oh yeah! Play that funky music white boy!" Kuroo yells and slaps Bokuto's ass.

"I'm way too sober for this shit." Konoha mutters.

Sarukui nods. "There's a reason why disco is dead."

Akaashi chuckles. "Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san seem pretty keen on reviving it."

Turns out that they're not the only ones, because when people start arriving, the first thing they do after getting drinks, is busting moves straight out of an 80's.

Since the door bell keeps ringing, Akaashi stuffs another beer in his pockets and remains at the front gates to welcome everyone.

He sees Kenma in the distance, head buried in his phone, possibly trying to find the right location, even though the blasting music coming from the house, echoing through the streets is pretty hard to miss.

"Kenma! Over here!" He waves. "Hey."

"Hi." Kenma smiles.

"Nice costume, Waldo." Akaashi grins at Kenma's red and white striped shirt and hat.

"Thank you, police officer. But how come you're the one here and not Bokuto?"

Akaashi sighs. "Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san are too busy being the dancing queens right now."

"Oh. I didn't realize this was a retro party."

"Me neither."

Kenma stays next to him, so Akaashi offers his spare beer to him, which he accepts at once.

"I promised Kuro I'd come for a little bit, but now that I know that there's another sane person in here, I really don't mind staying." Kenma smiles.

Akaashi smiles back. "Thanks. This way we can save each other in time of need."

Bokuto must have extended his party invitations to the entire Fukurodani school, because Akaashi keeps seeing students he's seen in the hallways, including Saito! Akaashi doesn't know if he's gate crashing or not, but it's Bokuto's party after all, so he keeps welcoming all the familiar and lots of unfamiliar faces inside.

Aoba Jousai and Karasuno's team, lead by Yukie, are the last ones to arrive around 9:25 pm, so Akaashi locks up the gate and ushers them all inside.

Since Akaashi was welcoming everyone, he knows that Bokuto's house will be completely packed, but he genuinely didn't expect to have to push through a crowd to get to the kitchen and get drinks for Kenma, Yukie and himself.

"Wait, let me guess who you are." He studies Yukie from head to toe. "Two braids, freckles and different stockings." He grins. "You're Pippi Longstockings!"

"Congrats. You and Kiyoko - Karasuno's manager - are the only ones who recognized my outfit so far. Damn it. If I knew all the girls will dress up so sexily, I would've too." Yukie says
miserably. "Just look at her." She nods her head at Ayame. "She's in your class, right?" Akaashi nods. "I don't even know who she's supposed to be?"

"Harley Quinn. From The Suicide Squad." Akaashi replies.

"I don't know who that is, but point is, I shouldn't have dressed up in such a girly outfit."

"What's wrong with girly?"

"Nothing. It's just... it's childish and not sexy, you know?" She pouts.

"Yukie, I think you look great." Akaashi smiles. "And you're so smart-" She groans. "Yeah, because being smart will totally put me on Oikawa's radar."

"It's his loss then."

"Is it really?" Yukie snorts.

"Yes, it is. Yukie, I'm not just saying this because you're our manager, I really think you're one of the most beautiful girls here. And not just here, in general. Right, Kenma?" Kenma nods his head shyly. "See?"

"Awww, you guys are so sweet!" Yukie grins and pecks both of them on the cheeks. "Well, I best be off being the social butterfly that I am."

Akaashi doesn't remember agreeing to be a waiter, but people keep coming up to him and asking for a refill, so he complies. Somebody's got to do it, right?

Kenma shadows him for the next hour or so, but then he tugs at Akaashi's arm.

"Would it be awful of me to ask you to show me a more secluded and quiet place where I can play on my game?"

Akaashi shakes his head, smiling, and leads him up the stairs into Bokuto's parents bedroom.

"Nobody is going to disturb you here, so don't worry. I'll probably join you later."

He sees Konoha and Sarukui in the crowd and joins them.

"How's it going?" Akaashi smiles.

"Don't say we said this, but Saru and I are trying to figure out the way Kuroo's able to dance with all these hot chicks." Konoha mutters. "Ugh. Just look at how smooth he is. That fucker."

"He dances like a cat." Sarukui adds.

Akaashi has never seen a cat dance before, but he still laughs. "More like an alley cat." He looks around. "Where's Bokuto-san?"

Konoha points behind. "He was next to the fridge a couple of minutes ago."

"Oh. I better go get a refill too, I guess." Akaashi says, even though neither Konoha and Sarukui seem to be listening.

By the time he's able to push through the crowd, Bokuto is nowhere to be seen. Akaashi tries to ignore the slight disappointment he feels, because he really wanted to congratulate him on what a
success the party is. But it's all good, because he can tell him that later.

Oikawa, Iwaizumi and another guy from Aoba Jousai approach him and Oikawa laughs.

"Iwa-chan, see that I was right?" He points at the guy and Akaashi. "Matssun and Aka-chan look like long lost brothers."

Iwaizumi sighs. "They look nothing alike."

"Iwa-chan, you're so blind."

Kuroo walks over to them and throws his arm over Oikawa's shoulders. "Oikawa, didn't they tell you you're supposed to dress up as something that you're not?" He smirks. "You're Prince Charming every day, so why on Halloween too?"

"Awww, Tetsu-chan, you're so kind. And so very right. I told Iwa-chan he should come as Brock from Pokemon, but he insisted on coming like this." Oikawa points at Iwaizumi. "But it's great, because he's my knight in shining armor now."

"What do you say you ditch your knight in shining armor and come boogie with the king of rock and roll?" Kuroo smirks.

"I say let's do it." Oikawa smiles and follows Kuroo onto the dance floor, which is basically everywhere around them.

Akaashi notices the way Iwaizumi scowls silently and he wonders if there's something going on between him and Oikawa. But it's none of his business, so instead, he asks.

"Iwaizumi-san, would you like another drink?"

"Yeah, that'd be great."

Since they are out of beer cans, Akaashi taps one of the beer kegs and fills two plastic cups.

"Here you go." He smiles.

"Thank you."

Then, Bokuto's voice booms through the speakers. "Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, owls, cats, crows and leaves - or Oikawa followers - " Iwaizumi shakes his head. "- and basically everyone that's here. Thank you all for coming here tonight. Are you guys ready to partaaaaaayyy?"

"Yeahhh!"

"Hey hey heyyyy! That's what I like to hear." Bokuto laughs and Akaashi makes a mental note that before the end of the party he needs to explain to Bokuto how microphones work. Because if he keeps making announcements like this, everyone will go deaf. "I just saw that one of our beer kegs got tapped, so do you all know what time it is?"

"Beer time!"

"Damn right it is! Which means we're going to be playing beer pong in the garden, and we'll also have a beer drinking contest in the kitchen." Loud and happy hoots follow. "That's all the announcements I have for right now, so let's party! Wooooo!"

Beer pong is something Akaashi has never played and he would really like to, but when he walks
Beer pong is something Akaashi has never played and he would really like to, but when he walks out into the garden and sees the dangerous amount of people in the pool, he decides it's probably best to keep watch there. He can't swim, but he can yell for help in case something happens.

"Hey." Kuroo smiles at him. "Didn't I tell you I can be the responsible one tonight, so you can let loose? Go, you obviously wanna play beer pong."

"Thanks, Kuroo-san, but that's alright."

Kuroo rolls his eyes. "I'm not gonna let anyone drown, if that's what you're worried about."

"I'm not worried about that. But if you don't mind, I'll stay here."

"Of course I don't. Where's Kenma by the way? I haven't seen him in a while."

"You mean where's Waldo?" Akaashi snickers. "He's upstairs in Bokuto-san's parents bedroom."

Kuroo nods. "Gotcha."

They both watch as Bokuto picks up Ayame on top of his shoulders.

"Bokuto-san seems to be having a lot of fun." Akaashi smiles and hopes his smile looks genuine and not as forced as it feels.

"Indeed." Kuroo glances at him. "And what about you? Are you having fun?"

"Of course I am. Why wouldn't I be?"

Kuroo purses his lips and Akaashi can see he wants to say something, but he doesn't. Instead, he reaches in his pocket and takes out a big wad of money.

"See this money?" Akaashi nods. "Guess how I made it?"

"I don't know. How?"

Kuroo grins. "I not only managed to make myself a nice tit soup in the jacuzzi upstairs, but also started charging people for it."

"I have no idea what a tit soup is, Kuroo-san, but that's good thinking." Akaashi laughs softly. "You should consider becoming a business major when you're in college."

"Here." Kuroo hands him half of the money. "This is your share."

"Really? But... why? I didn't do anything?"

Kuroo shrugs. "Because I wanna share it with you, that's why."

"What about Konoha-san and Sarukui-san?"

"I knew you'd ask that." Kuroo sighs. "Fine, all four of us can share it."

"It's only fair, since they also paid for all the shit we bought."

Kuroo separates the money, then grins. "Go make your fellow owls rich."

Then he slaps Akaashi's ass.

"Ah!" Akaashi gasps. "What the Hell was that for?"
Kuroo finger guns him and winks. "A little less conversation, a little more action please."

Akaashi’s just about to head inside and look for Konoha and Sarukui, when Kenma joins him and Kuroo.

"Kenma, are you leaving already?" Kuroo asks and Kenma nods.

"I saw a chess board in Bokuto-san's room, if you wanna play?"

"Thanks, but maybe next time. There's not a quiet place around here to do that."

"What about Bokuto-san's parents bedroom?"

Kenma shakes his head. "That's kind of why I'm here and ready to leave."

"What?" Akaashi blinks. "Did anyone go up there? Oh crap. Bokuto-san's gonna be pissed if he finds out."

Kenma glances at Kuroo, then looks at Akaashi and shakes his head.

"I don't think he'll mind, since he's the one that told me to leave his parents bedroom."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Pls don't hate me for what's about to follow. But do not fear, my children, because Bokuaka is going to happen C:

Akaashi wants to ask if Bokuto went up there by himself, but he knows, of course he knows, that he's not alone.

He's grateful that Kuroo suggests to walk Kenma out and after wishing Kenma goodnight, Akaashi goes to the freezer and takes out a tray with jello shots. He forgets - no, he doesn't forget, he ignores - Kuroo's warning from before about mixing liquor. Maybe the alcohol will calm his drumming heart.

He sits at the kitchen counter, on the chair that is right across the staircase and starts working on the green and red vodka shots. Iwaizumi approaches him and asks if he can take a few and Akaashi nods. Clearly he's not the only one that wants to escape the cold reality which is sobriety.

Komi, Yukie, Konoha and Sarukui come over and the six of them quickly finish the tray.

"Oh my God, these are so delicious!" Yukie exclaims happily and takes another one out of the fridge. "If I knew alcohol tasted so yummy, I wouldn't have eaten all those peanuts and soft pretzels."

Konoha snorts. "Yukie, your stomach is the size of Santa Claus's bag - it's bottomless."

"That's no way to talk to a lady." Oikawa's voice comes from behind Akaashi and he turns his head just in time to see Oikawa's dashing smile in Yukie's direction, who starts giggling uncontrollably.

Akaashi motions for Yukie to come closer and whispers in her ear.

"Yukie, you're being really obvious."

She continues giggling. "Please make sure I don't drink any more, Akaashi."

He pushes the tray away from her reach and Yukie gives him a conspiratorial wink. It's better this way, the less for her, the more there is for him.

Kuroo, who's next to Oikawa, pats his shoulder and smirks.
"So I was just asking Prince Charming over here how he got his knee injured. Please do tell, Oikawa. Knowing you, you were probably up to some weird kinky shit in the bedroom, weren't you?"

"Testu-chan, wouldn't you like to know!" Oikawa laughs softly.

"You bet your sweet ass I do." Kuroo's smirk spreads even wider. "I'm really curious to know what happened."

Iwaizumi growls. "Watch yourself. Curiosity killed the cat."

"Ah, but you're forgetting a cat has 9 lives." Kuroo replies, not at all bothered by Iwaizumi's dangerous tone.

"Interesting theory." Iwaizumi cracks his knuckles. "Would you like to test it?"

Kuroo makes a "come at me" motion with his hands. "Bring it on, big boy."

"Rawr! Kitty got claws." Oikawa chuckles.

"You sure you wanna take this outside?" Iwaizumi challenges.

Before Kuroo can reply, Sawamura stands between him and Iwaizumi and puts his hands up.

"No! Nobody is taking anything outside. Do you both hear me?"

"Careful, Dadchi. You don't wanna end up getting punched like your boyfriend at lunch." Kuroo grins.

Sawamura sputters. "Suga is not my boyfriend."

"Maybe not, but you totally wish to get yourself a slice of Mr Refreshing." Oikawa smirks. "Don't you, Sawamura-kun? Come on, let's go ask what he thinks about that."

Akaashi feels totally bad for Sawamura, because despite his protests, Oikawa and Kuroo carry him over to where Sugawara is.

Thank God he isn't Sawamura, because if Kuroo and Oikawa teased him like this about Bokuto, he'd wish for the ground to open up and swallow him whole.

Then he reminds himself he shouldn't be thinking about Bokuto at all.

But apparently you don't have to speak of the devil, you just have to think of him and he shall appear.

And while Akaashi was busy watching everything around him, he missed who Bokuto'd come down with.

Maybe it's better not knowing.

He sees Bokuto talking to Kuroo, then he walks over to him and tugs at his arm.

"Akaashi!" Bokuto grins. "Come with me!"

"No."

"Please?"
"Why should I?"

"Becaaaause! I didn't see you dance, not once, all night!"

Akaashi is surprised, because he didn't think Bokuto noticed. Ever since everyone arrived and the party started, Bokuto hadn't so much as said a single word to him. But he must've been paying attention, if he knows that.

"Bokuto-san, I don't dance."

"Eh? Please don't tell me I spend the past half an hour upstairs learning how to slow dance for nothing!" Bokuto grumbles.

Akaashi blinks. "What?"

"Yeah, you heard me. I asked your friend, Ayame, that was her name, right?" Akaashi nods. "To teach me how to do it, because I only know how to lead and I thought that if you and I danced together, you might prefer to lead?"

The green eyed monster inside Akaashi's chest purrs happily, because shit! Bokuto was upstairs not to get his freak on with someone, but he was learning how to dance? For him?

He might not dance, but there is always an exception to the rule. Bokuto's gesture, his pleading eyes and big smile, how can he say no to that?

It's just not possible.

As Bokuto leads him to the dance floor, Kuroo takes the microphone.

"This next song is a dedication to all the sexy ladies and hot dudes out there."

Elvis's "I can't help falling in love with you" starts playing and Akaashi doesn't care if people talk that they're two guys dancing together. In fact, the dance floor fills with all kinds of couples - girls with boys, girls with girls, boys with boys. Nobody is paying even the slightest attention to Bokuto and him.

But even if they were, he wouldn't care.

Akaashi knows how to slow dance, because he's done it with him mom and seen his dad do it with her, many times, and after all, moving your legs in a square isn't all that hard. Since Bokuto asked him to lead, Akaashi places his hands on Bokuto's hips and expects Bokuto to place his on his shoulders. But Bokuto shakes his head.

"Nooo, Akaashi, not like this!"

"Oh. Then how?"

Bokuto extends his hand. "Take my hand."

"Bokuto-san? You expect me to tango with you?"

"Yes, exactly!" Bokuto grins.

"But... you can't tango to this?"

"Sure we can."
Bokuto sees just how clueless Akaashi is, so he takes the lead. Akaashi lets him push through the dancing couples and starts laughing at how enthusiastic Bokuto is, and so very pleased with himself. He even lets Bokuto twirl him a few times.

At this point Akaashi doesn't know if it's the alcohol or just the fact he's so damn happy that Bokuto and him are dancing together, that he can't stop smiling. He doesn't even care that Kuroo hasn't let go of the mic and is making everyone endure his horrible singing.

Because Kuroo is a lot of things, but singer is not one of those things.

Not even an hour ago Akaashi felt like the party was a nightmare, but now it's just... indescribable. No. It's perfect.

Especially the way Bokuto keeps smiling at him, his favourite smile. And his honey eyes, glinting happily, as if Akaashi is the most important person here, or the only one present.

When the song ends, another slow one comes up and Bokuto raises his eyebrow at him.

"Another dance?"

"Maybe later, Bokuto-san." Akaashi smiles. "I need to go out for some fresh air."

"That's a pretty good idea, it's so hot in here."

Ayame approaches the both of them and grins.

"Bokuto-senpai! What do you think of my dancing lessons?"

"Ask Akaashi."

She looks at Akaashi. "Well?"

"I think you should teach me some of your moves." Akaashi chuckles.

"Let's do it!"

"Oh, not now. Maybe-"

"Would you mind if I take your dancing partner then?" Ayame grins.

"Please. Bokuto-san is all yours."

"I was gonna go out with Akaashi for some-" Bokuto begins, but Ayame pulls his hand. "Okay then."

Akaashi walks out and it's way colder than he thought. The pool still has some crazies inside, but compared to earlier, it's almost empty. He sees Iwaizumi sitting at the edge, his legs dipped inside. Akaashi considers approaching him, but his shoulders are so slumped that maybe he prefers to be alone. Why else would he be outside in the cold?

He walks back in and since the chairs are all taken, he fills himself a cup of beer and leans against the fridge. He sees Yukie dancing with Oikawa and as if she knows he's looking at her, she grins. He's about to grin back, when he hears Konoha's loud voice.

"Alright, get it, Captain!"

Akaashi's eyes instantly find Bokuto in the crowd.
Apparently Ayame took Akaashi's words of "Bokuto-san is all yours" at heart. And it also seems like Bokuto has found himself a new kissing partner.

Just when he'd started to think that really, he wasn't just imagining it, and that Bokuto was flirting with him... Of course it would happen like this.

Akaashi blinks and stares at his wet hand. He didn't realize he'd crushed the plastic cup in it.

He swallows down the terrible lump stuck in his throat. But he can't do anything about the way the hair on the back of his neck is standing up and his skin is in goosebumps. Or the way his heart feels like it just got sucker punched.

Despite all the noise around, Akaashi can hear a tiny voice whispering in the back of his mind. Is this what it's supposed to be like? Is this how it's supposed to feel? Like a roller coaster? Like a lifetime's emotions squeezed into a single minute? Like losing your fucking mind?

He didn't notice when Kuroo walked next to him and obviously said something, because he's looking at Akaashi expectantly.

"I'm sorry, what?" Akaashi asks.

Kuroo sighs and shakes his head sadly.

After a while, he tries again.

"I know what you're thinking, Akaashi."

Akaashi snorts. What, Kuroo's a mind reader now?

"I see the way you look at him." Kuroo licks his lips. "But it's not gonna happen. He's not gay."

"You think I don't know that?" It sounds way more defensive than Akaashi meant it and wow, really bitter too. When did that happen?

And wait a minute, why didn't Akaashi deny it? How did Kuroo make him open his mouth and reply to that, instead of saying "I don't know what or who you're talking about."

Akaashi finally understands the looks Kuroo'd been giving him lately.

He knows.

And maybe deep down Akaashi knew that Kuroo knows.

"As your friend, and someone who's known Bokuto a lot longer than you, I felt the need to say it." Kuroo replies softly. "And you don't have to worry, because I'm not going to tell anyone about it."

"I didn't think you would."

"Hey, that's the first time you didn't make the worst assumption about me."

A ghost of a smile passes Akaashi's lips. "I guess you're growing on me."

"No biting remark? No "growing on me like cancer"?" Kuroo blinks.

Akaashi shrugs. "I'm not really in the mood for jokes."
"Well, as your close friend, I have an idea of what to do next."

"Yeah? What's that?"

Kuroo grins and squeezes Akaashi's shoulder. "We get piss drunk, so you can forget all about it."

"Sounds like a really good plan."

"Oh fuck, you're even agreeing with me?" Kuroo bites his lower lip. "I should be worried about you, right?"

Despite himself, Akaashi laughs. "No, I'm fine."

He isn't, though. And they both know that. But there's nothing left to do, other than get crazy drunk, like Kuroo suggested.

So they do.

Kuroo leads the way to the cigar room on the third floor. There's a Nekoma first year smoking in one of the armchairs and he's blowing smoke circles in the air.

"You." Kuroo snaps his fingers and points at the door. "Out."

"But you said this is the only place I can smoke?"

"Are you questioning your senpai? Get outta here before I tell your mom you smoke."

The first year snorts. "Where do you think I got the cigarettes from?"

"I'll tell our Captain and Nekomata-sensei that you smoke if you don't make yourself scarce in the next 30 seconds."

Akaashi snickers at the speed with which the first year dashes out of the room.

"Some peace and fucking quiet finally." Kuroo grins. "Now, what would you like to drink, Angel Eyes? Do you want me to make us killer cocktails?"

"Are we going to die?"

Kuroo laughs. "Not if we just have one each."

"Make us two each then." Akaashi replies.

"You better not hate me tomorrow when you have a hangover."

Akaashi laughs. "Don't worry, Kuroo-san, I'll only hate myself in the morning."

"If it's any consolation, we'll all be in a terrible state and hate ourselves."

"That helps, yeah."

Akaashi watches as Kuroo pulls out two tall glasses and starts pouring different kinds of bottles inside.

"Kuroo-san? When you said you're making us cocktails, did you mean you know how to or are you just putting all kinds of shit in there?"
"You got me." Kuroo laughs. "Wanna help?"

"Yeah. But instead of those big ones, what do you say we get shot glasses?"

"Oh ho hooo, brilliant! You make two for us and I'll make two for us."

"And then we can name them, since we're the creators."

"Perfect. Just don't touch that bottle." Kuroo points. "Because that's Bokuto's dad's favourite."

Akaashi nods. "What's Bokuto-san's dad like?"

"Are you sure you wanna ask me about his dad?" Kuroo asks quietly. "Because for someone who wants to get over their crush, you're doing a pretty bad job of trying to get over it."

"A crush?" Akaashi echoes as his face turns red.

"Well yeah, isn't that what you feel?"

"I don't know... I guess so."

"Don't worry, Angel Eyes, everyone gets crushes, like, all the time. And it's super easy to get over them."

"You speak like you know from experience?"

"Nah, but I'm different. I don't get attached like everyone else does."

"How do you do that?"

"I don't know." Kuroo shrugs. "I just don't let anyone close enough to break my heart."

"What about Kenma?"

"He's like my brother!"

"That's what Bokuto-san said about Yukie, that he only sees her as a-" Akaashi stops as he sees the way Kuroo is looking at him. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't be talking about him."

"You can if you want to? I'm a good listener, so if you think that'll help, please, pour your heart out."

Akaashi shakes his head. "No. The only thing I wanna pour is this bottle of tequila."


After they finish with their first batch of shots, they exchange glasses and down Akaashi's ones first.

"Mmmm I taste tequila and strawberry juice?" Kuroo licks his lips. "It's the first time I try such a combination and I'll make sure I never do again. So what's the name of your shot?"

Akaashi coughs in laughter. "How about "Never again"?"

"That's a good name. Now let's do mine."

They down Kuroo's shots and Akaashi shakes his head in disgust.
"Kuroo-san, that tasted like ass." Then he quickly adds. "And no, I have never tasted ass before."

Kuroo laughs. "You might in the future, though."

"You're even more disgusting than the shots we just drank." Akaashi scowls.

"I'm just sayin', Angel Eyes, don't knock it till you try it."

Akaashi pulls a face. "This time I'm really sure you're speaking from personal experience."

"Ding ding ding, we have a winner."

Akaashi sighs. "So what's the name of your shots?"

"I'm gonna name them "The kiss of ass"."

The two of them busy themselves with making more shots and after a while, they've created and tasted "Hammer hooter", "Cat's nipple", "Dragon Slammer", "Mind blaster" and "The shot of the dead".

"Blegh, I think that last one had the most accurate name." Akaashi mutters. "I feel like I'm dead."

"Nah, you're fine." Kuroo laughs.

Halfway through the shots, they decide to sit on the floor, because standing requires effort, which neither of them are willing to give.

Since the taste in Akaashi's mouth is awful, he takes a blue bottle and opens up the cap.

"Angel Eyes, that's a fucking colorer!" Kuroo tries to paw the bottle away from his lips, while laughing. "Oh my God, we can't drink that."

"Really?" Akaashi shrugs. "I can."

He takes a chug from the bottle, while Kuroo shrieks in laughter.

"You're gonna kill me. Let me try it too."

Akaashi passes him the bottle and after Kuroo takes a swig, he shudders.

"It's fucking bitter as shit."

"Then give it back here, I like it."

"I wanna say something before I'm too drunk and forget it." Kuroo says slowly.

Akaashi grins, because from Kuroo's tone, he can tell just how drunk Kuroo is already. His words sound garbled, like he has a fucking potato stuck in his mouth.

Akaashi probably sounds the same, which he finds even more amusing.

"Earlier, I asked Kenma to text me when he got home and-"

"That's nice of you, Kuroo-san."

"Shhh, wait." Kuroo scratches his head. "Oh, yeah. Um, he asked me how you're doing."
"Peachy." Akaashi replies.

"Yeah, I can see you're peaches and all." Kuroo hiccups. "He's even more perceptive than I am."

"He knows too, doesn't he?"

"Yup. That's why he's such a great setter. And don't worry, he won't tell anyone either."

"I know that." Akaashi sighs. "Do you think Bokuto-san knows?"

Kuroo snorts, a bit too hard perhaps, because snot comes out of his nose.

Akaashi cackles. "Kuroo-san, you've never looked so sexy before."

"Fuck you." Kuroo reaches with his hand for a napkin above his head. But since he can't reach or find one, he gets up on his feet. "Fuck. I think there's an earthquake."

"I think we shouldn't drink anymore." Akaashi replies and rises as well. "Yeah, you're right about the earthquake. I feel it too." Then he groans. "I have no idea how we're going to clean this place up when we wake up."

"Chill." Kuroo grins. "Bokuto's parents have a maid who comes every weekday, so she'll clean it all up on Monday. And he told me his parents come back on Thursday, so the place will be spotless by then."

Akaashi sighs. "Poor woman."

"Wanna go downstairs and see how the party's going?" Kuroo suggests. "Or if you prefer, we could stay here?"

"No, I feel like going to bed."

"You can't do that, Angel Eyes. You gotta hydrate yourself or eat, maybe dance it off or something. If you go to bed like this, you're gonna feel like shit in the morning, or whenever the fuck we wake up."

The two of them walk out of the cigar room, but as they approach the stairs, they exchange a glance and start laughing. Going down four flights of stairs is going to be quite a challenge and they both know it.

They do make it down to the first floor by crawling instead of walking, after what feels like hours later.

But everything else is a blur of faces and people and voices and Akaashi thinks he hears Konoha saying something like "Shit you guys, we were so busy watching Bokuto this entire time, that we didn't realize it's his nanny that needs help."

Akaashi can't understand why there are two moons in the sky when he wakes up or why they are blinking at him.

Groaning, he rubs the back of his hand over his eyes, then looks again. He realizes he's lying on a bed, staring up at Bokuto's big honey colored eyes.

"Had fun last night?" Bokuto grins.

"Bokuto-san, I have been poisoned." Akaashi croaks out and rolls over on his stomach, feeling as if he's on the deck of a ship during a fierce storm.
Why is everything spinning like this?

Laying down on the bed is doing nothing to help, so he gets up on his feet. The movement makes his stomach flop dangerously, so he pushes Bokuto out of the way and dashes for the bathroom, and just in time, as the bile rises up in his throat.

Akaashi is thankful that Bokuto doesn't barge in, but simply knocks on the door and says he's going downstairs to fix them some breakfast.

The idea of food sounds revolting, so he throws up again. When he's certain that he's emptied all the contents of his stomach, he gets up and brushes his teeth. Then he splashes some cold water against his face and stares at reflection in the mirror.

Bleary eyes, with big circles under them. And his face is a terrible yellowish color.

Akaashi feels even worse than he looks.

With a sigh, he slides against the bathroom door until his ass hits the floor. He tries to remember how he got into Bokuto's parents bedroom. Or basically anything?

For someone with a photographic memory, it's ridiculous how much alcohol can change everything, because he can only recall snapshots.

Him and Kuroo drinking a lot - like a whole fucking lot. There was lots of laughing, which is probably why his throat feels so sore. Or maybe that's because he threw up. He feels a bit better now, though, because all the alcohol is out of his system.

Akaashi makes a mental note to never drink carelessly like this, because it feels awful.

Then he remembers why he drank himself silly.

Of course, his stupid mind wouldn't forget the thing he wanted to forget the most, but conjure up the memory as bright as the fucking sun. It's almost like Bokuto and Ayame's lip lock is tattooed in his brain, mindfucking him ten ways into next Sunday.

Akaashi reminds himself that he doesn't care.

He's very pleased to find out that Bokuto's cancelled volleyball practice for the day, because everyone is partied out and incapable of running. Mundane things like getting dressed, eating, walking, staying awake and even breathing are difficult tasks, after all the alcohol they'd consumed last night.

Which totally sucks major ass, because tomorrow is Monday, which means the beginning of their midterm exams.

Akaashi tries to keep his distance from Bokuto as much as he can, because he doesn't want to deal with Bokuto. Not in his current state of mind, or mood. But that's a hard thing to do when you live together.

And Bokuto obviously notices that, because at the end of Study Hall, he can't keep quiet anymore.

"Akaashi, are you mad at me?" He asks. "Did I do something?"

Akaashi laughs, but even to his own ears it sounds horrifically fake and too high pitchy, like a rusted door hinge, from the scary movies they saw on Friday night together.
"Please, Bokuto-san. What could you have possibly done to upset me?" Bokuto shrugs, so he continues. "I have no reason to be mad at you, that's stupid."

But it sounds like he's saying "you're stupid". And it feels like "I'm stupid".

And that's the truth - Akaashi doesn't have a reason to be mad at Bokuto.

But he kinda is.

It's easier to feign oblivion than admit, even to himself, that he wants Bokuto to burn the way he burns.

Why should Akaashi be the only one unable to stop thinking about their stupid kiss? What the fuck, it wasn't even a real one?

He'd just, he'd really thought it was more than the play?

How foolish of him. Why did he delude himself with such ideas? What was the point of it, when Bokuto, so very clearly doesn't feel the same way?

Dumb Akaashi.

On Monday, just after their classes end and he heads into Dining Room A for tutoring, Ayame whispers in his ear.

"Did Bokuto-senpai say anything about me?"

Akaashi shakes his head.

"Oh. Could you maybe tell him I think he's really cute?"

"Why don't you do it yourself?" Akaashi replies, and he wonders if the annoyance in his voice is as obvious to Ayame as he thinks it is.

It isn't.

"Akaashi!" She laughs. "I can't do that! Can you please do it for me? Please?"

Akaashi agrees with a silent nod.

He passes the message to Bokuto when they're alone in the gym during dinner.

"Really?" Bokuto asks, eyes gleaming with joy. "What were her exact words?"

Akaashi sighs. "Do you want me to quote?"

"Yes!"

"She asked me "Did Bokuto-senpai say anything about me?" and I said no."

"Akaashi! Why didn't you tell her I said something nice about her?"

"Because I'm not a liar." Akaashi scowls. "Then she asked me tell you she finds you really cute."

"Did she say anything else?"

"No, she didn't."
Bokuto taps his chin thoughtfully. "Does this mean I should ask her out?"

Akaashi shrugs. Bokuto can do whatever the fuck he wants to do.

And once again, he has to remind himself he doesn't care.

"Do you mind if I go and call Kuroo? He'd probably give me some pointers what to do."

Akaashi remains alone in the gym and decides to listen to the advice Oikawa gave him over the weekend. He finds some cones in the storage room and places them on the other side of the court.

He starts practicing serves, taking out all of his pent up frustration on the balls.

Again. And again.

Then he places the cones to his side of the court and starts practicing setting. He tries to toss the balls right on top of the cones, or at least next to them, so they get knocked over.

Akaashi wonders what advice Kuroo would give Bokuto and if he'd tell him to go for it, after knowing how Akaashi feels. Is Kuroo going to be a good friend to Bokuto or to him?

He snorts.

Friend or no friend, knowing or not knowing, Kuroo doesn't owe Akaashi anything. And of course Kuroo would encourage Bokuto to go for it.

The three of them were together in the gym when Bokuto admitted he really wanted a girlfriend.

Is it really that surprising that Bokuto would want Ayame to be that girl?

Ayame's a cute little thing with a sunny personality, dark caramel skin and a great head of hair, nice pouty lips and a bouncy pair of breasts and she is all the things that Akaashi is not.

He's nearly Bokuto's height, but he's lanky and he's got no muscles, is quiet and often scowling, as Kuroo calls it a "resting bitch face". He has no idea why he bothers even comparing Ayame with himself.

If you think about, which he does, she has everything in common with Bokuto.

The only thing Bokuto and him have in common is volleyball.

In everything else, in all other aspects, they are as different as the day and the night, as fire and ice, the two different poles of a magnet. Bokuto is red and he's blue. Or he's red and Bokuto's blue.

Bokuto is the loud type, while Akaashi is the quiet one. Bokuto acts carefree - Akaashi does not. Bokuto always says whatever is on his mind, whether that's a good or a bad thing. Whether it's something ridiculous, but he finds awfully funny or something extremely sophisticated, like a famous quote, that often leaves Akaashi surprised. But he shouldn't be surprised - not after spending so much time together.

Whoever said opposites attract is a filthy fucking liar and also an idiot. Kind of like Akaashi feels right now.

Since Akaashi hears the bell ring in the distance, announcing the end of Study Hall, he gathers up all the balls and after a couple of laps of the court and quick stretching, he heads upstairs.

Bokuto's face lights up the second Akaashi walks into their room.
Bokuto obviously has no idea what his smile does to Akaashi.

And it's awful. The whole thing is just awful.

"Akaashi! Do you have Ayame's phone number?"

Akaashi nods and hands his phone to Bokuto.

"Do you wanna come with me to Konoha and Saru's room? They wanna be my witnesses when I ask her out, because they don't think I have the balls to do it."

Akaashi shakes his head.

He doesn't have the heart to listen to Bokuto's conversation with Ayame. Or maybe he has too much heart and that's why he can't?

After he takes a shower and changes into his pyjamas, he gets in bed and decides to call his parents.

The second he hears his dad's cheery voice into the receiver, he starts crying.

"Keiji, what's wrong? Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I am. And everything's fine. Sorry, dad, I didn't mean to worry you."

"What's wrong, son?"

"I just..." Akaashi takes a deep breath and wipes the hot tears away from his cheeks. "I miss you and mom a lot."

"We miss you too! I have a book signing in Tokyo scheduled at the end of November, so we'll both visit you before your birthday. How does that sound?"

"Sounds perfect, dad. I can't wait to see you both."

"Neither can we." His dad clears his throat. "Are you sure everything's okay with you, my boy?"

"Yeah. Yeah, it is. I'm just stressed from our exams this week."

"Take it easy and don't worry about it. You know your mom and I are very proud of you."

A heavy lump has lodged itself into Akaashi's throat, but he manages to compose himself enough to say that he loves them both and that he'll call again soon. But when he presses the red button on his screen, he buries his face into his pillow and lets all of the bubbling emotions rise to the surface.

When Bokuto comes back into the room, he pretends to be asleep, because he doesn't want to talk.

Bokuto turns off the main light, then quietly tiptoes into his bed.

While Akaashi cries himself to sleep.

He wakes up earlier than the bell, but he doesn't bother going to the gym for a morning run or practice. Because he'd promised Bokuto to call him whenever he goes, and he doesn't want the two of them to be alone.
Instead, he checks his facebook and sees Kuroo has started a new thread between the two of them.

Kuroo: how's it going, angel eyes?
Kuroo: you probs already know bokuto has a date this weekend.
Kuroo: if you want you and i could go out on friday and get drunk again?
Kuroo: altho i'm still not okay from the fuckin' party lol.

Akaashi replies a "no to alcohol, yes to hanging out", then gets up, sits at his desk and starts pouring over his math notebook. His AP Calculus exam is today, and he'd be damned if he gets anything lower than an A-.

During breakfast, all the volleyball team can talk about is Bokuto's date. And since Akaashi has no appetite, he drinks his coffee and longs for the weekend. Not just because their midterms will be over, but also because it'll mean time away from Bokuto.

Which is what he needs to get over his stupid crush, like Kuroo said.

Yes, but no.

For 60 minutes for the next three days of the week, Akaashi finds himself staring at Bokuto - not obviously, of course - from the corner of his eye, during English class with Mr Burns and only slightly paying attention to what their teacher is saying, during their meals, from across the court, from his own desk in their room.

People often stare at works of art, masterpieces, and silently admire them from afar.

Is that what he's doing with Bokuto?

Akaashi does feel connected to his artistic side, so he enjoys gathering inspiration from things he finds aesthetically pleasing. And he finds Bokuto very aesthetically pleasing.

All you have to do is take a look at his golden eyes - eyes as bright as the sun. And when they are angry, the way they flash dangerously. Or when they are full of sadness, they look breathtakingly beautiful, but oh, so sad. No, no matter how beautiful, those eyes were never meant to be filled with tears, they have to be full of light and happiness, just like their owner.

And that smile, almost never leaving Bokuto's face - except for when he's being a drama queen and sulking.

It's not often that Bokuto catches Akaashi staring at him, but when he does, he unleashes that smile, his favourite damn smile, that makes his inside turn to butterflies, cracking and popping and snapping, bursting at the seams. And Bokuto looks so genuinely happy, as if his smile says "hey, Akaashi, hey!"

During Studio Art, when Mori-sensei asks them to sketch apples and a bottle of wine, he quickly finishes that and indulges himself in drawing what he finds truly inspiring - the exact carat of gold a certain pair of eyes have.

Akaashi realizes he's doing a piss poor job of following Kuroo's advice in getting over his Bokuto crush, because well, everything he does is the exact opposite of what he should be doing.

Friday's lessons end just after the first period, because everyone has their last midterm exam then and the teachers have to grade everything and input the results before the end of the day.

Which means volleyball practice is earlier.
Akaashi's serves and setting skills have improved, which makes him pretty happy, because all his rigorous practice with the cones during Study Hall is paying off.

And the entire Fukurodani team not only notices it, but congratulates him. Nobody looks as proud as Bokuto, though.

"Akaashi, you really outdid yourself today." Bokuto grins and swings his arm over Akaashi's shoulders. "If you keep this up, you're gonna be as amazing as Oikawa."

Akaashi snorts. "Yeah, right."

"Akaashi, are you calling me a liar?" Bokuto pouts. "Don't, because I'd never lie to you. And you'd never lie to me too, right? Right, Akaashi?"

"No, Bokuto-san, I wouldn't."

But that doesn't mean I'll tell you everything, he thinks.

"You don't have any plans for the day, right? If you do, please cancel them."

Akaashi scowls. "And why would I do that?"

"Becaaaacause, Akaashi! Did you forget I have a date with Ayame?"

How could he forget?

"So? I'm not the one going on a date."

"Akaashi! I'm too nervous to go alone! Please come with me?"

"Bokuto-san, I can't do that."

"Why not?" Bokuto pouts.

"Um, maybe because I don't want to be a third wheel?"

"You won't be, because Kuroo agreed to come too."

Great. No, that's just great. It's a 100% peachy.

Since Bokuto takes a whole lot longer to get ready, he goes into the bathroom first. And while he showers, Akaashi dials Kuroo's number.

"'Sup, Angel Eyes?"

"What did I ever do to you, Kuroo-san?"

"What?"

Akaashi pinches the bridge of his nose and sighs. "Why did you agree to accompany Bokuto-san and Ayame to their date?"

"Because Bokuto asked me to."

"And did you know he asked me that too?"

"He did? Oh. I didn't know that."
"Well now you do." Akaashi mutters. "So what am I going to do?"

"I don't know. You could pretend to be sick?"

"That sounds way better than actually going."

"You do realize Bokuto will be disappointed, right?"

"Yes, I do." Akaashi sighs. "But I don't owe anyone anything. And your guilt trips aren't going to work on me, because I never promised Bokuto-san I'd go."

"How dare you? I'm gonna skip fucking school and you're telling me you can't drag your sorry ass for a few hours of chit chatting with your classmate friend, my bro and I?"

Akaashi scowls. Then he realizes Kuroo can't see him, so he mumbles. "You don't feel the way I feel, Kuroo-san."

"Well then when you see your beloved kissing someone else, your brain might start functioning properly and you'll get over Bokuto."

Silence.

"Sorry, Akaashi. That was too harsh. My bad."

"You're a pain in the ass, Kuroo-san."

Kuroo laughs. "Oh, Angel Eyes, I can easily become a pain in your ass, if you'd like? There's a reason why people call me Big Dick Kuroo."

"They probably do it, because you're such a dick."

"Yeesh, easy with the insults. Where's your sense of humor?" Kuroo sighs. "Text me when you leave Fukurodani, okay?"

"Okay."

When Akaashi's done with his shower, he walks out to see Bokuto dressed up in a suit. The fuck?

"Bokuto-san, why are you dressed so formal?"

"Because we're going to this really fancy place in town and I wanna impress Ayame."

"Didn't you say you should avoid fancy places from the paparazzi?"

"Yeah, but it's the middle of the day and I'm not going to get drunk. Besides, if we end up being cornered by the press, my parents won't mind, because I'll tell them I'm on a date." Bokuto grins. "Everyone in my family has been asking why I don't have a girlfriend, so maybe after today, I will? And Ayame's really smart and pretty, so they'll be happy about that."

Akaashi has a strange feeling in the back of his throat, a cold, coppery taste, like old coins. It reminds him of when he was a kid, no more than 4-5 years old. His grandfather used to keep a jar of old pennies on his desk and for some reason Akaashi used to find them irresistible. He would always dip his hand into the jar, fish one out and suck on it. And his grandparents scolded him whenever they saw he was doing it. "Take it out of your mouth, Keiji, they're dirty! You don't know where it's been!" He still doesn't know why he used to do that. Probably because that's what kids do, he supposes, putting things in their mouth?
He swallows, but the taste remains.

Akaashi puts on a pair of jeans, but when he reaches for a t-shirt, Bokuto's hand stops him.

"Akaashi! The place we're going to has a dress code! Can't you put on a shirt and a blazer?"

Akaashi scowls, but pulls on a white shirt and his black blazer. "Kuroo-san is coming from Nekoma, so he's going to be in his school uniform."

"I know, but their uniforms are way cooler than ours."

"Do you want me to wear a tie too?" He asks sarcastically.

"No, you don't need a tie."

Bokuto studies him from head to toe and curses! He rewards him with his stupid smile that Akaashi likes so much.

Why does he continue to lead Akaashi on with that smile? Because that's exactly what he's doing, smiling at him as if he's the only thing Bokuto has eyes for?

That smile's a dirty liar and Akaashi knows that perfectly well, but his better judgement has already been clouded.

Fuck it.

They sign out at the front desk and while they wait for the bus, Akaashi texts Kuroo.

When they make their way to the cafe, Kuroo, who is already there, greets them both with a wave.

"Aren't you all dressed to impress." He smirks and pats Bokuto's shoulder.

"You think so, bro?" Bokuto bounces off the soles of his shoes. "Shit, I'm so fucking nervous, you guys. Akaashi! How does my hair look?"

Akaashi's brows knit together. "Like always?"

"So perfect, yeah?" Bokuto grins.

"Totally, bro." Kuroo winks. "Do you want Angel Eyes and I to wait for her out here too, or should we go inside?"

"No! Stay with me!"

"Does Ayame know we're going to be here too?" Akaashi scowls.

Bokuto nods. "I texted her last night and she's cool with it."

Akaashi thinks that even if she wasn't, she wouldn't say so, because she's polite.

When Ayame arrives, she pecks all three of them on the cheek happily. Then they head inside and a waiter escorts them to one of the booths.

From the moment that they sit down and order, Bokuto's mouth opens up and he starts talking. Volleyball this, volleyball that, writers, books, magazines, people, parties... which wouldn't be so bad if Bokuto just dropped the act and started behaving like himself, instead of this jabbering
stranger, who only looks like Bokuto, but sounds nothing like him.

Akaashi doesn't like it. The way he speaks, without even a hint of swear words, and waves his hand instead of in his usual animated Bokuto manner as this phony intellectual... it's embarrassing.

It makes Akaashi feel uncomfortable - that wincing kind of discomfort you feel when someone you like, someone close to you, suddenly starts acting like a complete idiot.

He doesn't understand why Bokuto isn't just being himself and instead thinks this jabbering stranger he pretends to be is better than his normal self.

Just as his irritation seriously starts to set in, Kuroo reaches across the table and gently touches his cheek, demanding Akaashi to present his ear to his lips.

"Calm down and stop looking so pissy." He whispers softly. "Can't you see how nervous Bokuto is? Try to make him feel more at ease and look just at least a tiny bit encouraging."

Akaashi's scowl instantly disappears. Just because he's bitter and jealous doesn't mean he should be a bad friend, especially when Bokuto really looks like he wants to impress Ayame.

And it's not like he wants to be bitter or jealous? People don't just choose who they have feelings for. Because if they did, why in his right mind would he sign himself up for such pain?

No. Akaashi never wanted to have any part of this.

And it's totally stupid, Bokuto's whole pretense? It's so very dumb. Didn't Bokuto say he wanted a girlfriend that didn't want him for the fame or his parent's money, but for himself? Why is he behaving like this then?

When Ayame excuses herself and goes into the bathroom, Bokuto turns to both Akaashi and Kuroo.

"Guys! I'm fucking dying out here!"

Yes, we can see that, Akaashi thinks. But he doesn't say that out loud, of course.

"Bokuto-san, calm down. Don't be so..." He recalls his first volleyball game and how everyone told him not to be nervous, which didn't help at all, but made him even more nervous. "Try to relax more. Instead of talking the whole time, why don't you ask Ayame some questions? Something about cheerleading, school, her family? You want to get to know her better, so ask her about her hobbies and stuff. Get her to talk, so you can relax."

"By the way, bro?" Kuroo grins. "It's me you've been playing footsies with under the table."

"Oh." Bokuto scratches his forehead. "My bad, bro. Listen, could you guys maybe act like a couple, so-"

"No." Akaashi replies at once.

"- I could follow your lead and try to put the moves on her?" Bokuto finishes.

"We got you, bro." Kuroo smirks and drapes his arm over Akaashi's shoulder, while Akaashi stares at him with a sour expression. "Yo, Angel Eyes, tone down the death glare a lil' and try smiling a bit."

Akaashi swallows down all the things he wants to say and plasters a fake smile on his face.
As the afternoon rolls by, so do the drinks and the more Akaashi drinks, the faster the time passes. In short, he thinks it's awful. A daze of drinking, grinning, crappy jokes and lame beer mat tricks, sly looks and suggestions, winks and loose hands, with Ayame giggling loudly, which reminds Akaashi of his great aunt during the holidays when she gets drunk, and Bokuto pawing her under the table and Kuroo just sitting there looking offended after Akaashi kicks him in the shin for thinking he was trying to stick his tongue in Akaashi's ear. And he only wanted to whisper something in there. Oops.

Akaashi didn't have that much to drink, but it was not possible to sit there all afternoon, without drinking something, if only to dull the pain and boredom.

Because watching the guy you like flirt and hook up with someone else in front of you while you're forced to pretend a relationship of your own just so your crush can get lucky - that's certainly in the top worst moments of Akaashi's life.

So when Bokuto and Ayame slope off to the bathroom to get some more groping in - or more than that - Akaashi just can't take it anymore. After leaving enough money on the table to cover his drinks, he gets up and leaves.

He doesn't know where his feet are taking him, but anywhere is better than here.

Akaashi isn't all that surprised when he hears hurried footsteps approaching from behind. Then Kuroo's voice reaches his ears.

"What's the rush, boyfriend?"

"Don't call me that."

"I cannot believe you planned on deserting me there all on my own!"

Akaashi snorts. "I knew you'd leave too."

"Well obviously. Bokuto and Ayame seem to be doing alright on their own, so I couldn't just sit there like a lonely loser."

"Kuroo-san, wait!" Akaashi stops walking. "We left Bokuto-san alone."

"Oh, he's not alone, Angel Eyes."

"No, that's not what I meant. He probably doesn't have money to-"

"Chill, I gave him my wallet earlier."

"You're a good friend, Kuroo-san."

"I know. That's why I'm here with you."

"Thank you." Akaashi nods his head slowly. "But... do you think Bokuto-san will be alright without the two of us there?"

Kuroo sighs. "You really carry a torch for the guy, don't you?"

Akaashi shrugs his shoulders helplessly, because he has nothing to say.

"Come on, follow me. I wanna show you something."

Akaashi lets Kuroo lead the way and curses himself for listening to Bokuto, because if he'd put on
his leather jacket, he wouldn't be so cold right now. Kuroo seems to notice he's cold, though, because he quickens his pace.

Akaashi does too.

They stop in front of a big library and Kuroo motions with his head for them to enter. When they do, an old lady greets them with a smile and says how wonderful it is to see young people in there on a Friday night.

Akaashi doesn't remember the last time he was in a library, because ever since he became a student at Fukurodani, the list of things he liked doing grew, putting his previous hobbies on the back burner.

"Kenma and I used to come here together since I could remember." Kuroo says softly. "We used to love it. Sometimes we'd spend hours in here, looking through all the books, talking quietly, enjoying ourselves. He's a big fan of comic books, so we'd take the latest issue they have here, hide under one of the tables and read it together. God, I remember I used to get really excited about our trips to the library. Was it really that long ago?" Kuroo chuckles. "Damn. It feels like it was a lifetime ago."

"I don't even remember the last time I was in a library." Akaashi admits.

"It's great, though, isn't it?"

"Yeah."

Kuroo slides under one of the table and chuckles. "I'm too tall for this now."

"Doesn't matter." Akaashi replies and lies down next to him.

The two of them read the writings on the roof of the table. It's all the same, "N. was here", "K, M. and B. were here for their science project.", "H + D = true love.". Kuroo takes a pen out of his pocket and begins to write his initials.

"Kuroo-san!" Akaashi scowls. "Don't damage library property."

Kuroo laughs. "Don't be such a goodie goodie. Here, sign your initials too."

"No."

"Then I'll do it for you." Kuroo grins and proceeds to write out A.K.

Akaashi sighs, closes his eyes and breathes in the smell of old books. He loves it.

"My dad's a writer." He says after a while.

"Yeah? Cool. What books does he write?"

"Science Fiction."

Kuroo laughs. "No wonder you're such a nerd."

"That's not genetic, Kuroo-san. I was influenced by my environment. When I was younger my parents would always take me to my dad's book signings. It was pretty cool."

"Sounds cool. Do you think they have some of your dad's books in here?"
Akaashi shrugs. "Probably."

"Wanna find them?"

"No, I don't feel like moving."

"Well we should, because the library's going to close soon."

Akaashi glances at his watch. Oh crap. When did it get so late?

They stay under the table and share a pack of M&M's which Kuroo fishes out of his pockets.

"My dad died when I was 8. He was 36." Kuroo says.

"Oh. I'm sorry for your loss. I didn't know."

"I know you didn't. It's alright, though, it was a long time ago." Kuroo sighs. "That's why I keep coming over to Fukurodani for the weekend. I'd rather be with Bokuto and now you, instead of staying at home with my mom and my step dad. I don't like him."

"Does he treat you bad?"

"No. He's great and all, but he tries too hard to take my dad's place and I hate it." Kuroo shrugs. "He makes my mom really happy, though, and that's all that matters to me."

A bell rings and then the lights get switched off.

"We gotta go before they lock us in here." Kuroo grins and helps Akaashi up to his feet.

"I wouldn't mind being locked up in a library." Akaashi says with a smile. "If I wasn't so damn hungry."

"Let's go get something to eat, I'm starving too."

Since Kuroo knows the neighborhood better than Akaashi, he leads the way again. They take the train and get off on the fourth stop. The way back to Fukurodani is a lot longer now, because there are no buses, but they make a quick stop to get some pizza slices and after they fill their growling stomach, the walk doesn't seem that long.

Akaashi's just about to head in from the front door, when Kurooo stops him.

"I know, Kuroo-san, I'll drop the rope from the window."

"Yeah, that's not it."

"Oh?"

"I just got a text message from Bokuto."

"And?"

"He said you should sign him at the front desk, because he's not coming back."
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Okay, so this chapter is shorter than usual. But y'all were askin' for it. Maybe not for this, but what can I do. *shrugs and hides*

Bokuto returns to Fukurodani in time for volleyball practice in the morning, but he doesn't look too happy.

"Did your date go well, bro?" Kuroo asks.

Akaashi doesn't really want to hear Bokuto wax poetic about how amazing it was, but that's not what happens. He remains close enough to listen in on their conversation, but not close enough to be considered a part of it.

"Nah, bro. My dad called me to come home, because he wanted to watch the tapes from our game and practices and discuss them." Bokuto sighs. "And instead of enjoying my Saturday with you and Akaashi, I have to go again, because mom wants me to go for some stupid photo shoot shit. Akaashi? Do you maybe wanna come with me?" Akaashi shakes his head. "Yeah, didn't think so, but it was worth the shot." Bokuto sighs. "You two better not do anything fun without me, alright?"

"Wouldn't dream of it, bro."

Akaashi watches as Bokuto leaves the gym and is brought back to reality, when Kuroo throws a ball at him, hitting the back of his head.

"What the hell was that for?" Akaashi scowls.

"Sorry, my hand slipped." Kuroo shrugs innocently. "I was worried you're all caught up in a daydream and thought I'd help you with that."

"Yeah, you're all heart." Akaashi snorts. "A true humanitarian."

They stay at the gym and practice serving.

After a while, Akaashi asks the question he'd been wanting to ask for a good half an hour.

"Bokuto-san doesn't like photo shoots?"

"Yeah, he does, but not when his mom's responsible for them. I went with him this one time and
it's pretty shit. All these assistants hovering around, prepping him for the camera with their brushes and make up kits, constantly criticizing the way he stands, the way he looks, everything." Kuroo's eyebrows knit together. "It's like they criticize him to kiss up to his mom or some shit."

Akaashi licks his lips. "If I was a parent and people who worked for me criticized my kid, that'll put them on my shit list immediately."

"Yeah, but that's not how things work in the fashion business. Or in Bokuto's family."

"Bokuto-san wasn't exaggerating when he said his parents put so much pressure on him, was he?"

Kuroo shakes his head. "It's so much worse than he admits. But he's a tough son of a gun, so he perseveres like a good soldier."

Akaashi swallows hard. He gets back to serving, but Kuroo's words leave a bitter taste in his mouth. How awful.

His own parents aren't rich or anything, but they've always provided enough of everything. Food on the table, clothes on his back, roof above his head, decent amount of pocket money and now a good education. Not many kids are as fortunate as him and there's even less kids that have the privileges Bokuto has. But when you're miserable or under pressure like Bokuto is, the price to pay for all that money seems unequal to having a mental stability and your parents irrevocable love and affection, despite what grades you have in school or if you make some typical teenage mistakes, which everyone that age is bound to make.

A conversation him and Bokuto had when they were revising for their midterm exams swims into his mind.

"Akaashi, do you know what my mom always tells me?" He'd asked. "Smart people learn from their mistakes. But the real sharp ones learn from the mistakes of others."

Then he'd said that he must be the dumbest person on the earth, because he keeps repeating the same mistakes over and over again. And Akaashi tried telling him everyone makes mistakes and no, he's not at all dumb, but Bokuto laughed it off and said he was only joking.

Yeah, but Akaashi knew perfectly well he wasn't.

Akaashi doesn't know when exactly he became such an expert on Bokuto. It just sort of happened? Because he no longer feels desperate in trying to read Bokuto and his many expressions and silent thoughts. To figure out his greatest strengths, his biggest weaknesses. What's truly inside, underneath all the layers. What makes him tick and what makes him tock. What made him him.

Maybe it's because they spend pretty much all their time together. Or maybe it's because when you like someone, even the tiniest thing that person says or does, sticks with you and you find yourself paying even more attention to all the details.

He wonders if Bokuto has been doing the same with him? No, of course not, that's silly. Because if Bokuto knew, he wouldn't keep giving Akaashi all those looks, winks, smiles. The different tone he uses when he calls Akaashi's name. The things he does that keep Akaashi stuck right where he is, giving him false hope that maybe... maybe something.

No. He'd probably confront Akaashi about it. And Akaashi doesn't know what he'd do then, because he isn't that good of a liar. But he doesn't have to worry about it, because Bokuto doesn't know.
When he first arrived at Fukurodani, Akaashi longed for quiet weekends, sleeping in, not having to put on pants, but remaining all day in his pyjamas, reading a book, napping and lazing about without doing anything. And now that Bokuto is away, that's exactly what his Saturday is like. But he doesn't like it.

Kuroo begs for the two of them to go to the closest store and get some beers and snacks, because they'd emptied Bokuto's goodie drawer when watching movies the previous night.

"But it's raining."

"Angel Eyes, as sweet as you are, you're not made out of sugar, so a little November drizzle won't melt you."

Since it's going to be one of those days with nothing to do, Akaashi agrees. He's not hungry, because they'd just had lunch, but he might be in the mood to snack on some sweets later.

Kuroo nudges him in the ribs and whispers with a grin.

"Watch and learn, young Padawan."

Akaashi watches closely as he approaches the girl behind the counter, who is instantly entranced by Kuroo's playful smirk. She gives him a handful of salt caramel toffees for free and all he had to do was lean over the counter and let his eyelashes dance.

Akaashi didn't need to see it with his own eyes to believe it. He'd spend enough time with Kuroo to know exactly why Bokuto and every guy on their volleyball team is so impressed by Kuroo's way with girls. And guys too.

When they leave, Kuroo's smirk has spread from ear to ear.

"Angel Eyes, aren't you going to say something?"

Akaashi sighs. "You're like one of those horny cats that drag their butts all over the floor."

"Excuse me! I'll have you know that when I want some, I get some. Which is more than you can say about yourself."

It's the truth, but Akaashi still scowls.

"Hey, if you'd like, I can become your teacher and teach you all the ways to seduce people. You're hot and smart. You're already a promising student."

"Thanks, but no thanks."

"Why not?"

"I don't find enjoyment in playing mind tricks with people."

"It's not mind tricks, it's just harmless flirting." Kuroo replies. "I've heard that in order to get over someone, you have to get under someone else."

Akaashi snorts. "Did you really hear that or did you just make it up?"

Kuroo laughs, which is enough of an answer for Akaashi.

The second they get back into the room, Akaashi changes into his pyjamas and lies in bed, with Death of a Salesman in his hands. He has to catch up on the play, because he didn't pay much
attention to the reading they did in English class.

But after rereading the same sentence three times and still having no idea what he just read, he gives up. His mind is once again thinking of Bokuto, wondering what he could be doing right now. And Kuroo stays with him, but he doesn't blabber or interrupt his doing nothing. He just sits on the floor and reads too, or plays something on his phone. He keeps glancing at Akaashi every now and again, but remains silent.

It's really relaxing, because it's warm and cozy inside, with the heavy raindrops tapping against the window sill. The only thing missing is a steaming cup of tea, but water and beer is all they have, and that's okay too.

"You're pining." Kuroo finally breaks the silence.

Akaashi's about to reply that he doesn't pine, but that would be admitting something and he doesn't want to admit anything, even if the both of them know it's the truth.

"You're skipping meals, you've been reading the same page for about three hours now and I swear to God, if I have to listen to Mr Brightside again, I'm going to break your laptop."

"Then you'll have to buy me a new one." Akaashi replies. "And mine's pretty battered up and old, so I wouldn't mind that."

"Angel Eyes, you're like a lovesick puppy, and it's even depressing me. I've given you enough time to wallow in self pity, and that's not helping either of us." Kuroo takes a deep breath. "You have two options here. One," Kuroo puts his finger up. "You tell him how you feel."

"What are you, nuts?" Akaashi scowls. "I can't do that."

"Why not? What's the worst that could happen?"

"Uh, he could hear me!"

"So? That's the whole point, isn't it?"

"Weren't you the one that told me he's not gay and nothing will happen?"

Kuroo nods. "True, but I also believe you should never say never."

"What about Ayame?"

"What about her?" Kuroo shrugs. "They went on a date and hooked up, so what?"

"Exactly! They're dating!"

"Big deal. It's not like they're married."

Akaashi sighs. "What's option number two?"

"You get over him and move on."

Akaashi laughs humorlessly. "Right, how did I not think of that? Thank you, Kuroo-san, that was very enlightening."

"Don't get sassy with me." Kuroo replies. "Don't deny that you don't want to get over him. If you did, you wouldn't be putting his happiness before yours."
"It's called being a good friend."

"Yeah, my ass. Bokuto-san this, Bokuto-san that. Kuroo-san would Bokuto-san be alright without us there?" Kuroo mimics. "You hang onto his every word like it's your life line, man, don't think I haven't noticed."

Akaashi doesn't say anything, so Kuroo continues.

"You're not even trying to get over him, because you don't want to. Or am I wrong? Please, correct me if I am."

"You're... not entirely wrong." Akaashi mutters. "But you don't have to look so smug about it."

"I'm always right." Kuroo grins, then claps his hands. "So that leaves us with option number one."

"How about secret option number three where I don't have to do anything?"

"Sorry, we don't have that option on the table."

Kuroo is right, though. Akaashi does have a tiny voice in the back of his mind that more often than not wonders what if?

"So... just out of curiosity, what am I supposed to do?" Akaashi asks.

"For starters, you should talk to him."

"About what?"

Kuroo rolls his eyes. "About your feelings, duuh."

"I don't know how to." Akaashi admits quietly, while his cheeks splash a deep red color.

"Okay. Imagine Bokuto is here. Just imagine he is that chair over there. What would you tell him?"

"I'm not gonna have a one sided conversation with the chair, that's stupid. You know who talks to themselves, Kuroo-san? Crazy people. And I'm not crazy."

Kuroo scratches his chin, then jumps on his feet with a big grin.

"I know what to do!" He exclaims happily. "Close your eyes."

"Why?" Akaashi scowls. "What are you going to do to me?"

"Nothing. Just close your eyes and promise not to peek until I tell you to open them. Promise?"

"I promise." Akaashi replies and closes his eyes.

He keeps his eyes tightly shut despite the fact he hears drawers being opened and then the bathroom door closing and he's curious what kind of shit Kuroo is up to, but he promised not to look, so he doesn't. Instead, he crosses his legs and remains seated on his bed, waiting patiently.

"Okay, you can look now."

Akaashi opens them and watches as Kuroo's leg kicks the bathroom door open.

"Hey hey heyyyyy!" Kuroo's voice booms into the room. "Akaashi! How's it going?"
Akaashi opens his mouth to speak, then closes it. His eyes roam up and down Kuroo's body. What the fuck is Kuroo wearing?

"Kuroo-san, what's going on?" He asks confusedly.

"What? Noooo, you got me confused with my bro, I'm Bokuto." Kuroo flashes him with a spot on Bokuto grin and sits next to him on the edge of his bed.

"I don't... I don't understand. Why are you wearing Bokuto-san's volleyball uniform?"

Seeing the anxiety wash over Akaashi's face, Kuroo lets out a long sigh. All he wants is for Akaashi to let loose, relax a little. But he needs to break character for a few minutes to make Akaashi understand.

"Yes, Angel Eyes, I'm wearing Bokuto's clothes. And yes, I styled my hair up in the exact same way he does it - which I know is fucking ridiculous. Look, just go with it, alright? You couldn't talk to the chair, right? Well this is different. I'm giving you the means for a better imagination. If you see it for what it is and nothing more, it'll be a good thing. You can say anything you want and I'll never judge you. I already know how you feel about him, so you've got nothing to lose. Just practice on me." He watches the passing emotions on Akaashi's face.

Confusion, apprehension, shock, more confusion. Then, acceptance.

"That's the last I'm saying on that, so take it or leave it."

When Akaashi remains sitting in his spot, unmoving, Kuroo goes back to smiling widely.

"Akaashi, what do you feel like doing? Do you wanna watch a movie or something?"

"No, I'm good." Akaashi's lips form a tiny smile, fully taking Kuroo's appearance at last.

The white, black and gold Fukurodani jacket, the shorts, even the sneakers. The hair. The accent, the way Kuroo walked over to his bed, bouncing on his toes excitedly just like Bokuto does, the long knee pads! The knee pads just seal the deal all on their own.

Kuroo had gone all out to help his imagination, that much is for damn sure. In fact, with all those put together, Kuroo is sitting next to him as a glorified bootleg Bokuto.

"This is... nice." Akaashi finally says.

"What is?"

"This." Akaashi motions at the small distance between them, still more than a little weirded out, but willing to put in a solid attempt. You'll never fully live unless you fully try, right?

Apprehensive, he takes in a small breath, letting it out just as slowly, searching Kuroo's eyes for any form of mocking or ridicule. He finds nothing resembling either.

In Kuroo Tetsurou, Akaashi finds a close friend. A true one, one that he knows can be trusted with his secret or anything, really. And so, he begins to open himself up some.

"It's been a while since we were last alone. Just the two of us."

"It has, Akaashi, I know." Kuroo takes the conversation by the reigns again, not pausing for a second. "Just been so busy lately, with all those stupid midterm exams and school shit."
Kuroo takes off the jacket, letting it land on Bokuto's chair next to the bed. When he notices Akaashi's eyes roaming his chest, arms and the jersey # 4, he grins.

"I've been working out more." Kuroo announces proudly, puffing out his chest and flexing his arms. "You like?"

"I do."

Kuroo smiles, incredibly pleased with himself for his brilliant idea.

As long as Akaashi is smiling like this, any get up he has to wear or any act he has to fake is undoubtedly worth it. Seeing the approval in Akaashi's eyes, he knows it's time to up the game some, to get them on the right track. Well, to get Akaashi on the right track. It's all for him, after all.

"Akaashi, listen. My bro and I had a long chat earlier and he told me a few interesting tidbits." Kuroo muses, trying to work out the way Bokuto winks, hoping he is mastering it.

"About what, Bokuto-san?" Akaashi asks softly.

He can't tear his eyes away from Kuroo's form. It's unbelievable, he truly almost feels like Bokuto is here, talking to him.

Almost.

"About you. But he said I needed to come here and get you to tell me the rest, fill in the blank spaces for me."

Akaashi wonders how Kuroo manages to keep a straight face throughout. Unbelievable. But it's so Bokuto. Damn, Kuroo's good.

"What do you want to know, Bokuto-san?"

Kuroo takes a swig of his beer can, then wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Kuroo told me you got a thing for me." He quirks his eyebrow at Akaashi.

"Kuroo-san's a liar." Akaashi scowls.

"Akaashi, no, he isn't. He's the best bro ever, and he's so hot and-" Akaashi clears his throat. "Anyway, enough about my bro. But he did say you kinda like me."

"I do. Kinda." Akaashi smiles, a deep shade of red finding its way to his usually pale cheeks.

Sure, it's just Kuroo, well, Kuroo as Bokuto, but still. He'd only just barely let Kuroo into this part of his world like an hour ago.

"Akaashi, keep talking, keep talking." Kuroo presses.

"Bokuto-san, it's hard to explain. It's not something simple that I can just come right out and say. It's complex, there's more to the story than just-"

"Akaashi! Quit beating around the bush and just spit it out already!"

"I think about you a lot." Akaashi blurts out, smiling immediately after, almost letting out a whoosh of air at how good it feels to finally say it out loud. It's almost like writing a love letter, pouring your heart out onto three loose leaf notebook pages - back and front - and sending it
anonymously. Free to say everything you'd ever dreamed of saying, with no fear of the recipient ever knowing the sender's name.

"In what way do you think of me, Akaashi?"

"Well, basically in every way. I wonder what you're doing when we aren't together. I think about the things you say and not even just the things you say to me, things you say in general. The way you talk. The way you say my name when you want me to give you a toss. The way you get excited on Tuesdays, because we have yakiniku for lunch. The way you eat. You kind of chew your food to one side and you have this strange way of smiling even with your mouth stuffed, like it makes you happy just to be eating. I don't know, but it's...it's nice."

"You know yakiniku's my favourite." Kuroo fakes a good Bokuto laugh, wondering if his eyes are crinkling at the corners the way Bokuto's do and if they aren't, if Akaashi is noticing. "That's it?"

"No, Bokuto-san, it isn't." Akaashi confesses shyly, as Kuroo hangs onto his every word. "I think of other stuff too. When you call me, no matter where I am or what I'm doing, your ring tone has this way of making me feel... I don't know, alive? As if my whole mission in life is to answer your call."

Kuroo's inquisitive look nearly falters at that, seeing the sincerity seeping from beneath Akaashi's lashes. Everything he's saying, whether it cuts him down to his core or not, he means it.

"I'm sorry, Bokuto-san. I'm probably not making any sense." Akaashi's low voice fades off, not sure if he's going about this the right way. Or if there is a wrong way. Are there rules to this sort of thing?

"Akaashi, it makes perfect sense! I know that exact feeling." Kuroo replies, nodding his head. "Tell me more. You know how much I love talking about me. It's exciting!"

"You know that thing you do, when we're playing volleyball and you're really into it? Your tongue comes out of the side of your mouth and that's..." Akaashi tries to find a word for it, other than nice. But he can't so he changes it. "It makes me feel happy."

"Yeah, you like that sort of thing?" Kuroo asks, reaching over to place his hand on the protruding muscle between Akaashi's neck and shoulder, giving it a light squeeze, holding onto it as he holds Akaashi's grey blue eyes for longer than necessary.

"It's a Bokuto thing, though, right, so why not?"

Akaashi offers a small nod, accompanied by the tiniest of yelps, feeling Kuroo's fingers massage him softly, as if trying to ease every burden he's ever carried. Or so it feels like.

"Well you know what I think is sexy, Akaashi?"

"What, Bokuto-san?" Akaashi is barely able to mumble out, feeling as though he's feeling Bokuto's touch, but looking into Kuroo's eyes. He's beginning to feel like during their Halloween party when they drank that ridiculous amount of shots in the cigar room and it's a little trippy to say the least.

"You, Akaashi."

Yes, this most definitely feels like someone'd given him a couple of "Hammer Hooters" and "The shot of the dead". He's just about to protest and inform Kuroo that that doesn't sound anything like something Bokuto would say to him, until the response he'd been ready to give fades out on the
It's actually nice to play pretend for one night, so why not enjoy it?

Yes. That's what Akaashi would do. Enjoy it.

"Me? Really?" Akaashi's head falls to the side, nuzzling against Kuroo's hand, still rubbing soft circles into the weak spot on his neck.

"Yes, Akaashi. Really."

Akaashi smiles, part of him feeling a little silly. Part of him not. Not with the way Kuroo's looking at him, just like Bokuto does, like he's the most interesting thing in the world. He begins to wonder if he himself looks at Bokuto like that. He is more than certain that he does.

"You always look so good, Akaashi."

Akaashi beams, truly beams. "So do you, Bokuto-san."

"I know."

As Kuroo watches him, he sees the slight shift in Akaashi's eyes, the small half smile starting to form, almost lazily. The relaxed and almost floating aura that seems to envelope him anytime Bokuto is around. And in that moment it dawns on him that Bokuto is around, for Akaashi at least, and Kuroo can see why his friend seems a little more peaceful.

And a little more nostalgic.

"Do you know what I want, Bokuto-san?"

"Tell me, Akaashi."

Ignoring his flaming face, Akaashi hears his quiet voice reply.

"I want to touch you. I want to do it without a time limit and without people watching. Just you and me, Bokuto-san. To know I have all the time in the world to do nothing, but touch your body, get to know every piece of it. Introduce myself. I want that." Akaashi bites his lip, his eyes narrowing some, as though he is picturing Bokuto right in front of him.

"You want me?"

Akaashi nods his head furiously, his hand shakily reaching out to stroke Kuroo's arm out of instinct.

"Yes, Bokuto-san, I do."

"Akaashi, how? How do you want me?" Kuroo can feel his skin prickling, breaking out in goosebumps, as he watches Akaashi's hand move so delicately across his skin, feeling a guilty chill down to his bone.

"Every which way, Bokuto-san. Everything. Anything. I want it all. I want to know it won't always be like this."

"Akaashi. It won't always be like this." Kuroo's voice is barely audible, still staring at the spot where his and Akaashi's skin meet. The palm of Akaashi's hand, the warmth coming off it, despite the fact he knows Akaashi's hands are almost always cold. The heat surrounding them.
To be Bokuto for just one night, wouldn't it be perfect?

"I'm so happy that you're my roommate, Bokuto-san. Because whenever I fall asleep, I know you're just above me. And when I wake up, I know you're here with me, without even having to open my eyes. I'd give anything to always have you here with me." Akaashi freely lets the words spill, shocked with himself for daring to say such things, such words, with his tongue and lips and not just his mind.

"Akaashi, I'm right here." Kuroo doesn't know what he's saying anymore, or why he is saying it, but the look in Akaashi's eyes wouldn't let him stop. It's as though Akaashi needs to confess his secret and he needs Kuroo's words just as much. Wait, Bokuto's words. They are Bokuto's, not his. Although, if Bokuto wouldn't actually say those things, are they still considered his words?

Whose are they?

"You know, Akaashi, I need you." Kuroo speaks softly, delicately. They are both sitting up, facing each other, a strange healing sort of moment taking place as they both continue to speak. To admit and confess. "You don't even know the half of it. And how could you, when I've never told a single soul about it? But it's true, Akaashi, I do need you. More than you could ever understand."

"You do?"

"Akaashi, you've changed me in so many ways. Don't you know? Can't you see?" Kuroo asks, reaching out to catch the side of Akaashi's face with his large palm, his fingertips dancing over the sharp cheekbones. "I'm different now. I wasn't always like this."

"Like what, Bokuto-san?" Akaashi whispers, his eyes trailing up and down Kuroo's arms. The sneakers on Kuroo's feet are still within his line of sight, one on the floor and one on the edge of his bed, the tip grazing his knee as they sit huddled close.

"I wasn't always this desperate."

"What are you desperate for, Bokuto-san?" Akaashi asks, now searching Kuroo's eyes. "I don't understand. Desperate for what?"

"For you, Akaashi." Kuroo's voice comes out hoarse, placing his other hand on Akaashi's other cheek, feeling himself scoot forward without knowing. His spine straightens, realizing what he is doing, what he is saying and knowing full well he should stop. But unable to find the breaks no matter how hard he searches.

"Me?"

"Yes, Akaashi, you. Just you."

Akaashi is facing him, both his hands on Kuroo's broad shoulders, gripping tightly. He can feel the intensity of Akaashi's stare and it almost pulls the breath straight from his very lungs.

"Since when, Bokuto-san?"

"Since the day I gave you your jersey #5 and you became my setter." Kuroo's breath nearly fails him, his face so close to Akaashi's, his hands holding his face gently, Akaashi's own hands on his body. It's suffocating and yet, the only thing he wants to do is pull the bag on tighter.

"You're telling me all this time I've spent wanting you... you've been wanting me too?" Akaashi asks, his eyes in a dream like fog, his usually tense features suddenly slack and serene.
Clearly something is missing from Akaashi's life, something big, something no one should ever have to go without.

Kuroo nods, feeling himself drawn further and further toward Akaashi, seeing his sweet face in greater detail as he, too, falls forward.

"I've spent so long wondering what this feeling is, Bokuto-san. Ever since you kissed me." Akaashi whispers, his hands moving higher, clutching both sides of Kuroo's jaw, trailing his long fingers over the soft skin. "So long. And it hurts so bad."

Despite the fact this kiss between Bokuto and Akaashi is news to him, Kuroo remains in character.

"Akaashi, it doesn't have to hurt anymore." Kuroo whispers, closing his eyes for the sake of his own sanity as he clears his own conscience off, throwing off weights of his own.

I've spent so long wondering what this feeling is, Bokuto-san.

Bokuto.

Fighting the urge to cave in and let pieces of sadness from the corners of his eyes, Kuroo squeezes his lids tighter together, breathing deeply, continuing to hold Akaashi's face between his own two hands.

"It doesn't?" Akaashi asks, seeing the way Kuroo's eyes open, no longer able to hold back his emotions.

Akaashi watches a matching set of salty tears trailing their way down each of Kuroo's cheeks, wetting his own hands in the process. In a race to the bottom, Kuroo can't stop himself from pulling Akaashi closer to him, closer than ever, letting an all too real "I love you too, Akaashi" slip out just as their lips press together in a desperate embrace.

To Akaashi, this is all new. And maybe to Kuroo too?

The words of love, the desperate emotions, everything.

But just because Akaashi isn't an experienced of a kisser as Kuroo is, doesn't mean he doesn't know how to do it. It's basic instinct, the way he feels, the hunger inside his chest, the way his body reacts. It's only natural.

Before either of them fully know what is happening, they are clutching at each other longingly, Akaashi's arms wrapped around Kuroo's head, Kuroo's tightening around Akaashi's waist. Bokuto's jersey is being pulled off - nearly ripped off - and as it lands on top of Bokuto's desk, Kuroo lands on his back.

He can feel all of Akaashi's weight on top of him, pressing him into the mattress, their flush and heaving chests nearly melting together. The world around them seems to go fuzzy, fading and merging together until everything else goes black. Akaashi keeps his eyes closed, but he is using everything else to see, to understand. His hands, his lips, his nerves, every tiny cell in his body is focused on feeling some sort of Bokuto beneath him. His tongue explores Kuroo's hot mouth, his ears happening upon small, breakable sounds. Half sighs, half whispers.

"Akaashi. Oh God, Akaashi."

It's everything he's ever wanted to hear.
"Say it again, please." Akaashi breathes, the moisture from his breath landing on Kuroo's newly exposed chest and abs, creating a warm path the lower he goes. "Tell me you love me."

"I love you." Kuroo can't help himself, his words themselves almost shivering, feeling Akaashi's fingers tug at the edge of Bokuto's shorts. "I love you."

"Again, say it again. Say it more."

"I love you."

Not stopping to think it over, not even knowing how to think anymore, how to actually go about processing thoughts, Kuroo lifts his hips almost mechanically, letting Akaashi drag Bokuto's shorts down and around his long thighs.

Kuroo doesn't have the heart to stop their little charade, to throw in the white towel. But when Akaashi's fingers urgently pull at the long knee pads, his hands gliding over them, Kuroo jumps out of the bed as if his dick is on fire.

It kind of is.

"Angel Eyes, we can't do this." He says softly.

No, not Angel Eyes. Akaashi wants to be Akaashi and not Angel Eyes. Why is Kuroo breaking character?

It's weird, because when he looks around the room, he sees Bokuto's discarded uniform on the desk and on the floor. And yet, it's Kuroo standing in front of him and not Bokuto.

He watches silently as Kuroo takes his own clothes out of their bathroom and puts them on.

"Kenma was so fucking right." Kuroo says with a sigh. "Fuck. He knows me even better than I know myself."

"I don't understand, Kuroo-san." Akaashi mumbles. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No. No, you didn't. Couldn't you tell just how excited I was? I know you felt it."

Akaashi's face turns bright red, because it's true. He felt Kuroo's hard dick rubbing against him.

"But this-" Kuroo motions at himself, then at Akaashi. "This can't happen. It's not working out for me."

Akaashi has never felt this exposed before, even though Kuroo was the one almost naked a few minutes ago.

He swallows hard. "Why not?"

"Kenma told me I shouldn't meddle in your affairs and yet..." Kuroo groans. "God, this sucks. I'm such a fucking idiot."

"I don't understand." Akaashi mumbles.

"You were pretending I was Bokuto, right?"

"Yes, but that's because you were?"

"Yeah, well, that was really stupid of me." Kuroo presses his lips together. "You were imagining
you were with him. But I wasn't imagining anything."

"Oh."

Oh. That's all Akaashi can say.

He never in a million years could've seen this coming. And how could he, when this was all Kuroo's idea? And wasn't Kuroo the one who said he doesn't get attached?

So why...? Why is this happening?

"I think I'm gonna go." Kuroo says and picks up his backpack.

"Don't be ridiculous, Kuroo-san, it's almost midnight."

"So?"

"So don't just leave. You know you can stay here."

"Yeah, I know."

"Then put your backpack down and spend the night."

"No. I need to be alone right now. I need to clear my head a little. Both of them." Kuroo replies with a smirk, but his eyes tell a different story. "You're not gonna take it personally, right, Angel Eyes?"

Akaashi nods, but how can he not take it personally when it is?

"Please text me when you get home." Akaashi says softly.

"I will." Kuroo replies, opens the window and drops the rope out. "Don't you worry about me, Angel Eyes, I'm gonna be fine." He smirks, then climbs out of the window. Just before he descends out of Akaashi's eye sight, he licks his lips. "Just... you take care of yourself, alright, Angel Eyes?"

Akaashi nods and watches Kuroo disappear.

He goes into the bathroom, brushes his teeth, then collapses into his bed.

Sleep doesn't come, though, no matter how hard he wishes it does.

Everything, all these questions, start going round and round in his head, spinning in endless circles, screaming at him - What do you think of Bokuto? You like him, don't you? How do you like him? Is it more than like? Is it love? And what about Kuroo? What does it mean? Do you care about him? Do you want to care?

He wishes he knew.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Over the next few days, Akaashi remains in his room, bedridden with a terrible flu. And some guilt too.

Okay, maybe a lot of guilt.

Because when he's sick in bed with fever, blocked nose which makes it difficult to breathe, and he can't concentrate on school work, all his brain can do is replay the events from the past few days. Weeks.

It's as if someone had opened Pandora's Box inside his head and everything, all these things came pouring out, before he could put them all back inside and close the lid tightly shut.

How did everything get so messed up?

When he first got here, things were terrifying at first, but then he'd made friends, he joined the volleyball team. Before he knew it, Fukurodani became his home. A place where he belonged.

It was sweet peaches.

Being a teenager sure is a difficult thing. Because it feels like... it feels like you don't know how to feel? Your mind keeps slipping from one thing to another, you can't relax, you know you've got this awful itch, but you don't know where to scratch it to make it go away?

Akaashi's itch has a name and it goes by the name of Bokuto.

That's how it felt. How it feels.

Bokuto was no longer the only person, who he'd kissed, but Kuroo and his little charade completely backfired at the both of them.

Because now Kuroo wanted to be more than friends. And that should be a good thing, right, having someone interested in you? Wanting to be with you?

But no, it doesn't. It's a terrible thing, actually. Because just like before, like with Bokuto and him, it started out with a dumb and silly game. A pretense.

He feels guilty in his stomach, because what if he was leading Kuroo on, just like Bokuto is doing to him, unknowingly?

Akaashi hates pretenses.

Not that 16 years of age is that old, not at all, but he remembers when he was younger how much he couldn't wait to be a grown up. An adult. But adults have work, bills to pay, lots of adult responsibilities. And Akaashi is good with responsibilities, he really is, but in his current state of
mind, he thinks how right his family was in repeatedly telling him that he shouldn't hurry, that the
best years of his life are his school years.

Yeah, but nobody ever told him how heightened your feelings become, how confusing everything
is, how your body changes and it makes you feel all weird, the way your voice starts to break. The
way you're incapable of telling how you yourself feel about anything.

He does recall his dad telling him that since he's a teenager, sooner or later, he'll experience love
for the first time. And heartbreak. "Heartbreak too, because the two of them go hand in hand, 
Keiji, unfortunately." Then his dad laughed and asked him to promise telling him when he does 
fall in love, because he'd like to relive his own teenage years with his son's story.

And Akaashi'd pulled an embarrassed face, saying "Daaaad, I'm going to Fukurodani to study! I
don't plan on falling in love."

And that's the God honest truth, at least when he'd told his father that.

He never planned on falling in love with his Captain, roommate and best friend. And least of all,
with someone who is interested in girls.

Instead of wishing to be older, he wishes he could go back to being a kid. When the only thing he
had to worry about is getting the same Pokemon trade card he already had in his collection with
his lunch money. Or being tucked in bed by his mom, who would read him James and the Giant 
Peach until falling asleep and then wondering about how the story would go next. When grazing
his knees on the monkey bars in the playground were healed by his parent's kiss and a Flintstones 
band aid.

As expected of November, the weather doesn't settle. In the space of a single day, they'd have a
bit of sunshine in the morning, followed by cloudy skies and a light autumn shower, then another 
brief spell of sunshine, before the clouds build up again and the rain pours down in torrents.

Akaashi observes the changes from his bedroom window, with his pillow behind his back and his
blanket over his legs, and he feels as if he watching one of those sped up films of the passing
seasons.

It's raining outside, but also inside. Inside his chest, that is.

He wishes he could plaster one of those Flintstones band aids over his heart.

Konoha and Sarukui come to check on him in their room and tell him about what he'd missed
during classes, during practice, who was up to what in the hallways, that sort of thing.

And Bokuto, of course, almost like a worried parent, constantly asking if he'd taken his medicine,
if he gets enough sleep, rests up and feels better. Despite the fact it's the school nurse who brings 
Akaashi his meals, Bokuto brings him food too, whatever he can sneak up the stairs in his pockets
or hands. He brings Akaashi all of his homework too, papers and whatnots, and Akaashi wonders
if it's Ayame that gives them to Bokuto to pass them onto him.

Turns out it's not her, though, because someone - Konoha or Sarukui, he doesn't remember who
exactly - tells him Bokuto's girlfriend is sick too. And despite the fact those words land a punch
right in his heart, a punch Akaashi thinks should be illegal, he also feels incredibly touched,
because it means Bokuto is the one going to all his teachers, asking for all the school work he's
missing out on.

Maybe he does it for Ayame too, but Akaashi decides not to think about that.
A couple of times, Bokuto checks Akaashi's forehead with his mouth, to make sure he's not feverish, which makes Akaashi's heart thump uncontrollably against his rib cage. Because Bokuto's lips feel just as soft as he remembers them to be.

He also gets a text message from Kuroo, a simple "get well soon", but he appreciates the concern and replies with a just as simple "thank you".

On Wednesday, just after the third period warning bell rings, to be exact, a most unexpected visitor shows up. After a soft knock on the door, Bokuto's father walks in.

Akaashi, who'd been dozing off, instantly wakes up and he's just about to jump on his feet, when Bokuto's father shakes his head.

"Please, don't get out of bed. Your dean told me you're sick." He smiles. "May I?" He pats the edge of Akaashi's bed, who quickly nods his head. He sits and continues smiling at Akaashi.

Before he says anything else, Akaashi blurts out.

"If you're here for-

"No, I'm not here to see Koutarou. I'm here to see you." He extends his hand. "It's a pleasure to finally meet the Wonder Boy my son's been talking so much about."

Akaashi's face heats up instantly and it has nothing do with his fever.

"It's a pleasure to meet you too."

They shake hands.

"Flu season's awful, isn't it?"

Akaashi nods, not knowing what to say. Why is Bokuto's dad here to see him? Shouldn't he be at work, operating on someone or something?

"Ah, Slaughterhouse- Five?" He nods his head at the book next to Akaashi's pillow. "Never been much of a Vonnegut fan, myself."

"It's for our English class."

"Even while sick in bed, you're catching up on school work. Impressive. I can understand why my son and your dean both speak so highly of you." Bokuto's father smiles again and glances at his watch. "I've got a pretty busy schedule and as a doctor, I don't want to take up any of your resting time. I just wanted to drop by and thank you."

Akaashi swallows. "For what?"

"Your midterm exams came in on Friday and my wife and I were beyond shocked, when we discovered Koutarou's name isn't on the list of students with mandatory detention. Not only that, his GPA has gotten higher, higher than it's ever been before. And I know I have you to thank for that."

Akaashi doesn't know why Bokuto's father makes his skin prickle, because he's smiling and the tone with which he speaks is somewhat formal, but soft, almost friendly. But for some inexplicable reason, he feels like an intruder, as if this isn't his room, but he is merely a guest here.

"He studied very hard to accomplish his grades." He hears his own voice reply.
"You don't have to be so modest about it." Bokuto's father laughs. "My wife and I already know Tetsurou, and he's a good influence on Koutarou, but he doesn't go to your school. So I know you're the one responsible for the improvement in his grades, Keiji."

Akaashi tries not to scowl, because he doesn't remember saying it's okay to be on a first name basis with a stranger, even if said stranger is Bokuto's dad. But he doesn't comment on it, because he respects people older than him. And in his expensive suit, glasses and posture, the entire aura surrounding Bokuto's father, screams just that. Respect.

"I'm not sure of the exact date, because my wife is the one responsible, but we're going to be hosting a charity ball and I would be really glad if you could accompany my son. There's some people I would like to introduce you to."

"Me?" Akaashi blinks.

"Yes. I know you're only a first year, but it's never too soon to think about the future, what university you would like to go to. And unlike my son, I'm sure you have thought about it, haven't you?"

Akaashi nods his head slightly. He's never even had this conversation with his own parents, and yet Bokuto's father is here, demanding to know what he plans to do next.

How the fuck should he know, when he doesn't even know what he'll want to eat for breakfast tomorrow morning?

"Having contacts is a very important thing, Keiji, and I know all the right people for that. Koutarou never appreciates it, but I think you will. And I also think you will enjoy yourself."

The more Bokuto's father speaks, the less Akaashi decides he likes him. At least that's what his gut feeling is telling him.

"T-thank you for the invitation." He bows his head. "I would love to and I look forward to meeting you again, and your wife too."

"She would love to meet you too. With cheekbones like that, she'd probably ask you to become one of her models." Bokuto's father laughs.

Akaashi clears his throat. "Um, maybe you already know this, but this Friday is our school's play. Would you and your wife be able to show up and see Bokuto-san's performance? I'm sure he would greatly appreciate that, after all the hard work he's put into it."

He doesn't know if that's true. Bokuto might even get mad at him for saying something like this to his father, but the words are already out of his mouth and he can't take them back.

"No, we won't, but we'll watch it on a tape later. Koutarou's theater and drama teacher sent us an email with the script and how great he thinks it is, but if I have to be honest with you, I'd rather not see my son kiss another boy in front of your entire school." He shakes his head, revolted by the mere idea of it.

Akaashi's inside boil with silent rage.

"Still, it won't be the worst and most embarrassing thing Koutarou has put his mother and I through." He sighs. "I'm actually surprised the teacher approved of it, because what are all those parents going to think? Paying for their kids education and having to see that kind of thing?" He shakes his head again. "No, Fukurodani is a great school, but people might get the wrong idea. If I knew this beforehand, my wife and I wouldn't have allowed Koutarou to join this school and pay
"I don't understand what is so wrong in teaching our peers about acceptance," Akaashi licks his lips. Then he dares to add. "And your son's on a full scholarship, so you're not paying anything."

Bokuto's dad laughs. "And what about his previous year? We had to donate a whole lot of money to make sure he doesn't get thrown out because of his bad grades."

"Well he seems to be doing alright this year."

"Yes, for now at least. Knowing my son, he's bound to slip up." He reaches out and pats Akaashi's shoulder. "But when that happens, I know you'll help him through with it. Won't you?"

Akaashi hates the way Bokuto's father talks about him. He finally understands why Bokuto is the way he is. It's really no wonder he has prescribed sleeping pills, mood swings, the sense of unworthiness he feels of carrying his family's name. How could someone, as smart as his father, treat his son, his very own flesh and blood, in such a way? It's like he sets him up for a downfall, before he's even started something?

He remembers Bokuto calling himself the black sheep of the family and now he knows why he did.

Still, despite all the things Akaashi wants to say, like yell "guess what, Daddy-O, I'm so fucking gay for your son" out of spite, he nods his head and quietly says he would always help Bokuto out in whichever way that he can.

And damn fucking right he would. He doesn't care if he's sick, or it's the end of the world, he's going to make sure he goes with Bokuto to the dumbass ball event, or whatever the fuck, if only to provide him company, or the support Bokuto deserves and needs, which he doesn't seem to get from his own parents.

It's almost ironic, because doctor or not, Bokuto's father's visit makes him feel sicker than he felt half an hour ago.

Nobody ever gets to choose their family and that's unfortunate. Because if he had Bokuto's father for a father, he would hate every single second of it. And he, too, would pick being a boarding student here, over staying at their fancy ass house and having to endure all the criticism and passive aggressive behavior.

Maybe he was wrong, when he'd told Bokuto his parents only have his best interest at heart. Or maybe his mother and father think this is a good way to raise their child, with their heads so busy being buried deep in their own conservative asses to realize that sort of pressure is absolutely unhealthy for any human being.

Akaashi takes his laptop and furiously begins to type at his keyboard, explaining in full detail all about his meeting with Bokuto's father to Kuroo. Because Kuroo is the only one who knows Bokuto's parents and would understand. And he's just about to hit send, when he decides against it and closes the window.

Kuroo must already know. And maybe he'd prefer it if Akaashi keeps his distance, at least for a while. Because his facebook inbox messages are from Monday and the last thing there, is his short "thank you" reply.

His silent anger dissipates, leaving nothing but a bitter taste of disappointment in his mouth. He feels so much pity for Bokuto, what he's had to endure his entire life, and it makes his eyes well up with tears. He knows perfectly well Bokuto hates all kinds of pity, which is probably why he
almost never speaks of his family.

When Akaashi finally stops crying, he feels drained, sick and ugly. His eyes are swollen, his chest aches and his entire face is caked in snot and tears. Also, his fingers hurt from clinging so hard against his wet pillow.

He gives one final sniff, then goes into the bathroom to wash his face, because it's almost lunch break, which means in a couple of minutes Bokuto will barge in and ask him if he feels any better.

Bokuto doesn't even have time to announce his happy "Hey hey heyyy!", because the second he takes a step into their room, he stops dead in his tracks.

"My dad was here, wasn't he?"

"How did you know?" Akaashi asks softly.

"I can smell his cologne in the air." Bokuto replies and sits next to Akaashi, right where his father had sat. Then he pulls Akaashi into a hug. "Akaashi, I don't know what he told you, but you should ignore everything he said. I am so sorry, Akaashi."

Akaashi nods silently and feels his own hands locking themselves into a tight grip behind Bokuto's neck.

A burden shared with a friend might be a burden halved, but Akaashi doesn't want to place any of its heavy weight on Bokuto's shoulders, not one bit. He prefers to silently carry it, because guilt is the last thing he wants Bokuto to feel. Guilt, which Akaashi knows perfectly well with eat him from the inside and upset him, just as upset as he feels, and he doesn't want that.

Never.

"Listen, I don't know what kind of bullshit my dad filled your head with, but I think I can cheer you up." Bokuto lets go and Akaashi is faced with the big golden eyes, tinkling mischievously at him. "You know Kuroo's birthday is next Tuesday, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, Oikawa and Iwaizumi are coming this weekend and Kuroo and I decided we should celebrate his birthday this Friday."

"Celebrating one's birthday before the actual birthday is bad luck, Bokuto-san."

"Akaashi, that's just what old superstitious grannies say!" Bokuto laughs. "You're okay with Oikawa and Iwaizumi staying here with us, right? It'll be great, because instead of spending their money on a hotel, we could spend it on alcohol and we'd have a slumber party together. Wouldn't that be awesome?"

Akaashi feels the corners of his mouth curve up a little, if only at Bokuto's obvious enthusiasm.

"Yeah, I suppose."

"You suppose? Are you kidding, it's like the best news ever!" Bokuto grins. "I'm so excited already!"

"Bokuto-san, you aren't forgetting about the play, right?"

"Nooo, that's gonna be before, and then we'll go out to celebrate! I know we won't be checked
out, but we have the rope, so we could sneak out the window after checking in at the front desk." Bokuto snickers.

"How come Oikawa-san and Iwaizumi-san are coming to Tokyo? Is it because of Kuroo-san's birthday?"

Bokuto shrugs. "Don't think so, because Kuroo and I decided to change it like an hour ago, after hearing they're coming. They probably wanna check out some universities or something?"

"Oh. I see."

"Yeah." Bokuto pats his back. "I hope you feel better, so you can come to school tomorrow. Classes are so boring without you."

Akaashi feels touched, but he still rolls his eyes. "Bokuto-san, we only have English class together."

"Yeah, but there's also breakfast, lunch, volleyball, seeing you in the hallways."

"Thanks."

"I better go, or I'll be late for my next class." Bokuto says after glancing at his watch. "But I totally cheered you up, right?"

"You did, Bokuto-san."

On Thursday morning, when the both of them go downstairs for breakfast, the volleyball team greets Akaashi with each of them clapping their hands the second he walks into Dining Room B. With a smile and a nod, he thanks them for the warm welcome, and takes his seat next to Bokuto.

"Oh, Akaashi, you have no idea how happy we all are that you're finally here." Konoha says and groans. "For three whole days we had to listen to Bokuto's whining. "I miss them so much"." He mimics.

"Them?" Akaashi asks as he bites into his butter and honey toast.

"Yeah, you and Ayame." Konoha replies and pretends to gag. "It's been all "my girlfriend this, my girlfriend that". Like yeah, Bokuto, we get it, you have a girlfriend. Just shut up about it already."

Akaashi's bite get stuck in his throat, but nobody seems to notice, so he washes it down with a big gulp of coffee.

"Screw you, Konoha, you're just jealous, because you don't have one." Bokuto pokes his tongue out at him.

"Damn right I am. I still can't believe she chose you out of all the boys from our school." He shakes his head in disbelief. "And I thought being a tutor meant she's smart."

"That's no way to talk to your Captain, you hyena."

"Eat me, Bokuto." Konoha sneers.
"I can't, because my girlfriend might get jealous."

This time Akaashi joins everyone around the table and pretends to gag with a loud "eughhh" sound.

It seems that during Akaashi's absence, Bokuto'd started referring to Ayame as his girlfriend. Which shouldn't surprise him, since they're dating, but it still sounds revolting every single time he has to hear it. Which he hears a whole lot, especially since he rooms with Bokuto.

The relief Akaashi feels during History, Japanese, Physics and also Studio Art, is strong, because those are all classes and desks he shares with Ayame and he relishes it, despite the small amount of guilt. Because no matter how boring the lessons are, for the next two days, he doesn't have Ayame's quiet whisper by his ear, or the notes she passes him, informing him how cute Bokuto is, how great his arms are, and wow, Akaashi, he's such a babe, right?

Yeah, he already knows all those things.

And just like Ayame, he too, knows how good his lips feel, without having her to tell him that.

After classes on Friday, Bokuto and Yukie leave for the train station to welcome Oikawa and Iwaizumi. Bokuto'd asked Akaashi to go with him, but after seeing how jumpy and excited their manager got, he suggested for Bokuto to go with her, who gave him the thumbs up behind Bokuto's back.

When the two of them leave the gym, the team starts with their warm up laps. But then they all stop, since nobody takes the place in the middle of the court to lead their stretching exercises.

Komi nudges Akaashi in the ribs and whispers quietly.

"We're all waiting for you, Vice Captain. You're the boss now."

Oh. Right.

Akaashi'd seen Bokuto do it so many times before, that he doesn't feel nervous about doing it. It feels different than doing a presentation in class, because despite having all eyes on him, Akaashi feels at ease on the court.

And when he separates everyone into two teams and they begin playing, despite the fact he's the one with the least experience and almost everyone is a year older than him, being his senpais, they all listen to his every word, not questioning him even once.

A rush of pride fills his chest and he finally, truly, feels like a Vice Captain of Fukurodani's volleyball team.

Halfway through their game, Bokuto, Yukie, Iwaizumi and Oikawa join them and after a bit of persuasion on Bokuto's part - perhaps pestering is a better word than persuasion, Akaashi muses - Iwaizumi and him get on the court too.

Akaashi wonders why Oikawa doesn't join them as well, but instead takes a seat on the bench next to Yukie, who looks like she's in seventh heaven.

Before they resume their play, Oikawa yells.

"Kou-chan, we all know how well you work with Aka-chan. Wouldn't you agree that things would be more interesting if you went on the other team, while Iwa-chan teams up with your setter?"
Bokuto's eyes instantly dart at Akaashi, and despite the fact everyone there knows Bokuto doesn't like playing unless they are on the same team, he isn't one to turn down a challenge and after a shrug, him and Iwaizumi trade places.

It's Akaashi's turn to serve, so he lines up. He feels incredibly pleased with himself, because his serve earns his team a point. And he's really glad that Oikawa is there to see it, to witness that Akaashi has improved. Hah!

After his serve, Oikawa's approving voice reaches his ears.

"Ahhh, it seems you've taken my pointers into consideration, eh, Aka-chan? Nice. You're nowhere near as good as me, but better than the last time I saw you serve."

"Stop interrupting the play, Shittycawa!" Iwaizumi yells.

"Sorry, Iwa-chan, I'm just excited to see that I've given yet another kouhai of mine advice, which has improved their game."

Akaashi's second serve gets received, and he quickly backs into his position next to the net. Konoha knows his movements better than Iwaizumi does, but Akaashi still decides to set the ball for Iwaizumi. His toss isn't as accurate as he's probably used to with Oikawa, but it's good enough to get a successful and powerful spike in, nearly at the back line.

Bokuto shakes his head and calls for a do over, since the ball was outside the line, even though everyone could see it wasn't.

"A do over? What are you, five?" Iwaizumi scowls. "The ball was inside! It's our point!"

"No, it was out." Bokuto's eyes turn to Akaashi. "Tell him, Akaashi."

"Bokuto-san, the ball was inside."

Bokuto's mouth drops in a betrayed, comical "O".

"Fine! If you guys say it was inside, it was inside." He says sourly.

Akaashi and everyone else already knows Bokuto's gone into his dejected mode. And Akaashi is the only one who knows how to deal with Bokuto when he does, but they're on different teams now, so it's no surprise to anyone that Bokuto's team ends up losing and they have to do suicides.

Iwaizumi pats Akaashi's shoulder.

"Nice game. You've improved from the last time we played together." He says with a small smile.

"Thank you, Iwaizumi-san! Coming from you, that really means a lot." Akaashi says and bows his head.

"Akaashi, what the Hell?" Bokuto pants, completely out of breath. "I always tell you how much you've improved, don't I?"

Akaashi bites the insides of his cheeks, trying his best not to grin. He finds Bokuto's jealousy very endearing.

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

The bell rings, and they all head out the gym and line up for dinner. Bokuto pushes ahead of all
the other students with his elbows, yelling "VIP coming through!". And by the time Akaashi carries his tray onto their table, Bokuto's finished eating and out of Dining Room B, maybe even showering upstairs already.

Konoha, Sarukui, Yukie, Oikawa, Iwaizumi and Akaashi sit together and eat their dinner in peace and quiet.

"Thank you for letting us stay with you." Iwaizumi mumbles, mouthful of mashed potatoes.

"Aww, you guys are always welcome here." Yukie quickly says, grinning at him and Oikawa.

Iwaizumi's hand slaps the top of Oikawa's head.

"Iwa-chan, why?"

"Don't be ungrateful and say thank you too!"

"But, Iwa-chan, you already said it for the both of us. And I'm going thank them when we leave on Sunday."

"Do you think your mouth would fall off if you thank your hosts more than once?" Iwaizumi grunts and kicks him under the table. "Look, their manager even brought you milk bread. Say thank you, you pig!"

"Ouch! Yes, thank you, I really appreciate it."

After dinner, Akaashi leads Oikawa and Iwaizumi up to his and Bokuto's room. Since he's the host, he offers for the two of them to go into the bathroom before him. Iwaizumi thanks him with a nod and after taking a towel, he heads for the door, when Oikawa says.

"Iwa-chan, we have to hurry up for Kou-chan's play. We'd save some time if we showered together."

Iwaizumi ignores him and locks the door.

Oikawa sighs and sits on Akaashi's bed. He looks around their room and turns to Akaashi.

"So this is your room."

Akaashi tries not to laugh at the dumb observation.

"Obviously."

"What's it like being a boarding student?" Oikawa asks curiously. "I don't think I could stomach living with another person in such a small space, unless it was Iwa-chan. How is it rooming with Kou-chan?"

Akaashi shrugs. "It's nice."

"Yeah? You like Kou-chan's gun show, don't you, Aka-chan?" Oikawa chuckles at Akaashi's expression. "We all do."

As if he doesn't feel awkward enough being scrutinized by Oikawa's eyes, things get a whole lot worse, because just then, Kuroo walks into their room.

"Bro, I wanted to wish you good- oh." Kuroo blinks, his eyes meeting Akaashi's.
This is the first time they see each other face to face after what'd happened last weekend.

"Hey, Angel Eyes."

"Hello, Kuroo-san. It's good to see you." Akaashi mumbles.

Oikawa claps his hands excitedly. "Is it just me or is there a whole lot of unresolved sexual tension in the air?"

Akaashi feels eternally grateful that Kuroo is Kuroo, because he smirks at Oikawa.

"Yeah, there is. But since you're here and I'm here, we can easily resolve it."

"Rawr, the birthday boy is here to play, huh?" Oikawa pokes his tongue out at Kuroo.

Akaashi totally feels like a third wheel and hopes for Iwaizumi to be done with his shower quicker. But it seems he's the only one who feels uncomfortable, because Kuroo sits next to Oikawa and wraps an arm over his shoulders.

"You know, Oikawa, my bro said you and Iwaizumi will get the beds, while Angel Eyes and him take your sleeping bags on the floor." He says with a smirk.

Well this certainly is news to Akaashi, because he not only never agreed to this, he doesn't even remember Bokuto asking him? But that's typical Bokuto for you.

Oikawa goes into the bathroom next and oh wow, things get a whole lot more awkward than they were before, because Akaashi is left with Iwaizumi and Kuroo.

The only thing missing is the cricket noises.

Awkaaaaaaard.

Akaashi takes his clothes into the bathroom with him and after a very quick shower, he changes into them. When he walks out, Kuroo's already out of their room, probably waiting for them at the stairs, but he hears Oikawa's quiet whisper as he locks up the door.

"Iwa-chan, you can't see my nipples through my shirt, right?" He plucks at the hem of his white shirt, glancing down.

"What."

"Nevermind, Tetsu-chan was probably just teasing."

Kuroo leads the way into the auditorium and the second they walk in, a boy with an earpiece tugs at Akaashi's arm.

"Well about time you got here! Come on, you have to go backstage."

"Me? Why?" Akaashi blinks.

"Because Bokuto wants you there and he says he won't get on the stage unless you're there."

Akaashi nods at once. "Please lead the way."

He follows the boy into the back and tries not to stare too hard at the changing rooms, the big mirrors, the decors, the entire play's cast, all dressed up in their get ups, nervously peeping behind the curtains, wondering if their friends and parents have already arrived, quietly talking between
Bokuto's entire face lights up the second that he sees him and rushes by his side.

"Akaashi! Oh my God, I'm so nervous, I think I'm going to be sick."

"Bokuto-san, calm down." Akaashi offers up a small smile. "You're going to be great."

"What if I mess up?"

"You won't."

"But what if I forget my lines?" Bokuto asks, panic clear in his voice.

"Then look back at me, because I'll be here the entire time. I already know your lines, so if you do forget them, I can whisper them to you. Okay? But don't worry about it, because I know you'll be great. Good luck out there."

"Akaashi, I'm an actor! You're supposed to say "break a leg"!"

"You're absolutely right." He laughs softly. "Please, Bokuto-san, go out there and break a leg."

"That's more like it." Bokuto winks and takes his place.

The loud voices of the students and parents can be heard from here, but despite all the noise, Akaashi hears Bokuto's urgent whisper.

"Akaashi! It's too bad my girlfriend isn't here to see my first performance."

Bokuto's words cut like a knife, but Akaashi puts on a brave face and smiles reassuringly.

"It's okay, Bokuto-san. You have me."

And that's the God's honest truth. Bokuto has him, mind, body, soul, everything. Everything Akaashi has to give, Bokuto's already got it. Signed, sealed and fucking delivered.

When the curtain raises, Akaashi only has eyes for Bokuto, even if he can only see his back and parts of his profile. Bokuto's voice is the only one his ears pick up on and he almost feels like a groupie, mouthing to himself every single one of Bokuto's lines.

In the quiet parts of Akaashi's heart where no one else can hear, he knows exactly how bad he wants Bokuto to kiss him again. That's probably the worst part too, that even knowing full well Bokuto's in a relationship, he still wants it and he would kiss back, if Bokuto so much as looks at him the right way. The wrong way.

And it happens.

Just after the kissing scene and the slap, when Bokuto's character is about to confess his love, his eyes, even if just for a second, look directly into Akaashi's.

Akaashi feels like he just got electrocuted.

And maybe it's just wishful thinking on his part, but he knows. Oh, he knows.

That look meant more and he's sure of it.

So after the play ends and they've all taken their bows and the curtain rolls down again, Akaashi
doesn't care if there's people around, he doesn't care about anything but what he feels inside his chest.

With courage he never knew he had, he walks up to Bokuto and with a hand lightly pressing against Bokuto's nape, he kisses him.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

In that single moment, despite the voices around, to Akaashi it's just Bokuto and him. He puts all his unspoken words and feelings, conveying them all through his lips, hoping it's enough.

It'll never be enough.

What makes him break away from Bokuto, isn't the people backstage, their quiet gasps and murmurs, it's the fact that Bokuto's lips remain unmoving. And when Akaashi opens his eyes, he is greeted by the big honey orbs, blinking at him curiously.

What the fuck, did Bokuto really think he can just give Akaashi such a meaningful look while delivering his lines and then expect for Akaashi to not kiss him?

It's not possible. It's also not fair.

"Akaashi?" His soft voice makes Akaashi's insides churn. "What was that for?"

Akaashi swallows hard.

How could he be so stupid? Why, after everything he already knows, how could he let his heart take over his better judgement and do this?

It turns out not all superheroes have capes, because just then, Kuroo, followed by Oikawa and Iwaizumi, swoops in to the rescue.

Akaashi watches as Kuroo gently pushes him to the side, takes Bokuto's face into his large palms and kisses him, too. Then he laughs at Bokuto's even more bewildered expression.

"My bro, Angel Eyes and I decided earlier that since Ayame isn't here, we're going to give you a well deserved kiss for your amazing acting."

"You really thought I was that good?" Bokuto grins and looks at Akaashi, who nods his head furiously in agreement.

"Kou-chan, your performance wasn't as moving for me as it was for Tetsu-chan and Aka-chan, but here's a hug." Oikawa says and hugs Bokuto.

"And we're not that close, so you only get a handshake from me." Iwaizumi adds, but Bokuto pushes his hand away and pulls him into a hug, oblivious to Iwaizumi's scowling face.

As Yukie, Konoha, Sarukui, Komi and Washio, basically the entire volleyball team come backstage to congratulate Bokuto, Kuroo slides next to Akaashi and whispers quietly.

"Love makes us do crazy things, doesn't it?"
"Kuroo-san, tha-"

"You don't have to thank me." Kuroo pats his back. "But next time you wanna do something as reckless, make sure there's not that many people around. Cause, you know, people talk."

"I honestly don't know what I was thinking." Akaashi admits, his face turning a deep shade of red as if he only just realizes what he'd done.

"That's the thing, you weren't thinking. You were feeling." Kuroo's eyes dart at him for a second. "I would know, since I did the exact same thing with you."

Ouch.

Kuroo seems to be able to read the expression on Akaashi's face, because he chuckles softly.

"There's no need for you to feel guilty, you didn't do anything wrong."

Akaashi already knows that. And yet, the guilt is there, nestled in his chest.

"I know, Kuroo-san. But... I'm still sorry."

"Don't be. It's me that should be saying sorry and not you."

"How do you figure that?" Akaashi snorts.

Kuroo shrugs. "I'm the only one who knows your secret. When you were sick this week, it must've been Hell for you, being alone, while having to listen to Bokuto talk about Ayame the whole time. And instead of being there for you, like a good friend should've done, I avoided you."

"Why are you telling me all this?" Akaashi swallows hard. He doesn't want to fucking cry here and if Kuroo continues to talk like this, he just might.

After all it was him that gave Kuroo advice, that he should open himself more. And Kuroo'd done that. He'd been nothing but a selfless friend to Akaashi and for him to stand there and apologize to Akaashi for it, Akaashi can't bear it. It's too much guilt, it's too awful.

Things would be so much simpler if he liked Kuroo back.

But life isn't simple like that. It never is.

Akaashi decides that he should never give advice in the future, unless it's school related, because instead of helping, it ruins everything. Or so it feels like.

"Other than my own teammates, I invited some of your owl friends to come to the Irish Pub with us. Kenma would be pretty happy to see you too." Kuroo presses his lips together. "But something tells me you don't feel like coming."

Yeah. That's exactly it. Akaashi doesn't feel like going out and drinking, and it's not just because he's still on antibiotics and can't. He just doesn't want to go out and have to fake his good mood, or if he can't, have to answer why he isn't in a good mood.

Now that he has so many friends, it's probably not a good thing to isolate himself from them and sulk, or whatever. But sometimes, it's better to be alone with your thoughts. It's less tiring, less painful. And what's the point of bringing everyone else down, too, instead of letting them have a good time?

"Your birthday gift is upstairs in our room, but I'm not gonna give it to you until your actual
"Your birthday gift is upstairs in our room, but I'm not gonna give it to you until your actual birthday." Akaashi says.

"Yeah, Bokuto did say you're superstitious like an old grandma." Kuroo laughs. "It's alright, it's better not knowing."

Akaashi eyes him suspiciously. "He already told you what we got you, didn't he?"

Kuroo laughs again. "Yup."

"Why does that not surprise me." Akaashi sighs. "Well, since you already know, we might as well give it to you."

"Excellent." Kuroo grins.

Bokuto, Kuroo, Oikawa, Iwaizumi and Akaashi head back to the room and Bokuto, proudly, gives Kuroo his present, which Akaashi had neatly wrapped up, with a red bow on top. Kuroo tears at the paper at once, and Akaashi can't help, but think of his grandmother. During birthdays and holidays, she would always tell him to be careful when unwrapping his presents, because she would collect all the papers into the bottom drawer of one of their kitchen cupboards, saying they could reuse them in the future.

Kuroo grins proudly as he holds his bright red jersey and shorts in the air, with the #1 and Nekoma Captain written at the front and the back, for all of them to see. He pulls Bokuto and Akaashi into a hug, laughing and thanking them both, because he absolutely loves it. Then he changes out of his shirt and puts the jersey on, saying he can hardly wait to see the angry look on his Captain's face.

They all head downstairs, but not before Bokuto stops at the door and with a look Akaashi can't quite decipher, he says.

"Akaashi, you and I need to have a talk later."

Akaashi closes his eyes and counts to ten, trying to compose his breathing.

Those are literally the worst words Bokuto could've chosen to say to him. Doesn't Bokuto know he should never, ever, say things like that to someone, who suffers from anxiety? Hell, even to person who doesn't have it, those words could easily turn even the most relaxed person into a tense mess. Really, those words should be illegal.

Because Bokuto's gone now, but his words stay with Akaashi, mindfucking him and making him worry sick. Talk about what? Why didn't Bokuto give him at least a little hint of what their talk should be about later?

Groaning and cursing loudly, his heart and mind a mess, Akaashi changes and heads for the gym. Practicing some serves, setting and running might offer up some sort of distraction to him. Hopefully.

People often say hope dies last. And, boy, that couldn't be more true. No matter what tiny sliver of it there is, as long as it's there, it might just fucking kill you. Hope is exactly what keeps Akaashi stuck, right where he is, how he got himself into this mess in the first place. Hope is why he kissed Bokuto tonight. Hope is the reason why he often lies awake in bed, tossing and turning like the sea during a storm.

Bokuto isn't one to run away from confrontations, unlike Akaashi. He isn't one to swipe a problem under the rug and ignore and deny it's there. But maybe that's not such a bad thing, because if he
straight up tells him "Listen, Akaashi, a have a girlfriend and I'm not gay", then maybe Akaashi could finally find peace and move on. Sure, it would be painful as Hell, heartbreaking. But he would move on and not be like this.

Hope sucks, because it paralyzes you. It makes you see things not for what they are, but for what you want them to be. What you wish for them to be.

Akaashi needs a cold, harsh dose of reality, because he's clearly lost his grip on it. Of course he doesn't want it, not at all, but it's what he needs.

The right palm of his hand pulses a bright red color and he lines up for another serve. Just then, he hears unfamiliar voices carrying in the corridor.

It's Friday night, and it's still pretty early, so maybe some students saw the lights on from outside, thinking they could use the place to make out or whatever.

"I'm sorry, the gym's closed!" He yells.

Since the voices don't stop, but grow closer, after an angry "What the fuck did I just say" mutter under his breath, Akaashi takes the ball under his arm and he's just about to get off the court and tell the people to leave, when two guys appear in front of him. The one at the front is Saito, while the other one, flanking his side, is older looking, and Akaashi has never seen him before.

"The gym's closed, Saito-san."

"No, it isn't. You're here." Saito replies and before Akaashi can take a few steps back, Saito passes a bottle of whiskey to the other guy and then he's in front of Akaashi. He takes the ball from under his arm. "And didn't I already tell you it's senpai?"

"Saito-senpai, please leave." Akaashi says and licks his dry lips.

"No." Saito twirls the ball on his finger. "There's three of us, so we could play a little game. Two against one, what do you say? After all you're Fukurodani's official setter, so it shouldn't be a challenge for you."

"Actually, I was just about to close the gym and-"

"You're not going to do that." Saito laughs, making the hairs on the back of Akaashi's neck stand up. "See, I knew there's gotta be a reason why Bokuto would sub my starting setter position for you. And what do you know, tonight I finally saw that reason." He sneers. "What did you do, suck him off into your room? Give him a real nice blowjob that would ensure you get my spot, huh? Is that it?"

Akaashi scowls. He knows perfectly well Saito is saying those things to get a rise out of him, but he's not in a mood to be fucked with. Sure, there's two of them and they're both bigger and definitely stronger looking than him, but Saito wouldn't be stupid enough to pick a fight on school grounds, especially when there's parents and teachers still out there.

He wants to say that instead of spitting untrue accusations at him, maybe Saito should've practiced more and maybe then Bokuto wouldn't have given Akaashi his volleyball position.

But he keeps his mouth shut, because from this close, Akaashi can smell the alcohol on Saito's breath and he can see Saito's eyes aren't as sharp or as focused and they would be if he was sober.

Which he isn't. And messing with someone that's drunk is a dangerous thing to do.
"Please, I don't want any trouble." Akaashi says quietly.

Saito's hand darts out and settles on Akaashi's neck. Akaashi flinches and ducks out of the way. But the other guy, while still holding the bottle of whiskey, approaches and squeezes Akaashi's hand painfully.

"Don't touch me!" Akaashi yelps, but the guy's grip is too strong to be shrugged off.

Saito grabs Akaashi by the roots of his hair, pulling Akaashi towards him. It hurts a lot, but Akaashi's so paralyzed with fear that he can't yell for help, he can't do anything. Saito jerks Akaashi's hair, making Akaashi look up at him. His jaw is set tight and his eyes look out of control.

"I think it's time for a walk in the woods." He says and takes hold of Akaashi's other hand.

As both boys begin to pull Akaashi away from the court, he digs his feet in and tries resisting. Saito stops and stares at him.

"You're not that smart, are you? You shouldn't fight back, not when your boyfriend isn't here to protect you."

"Bokuto-san is going to tear you apart." Akaashi says quietly.

"Probably." Saito smiles. "But that's not going to help you much now, is it?"

Saito's words momentarily make Akaashi realize they're absolutely true, because Bokuto isn't here now, no, he's alone. But despite the fact the other two are a whole lot stronger than he is, he struggles, even if it is pointless, a waste of energy.

Don't give up, Akaashi, he tells himself over and over again. Don't you dare.

Maybe it's the lights in the gym that are more comforting than the idea of being dragged into the darkness, into the woods. It might be dramatic to think he might get killed, but with drunk and aggressive people, you just don't fucking know what they might do to you. And in that moment, all he can think about is staying alive.

It's amazing how fast you can move, or how you get a rush of strength you never knew you had inside you when your mind shuts down and your body takes over. It's the survival instinct, Akaashi supposes, the autonomic nervous system, primitive, almost animalistic reflexes kicking in, fight or flight. He doesn't know how it works exactly, but that's probably the whole point, your mind unconscious of what it's telling you to do, but you just do it. You have to.

Akaashi's teeth bite into one of the hands holding him and he nearly vomits, when he feels the salty skin under his tongue. But it works, because the hand stops holding him. His body trashes out of control and even though Saito punches him right in the mouth, making his own teeth bust his lower lip and his eyes water in pain, he bites Saito's other hand until it releases him.

He quickly backs away onto the court again and wipes the disgusting coppery taste of blood away from his lips with the back of his hand.

"You're not gonna get away with this." Akaashi pants out, as droplets of sweat roll down from his forehead and his neck. "I'm gonna make sure you get expelled."

His words seem to register in Saito's clouded mind, because he stops moving.

"That's enough!" Iwaizumi's angry voice booms onto the court.
Akaashi doesn’t know what Iwaizumi is doing there, but in that moment, he feels an incredible rush of gratitude to see Aoba Jousai’s player there with him. If Iwaizumi is here, it means help, it means Akaashi is safe!

"Iwaizumi-san!" He chokes out as his eyes water up in appreciation.

The next few minutes pass in a blur. Everything just happens so quickly, that Akaashi can't take all of the details in, but he feels the flood of emotions that flow through his body as he watches Iwaizumi's quick stride down the middle of the court. Iwaizumi's eyes are an intoxicating blend of fury and loathing and for the first time in Akaashi's life, he wants to see someone get hurt.

Saito puts his hands up, blocking Iwaizumi's way. Saito stands tall, with his shoulders and back towering over Iwaizumi, almost blocking him out of Akaashi's eye sight. But Saito's taller form doesn't seem to bother Iwaizumi one bit. Iwaizumi just walks directly at Saito, never wavering and never taking his eyes off him.

Akaashi holds his breath, silently praying that the worst doesn't happen. But it's not Iwaizumi he should be worried about, because he might be shorter, but he's probably even stronger than Bokuto.

The second that Saito moves, Iwaizumi dodges to the right, much quicker, and Saito's hands are still grasping at thin air, when Iwaizumi jumps and with a loud thudding noise, he brings his elbow down, right on Saito's head. Saito's entire body falls heavily to the ground, lying there, unmoving, probably unconscious from Iwaizumi's blow.

"Fuck!" Saito's friend yells, then quickly bends down and Akaashi watches as he smashes the whiskey bottle against the ground.

Akaashi has enough time to cover his face against the shards with his hands. But while he is shielding his eyes away, which couldn't have taken more than a few seconds, Saito's friend walks behind him and grabs him around the neck, holding Akaashi in front of him. Akaashi can feel the tension in his body and he can hear his terrified breathing in his ear. His arm is so tight around Akaashi’s neck, he can hardly breathe. Akaashi tries telling him to loosen his grip, but all that comes out is a throaty squeak. Saito's friend stares at Iwaizumi, and without so much as glancing at Akaashi, he holds the broken bottle to his face. His hands are shaking and Akaashi can feel the jagged glass brush against his cheek. Akaashi's heart is hammering loudly against his chest and he tries not to look at the glass, but instead, at Iwaizumi in front of him.

"That's close enough!" Saito's friend warns. "If you come any closer, I'll cut your friend's pretty face off!"

Iwaizumi stops moving, but after quickly glancing at Akaashi, his eyes look up and stare at Saito's friend.

"I have a Swiss knife in my back pocket." Iwaizumi says, which makes Saito's friend stiffen, making his grip tighten around Akaashi’s neck. "So you better think very carefully what you're going to do next."

"Drop it on the ground!" Saito's friend yells. "Drop it, or I swear to God, I'll cut him!"

"Then what?" Iwaizumi replies.

Saito's friend hesitates. "You think I'm fucking joking?"

Iwaizumi shrugs. "I don't really care if you're joking or not. But do know that if you don't let go of
him, I'm going to stab you with my knife."

Saito's friend begins trembling, which makes the edges of the bottle graze against Akaashi's skin, drawing blood.

"Do you want to live?" Iwaizumi asks. "Because it seems to me you don't."

Iwaizumi's words don't sound like a threat, but a mere fact.

The next few seconds last for ever. No one speaks. The heat bears down on all three of them and the air is thick with tension and the scent of sweat. Saito's friend has one option and eventually, he takes it. With a little whimpering sound escaping his mouth, he relaxes his grip on Akaashi's neck and steps back. Seconds later, Akaashi hears the broken bottle drop to the ground. Akaashi feels his knees go weak and for a moment, he thinks he's going to fall, but Iwaizumi steps in front of him, steadying him.

"Are you hurt?" Iwaizumi asks. "Anywhere other than your lip and your cheek?"

"I don't think so."


Akaashi steps to the side and moves behind Iwaizumi. Saito's friend is standing in front of them, shaking from head to toe, his face white with fear. It's really hard to believe, but Akaashi almost feels sorry for him.

Iwaizumi isn't quite as sympathetic.

His hand takes hold of Saito's friend's shoulder and kicks him in the chest, making him fall on his knees. Then Iwaizumi kicks again, at his face this time, and a loud crunching noise fills the court. Blood immediately spurts out of Saito's friends nostrils and he rolls on the floor, sobbing loudly in pain.

Akaashi is stunned for a moment, but when he sees Iwaizumi's foot swing back, about to kick again, he finally finds his voice.

"Iwaizumi-san, don't do it." He says, breathing hard. "Please, it's not worth it."

When Iwaizumi's eyes look at him, he doesn't look as angry as he'd been mere seconds ago. There's no trace of fury or viciousness behind his green eyes. In fact, he looks almost as docile as a puppy.

"Akaashi, are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure." Akaashi nods and licks his lips. "I'm sure." He repeats.

They both glance at Saito's friend, still on the ground, a complete mess. His nose, red and swollen, his face covered in blood, and a jagged bit of broken tooth stuck to his lip. His eyes focus on Akaashi and he tries to say something, but all that comes out it is a choked out cry and a "n....uhhhh."

Iwaizumi looks at Akaashi. "You know, I'd save all of you owls a lot of bother if I just kicked him again."

"He's not from our school." Akaashi replies. "I've never seen him before."
"All the better, nobody'll know."

Akaashi's about to protest, when he realizes Iwaizumi's slightly smiling at him.

"I'm gonna go report this at the front desk." Akaashi says. "Do you want to come with me or will you stay here with them?"

"Go, I'll stay." Iwaizumi replies and places his hands on his hips. "I'm gonna make sure they don't run away, even though they don't look like they would."

Masha covers her mouth in horror when she sees Akaashi and his bloodied face. He ignores her "oh my God"s and quickly explains what had happened. She then phones Saito's parents, an ambulance and the police. Curious Fukurodani students form a circle at the front desk, while Akaashi awaits for someone to arrive, even though he really wants to just go up to his room and be alone.

The ambulance is first to arrive and while Masha leads two of the medics into the gym, the other one remains and begins to treat Akaashi's face. He checks his eyes, then disinfects the small gash on his bleeding cheek and his busted lip with a spray and a nasty smelling ointment, which he gently rubs on his skin. Akaashi tries not to flinch away from the stinging feeling, and nods his head when the medic tells him he shouldn't take the band aid off until tomorrow morning and avoid wetting it.

Then he gives his statement to a police officer, explaining everything that had happen in the gym in full detail. He tells a little white lie about Iwaizumi and Saito's friend, saying Iwaizumi was only acting in self defense, even though Saito's friend had given up, when he'd broken his nose. The policeman doesn't need to know that, though, and when Akaashi leads him to the gym, he gives Iwaizumi a meaningful look, hoping his eyes can tell Iwaizumi enough. Iwaizumi gives a tiny nod, then backs up Akaashi's story completely.

As the two of them walk up the stairs into their room, Akaashi can't stop thinking about what he'd witnessed. He'd never experienced any real violence before and now that he had, he doesn't know what to think about it. Of course, he's glad that he's safe and sound and he can't pretend he didn't enjoy seeing Iwaizumi make Saito's friend suffer. But now that he's out of harms way, away from the gym, his relief from before feels a bit outweighed by his reaction to the violence. The whole thing - the sheer power, the brutal simplicity of things - feel breathtaking. Because up until now, Akaashi'd always gone along with the idea that violence never solves anything. But now, he isn't so sure. He begins to realize that violence can be a legitimate answer. It can solve things. And he most certainly doesn't like that.

"Iwaizumi-san, thank you. I don't know what would've happened to me if you hadn't shown up when you did." Akaashi says softly, trying to control his voice from breaking. Trying not to think of what really would have happened if Iwaizumi hadn't shown up right there and then.

"Don't think about that." Iwaizumi pats his shoulder gently. "And you don't need to thank me."

"But why did you come back?" Akaashi asks curiously, before Bokuto, Kuroo and Oikawa return and join them.

"I wanted to let Oikawa have some time with his Rat Pack buddies without having to worry about me being bored there." Iwaizumi sighs. "He doesn't get to see Bokuto and Kuroo often, so I thought it'd be a good thing to let them have their fun together."

"It's Oikawa-san's knee, isn't it?" Akaashi asks quietly. "That's why you're here, in Tokyo."
Iwaizumi blinks. "Did he tell you?"

"No."

"How did you know?"

Akaashi shrugs. "You and Bokuto-san joined our practice today, while he sat on the bench with our manager. Oikawa-san doesn't look like someone, who would miss on an opportunity to display his incredible skills on the court, unless he can't."

"You're right about that." Iwaizumi replies and his brows knit together. "And you're way sharper than I thought you were."

The two of them remain silent.

Then after a while, Iwaizumi speaks up.

"He told Bokuto and Kuroo we're going sight seeing tomorrow, but that's a lie. We're scheduled to meet with a surgeon, and if he says Oikawa needs to have a surgery, which I think he does..." Iwaizumi shakes his head and takes a deep breath. "I need to be strong for the both of us."

"It's that bad?" Akaashi asks.

"No, Iwaizumi-san, I wouldn't." Akaashi presses his lips tightly into what he hopes to be an encouraging smile.

"Thanks."

"You've shared a secret with me, so it's only fair for me to share one in return." Akaashi takes a deep breath. He's just about to tell him about his feelings towards Bokuto, when Iwaizumi laughs softly.

"I know what you're gonna tell me. You're in love with your Captain, right?"

Akaashi gasps. "Am I really that obvious?"

"Nah, you're not." Iwaizumi reassures him. "But I do have years of experience of being in love with my own best friend to know the familiar look all too well when I see it."

"Oikawa-san doesn't know?"

"No, he doesn't. Even though all of our teammates suspect it, he doesn't have a clue." Iwaizumi snorts. "The idiot." He adds, and despite the obvious insult, Akaashi can feel the affection behind Iwaizumi's words.

He understands it completely.

"Why don't you tell him how you feel?" Akaashi asks.

Iwaizumi chuckles. "The same reason why you don't tell Bokuto."
"That's different! Bokuto-san has a girlfriend!"

"Been there, done that." Iwaizumi replies. "I've been through all of Oikawa's relationships with him."

"And?"

"And nothing."

"But what if... what if you tell him and-" Akaashi begins, but Iwaizumi interrupts.

"Believe me, Akaashi, I've been over the same thing for years now. Could have, would have, should have. All those thoughts have passed my head an endless amount of times. I'd rather keep my mouth shut, than jeopardize our friendship. What Oikawa needs is a friend, who'd stick with him through thick and thin, pick him back up on his feet when he's down and that's exactly what I am. I'm his pillar on which he can lean on whenever he needs it."

Silence.

"Iwaizumi-san?"

"What?"

"Does it always feel like this?" Akaashi swallows. "Or does it get better?"

"I'm not going to baby you and lie to you." He replies softly. Truthfully. "It always hurts. But you get used it."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Iwaizumi and Akaashi had been peacefully playing chess on their phones, both caught up in their game, thinking about the other one's moves, when just before midnight, at 11:47 pm to be exact, lots of noise comes from downstairs.

They look up at each other, knowing that the Rat Pack has finally returned for curfew and judging by all the noise they must have found out what had happened to Akaashi. The mixture of loudness is nothing compared to Bokuto's bellowing voice, carrying deafeningly over all three floors.

"Iwa-chan! Iwa-chan, please come help! We can't keep Kou-chan down!"

They both jump on their feet and rush down the stairs.

To call Bokuto livid would be the understatement of the century. He's got Konoha and Sarukui trying to stop him, as his legs kick out, bucking and baring his teeth in a dangerous snarl, spit flying. One of Konoha's hand is grasping at Bokuto's head, strands of hair sticking against his sweaty forehead as he continues trashing.

"Let me go! Fuck! Fuck!" Bokuto screams, big hands trying to connect with something human and breakable. His right foot kicks the edge of the front desk, nearly turning it over as he continues to fight for his freedom.

"You two go stop Kuroo, I'll get Bokuto!" Iwaizumi yells at Konoha and Sarukui, who immediately let go and jump at Kuroo, who has Yukie over one of his shoulders and Masha in front of him, blocking the door with her body and hands, repeating over and over that he might not go to Fukurodani, but since he is there, she is responsible for him too and can't let him leave until he's calm.

Iwaizumi's hands put Bokuto in a headlock and then he turns his hips until he's lifted Bokuto onto his back. But one of Bokuto's blindly aimed fists connects with his cheek, which makes Iwaizumi's knees buckle under Bokuto's weight and they both fall on the ground with a loud thud.

Bokuto snarls at Iwaizumi, but just before they continue wrestling each other, his eyes look above.

"Bokuto-san, please calm down."

Bokuto instantly stops fighting and Akaashi slides on his knees in front of Bokuto's head and on impulse, his hand reaches out, his fingertips gently pushing Bokuto's matted hair away from his forehead.

"Akaashi!" Bokuto's eyes blink at him once, twice, but when he sees the state of Akaashi's face, his fury returns. "I'm gonna fucking kill him!"

Iwaizumi sits on top of Bokuto's trashing body and tries to hold Bokuto's hands above his head,
but Bokuto rolls them over.

"Stop! I got him, alright?" Iwaizumi pants out.

"Did you get him good?" Bokuto asks.

"Yeah." Then his lips curve up. "He peed himself."

"The other one?"

Iwaizumi shrugs. "Broke his nose and front tooth."

Bokuto nods in approval, then gets up, extends his hand and helps Iwaizumi up. While still holding each other's hands, Iwaizumi and him exchange silent glances.

Then Iwaizumi almost smirks. "Where do you want it?"

Bokuto taps the side of his cheek and to Akaashi's utmost surprise, Iwaizumi's knuckles jab him there. Bokuto actually presented his face for Iwaizumi to hit him? What the fuck.

Then they grin at each other as if they weren't just fighting mere seconds ago?

"Bokuto-san, why?"

"Akaashi, it's a guy thing."

"Please explain further." Akaashi scowls. "I'm a guy and I don't get it."

"Akaashi, I owed him one from before."

Akaashi still doesn't understand, but doesn't bother asking again. At least everyone'd stopped fighting.

Masha claps her hands for their attention. "Now that you're all done with your melee, can you all go upstairs? I know you won't go to bed, but at least stay in your rooms and keep it down."

Konoha and Sarukui sit on Akaashi's bed, while Kuroo and Bokuto plop down on the ground, each on Akaashi's side, while Oikawa and Iwaizumi take the chairs.

"Akaashi, tell us what happened." Konoha says. "I mean we heard what went down in the gym, but it's better to hear it from you."

"Better for whom?" Akaashi scowls.

"Hey, man, look at my fucking face! I got a shiner from both Bokuto and Kuroo and you're saying you won't tell us what happened? What the fuck, that's not cool at all."

"Shut up, Konoha." Bokuto grunts. "Don't pressure him if he doesn't wanna talk about it."

Akaashi sighs. He doesn't like attention, nor does he want to sound like a weakling in front of them, but at the same time, they already know. And they're not strangers, but his friends, and their eyes are all full of curiosity to hear about it anyway, so why not tell them?

"Okay, but only if Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san promise not to overreact again."

Because sure, he's glad that they are both so invested in his well being, but he's had enough violence for one night.
And it was supposed to be a quiet Friday night in. Yeah, right.

Bokuto and Kuroo both roll their eyes and mutter that yeah, alright, just get on with the story.

Akaashi licks his lips and begins. He spares his thoughts, of course, how truly frightened he felt when he was all alone in the gym, and concentrates more on explaining how cool Iwaizumi had been. Nobody interrupts him, but when he gets to the part that Iwaizumi threatened to stab Saito's friend with his knife, Oikawa chuckles softly.

"Iwa-chan, you're such a liar." He grins. "You don't have one."

Iwaizumi shrugs. "Yeah, so what? I didn't need one."

"Your bluff is great and all, but you do realize you could've gotten Angel Eyes even more hurt, right?" Kuroo says, disapproval heavy in his voice and Bokuto nods.

"I wouldn't have let that happen." Iwaizumi replies.

"Kou-chan, Tetsu-chan, relax, please. Iwa-chan knows how to handle himself in situations like these." Oikawa says. "Neither of you have any idea how many times he's saved my skin over the years."

"From whom?" Bokuto asks curiously.

"My fan girls, of course."

Everyone groans.

Iwaizumi sighs. "You just always have to make everything about you, don't you?" Oikawa opens his mouth to reply, so he adds. "Don't answer that."

Sarukui clears his throat. "So what's gonna happen to Saito?"

"He's gonna get wrecked on Monday, that's what." Bokuto replies and cracks his knuckles.

"Bro, why wait til then, we can go to his house right now." Kuroo suggests.

"And what will you two do, Kuroo-san, drag him out of his house?" Akaashi snorts.

"Yeah, pretty much." Kuroo replies.

"No." Akaashi scowls. "Iwaizumi-san and I both gave our statements to the police, so they'll take care of it. And Masha called in his parents, so-

"Akaashi, wake up." Bokuto says softly. "The police aren't gonna do shit. He'd just get a slap on his wrist from his parents, they'd pay a fine or whatever and that's it."

"Bokuto, the dean and the principal must already know about it from Masha." Konoha licks his lips. "Which means the teachers are gonna have a meeting on Monday after school to decide what happens to him. Both Akaashi and Ayame are tutors, which means they'll be there and demand for his expulsion. Right?" He looks at Akaashi. "You're not gonna vote for him to get suspended, but expelled, right?"

"Yes, Konoha-san."

"I don't like this." Bokuto crosses his arms. "My gut feeling tells me he's gonna get away with it.
Akaashi, just say the word, and we'll go beat the shit out of him."

"No. Two negatives don't make a positive." Akaashi replies.

"I might not be a math whiz like you, but I'm pretty sure that they do."

Akaashi rolls his eyes. "I mean in life, Bokuto-san, not math. You'll break his arm or his leg, get in trouble and then what? No, that's not gonna resolve anything."

"He'll learn his lesson, that's what." Kuroo replies.

"Yeah, because lessons are taught with violence." Akaashi says sarcastically.

"I'm sure Iwa-chan opened up his can of whoop ass on this Saito guy, but what if he does the same thing again? Maybe not to you, Aka-chan, but to someone else. Iwa-chan, what do you think?" Oikawa asks.

"I can see where Akaashi's coming from, but at the same time... " Iwaizumi scowls. "Those two didn't look like they just wanted to ruffle him up a bit and scare him, and they were drunk enough to... do something there's no coming back from." He looks at Akaashi. "They were trying to get you out of the gym and maybe drag you in the forest outside, yeah?"

Akaashi'd been very careful not to mention that at all, and not even think about it, but the second that Iwaizumi's words are out of his mouth, Bokuto closes his eyes and starts massaging his temples.

"Bokuto-san, please-"

"Akaashi, don't tell me to calm down, because I swear to God, I'm gonna throw my desk out of the fucking window." Bokuto's seething voice comes between his gritted teeth. He takes a deep breath and stares at Akaashi. "If Iwaizumi hadn't come back in time and they'd dragged you out of the gym, you might not even be here right now! Just imagine - no, I don't wanna think about this or I'll go crazy. Let's just all go to bed and get some sleep." He smiles his big grin, but Akaashi notes how it doesn't reach his eyes.

He's never seen Bokuto give a fake smile before, but this is it. And it looks really off. At least to him it does.

When Konoha and Sarukui leave, Kuroo smirks.

"Tetsu-chan, what are you so happy about?" Oikawa asks.

"I didn't bring my sleeping bag with me, because I'm the birthday boy and I'm not gonna sleep on the floor with Bokuto and Akaashi." His smirk spreads. "Which means I'm sharing a bed with someone."

"Not with me, you're not." Iwaizumi replies.

"Well I said it, because I didn't want to exclude you, but what I really meant by someone is Oikawa." Kuroo sneers.

"Awww look at you two, fighting over each other to sleep next to me." Oikawa grins.

"Nobody's fighting over you." Iwaizumi scowls and turns to Kuroo. "Take him, he drools in his sleep."
"Iwa-chan, you're so mean!" Oikawa whines. "You never seem to mind my drooling when we snuggle in your bed at your house."

A gurgled noise comes out of Iwaizumi’s throat and Akaashi sees a subtle pink over his cheeks. He tries not to smile, because he knows all too well what it's like to be embarrassed, but at the same time, he finds it kinda sweet.

Bokuto and Akaashi both take Oikawa and Iwaizumi's sleeping bags and he snickers quietly, because Bokuto points at the windows and silently mouths "Jason" at him. Then Bokuto reaches into his desk drawer and takes something out, something small enough to be hidden into the palm of his hand. Akaashi doesn't know what it is, but he hears Kuroo’s quiet sigh come from Bokuto’s bed.

"Bro, do you really have to?"

"Yeah."

"But-"

"I know."

When Akaashi sees Bokuto reaching for his water bottle, he realizes Bokuto must be taking one of his sleeping pills. Even though he'd told Akaashi he doesn't like taking them, because he feels awful the next day.

Akaashi tries not to think that Bokuto's popping a pill into his mouth, because of him, but it's kind of hard not to, when he knows it's the truth. For the entire time he's been Bokuto's roommate, he'd never taken them and now that he is, Akaashi feels incredibly guilty, like a helpless burden.

He makes a promise to himself to work out more and become stronger. He doesn't want to worry his friends anymore. And he doesn't want to feel as helpless as he'd felt when he was in the gym with Saito and his friend. Never again.

Oikawa's last to go in the bathroom, while Iwaizumi gets into Akaashi's bed. Then he sighs and gets up.

"Do you guys mind if I turn off the lights?" He asks. "Oikawa brought all of his face shit that he uses, so he's gonna be in the bathroom for a long time."

"Iwa-chan, I can hear you being mean again!"

"Don't you always tell me you shouldn't talk when you have a face mask on?"

"Yes, but-"

"Then shut up! And when you come out of there, try not to step over Bokuto and Akaashi."

A couple of minutes after their room is enveloped in darkness, Akaashi feels movement right next to him. Then he feels Bokuto’s warm breath against the side of his face, his lips mere centimeters above his ear.

"Akaashi, I'm really glad you're safe." He whispers.

"I'm sorry for making you worry, Bokuto-san." He whispers back.

Akaashi’s hand grasps in the air in front of him and lets his fingertips dance over the spot on
Bokuto’s face where he’d gotten punched by Iwaizumi. His breath catches in his throat, because just then, Bokuto’s own hand takes hold of his, and brings it towards his mouth, pressing a soft kiss against the side of Akaashi’s thumb.

His loud heartbeat booms against his chest and surely, this can’t be good for his heart, but he doesn’t mind. Not one bit.

He feels Bokuto's fingers loosen around his own and before the sleeping pill completely takes over him, he whispers.

"Bokuto-san, what did you want to talk to me about?"

"I wanted to ask if you and Kuroo had a fight when I was with my parents last weekend."

Akaashi bites his lip and immediately stops, because it hurts. Fucking Saito.

"No, we didn't."

"Yeah, Kuroo already told me when we were out."

Akaashi wonders if Kuroo'd said anything else to Bokuto, but he doesn't ask, since Bokuto doesn't say.

Bokuto's already asleep when Oikawa finally comes out of the bathroom. Carefully, he tiptoes across the floor and then there's the sound of a bed creaking.

"Iwa-chan, move, I need more space."

"You and your damn space." Iwaizumi chuckles softly. "You should just go back to your home planet."

"I will, Iwa-chan, but only if you come with me."

"You four are gonna leave the birthday boy sleep alone?" Kuroo’s says loudly. "Fuck you guys, I hate you. I'm gonna find new friends tomorrow. Better ones."

"Tetsu-chan, you might find better friends, but you'll never find ones better looking than me. Ouch! Iwa-chan, don't kick me."

"Then shut up and sleep, dumbass."

Akaashi chuckles quietly, squeezes Bokuto's limp fingers against his and falls asleep.

When his eyes blink awake, Akaashi realizes he's still holding Bokuto's hand.

He looks up and sees his bed is empty and made up. Then he looks further up and is greeted by Kuroo's eyes, staring at him.

"Morning, Angel Eyes. We should wake Bokuto up, because it's nearly time for your volleyball practice."

Since they'd missed breakfast, they have to settle for snacks. Akaashi would have preferred to get some real food inside his stomach, but lunch is right after practice, so it's not too bad.

When they are on the court, Akaashi notices how much slower Bokuto's reflexes are. Some of his spikes make it over the net, but not all, and not one of his serves makes the ball whoosh in the air with power. But since he knows Bokuto took a sleeping pill, he doesn't call him out on his bad
game, like he usually would.

Bokuto doesn't join them for lunch, because he'd promised Ayame to help babysit her little sister. Akaashi tries not feel too disappointed and busies himself with his food, but his burger and fries don't taste too good. He could probably eat cardboard, and it would feel the same. Tasteless. Bitter.

After a long call and reassuring his parents that he's absolutely fine, Akaashi spends the rest of his afternoon in the weightlifting room with Kuroo, with Kuroo giving him a lot of pointers on self defense.

"Put on the gloves, Angel Eyes, and watch how I hit the punching bag. Then do the same, alright?"

Akaashi nods and watches carefully.

"Your turn."

Akaashi takes a swing, but the punching bag is so damn heavy and big, it barely sways.

"Add more power to it. Imagine it's Saito's head or something."

Akaashi does and Kuroo smirks.

"Much better. Now try with your legs."

By dinner time, the muscles on Akaashi's arms and legs feel sore, but he's pretty happy about his newly acquired knowledge.

Turns out that while they were all out in the Irish Pub, the Rat Pack trio had decided for them all to go to a fair, and since Akaashi has nothing else to do, he decides to go as well.

So at 7:00 pm sharp, Kuroo, Konoha, Sarukui, Yukie and him head out of Fukurodani.

"I don't have any money, so I'm gonna have to stare at you guys, while you drink tea and eat dangos and shit." Konoha whines. "So unfair."

"Konoha-san, we're going to a fair, so it is fair." Akaashi says and Kuroo laughs.

"Goddamn it, Angel Eyes, your puns just get worse and worse."

Kuroo's right - it was a silly joke, awful, really - but Akaashi's read enough articles on the Internet to know that when someone laughs at your joke, despite it not being funny, it's because they like you. Or something.

"That's what you get for spending the last of your allowance on beer." Yukie tuts.

"Yukie, you have no right to judge me, when you didn't bring any of your cute friends with you."

"Cheer up, Konoha, I'm going to treat to you whatever you want." Sarukui grins.

Konoha pretends to wipe a tear away from his eyes. "This is why you're my best friend."

They meet up with Iwaizumi and Oikawa at the entrance, then all heads turn to Akaashi and Kuroo to call Bokuto. While Kuroo moves to the side and phones him, Akaashi approaches Iwaizumi.
"How did it go?" He asks quietly.

"Bad."

"Oikawa-san needs operation?"

"Yes."

"I'm really sorry to hear that."

"Me too." Iwaizumi sighs. "But I have to keep my game face on." He plasters a smile on his face. "How does that look?"

"Forced." Akaashi admits.

"It is."

They see Bokuto, Ayame and her little sister approaching, waving at them, and Akaashi's heart drops to the ground. Not because Bokuto has Ayame's little sister over his shoulders, but because he's holding Ayame's hand.

The same hand that Akaashi held when they were sleeping.

He, too, just like Iwaizumi, forces a smile on his face.

"Hey hey heyyyy! I'd like to introduce all of you guys to this lovely lady, who is my date for the night." He looks up at Ayame's little sister. "Hana, aren't you going to say hello to my friends?"

"Hello." Hana says quietly and shyly buries her small head into Bokuto's hair. "Big Brother, can we please go on the rides?"

"Of course! We'll go on all of them." Bokuto grins. "So where do you guys wanna go first?"

"Right now I really need a drink." Konoha says. "God, I hate kids. They're so fucking loud."

"Language!" Yukie shushes. "There's a kid present."

"Not my kid, not my responsibility." Konoha replies quietly. "Let's just agree on a meeting point, because there's too many people around right now. Let's all meet at the carousel in an hour and a half, alright?"

They all agree.

"I'm going to the nearest place that sells alcohol, who's with me?" Konoha asks.

Sarukui and Kuroo both raise their hands.

"Iwa-chan, we're gonna stick to our childhood routine, right?" Iwaizumi nods. "Perfect."

Before they leave, Iwaizumi turns to Akaashi. "You wanna come with us?"

"Thank you, but I don't want to ruin your alone time with Oikawa-san." He replies quietly.

"You're not gonna ruin anything, that's why I'm inviting you." Iwaizumi offers up a small smile. "Come with us, if you'd like."

Akaashi's just about to agree, but when he sees that Bokuto and Ayame are waiting for Oikawa
and Iwaizumi, he decides against it.

"Akaashi, what about you?" Bokuto asks.

"I think I'm gonna go have a drink with the others." Akaashi replies. He didn't plan on drinking, but being completely sober is not an option. Not that he minds kids as much as Konoha seems to, he likes kids just fine, he just doesn't know how to deal with them. And his problem is dealing with Bokuto and Ayame playing family.

"I'm coming with you then." Yukie says and grabs onto Akaashi's arm.

As they follow Konoha, Sarukui and Kuroo, she chuckles.

"I came here thinking that I could spend some time with Oikawa, but he hasn't so much as looked at me." She grins. "I feel like such a loser."

Akaashi laughs. "You're not alone. I mean, it's Saturday night, we're at a fair and we're going to a bar to drink, like we do pretty much every weekend." Akaashi laughs. "We're all losers, Yukie."

They take a table at Señor Frogs and their waitress brings them all menus, telling they have a special offer on group cocktails.

"Oooo there's so many to choose from!" Yukie rubs her hands together. "What do you guys want?"

"I don't know about you guys and the cocktails, but I want ten tequila shots." Kuroo says and the waitress nods.

"Yukie, why don't you pick a group cocktail for the rest of us all?" Sarukui smiles.

"Yayyy! It's really nice to be the only girl around." She grins and turns to their waitress. "We want a... uh... Swimming Pool! We want Swimming Pool."

"You got it, babe." The waitress says, winks at her and leaves.

"Well looks like someone's got their eye on you." Kuroo smirks at Yukie. "Interested? She's pretty hot."

"Please, Yukie only has eyes for Oikawa." Konoha rolls his eyes. "Konoha!"

"What? It's not like the cat hasn't noticed."

"That's true." Kuroo laughs.

"Really?" Yukie covers her mouth. "I'm that obvious?"

"No, you're not, Kuroo-san's just pulling your leg." Akaashi replies.

"I'm not, Angel Eyes. She's displaying all the right symptoms - fluttering eyelashes, playing with her hair, giggling, not able to sustain eye contact, all that jazz."

"Symptoms?" Akaashi snorts. "You make it sound like it's a disease."

"Isn't it?" Kuroo asks, staring at him. "It sure feels like it."
Akaashi feels his cheeks burn and luckily, he doesn't have to reply, because their waitress brings their order, placing the big ass cocktail in front of Yukie.

"Here you go, beautiful." She says, winks at Yukie again and leaves.

"Well, shit, Yukie, I'd give anything to be in your shoes right now." Konoha sighs.

"It's okay, you have me." Sarukui pats his back and they fist bump each other.

"Guys, look at the straws!" Yukie points at them and laughs. "They all have penises!" She brings her lips towards one of the straws and takes a sip. "Oooo, the cocktail's so yummy, I love it!"

"Hey, you don't have to be sucking on a plastic penis. If you want the real deal, just tell me." Kuroo smirks at Yukie, who makes a gagging noise and tells him he's disgusting.

"Dude, you're so vulgar, you're my hero." Konoha grins. "I've seen you enough times in action to know your pick up lines always work. So, what do you say you hook me up? Help a brother out, y'know?"

"I can do that." Kuroo smirks. "Pick someone from the bar that you like."

Konoha points at a table full of girls. "Them. One of them."

Kuroo nods. "You got it."

"Are you gonna tell us your moves or what?" Sarukui asks.

"A magician never reveals his magic."

Kuroo leaves their table and they all watch as he approaches the girls's table. He gently bumps into one of the girls from behind and his hand gently slides against her lower back, and while he smiles at her apologetically, his other hand tugs at the scarf over her purse, making it fall on the ground. Then he disappears into the crowd, probably into the bathroom, but they all see the girl staring at Kuroo's back as he leaves.

"Oh my God!" Yukie pulls a face. "Is that how you guys pick up girls?"

"I wish I could." Konoha replies, while Sarukui shrugs and Akaashi takes a long sip from their cocktail.

Yukie had been right, the cocktail is great. It might be a little too much of the sweet side, but there's lots of alcohol in it too, and that's just what he needs.

"Wow wow wow, easy there, froggy!" Konoha pats Akaashi's shoulder. "What's with the rush?"

"We have plenty of time to have another cocktail before our meet up with the others." Akaashi replies.

"Akaashi, please don't forget we get breathalyzed." Sarukui says. "I have my plate full with worrying about Konoha, I don't need to worry about you too."

Akaashi gives him the thumbs up. "You got it, dude."

Konoha, Sarukui and Yukie exchange worried glances.

"Saru, has Akaashi ever called you dude before?" Yukie asks.
"No. I actually think this is the first time I hear him say the word dude." Sarukui replies.

"I'm fine." Akaashi smiles.

"Akaashi, you don't have to lie to us." Yukie sighs. "We're your teammates."

Akaashi swallows hard. "I don't know what you expect me to say."

"We know, man." Konoha says. "Being shook up after what happened to you last night is totally normal. Hell, if what'd happened to you happened to me, I would've probably crapped my pants."

Thank God they don't know the truth.

"You got me." Akaashi nods.

"You can always be honest with us." Sarukui smiles. "We got your back."

"Guys, our first away game is this Tuesday. And at the end of the month, we have the first qualification match for Nationals." Yukie says. "I know you already know that, but I'm kind of worried about Bokuto. During practice today he was really off."

"Don't worry." Sarukui replies. "We got Akaashi know, he'll make sure Bokuto brings his A game on."

"Yes." Akaashi nods. "I'll do everything to make sure of that."

Konoha pats his back. "You're the man, Akaashi."

"Look, Kuroo's back at the girls table!" Sarukui says and they all turn their heads.

Kuroo's talking to the girl, who'd scarf he'd pulled on the floor. He sees they are all staring at him and waves at them with a smirk.

A couple of minutes later, Kuroo and the girl come back to their table and she immediately grabs Konoha's arm and whispers something in his ear.

"I might be back for curfew, but just to be safe, one of you guys sign me in." Konoha grins and leaves with the girl.

"Kuroo-san, what exactly did you tell the girl?" Akaashi scowls.

"Angel Eyes, I already told you a magician never reveals his tricks." Kuroo winks and downs a couple of his tequila shots. "Want one?"

"No, thank you. Tequila doesn't agree with me much." Akaashi replies.

"You two were a fucking mess at the Halloween party." Yukie laughs. "I still remember your singing."

"Singing?" Akaashi turns to Kuroo. "Do you remember any singing?"

"No. You're telling me Angel Eyes and I were singing?"

Yukie and Sarukui both shake their heads, laughing.

"How did their song go, Saru?" Yukie grins.
"They were both out of tune, but they were singing how they were the kings of sake and how much they love sake."

"Yeah! And the second verse was about tequila!" Yukie claps her hands gleefully. "And then the Rat Pack took the mic and all four of them butchered Frank Sinatra's New York New York."

"You guys should be nicer to me, because I got dirt on almost all of you owls." Kuroo says.

"You don't have any dirt on me." Sarukui says.

Kuroo reaches over and whispers something into his ear.

"So?" He smirks. "You wanna say that again?"

Sarukui shakes his head.

"Yeah, that's what I thought."

Konoha returns, angry and panicked at the same time.

"We gotta leave. Now!" Then he scowls at Kuroo. "You fucking asshole, you told the girl I was a struggling male hooker?! What is wrong with you?"

Kuroo throws his head back and laughs. Then he quickly downs the rest of his shots and after leaving enough money to cover their bill, they leave and head towards the carousel, even thought it's earlier than the hour they agreed to meet up.

They aren't the first one there, though, because Ayame waves at them and goes back to snapping photos with her phone at Bokuto and her little sister, both laughing, while riding horses next to each other.

Akaashi'd never seen Bokuto interacting with a five year old before, but he isn't surprised he's so great with kids, because he's definitely the biggest child at heart. And it's kind of endearing to watch.

"Koutarou told me what happened to you last night." Ayame says into Akaashi's ear. "I'm really glad you're safe."

He nods his head in appreciation and tries to control his face from scowling. Since when is she on a first name basis with Bokuto?

It's better not knowing, though, because what he doesn't know can't hurt him.

When the merry-go-round stops, Bokuto lifts Ayame's little sister up from her horse and carries her in his hands to the rest of them.

"Hana, do you want to tell our friends what we did?" He grins at her.

"Big Brother treated us to yakisoba bread, candy floss and kakigouri. And he also caught a fishie for me!" She points at the plastic bag filled with water and a goldfish, which Ayame is holding. "Big Brother is amazing!"

"Hey hey heyyyy!" Bokuto laughs.

Akaashi licks his lips and turns to Kuroo. "Did you give Bokuto-san your wallet?"

"No, it's here with me." Kuroo pats his back pocket. "He's using his credit card, because he paid
the entire bill for us last night, saying it's for my birthday."

"I see."

It's very unlike Bokuto to rely on his parents money instead of borrowing from one of his friends, but Akaashi doesn't comment on it. Ayame hadn't been at the Irish Pub, which means he isn't doing it to impress her, but because... Well, he doesn't know why exactly, but he's sure it's not because of Ayame.

And that makes him feel a little bit better.

Iwaizumi and Oikawa join them and Oikawa has a giant teddy bear and a penguin in each hand, smiling happily.

"Look what Iwa-chan won for me!" Oikawa displays both of his stuffed animals.

"Ehhh?" Hana blinks and points at his penguin. "Can I have it please?"

"Hana, don't be rude!" Ayame tuts. "It's not yours."

"Big Sis, I said please?" Hana pleads.

"Give it to her, Oikawa." Iwaizumi says.

"But Iwa-chan, you won it for me!" Oikawa pouts. "It's mine."

"She's five, you dumbass!" Iwaizumi replies, snatches it out of Oikawa's hands and gives it to Hana. "Here you go."

"Hana, what are you going to tell Iwaizumi-senpai and Oikawa-senpai?" Ayame asks.

"Thank you very much!" Her little sister says and blows them both kisses.

They all head towards the haunted house, but on their way there, Bokuto stops at a booth and buys a pink, fluffy crown, placing it on Hana's head.

"Koutarou, you're spoiling her." Ayame laughs.

"Anything for my little princess." He grins and kisses the top of Hana's head.

Akaashi realizes he needs help - serious, professional help - because he feels jealous of a five year old and that is not normal.

It's just not fair. He can bet his head right there and then he knows Bokuto better than Ayame does. His favourite food, his favourite beer, his favourite superhero. All vital things, according to Bokuto.

Since Akaashi, Ayame and her little sister are the only ones who don't line up for the haunted house, Bokuto passes Hana into Akaashi's hands, telling him to protect her, then he joins Kuroo into the two seated booth.

"Koutarou's great with her." Ayame says, smiling fondly. "But enough about us, what about you, Akaashi? How are you?"

So it's not just Koutarou, but it's already "us".

Akaashi wonders how Ayame would feel if he told her her boyfriend and him held hands while
falling asleep last night.

"I'm great." He smiles. "Peachy."

"I'm so glad to hear that. I hope you know I will vote for Saito's expulsion on Monday too."

Things would be so much easier, simpler, if Ayame wasn't as nice as she is, so Akaashi could hate her without feeling guilty about it. But he doesn't hate her.

After all, it's not her fault Bokuto is goofy, easy to talk to, touchy feely and just Akaashi's type. There's nobody to pin the blame on, unfortunately.

On Bokuto, maybe, because he keeps doing things that leave Akaashi wondering and hoping that maybe, just maybe, there's something more than just friendship between them.

What kind of friends would fall asleep holding each others hands? And what about Bokuto's reaction last night? Kuroo's, Akaashi understands, but Konoha and Sarukui, who are also his friends, didn't react as badly as Bokuto did?

Could that mean something? Or is he just wishing for it to be more than it actually is?

The only ride left is the ferris wheel and they all line up - Oikawa and Iwaizumi, Konoha and Sarukui, with Yukie in the middle, Bokuto and Ayame, with Hana in the middle and before Akaashi can say that no, he doesn't want to get on, because he's terrified of heights, Kuroo gently pushes him into the seat next to him.

The second that the ferris wheel begins to spin, Akaashi closes his eyes.

"I hate this." He mutters.

Kuroo laughs. "Don't be scared, Angel Eyes, I'm right next to you."

"Kuroo-san, just because you're next to me doesn't reassure me that we won't die."

There's a loud creak and they stop moving.

"Oh my God, that can't be normal!" Akaashi says, panicked. "Why didn't we move? Are we going to die?"

"Chill, we're fine." Kuroo's hand squeezes his shoulder. "Maybe one of the couples paid off the guy to leave us in the air."

"Why would they do that?"

"I dunno. To get some alone time with their loved ones, maybe? I'm not scared of heights like you, but if I'd had more to drink, you could've watched me puke over someone below us. Wouldn't that be funny?"

"Yeah, Kuroo-san, it'd be downright hilarious."

Kuroo shakes their seat in laughter. "You need to calm down."

"What I need is for us to go down on the ground." Akaashi mutters.

"We will, in good time."

They start moving again.
"We're at the top right now." Kuroo says. "If you open your eyes, you'd see how beautiful the view is."

"No, I'm good."

"Angel Eyes, relax, we'll be down in a couple of minutes."

"Yeah, but each of those minutes feel like hours to me."

"I can easily distract you from thinking about the height."

Akaashi sighs. "Please do, becau-"

Kuroo's lips press against his, silencing him at once.

Akaashi might have some alcohol in his system, but he's not drunk and he knows perfectly well what is happening. Kuroo is kissing him, and he kisses him back.

It's wrong of him to lead Kuroo on like this, and a tiny voice inside his head tells him that, but after watching Bokuto and Ayame exchange kisses all night, it feels good knowing someone wants him and acts on it, even if that someone isn't Bokuto, but Kuroo.

And after all, it was Kuroo that had initiated their kiss, so Akaashi uses that as a lousy excuse to calm his mind.

Kuroo's hands find home on each of Akaashi's cheeks and when he feels Kuroo's playful tongue against his lips, Akaashi opens his mouth, granting him instant access.

After a couple of minutes, which feel like seconds, Kuroo breaks away from their kiss and chuckles softly.

"We're back on the ground again, so you can open your eyes."

Akaashi’s eyes blink open and look at Kuroo, who's smirking. He instantly looks away, feeling his cheeks heat up. Mere seconds ago, they were making out and now that the moment's over, it feels really awkward.

They both get off their seat and join the rest of the group, but the second that they do, Bokuto fakes a smile at Akaashi.

"Akaashi? May I have a word with you, please?"

Akaashi nods and when they move to the side, out of the others earshot, Bokuto's smile disappears.

"So this is what you and Kuroo did last weekend."

"Bokuto-san, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Don't lie to me, Akaashi! He told me last night how he feels about you! And I know you know!" Bokuto says angrily.

"You're right, I do. But what's it to you, Bokuto-san?"

"I don't appreciate my best friend and my bro going behind my back and-"
Akaashi laughs humorlessly. "Are you sure that's all it is?"

"What does that mean?" Bokuto blinks.

"It means that you're jealous." Akaashi dares to reply. "But what's it to you, when you're in a relationship with Ayame?"

"I- I'm... I don't care!" Bokuto sputters.

"You sure about that? Because it sounds to me like you do care. Is it really that unbelievable for you to hear and see that someone wanted to kiss me without having to use an excuse for their Theater and Drama class to do it?"

"I'm not having this conversation. And I'm not coming back to Fukurodani, so you better sign me in."

"Fine, I will."

"Yeah, right back at you."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Bokuto crosses his arms and turns his back on Akaashi, and Akaashi can see that Bokuto is waiting for him to say he's sorry. Well he's gonna be waiting for a long time, Akaashi thinks, because he is not at all sorry. Sorry for what, speaking exactly what's on his mind?

Akaashi leaves Bokuto sulking there and as he walks towards the others, curious glances all around, Kuroo sighs and almost run towards Bokuto.

"What's the matter, Akaashi, cat got your tongue?" Konoha snickers. Akaashi shoots him a glare and he scowls. "Oh, okay, so the fucking cat can embarrass me in front of everyone and get away with it, but when I make a joke, everyone gives me the stink eye? What the fuck?"

Sarukui pats his back. "You should just shut up, Kono."

"Why is Koutarou so angry?" Ayame blinks confusedly, asking nobody in particular. If she'd directed her question at Akaashi, he would've snapped at her that she should just ask her boyfriend about it, but she doesn't. And so neither does he. "He never cares about a little bit of PDA between a couple."

"What?" Oikawa laughs. "Who exactly do you envision here as a couple?"

Before she can reply, Kuroo and Bokuto join them, with Bokuto immediately picking Hana up in his arms. On their way out, they all stop for Oikawa to get some milk bread, and then they leave.

On the train ride, nobody speaks. A few stops before they get off and switch to a bus, Bokuto moves towards the door with Ayame and Hana.

"Bokuto and I need to have a talk, so we'll walk back to Fukurodani." Kuroo quietly says to Akaashi. "Sign him in and I'll call you when we're down, so you can drop the rope."

Akaashi gives a curt nod.

When the four of them get off, Konoha makes a cracking noise with his mouth.

"Whipped!"

"You're calling Bokuto whipped, because he's sending off his girlfriend and her little sister home to make sure they're safe?" Yukie rolls her eyes. "This is exactly why you don't have a girlfriend, Konoha."

"Nice kill." Sarukui grins.

After signing in at the front desk, Yukie, Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi get breathalyzed by Jared, then they all head up.
Hours later, when Bokuto and Kuroo climb up through the window, they're both carrying a heavy smell of alcohol, which immediately stinks up the room, so despite the cold air, Akaashi leaves the window open.

Without saying a single word to either of them, Akaashi gets into his sleeping bag and turns on the side that doesn't face Bokuto.

Before their volleyball practice on Sunday, Bokuto approaches him.

"Akaashi, I'm sorry for my behavior last night, it was unacceptable."

Yeah, it really had been.

And even though Bokuto apologizes for Saturday night, what about those other times he'd unintentionally, unknowingly, hurt Akaashi?

No. He's not ready to forgive, and most certainly not ready to forget.

On Monday morning, during Japanese class, Akaashi gets called into the dean's office.

"Please, take a seat."

Akaashi does.

"I know you gave your statement to the police, but please tell me everything that happened in the gym."

Akaashi explains everything in full detail.

"I know when I'm being lied to by a student, and I don't need to see the bruising on your face to know you're telling the truth." The dean says and sighs. "But Saito gave a statement of his own."

Akaashi swallows hard.

"He told the police he'd acted violently towards you, because you'd sexually assaulted him."

"What?" Akaashi blinks.

"Saito and his parents, as well as a couple of other students and the Theater and Drama class already told me they saw you kissing another student backstage."

Akaashi's just about to protest, but the dean shakes his head.

"No, I know Bokuto and you are friends. But it's your word against Saito's." The dean says and winces. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but there are no witnesses to confirm or deny either of your statements, which makes my hands tied."

"So he's not getting a disciplinary meeting after school?"

"No. I'll suspend him for drinking on campus grounds and he'll do some community work, but that's all I can do. Now I have to write an email to both your and Saito's parents. You have my permission to skip the rest of your class and call your parents."

Akaashi nods. "I understand."

"I'm sorry, kid, but as much as I want to, I can't play favorites." The dean presses his lips together.
Apparently, there's no such thing as a secret when it comes to a boarding school, because by lunch time, the entire school knows what'd happened between Saito and Akaashi, and that's all they can talk about.

Bokuto's gut feeling had been right, because Saito got away with it.

A two week suspension and a couple of hours of community work are not at all fair in comparison to the fear Akaashi'd felt for his life.

When Bokuto, Konoha, Sarukui, Komi, Washio, Yukie, their entire volleyball team, all indignant and furious, go speak with the dean, as well as the principal, on his behalf, it might not change Saito's fate, but it fills Akaashi's chest with warmth and love for them all. And to Akaashi, having his friends stick up for him is worth a whole lot more than actually getting Saito expelled.

Right after lunch on Tuesday, the Fukurodani volleyball team all head out of school and load up their bus for their first away game. And despite the fact there's plenty of room, Bokuto takes a seat right next to Akaashi.

They end up winning, and on their way back, they stop at McDonald's for a victory dinner. Bokuto steals a couple of fries off Akaashi's tray and compliments him on his setting. Akaashi nods his head in silent thanks.

The first time Akaashi actually speaks to him, after their fight on Saturday, is when they are back in their room for Study Hall, with Konoha and Sarukui joining them in their room.

"Bokuto-san, do you want to join Konoha-san and Sarukui-san while I explain to you your math homework?"

"Thanks, but my girlfriend already helped me out with it yesterday."

After that, Akaashi doesn't bother asking if Bokuto's homework needs to be checked.

Things just go downhill from there.

Bokuto starts sneaking out of their window after Lights Out and returns in time for breakfast, a drunken mess. He sleeps during classes and that results in his GPA dropping, making him stuck in detention after school, instead of joining the team for volleyball practice.

And when he does show up for his tutoring sessions after classes, he spends the entire time exchanging kisses with Ayame, who must have taken over as Akaashi's replacement for helping Bokuto out with his homework.

To be honest, she's doing a piss poor job of it, but it's none of Akaashi's business. He might be thinking of Bokuto 24/7, but Akaashi's pride is a whole lot stronger than his feelings towards Bokuto, which is what keeps his mouth shut.

Bokuto repeatedly tries to make amends with Akaashi. And the nicer Bokuto is towards him, humble and apologetic, the nastier Akaashi gets, lapping all of it up. It's like Akaashi's trying to see how far Bokuto could go, baiting him, seeing how hard he could push him before he snaps.

He becomes the boy from Hell.

Akaashi hates himself for doing it. He hates bickering with Bokuto, he absolutely loathes it. But he just can't help himself. It's as if someone else is inside him, someone who doesn't give a damn about anything.
Akaashi doesn't know where the real him disappears off to.

Every now and again, he would hear the quiet voice of reason, deep within him, calling out from somewhere, begging him to think about what he's doing, what he's saying, but it's too quiet and too far to have any impact. It's too weak. All Akaashi has to do is tell it to shut up and off it goes, scuttling back into his hole with its tail between its legs.

He's terrible and when he thinks about it, he almost feels ashamed of it. Almost. How could he treat Bokuto like this, like the dirt under his feet? How?

Akaashi wishes he could tell himself he doesn't know what he's doing, but he does - he knows exactly what he's doing. And that's what makes it so awful.

I'm sorry, Bokuto.

It'd started off with the dirty looks. Then came the little digs, sarcastic comments, frosty silences. With stress from the upcoming exams, as well as Ayame sitting on Bokuto's lap during lunch time, as well as the friction between Bokuto and him on the court during practice, the week before his birthday, his parents cancel on him, which is what overfills Akaashi's cup of patience.

And so on Wednesday, after a terrible practice during PE, they both explode during lunch.

"Bokuto-san, our first preliminary qualification match is in two days. So instead of being so reckless and irresponsible, you need to-"

"Akaashi, I know that! Just stop treating me like a goddamn child already!"

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of it, Bokuto-san, a fully grown man like you?"

"I don't have to listen to this! Why can't you just let me enjoy myself?"

"Is that what you've been doing?" Akaashi licks his lips. "Enjoying yourself?"

Bokuto slams his fist on the table. "What would you know about enjoying yourself? Huh? When all you do is pour over your precious school books, even on weekends!"

Well. The truth, apparently, really does hurt.

Fukurodani win their first match for the Tokyo qualifications for the spring tournament, but nobody is happy about it. They all feel embarrassed at how poorly they'd played, despite all the encouraging chants from the crowd. Fukurodani is a powerhouse school and they'd almost thrown their school's reputation and dragged it through the mud.

All because of the team's foundation, the Captain and Vice Captain's inability to communicate with one another.

Akaashi is ashamed of himself for letting his rocky relationship with Bokuto influence their game, but it's really hard for him to not act on how he feels. And when they are in the locker room, he bows his head and apologizes to his teammates, promising them all that he would make it up to them during their next game.

The 5th of December happens to be on a Friday and before the bell at 7:00 am, both Konoha and Sarukui, still in their pyjamas, come to wake Akaashi up.

Ever since Bokuto'd stopped doing it and he'd been late for his History class, he'd asked for either
Konoha or Sarukui to come and do it. And since his getting out of bed had been too hard for either of them, they’d started doing it together.

Akaashi gets out of bed, thanks the both of them and they leave without saying another word to him.

As he puts on his school uniform, he looks out of the window and immediately smiles. The ground, as well as the trees and the rooftops of their classroom buildings are all covered up in a white blanket. Their first snow.

Despite the fact Akaashi is always cold, he loves winter. Long coats, scarves and ear muffs, cheeks and noses reddened by the biting cold, pretending to be a dragon each time you take a breath and steam comes out of your mouth and nose, it's absolutely glorious.

It's not like he expects anything special, but when Akaashi joins the rest of his team at the table for breakfast and neither of them say anything other than a sleepy "good morning", Akaashi almost feels like Molly Ringwald in 16 Candles.

Even if it's not his Sweet 16th, but his 17th birthday.

Yeah, a year older and yet none the wiser.

Still, he tries his best not to feel too disappointed that his teammates have forgotten all about his birthday. Because after lunch, when he checks his phone, he sees he's got messages from his parents, Kuroo, Kenma and Iwaizumi, all wishing him a happy birthday, so he swallows the nostalgic feeling budding up in his throat and replies, thanking them all for the nice wishes.

After their vocabulary quiz in AP English Class, they start on Othello, and as Mr Burns begins to assign their roles, Akaashi chuckles softly to himself.

Loneliness, thy name is Akaashi, he thinks and grins.

But since Bokuto and him aren't on speaking terms, he doesn't get to share his little joke.

Since it's Friday, Akaashi doesn't expect to hear any important announcements after Studio Art. So when he hears the dean mention his name, asking him to report to his office, he is quite surprised.

All kinds of thoughts swim into his mind, worrying, and he wonders if he's in trouble for letting Bokuto's grades drop? But despite his tutor status, he shouldn't be held accountable for it, because it's not his fault, not really.

When he enters his office, the dean motions for him to take a seat.

"Do you know why you're here?"

Akaashi shakes his head.

"I thought so." The dean replies and presses his hands against one each other. "Do you know how much trouble you're in?"

As Akaashi blinks, the dean throws his head back and laughs.

"Oh, what am I going to do once you graduate?" He grins. "I'm really going to miss seeing that worried face you always have whenever you come in here."
"So I'm not in any trouble?"

"Of course not. I called you in here to tell you that instead of going to the gym, you need to go to our auditorium. Come on, go." The dean replies, smiling. "And happy birthday."

"Thank you very much, Sensei."

As Akaashi heads towards the auditorium, he starts smiling, because he know he'll see the volleyball team there, and their whole forgetting his birthday had been a pretense.

He is absolutely certain of it.

And he's not disappointed.

Because the second that he steps into their auditorium, he is greeted by kazoo's blown in his face, confetti in the air and a deafening "SURPRISE!"

Akaashi'd expected something like this, but he doesn't feign his surprise, because between the grinning faces of his teammates, all wishing him a very happy birthday, he also sees the faces of his parents.

"Mom? Dad?" He blinks, his mouth all but dropping on the floor. "What are you doing here?"

Everyone laughs.

"We told you it's a surprise!" Yukie grins and pushes a big cake with 17 candles on it. "Blow the candles out and make a wish!"

Akaashi does blow the candles out, but he doesn't bother making a wish, because the Fukurodani auditorium is filled with his most favorite people in the world. There's nothing else he could wish for.

His parents each take a turn hugging him, and he feels his eyes water up.

"But you said you wouldn't be able to make it to Tokyo." He chokes out. "How did- just - how?"

"It's all because of this young man." His father grins and points at Bokuto. "But please, this was all your idea, so you should explain to Keiji about it."

"Well," Bokuto begins, relishing the attention as all eyes turns towards him. "I knew Akaashi had been feeling down lately, so when he was in the shower, I took his phone and got your number. Then I called you and-" Bokuto shrugs modestly -."we're all here now."

"You didn't really think we'd forget your birthday, did you?" Konoha's arm pats Akaashi's back. "Bokuto'd been reminding us all about it since like a month."

Akaashi swallows the emotional lump stuck in his throat. "Thank you very much."

"Come on, Akaashi, cut your cake!" Yukie grins.

He laughs fondly, not at all surprised that their manager is so eager to eat. He is too.

"When did you guys have the time to buy this?" He asks as he begins to slice each of them a piece.

"We only bought the ingredients!" Konoha replies. "Bokuto made it himself, last night after Study Hall."
Akaashi blinks and turns to Bokuto. "Really?"

"Of course." Bokuto replies proudly. "Your parents told me carrot cake is your favourite, but I experimented with the recipe and added a special ingredient that you love. Akaashi, try it!"

Akaashi nods and takes a spoonful of cake.

"Bokuto-san, it could have used more honey." He says, jokingly, and all of his teammates laugh.

His parents haven't the slightest bit of clue what is so funny, but Akaashi makes a mental note to explain it later, because right now, he feels so overwhelmed with happiness and gratitude, he can't say a single word.

When they all finish eating their cake, Bokuto claps his hands.

"Alright, you owls all had your fair share of sugar in your system, it's time to head to the gym and burn it off during practice." He turns to Akaashi. "Akaashi, have a very happy birthday and enjoy your weekend with your parents."

"Bokuto-san, thank you. For everything."

Bokuto nods and in that moment, when they exchange glances, it almost feels like it's them again, back to normal, almost like their dynamic hadn't been on the rocks for the past few weeks.

As the team all wish him a happy birthday, again, and start filing out the door, Akaashi's mom clears her throat.

"Keiji, why don't you invite your roommate with us for dinner tonight?"

Akaashi swallows. "Oh, I'm sure Bokuto-san is busy and -"

"I would love to!" Bokuto grins. "Thank you very much for the invitation! Akaashi, text me the details and I'll see you later."

After giving his parents a tour of Fukurodani, all three of them head up to Bokuto and his room and he quickly stuffs some clothes and his toothbrush into his backpack.

"I'm ready to leave."

They don't make it back to their hotel, because his mom drags the both of them to her favourite mall, repeating over an over again how much she's missed Tokyo.

But after following her into a couple of shops, Akaashi and his dad, sighing tiredly, absolutely bored, decide to sit at a cafe and wait for her, while she proceeds to raid the shops.

"Dad, I'm really glad you and Mom could make it here this weekend." Akaashi says and takes a sip of his espresso. "But what about your work?"

"Don't worry about that." His dad snorts. "This is the longest time we've been separated and both your mom and I really missed you and wanted to see you."

"I've missed you too. I mean, things are great at Fukurodani, so I can't complain. Sure, we have exams coming up and -"

"Enough talk about exams. Let's talk about this roommate of yours."
"Bokuto-san? What about him?"

His dad smiles thoughtfully. "Tell me more about him."

"Well, you already know he's my roommate and volleyball Captain. He's a year older than me, and he's in the top five volleyball players under 19 in the country. We only have English together, but outside of classes, we spend pretty much all of our time together." Akaashi replies, ignoring the last couple of weeks. Because ever since Bokuto started dating Ayame, they'd spend less and less time together. And he'd been mad with Bokuto, not talking to him, but his father doesn't need to know that.

"And what do you think of Bokuto?"

"He's..." Akaashi licks his lips. "He's interesting."

"In what way?"

In every way, Akaashi thinks.

"I don't know, Dad, he just is." He shrugs. "And we also have this other friend, Kuroo-san, who told me he read one of your books and loved it."

"Don't change the subject."

"What? I'm not. I was just telling you-"

His dad laughs. "There's no need to fret. I'm only doing my father bit. I am your father, you know. I'm supposed to ask awkward questions. It's part of the job."

"I'm not fretting."

"You could have fooled me."

"Well, all these questions - it's embarrassing."

"It's meant to be." His dad chuckles. "My father instincts tell me there's more to the story, so what exactly are you hiding, Keiji?"

"Nothing! I swear."

"I must have told your grandfather the exact same lies when I started dating your mother." His dad sighs. "But things are a little bit different here. And if you are involved with your roommate, it'll be really inappropriate for you two to be rooming together."

"Dad, Bokuto-san has a girlfriend! There's nothing going on between us!"

"I know you're a teenager and I also know you use the head over your shoulders for thinking, Keiji, but what I'm trying to say is that if you end up doing something, I want you to be safe."

"Oh my God."

"You and I never had the sex talk and-"

"Dad, please spare us both the embarrassment and stop talking. Please."

After his mom joins them and all three of them decide to eat dinner at their hotel's restaurant, Akaashi texts Bokuto the address.
Akaashi doesn't understand why Bokuto'd agreed to join them, because, well, why would he? He could be off with Ayame or Kuroo, having a good time without parental supervision.

And yet, at 8:30 pm sharp, Bokuto shows up, dressed up in a suit - wtf - and takes the empty seat right next to him.

He remains unusually quiet until all four of them place their other, but the second that their waiter leaves, he opens his mouths.

"Well, now I can see where Akaashi gets his good looks as well as his silent, polite manner." Bokuto laughs loudly.

As both his parents blink in surprise, Akaashi closes his eyes and sighs.

Neither of them are used to such bluntness and to be honest, he hadn't been either, when he'd first met Bokuto.

When his father and Bokuto get into an animated conversation about books, with Bokuto eagerly asking more about his father's works, Akaashi can't stop his drumming heart.

He already knew that he's in love with Bokuto.

But the intensity of the things he feels inside his chest is so strong, it's almost unbearable.

Before he realized it, Akaashi'd grown to love Bokuto so much!

If he knew beforehand how much it would hurt, he never would have insisted on becoming a student at Fukurodani as much as he had. Not knowing Bokuto, not ever meeting him, would be so much easier. Not at all painful.

He excuses himself and heads towards the bathroom. As his hands clutch at the sink desperately, he thinks how much he would like it if Ayame could just disappear!

And the second that he thinks that, he looks up at his reflection in the mirror, feeling disgusted with himself. In his own eyes, he's never looked more ugly, and he feels ashamed for having such thoughts.

His parents raised him better than this.

After splashing some cold water against his face, he returns to their table, but he can't bring his eyes up to meet either of the three of them, because he's too ashamed of himself.

Akaashi manages to keep his features composed, despite the ache in his heart.

After dessert, Bokuto takes his wallet out, while his father shakes his head furiously, saying they're glad to treat him to dinner for being so wonderful to their son. Bokuto nods his head, thanks them and leaves.

He follows his parents into their room, with his father instantly falling asleep in their bedroom, while his mom helps him extend the couch he'd be sleeping on. After brushing his teeth in the bathroom, Akaashi isn't surprised to see she is still there, waiting for him.

Maybe it's a woman's intuition, or her mother instinct, but when he lies down, she begins stroking his hair, the same way she would do it when he was younger, and that's when Akaashi finally breaks down and starts crying. He doesn't speak, and neither does she.
She continues stroking his hair while he cries, and after what feels like hours later, he is too tired, too emotionally and physically drained, and the feel of his mother's gentle fingers across his scalp lull him into sleep.

Akaashi returns to Fukurodani on Sunday night, and despite the positive energy his parents had charged him with over the weekend, it instantly drops below zero, because after Lights Out, Bokuto once again sneaks out of their window.

He tries to calm himself that there's less than three weeks left. All he has to do is stick it out for the next two weeks and a half and then it'll be Christmas break.

During Physics on Monday, Ayame passes him a note, asking if he's going to join Bokuto and her at Bokuto's parents galla and he gives her a curt shake of his head. He doesn't care that Bokuto's father had specifically invited him, he's not going anywhere near the toxic environment of stuck up, homophobic people.

As Akaashi practices serving and setting with his water bottle, he doesn't have a clue what time it is, but it must be getting pretty late.

"So, I've been thinking about this a lot, and I finally understand." Bokuto's voice reaches him.

Akaashi turns his head and sees him, still in his formal suit, sopping wet, hair matted to his skull.

He blinks.

He's never seen Bokuto with his hair down before. It looks so... different.

"It's because of her, isn't it? That's why you've been so mad at me lately, not talking to me. Avoiding me."

"Aren't you supposed to be at your parents ball or whatever right now?"

"She told me she loved me tonight."

Akaashi considers congratulating him, but after seeing the shift in the golden eyes, he doesn't say anything.

"And you know what? I couldn't say it back." Bokuto says softly, placing his hands on his hips. "I just couldn't."

Akaashi stares at him silently.

"Care to take a guess why?" Bokuto asks, taking a step forward.

Akaashi shakes his head, and watches as Bokuto takes another step towards him.

"I'll tell you why."

Another step.

"Because of you."

And another.

"It's all because of you."

For once, Akaashi decides to shoot first, ask questions later.
Fuck the questions.

Bokuto kisses him, both hands on Akaashi's face, holding him there.

As if Akaashi would run away from this, after craving it for so long. Craving him.

Bokuto's lips taste just as perfect as they look and they feel just as kissable as Akaashi remembers them to be.

When Akaashi's tongue forcefully opens up Bokuto's mouth, there's a quiet, surprised, gasp, and that little noise is just the fuel that Akaashi needs to deepen their kiss.

Seconds later, they are clutching at each other, and Akaashi feels his body slam against the wall of the storage room. He doesn't care and he doesn't feel any pain from the impact. What he cares about is the ferocity with which Bokuto's lips attack his neck and it's so mind numbingly delicious, that he almost forgets his own name.

"Bokuto-san!"

He doesn't forget Bokuto's name.

It's all that he can say, mumble out, actually, as he feels Bokuto's fingers hook themselves on his shorts and boxers, dragging them both down, making them pool against his ankles as Bokuto drops on his knees in front of him.

"Akaashi, please guide me."

Akaashi takes hold of Bokuto's hand, brings it up to his lips and after placing a small kiss against the knuckles, he brings it down between his legs.

As Bokuto's hand and tongue begin working on him, he leans against the wall and closes his eyes. The darkness behind his eyelids leaves less room for who and what and where, and more room for yes, and now, and again.

His fingers bury themselves on each side of Bokuto's head and oh wow, he never expected his hair to feel this soft. But he forgets all about his soft hair when he feels Bokuto's lips. And when Bokuto's hot mouth clamps against his hard dick, he lets out a low and long sigh.

As Bokuto begins to work up a rhythm, moving his head up and down, up and down, Akaashi's muscles begin to tense up and when he feels the familiar tug below his stomach, he clutches at Bokuto's hair.

"Bokuto-san!" He hears his throaty voice warn.

But Bokuto must have either gone deaf, or he doesn't care, because his mouth continues moving and Akaashi can't hold it back any longer. His entire body shakes and he feels his toes curl inside his sneakers and oh God, it feels so fucking great, why haven't they done this before?

It would be unfair of Akaashi to not reciprocate, but when he drops on his knees in front of Bokuto and begins to work on his zipper, Bokuto's hands stop him.

"You don't have to do this, unless you want to."

"I want to."

And it's the God honest truth, he really wants to.
After exchanging blowjobs, the two of them leave the gym and head up to their room. After Akaashi showers and brushes his teeth, he can still feel the taste of Bokuto, still there, on his mouth.

He stares in the mirror and thinks about how a couple of minutes ago he'd made Bokuto's knees shake, moaning, pressing his head down harder, almost crying out when he came.

Akaashi licks his lips and gives his reflection a smile, a filthy, dirty smile that even Kuroo would be jealous of.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

This chapter involves a character's death. (Trigger warning for suicide mention!). Please don't hate me for it you guys. I love my volleyball children very much, so I honest to God don't know what came over to make me write this.

Bokuto's already waiting for him in his bed, with his knees tucked into his chest, rocking back and forth. With his hair down like this, he looks so much younger, so innocent, like a little boy. And he looks almost as lost as one.

Akaashi brings his little desk lamp on the ground and after switching off the main lights, he sits on the edge of his bed.

"This makes me gay, doesn't it?" Bokuto asks after a couple of minutes.

Akaashi has to bite the insides of his cheeks from replying that no, the first blowjob comes as a freebie, before Bokuto'd get an invitation to the gay club. And Akaashi doesn't think he's gay, not really, because he knows he likes girls.

But coming in terms with your sexuality is a scary thing to do, he knows that from his own personal experience. So instead of making Bokuto freak out, he tries to calm him.

"You don't have to label yourself as anything." Akaashi says and gently touches Bokuto's warm shoulder. "I had so many panic attacks, when I kept trying to build up the courage to tell my parents that I'm gay. It wasn't easy, but I think deep down they always knew. And after I told them, I felt like..." He searches for the right word. "It felt very relieving. Like my mind and soul were finally at peace."

"After meeting your parents, I can assure you that mine are nothing like that. But you already met my dad, so you know what he's like." Bokuto takes a deep breath. "I wish I could be more like Kuroo and you."

When Bokuto starts crying, Akaashi gently pushes him into a lying position and hugs him from behind. Bokuto's quiet sobs, his entire body shakes the bed, but Akaashi clutches him tighter, and just like his mom does to him, he begins to run his fingers through Bokuto's soft hair.

Akaashi has so many questions he wants to ask. Questions such as, what exactly are we doing? Was this a one time thing, or would there be more? Do you regret it?

But now, he tells himself, is not the time to ask. Bokuto's not ready for that. And maybe neither is
he. Because if he asks and Bokuto gives a reply that he doesn't want to hear, what then?

Instead, he quietly murmurs reassuring words into Bokuto’s neck, while pressing tiny kisses there. It's okay, Bokuto. It's going to be okay. Tomorrow, you can be a little bit braver. You will be. Tomorrow. Just try.

When the two of them go downstairs for breakfast the next morning, Akaashi sees that Bokuto and Ayame are still very much together and not broken up as a part of him hoped for them to be.

That small part, the hoping part of him dies a little.

What about me? Akaashi wants to ask, but he doesn't. Because Bokuto's answer might kill him. No, he doesn't want to hear it.

Some things are better left unknown. Because what you don't know, can't hurt you.

Ignorance is bliss, and all that, right?

But when Ayame kisses Bokuto in front of him, the impact of what the two of them had done last night comes crashing down all around him. He'd become an accomplice of cheating.

Because he can blame Bokuto from Japan all the way to the end of the world, that this is all his fault. But it always takes two to tango.

His insides churn sickly, so he quickly excuses himself and dashes towards one of their school bathrooms, until all of his breakfast reappears into the toilet.

How despicable. Hadn't he be the one that told Ayame she deserved better than her last cheating boyfriend? Yes, that had been him. And he'd been outraged about it. Cheating is inexcusable.

"Akaashi, give me another toss!" Bokuto tells him, when the two of them are once again alone in their gym after practice.

He does.

He wonders if Bokuto is thinking about the storage room like he is.

When he's in the shower, with the hot water pouring over him, he experimentally, slowly, inserts a finger inside himself. Thinking of Bokuto, as if he is the one that's touching him, smiling at him, saying things he probably says to Ayame and Akaashi hates himself for it. He hates himself passionately.

And yet, apparently not enough.

Akaashi doesn't like doing things that he doesn't want to be done to him. Or things that would upset his parents.

His mom often told him, when he was younger, how he is her little miracle, because his parents were told their chances of conceiving a child the natural way are nearly impossible. Something to do with her ovaries, or whatever, he never asked about the details.

And it's not that he's afraid of his parents finding out about this and punishing him. They never have.

So when he does something he shouldn't be doing, he feels sick inside.

And that's how he feels right now. Stomach fluttering, heart beating like a drum, his own voice
And that's how he feels right now. Stomach fluttering, heart beating like a drum, his own voice echoing in his head. Don't do it, Akaashi. You shouldn't do it.

He doesn't want to let himself down or his parents. But sometimes a higher power takes control, something that lies deep within you, beyond your conscious self, better judgement and beliefs, and you find yourself doing things you'd never normally do. You can make up all the excuses you want - I'm drunk, I'm angry, I don't know what I'm doing - but you know in your heart you're just kidding yourself. It's wrong, but you're doing it anyway.

So just do it.

And he does.

Because when it's lights out, he allows Bokuto into his bed again, and the two of them do anything but sleep.

The same things happens during the next night.

And the next.

It becomes an every day thing, like habit, like ritual, like prayer, nobody else but the two of them know what goes on behind closed doors, in the darkness.

Bokuto and him exchange kisses, handjobs and blowjobs. It's never more than that, because neither of them are willing to talk about the pink elephant in the room. Sex.

And the most terrible thing is that Akaashi would, he would absolutely throw all of his expectations of his first time being special right out the window, in a heartbeat, while Bokuto fucks him senseless into the mattress. If it comes to it, he totally would. Because no matter what, if it's with Bokuto, it'll be special. Always.

On the rare occasions that Akaashi is around to hear Bokuto tell Konoha and Sarukui different tidbits about Ayame, his chest fills with pain. It aches, when he's told that she's a vegetarian that likes rock music, with a penchant for taking stray animals off the street, like the four cats, two dogs and the rabbit that they have. And her guilty pleasure is watching crappy reality tv shows.

Akaashi's guilty pleasure is having her boyfriend's lips wrapped around his cock.

He prefers to feed himself lies, such as Ayame being a crazy party girl that hits the clubs every night, flashing her tits at strangers and fucking them for a cheeseburger and a side of fries.

It's ridiculous and stupid, because she isn't. And Akaashi knows that.

But he prefers his made up version of her, than the actual nice girl that she is.

It's easier that way. It's easier for Akaashi to dislocate himself from the whole thing. He tries to convince himself that she's awful, that she's the one that does doesn't fit into the equation. She's the odd one of the three that doesn't belong.

But Ayame isn't clingy and jealous, blowing up Bokuto's phone with complaints and questions where he is, with whom, what they're doing, demanding to have all of his attention.

And Akaashi tells himself that it's her own fault for not being attentive enough of a girlfriend. Which is absolutely untrue, but whatever.

The other option is Akaashi admitting he's a shitty, shitty friend to her, for going behind her back and doing all the things he does with Bokuto when the two of them are alone.
His mind is still drawing up a blank at the list of Ayame cons he'd told himself not to keep a track of, or that he is actually trying to make.

Some nights, he can't even breathe without choking on regret, and he wishes he wouldn't be forced to grow up and act more like a responsible adult. He can't. Not when it means he has to stop borrowing Bokuto's lips and soft touches. Not if it means he has to go on without him.

Friday night happens to be one of those difficult nights, because Kuroo comes to their room and Akaashi and him are alone.

"Angel Eyes, I'm sorry I missed your birthday, but you know our team was away to Miyagi," Kuroo says as the two of them sit on the floor and crack up a couple of beer cans. "I heard that Bokuto managed to keep his surprise a secret."

"Yeah, it was amazing." Akaashi nods. "I saw that you guys won your first match for the preliminaries."

"Let's toast to both Fukurodani and Nekoma winning."

They do.

"My grades started to slip a little, from all the times Bokuto and I went out during school nights. In case you're wondering why I haven't been around much lately."

"So... Bokuto-san's been with you the whole time?"

"Yeah. Not always, but mostly."

Akaashi swallows hard. He finishes his beer and gets a new one.

"Angel Eyes, I already told you you don't have to pretend in front of me."

Kuroo's not an idiot. And Akaashi is more than certain he knows.

Is there anything that Kuroo doesn't know?

"I know you're expecting me to disapprove or judge, but I'm not gonna do either of those things." Kuroo says. "We all make mistakes, so don't beat yourself up about it."

"Kuroo-san, that's the thing. I don't consider it a mistake."

"Dude, chill. I've done things way worse than what you're doing."

"Like what? If you don't mind me asking."

Kuroo shakes his head. "Nah, I don't. Last summer, I banged a chick that was married. I mean I didn't know she was married until after, but that didn't stop me from going back again. It was good. It was great." He continues. "Maybe even the best sex of my life so far."

"Let me guess. Her husband found out?"

"Yup. I was leaving their apartment when he came home from work earlier."

"What happened?"

"I didn't stick around to find out. Maybe they got a divorce? I don't know. And I also don't care."
"So what you're trying to tell me is... yeah, what exactly are you getting at? That you're going to show me the light and guide me on the right path before anyone gets hurt?" Akaashi asks, pressing his lips together. "Get out before you get caught?"

"No. My senses of what's right and what's wrong are way more questionable than yours." Kuroo laughs. "Like I already said, it was pretty great. Do I regret what I did? No, I don't. And I wouldn't take it back. But I don't think I would do it again."

"What's the moral of your story?"

"There isn't one. And as for your question about getting out before anyone gets hurt? I'm afraid it's a little too late for that." Kuroo bites his lip. "The difference between our stories is that there are feelings involved with you guys." He shakes his head sadly. "I don't think Bokuto and you would get caught, Angel Eyes, if you're careful enough about it. But feelings make things messy. So even if he cares about you more than he cares about Ayame, which I think is the case, he also has his parents expectations to be considered. I was wrong in telling you nothing would happen between the two of you, but at the same time I know you know what his dad is like. I just hope things don't end up being real ugly for you."

Before Kuroo and him had their little chat, things were simpler, because it'd just been thoughts in his mind. A secret thing between Bokuto and him. And now that Kuroo knew, things were out in the open, making everything real.

Akaashi volunteers to help Yukie out with going to a store and buying stuff for the candy grams she plans on selling before their Christmas break. What he doesn't know is that the two of them would be accompanied by the Captain and Vice Captain of their cheerleading squad. It happens in the aisle of the gummy sweets, when both Ayame and him reach for a pack of grape jellies.

"Koutarou loves these things." She says with a small smile. "I find the taste really disgusting."

It's got nothing to do with her, or maybe it has everything to do with her, because she's been calling Bokuto by his first name for a really long time now. But when she just casually drops it in front of him like that, he feels incredibly irritated. Why is she telling him what he already knows? It's irrational of him to consider it some sort of competition, like who knows Bokuto better between the two. He already knows it's him.

"Yeah, my boyfriend adores them." Akaashi hears himself reply. "He actually can't get enough of them."

Despite wishing it, Bokuto isn't his boyfriend. Not really. There are no exact words to describe their relationship, because it's more than just being friends with benefits. It's so much more than that, and Akaashi doesn't need for Bokuto to actually confirm it for him to know.

"I didn't know Kuroo-senpai likes them too."

No, it's not Kuroo Akaashi is thinking about. Not by a long shot.

"Akaashi, I know you and him are really close, so maybe he told you things aren't so great between the two of us?" When he shakes his head, she continues. "I might be totally off, but I think he's cheating on me with someone."
You're not off, he thinks. You hit the bullseye.

And yet, knowing what he knows, he still asks.

"Why would you think that?"

"This is a little bit of an overshare, but our sex life isn't what it used to be. Whenever I try to get intimate with, he flinches away from my touch. He wasn't like this before."

And just like that, right there and then, Ayame bursts into tears.

Seeing her cry, after confiding in him, bearing her soul, is what makes everything finally register in his mind. His actions have repercussions.

This is not a game.

Akaashi doesn't demand for Bokuto to pick between the two of them. But he feels neither of them are being fair towards Ayame, playing her like this. She's a really nice girl and imagining what she would feel like if she ever found out, makes him feel crushed.

He wasn't like this before. A coward. A liar. A cheater.

No more.

When they are released for their Christmas holidays, it's a true blessing for Akaashi. Because for the next few weeks he wouldn't be rooming with Bokuto, making it easier to distance himself.

During their winter break, Akaashi stays at home as much as possible. He's had enough of other people and socializing for a while. He doesn't want to talk to anybody and he doesn't want to think about anything. He just wants to sit around and do nothing.

But it's not as easy as that, especially with how hectic things get around Christmas.

Still, the only time he does leave their house is to go running, because he wants to stay in shape for volleyball and not drop dead after their break's over and they have practice again.

And he accompanies his mother to do the groceries, but that's literally it.

At least his last few days at Fukurodani for the year are now over and done with. They'd been long and disturbing. Awful. Probably the worst in his life. Stopping himself from acting on his feelings towards Bokuto? Nearly impossible to do, after knowing what his lips feels like. After knowing what it feels like to let himself come undone from Bokuto's touch.

But it's all over now, he keeps telling himself, it's all in the past. Things would soon get back to normal.

After listening to the weather report, he knows snow would fall again. And its calm white color would ease his mind some. Definitely.

So he could settle down to quiet Christmas holidays with his family with nothing to worry about. Just snowy skies, good books around the fireplace, hot chocolate and grandma's amazing gingerbread cookies wafting through the air. No more cheating, no more drama, no more crap.

That's it.

That's everything that Akaashi wants. Nothing to think about. Nothing to do. No more worries.
Yeah. Fat chance.

It's the 30th of December, the day before the new year, and Akaashi sleeps in. He joins his parents around the kitchen table for brunch, ignoring the crazy amount of missed calls he'd gotten from Kuroo. Still, his curiosity is piqued and he doesn't want to be too out of the loop, so he checks his facebook feed.

The milk jug his mom had asked him to pass from their fridge drops on his bare toes, smashing against the floor loudly, glass shards and milk flying all around.

His stomach drops too.

"Keiji, what's wrong?" Both his parents ask in unison, jumping on their feet at once.

He is unable to find his voice and speak. Hands shaking, he passes them his phone to read what he'd just read.

"My name is Oikawa Tooru and I'm eighteen years old. I'm not smart. I'm not funny. I'm pretty, maybe. I've never saved anyone's life. I'm no one special.

Dad, things were never supposed happen like this. I understand why you changed and started drinking. I don't blame you for it, not one bit. But I didn't need you to shower me with expensive gifts after volleyball games. Daddy, I never wanted your money. What I wanted is for us to try and be a family again. But I know that's too much to ask, and I'm sorry.

Mattsun, Makki, thank you for the past two years. Sharing them with you two, as well as the rest of our team, has been an absolute blast. I'm going to miss that dearly.

Kou-chan, Tetsu-chan, Daichi-chan, the same goes for you three. Thank you for everything. Bonding over volleyball with you guys was amazing.

Tobio-chan, I'm sorry I wasn't a better senpai to you when I was still at Kitagawa Daiichi. Please do know that it was all because of my jealousy and pride. You're a natural born genius when it comes to volleyball. I owe you an apology for how I treated you, but for what it's worth, I know great things would happen to you in the future. All you have to do is trust your teammates more, because from everything I've learned, it's that you can always rely on them when you're on the court. You never have to fight alone.

Iwa-chan. My dearest Iwa-chan. Please don't be mad. I love you very much. But you know better than anyone just how unhappy I've been for the past few months. Please don't blame yourself for this, because it isn't your fault. Ever since the car accident, you know I haven't been the same. I tried really hard to be happy, but I just can't take it anymore. Please don't hate me for being a coward, but this feels like the only way out. Please take all of my alien related things as something to remember me by. I know you wouldn't forget me. But I want for you to have them. I don't know where I'm going next, if I'm going anywhere at all, but maybe I could be reunited with Mom and Big Sis. Thank you for always being my pillar for all the years we've known each other. And I'm sorry I can't be strong like you, Iwa-chan. I truly am.

Everyone, I'm really sorry if I ever hurt you during all the times that I was hurting. I'm sorry about this. But just like I already said above, I'm nobody special.

I'm sorry."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

This chapter was totally inspired by Haikyuu!!'s s2's finale and seeing Iwa-chan cry. If you wanna blame someone for this, blame Furudate. Blame him. I know I do.

Akaashi ignores the missed calls, but he does read the text messages from Kuroo.

30th December 11:43 am, Kuroo-san.

"Angel Eyes, I'm stuck at a family thing with my parents and Kenma's away from Tokyo and Bokuto got back late last night from the States. He still doesn't know, because he's jet lagged and on his sleeping pills, so please go and be with him before he wakes up. I beg you."

Akaashi inner senses feel deranged. His mind should have been able to tell him where he is and who he is, but it doesn't. His limbs belong to someone else. It's not him, though, they aren't his.

But the idea of Bokuto finding out alone spur him into action and he somehow manages to get dressed. And when his dad offers to give him a lift, he accepts with a nod.

It doesn't matter that Bokuto and him hadn't spoken since the beginning of Christmas break, even though Bokuto'd kept ringing him. It feels almost stupid now. Why were they even fighting in the first place? It doesn't matter. Nothing matters. None of it.

Akaashi rings the doorbell until his finger goes numb. After a couple of minutes a very sleepy Bokuto, topless and yawning, with strands of hair sticking out in all kinds of directions, comes out to open the door.

"Akaashi?" He blinks. "What are you doing here?"

Bokuto still doesn't know.

"Bokuto-san, may I please come in?"

"Of course."

As the two of them sit around the kitchen counter, Bokuto offers him something to eat or drink.

"Just water, please." Akaashi licks his dry lips. "Thank you."

"So did you have a nice time with-" Bokuto begins to ask, but stops. He carefully studies
Akaashi’s face. "Not that I'm not happy to see you, but you showing up at my doorstep unannounced and looking like this..." He swallows. "Something's wrong."

"Bokuto-san, please take a seat."

There is never a good way to deliver devastating news. And Akaashi hates being the bearer of bad news, but at least it's not over the phone and he's there with Bokuto.

It is said that everyone grieves the loss of a loved one in different ways. There is no right or wrong way to do it.

Step 1 - Denial.

Being in denial is a natural defense mechanism, your mind and body protecting you from the shock and reality of things in a small little bubble.

"Akaashi, this is a sick joke, isn't it?" Bokuto throws his head back and laughs. "I'll admit you caught me off guard, but you can stop pretending now."

Akaashi shakes his head sadly and wipes the tears away from his eyes.

Bokuto, still in denial, reaches Stage 2 - Anger, in less than a minute later, his laughter transforming into a yell.

"No. No! He's not dead! He's not dead, he can't be! Do you hear me? HE'S NOT DEAD!" His hand takes the water glass and throws it against the wall. "But he will be after I'm done with him!"

Before Bokuto can continue to break things in frustration, Akaashi pulls him into a tight hug. He has no kind words to offer, because there are no words. No words that could make things better. No kind lies, no "it's going to be okay", because it won't be.

The only consolation Akaashi has to give and gets in return is a hug, a simple hug between the two.

Akaashi has no conscious recollection of the immediate aftermath. He can vaguely remember Bokuto and him somehow making it upstairs into his bed, lying down next to each other. He can remember the feel of the hot tears streaming down his face, the wet pillow, and the back of his throat with the grainy taste of salt. Yes. He remembers that.

But that's about all he can remember with any real clarity. The rest of it is just a blur.

Bokuto and him discard the restraints of their clothes, the feel of each other's warm naked skin comforting somewhat, but Akaashi doesn't remember anything about it. He isn't there and neither is Bokuto. He's disembodied, spiritless, lost and confused. His mind and heart ripped into a million pieces.

And he'd only known Oikawa for a few a months. Bokuto's suffering is so much worse. But at least they are there, together.

He thinks about Oikawa's father, what he must be going through. And then he goes into hysterics, imagining how Iwaizumi must be feeling. It makes him feel hot, cold, tired. He feels ill. Sick.

Bokuto screams and it's a wordless scream, full of pain and sorrow. It builds from somewhere inside his throat, bursting out loudly, forcefully. Akaashi feels nearly deafened, but he doesn't tell Bokuto to be quiet. Because he knows Bokuto can't keep it inside. Better out than in. He screams as long as he can, as long as his voice can carry his insane howl.
The world outside disappears and they live in a dream of curtained lights, phones vibrating somewhere close by. They sleep without sleeping, floating in a curious state of nothingness, somewhere between consciousness and unconsciousness. The dimensions of Bokuto's room lose control. The walls, the windows, the ceiling, the floor, everything shimmers like a dream, unreal. It's not a dream, though, unfortunately.

Somewhere between the madness, Bokuto and him both reach Stage 3 - Bargaining. If only they'd known... If only they could've done something about it.

Akaashi doesn't know what time is, but it doesn't matter. Time loses meaning. It grows elastic. It becomes a concept with alien qualities.

And when Bokuto offers him one of his sleeping pills, he accepts it graciously.


The only thing that feels real is Bokuto's touch and his own in return.

It's not much, but that's all they have to hold onto.

Akaashi can't move to save his life, while Bokuto can't stop moving. Twisting, turning, crawling, twitching, wrapping himself and Akaashi in sweat soaked sheets, the two of them crying, crying, crying...

It's senseless.

When Iwaizumi calls him, Akaashi sees on his phone that it's only been a day and a half. It's insane, because it feels like years have passed. He doesn't remember a time when it didn't hurt.

Composing himself, Akaashi picks up and puts Iwaizumi on speaker. He doesn't want to repeat to Bokuto what he's about to hear.

"Iwaizumi-san." The first thing that pops into his head is a stupid question, but it's out of his mouth before his brain can process it. "How are you doing?"

Iwaizumi sighs and the tone of it feels ancient, like a thousand year old man in pain, than just a mere boy of eighteen.

"I've just been so busy organizing the funeral and everything that I haven't had time to process things still, you know?" He sniffs. "I'm sorry to give you a call this late, you must have plans with your family and friends for the New Years, but-"

"No." Akaashi swallows the lump stuck in his throat. He doesn't bother telling Iwaizumi they aren't in a mood to celebrate, because he knows better than all of them. "No. If there's anything I could do for you, please tell me."

"Yes, there is actually. If you could contact the rest of your teammates and just anyone in your region and pass on the details of the funeral, that would be really helpful."

"Of course. I can do that."

"I spoke with Sawamura earlier and he agreed to meet any one of you that wants to come at the Miyagi train station. I would come myself, but I have to make sure Oikawa's-" Iwaizumi's voice cracks. "father is decent for the funeral."
"Please, don't worry about it, Bokuto-san and I will take care of everything."

"Thank you."

Bokuto and him exchange silent glances, nod, and hold each other's hands while they begin dialing. Akaashi's the one that has to break the news to the rest of Fukurodani, while Bokuto calls everyone whose phone numbers he has in the Tokyo region.

Each phone call feels heartbreaking. Yukie cries the hardest and she makes Akaashi cry too. But everyone from Fukurodani cancel their plans and agree to go to Miyagi as a team, together.

The last phone call Akaashi places is to his dad, asking if he could come and give Bokuto and him a lift to their house, so they could have a dinner together.

Bokuto and Akaashi go into his bathroom and help each other with showering, because they both need it. The water feels refreshing, calming in a way, as it washes away their silent tears, their caked faces of dirt and sweat, everything.

Then they get dressed, with Akaashi borrowing a fresh pair of clothes from Bokuto. They are too big, too lose around his shoulders especially, but it doesn't matter.

Before they leave, Bokuto quickly throws a couple of things into a suitcase - a black suit with a black shirt, his toothbrush, a volleyball, a bottle of whiskey from his father's cigar room and a bottle of wine from their cellar, some shoes, and off they go.

Bokuto bows his head and thanks Akaashi's parents for their hospitality, handing them the bottle of wine. Akaashi offers to give him a tour of their house, but Bokuto says "later" and goes into their kitchen, helping his mother out with their meal, while Akaashi and his father set the dinner table.

"So he's a cook, huh?" Akaashi's father winks and whispers. "He's a keeper, son."

"Dad, please don't embarrass me." Akaashi mutters, face growing red.

"Oh, come on, now, son." His dad laughs. "That's what fathers are for."

Halfway through their meal, Bokuto turns to Akaashi's father.

"May I ask you something, Sir?"

"Sir? Oh, you make me feel so old." Akaashi's dad laughs.

"Dad, you are old." Akaashi scowls.

"Keiji, your mom and I are like this fine wine that Bokuto-kun has brought." His father says and swishes his glass. "We are mature and full of experience, not old." Akaashi rolls his eyes, while his father turns to Bokuto. "Please, Bokuto-kun, ask whatever is on your mind."

"It's just... I've read a lot of books, and it's the same with movies." Bokuto says.

"Okay, go on, son." Akaashi's father nods his head, and Akaashi's insides burn. His dad just called Bokuto "son". He'd never done to anyone that hasn't been Akaashi, but then again Akaashi's never had a friend over to his house before. Still, it feels really nice. A bit embarrassing, but nice.

"One of the things I've always found strange is that the characters from the movies and books
never seem to use the bathroom." Bokuto replies. "You see them doing all kinds of things - falling in love, driving cars, eating food, getting dressed, having fights and getting beaten up, shot, having sex, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, smoking cigarettes - that kind of thing, right? But you never hear or read about one of them going like "Excuse me, I'll be over here in the bathroom, dropping a deuce."." He grins.

"Bokuto-san!" Akaashi scowls.

"Akaashi, what? I'm curious about it." Bokuto shrugs. "I know it doesn't matter, but it's always ignored in books and movies and it's such a fundamental thing of people's everyday lives. I'm not saying I want to see or read about actors and characters going to the bathroom every ten minutes or so, but I can't help wondering every now and again if so and so need to go there. Like, I'll be watching The Gladiator and wonder what if while Russell Crowe is fighting and needs to take a leak, because he hasn't had one for ages, so his bladder must be bursting?"

Akaashi sighs and shakes his head, while his dad laughs.

"That's a very good question, Bokuto-kun. I've never given it much thought myself, but you're right, because I've never written about it in one of my books. I can't explain it, but some things are better left unsaid or unseen, I suppose."

They open another bottle of wine when it's time for dessert. Akaashi's parents had bought a cake from a store, but Bokuto'd insisted on making them milk bread. And it's absolutely delicious, but each bite grows tougher and tougher to swallow, despite its softness, at least to Akaashi and Bokuto.

At 12:00 am, all four of them clink their champagne glasses, smiles all around, wishing each other a Happy New Year and may the new one bring more joy and happiness, with new accomplishments, anything Akaashi and Bokuto put their minds into doing.

Akaashi helps his mom with washing the dishes, and then, before his parents excuse themselves and go upstairs to bed, his father brings Bokuto and him an empty notebook and a pen each.

"I know you kids are suffering, and just like every parent, I wish I could ease your pain somehow, but I can't." Akaashi's dad says. "Life is a fragile thing and it's short, but it's filled with good as well as tragic moments. I know you won't be able to sleep, so as an author, let me give you an idea. Write about Oikawa-kun, the both of you. It wouldn't make you feel any better right now, it might even make things worse for a while. Because your wounds are still fresh, and you'll be adding salt to it. But you mustn't let the sadness die inside you. You have to give it some life. Write about it. Write about everything that you feel, let it all out."

"Dad, we aren't writers like you."

"Ah, Keiji, that's nonsense." His dad replies and strokes his cheek." Anyone can write a story. It's the easiest thing in the world. How else do you think I make a living out of it? All you have to do is write the truth, tell it like it is. Not all stories are facts, they are feelings. And you both have feelings, don't you?"

Bokuto and Akaashi nod silently. Too many feelings, actually.

"Well, that's all you need."

When his father leaves them in the kitchen and follows his mom upstairs into their bedroom, Akaashi and Bokuto raid the fridge for more wine and some snacks, then sit down, next to each other and do exactly as Akaashi's dad had told them to do. They write and cry themselves a story.
Akaashi's dad had been right, when he'd said writing about it wouldn't make them feel any better - it doesn't. And when Bokuto and Akaashi exchange notebooks and read each other's feelings and thoughts, they are both a mess. But with their pens, they'd both given their sadness some life. It doesn't answer any of their questions. It doesn't change the outcome of things. But it helps them understand each other a little bit better.

They've done it - they've cried themselves a story each.

It's not much, but it's something, Akaashi supposes.

On the first of January, Fukurodani, Nekoma and a couple of other volleyball teams Akaashi doesn't know board up the first train to Miyagi.

Bokuto, Kuroo, and some other students have bottles of alcohol in their hands and proceed to pass them around, each one taking a swig. Dealing with things not completely sober is easier.

Before their train pulls up, Bokuto claps his hands together and asks for everyone's attention.

"Listen up, you guys." His voice booms into their packed compartment. "I know this isn't the reunion we all thought we'd have, but we are here to show support to Oikawa's family, friends, teammates and close ones. It's sad as fuck, but I don't want to see any of you breaking down and making things worse, alright? You can cry about it when you're alone, later, but not now. Now we all have to be strong. Got it?"

"Yes!"

They all nod in agreement and understand, but it's so very hard to keep the tears at bay.

It's Akaashi's first time attending an open casket and it's just as awful as he'd expected it to be.

Yukie is in line just before Akaashi, and when she steps forward, she bursts into tears and faints, with Konoha and Sarukui carrying her out.

Akaashi places the flower he's holding into Oikawa's coffin and swallows. He never asked Iwaizumi for the details of how Oikawa'd taken his own life, but it doesn't matter. The morticians have a done real good job of making Oikawa's corpse presentable, because from here, he could pass off as Sleeping Beauty, or perhaps more like the Prince Charming he'd been during their Halloween party. His peach skin, polished like smooth silk, makes Akaashi's fingers graze against the cold cheek.

Pink lips, a paler shade of what they'd once been, but still unsettingly pretty. Lips that loved to smile, laugh and be kissed. Lips that have been pushed into a serene, small smile, accepting, like he might've embraced a certain peace in death, a thing not everyone can reach. Because even without a heartbeat, Oikawa looks like the most beautiful thing Akaashi's ever laid his eyes on.

With a bow of his head and a final goodbye, Akaashi silently hopes that wherever Oikawa is right now, he's reached the peace he'd wanted.

He takes his place between the rows of people when Iwaizumi takes the podium and begins to give the eulogy.

"I don't remember a time, when Tooru and I weren't friends." Iwaizumi says and clears his throat. "Becoming friends with him was a magical thing and to this day, I still don't know exactly how it happened. One day, we just became the best of friends. We did everything together, despite our different characters, inseparable, like conjoined twins. He was the brother I never had. We certainly bickered like brothers." He presses his lips into a small smile. "I don't have to stand here
and tell you all what a wonderful person he was, because you all know how gentle and kind and giving Oikawa Tooru was. Understanding and helpful, always trying to better things, especially himself. W. S. Gilbert is who said "It's love that makes the world go round". And if we are to assume that that's true, then the world was spinning a little faster with Oikawa in it. His endless love, his dedication to his family, friends and teammates is exactly why we're all here today. We can all learn a lot from the way he lived. And if he was here with us, he would scold us all for being sad and tell us to celebrate his life, instead of mourning it. He would tell us all how important family is, how important our bonds are. That we should never take each other for granted, and appreciate each other more than we did yesterday, and the day before." Iwaizumi crumples his notes into the palm of his hand, his tears flowing freely. "I keep expecting to wake up from this nightmare, with his tap against my shoulder, telling me this isn't real. But Tooru's gone and the only thing I have from him is his voice inside my head. I'll never hear his voice again. It's over. It's the end." Iwaizumi wipes at his cheeks and yells. "What kind of best friend am I? How could I not tell how much he was suffering to prevent this from happening and - no!" He yells as Bokuto and Kuroo take hold of each of his arms. "Let me go!"

Iwaizumi screams, his threats that they should let should go of him right this instant, as Bokuto and Kuroo escort him out, echo into the quiet room.

Then the priest takes Iwaizumi's place at the front, clears his throat and starts talking.

But Akaashi doesn't stick around to hear it.

Hours and lots of tears later, Akaashi follows Iwaizumi into Oikawa's home. They aren't alone, though. Bokuto, Kuroo and the other two Aoba Jousai second years, Matsukawa and Hanamaki go there as well.

They all follow Iwaizumi's orders and help him out with sorting Oikawa's things into boxes - clothes, photographs, toys, DVDs, everything. They all silently work together. Since they are alone in the house, with Iwaizumi telling them Oikawa's father is a mess and wouldn't be returning any time soon, Bokuto and Kuroo go to the nearest store to buy alcohol, while Hanamaki pulls a small plastic bag out of his pocket. Iwaizumi, Matsukawa and Akaashi silently sit on the floor, watching him roll a blunt.

Akaashi swallows the emotional lump in his throat and looks around the empty room. It's crazy how they'd all gathered Oikawa's life, his eighteen years of existence into a couple of boxes. A keepsake. Something that says Hey, I was here, once. I lived.

When Bokuto and Kuroo return, they all sit in a circle and take turns drinking and smoking.

It's Akaashi's first time trying pot, and when his eyes water up and he coughs, Bokuto's elbow nudges him between the ribs.

"Akaashi, you okay?"

"Woof."

They drink and smoke themselves into a stupor, right there on the floor. None of them make it in time for the actual burial, but all six of them head towards the cemetery. Despite the fact it's snowing heavily and freezing cold, they walk on foot. The alcohol keeps them warm inside.

Oikawa's grave is next to his mother and sisters, right under a big lemon tree, with lots of freshly laid out bouquets in front of the tombstone.

Bokuto, who'd been carrying his volleyball, is just about to place it between the mass of flowers,
when he stops and gives it a twirl over his forefinger.

"The first time I met Oikawa, he was a total dick. I know you shouldn't speak ill of the dead, but we all knew what he's like. He told me my serves and cross court spikes were good, but I needed to work on my straights. I replied that he's a setter, so he couldn't possibly know how hard it is to execute a straight." He shakes his head and laughs softly. "That son of a bitch showed me just how it's supposed to be done and I absolutely hated him for his skills and abilities. But I've always admired him for them, which is how we became friends." Bokuto grins and passes the ball into Kuroo's hands.

Kuroo, then Akaashi, then Matsukawa and Hanamaki all take turns explaining their first meetings with Oikawa, passing the ball each time. Iwaizumi's last to go.

"I never believed in soulmates and crap like that before I met him. Tooru was the one that taught me what it's like to love. He was- he was my person." He wipes the tears away from his eyes with the back of his hand. "He was mine and I was his. We never said it out loud, but we both knew it. And now that he's gone, I feel so lost without him." He chokes out. "I don't know how I'm supposed to get on with my life without him next to me."

Matsukawa and Hanamaki flank Iwaizumi's side each, draping their hands over Iwaizumi's slumped shoulders.

"You have us." Matsukawa says through tears. "You'll always have us."

"We'll always be there for each other." Hanamaki adds. "Always."

"Thank you, guys, but I just can't help, but wonder if I'd ever mustered up the courage to tell him I was in love with him, if- if the outcome of things would be like this." Iwaizumi sobs loudly. "Please learn from my mistake, and don't keep quiet when you love someone. Tell them. Tell them how much they mean to you and you love them. Repeat it every single day if you have to. Don't be cowards like me and do it before you miss your chance. Just do it."

The train ride back to Tokyo is quiet, silent. The events of the passed two days feel unreal.

But everything, life, goes on. The world keeps turning, not stopping for anyone or anything.

Before their train pulls up at their stop, Bokuto's voice, loud as always, booms, addressing everyone.

"I broke up with my girlfriend three weeks ago, because I wasn't in love with her." He says, ignoring the whistles he gets. "There's someone else I'm in love with, and that someone is my teammate, my best friend. Akaashi, you're my person." He declares into their entire compartment, echoing Iwaizumi's words from the previous day. "You're my person, Akaashi, and I don't want to deny it any longer. I love you. I'm in love with you."

Despite having all eyes on him, on the two of them, Akaashi hears his hoarse voice replying.

"I love you too, Bokuto-san."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it's been ages since I updated, last chapter killed me and rl shit kept me busy. MY BAD <3

Their compartment fills with cheers and Yamamoto begins clapping and chanting "kiss, kiss, kiss!", but Kenma, who is right next to him, stills his hands and shakes his head. Akaashi's glad that Bokuto doesn't make a movement to kiss him, take his hand or do anything else intimate. The only thing Bokuto does do, is keep his eyes on Akaashi, perhaps a bit longer than appropriate, but Akaashi doesn't shy away from it.

Instead, he lets his eyes do the talking for him and he knows Bokuto understands.

Akaashi told him he loved him too, but he hadn't said he's also in love with him.

He doesn't know what it is that stops him, because he's very much in love with Bokuto and he knows that perfectly well. He also knows he'd been wanting and needing to hear Bokuto confess for a very long time. He would have preferred for it to be in a more private setting, as this is a private conversation and he wants nothing more than to shut off the binders and exclude all the bystanders, their audience.

He doesn't blame Bokuto for making such a choice, because it's typical of Bokuto to just blurt it all out. And Akaashi understands, because Iwaizumi's words, full of regret, ring inside his head too.

But there are times when your mind goes into a shock, triggered by a painful blow, and in order to protect itself, it makes you go numb. It stops accepting information and comprehending things, it just shuts down, giving you a small escape from reality.

This is one of those times for Akaashi.

"Bromeo, what you did was very nice and touching, but how could you be so careless?" He hears Kuroo's voice somewhere behind him. "You know us cats wouldn't talk, but that Daishou fucker heard you too and he loves to stir shit up. If he talks and your dad gets word of it, he'll tear you a new one, bro."

"Kuroo, I appreciate your concern, I really do." Bokuto replies calmly. Actually, it's extremely calm. "But I don't care if my dad finds out. I don't care if everyone finds out. I just don't care anymore." He snorts softly. "And I don't care that I don't care."
Akaashi's dad waves and gives him a hug, and as Akaashi gets into the front seat, he sees Bokuto's reflection in the rear view mirror. Shoulders slumped, trudging his suitcase in one hand, walking through the empty snowy streets, alone, and Akaashi knows Bokuto plans on walking back to their big empty house.

And that's when his mind kicks into gear again.

"Dad, stop the car."

He feels his feet break into a small jog and he actually has to speak up for Bokuto to notice his presence.

"Bokuto-san?" When the familiar honey eyes zero in on him, looking just as lost as he feels, he continues. "Would you like to come and stay over?"

Bokuto nods silently.

Before Oikawa's funeral everything still felt surreal, but now that it's over, the insanity of things finally sets in. There's no reason for either of them to stay strong and keep up brave faces. For whom? What's the point? They both know the pain is there, and so are the tears, coming and going in waves, dragging them down into a bottomless pit, making it hard to just breathe.

They both hear Akaashi's mother announce that dinner is ready, but neither of them have the energy to get out of bed - they hadn't even changed out of their clothes yet.

They don't get called again. Instead, Akaashi's mom brings them a tray with bacon, eggs and toast up into Akaashi's room, placing it onto the desk and leaving without saying a single word.

Akaashi is first to move. Maybe it's the scent of his mom's cooking wafting through the air that kicks in his survival instinct, or maybe it's out of guilt, because he knows both of his parents have postponed their work until their school break's over and he doesn't want to burden them with worry of his well being.

He eats, showers and after changing into his pyjamas, he sits next to Bokuto.

"Bokuto-san, you have to eat."

"I'm not hungry."

Still, Akaashi manages to get some food into Bokuto, speaking to him as if speaking to a small child, coaxing him with each bite, please, just one more, Bokuto-san, for me.

Then he gently tugs his clothes away, because he knows Bokuto feels most comfortable sleeping in his underwear. And Akaashi wants him to feel as comfortable as possible, even if neither of them get a wink of sleep.

The next morning, Akaashi joins his parents at the kitchen table for breakfast. And he's just about to go upstairs, making sure Bokuto eats something too, when he feels his mom's hand against his shoulder.

"Keiji, I don't want to impose, but please, let me." She smiles softly. "Sometimes all you need is a mother's touch."

He nods silently, thankful, and so very grateful.

"I love you, mom." He swallows, eyes watering up, and she places a kiss against his eyebrow and
ruffles his hair.

"I love you, too."

Akaashi does the dishes, while his father makes a fresh pot of coffee.

"What do you say we jog that brain of yours?" His dad asks.

"Let's do that."

They sit back at the table and Akaashi begins doing the crosswords in the newspaper. He hasn't been able to solve one completely on his own, not yet, but when his dad sees him scowling at the paper, he gives him a few hints and he eagerly writes out the missing words.

Some time later, his mom comes back down and starts preparing their lunch. Since Akaashi can't cook, he does other house chores, like doing the laundry, sweeping the floor, taking the trash out. He doesn't mind helping out, because he wants to busy himself.

While they eat, he quietly asks how Bokuto's doing and his mom reassures him that all he needs some more time, that he's going to be okay.

When he goes back up to his room for an afternoon nap, despite the fact Bokuto is still in bed, knowing that Bokuto is right there, in front of his eyes, so he can make sure Bokuto eats and hydrates himself enough, even if he needs reminders and coaxing, Akaashi's state of mind is calmer. Because had Bokuto been back into his house, alone, he wouldn't have bothered with doing either of those things.

Akaashi realizes there isn't that much of a difference between friendship and romance. They both require love and patience, an unwavering trust, fierce loyalty, a desire and need to be close. Which is why Akaashi feels so very protective of Bokuto, just like he knows Bokuto feels the same way about him.

They were best friends first, before anything else, and best friends share things with each other. Notes in their own made up language, chocolate candy bars, secrets that nobody else could ever know. With time, the list of things they shared grew bigger, adding more than just words of plans and future dreams, insecurities. They started sharing really personal, tangible things like their beds and their lips, lots of kissing which would always quickly turn filthy, leading on to so much more. Which felt really great, like fuck, so good, but it made things a whole lot more confusing. Everything between them just happened so fast, too fast, a tornado spinning out of control, dragging Ayame, Kuroo, their volleyball team in it too, unknowingly.

It takes two, maybe three more days - Akaashi doesn't really know, because not even he keeps track of time when it's still the holidays - for Bokuto to slowly, gradually, come back to himself. He becomes aware of his surroundings, he gets out of Akaashi's bed, walks, showers, eats, drinks, he listens, he talks. Bokuto's loud self Akaashi knows him to be and is familiar with, resurfaces every now and again, which helps Akaashi's own healing process.

In the places that count - their hearts, their souls, their selves - they're still nowhere, their chests empty and heavy at the same time, and Akaashi knows that it's all on the surface, for the both of them, but it's still a progress from where they'd been a few days ago.

Akaashi sleeps in and he's surprised, but very pleased, to see Bokuto downstairs at their kitchen table, with his parents, who tell him he'd been the one to prepare their breakfast.

"Akaashi, you better tell me how good my french toast is, because I put a lot of work in it!" He crosses his arms expectantly. "Work and honey!"
Akaashi tucks in. "Bokuto-san, it tastes amazing."

There is no happy hooting, no “Hey Hey Hey!”, but there is a small smile and a nod.

"Bokuto-kun, you're spoiling us with such a treat." Akaashi's father says.

Bokuto stands from his chair and bows his head.

"Thank you so very much for your hospitality, all three of you. I know I’ve been a burden, but you still accepted me into your home and made me feel better. I appreciate all that you've done for me." He bows his head further down.

"Now, now, there's no need to get so formal with us." Akaashi's dad chuckles. "You should know by now you’re always welcome here."

"Thank you."

"Why don't you kids invite some of your friends over for dinner tonight?" His mom suggests. "I'm gonna make some grilled mackerel pikes."

Bokuto and Akaashi both know it's Kuroo's favorite, so after exchanging a glance, Bokuto calls and invites him and Kenma to join Akaashi's family and him to eat together.

Knowing Kenma's shy nature, Akaashi isn't at all surprised to see that only Kuroo shows up at their doorstep just before 8:00 pm. Bokuto and Kuroo hug it out, and pull Akaashi in there too, but all three of them are ghosts of themselves.

After short introductions, Akaashi’s parents, all dressed up, head out, with Akaashi wishing them a good evening.

“I thought your parents would stay with us for dinner?” Bokuto blinks as the three of them sit at the kitchen table and start eating.

“No, today’s their 25th year anniversary since their wedding.” Akaashi explains, munching.

“Excellent.” Kuroo smirks and goes into the hallway. He returns with a half an empty vodka bottle out of his inside jacket pocket. “Want some?” He offers, but both Akaashi and Bokuto shake their heads. “Suit yourselves.” He lifts the bottle up to his lips and takes a couple of gulps.

“Oh, what the Hell, bro, give it here. I’m not gonna let you do this alone.” Bokuto closes his eyes and drinks.

“So that’s the plan.” Akaashi licks his lips. “Getting drunk.”

“Beats being sober.” Kuroo replies. “It’s been a whole lot easier for me to deal with everything.”

“Kuroo-san, that’s...” Akaashi is just about to say that’s not dealing with things, but avoiding to deal with things, but he doesn’t bother. Who is he to give advice on moving on, when he’s a mess too? And besides, Kuroo’d been there for him when he’d needed him. Now it’s Akaashi’s turn to show his friend some support, and if Kuroo needs a drinking buddy, he’s got two. “that’s not gonna be enough for the three of us.”

Since he knows his father can almost never sit down and work without having a drink or two first, they always have a couple of whiskey bottles stashed up in the cupboard under the sink.

Kuroo barks a laughter as he watches Akaashi take one. "You think your parents are gonna get
mad you’re stealing that?”

Bokuto claims it’s not stealing, because it technically belongs to Akaashi. But just to be safe, they clean the dishes and head upstairs to Akaashi’s room, where they sit in a circle on the floor and begin passing the bottle back and forth.

“So, Mommy and Daddy want some alone time, huh.” Kuroo wiggles a sleazy eyebrow.

Akaashi scowls. “Kuroo-san, please don’t say stuff like that.”

“Akaashi-san’s gonna be dusting off the old cobwebs.” Bokuto smirks and him and Kuroo exchange high fives.

“Bokuto-san! That’s so inappropriate!”

“Shit, Angel Eyes, it’s gotta be fucking embarrassing to know your parents have a better sex life than you.”

Akaashi points at the door. “Get out of my house, the both of you.”

They decide to build a blanket fort, because Akaashi’s bed is too small to fit all three of them in it.

When Akaashi feels his head spinning, he stops drinking and gets into his bed. He's tired and drunk and he thinks it's not normal for someone as young as them to be drinking themselves into a stupor, but he doesn't know what's normal anymore. At least his mind is clouded by the liqueur, making it impossible to think straight.

A couple of hours later, Akaashi awakes by quiet whispers coming from somewhere beneath his feet, from the blanket fort.

"A month ago, I had the both of them, bro." Bokuto says, voice thick with alcohol and pain. "And because of my selfish ways, I lost them. How fucking stupid am I?"

"Come on, bro, don't be like that. You know Akaashi loves you. We all heard him say so on the train."

"Yeah, I know. But it's what he didn't say that matters."

"What's that?" Kuroo asks.

"He's not in love with me. He... I know he doesn't want to be with me."

"You don't know that."

"I do. I don't blame him, though, after everything I put him through."

"Maybe." Kuroo sighs. "Well, I never even stood chance, bro, so don't beat yourself up about it. We're in the same boat, you and I."

"Bro, you don't get it. We... we did stuff and now that we're not anymore, it's like so shit, because I got used to it, you know?"

"I know. And believe me, I do get it. I get it, bro."

Akaashi feels a bit guilty for listening in on their private conversation, but his brain is all fuzzy and once again, he falls asleep.
When he wakes up, it's late afternoon. There's no sign of Kuroo, but Bokuto is sitting on the edge of his bed, looking at him.

"Were you watching me sleep?" Akaashi croaks out.

"N-no." Bokuto shakes his head quickly, face red. "I was just - I was just about to wake you up."

"Oh."

It's just before midnight, on the last night of their Christmas break. Akaashi'd left the window wide open, with Bokuto and him looking at the sky above, shining brightly with stars, the chilly air making their breaths come out smokey.

There's a quiet knock on the door and Akaashi's father asks if he could come in.

Bokuto and Akaashi both wipe the tears away from their eyes and lie down, tucking their legs to make some room for Akaashi's dad, who sits on the edge of the bed.

"It's a lovely night."

Akaashi knows his father's writing process, his muse, as he calls it, requires alcohol, and he can tell he'd been drinking, but not much. His voice is clear, his eyes tired, but bright, his breath carrying just the faintest smell of whiskey.

"Akaashi-san, would you like me to give you some alone time?" Bokuto asks, but Akaashi's father shakes his head.

"No, stay."

The three of them stay silent for a while, breathing the night air, relishing the silence and calmness.

"I know this sounds hard to believe, but grief doesn't last forever." He says softly. "Once you stop fighting it and accept it, as a part of you, it's not such a bad thing. It's all part of the growing up process. It'll still hurt, it'll still tear you apart, but in a different way. An intimate way. It's yours, and it belongs to you. The pain of grief..." He licks his lips. "it doesn't last forever. It doesn't. It can't. Because it hurts too much. You can't live with that much pain, not for ever. Your bodies and minds can't take it. They both know that if you don't get over it, it'll kill you. So they both make you get over it." He presses his lips into a small, sad smile. "Getting over it doesn't mean you forget it. It doesn't mean you're betraying your feelings. It just means that the pain you're feeling is reduced to a tolerable level, a level that doesn't destroy you. I know that right now the idea of getting over it is unimaginable, unthinkable. I was a teenager a very long time ago, but I haven't forgotten what it's like. Right now, you don't want kind words, you don't care what other people think or say, you don't want to know how people in your position have felt, when they'd lost someone. Because they are not you, and they can't feel what you feel. No one but you know the pain inside your chest, the emptiness there. But take it from someone older than you. It's no lie that time heals all wounds. Maybe not completely, but enough for it to be bearable. Enough for you to be able to get on with your lives and move on. And that's okay." Akaashi's father pats both their feet, gets up and turns the lights off. "Goodnight, kids."

"Night, Dad."

"Thank you, Sir. And good night."

Bokuto and Akaashi turn on their sides, facing each other and at the same time they reach out for each other's hands. They stay silent for a while, and after a couple of minutes, Bokuto gives Akaashi a detailed play by play of how his break up with Ayame'd gone. He'd told her it was
inevitable, and she hadn't really seen it coming, and Bokuto cries, saying he'd felt like shit that he'd made her cry. But she'd nodded her head and let him go, and even though Bokuto doesn't comment on it, Akaashi assumes that in itself must've hurt him.

Ayame'd asked Bokuto if there was someone else, to which he'd replied than no, there wasn't. Not because he'd wanted to hide his feelings for Akaashi, but because he hadn't wanted to add more salt to her fresh wound. He'd told her he'd wanted to better his grades and concentrate on his volleyball.

"Akaashi, I can't even begin to tell you how sorry I am for everything."

"Bokuto-san, you don't have to tell me, I know. I'm sorry too."

"Akaashi, I know I'm not the brightest bulb in the box, which might be why I've been so stupid and blind and I totally fucked things up between us and-"

"Bokuto-san, don't cry." Akaashi whispers, squeezing Bokuto's fingers gently. "And please don't take the entire blame, because I'm guilty too."

"No, you're not. You shouldn't be." Bokuto chokes out. "I'm sorry it took me so long to realize I'm in love with you, Akaashi. I know that we're friends, but it's just how I feel. And I really hope I'm not too late, because I wanna be with you."

After their last sexual encounter together, Akaashi'd promised himself to not cave in, to not be weak, because he'd been in pain long enough. And sure, he's a self preservist, but, shit, he's not immune. Especially of all to Bokuto.

"Bokuto-san, I appreciate your honesty. Which is why I'm going to be honest with you too. Everything between us happened so quickly, that I would much rather slow things down."

"Akaashi, whatever you want."

They fall asleep like this, facing each other and holding hands, protecting each other from the demons in the dark.

The next day, after a quick stop at Bokuto's house to pack up his stuff, they are back at Fukurodani. Since it's the Sunday right after the holidays, there's no Study Hall, but Quiet Time, during which they can unpack, talk to each other, anything as long as it's not too loud.

Bokuto'd brought the entire volleyball team presents from the States, and once Konoha, Sarukui and Yukie come into their room, he starts handing them out.

"Duuuuude!" Konoha hoots happily and slaps his brand new Yankees baseball cap on his head. "Thanks, I love it."

Yukie gasps happily as she unwraps her gift and puts it on.

"Well? What do you guys think?"

"You got her a fucking blanket as a present?" Konoha laughs.

"It's a poncho!" She corrects.

"So, a blanket." Sarukui grins.

"Whatever." She pokes her tongue out and hugs Bokuto. "Thank you, it's wonderful."
"I have something else for you." Bokuto says and takes a t-shirt out of his suitcase. "Here, take it."

Akaashi'd been there, in Oikawa's room, when Iwaizumi'd given both Bokuto and Kuroo one of his t-shirts, so he knows it had belonged to Oikawa.

Yukie blinks in confusion, but presses the fabric against her face and realizes what it is.

"It... it still smells like him." She chokes out. "Bokuto, are you sure?"

"Yes." Bokuto nods. "It's yours."

"It's the best gift ever. Thank you." She presses a tearful kiss against Bokuto's cheek.

The five of them spend the rest of their Quiet Time making small talk about their break, and after the bell rings, Akaashi heads in the bathroom for a shower. When he comes out, he sees a plastic bag with a purple bow stuck on its side right on top of his bed.

"Is that for me?" Akaashi asks, pointing at it.

"Yes! I hope you like it." Bokuto nods eagerly and stands right next to Akaashi as he opens up his present.

"Owl patterned pyjamas." Akaashi chuckles. "It's great. Thank you, Bokuto-san."

"I knew you would like it." Bokuto grins.

Akaashi immediately changes into it and Bokuto claps his hands.

"Hey hey hey! I got your size right!"

"You did." He licks his lips. "I actually got you something too."

"Akaashi! You shouldn't have. But since you did, come on, give it to me!"

Akaashi rolls his eyes at Bokuto's impatience, takes a small neatly wrapped up package out of his cupboard drawer and hands it to him.

Bokuto tears at the paper and when he sees the yellow and black scarf with the badger crest in the middle of it, he dramatically places his hand over his heart.

"Akaashi! You got me the Hufflepuff scarf!"

"You told me that's your house, so-" Akaashi begins, but Bokuto's hand wraps him into a tight hug, nearly crushing his windpipe. "Bokuto-san-I-can't-breathe-!"

"Sorry!" Bokuto lets go all at once, grinning. "Akaashi, thank you so much! I love it! I'm so happy right now, I could ki-" He clears his throat, looking away. "I could give you another hug."

Rob comes by, wishes them good night and turns the main lights off.

Akaashi's already in bed, but Bokuto isn't. Instead, he is pacing their floor.

"Bokuto-san, what's wrong?"

"Nothing."

Akaashi sighs. "Then what's bothe-"
"Akaashi, I know you're the one calling the shots, but could I maybe sleep in your bed?" Bokuto asks. Then he quickly adds. "Just for tonight, I promise I won't bother you again."

"Okay."

Monday morning is a new year, a new beginning. A fresh leaf in one of the pages of life.

Just like Kuroo'd said, Bokuto and Akaashi hadn't gotten caught together, cheating. But Fukurodani's a huge, boarding school, and if anyone'd found out about the two of them, Bokuto and Akaashi would've become pariahs, at least until the next biggest gossip broke out on campus.

Their dirty little secret could've blown up in their faces, breaking Ayame's heart, especially, into a million pieces. It doesn't, but it could have.

The pain from losing Oikawa doesn't disappear - not by a long shot.

Classes aren't a nightmare, but a miracle in disguise, because they keep them all busy, making it easier not to think about anything other than school work.

Since Bokuto's grades had dropped and he'd gotten stuck in detention after classes and room restriction on weekends, the entire team's practice moves up to 5:30 am. Because with their upcoming qualifying matches for the Spring High, they can't dick around, especially without their ace.

Tutoring sessions are a bit awkward at first, because Ayame's there too, in Dining Room A, but Bokuto sticks to Akaashi like glue, and Akaashi does his best to help Bokuto out with his studies.

And even though Akaashi skips the first half of their Study Hall, practicing serves and setting in the middle court alone, once he's back in their room, he might be tired as Hell, but he checks Bokuto's homework, as well as doing his own, encouraging Bokuto to ask all of his teachers for extra work, anything he can do to raise his grades.

Since the second years have a Math test on Wednesday, after Yukie, Konoha and Sarukui thank Akaashi for his help, Bokuto throws his notebook against their door.

"Akaashi, I give up! I can't do it, okay?" He cries out. "I guess I'm just stupid!"

Akaashi shakes his head and after placing Bokuto's desk lamp on the floor, he turns off the main lights and makes a motion with his hand for Bokuto to sit down next to him, on the edge of his bed.

Bokuto looks beaten, exhausted and tired, but he'd always been there to help Akaashi improve on the court, and Akaashi'd be damned before he lets Bokuto fail his Math test.

He doesn't care how long it takes into the night, he's going to help him.

As a tutor, as well as Bokuto's roommate, best friend - whatever the two of them are - Akaashi knows the exact words he needs to use to motivate Bokuto.

"Bokuto-san, listen to me." He says, taking one of Bokuto's hands into his own, squeezing it gently. "I've tutored a lot of students, you know that, don't you?" Bokuto nods. "Not everyone can display their knowledge during testing, because everyone's different. But, Bokuto-san, you're special. You might not even realize it, but so many things come easy to you. You're a leader, and you show it not just as our Captain, but also during school presentations. Not everyone is as good of a public speaker as you are, but you have a natural born talent for it. So if you give up on something, like Math, just because it's difficult, you're gonna miss out on a lot that's valuable. As
my volleyball Captain, you know better than I do that there's no better feeling than defeating a rival, which seems unbeatable. Think of Math like it's a volleyball victory, conquering a very hard hill up."

"Akaashi, what if- what if I work as hard as I can and don't reach the top?"

Akaashi smiles softly. "Then I'll be proud of you, Bokuto-san, for working as hard as you can."

"Nobody in my life, not once, has ever said those words to me." Bokuto chokes out, making Akaashi's chest fill with a painful, weighty lump, one he can't swallow down. "Akaashi, thank you. Thank you for saying you're proud of me and believing in me."

Neither of them get a wink of sleep that night, because by the time Bokuto is finally able to solve the problems Akaashi makes up for him, it's time for volleyball practice. Since Bokuto and Akaashi are back to their usual selves on the court, as well as thanks to their rigorous volleyball training, they easily win their next volleyball game, earning Fukurodani a place for the quarterfinals.

On Friday afternoon, just before the bell rings, Mori-sensei tells them they're going to be joined in the next few days by the Theater and Drama class, posing as their models they have to draw. In a flash, Bokuto takes his place right next to Akaashi, on his right side, closer to Sarukui, because on his left is Ayame and luckily Mori-sensei lets them pair up as they wish.

Akaashi had drawn Bokuto, mostly sketching him, many times before, but now that he has the real deal in front of him, knowing Bokuto's fidgety nature, he make sure he is comfortably seated and prepared to stay still, unmoving.

Mori-sensei walks around the classroom, snapping photos of their drawing process, telling them there's going to be an art exhibition of their work, which motivates Akaashi even further, to make his Bokuto drawing into an actual portrait, like a photograph.

Ever since he'd given Bokuto his Christmas present, Bokuto'd been wearing the Hufflepuff scarf over his school uniform non stop. Akaashi thinks it'll look great in his drawing, because it would make Bokuto's golden eyes stand out even more.

And his eyes aren't the only thing that stand out. Bokuto also has a soft bump at the bridge of his nose, which adds, but at the same time doesn't subtract the uniqueness of his features. Then there's rows of dark silver and black eyelashes, thick, settling against his cheeks, blinking.

Biased or not, Bokuto Koutarou is the most exquisitely beautiful thing Akaashi's ever had the pleasure of drawing on canvas.

Akaashi stares at Bokuto, inappropriately long, before he gets back to drawing. And it's so very hard to capture it all on paper, the emanating light, the life, from his face.

After AP History on Monday morning, when Akaashi and Ayame make their way to their next class, Bokuto approaches them and lifts Akaashi's feet off the ground, twirling him around in the school hallway.

"Akaashi, I got an A+ on my Math test!" He declares, laughing. "And it's all, because of you!"

And when Bokuto puts him down, Akaashi can see that Bokuto is staring not at his eyes, but his lips, maybe wishing to kiss them. But that's not in the cards, so Akaashi takes a step back, putting some distance between them.

"Bokuto-san, I'm really proud of you." Akaashi smiles.
During Japanese, Ayame passes him a note.

"I heard about Oikawa-senpai's death. But he seems to be doing alright. You too."

He quickly scribbles down a reply.

"Yes. As alright as possible."

She reads it and begins to write something again, but halfway through she bursts into tears and asks their teacher to please excuse her, but she needs to go to the bathroom. She doesn't return even after the bell rings, so Akaashi takes her things and carries them to Physics.

Ayame takes her seat just as their teacher is taking attendance and quietly thanks Akaashi.

Another note appears in front of him.

"It's not just me that misses him. Hana keeps asking where is Big Brother and doesn't understand why he doesn't visit our house over the weekend anymore. I tried explaining, but how can I explain our breakup to my five year old sister when I don't understand it myself?"

Akaashi swallows hard. He doesn't bother writing down a reply, since he doesn't have one. He crumples the note in his hand and nods sadly, as if to say I feel your pain.

But he feels guilty to the core.

Things between Bokuto and him are at a standstill, currently, but Akaashi wonders if Ayame remembers their conversation in the aisle of sweets, if she would ever make the connection, that he'd been the one helping Bokuto cheat. Because to him, it feels like he has a bright, scarlet red "A" tattooed over his chest, visible for all to see.

After classes, Yukie gets the entire volleyball team together in the gym.

"We're halfway through January, so I really wanna get our calendars done before the end of the month." She grins. "I already have some photos, but since we're such a big team this year, you won't be posing for each month alone. So instead of wasting our time with complaints, just follow my instructions and pose for the camera. Okay? Okay."

Akaashi thinks it's pretty far from okay, because for one of the months Yukie asks them all to strip down into their underwear and gives them different kind of props - some have swimming goggles, snorkels, swim paddles. Akaashi gets a swim ring and tries to cover his nearly naked body with it. But their manager is absolutely displeased, so she goes around, rearranging them all.

For the next photo, she hands them all different kinds of loose summer dresses, telling them all to be careful not to tear them, because they are her own. Akaashi gets a yellow one, with a butterfly print, and after a quiet sigh, puts it on. Then Yukie takes out a makeup kit and starts putting it over each and every one of their faces.

"I don't understand why we have to do this." Washio grunts as she puts a dark purple lipstick on his lips.

"Oh my God, Washio, you look like Lurch from the Addams family!" Komi snickers.

"This is for October, as our Halloween photo." Yukie explains. "I'm going to draw me a mustache and a black tooth, so we all look funny."

"But why?" Sarukui asks. "Why can't you just use a photo from our Halloween party? We looked
like a team, with our policeman uniforms."

"No." She grins. "This way everyone will see what a fun team we are and that we aren't afraid to show our silly side. So next year we'll have so many new students lining up for volleyball tryouts."

"No, no one would want to join us after seeing us like this." Konoha shakes his head. "We look like fucking Thriller video rejects!"

"Oh my God, you're a genius!" Yukie exclaims happily and he blinks, then puts his chest forward, looking incredibly pleased with himself. "Let's all act like we're straight out of Michael Jackson's video!"

Yukie's roommate, who is their photographer, snaps a couple of photos of them and they all circle her around the camera to see the result.

"Why didn't anyone tell me I have lipstick all over my front teeth?" Konoha grunts. "You guys are all shady fucking bitches."

"No, it's perfect!" Yukie cackles and kisses Konoha's cheek. "Thank you, Konoha, you were amazing."

"Oh, well, if you insist." He shrugs modestly.

During Studio Art on Thursday afternoon, the entire class is almost done with their drawings and Akaashi feels physically repulsed at the notion that he'll no longer have a free pass to stare at Bokuto. Which is ridiculous, because they live together and he can stare at Bokuto as long as he likes. But it feels different to Akaashi, because as long as it's school related, it's totally okay. And he doesn't want to give Bokuto any ideas that he wants to take a step forward.

If he wants to, he would say so. But he doesn't feel ready, not yet.

They'd already had volleyball practice before classes, so after detention Akashi heads towards the weightlifting room alone. Instead of using the punching bag, or all the other machinery there, he takes the jump rope, using it, until he hears the dinner bell.

After filling his tray with pizza, salad and a slice of chocolate tart, Akaashi joins Konoha and Sarukui at the volleyball table.

"Akaashi, you still practice on your own?" Sarukui asks.

"Yes." Akaashi nods. "But not for setting or serving, I want to improve my power."

"Maybe you should just ask Bokuto to give you his work out regime." Konoha mumbles, mouthful of food. "I hate to say it, but he's got the best abs out of us all."

"I don't care about abs, Konoha-san, I just want to improve my stamina and power."

After dinner, he heads upstairs and sees Bokuto only clad in his Calvin Klein's, his feet wrapped around the wooden bars of his top bed, doing something that resembles sit ups, but not exactly, because his entire body is in the air. Either way, it looks difficult as Hell.

"Hey, Akaashi!" He pants out.

Bokuto's chest, abs, thighs, his entire body is glistening with sweat.
Akaashi swallows hard, trying not to think how this is the hottest thing he's ever seen with his eyes and heads directly for the bathroom, where he can take a much needed cold shower.

Yeah. So much for not caring about abs. Right.

During AP Calculus on Friday, Akaashi has a very detailed daydream of jerking Bokuto off all over his face.

What the fuck.

It's the 23rd of January, which means it's Komi's 18th birthday. The day students of Fukurodani's volleyball team have all gathered at the Irish Pub, while Konoha, Sarukui, Bokuto, Akaashi and Kuroo wait until it's lights out, so they can sneak out of their window.

Once they're all there, after wishing Komi a happy birthday, Bokuto and Kuroo exchange glances and Kuroo disappears, while Bokuto pulls a chair and asks Komi to sit in it, away from the table.

"What's going on?" Konoha asks curiously.

Akaashi scowls. "I think - I could be wrong, but I don't think so - Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san got Komi-san a stripper."

"Akaashi! How did you know?" Bokuto gasps. "We were so careful not to give away the surprise!"

"I guess I know you and Kuroo-san well enough." Akaashi replies.

"You guys got me a stripper?" Komi asks happily. "Holy shit, this is the best birthday ever!"

"Komiyan, my man, you only turn 18 once." Bokuto grins. "Bro, come on, we're ready!"

Just then, Kuroo wheels in a cart with a massive fake birthday cake and sets it right in front of Komi.

"Happy Birthday, owl dude!" Kuroo says and takes a seat right next to Akaashi.

The second that Komi blows the single candle, the Fukurodani volleyball team start clapping and cheering. However, it's a man that pops out of the cake, taking off the top. It's a male stripper. Bokuto and Kuroo exchange apologetic glances, but it's too late.

When Michael Bublé's version of "Feeling Good" booms through the entire Irish Pub, everyone is quiet, and the male stripper takes his place right in front of Komi's chair. He puts on his sunglasses over Komi's eyes and takes Komi's hands, dragging them over his naked chest, placing them on his hips as he sways them in rhythm with the music. Konoha is cackling the loudest, while Sarukui films the entire thing on his phone. The horrified look on Komi's face makes Akaashi smile, but the stripper doesn't pay attention and continues dancing in front of him. He begins to tease Komi by slowly unbuttoning each side of his trousers, leading Komi's fingers over him, touching every bit of naked skin he's showing, going over his bare chest over and over, then twisting and making Komi's hands grab his ass. He makes his pecks dance right in front of Komi's face, and he pushes Komi further into his chair as he does body rolls. There's a loud ripping noise and all of a sudden the stripper is completely naked, except for the bow around his neck and the g string over his private parts. Despite the fact the song ends and a new one begins, the stripper continues with his body rolls, shaking his junk right in front of Komi's face and Konoha gets up, eyes full of tears of laughter and puts some money into his g string, clapping and asking for more. The stripper complies and dances for two more songs, making Komi as uncomfortable as Akaashi's ever seen his teammate to be. And when the stripper wishes him a happy birthday,
thanks them all and leaves, the entire Fukurodani volleyball team is on the floor laughing.

"I just turned 18 and I already hate my life." Komi sighs. "I take it back. Worst birthday ever."

"Bro, didn't we specify we wanted a chick?" Bokuto asks Kuroo.

"I don't know, bro, you're the one that called." Kuroo shrugs. "My responsibility was calling the bar manager and asking if it'll be okay to have a stripper."

"Oh. Well, shit." Bokuto scratches his forehead. "Komiyan, my bad, man, I screwed up. Let's just all drink and forget the whole thing happened."

They all get piss drunk and since Konoha, Sarukui, Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi are too drunk to barely walk, climbing the rope up to their rooms is out of the question, so they end up in the gym's storage room, each one taking a mat and falling asleep right there and then.

It's nearly morning, time for the lake walk activity and Akaashi has enough sense to call Yukie. She joins them in the gym and takes Akaashi's key to their room, making sure the rope hanging out of their window is pulled up and hidden. Akaashi doesn't know if she returns or not, but he doesn't care, he closes his eyes and lets sleep take over, despite the fact everything around is spinning.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Almsy, thank you for the brainstorming session ♥

"Get up! Get up, all of you!" Yukie's voice booms somewhere from above and as if that's not painful enough, she claps her hands loudly. "You're stinking up the entire gym of alcohol. What the Hell, you're all a hot mess."

"Are you calling us hot?" Konoha croaks out.

"Absolutely not." She replies. "I can see that we won't have volleyball practice today, but get up and go into the kitchen before you miss lunch. By the way, Saru, Komi called me three times already to say how much he hates you."

"Me?" Sarukui blinks. "Why me? He should hate Bokuto and Kuroo."

"Nope, for once I'm totally innocent." Kuroo smirks. "Bokuto's to blame entirely."

"Hey!" Bokuto complains. "That's not cool, bro!"

"Why does Komi hate me?" Sarukui repeats.

"Because you're the one that uploaded the video of him and the stripper on our Facebook volleyball page."

"What? No, I swear to God, I did no such thing! I mean I filmed it, but-"

Konoha bursts in laughter. "It might've been me."

"On the bright side, at least it's on our volleyball page and only our team can see it." Akaashi says.

Yukie shakes her head. "Washio shared it on his wall as payback for Komi calling him Lurch. I lost track of the comments and shares an hour or so ago, but it's safe to assume everyone and their grandmothers not just from Fukurodani have seen it already."

"Komiyan's gonna kill us all." Sarukui sighs.

"No, he won't, because I have a plan." Yukie winks. "The Spring High tournament is close and you already know we are hosts for Jamboree, as well as training camp over Easter break, so I've decided for us to have our boy auction on the weekend before Valentine's Day."
"Yukie, no." Konoha gasps. "You can't."

"Oh, believe me, I can and I will. Everyone will be coughing up a whole lot more money to get dates with you guys before the 14th of February. And I already promised Komi that I will sell you-" She points at Konoha and smiles sweetly -" and Washio to dudes."

"Oh hoo!" Bokuto grins.

"Oh ho hoooo!" Kuroo cackles.

Actually everyone laughs, except for Konoha, who looks absolutely miserable.

After lunch, Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi head upstairs to their room. Akaashi gets directly into his bed, while Bokuto goes for a shower.

"Angel Eyes, I'm off." Kuroo says, backpack slung over his shoulder. "I promised Kenma we'll have a gaming tournament. I'd invite you too, but it's just me and him time, you know."

"Have fun, Kuroo-san."

Bokuto's showers always take a long time, so Akaashi decides to nap first. He's too lazy to get up, so he unbuttons his jeans and shirt and lays them down on the floor next to his bed.

Bokuto'd been right - sleeping in your boxers only is great, the cold feel of the sheets and blanket against his body.

The bathroom door opens and as Bokuto steps out, he fills the entire room with the scent of freshness, coconut and his Bokuto smell. After a couple of minutes, Bokuto asks.

"Akaashi, how do I look?"

Akaashi blinks open and sees Bokuto dressed up in a suit.

"Where are you going?"

"My parents are back from Europe, so I'm off to meet them." Bokuto sighs. "Damn. I really overdid it with the alcohol last night. Do I look as drunk as I still feel?"

"Um." Akaashi licks his lips. "Perhaps a pair of sunglasses would help."

"So that's a yes." Bokuto chuckles. "I'll see you later."

"You're not spending the night back home?"

"Not if I can help it."

"Okay. See you later, Bokuto-san."

Despite the fact he doesn't do anything for the rest of the day, but sleep, when Akaashi wakes up, he still feels tired. A long shower does make him feel a little bit better. Only a little bit, though.

He doesn't remember a time when he'd only have a drink or two without getting too drunk to function. It was probably before he joined Fukurodani. Yeah. Before he became an owl, he definitely had a lot more sense and brain cells.

Akaashi puts on a pair of sweatpants and a t shirt and goes to Konoha and Sarukui's room.
"Hey, Akaashi." Sarukui grins. "I woke up like an hour ago and since we slept through dinner, I came and helped myself to a bag of Doritos from Bokuto's goodie drawer."

"That's why I'm here. Do you wanna order some take out?"

"Yes! But first, look." Sarukui points at Konoha, still asleep in his bed. There's a penis drawn over his forehead and his cheeks spell out "I'm a dick".

Akaashi chuckles softly. "Permanent marker?"

"You bet." Sarukui grins, then pulls Konoha's blanket off. "Wake up, man, we're gonna order food."

"I'm in." Konoha yawns and without knowing any better, the three of them head downstairs, with Sarukui carrying his laptop under his arm.

A couple of students laugh at Konoha and Jared, who's on duty at the front desk sneers at him.

"Good luck taking that off."

As they sit in Dining Room A, Konoha whispers. "What the fuck is he talking about?"

Sarukui and Akaashi shrug innocently and busy themselves with picking a restaurant to order from.

"I love how advanced technology is." Sarukui grins. "With just a click of the button you can have food delivered without having to talk over the phone."

"Me too." Akaashi nods. "I'd rather starve than call."

They settle for Mexican and as they wait for their dinner to arrive, the Dining Room fills with students for the smores activity. Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi ask if they could join, but Masha tells them they cannot, as they have not signed up. The three of them decide to move away from the delicious smell wafting through the air and move to Dining Room B, to their volleyball table.

A first year from Akaashi's class, a girl who's name he doesn't know, but he remembers tutoring, drops by and brings him a napkin with a smore.

"Is this for me?" She nods. "Thank you very much." He smiles.

"You better share that." Konoha says.

"Konoha-san, how exactly can I share a smore?"

"You take a bite, then you pass it on to Saru and I, that's how." Konoha replies.

Sighing, Akaashi takes a small bite. Then he passes it to Sarukui, who puts the entire thing in his mouth.

"You asshole!" Konoha grunts. "What the fuck, man?!!"

Sarukui shrugs, while chewing. "Oops."

"This is payback for the video, isn't it?" Konoha scowls.

Sarukui grins. "Something like that."
They hear the front door opening, followed by a lot of girl voices and click clacking of heels.

"Yukie’s back!" Konoha grins.

"How could you tell?" Sarukui asks.

"By the smell of her perfume, duuh. Can’t you recognize it?"

Akaashi and Sarukui shake their heads and exchange glances. Konoha's right, though, because after a couple of minutes, their manager joins them with her roommate.

"Hey, guys." She greets them and then laughs. "Konoha, nice face."

"Thanks, Yukie, you too." Konoha smirks.

Yukie laughs, while her roommate takes a small mirror out of her purse and hands it to Konoha.

"What is this for?" He asks confusedly.

"Just take a look." She replies.

"I don’t- You fucking assholes!" He yells, while Sarukui, Akaashi and Yukie laugh. "Yukie, you better sell Saru to a really sleazy guy at the auction!"

"I don’t think so." Yukie grins.

Konoha gasps, appalled. "This is absolute injustice."

"Anyway." Yukie ignores him. "What are you guys up to?"

"We just ordered some food." Sarukui replies.

"Mmm food. Nice." Yukie says and pulls up the chair on which Bokuto sits.

"Yukie, we just had dinner." Her roommate rolls her eyes. "Whatever, I'm going upstairs."

"What do you guys say we play a friendly game of Monopoly?" Yukie suggests.

"Yukie, there's nothing friendly about that game. Monopoly ruins friendships." Sarukui says.

"I could play some board games." Akaashi replies, while Yukie goes to the front desk to get the game.

"Akaashi, you weren't present, but I'm still having war flashbacks from the last time we played Uno as a team." Sarukui rubs his forehead. "Konoha's an absolute sore loser."

"Fuck you, bitch, I hate you the most!" Konoha replies.

"Aaaand as you can see, this is exactly why none of us like playing with him." Sarukui explains.

"I’ll only play if Yukie or Akaashi are the bank." Konoha says. "Saru's a cheating fucker."

Sarukui snorts. "That's really rich coming from you."

Their dinner arrives and as the play, Yukie, who is the bank, starts taking food from all three of them.
"Akaashi, I'm going to eat your chocolate chimichanga instead of jailing you, okay?" Yukie asks.

"Okay." He replies.

Konoha slams his fist against the table. "Dammit, Yukie, what kind of a bank are you?"

"The corrupt kind." She grins.

"You should've ordered dessert too, man." Sarukui laughs.

After a couple of minutes, Yukie declares that Konoha's out of the game, because he's bankrupt.

"Fuck!" He spits angrily. "I fucking hate this game."

They're just about to play another game, when Akaashi feels his phone buzz. He quickly fishes his phone out of his pocket and sees a text message from Iwaizumi.

"Akaashi, you sleeping?"

"Not at all." He quickly types out.

Iwaizumi calls and Akaashi replies on the first ring.

"Iwaizumi-san!" Konoha, Sarukui and Yukie go silent. "How are you?"

"I'm alright, you?"

"Good, thank you." Akaashi walks out of the Dining Room, finding some privacy in the boy's bathroom.

"Is Bokuto with you?" Iwaizumi asks.

"No, he's with his parents. Do you need me to pass on a message?"

"Could you maybe text me his phone number?"

"Of course."

"Thanks. You probably know why I'm calling?"

"No."

"Oh. I might as well tell you and thank you, even though I'm going to thank him on behalf of not just my volleyball team and our coaches, but the entire Aoba Jousai school." Iwaizumi says. "Yesterday during practice a reporter from Tokyo visited us. We already gave an interview saying we're dropping out of the tournament. Our school slogan's "Rulers of the court" and since our King isn't with us anymore, we mutually decided not to play for Nationals, not without Oikawa."

Iwaizumi sniffs. "Well, you'll read about it in Volleyball Monthly at the end of January."

"I see." Akaashi swallows hard. "But what does that have to do with Bokuto-san?"

"Since he's top five aces in the country, he was supposed to give a big interview, but he refused and asked the reporter to use his two page spread for Oikawa's memory." Iwaizumi takes a deep breath. "That's why I called to say thank you."

"I understand." Akaashi whispers, chest burning with pride.
"Yeah. So it'll be okay for me to give him a call tomorrow?"

"Yes, Iwaizumi-san. I'll text you his phone number immediately."

"Thanks, Akaashi. And congratulations for qualifying. I wish you guys good luck, because I'm sure you'll go to Nationals. So from my entire school, thank you and see you then. We'll be in the stands, cheering for you owls."

"Thank you. We really appreciate the support." Akaashi replies and hangs up.

He splashes some cold water against his face and takes a couple of moments to compose the bubbling emotions. When he walks out of the bathroom, he nearly steps on Konoha, Sarukui and Yukie, who are sitting in a semi circle on the ground.

"What are you guys doing here?" He asks.

"Waiting for you." Yukie replies. "What happened?"

Akaashi joins them on the floor, takes a deep breath and tells them about his conversation with Iwaizumi.

"Oh my God!" Yukie chokes out, wiping the tears away from her eyes. "I love him. I love Bokuto."

"Same." Sarukui nods.

"He's a goofball, but he's the best Captain in the world." Konoha replies.

Akaashi silently agrees with them. Bokuto really is amazing.

"Akaashi, do you know when he's coming back?" Yukie asks.

"He told me he'll try to come back tonight."

Sarukui glances at his watch. "Let's go wait for him at the front desk."

Jared is incredibly displeased that all four of them keep pacing in front of him, but he can't say jack shit, because there's plenty of time until curfew.

Just before their RC locks up the front door, at 11:32 pm, Bokuto returns and Yukie, Sarukui, Konoha and Akaashi all throw themselves at him, pulling him into a group hug.

"Oh." He blinks. "Hey, guys. Is everything alright?"

"Bokuto, we all love you." Yukie says, kisses each of his cheeks and goes on her tiptoes to place one on his forehead. "You're the best, you know that?"

"I don't know what's going on, but you're right, I am the best!" Bokuto grins happily. "Hey hey heyyyyy!"

"Quiet down!" Jared scowls. "Now go to your rooms before I write you all down for detention on Monday. Especially you, Bokuto. You have room restriction!"

"I was with my parents!" Bokuto replies.

"I know, but you're not anymore."
The four of them head upstairs, muttering quiet swear words at Jared. Yukie pulls Bokuto into a hug and since she asks to have a few words in private with him, Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi each go into their rooms.

Akaashi brushes his teeth, gets into bed and to give himself something to do, he refreshes his email a couple of times. Since his inbox remains empty, he leaves his phone next to his pillow and starts playing with his fingers. A couple of minutes later, he hears Jared’s voice in the corridor and he ushers Bokuto into their room, switching off the main lights.

"Bokuto-san?" Akaashi asks in the dark. "You can turn on one of our desk lamps."

Bokuto does. Akaashi can see his roommates smiling facade crumbling in an instant, and he silently pats the edge of his bed. Bokuto nods and sits.

"How did your meeting with your parents go?" He asks.

"My relationship with my parents is a fucking joke!" Bokuto laughs humorlessly, his quiet voice laced with pain. "I could set myself on fire and all they'd say is that I should've used a better lighter or how I should be burning brighter, if only I tried harder, but no, I just don't try hard enough."

"What happened?"

"Before we left for the States I told my parents I broke up with Ayame. Then I came back to Japan, while they went on this cruise through Europe."

Akaashi nods silently.

"There's this Sadie Hawkins dance in March, I don't know if you've heard of it?" Akaashi shakes his head. "It's just, it's not even important. Not to me or anything, but my mom keeps making it out to be some bigshit monumental thing and I'd actually rather not go. But I have to, because I'd promised her that I'd be there." He takes a deep breath. "Today she asked me what color dress I think Ayame will wear, so she can get me a matching tie. A matching fucking tie! For me. Can you believe this shit?"

Akaashi licks his lips. "I'm sorry, Bokuto-san."

He doesn't what else to say. What is he supposed to say?

Bokuto stares at Akaashi silently, long and hard. He can feel his tear glands trying to work overtime, those traitorous things, his pulse hammering out a sick, frantic throb, and he forces himself to not blink, stay dry, just don't fuckin' cry, you got this.

He wants to do this right.

"Akaashi, I know it's a month and something from now and I would understand if- if you say no, but-"

Akaashi can see where this is going and decides to make things easier on Bokuto.

"Okay."

"Eh?" Bokuto blinks.

"You're asking me to accompany you to the dance, right?"
"Yes."

"Then I accept."

"You... you accept? To come with me?"

"Yes, Bokuto-san, I do."

"Akaashi, are you agreeing to come with me just because you feel sorry for me? Or- or" Bokuto stutters, face crimson, unable to look Akaashi straight in the eye, staring at the floor as if it has a story more important to tell. "Or are you agreeing to come as my date?"

"I'm not sure you should call it that in front of your parents and everyone else, because people will talk."

"But... but between you and I, it's - it's a date?"

"Sure."

The 7th of February is a Friday, the day that all the boys from the Fukurodani volleyball team have been dreading more than anything, but it comes. It's boy action time and like it or not, by the end of the night, they will all have dates for Saturday.

Yukie'd been spreading flyers all around the school - outside of it too - for a few weeks now and the air is buzzing with excitement, girls nudging each other in the hallways whenever a volleyball player passes by, giggling and whispering not so quiet secrets.

Akaashi exchanges his usual scowl for an exhausting friendly smile, and during their shorts breaks between classes, he has to explain to a throng of different girls that no, he doesn't know how much he costs, because it's an auction, and they will have to bid money to get a date with him, or either one of his teammates.

Does he like the idea of being sold? Absolutely not. But considering all of Yukie's hard work, plus the fact it's all for them, for the volleyball team, he doesn't complain, not once.

During lunch time, nobody at their table looks more miserable and pathetic than Konoha.

"Come on, man, stop looking like a sour grape and eat your food." Komi says, chewing on his burger.

"Easy for you to say, Yukie wouldn't sell you off to a dude." Konoha sighs, all the pain and sadness in the world written over his face. "She's gonna do it, you know. Sell me to a dude. Again. She said so."

"Take it as a lesson." Sarukui grins. "Next year, don't upload any embarrassing videos of one of us and Yukie will have mercy on you."

"Screw you, Saru, you're the worst best friend ever." Konoha spits venomously, which makes Bokuto roar in laughter. "Why do you look so happy, it's not like you'll get to have a date with Akaashi."

Bokuto chokes and a chewed up piece of his lunch flies off across the table, landing on Sarukui's cheek, who flicks it away in disgust.

After classes, they all go into the gym, despite Bokuto's room restriction, with Yukie giving them instructions how to behave on their dates.
"Second years, you already know how this goes," She says. "But I will explain it for the first years. You all have to dress up real nice for tonight, as well as for tomorrow night. I'm gonna sell each of you to the highest bidders, I don't care - and neither should you - if that's boy or girl, if you know each other, if you like each other and are friends or not. This close to Valentine's Day, people will be coughing up more money than usual and you better be on your best behavior. You got that?" They all nod quickly. "Konoha, that means you too."

"Yeah, yeah, I got it." Konoha rolls his eyes. "You don't have to call me out like that."

At 7:45 pm, the entire volleyball team is in the school auditorium, all dressed up in suit and ties, with Yukie, in a fancy black dress, preparing them with a last minute rehearsal.

"I will announce you each with your name and volleyball jersey number, so listen closely." She says. "Whenever each of you steps out and do your catwalk, a new song will play. You have to work the stage and the audience during the bidding, so a little dance or something would be nice."

"A dance?" Akaashi scowls. "We're gonna have to dance?"

"You don't actually have to." Sarukui says.

Konoha smirks. "With sultry, bedroom eyes like yours, you don't have to do a damn thing, other than let the people see you."

"Hey!" Bokuto punches his arm. "Why don't you just keep your mouth shut, you fucking hyena?"

"Daaaaaamn, Bokuto, keep your jealousy in check." Konoha sneers, massaging his arm. "Once Yukie starts auctioning Akaashi, what are you gonna do, punch everyone from the audience for wanting a piece of him?"

"Ha - ha, that's not gonna happen." Bokuto pokes his tongue out at him.

Komi snickers. "I can bet my head Bokuto made a deal with Kuroo to get the date with Akaashi."

"I feel it too." Washio nods.

"Same." Sarukui agrees.

"Maybe, but at the same time, like, Bokuto wouldn't be stupid enough to agree to that, because he must've seen the hungry way that damned cat looks at our Vice Captain." Konoha smirks. "Oh, who am I kidding, Bokuto is totally dumb enough to agree to it, suggest it, even."

By 8:30 pm, the auditorium is bursting at the seams, completely packed with students not just from Fukurodani, but lots from out of the school and the bidding begins.

Bokuto, as Captain and ace, gets called first and steps out, while the rest of them stay behind in a line, awaiting their turn. Since Akaashi knows it'll be his turn afterwards, as Vice Captain, he walks up to the curtain separating him from the stage.

There's lots of cheering, yells, and claps and then there's Yukie's booming voice, announcing that "The gentleman with the messy black hair" gets to have a date with Bokuto, and they all know that's Kuroo.

When Akaashi hears his name being called, he takes a few deep breaths and steps out. He tries to keep the same friendly smile from the morning as he walks around the stage, ignoring the hands full of cash being waved in front of his feet, the filthy grins and wolf whistles.
"Akaashi Keiji is a first year, the volleyball team's Vice Captain and a tutor." Yukie says into the microphone. "He enjoys winter, boiled rapeseed plants with karashi mustard dressing and talking about art. Now let the bidding begin!"

A sea of hands appear into the air and Akaashi isn't all that surprised to see Kuroo, nearly jumping out of his seat, announcing the highest amount of money from the rest.

"Do I hear anyone go higher?" Their manager looks around. "You!"

Akaashi's eyes follow Yukie's finger in the direction she's pointing at and his stomach almost drops, because it's Ayame. He walks around the stage, readjusting his blazer and tie, while Kuroo and Ayame start outbidding each other.

In the end, Ayame wins a date with him, with Yukie knocking her gavel and nodding in approval.

"Sold! To the beautiful lady in the bright pink dress over there!"

Akaashi jumps off the stage and walks up to Ayame's table, which is full of people he doesn't know. She smiles at him, then gives him a small nod of her head to the doors. He nods in return and extends his hand out, which she takes and the two of them step out of the auditorium. Since she doesn't stop walking, he follows her all the way towards their school's entrance, Akaashi opening the front door for her.

"Ayame, thank you." He bows his head.

"You're welcome." She waves a big wad of money and puts it in his blazer pocket. "There. That's for you."

"Technically, it's not for me, but for our team." Akaashi smiles. "We all appreciate your generosity."

"Would it be against the rules if I ask for our date to be right now, rather than tomorrow night?" She asks.

"I don't think so. I mean you already paid, so there shouldn't be a problem. I'm absolutely free - no - I'm yours, for the next few hours."

"I don't need that much time."

Akaashi licks his lips. "Do you have any particular place in mind you would like me to take you to or should I -?"

"Home." She replies simply. "Take me home."

"Um. I can assure you that I would accompany you to your home at the end of our date?"

"No. Just take me home now."

"Is that what you want?" Akaashi asks and she nods. "Just so you know, if I take you to a restaurant, you wouldn't have to pay."

"I know."

"So do you want to go to a restaurant or?"

"No."
Akaashi nods. He didn't think he'd be going on a date until tomorrow night, but since it's what Ayame wants, he can't object.

As the two of them wait at the bus stop, Akaashi sees her shivering from the cold, so he takes off his blazer and places it over her shoulders, which she accepts with a small nod.

Akaashi's never been one to mind silences. In fact, he prefers it over mindless small talk. So their short trip back to her house is calm, it feels nice, refreshing, despite the February wind biting at their faces.

"There's lots of stars out tonight." She says quietly, head tilted up at the sky.

"Yeah. There are." Akaashi licks his lips. "Ayame, is everything alright?"

"No, not really." Ayame looks him directly in the eye. "I dated Koutarou, and he meant a whole lot to me, but you knew that, didn't you?" He nods. "You knew that better than anyone else. Koutarou and you must've had a real laugh over me being oblivious." She snorts, shaking her head. "I hope you wouldn't insult my intelligence any further by denying you two were together."

Akaashi doesn't how he has the strength to sustain their eye contact, but he does. And he wants to say something, anything, but he can't find his voice.

"I know figuring out your identity and sexuality is difficult, so no matter what he did, I can't be mad at Koutarou. But you. You knew. You were my friend, so you knew everything. I even confided in you about my ex boyfriend!" He watches as angry tears begin to form at the corners of her eyes. "Akaashi, I don't know what hurts more, you two cheating on me behind my back or you lying to my face about it."

Akaashi doesn't see a point in lying any further, or denying the truth.

"Ayame, I can't even begin to tell you how sorry I am a-"

"No, Akaashi, I don't wanna hear it. You had plenty of time to come clean to me about it and you didn't. You wouldn't have said a damn thing. Now your apologies and excuses mean nothing to me. So, please, save your breath." She wipes the corners of her eyes and hands him back his jacket. "Thank you for our date." She says sarcastically. "I won't say anything about you two to anyone. But just so you know, I am no longer your friend, Akaashi. I'm not your anything. I know we share desks during all our classes together, but come Monday morning, you won't exist to me. Do you understand?"

Akaashi swallows hard. "I understand."

Even though he is shivering, he decides to take the long way back to Fukurodani on foot, with his only company the pieces of sadness, freezing before they can leak out of his eyes, and the cold winter wind all around.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Yes, hello, it's been ages since I updated - rl is real busy, so I apologize. But do not fear, my children, I will not drop this fic, I will finish it (even if chapters are shorter than usual) C:

Akaashi can hear Bokuto and Kuroo’s laughter from the stairs, but when he walks into their room, they both stop talking and look up.

“Akaashi, what happened?”

“Angel Eyes, how did it go?”

Akaashi shrugs and joins them on the floor. Kuroo immediately passes him a beer and Akaashi accepts with a curt nod.

“Did you tell Ayame the date is supposed to be tomorrow night?” Kuroo asks.

“Yeah, I don’t think that’s happening.” Akaashi snorts. He looks at Bokuto’s concerned face and clears his throat. “Bokuto-san, she knows.”

“Wha-How?” Bokuto blinks.

“Does it matter?”

“No.” Bokuto swallows hard. “No, I suppose not.”

“Did she give you Hell?” Kuroo asks.

“It’s not like I didn’t deserve it.” Akaashi replies.

“So I have a question for you guys.” Kuroo says.

“Shoot, bro.”

“Are you two like dating officially, are you fuck buddies, what are you?”

When Bokuto sputters in reply, Kuroo shrugs.

“What, bro, I’m curious. I gotta know, so I can make my own plans, you feel me?”
Since Akaashi remains silent, so does Bokuto. And Kuroo remains clueless, shrugging it off.

Both Bokuto and Kuroo do their best to keep Akaashi entertained with their drunken shenanigans during the weekend, but despite all the alcohol and jokes, there is a bitter taste in the back of his throat.

When classes start on Monday morning, Akaashi could be sitting next to the wall and it would pay more attention to him than Ayame does. He never expected her to be this silent and unforgiving, given her bubbly nature, but then again, after what he’d done, it’s completely understandable.

Akaashi can separate his real life woes from the volleyball court, and practice is great, but he still feels like crap.

Bokuto, whose grades still need raising and is stuck in detention, leaves him in the gym alone after the bell, but halfway through Study Hall, Akaashi is joined by their manager.

“How’s practice going?” Yukie asks, dribbling a volleyball.

“Slower than usual.” He replies. “Do you need help with Math?”

“No.”

Since she remains silent, he continues with his serving practice.

When he stops for a water break and to catch his breath, she finally speaks up.

“Akaashi, I kind of need your help.”

“Oh?” He blinks. “With what?”

“I kind of did something I shouldn’t have done.” Yukie replies, scratching the back of her head. “I know I shouldn’t shit where I eat, but... I kind of did.”

Akaashi’s eyebrows knit together. “What do you mean?”

“You know how I take volleyball very seriously?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I did something very unprofessional.”

“What.”

“I slept with Konoha.” Yukie blurts out. “It was over the winter break and I was feeling really low from the loss of Oikawa and Konoha was there for me and... well you know how things go. We promised each other we wouldn’t say anything, but knowing him, he already told Saru and maybe the entire team, and with Valentine’s Day approaching he keeps asking me out on a date.” She bites her lower lip. “I’m not really sure what to do.”

“So... what do you need from me?” He asks simply. Because he isn’t good with relationship advice – not by a long shot – but if Yukie needs a listener, he is a great one.

“What am I supposed to do?”

Akaashi snorts. “You’re asking me?”

“Yeah.”
“Do you want to go out with Konoha-san?”

“I’m not sure.” She replies slowly. “I don’t know if I want a relationship or not.”

“Let me tell you a little secret. Us guys? Yeah, we don’t do well with subtle clues and hints. You have to be direct with Konoha-san. Just tell him exactly what you want, straight up.” He replies. “Or don’t want.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“What do you think, Akaashi?”

Akaashi shrugs. “I’m not sure what I’m supposed to say. Personally, I believe Konoha-san genuinely likes you. At least that’s the impression he’s left me with whenever you were around and he was talking about you. If you don’t know how you feel, go out on a date with him and see how things go. But try to be honest with him about it, because being lead on sucks.”

“Is that what happened between Bokuto and you?” She asks curiously, almost blurting it out. When Akaashi blinks at her, she becomes embarrassed. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to come off as such a rude and nosy cow. You don’t have to answer me if you don’t want to. But just because we – by we I mean the entire volleyball team – haven’t commented on it, doesn’t mean we haven’t noticed. I don’t know what’s going on with you two, but I have to admit, I’ve known Bokuto longer than you. Probably not as much as you, but I have never seen him so invested in anything other than volleyball.”

Akaashi chuckles.

“Bokuto wears his heart on his sleeve, so to be honest I wasn’t all that surprised when he confessed to you on the train.” Yukie presses her lips together. “Akaashi, he really cares about you.”

“I know.”

“Good. I’m glad you know it.” She squeezes his shoulder gently. “I love you both equally, so I want nothing more than to see you two happy.”

Akaashi nods, hoping the simple motion of his head is enough to tell her that yes, he, and Bokuto also, love her, too.

And when he’s lying in bed that night, he wonders why, or how, it’s so easy for other people to say out loud they love each other. It’s not like he’s never said those words before, no. He often tells his parents he loves them. But before coming to Fukurodani, he’d never had people to care about, or who cared about him, people to love and love him in return. He doesn’t have any experience, but he always assumed the words of love when it comes to friends is a given. Obviously you wouldn’t spend pretty much your entire time – not by obligation – with people you dislike. At least that’s how he sees it. Then again, he’s always been described as closed up and mysterious. It’s just Bokuto that’s been able to read every passing emotion going through his hard to read poker face.

The school days roll on by, bringing on more snow, homework and volleyball. And even though Akaashi concentrates in school, whenever he goes to his classes, he feels a pang of shame and regret whenever he sits next to the ever so unforgiving Ayame. It’s not that he doesn’t have the courage to ask her to talk and properly apologize - even if words are cheap - it’s because he’d
understood her words as “Give me space”. But at the same time, he wants to show her he wants her to be a part of his life and vice versa, and that his silence isn’t indifference, but respect, giving her time to not forget, but forgive. He’s willing to pay whatever price there is to their friendship, because he really fucked up there, and he knows it. Akaashi writes down more than a dozen notes, but before passing them to her, he decides it’s a bad idea and crumples them in the palm of his hand, unsent. Because when he puts himself in her shoes, he thinks he’d need more time to not forget, but forgive.

He will try to see if she wants to resuscitate their friendship with time.

Akaashi’s never been one to celebrate the 14th of February, so to him, it’s just a regular Wednesday. There are perks of being on the student council, though, because he gets to do the candy grams during some of his classes and having to hand them out. He isn’t the treasurer, so he doesn’t know who paid for which ones or how many, but he can see a few addressed to him, and he can recognize Konoha’s scribbles on three of them to Yukie, but he remains quiet, and despite the fact the entire volleyball table keeps asking him for details, he keeps his mouth shut, because anonymous means anonymous.

As usual, Akaashi spends most of his Study Hall in the gym practicing. But the second he is back into the dorm, Rob ushers him into Sarukui and Konoha’s room, telling him they’ve demanded him for tutoring.

“Could you guys wait for me to shower first and then I can come-“

“No.” Sarukui replies. “You can shower in our room. I can get you your towel and pj's from your room, but you gotta stay here.”

“Why?” He asks.

“Because we need you here.” Konoha replies as Sarukui goes to room number #12 to get Akaashi’s things. “So tell me, who sent Yukie candy grams?”

“I’m sorry, Konoha-san, that’s confidential.”

“Fuck that, Akaashi, you’re our inside man. Tell me what kind of competition I’m dealing with!”

“I’m sorry-“

“Nah, man, don’t give me that kinda bullshit. Tell me.”

“Konoha-san, you’re not gonna let this go, are you?”

“Nope.”

“Okay, but I’m really not supposed to.”

“Bla bla bla. Spill the beans.”

Akaashi sighs. “Other than the entire volleyball team, three other guys sent our manager candy grams. Two are from the basketball team and one from the tennis team. Also, her roommate and someone from the cheerleading squad.”

Konoha blinks. “A chick?!”

“Yeah.”
“Is the girl from the cheerleading squad Yukie’s friend or is she interested in her romantically?”

“I honestly don’t know.” Akaashi shrugs.

“You’re no good to me if you don’t know! Fuck you! You made things worse!”

Akaashi shrugs apologetically, and as he heads into their bathroom, he hears Sarukui let out a
“That’s what you get for aiming for a popular girl that’s way out of your league.”, followed by a
“Fuck off!” by Konoha.

He takes his time in the shower, because he’s done with his work for the next day and he doesn’t
feel too sleepy - he’s used to checking Bokuto’s homework after Lights Out.

“So has Yukie told you anything about me?” Konoha asks the second Akaashi steps out of the
bathroom.

“Like what?”

“Like if she considers me handsome? Or if I’m good in the sack?”

“I don’t know.” Akaashi scrunches his nose. “Nor do I want to know.”

“Akaashi, man, just what sort of a wing man are you?!” Konoha grunts.

“Um. I never said I was one?”

“You’re the worst wing man ever!” Konoha shakes his head. “Fucking Hell, I need a snack. Let’s
just go to your room so I can get something to eat from Bokuto’s goodie drawer.”

“Konoha! But Bokuto-!” Sarukui begins, as the bell rings, announcing the end of Study Hall.

Konoha, followed by Akaashi and Sarukui make their way into Akaashi and Bokuto’s room,
blinking in surprise the second they take a step in. Their lights are off, but there are lit candles all
around - the desks, the cupboards, the floor – soaking everything in an otherworldly, orange
scented, magicked yellow light. Dreamlike.

Bokuto’s lying in the middle of Akaashi’s bed, rose petals all around, clad only in a pair of boxers,
with a rose stem between his teeth, his bedroom eyes blinking in horror as he sees Akaashi isn’t
alone.

Akaashi is taken aback by the scene in front of him, but Konoha approaches his bed, shaking his
crotch in Bokuto’s face, cackling.

“Oh Captain, my Captain!” He takes his phone out of his pocket, snapping a few photos. “Saru,
do you see this shit? Bokuto’s trying to seduce our Vice Captain with his abs and big dick! Hah!”

As if this isn’t enough of an embarrassment for Bokuto, who is still speechless, Sarukui points at a
picnic basket on top of Bokuto’s desk, smirking.

“Oh Captain, my Captain!” He takes his phone out of his pocket, snapping a few photos. “Saru,
do you see this shit? Bokuto’s trying to seduce our Vice Captain with his abs and big dick! Hah!”

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picnic basket on top of Bokuto’s desk, smirking.

“Konoha, check it out! Bokuto was planning on playing on Akaashi’s food weakness!”

“Oh my God!” Konoha sneers, pressing a finger gun to his temple. “My mind just exploded from
second hand embarrassment!”

“What the fuck?!” Bokuto yells as he jumps off Akaashi’s bed. “What did I ask of you two
birdbrains? Keep Akaashi out of our room until the end of Study Hall! You had one job!”
Konoha laughs. “Technically it’s the end of Study Hall.”

“Out!” Bokuto’s angry voice booms through the room. “Get out! Now!”

Konoha continues pointing his phone at Bokuto, before Bokuto almost kicks him and Sarukui out of the room, slamming the door behind them.

“Akaashi, I’m sorry about that! Those two fucking idiots ruined the surprise.” Bokuto mumbles, avoiding Akaashi’s eyes, face crimson.

Akaashi remains rooted in his spot.

“Bokuto-san, were you really planning on seducing me?” He asks, a small, amused smile playing at his lips.

“No, I was just-”

“That’s alright.” Akaashi chuckles softly. Normally, this kind of situation would make him feel embarrassed, but he doesn’t feel uncomfortable at all. In fact, with Bokuto beet red, he knows things are in his control. “I think I’m a little bit over dressed.” He steps out of his pyjama pants and with a single fling, takes off his t shirt, throwing it somewhere on the floor behind him. He all but smirks at the way Bokuto’s eyes go all big and wide as if it’s the first time he sees him in his boxers. Still, it’s nice and it makes him feel real good. Confident. “There, that’s better.”

Bokuto licks his lips. “Just for the record, my plan wasn’t to seduce you, but just try and be somewhat romantic. You know, since it’s Valentine’s Day and it’s not the weekend for me to ask you out, so... I thought I’d bring the date to you.”

“Okay then.” Akaashi sits on his bed. “Let’s have our date here and now.”

“Seriously?” Bokuto blinks, not being able to believe his own luck. “Like, you’re not pulling my leg or anything?”

Akaashi shakes his head.

Before Akaashi can change his mind, Bokuto takes the picnic basket off his desk and places it right next to Akaashi on his bed.

As he begins to take out different gourmet delicacies for the two of them, Akaashi smirks, his insides fluttering, because Bokuto’d gone all out in trying to make this all kinds of special. There’s skewered shrimps, mozzarella pillows, grapes, cherries, blue cheese, caviar and crackers, cupcakes, chocolate strawberries and even a bottle of champagne.

Akaashi eats a couple of Maraschino cherries, tying each stem with his teeth and tongue, relishing the way Bokuto’s staring at him, mouth gawping. He tries not to laugh at Bokuto’s desperate and unsuccessful attempts to do the same.

“Akaashi! Fuck! How the Hell do you do it?!”

Akaashi licks his lower lip, hoping it would come off in a seductive manner.

“Bokuto-san, let me show you.”

It’s a ballsy thing to say, but Akaashi doesn’t feel a tiny bit shy, not with the way Bokuto is looking at him as if he’s the most important thing in the world.
He presses his mouth against Bokuto’s, intertwining their lips, ever so gently opening up and poking his tongue out. Bokuto’s mouth grants Akaashi instant access, and Akaashi’s playful tongue darts out further, which Bokuto accepts graciously, almost too eager, in fact, pressing him forward for more, for more contact. As Bokuto’s fingers press against the back of Akaashi’s head, pushing him closer, Akaashi lifts his chin up. By now Bokuto knows where Akaashi’s weak spot is, and his mouth almost automatically dips lower, trailing kisses up and down Akaashi’s neck, swirling his tongue here and there.

Akaashi’s fingers bury themselves into Bokuto’s soft hair, tugging at the strands. Bokuto breaks away for breath, feeling almost too dizzy, because it’s so fucking much - the way Akaashi’s eyes are hooded with desire, the way Akaashi’s long fingers caress his shoulders and chest, the way Akaashi’s dick is hardening against his side. Fuck! Bokuto closes his eyes for a moment, because he fears he’d lose his mind. Perhaps it’s too late for that, because Bokuto knows he’s lost his mind over him. And to be honest, he’s perfectly fine with it, because Akaashi looks so damn good, it’s impossible to resist that kind of sex appeal.

Since Akaashi already feels comfortable around Bokuto, he decides to jump into the driver’s seat – so he pushes Bokuto against his pillow, straddling Bokuto’s hips, completely ignoring and not at all caring about the fact he feels his legs smushing food onto his bed. Who gives a shit about that? Certainly not Akaashi. He relishes the way Bokuto’s golden eyes are about to bulge out of their sockets, roaming all over his body, hungrily, almost starved.

Akaashi takes hold of Bokuto’s fingers, placing them over his hips, and he begins to grind his crotch against Bokuto’s, moving up and down, left and right. Akaashi’s upper body bends forward and his teeth playfully graze the side of Bokuto’s neck, encouraging him further as Bokuto’s throat lets out a guttural moan and he moves his hands from Akaashi’s hips to squeezing each of Akaashi’s butt cheeks into his firm hands. Akaashi’s mouth begins to trace Bokuto’s chest and Bokuto’s body involuntarily does a wave of pleasure, letting out a tiny gasp, which is music to Akaashi’s ears. Akaashi’s heard those small, breakable noises that Bokuto makes whenever he’s enjoying himself plenty of times before, and he can never get enough of them.

As Akaashi’s hand cups Bokuto’s crotch, he moves his head upward, nuzzling his nose against Bokuto’s earlobe.

“Bokuto-san, do you have any condoms?” He whispers huskily.

Bokuto’s hands, in fact, Bokuto’s entire body freezes up.

“What?!”

“Did you not hear me?”

“I heard you.”

Akaashi arches his eyebrow. “So...?”

"It's just... I don't - I'm not... y'know?"

"I understood nothing."

Bokuto’s never been very good with words, and now it’s even harder, because most of his blood isn’t in his upper head and he can’t focus, and judging by Akaashi’s expression he’s treading on very thin ice. He tries to phrase things in his head first, his explanation, but Akaashi misunderstands his silence, face turning sour.

Not even seconds later, Akaashi swing his legs off the bed and picks up his clothes, pulling them
on. A few minutes ago Akaashi’d felt so sexy, so turned on, and now he feels absolutely mortified, confidence completely gone.

"Akaashi, I-

"Could you please get off my bed, so I could go to sleep?"

Bokuto swallows hard. He has no idea what he did wrongly, but he can tell he'd just driven into Fuckville. With population, 1. Himself.

He doesn't have a death wish, so he keeps his mouth shut as he crawls into his own bed, not daring to say anything.

Akaashi doesn't know if it's irrational or not, but to be honest, he feels he has every right to be annoyed. He'd literally thrown himself at Bokuto and Bokuto'd basically said "no, thank you.". So, yeah, Akaashi is pissed off. His pride is wounded, stinging from last night's rejection. After all, if you can't get the guy who's in love with you to have sex with you, well, what the fuck?

During classes, all Akaashi can think about is the way he'd tried to seduce Bokuto and how he'd failed miserably. Fucking Hell.

Dumb Bokuto. So goddamn dumb and inconsiderate.

Excluding volleyball practice and tutoring, he continues giving Bokuto his silent, scowling treatment all the way to Friday.

He'd overheard Konoha telling Sarukui Bokuto's going to be with his parents, which makes Akaashi feel torn. On one side, he feels glad, because it'd mean he won't have to feel ashamed around his roommate. But on the other one, he knows it's going to be a quiet, boring weekend, with nothing to do, but remain bitter.

After practice, during dinner, Konoha, laughing, asks if Bokuto'd performed really badly in bed, hence Akaashi's terrible mood, being mad at the world. All it takes is for Akaashi to knit his eyebrows together in Konoha's direction, for him to zip up his trap and concentrate on his plate with a visible pout.

"You better watch out, owls, Angel Eyes is on the warpath." Kuroo's voice comes into the dining room, rucksack over his shoulder, smirk prepared on his face.

So maybe Akaashi'd been wrong - it won't be a quiet weekend, not with Kuroo present.

Kuroo takes Bokuto's seat, smirk intact.

"Well, you guys are pretty crappy hosts if none of you are volunteering to bring me some dinner. Didn't your parents teach you any manners?"

"Screw you, your team lost against Nohebi, so you have no right to dine with winners." Konoha sneers.

"Yeah, that's true." Kuroo nods his head sadly. "But you owls better watch out, because you face them next and those snakes are really something."

"We'll obliterate them." Konoha replies.

"Yeah, that's what we said too. So jokes aside, those snakes are really awful. I'd love nothing more than to see you guys kick their asses. Because if you lose, they'd be representing our region
in the Spring High Tournament, and if that happens, I'm moving out of Tokyo."

"In that case, maybe we should lose on purpose?" Sarukui says.

"Ouch." Kuroo winces. "You're the smiling owl, man, aren't you supposed to be nice and polite and shit?"

Kuroo's stomach gives a loud growl and Akaashi instantly gets off his seat.

"Kuroo-san, do you want the same plate as mine or should I get you something else?"

"Same as yours, please."

As Akaashi goes into the kitchen, he can hear Konoha's mutter, followed by Kuroo's laughter.

"He's been cold as ice for the past 2 days, but you come, and it's suddenly "What do you wanna eat?". What the fuck?"

Akaashi waits for Kuroo to finish eating, then the two of them head upstairs to Bokuto and his room. Kuroo, knowing all too well Akaashi's about to go into the bathroom, sits on the floor and opens up a beer can.

"Cheers." He says, head already buried in his phone.

"Tsk, you couldn't wait for me to shower, so we could drink together?" Akaashi grunts.

"You could have a drink with me before you go shower?" Kuroo suggests.

Akaashi thinks about it for a few moments. "I could do that."

Six beers, some small talk and an hour or so later, Kuroo descends out of their window for more beers, while Akaashi finally goes to shower. It's probably the alcohol in his system that makes Akaashi go out of the bathroom naked, with just his towel tied around his hips.

Akaashi silently congratulates himself for the decision, because Kuroo's back, and his attention is no longer on his phone, but on Akaashi's exposed upper body, as he takes another beer and sits on his chair.

"Angel Eyes, you might catch a cold like that." Kuroo says after a while.

"I won't." Akaashi replies confidently.

"How do you figure that?"

"Well, the windows are closed, the room is warm and I did just take a steaming hot shower." He glances at his arms and chest. "Can't you see my skin is pink?"

"Believe me, I can."

Akaashi's insides flutter. Yeah, it's definitely the alcohol. Because if he was sober, Kuroo's words wouldn't have such an impact on him.

Or maybe they would? He doesn't know.

What he does know is that he can see Kuroo wants him. Unlike Bokuto, who'd rejected him. Which is a really nice feeling.
Who doesn't like to feel wanted?

"Angel Eyes, get dressed, so we can talk about what's up your ass." Kuroo says.

Akaashi snorts. "More like what isn't."

Kuroo blinks, surprised, which makes Akaashi snort again.

"Surely, Bokuto-san told you?"

"He did give me his side of the story and that you're mad at him." Kuroo replies diplomatically.

"So you want to hear mine?"

"I do. But put some clothes on first."

"Kuroo-san, I told you already, I had a really hot shower."

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"How about I'm tipsy and I don't trust myself around you being almost naked?"

"And that's a bad thing, because...?" Akaashi challenges.

"You know why."

"I don't. Please, enlighten me."

"No. Nuh huh. I ain't playing this game with you, Angel Eyes."

"Who's playing?" Akaashi asks innocently.

All Akaashi's missing is his halo.

Yeah, right.

"You are. And I would really appreciate it if you didn't." Kuroo replies firmly.

The alcohol, mixed with Akaashi's still fresh feeling of being rejected, are stronger than his sensibility. So he does get changed into a fresh pair of boxers, his pyjama pants and t shirt, but instead of doing it in the bathroom, he does it right there and then, in front of Kuroo.

"God, Angel Eyes, why are you doing this to me?" Kuroo groans, burying his face into the palms of his hands. "You can't."

"Why can't I?" Akaashi asks quietly as he approaches Kuroo and sits right next to him on the floor, bumping his knee and shoulder against Kuroo's.

"You can. But you shouldn't."

"Why?"

"You know, playing dumb doesn't suit you." Kuroo mumbles between his hands.

"Kuroo-san, I believe we established I'm not playing anything."
"Bullshit." Kuroo looks up, serious. "I know this is all new to you, so let me give you a little reality check, which is just what you need - nobody likes a player. Yeah, I know that's really rich coming from me, but I never play around when people's feelings are involved. Especially the feelings of my closest friends. You know perfectly well that both my bro and I are in love with you. And I know you're feeling rejected, which is why you're flirting with me like that. I'm not mad at you, Angel Eyes." He says, this time softly. "But here's what you don't know. Bokuto didn't say no to you, because he didn't want you. The reason he did is because he was fucking terrified of being your first. I'm sure he was very honored by it - who wouldn't be?! - but that's a pretty big deal, especially when you know better than anyone else what he's like under pressure. Given your complicated history, I'm pretty sure he didn't expect it and would've liked for you guys to be already dating before you two bumped uglies. But hey, that's just my two cents." He shrugs.

As Akaashi lets this brand new information sink in, he starts feeling really stupid and ashamed.

He'd been so selfish in feeling offended, that he didn't give Bokuto a chance to explain himself.

And sure, the two of them aren't officially dating, but Akaashi'd always gone by the motto of "Don't do to others what you don't want to be done to you." He'd already fucked that up by assisting Bokuto in cheating on Ayame. And mere minutes ago, he'd been hitting on Kuroo, shamelessly.

When he thinks about it, he would be pretty angry if Bokuto flirted like that with someone else. Especially if that someone was in love with Bokuto.

"Kuroo-san, I'm so sorry-" Akaashi begins, but Kuroo puts his hands up, interrupting.

"Nah, Angel Eyes, I understand your feelings." He presses his lips into a smile. "You don't have to apologize."

Akaashi nods silently.

This is what he loves about Kuroo - he would tell him things as they are without sugarcoating them, just straight up. And he'd been right - Akaashi'd most certainly needed a reality check.

"Kuroo-san, I have a question."

"Shoot."

"Did you ever tell Bokuto-san about our..." Akaashi clears his throat. "charade game?"

"No." Kuroo winces, then laughs. "To be honest, telling my bro - or anyone for that matter - about pretending to be someone else in order to get you to make out with me kind of makes me die a little on the inside."

Akaashi chuckles. "True. But we did make out on the ferris wheel with you being yourself."

"I know." Kuroo replies, staring at Akaashi. "God, Angel Eyes, I don't have a lot of morals, but you make me question even the few ones that I do have." He shakes his head. "I got it bad. If I'm considering breaking the bro code, I got it real bad."

"Bro code?" Akaashi snorts. "I always thought that's not a-"

Kuroo's mouth cuts his sentence short, but instead of reciprocating, Akaashi turns his head to the side, with Kuroo's lips sliding over his cheek.

"Oh my God, I can't believe I just did that." Kuroo blinks in horror. "Angel Eyes, I don't know
what I was thinking, I just- I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to..." He jumps on his feet. "Coming here tonight was a really bad idea."

"Kuroo-san, it's alright."

"No, it's not. I crave being alone with you, but at the same time, I'm terrified of it. I told you already, I don't trust myself around you. Angel Eyes, I gotta go."

"Don't do this again. Stay."

"No. Don't you dare look at me like that when you ask me to stay."

Akaashi can see Kuroo needs to leave.

"Text me when you're home?"

"I will."

And he does.

But as Akaashi lies in bed, he feels really lousy, Kuroo's words from earlier echoing loudly into his head. He'd gotten mad at Bokuto over nothing, and he'd given Kuroo false hope by flirting with him.

Since this is one of the rare times he gets some alone time, Akaashi genuinely thinks over the person he'd become ever since joining Fukurodani. And tutor and Vice Captain titles aside, he doesn't feel too proud of himself.

He makes a mental note to better himself. Because he doesn't want to play around with people's feelings, and especially the feelings of people he considers dearest. No. No more.

Akaashi even prepares an entire speech, which he delivers to Bokuto when he returns on Sunday just before Study Hall.

"Bokuto-san, please accept my apology for being such an asshole."

Bokuto blinks. "Akaashi, I never thought you were an asshole."

"That's because you're biased and only see the best in me. But I did behave like a child, which I'm sorry for. After Kuroo-san gave me a reality check, I realized my mistake. I spent the weekend reading things online about relationships, and it turns out - at least according to Google - that most go into the trash heap, due to the lack of communication. So I promise you to put my pride and insecurities aside and tell you whenever something bothers me and not just get angry and stay silent until you figure out what you did wrong. Which by the way, you didn't." Akaashi smiles. "But you also have to be honest with me and tell me whenever something bothers you, okay?"

Bokuto nods. "Always."

"So how was your weekend with your family?"

"It was shit."

"That bad?"

"No. My parents were like, on their best behavior."

"So why did you say it was shit?"
"Two reasons." Bokuto puts two fingers up. "One, because you were mad at me. Two, because I didn't get to spend any time with you."

Akaashi slaps his forehead, sliding his hand over his eyes.

"Bokuto-san, your honesty is too embarrassing." He mumbles, cheeks aflame.

Bokuto grins. "As long as I make you smile, I'm ok with it."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

*old rickety voice* It's been 84 years... Yeah, this is what happens when I cover my colleague's shift and work 16 hours a day D: anyway, a very belated happy birthday to your_resident_owl_divine(divine_fanfics), hope you had a good one ❤❤❤ and a special shoutout to my broski kris, thanks for the brainstorming sessions <3

Spring arrives two weeks before the end of February. The snow is gone, the cold wind, the cloudy skies. Along with the cherry blossoms arrive a lot of good news - Bokuto is off room restriction, Fukurodani win their match against Nohebi and will be the representing Tokyo team at the Spring High Tournament and Ayame - Akaashi doesn't know if influenced by the weather or his one-sided note passing in class - seems to be warming up to him. Not as things were before, and he doubts things between them will ever be the same, but whatever the reason, he's glad for it. Point is, she's no longer ignoring his existence. She smiles and greets him in return and on Tuesday, during their student council meeting saves him a spot right next to her, chatting excitedly about their victory against the snakes.

Despite all the school work, tests and sleepless nights full of revision and tutoring, Akaashi feels like he can finally breathe easy, like a giant weight has been lifted off his chest. Yeah, everything seems to be all peaches.

Well, almost everything.

After an exhausting practice on Friday, as the volleyball team head into the kitchen to get some dinner, Akaashi notices Bokuto's absence, even though he'd been just behind him a few seconds ago. He's just about to ask the rest of his teammates if they know, when Konoha blocks his and Sarukui's way with his tray, letting Yukie go first.

"Why, aren't you a gentleman." She grins. "Thank you very much, but I'm only here for dessert."

"Only for dessert?" Konoha blinks. "Are you sick or something?"

"No, silly. I'm going out for dinner with some friends."

As she takes a mint chocolate cupcake in a napkin, she ruffles Konoha's hair and disappears.

"Akaashi, dude, you mind moving your chair a bit to the right?" Konoha asks as Akaashi takes his seat. "Also, if you could keep your head lower - no - lower than that - it'll be perfect. Thanks, man."
Akaashi and Sarukui exchange a silent, but very amused look, because Konoha keeps craning his neck, trying to look at the hallway and all the students that are passing by. "She literally just left, and knowing her, she's gonna need at least an hour to get ready to go out." Sarukui says. "So you can stop staring like the freak that you are."

Konoha ignores the insult. "So do either of you know her friends?" He looks at Sarukui and Akaashi, who shake their heads. "What friends is she having dinner with? Girl friends? Guy friends? Aren't we her friends too? Why would she go out with them and not us?"

"Maybe, because we're eating here?" Akaashi suggests.

"I hate fish tacos. Fish tacos are the worst." Konoha scrunches his nose and pushes his tray in front of him. "What do you guys say we go out for dinner?"

Sarukui smirks. "And go wherever Yukie and her friends are going?"

"Exactly. Yukie loves her food, so wherever they're going, there's gonna be good food, so let's go, yeah?" Konoha asks enthusiastically.

"I'll pass. Besides, I like fish tacos." Akaashi shrugs. He's just about to take a bite, when Konoha slaps his taco away from his hand, landing with a plopping noise on the ground. "There, that's better." Konoha says. "Saru, leave that shitty food, so we can go upstairs and-"

"I ain't leaving." Sarukui mumbles, mouthful of food. "I'm tired and need to catch up on sleep."

Konoha's just about to reply, when Bokuto's booming voice greets them seconds before he walks into the Dinning Room. "Sleep is for the weak!" He grins, then looks at Akaashi. "Akaashi, why aren't you ready? We're supposed to leave in like 10 minutes!"

Akaashi hadn't gotten a text from Kenma, in fact, the two of them haven't spoken in more than a week. But since Bokuto is better than him at keeping touch with people, he quickly gets into the shower. How exciting! A video game marathon! Akaashi's never had one before, and being around Bokuto, Kenma and Kuroo is just what he needs to charge up with positive energy. They sign out at the front desk and since the weather is nice, they decide to walk to the train station instead of taking the bus. The second that they move out of the school's eyesight, Bokuto clears his throat.

"Would it be alright if - if-" He points at Akaashi's hand. "I want to, but if you don't..." Akaashi's lips turn up at the corners and he takes Bokuto's hand into his own, squeezing it gently. "Bokuto-san, I appreciate you asking for permission, but you don't always have to."

Bokuto beams - truly beams - and his smile is more dazzling than the setting sun. It's more dazzling than the sun on a hot summer's day. At least to Akaashi it is.
It's Friday, and it's rush hour, so it's really no surprise that there's no place to sit on the train. But neither of them seems to mind standing.

On their third stop, a group of girls get on and one of them immediately recognizes Bokuto.

"Oh my God! You are Fukurodani's ace!" She squeaks. "You're Bokuto Koutarou, right?"

"Yeah." Bokuto grins, letting go of Akaashi's hand. "That would be me."

"Bokuto Koutarou?" Another one says. "You're one of the best players in the country, yeah?"

"Well, yes, but I'm still in high school, so-"

"You're still the best, though! Kazumi - " She point at the first girl " - and I saw your last game against Nohebi and you were amazing!"

"Thank you. But we wouldn't have won had it not been for Akaashi." Bokuto nods at him, who nods back in return. "He's our setter and -"

"Can you sign my - oh screw it, let's take a selfie!" The first girl, Kazumi, says and takes her phone out.

"Oh. Sure, why not?" Bokuto smiles and poses for the camera.

Then the entire group demand a selfie with Bokuto.

"No, my hands are too short!" The second girl grumbles and presses her phone into Akaashi's hands. "Here, you can take a photo of us all."

Akaashi is perfectly okay with taking a photo of Bokuto and his fan girls. He's not jealous of Bokuto's fame - not at all. He takes pride in the fact Bokuto is so great on the court. It's not family, but volleyball related popularity, so it's a great boost for Bokuto's self esteem.

However, there's a slight bitter taste in the back of his throat.

He's never been big on PDA to begin with, because there's a time and place for everything and private affairs are private. It's not like he wants for Bokuto to sweep him off his feet, twirl him around and smooch him on the lips right in the middle of the street, but not being able to hold hands?

It will always be like this, Akaashi realizes. And it'll only get worse.

With fans and paparazzi skulking about, always trying to find the freshest, juiciest bit of gossip. And finding out a future Japanese volleyball star, the son of a famous fashion designer and surgeon, is into guys, well, that would be an absolute goldmine of a scandal.

Denying your sexual orientation, fighting it, is always painful. Indescribable pain that courses through your entire being. A part of you is terrified of being found out, but at the same time, you just want the secrecy to be over and done with. It's like a ticking bomb and whether it explodes or not, you just want out. You just want to be free. To be yourself.

And for someone that's already experienced coming out, like Akaashi, this whole hiding and denying thing is bringing back painful memories. Memories he doesn't want to have. Memories he wishes he didn't have. He's been out of the closet for a while and he doesn't want back in, no way, not when he's accepted it. Not when he's accepted himself and he's proud of who he is.
But this all new to Bokuto and he understands. Or at least, he wants to be understanding. So despite the fact it sucks and his feelings are a little hurt, Akaashi presses his lips into a brave little smile and soldiers on.

Just a few months ago, he'd been torturing himself with the fact Bokuto's straight, thinking that chances of anything ever happening between the two were below zero. And when things did happen, and Bokuto confessed, he'd been the one that wasn't ready to define their relationship just yet, to give it some time and take things slow. And he got pissy just a few moments ago, because Bokuto let go of his hand.

Akaashi nearly laughs at the irony.

He honestly can't understand how his own mind works sometimes. He supposes rational thoughts jump out the window when matters of the heart are involved. Even though he tries, because he got burned last time and he doesn't want to make the same mistake again, flying too close to the Sun.

He sighs.

Everything is so complicated when you're seventeen and in love.

It might be Kenma's place, but it's Kuroo that opens the door and welcomes them with a big smile. His smile grows even bigger when he sees Akaashi.

"Well about damn time you silly owls got here! Come on in, come on in." He ushers them in the living room once they've taken off their jackets and shoes. "Kenma and I already started playing Mario Kart and he kicked my ass, but now that there's more people, it's bound to get more interesting."

Kenma, who is sitting barefoot on the ground, with his laptop over his crossed legs, greets them with a small smile and a wave.

"Akaashi, it's your first time being here, but please, feel right at home. Bokuto and Kuro will show you where the fridge and the bathroom are, because I'm already in my spot." He points at his laptop. "Now that you're here, we can order some food. Kuro and I want pizza, what about you guys?"

"Pizza sounds great." Akaashi replies and sits next to Kenma on the floor. "You're ordering online instead of calling?" He nods his head in approval. "Smart move."

Kuroo laughs. "Kenma would rather put out a fire with his face than talk over the phone."

Akaashi can appreciate that, because he is the same. But he probably wouldn't go to such extremes.

"So I'll just get a family Hawaiian pizza with extra pineapple, that okay?" Kenma asks.

"No, get half of it without any pineapple." Kuroo replies.

"Bro, since when do you not like pineapple?"

"I do, but Angel Eyes doesn't. You should know that, bro, you live with him."

Akaashi doesn't know whether Bokuto's eyebrows shooting up into his hairline is caused by confusion or surprise, but he doesn't ask.

"I do know that." Bokuto murmurs.
Both Kuroo and Bokuto plop themselves down onto the sofa, each one to the side, leaving the middle empty, perhaps for Akaashi? But Akaashi sits on the floor next to Kenma.

They're just about to begin playing, when Kuroo suggest they team up two on two.

"Awesome!" Bokuto grins. "Fukurodani vs Nekoma!"

"No, bro, let's switch things up a bit. You two are always on the same team, so let's go with Angel Eyes and I against you and Kenma."

For some strange reason Akaashi gets the feeling that Kenma is slightly maybe irritated with him? No, it's probably all in his head, because he knows for a fact Kenma likes him. They're friends, right?

Kenma could be playing against the three of them ganging up on him and he'd still be the victor.

"Akaashi, I thought you were good at video games?" Bokuto says after winning their fourth round.

"I am, Bokuto-san." Akaashi grunts, because really, he hates losing. "But Kenma is better."

He glances at Kenma, hoping to get some kind of reaction from the compliment, but he doesn't. And that's when he realizes something is off. For someone that takes pride in their gaming skills, not to get any kind of acknowledgement, well, that speaks volumes.

Yeah, that's definitely not just all in his head.

So naturally, the question that forms into Akaashi's head is why? What did he do to upset or offend Kenma?

Akaashi gets his answer about half an hour later after their food arrives and the four of them move into the kitchen, indulging themselves in pizza and beer, and Kenma sticking to his diet coke. Bokuto and Kuroo are keeping an animated conversation going, reminiscing about last year's volleyball Spring High tournament, despite the fact their mouths are stuffed with food, lips greasy.

Kuroo keeps placing his hand over Akaashi's shoulder, squeezing it, in between explaining something, and when Bokuto is the one doing the talking, Kuroo winks at him, each wink accompanied by a playful smile.

"Akaashi, may I have a word with you?" Kenma asks after wiping his mouth with a napkin.

"Kenmaaaa, Angel Eyes isn't finished eating!"

"No, it's fine." Akaashi replies after swallowing his mouthful, almost jumping out of his seat.

He follows Kenma into his bedroom, heart hammering into his chest, heavy and guilty. The walls are covered with posters of video games, movies, tv shows, all demanding Akaashi's attention with their big bright letters, but the Nekoma setter has all of it as he stands next to his desk, his nails scratching at the polished wood.

"It's hard to say no to a love song face. It's even harder when it's the first song you’ve ever known." Kenma says, finally, not looking at Akaashi, but not not-looking either. "Kuro is Kuro and he hardly shows his true feelings even to me. But I don't need words to know when my best friend is hurting. And he's hurting a lot. I'm not saying this to guilt trip you or make you feel bad, it's just how it is. So I'm going to ask you to stop." The golden cat like eyes stare directly into Akaashi's with the intensity of a thousand burning Suns. "Please stop. Giving him false hope is
way too cruel. Unless...

"Unless what?" Akaashi doesn't know why his question comes out as a whisper.

"Unless it's not false hope." Kenma licks his lips. "I'm not gonna ask you if it is or it isn't, because it's better if you have this conversation with him and not me."

"What should I say?"

"The truth would be nice."

"The truth hurts sometimes."

Kenma nods. "Yeah. And I'm sure it'll hurt him a lot. But it's better to just rip it off, like a band aid, than keep him hanging by a thread. Could you do that for me, please?"

"Now?"

"Well maybe not right now, but someday soon. You did see the tension between Bokuto and Kuro earlier, didn't you? The sooner you tell Kuro, the better."

Someday isn't too far away, though, not anymore, because when Kenma and Akaashi go back into the kitchen, Bokuto and Kuroo are already in a heated argument, standing, fists prepared at their sides.

"I've had it up to fucking here with you, Kuroo-" Bokuto starts.

It's the first time Akaashi hears Bokuto address him directly with anything other than "bro".

"Why, because I call you out on your bullshit? You keep acting like you're the victim, but it's not you, Koutarou."

"Kuroo-san! Bokuto-san!" Akaashi says, quick, jumping in the middle while there still is a middle. Fuck. He shoots Bokuto a we're talking about this later look and hustles him out the door before someone can say or do something they would really regret. "I think it's time we left. We have curfew to think about and all."

Kuroo snorts, muttering something about Akaashi always cleaning up after Bokuto's messes, and something more scathing under his breath.

"Maybe if you weren't so salty and jealous, he would have-" Bokuto begins, but stops when he sees the heartbreak beat of Akaashi's pulse no doubt throbbing all over his face.

Kuroo's target is Bokuto's face, but since Akaashi is still the shield between the two, his fist lands directly against Akaashi's nose. Blood spurts out of his nostrils instantly.

"Oh my God, Angel Eyes, I'm so sorry!"

"I'm gonna kill you!" Bokuto bellows.

"Enough!" Kenma puts his hands up as the second shield. "Akaashi, you take care of Bokuto, I'll take care of Kuroo."

The last thing Akaashi sees before the front door is closed behind them is Kuroo's face, which is the epitome of misery. Akaashi wants to tell him it's alright, that he's alright, but he can do that later, because right now he has to deal with a very angry Bokuto.
“Bokuto-san, it's okay. Really.”

“Kuroo broke your fucking nose, so don’t tell me it's okay, Akaashi. It's pretty goddamn far from okay.”

“It's not broken. And I'm fine.”

“Yeah, you're fine.”

Before they get back to Fukurodani, they make a quick stop at the gas station to buy baby wipes, because Akaashi doesn't want to write yet another accident/incident report and make his parents worried.

As Bokuto gently wipes the dried blood off Akaashi's face, Akaashi spots a familiar figure and yells.

“Sarukui-san!”

Sarukui turns around and once he spots them, he waves with a smile and waits.

“Hey, guys! How did the gaming tournament go?”

“It was alright.” Akaashi replies, ignoring Bokuto's peevish sigh. “How come you're here all alone? Weren’t you the one that didn't feel like going out?”

“Yeah. But Konoha saw Yukie leaving with a couple of guys from the basketball team, so he's lying in bed, heartbroken. I thought I'd be a good friend and came to get some beers.”

“You are a good friend, Saruman.” Bokuto pats his back. “And now that you mention it, I need beer too.”

“I bought two six packs, so you can have some of ours?” Sarukui suggests.

“Best teammate ever.” Bokuto grabs the right side of his chest dramatically. “You complete my heart.”

Once they're back in their room, Bokuto sits on Akaashi's bed and rubs his eyes. Akaashi gives him a couple of minutes of peace and quiet while he changes into his pjs, before he sits next to him and cracks open two beers, handing him one.

“Bokuto-san, you wanna tell me what happened back there with Kuroo-san?”

“Not really, no.”

“Well too bad, because you're going to.”

“Akaashi, do I really have to?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, so. I asked my bro a question and all of a sudden he fucking lost it. And that's it.”

“What did you ask him?”

“Just a question.”

“Bokuto-san, that's not good enough.”
Bokuto sighs and covers his eyes with his hand before he speaks.

"Don't look at me." He mumbles. "Remember how on Valentine's day you wanted to... get intimate and I kind of freaked out?"

Akaashi takes a long sip of his beer. "How could I forget?"

"Right. Well. I asked him for some help on that. And I might've mentioned how he was shamelessly flirting with you and that's when he lost it."

"I see." Akaashi nods slowly.

Technically, Bokuto and Kuroo'd fought because of him. But for some strange reason, instead of feeling guilty, his insides rumble happily. Because, yeah, jealousy is not a good trait, but at the same time, Bokuto'd cared enough to start a fight about it, with Kuroo, of all people.

"So...you're not mad at me?"

"Why should I be mad at you?"

"I don't know, I'm just checking. We're cool?"

"Yeah." A trace of a smile graces Akaashi's lips. "We're cool."

As the two of them prepare for bed, Akaashi quickly replies to the dozen of Kuroo messages on his phone that everything is alright, no, his nose isn't broken and that everything is alright.

"Akaashi, do you wanna watch a movie together?"

"Sure. A movie sounds good."

The 3rd of March arrives quicker than the blink of an eye and since Bokuto's father had spoken with their dean, both Akaashi and Bokuto are checked out for the weekend. Despite the fact the Sadie Hawkins dance is on Saturday, after their classes on Friday afternoon, Bokuto and Akaashi pack up their things and get into the fancy limo waiting for them outside Fukurodani. One of Bokuto's mom's assistants introduces herself and asks if they'd like a glass of champagne. Since it's Akaashi's first time in a limo and he feels incredibly nervous, he accepts, while Bokuto declines.

It's rush hour and they're stuck in a traffic jam, so Akaashi has two more glasses of champagne before they finally reach their destination, which is a massive glass building. Bokuto quietly explains it's his mother's atelier, the place where she works.

The assistant leads the way up to the fifth floor and Akaashi tries not to stare too much at everything around. There's models, photographers and all these fancy ass dressed people around, and he silently wishes he'd had another glass of champagne to calm his nerves.

As all three of them walk into Bokuto's mom's office, she looks up from her desk and smiles immediately. She thanks her assistant and dismisses her with a wave of her hand. Then she kisses each of her son's cheek and extends a hand towards Akaashi.

"It's wonderful to finally meet you, Akaashi-kun, I've heard so much about you not just from Koutarou, but from my husband too." She smiles as they shake hand. "Thank you very much, I'm delighted to make your acquaintance."

"Wow. My husband wasn't lying when he said you have cheekbones to die for." She traces her
long fingers over Akaashi's chin. "Have you ever consider a career in modelling?" Akaashi shakes his head. "You should. Let's go into the changing rooms and get you two dressed up for tomorrow night." She snaps her fingers and almost magically, two assistants appear in her office. "Prepare the changing rooms!"

Akaashi and Bokuto get into cubicles next to each other and keep being handed three piece suits, with Bokuto's mother standing outside, asking them to do a small walk in front of the big mirror outside, sometimes nodding her head in approval, while others she says "No" the second they walk out, giving them more things to try.

"What is this? Why is there white silk here?" Akaashi hears her grumble. "Do my son and his friend look like pimps to you?"

"No, no- absolutely not-" One of the assistants stutters.

"Don't waste my time with your incompetence. Go!"

Hours later, Bokuto and Akaashi are standing in front of the changing rooms in black three piece suits with white shirts, and to Akaashi, who doesn't know the first thing about fashion other than clothes that just feel comfortable - which these are not - Bokuto's mother is finally satisfied.

"Okay, so we've finally settled on the colors. Excellent." She says smiling and claps her hands. "Bring in the tailors!"

"We're not wearing these?" Akaashi whispers to Bokuto as the tailors come and start taking their measurements.

"No." Bokuto whispers back. "What we're wearing right now is Chanel, and my mom wants us to wear her original brand."

"Doesn't making a personally customized three piece suit take a long time?"

Bokuto nods.

"But the dance is tomorrow night?"

"Everyone here gets paid by the hour, so our suits will be done before lunch tomorrow." Bokuto licks his lips. "Speaking of food, you must be starving?"

"Aren't you?"

"Mhm. What would you like to have?"

"Bokuto-san, anything sounds good right about now."

Bokuto nods and turns to one of the assistants. "Can we have some bacon club sandwiches and Akaashi? What would you like to drink?"

"Water's just fine." Akaashi replies quietly.

"Water and a beer, please."

"Koutarou, is the beer for you or Akaashi?" Bokuto's mother asks.

"For me, mom."

"Good. Because I'd like to have Akaashi-kun to try out some of the things from our newest
collection and beer bloats the stomach." She replies and turns to her assistant. "Coffee for me. And, one of the club sandwiches is to be without any lettuce, just tomatoes. Bring everything up to the 7th floor, so while the two of them eat, Akaashi-kun can watch the models."

As they ride the elevator up, Akaashi's lips approach Bokuto's ear.

"Bokuto-san, I thought vegetables are a healthy diet?"

"Yes." Bokuto whispers back, barely moving his lips. "But green stuff like lettuce bloat the stomach."

"So? I'm gonna be trying on shirts and stuff for Spring wear?" Akaashi asks a bit louder than intended.

Bokuto's mom laughs. "Of course not. It's the beginning of March, so we're almost finished shooting our Summer Collection."

"I see."

As Bokuto and Akaashi sit down and wait for their food, Akaashi watches the models and photographers in front of him, feeling like a character straight out of The Devil Wears Prada. Everyone around is in swimsuits, so very skinny and so very comfortable with having all eyes on them, despite the fact they're almost naked. It's impressive. Despite the fact he's gay, when a couple of girls, models, walk by next to him, Akaashi feels his posture change, and he swallows in his stomach.

He's just about to reach for the second half of his sandwich, when one of the assistants appears next to him and shakes his head.

"You can eat that once the shoot is over. Drink this." He says, quietly and puts a glass of red wine in his hand.

"Thank you, but I don't feel like-" Akaashi begins.

"Please drink it." He whispers, pleading. "I don't want to get fired."

"O-okay." Akaashi blinks and takes a sip.

"Thank you."

Akaashi turns to Bokuto. "Why?"

"Red wine makes your muscles stand out." Bokuto explains and sighs. "Akaashi, I'm sorry, I know you didn't sign up for any of this. Look, I've been through enough of the photo shoots here and I know my mom and everyone else here is crazy, but you're a real trooper, so please just grit your teeth and do as you're told. You can hate me as much as you want later."

"Bokuto-san, I could never hate you." Akaashi replies with a small smile, downs his glass of wine and stands up. "I'm ready."

Akaashi loses track of the amount of clothes he gets to try on. The positive thing is that Bokuto's mom's newest collection doesn't have any speedos, but only swim trunks and surf shorts. He has make up artists all around him, some working on his face, others on his chest and almost non existent abs.

"Oh my God, I smell bacon." One of them says quietly. "Did you eat bacon?"
Akaashi's never felt insecure about having bad breath, because he always brushes his teeth and has gum, but just to be safe, he nods silently and makes sure to only breathe through his nose.

"Lucky you." The make up artists mutters. "Once we're done with the shoot, everyone's going to pig out at the buffet like crazy. You gonna join us?" She winks at Akaashi.

"Stop distracting him!" One of the photographer mutters. "Excellent. You were gifted with such beautiful features, so precise, I've never seen a photo of you, but I can tell you're photogenic. Come on, stand up and prepare for the camera."

Akaashi feels grateful that he'd done a presentation in English on Robert Frost, because he'd learned a very important quote - "The best way out is always through". Those are the words he keeps repeating in his mind over and over again as the cameras flash. And Bokuto's words too, that all he has to do is grit his teeth and do as he's told.

"Look at me, look at the camera! Give me a sultry look!" The photographer yells at him, snapping photos like mad. "Now look away!"

Akaashi's eyes settle on Bokuto, sitting and drinking yet another beer. Even from a distance, he knows Bokuto well enough to read him like an open book, so he knows the reason behind Bokuto's crossed legs, fidgeting in his chair constantly - he's trying to hide a boner.

He's always been one to shy away from attention, and under the current circumstances, having the spotlight, in a room full of people, unfamiliar eyes all staring at him, he should be feeling incredibly uncomfortable. But seeing that Bokuto is turned on, knowing it's because of him, Akaashi feels a surge of confidence course through him, the kind of confidence he never knew he had, and an automatic smirk forms on his face.

"Yes! That's it! Make love to the camera!"

It's nearly 10 pm when Bokuto's mom claps her hands, satisfied with the result of their work, saying it's time to leave.

A limo drops the three of them off in front of Bokuto's house and it's Akaashi's second time going there, but it looks completely different from their Halloween party. Since Bokuto's parents'd known Akaashi would be a guest staying over, they'd prepared both the kitchen and the living room's tables with all kinds of desserts - muffins, cupcakes, all kinds of fancy sweets in trays, even a chocolate fountain.

Bokuto's father is already there and after greeting them, they all sit down at the table for dinner.

"Have you been improving your grades?" He asks Bokuto.

"Yes, Sir." Bokuto replies.

Akaashi's only seen it depicted in American movies, mostly involving the military, with sons addressing their fathers with "Sir" and despite the fact their dinner is delicious, he feels a lump forming in his throat. He knows Bokuto's relationship with his dad as not as close as his own, with his own family, but after witnessing it first hand, he feels a surge of sadness, as well as respect, for Bokuto and his ability to persevere.

"I know you're off your room restriction, but I'm hoping during your new trimester you will not shame your mother and I any further. I assume Akaashi-kun has been helping you with your studies?"

"Yes, Sir."
Bokuto's dad thanks Akaashi, who replies that no, it's all Bokuto's hard work and doing, to which he laughs and says he shouldn't be so modest. Then he asks about their upcoming volleyball games, if Bokuto's prepared, because he hasn't raised a loser, no Sir, absolutely not, so Fukurodani better win at Nationals.

Bokuto watches Akaashi carefully, and after Akaashi finishes a couple of dangos, he asks for the two of them to be excused, because they are going to sleep.

"You two go and rest up, because I've arranged a dancing lesson for you both." Bokuto's mom says. "I'll wake you up at 8:30 am."

As Bokuto and Akaashi brush their teeth together, in Bokuto's bathroom, Bokuto spits into the sink and mumbles.

"He's not always like this. My dad, I mean." Bokuto shrugs. "He had a really rough day at work today. Mom said after an 8 hour operation, his patient died on the table."

"Bokuto-san, you don't have to explain. It's fine."

Bokuto nods. "My parents had all the guest rooms prepared, but if you'd like you could stay in my room? There's a mattress that could be pulled up from under my bed and I'm sure it's already made up, pillows, sheets and blankets ready."

"Bokuto-san, I'd rather sleep with you."

"Bokuto-san, I'd rather sleep with you." Akaashi says, and his insides rumble happily, because he sees Bokuto's cheeks splash bright pink, and he feels pleased that it's Bokuto that's embarrassed and not him.

Fuck yeah!

When the two of them settle into their beds, Bokuto whispers.

"Akaashi, thank you."

"For what?"

"For everything. For helping me and for not running in the other direction after meeting my parents." Bokuto sighs. "You know they'd rather have you as their son than me."

"Bokuto-san, don't say that." Akaashi licks his lips. "You know what? If I were in your shoes, I would crumble under all the pressure in an instant. You never cease to amaze me, Bokuto-san."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. Now can I tell you a little secret?"

"Akaashi, you know I'm not very good with those, but I'll try."

"I know. But here's the thing. I really wanted to try that chocolate fountain, but I was too shy to do it in front of your parents."

Bokuto roars in laughter and Akaashi nudges him in the ribs, shushing him to be quiet. Bokuto turns the light above his bed.

"Let's go." He grins. "They're already asleep."

The two of them tiptoe downstairs and despite the rich dinner they'd had, they sit around the
dessert table. Bokuto doesn't eat anything, but watches, a silent smile on his lips, as Akaashi attacks everything in front of him, dipping it all in the chocolate fountain. He feels his stomach is full, but instead of stopping, he starts spooning the warm chocolate into his mouth.

"Bokuto-san, please turn it off." He whispers, disgusted with his gluttony. "If you don't, I'll keep eating until I throw up."

They head back up to Bokuto's room, making a quick stop in the bathroom for Akaashi to brush his teeth again.

Bokuto's mother is a filthy liar, because she wakes them up at 7:00 am.

"Up, up you two! You have an hour and a half to eat breakfast and get ready for your dancing lesson!"

"Yes, mom!" Bokuto replies, jumping out of his bed like a bullet.

Akaashi, of course, takes a couple of extra minutes to rise, sleepily, silently, contemplating his life choices. This is not a good way to spend his Saturday morning, but what can he do?

Endure. That's all he can do, endure.

Bokuto lets Akaashi borrow some sports clothes from his wardrobe and the two of them quickly go downstairs into the kitchen. Bokuto's dad'd already left for work, so Akaashi, Bokuto and his mother eat breakfast together. For all the months he'd known Bokuto, it's Akaashi's first time seeing Bokuto drink coffee. And goddamn, it doesn't just smell amazing, it tastes like the best coffee Akaashi's ever tasted.

At 8:28 am, the front door rings and their maid goes to open it, while Bokuto's mom claps her hands.

"That's your dancing teacher." She says. "I'm going to work, but you two better follow all of his instructions."

Bokuto and Akaashi nod quickly.

"Hello, Koutarou-kun, Keiji-kun, my name is Juan." He introduces himself with a big, bright smile. "For the next few hours I'll teach you boys all the right moves."

Akaashi doesn't ask where Juan is from, but it's more than obvious he is not from Japan.

"Juan, we've worked together before and I know you're a professional." Bokuto's mom says and finishes her glass of orange juice. "I'm leaving you in charge. Boys?" Bokuto and Akaashi look at her. "Normally, I would call you in for last minute fitting, but I have the best of my team working on your clothes, so that won't be necessary. Just make sure you are ready for tonight."

The second that she walks out of the door, both Bokuto and Akaashi relax.

"First off, I want to see your moves." Juan says and plays some music on his laptop. "Come on, let's go! Dance for me."

Bokuto and Akaashi exchange glances, while Juan dances around their unmoving bodies.

Juan stops the music. "Okay, this is not working. Do either of you know anything about dancing?"

"I know some stuff." Bokuto says and Juan's face lights up.
"Show me."

"I can't dance alone, dude!" Bokuto replies. "I'm only used to doing it with a partner."

"That's perfect, because you have two partners." Juan points at himself and at Akaashi. "Please go with me first. Do you know how to cha-cha?"

"I think so."

"Okay, Golden Boy, come here."

Akaashi watches closely as Juan and Bokuto start dancing together, memorizing their footwork, because he knows the same kind of thing would be asked of him shortly.

When the song ends, Juan claps his hands, praising Bokuto. Then he makes a motion with his finger for Akaashi to get up and join him.

"It's your turn, Sexy Boy. Let's go."

Akaashi doesn't know if he's the one leading or not, but since Juan nods his head in approval, they dance until the music stops.

"You boys are excellent students." Juan smiles. "Golden Boy, could you please play the king?"

Bokuto blinks. "Elvis?"

"No, no, no." Juan lets go of Akaashi and taps at his laptop. "Julio Iglesias. You ever heard of him?"

"Yeah, Enrique Iglesias's dad." Bokuto says.

"Si, exactly. And do you know salsa?"

"Isn't that like a dip?" Akaashi asks, while Juan laughs.

"Si, but I mean the dance."

"I don't know that." Akaashi replies, scowling.

"Ay ay ay! This is why I'm here, though. Come on, Sexy Boy, let me teach you."

Akaashi would rather see the dance first, but Juan is having none of that, taking his hand and placing the other over his arm.

As the music begins playing, Akaashi takes a few steps back, because he is certain he would mess it up and step on Juan's feet.

"Five, six, seven, eight! Go!"

Akaashi stares at their feet, but Juan whistles. "No, Sexy Boy, look up, look at me. Let the music lead you."

Akaashi has no idea what that means and Juan must see his confusion, because he removes his hand from Akaashi's arm and places it on his hip, pulling him up real close.

"Now we take a step back. That's called New York." Juan says. "Back from the top, Sexy Boy."
Akaashi repeats the steps and when he moves back, Juan shimmies in front of him, then they do the same thing in the other direction and Juan lets his hand slide all over Akaashi's chest and stomach.

"Okayyy, Jose, man, let's cool things down, shall we?" Bokuto rises from his chair, displeased.

"My name's Juan." Juan laughs and stops moving. "Did you get the moves, Golden Boy? If you have, please, take my place and show me."

With a determined expression on his face, Bokuto steps forward and takes Juan's place as Akaashi's partner.

Juan claps his hands and they begin dancing. Bokuto, too, pulls Akaashi closer to him, so close that their hips press against each other, their legs moving in rhythm to the music, knees grazing, but on and on they dance until the end of the song.

"¡Ay, caramba!" Juan grins. "Let's stop for a lunch break."

Akaashi joins Juan around the kitchen table, sweating, while Bokuto begins to pull out platters of food out of the fridge.

"Excellent work, boys. Golden Boy, you have more experience with dancing, don't you?"

"Yeah. My ex girlfriend is a cheerleader."

Juan laughs. "I can understand why she is no longer in the picture."

"What do you mean?" Bokuto asks as the three of them start fixing each other sandwiches with the cold cuts.

"Dancing." Juan replies simply.

Bokuto blinks. "I don't understand."

Akaashi agrees, because he doesn't understand either.

"You two are lovers." Juan says.

"W-what?" Bokuto sputters, crumbs flying, face heating up. "What the Hell are you talking about?"

"I've never met either of you before, but just by the way you move, I can tell a lot." Juan explains. "Body language never lies."

Akaashi swallows his bite. "So what can you tell, Juan-san?"

"I'm a big sports fan and I've been in Japan long enough to know Golden Boy," He nods his head at Bokuto. "is a volleyball celebrity. Exclude the fact I've worked with your mother before, I can see it just by your body type. So it's already a given that you two are teammates."

"Tell us more." Bokuto mumbles, face buried in his phone.

Akaashi feels his phone vibrating and while Juan talks, he reads the text message from Bokuto.

"Let's get him drunk :D"

Akaashi looks up from his screen with a poker face, giving an almost invisible head nod.
Bokuto immediately rises and takes out three shot glasses and a bottle of tequila.

"Let's get the party started, shall we?" He grins.

"I don't drink on the job." Juan says.

"Yooo, we're just dudes here, man." Bokuto winks. "I won't tell my mom if you won't?"

Juan scratches his head. "Okay, fine."

The three of them drink.

"So, Juan-san, tell us more about you." Akaashi asks conversationally, while Bokuto refills their glasses. "Where are you from?"

"I'm from Monterrey, born and bred. You know where that is?"

"Mexico." Akaashi replies.

"Si. Have you ever been there?"

"No. I've never been out of Japan." Akaashi replies.

"Mexico!" Bokuto exclaims. "I've been to Cancún with my parents!"

"You should go to Cancún without your family, but with your friends. And I know what you boys are thinking, but let me tell you, you cannot outdrink a Mexican with tequila."

Bokuto and Akaashi exchange glances, while Juan laughs.

"I may have been born at night, but not last night." He winks. "But since you asked, let me tell you more about me. I was a grade A student, so I got accepted to Hopkins."

Akaashi coughs. "Johns Hopkins?"

"Si."

"What is Johns Hopkins?" Bokuto asks.

"It's a really hard university to get into." Akaashi replies.

"Si. My parents wanted me to become a doctor, maybe even a surgeon, like your father." Juan nods at Bokuto. "But I couldn't. That kind of life wasn't for me, so on my third year in university, I quit." He shrugs. "My passion has always been dancing."

"You followed your passion, huh." Bokuto sniffs.

"Yes. My parents did not agree, but I put my foot down and told them this is my life and I will do what I like. To me, dancing isn't just passion, it is a way of life. I cannot live without it. I decided to follow my intuition, what my heart was telling me to do, and I started doing what I love, what I live for. Which is dancing." He shrugs. "So ever since, I've been traveling all over the world, sharing my love for dancing and teaching people about it. What about you, boys, what are your passions?"

"Volleyball." Bokuto replies, eyes gleaming. "I wanna be a professional volleyball player."

"Excellent. You have to follow your dream, Golden Boy." Juan nods and turns to Akaashi. "And
what about you, Sexy Boy? What do you want?"

"I don't know." Akaashi swallows. "I honestly don't know what I want to do."

"That's perfectly fine." Juan smiles. "You're still just a teenager. You have your whole life ahead of you to decide what you want to do and who you want to be."

"Juan, you're awesome, dude." Bokuto finger guns him. "Thanks for being so awesome."

"You're welcome. Now let's get back to our dancing lesson, or your mother will skin me alive."

Juan teaches them how to samba, rumba, waltz and even how to boogie. He really is a cool dude, because after he's done with passing on parts of his dancing knowledge, he dicks around with them.

"I know this kind of music will not be playing during your event tonight, but let me show you how to bachata."

Bokuto and Akaashi raise their shot glasses at him, watching closely the way he dances. It's entrancing, to be honest, the way his entire body moves with the music, almost becoming one with it.

By the time Bokuto's mother returns, the three of them'd finished the tequila bottle and are way too in the zone to stop dancing around an invisible sombrero, doing the La Cucaracha.

"La Cucaracha! La Cucaracha!" Bokuto sings happily.

Akaashi snaps his fingers. "Olé!"

"Juan, are the boys ready for tonight?" Bokuto's mom asks.

"Si, absolutely."

"Did they give you any trouble?"

"No, they were the perfect students." He winks at them both.

"Mom, can Juan come to the dance too?" Bokuto asks.

"Sure. He can join us if he'd like to." She replies.

"I would love to join you guys, but I have plans for the night." Juan grins. "See you boys around."

Akaashi would really like to take a nap, but Bokuto and him only get free time for quick showers, then they get dressed up in their suits and have to sit down, letting the make up artists Bokuto's mother'd brought home with her prepare their faces for the cameras.

He's never been to a fancy event like this before, but the second that he steps out of their limo, Akaashi has to shield his eyes, nearly blinded from all the flashlights. He feels like he's at the Oscars, because there's a red carpet under his feet and despite the fact he's a nobody, since he is there with Bokuto and his parents, he is a somebody, with reporters pushing their microphones in his face, asking him what it's like being Fukurodani's Vice Captain, what it feels like to be on a team with one of the top 5 five aces in the country.

Since nobody had instructed him what to say and if he should say anything at all Akaashi just smiles and nods at everyone, silently.
Luckily, Bokuto comes to his rescue after a couple of minutes. The two of them pose for a few photos, before Bokuto ushers him inside.

"Here, take this." He smiles, pushing a glass of champagne into Akaashi's hand. "It'll make you relax a little."

Akaashi drinks it, then takes Bokuto's glass and drinks that too.

"I suppose you needed that." Bokuto chuckles softly. "I'm really sorry about this, Akaashi."

"Bokuto-san, it's fine. As long as the champagne glasses keep coming, I can persevere."

"Well good thing there's an endless supply of." Bokuto scowls, staring at his phone.

"Of what? Bokuto-san? Is everything alright?"

"It's Kuroo. I'm so sorry, Akaashi, I gotta go."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

*drives by late as fuq* Yo. This chapter is dedicated to my Brobin Hood, phantomdieb. Happy Birthday to you, bro ❤ Thanks for helping me with my writers block and listening to all the late night shenanigans. ILU

"Bokuto-san, surely you're not thinking about leaving me when you know I only came to be with you?"

His guilt trip doesn't work, though, Akaashi can see that, because despite the golden eyes wavering, Bokuto's jaw is firmly set.

"I know. And I'm sorry, Akaashi, but I really have to go. I promise I'll make it up to you."

Akaashi's eyebrows furrow as Bokuto waves at a taxi.

"No. No, Bokuto-san, this is not okay. You asked me to be your date and that's why I'm here, to support you and spend time with you. And now you're just going to ditch me here without even giving me an explanation?"

"If you want me to explain, I promise you, I will. But that'll take time and right now I can't afford that."

As he stares at the back of the yellow car driving off into the busy street, a million different profanities stuck in his throat, Akaashi realizes there might be cameras and hungry reporters closely watching his every move, so he takes a moment to compose himself.

He's upset, but he tries to be reasonable. Knowing Bokuto, he wouldn't leave him hanging high and dry unless it was like, life and death situation.

But thinking about that is no good either, because he's gonna get worried and that wouldn't help his case at all. How did that Robert Frost quote go? "The best way out is always through."

Yeah, that's right. He's going to try and put a positive spin on this whole situation and before he knows it, Bokuto will be back and everything will be peaches.

So. How do you put a positive spin on spending your Saturday evening at a place you don't want to be in, surrounded by people you don't know for God knows how long and having to cover for your date that just ditched you?
Good question.

As Akaashi is racking his brain for answers, he's suddenly blinded by the flashlight of a paparazzi that's almost invading his personal space stepping over the red rope.

And that's when it hits him. But of course! How did he not make the connection sooner?

When he found out he's going to be a boarding student at Fukurodani, he immediately thought of Harry Potter and Hogwarts and that made everything better. And tonight? Tonight he's given the opportunity to imagine what's it's like being a tribute from The Hunger Games.

Come on, Akaashi, if Katniss Everdeen can do this, so can you.

"May the odds be ever in my favor." Akaashi quietly mutters under his breath as he walks back in, with a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

As a tribute, his first job is to study the arena, so he fully takes in his surroundings. The ballroom is packed and shiny and spacious and horrendously expensive by the looks of things. He's in the Capitol. What was Haymitch's first advice, other than "stay alive"? Find water. Right. Well, considering the circumstances, he has to find something to drink, preferably with some alcohol in it.

He'd already had some champagne, which was sweet. So he's going to stick to sweet. No hard liqueur. He spots a waiter close by and he takes a mojito off his full tray, smiling politely.

It would've been nice to have his fellow District tribute around to show him the ropes, so Akaashi knows if he should stand out or blend in. But since Bokuto's not around, he's just going to have to wing it.

Soon, Bokuto's parents find him, determinedly backing him into a corner, and begin introducing him to their colleagues. Two mind numbingly boring banter filled hours with lots of fake smiles later, Akaashi realizes there's a whole lot more to Bokuto's father to hate than just his homophobic side, so that immediately makes him President Snow.

He approaches a couple of people around his age and makes small talk. Careers.

Turns out, making conversation with rich kids isn't all that difficult. All he has to do is ask "So where do you like to summer?", then listen and nod his head, laughing politely at their silly jokes that he doesn't really get and that's basically it.

Akaashi takes a couple of bathroom breaks and after making sure Bokuto's parents both spot him on the dance floor, he decides to check out the buffet. His current mood can definitely be picked up by the glorious looking finger food all around. There's delicious sliders and prawn cocktail and fruit punch and all these gourmet stuff he would love to try. But the problem is, the appetizer table is surrounded by people looking for someone to chit chat with and he is so done with chit chatting.

He's not really a tribute looking for sponsors, so despite the fact he's hungry, ditching the food and all the people that come along with it is truly a no brainer.

There's a reason why it's called The Hunger Games.

A socializing break is just what he needs, so after excusing himself, he walks out of the ballroom. Leaving the building is not an option, so he gets into the elevator to the top floor, hoping there'll be something there. That's how fancy places like this are depicted in movies, right? Roof top parties and all that jazz? Even if there's people and loud music, he can tolerate everything, just as long as it's open and he can get some fresh air inside his lungs.
As the lift dings on 18 and the door opens, Akaashi is not disappointed - a dark and secluded lounge with nothing but his footsteps echoing through it. It gets even better, because there's a massive balcony with couches and tables and armchairs and even though they have no cushions, he's perfectly content with standing.

Akaashi puts his hands in his pockets and walks straight ahead to the glass rails. He closes his eyes, giving himself a few moments to just breathe in and out, relishing the slight breeze.

It's not completely quiet - he can hear the music booming in the distance and the cars down below honking from the busy streets, but it's kind of nice, actually.

His fingers fish out his phone and dial Bokuto's number.

"Bokuto-san, it's me again. Your inbox is full, so I don't know if my messages are going through or not, but please reply or pick up. I can no longer hide in the bathroom, because your Mom keeps waiting for me outside with different girls to dance with and you know I don't dance. Dancing is only okay when you're here, because you're way more horrible than I am and I don't look so bad next to you. You better call me as soon as you get this. If you don't, I swear to God I'll kill you. If you think I'm joking, I'm not. I will kill you. Call me. Bye."

He calls Kuroo's number next, but it goes straight to voicemail.

"Kuroo-san, hi, it's Akaashi. Neither you or Bokuto-san are picking up your phones and I've no idea what you two are doing, but you better call me soon. It's been more than 3 hours, I'm starting to get really worried. Seriously, call me. Bye."

Akaashi doesn't feel ready to go back to the crowded ballroom just yet, and besides, if Bokuto or Kuroo try to call him, he wouldn't hear his phone, so he decides to stay a little while longer.

He takes off his suit coat, folds it neatly and places it on the floor, like a little and very expensive pillow. After taking a seat, he crosses his legs and arms, taking in the view in front of him.

Tokyo at night is breathtakingly beautiful, especially from up here, he thinks. Just staring at all the lights below, in the distance, wondering what all these people living in the buildings around are up to this late. Party or worry? Work or fun? Papers due or work reports?

It's so calming. He could stay here for hours and wouldn't get bored, imagining up different scenarios about strangers like that.

"It seems my safe haven's been discovered." An unfamiliar voice reaches his ears and Akaashi's head whips to the side where it came from. "Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you."

It's a boy around his age, maybe a bit older. He's got a thin face with dark hair swept to the left. Short eyebrows and slanted eyes. He's shorter than Akaashi, but the way he carries himself makes Akaashi think he'd like to be taller.

"Can I sit next to you?" He asks and Akaashi nods. "Daishou Suguru, it's my pleasure." He extends a hand, which Akaashi shakes.

"Akaashi Keiji."

"I know." The guy, Daishou, replies, smiling.

Akaashi blinks. "How?"
"Here everybody knows everybody."

"It's my first time being here."

"Yeah, I know. You come to these kind of events a couple of times, you get used to all the familiar faces. And I've been coming for years, so..." He shrugs. "Either way, I'm glad I met a new face tonight." Akaashi nods. "If I have to be honest, I've seen you before."

"You have?" Akaashi blinks. "Where?"

"Volleyball games."

"You play?" Akaashi asks.

"Used to."

"Not anymore?"

"No. I just transferred schools and didn't make the cut for the team."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"It's okay. I'm going to work hard and improve over the summer, so in September I can become a Wing Spiker for Nekoma High."

"You go to Nekoma?" Akaashi's lips turn up at the corners. "I have very close friends from there."

"Yeah? Let me guess. Kuroo-senpai?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I guessed." Daishou sticks his tongue out and smiles. "He talks a lot about Fukurodani, and especially about Bokuto-senpai. And since I saw you came together tonight, I made the connection."

"Very perceptive." Akaashi notes. "So you're also a first year?"

"Mhm."

"I have a friend from your class." Akaashi says. Well. He doesn't know if Kenma is still friends with him, but he considers him a friend. "His name's Kenma."

"Kenma-san!" Daishou perks up at that. "Of course, yeah, we're classmates. We don't really talk, but I think he's really cool. His setting skills are exceptional."

"I think so too. His dump shots are just..." Akaashi shakes his head, smiling. Last time they played together, Kenma got about 4 feints in right under his nose. Damn.

"Insane, yeah. But so are yours."

"No, nobody can compare to Kenma when it comes to dump shots."

"I heard you'd never played volleyball before the season began. Is it true?" Akaashi nods. "And you're already a starting setter." He whistles. "It's incredible. You are incredible."

"Thanks."
"So you're ready for Nationals?"

"Definitely."

"Do you know the team you play against first?"

Akaashi nods. "Shiratorizawa Academy."

"Have you ever seen them play?"

"Only on tapes."

Daishou agrees. "Makes sense. Studying the way your opponents play is really important."

"Yeah, definitely. Although there's a team that made it to Nationals this year that aren't really what we at Fukurodani consider a threat."

"Oh? What's the name of the team?"

"Nohebi Academy."

"You don't consider them a threat?" Akaashi shakes his head. "How come? If they made Nationals, I'd say they're a threat. They beat us real good."

"From what Kuroo-san and Kenma told me, it was a close call. I heard they have this one player that's a real piece of work."

"Oh? Who is he?" Daishou asks.

"I don't know his name, what year he's in or what position he plays, but from what I've heard, ever since he joined Nohebi's team, their main strategy is to kiss up to the refs and win with manipulation."

"I think manipulation on the court requires a certain skill."

"Sure, I suppose." Akaashi shrugs. "But instead of gaining favor by kissing ass, they could just practice more and become a better team that relies on their volleyball skills, instead of cheap tactics. Either way, I'm looking forward to seeing them lose."

"Maybe they'll win and surprise you?"

"I seriously doubt that."

"Have you ever seen Nohebi play?"

"I don't need to. We only watch the tapes with the strong teams." Akaashi licks his lips. "Anyway. You know what else I heard about that Nohebi player I was telling you about? During the last game that they lost, his girlfriend totally dumped him."

"No, no, no, that's not true, she didn't dump him. They were just... going through a little bit of of a rough patch."

"That's not what everyone's saying. I heard she dumped him and it was like, this really big dumping, because he's such a loser."

Daishou opens his mouth to protest, but then he stops. Smiling, he scratches his forehead and speaks.
"Alright, I get it. You know who I really am."

Akaashi snorts. "Of course I know who you are, what kind of a birdbrain do you take me for?"

"Well, you do go to Fukurodani, so..." He shrugs.

Akaashi doesn't reply.

"So what gave me away?"

"Just the fact that you pretended to be a Nekoma transfer and Nekoma's not a big enough school to cut any volleyball players. Besides, you knew I'm close friends with Kuroo-san and Kenma-san, and I would've heard if they got any new transfers."

"Alright, you're smart, I'll give you that."

"If you think flattery will make me like you, you're wrong. Bokuto-san warned me all about you."

"Yeah? What did he say?"

"He said you roofied him last year."

"Oh my God, I did not roofie him." Daishou rolls his eyes dramatically. When he sees Akaashi crossing his arms expectantly, he continues. "We were at a boring event like this one and he was hungry, so I offered him some chocolate."

"You offered him some chocolate." Akaashi repeats sarcastically.

"Exactly! How was I supposed to know he didn't know chocolate means hash? It's not my fault he ate all those brownies."

"Right. Because everyone's into drugs and knows hash means chocolate."

"Hash is not a drug, not technically."

"You're gonna put this on technicality?" Akaashi shakes his head. "This is exactly why people don't like you."

"I don't really care about being liked. What I care about is winning." Daishou smirks. "You should be nicer to me, you know?"

Akaashi snorts. "How do you figure that?"

"Well, how about the fact I know Bokuto's not around and you're covering for him?" Akaashi rolls his eyes. "Where is he then? Please humor me."

"This is a big place and I'm not his keeper." Akaashi replies. "So excuse me for not being able to pinpoint his exact location."

"You're full of shit."

"How so?" Akaashi challenges.

"If I go downstairs right now and ask Bokuto's parents where their son is, they'd start looking for him. And that might become an issue." Daishou sticks his tongue out.
Akaashi is beginning to understand why Bokuto and Kuroo dislike him.

He's never dealt with blackmailing before, so he doesn't know if he should bluff or not, but from what he's heard, Daishou is not the type of person to try to one up.

"What do you want?" He asks bluntly.

"Spend some time with me and I'll keep my mouth shut."

"Where's the catch?"

"No catch." Daishou puts his hands up innocently. "I'll be honest with you if you're honest with me."

"Uh huh, sure."

"You don't really have options here, Akaashi-kun, so take it or leave it."

Fucking Careers, Akaashi scowls.

"Alright. Okay. You're calling the shots, so what's it gonna be?"

"For starters, we go back downstairs."

Akaashi gets up, puts his blazer back on and after butting it up, follows Daishou into the lift.

Once they're back in the ballroom, Daishou leads the way to a big huddle of girls.

"Good Evening, ladies." He greets them, smiling. "Which one of you would like to dance with my friend?" He nods his head at Akaashi, who tries his best not to scowl. "He's real shy, so try and be gentle, yeah?"

Before Akaashi knows it, a girl takes his hand and leads him to the dance floor. He's not familiar with the song, but after dancing with Juan all day, he can tell this is salsa. He pulls the girl closer to him, taking the lead, and they begin dancing.

"You don't seem all that shy." She slurs.

Akaashi doesn't need to look at her diluted irises to know she's on something.

"I try my best." He replies, smiling politely.

"So, like, d'you wanna go make out in the bathrooms?"

"No thank you."

She eyes him up dubiously. "You gay or something?"

"I'm taken."

"Typical." She sighs. "The hot ones are either gay or taken."

When the song's over, Akaashi takes a small bow, thanking her for the dance. But before he can move to the sidelines, another girls pulls him for a dance. And another one. And then another one.

He loses track of his dancing partners, but after a while his shoes start pinching his toes and he wonders if his better option would've been killing Daishou. There wouldn't have been any
witnesses and surely, getting rid of his body would've been more enjoyable and less sloppy than half dancing half supporting drunk girls that leave peach lipstick smears over his collar and neck.

Akaashi sees Daishou in front of him, clapping his hands in rhythm with the music, face full of glee and a bit to his left, he spots Bokuto's dad and suddenly, he realizes what a great opportunity he's given to kill two birds with one stone. Let snake boy think he's warming up to him and more importantly disappoint Bokuto's father.

So once the song's over, Akaashi walks up to Daishou and after a curt nod, extends his hand, demanding a dance. He doesn't know if it's good etiquette or whatever that makes him accept, but as it turns out waltzing with Daishou isn't all that bad. It's sure as shit more comfortable than the icy, hovering eyes of Bokuto's father. Yeah, those eyes aren't comfortable at all. They're chromatic and cold, and they catalogue part by part with an overt, perverse too - interested interest behind a pair of thick, tortoise shell glasses and they look and they look and they look.

Good. Let them fucking look.

Akaashi feels his phone vibrating in his pocket, but he doesn't answer. He waits until Daishou is swept away by a new dancing partner and heads for the bathroom, where he dials the last number on his missed calls list.

It rings three times, before there's an answer.

"Akaashi?"

"Bokuto-san! Where are you?" He asks, covering his ear with a finger. "Is that loud siren coming from your end?"

"Yeah, I'm in the ambulance right now."

"Ambulance?" He echoes. "Is everything alright?"

Stupid question, but it's the first one that pops into his head.

"No, not really. Akaashi, I really can't talk right now, but I won't be able to make it back to the dance." Bokuto replies and despite all the background noise, Akaashi can tell he's shaken up. "Akaashi, listen to me. You have to call Komiyan. Tell him where you are and-"

"Komi-san? But it's really late and-"

"Akaashi! Please just do as I ask, I beg you!" He sounds upset, voice urgent, and Akaashi can recognize that tone. It's the tone Bokuto uses when he needs him. And as selfish as it may sound, Akaashi loves it. It's just, never in his life before has he had someone actually need him and it's a good feeling, it's a good feeling to be needed. Especially by Bokuto. "I'm gonna text you the post code, so please come here as soon as possible."

"Yes, Bokuto-san."

He instantly calls Komi next.

"M'kaashi?" Komi yawns out sleepily.

"Komi-san! Hi, I'm sorry for disturbing you this late, but we're having an emergency situation and Bokuto-san said I should call you and."

"Where are you?"
"I'm at this Sadie Hawkins dance."

"Address, Akaashi, give me the address."

"I don't know the address."

"Turn the GPS on your phone."

"Okay, but-"

"Give me half an hour and I'll be with you." Komi replies and hangs up.

Akaashi's upper lip and forehead are covered in sweat, so he splashes some cold water against his face. He takes a couple of deep breaths as he wipes at the glitter and kisses on his neck.

He doesn't bother questioning how Komi would get there as quick as he'd said, because Komi always follows up on his word. So. He's got 30 minutes to figure out the real tricky part of leaving the party without detection from Bokuto's parents.

No, wait. That could make things worse for Bokuto later. It might be better to tell them he's leaving.

But what's a good enough excuse to give?

The cogs in his brain begin turning and by the time he locates Bokuto's parents, he's already got a plan.

Ideally, he would've liked to just speak with Bokuto's mom, but the odds tonight are not in his favor.

Well. At least the music isn't deafening and he could speak with them right on the spot.

"Keiji-kun, are you enjoying yourself?" She smiles. "Where's Koutarou?"

"Yes, thank you very much. And Bokuto-san is why I needed to talk to you, actually. He left a little while ago. And we're doing a special surprise, so I have to go as well."

"He left?" Bokuto's father blinks. "Even though he knows how much this event means to his mother?"

"And this special surprise couldn't wait until tomorrow?" She asks.

People that aren't all that good at lying tend to avoid eye contact, thinking that the eyes would always give them away. Akaashi is not one of those people. He might have been before joining Fukurodani, but right now, he's beyond confident how smooth his lying abilities have become. Whether that's a good or a bad thing.

Right now it's the greatest fucking thing.

"No." Akaashi presses his lips together. "He might be upset with me that I'm telling you this, but Bokuto-san felt confident that the way you made us look -" he glances fondly at his suit "would increase his chances of winning back Ayame-san's affections."

"He went to her house to win her back?" Bokuto's father asks and when Akaashi nods, he smiles proudly. "Excellent! That's my boy!" He quickly excuses himself to go talk to some people, while muttering something about chivalry not being dead - Akaashi doesn't really care, what he cares
about is the fact his lie was believable enough to get off scot free.

Bokuto's mother, though, he can tell from her lingering eyes, isn't convinced.

He thanks her for tonight and just as he's turning on his heel to leave, her hand gives his shoulder a gentle squeeze.

"Be kind to him."

Akaashi feels himself, as if in a dream - a dream that quickly deteriorated into a nightmare, standing outside the red carpet, the wind blowing loudly as he wipes his sweaty palms off on his suit.

What? What did she say?

It's as if the words make no sense. He desperately racks his brain for explanation.

Is it because she suspects there's something between them? Does she know there's something between them?

Why else would she say "be kind to him"?

His mouth has gone as dry as sawdust.

A couple of curious cameras are trained on him, snapping away, and he feels gratified he's able to wipe his face clean of any emotions, making him appear almost bored. On the inside, though, that's a whole different story.

"Akaashi! Akaashi! Over here!" Komi's voice calling his name zaps him out of his reverie and he looks ahead, at the huge yellow motorbike with its driver waving at him. "Hurry up, dude, I can't stay here!"

"Komi-san?"

"The one and only." Komi thrusts a helmet in his hands. "Here, put it on."

"Is this your bike?" Akaashi asks as he fastens it over his head.

"No, it's my brother's."

"And is your brother aware you have his bike?"

"I'm only borrowing it for a little while. C'mon, hop on and tell me where we're going." Akaashi shows him the address Bokuto'd sent him. "Ok, got it. You're not afraid of high speed, are you?"

"No. Should I be?" Akaashi locks his hands over Komi's leather jacketed upper body and feels it shaking with laughter.

"Hold on tight!" Komi yells over the noise of the engine roaring to life.

He's never ridden a motorbike before, but it quickly becomes his favourite means of transport. They swerve effortlessly between the long car lines, avoiding the traffic jam and Komi refuses to let the orange lights slow them down.

Akaashi thinks about how eventful this night has been. First - The Hunger Games. Now it's The Fast & Furious: Tokyo Drift.
"You wanna fill me in on what's going on?" Komi asks as the two of them rush up the stairs of the hospital.

"I honestly don't know. Bokuto-san got a text message from Kuroo-san, I think, and he left the dance we went to with his parents and then hours later he called from an ambulance, saying I should call you and get here as quickly as possible." Akaashi replies and turns to the bored looking plump woman behind the front desk. "Hi, we're here to see-

"Visiting hours are over." She mutters, not even bothering to look up from her paperwork.

Akaashi tries again. "We have a friend that came here with the ambulance and-

"Visiting hours are over." She repeats.

Komi slams his hand against the desk. "Listen up, you old hag, you're wasting precious time we don't have! So tell us where-"

The woman shuts the glass window in their faces.

"Nice going, Komi-san, that was real smooth." Akaashi scowls. "Now we're gonna have to go look for Bokuto-san floor by floor. Do you know how big this place is?"

"She was useless." Komi replies as they get into the lift and presses 1. "We'll be quicker if we separate, so you take the left side, I'll take the right."

Four Bokuto-less floors later, the antiseptic scent is really beginning to get to Akaashi and the higher they go, the worse it gets. Other than a couple of guards telling both Komi and him to slow down and not run in the corridors, there's still no sign of Bokuto and that's when panic starts to set in.

Pull yourself together, Akaashi. Bokuto would need you to be composed, so no matter what, you can't let your fear show.

As the elevator opens on T15, he spots Kenma down the hallway, sitting in front of a room and immediately calls out for Komi.

"Hey. I'm really glad you're here." Kenma says quietly.

Akaashi nods and extends his hand, but then reconsiders.

Last time they saw each other they didn't exactly part on the best of terms, but all it takes is one look into Kenma's eyes and Akaashi sees the sincerity in them. There's no bad blood between them. Kenma's genuinely glad he's there.

So he pulls him into a hug.

"Bokuto's in there talking to the police." Kenma's explains in a whisper.

"What about Kuroo-san?"

"We- we don't know yet. We're still waiting." He hears Kenma's choked sob against his ear. "I'm scared, Akaashi."

"Me too." He admits, letting his chin rest on top of Kenma's head, locking his arms against his neck and pulling him tighter against his chest.

Akaashi doesn't know how long they stand there, hugging, but it must be a while.
Eventually, Komi clears his throat.

"I don't mean to interrupt, but why is Bokuto talking to the police?" He asks as they let go of each other.

"I don't know. I just got here and they took him in for questioning. He didn't have time to explain anything, he just told me to wait for him out here." Kenma says. "All I know is that Kuro's in critical condition and the doctors are trying to save him right as we speak."

"Akaashi, what are we gonna do?" Komi asks.

Akaashi shrugs. "We wait." What else is there to do?

It almost feels like time has frozen and it's not passing at all, but pass it does. Slow. Excruciatingly slow.

Komi tries to keep a conversation going by asking Akaashi about the dance and Akaashi knows he's doing it as a distraction - anything to pass the time, really - but he's too tired to talk. He prefers the silence, so after a couple of "yes" and "no"s, Komi stops.

"God, I hate being a sitting duck." Komi swears and gets up. "I'm gonna go get some coffee, do you guys want anything? Something to eat, drink?"

Kenma shakes his head, but Akaashi nods. Dawn should be breaking soon and he could definitely use some coffee to stay awake. No, not really. Even without the caffeine sleep is out of the question. But drinking would at least give him something to do with his hands and mouth.

"I really need to go to the bathroom." Kenma says.

"Same." Akaashi replies. "But I feel like if I go, something's gonna happen."

"Yeah. So maybe that's why we should."

"Okay. You go first, you've been sitting here longer. My bladder can wait a few more minutes."

Kenma goes and comes back and still nothing.

"Maybe you'll have better luck." He sighs, plopping himself down on the chair next to Akaashi.

"Maybe."

He's just getting up, when they see a doctor approaching. He beckons at them both with his hand.

"You two friends or family of Kuroo Tetsurou?"

"Family." Kenma replies instantly. "We're family."

"Then come with me."

They follow him into the lift.

"How is he?" Kenma asks.

"Well, things were pretty bad earlier, but we managed to stabilize him. His life is no longer in danger." The doctor explains and they let out a sigh of relief.
"What happened to him?" Kenma asks, voice quivering with emotion.

"Mild brain damage due to severe hypothermia and alcohol poisoning, a couple of broken ribs and bruises all over his body."

"Mild brain damage?" Akaashi echoes. "How do you know it's not permanent?"

"Well, we can't know for sure until he wakes up."

"Can we see him?" Kenma asks.

"Absolutely." The doctor replies, leading the way to room 503.

Akaashi's heart drops as he sees all the machinery surrounding Kuroo's bed. There's tubes and catheters and probes and an oxygen mask attached to his battered and bruised body and the whole thing is just too terrifying to look at.

"It looks way worse than it is." The doctor reassures them. "He's under heavy sedatives right now, so don't expect him to be out of it any time soon."

"But he will wake up, won't he?" Kenma croaks out.

"Of course. Give it a couple of hours and-"

There's a loud knock and Bokuto walks in, followed by Komi. Bokuto doesn't bother with pleasantries, he makes a beeline straight to Kuroo's bed.

"How is he?" He asks, full attention at the doctor.

"I was just telling these two he's gonna wake up in a couple of hours. You're the one that brought him here?" Bokuto nods. "So you're the hero of the day. If you hadn't done CPR on him, the ambulance would've been too late. Congratulations, kid. You saved a life tonight." The doctor says and pats Bokuto's shoulder. "You should be proud of yourself." Bokuto nods absentmindedly, while Akaashi, Kenma and Komi gawp at him with awe. "Well, since I assume all four of you are family, I'll leave you to it. If he wakes up before I come back, call one of the nurses."

When the doctor leaves, Komi's the first to speak.

"Bokuto, you know how to do CPR?"

Bokuto "mhm"s in reply, stroking bits of Kuroo's messy hair away from his forehead.

"How?" Komi asks.

"My father taught me first aid when I was seven."

"Shit! You became a first aider when you were fuckin' seven?! You're amazing, dude, you really are!"

"Bokuto. I know you're probably not in the mood to talk, but could you please tell me what happened tonight?" Kenma asks. "Please... I need to know."

"Yeah, okay." Bokuto licks his lips and begins. "It's kind of a long story, but, um, after Kuroo's last birthday we made a promise to always have each other's back. Since we were both legal, we put each other as our emergency contacts, so if anything ever happened, we could cover for each other in front of our families and stuff. Tonight I was out with my parents and Akaashi when I got
a "S.O.S." text from him. I tried calling him, but there was no signal. Then I remembered that a few weeks ago he told me he was gonna go to this frat party to see his cousin. By the time I got there pretty much everyone was drunk, so even though I showed his picture and asked over and over again if anyone'd seen him, none of them remembered. I asked the campus guards to help me search for him, but he was nowhere to be found. As they were contacting the police, he called me. When I listened to the message he was so drunk, I could barely understand a word. He just kept apologizing. He said some guys got a little too rough with him, forcing him to drink. Y'know, so he wouldn't remember their faces or names, if he knew them. I called my phone operator and asked for the location of his phone, making up some shit, and they said the GPS signal was coming from my house. So I took a cab there and I found him in the driveway. He was just lying there, motionless, bleeding. So I immediately called an ambulance. While I was waiting for help to arrive, I stripped his wet clothes off and that's when I noticed he had no pulse. He wasn't breathing. I did CPR on him and when he started coughing I put him in the recovery position. Then the medics came and I called you and Akaashi and when we got here, they wheeled him in the emergency room. Then you came and the police took me in for some questioning. I didn't know who was responsible - the people that did this to him - so I was pretty useless in there. But when he wakes up, he'll tell us who did this to him."

"The doctor said Kuro has mild brain damage." Kenma clears his throat. "So maybe he won't remember."

"Let's not jump the gun right now and take things slowly, one step at a time, alright?" Komi says.

Kuroo's alive and that's all that matters, they mutually agree on that.

Other than the constant, quiet beeping noise from one of the machines hooked onto Kuroo, silence falls between them.

Akaashi rubs his eyelids tiredly. Guiltily.

If he'd insisted on Bokuto staying behind to give him a good explanation for leaving, Kuroo would be dead right now. The doctor said it himself - the ambulance would've arrived a little too late.

"I'm going to the bathroom."

He's barely made it into the first stall when he feels sick. He coughs, retching, until there's nothing left in his stomach. He wipes his mouth with a piece of toilet paper and flushes the vomit away.

Bokuto's waiting for him at the sink.

"He called your name. Not "Angel Eyes". The last thing he said before he lost consciousness was your name."
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Kids, none of you asked, but let me tell you a thing. I have been through Mystic Messenger and Voltron Hell, I switched flats, work nearly destroyed me and my motivation went MIA, but somehow I managed to make it back in one piece to bring you *Will Smith pose @ chapter 25* this. I know parts of it might feel rushed, but that's because they are. lol. No, really, I wanted to post this and get started on the next chapter, since s3 and the manga are motivating me to write about ~that. Anyway! This chapter, as crappy as it is, will hopefully satiate your Bokuaka and Kuroaka thirsts. you sinners, shame on y'all And as always, thank you for reading C: P.S. special shout out to Kris and Almsy for keeping up with my awful self and helping me power through the disgusting writers block. I love and thank you both ❤

The way Bokuto places his hand on his hips screams "say something". But Akaashi doesn't know what.

So, shoulders sagging, he doesn't say anything at all.

"You don't think I should've told you that." Bokuto concludes.

"I didn't say that."

"No, but you didn't have to." His voice is surprisingly composed. Quiet.

Akaashi's no fool. It's the calm before the storm.

Not even five minutes after they're back in Kuroo's room, Bokuto's inability to stand still, resulting in angry pacing, isn't enough. One word comes to Akaashi's mind as he sits back, observing Bokuto's silent fury. Explosion. But he keeps it to himself.

Then.

"He was afraid and alone and his last thought before the lights went out was of you and you don't think that's important?" Bokuto all but screams in Akaashi's direction, startling both Komi and Kenma. "Look at him! Just look!" He points an enraged finger at Kuroo for emphasis. "What, still nothing? What is wrong with you? Are you a robot?!"

Kuroo begins stirring at the sound of Bokuto's voice, but the movement causes one of the monitors to start beeping and suddenly the room is filled with nurses asking them all to leave.
"No! No, I'm staying!" Bokuto shrieks.

"Take him out." One of the nurses says and Akaashi, Komi and Kenma literally carry Bokuto out of the room, while he thrashes, kicking and spitting, shouting obscenities at them.

Akaashi is first to let go, followed by Kenma, while Komi tries to pin Bokuto against the wall, possibly thinking he would stop fighting.

He doesn't.

Eventually Komi realizes it's futile and the three of them watch Bokuto's back as he walks away, kicking at chairs and trash cans.

"Do you think I should go after him and - actually, maybe you should go and try to comfort him?" Komi suggests.

Akaashi shakes his head. "Not at the moment. Bokuto-san wants be alone. Later, he will need us. But for now, please leave him be."

"Alright. You are the owl whisperer, you know what's best for him."

Akaashi considers Komi's words.

Yes, he knows Bokuto like the back of his hand, if not better. It had taken him less than a second to realize why Bokuto was so upset with him.

Jealousy.

Bokuto's jealous, because in Kuroo's biggest time of need, he'd spoken Akaashi's name and not his.

Hence why he knew Bokuto would prefer to be alone for the time being, to sort out his emotions.

So maybe Komi is right and he does know what's best for Bokuto.

Akaashi follows Kenma's example and sits on the floor. He sees the first rays of sunshine breaking through the window closest to them and wants to witness the beautiful sunrise, but he's too tired to move. His eyelids feel like a ton of bricks. He lets his head loll back a moment to relieve the tension in his neck and before he can stop himself he dozes off despite his desire to stay awake.

Later. Much later, he is roused by a messy ponytail haired Kenma.

"The nurses said we can go in, but only if we aren't being troublesome."

"Where are Bokuto-san and Komi-san?"

"Komi left like an hour ago. Said he had to return the bike before his brother found out it was missing, but he'll call you later. As for Bokuto, I haven't seen him since he disappeared earlier."

"I see." Akaashi gets on his feet, stretching the stiffness and sleep away. "I'll go look for him."

"You sure you wanna go?"

"Yes. Bokuto-san will be upset if he finds out Kuroo-san's awake and nobody got him. Besides, I'm sure you want some alone time with him in there."

"Thank you." Kenma says softly. "If you don't find Bokuto... The South wing by the elevators
has a vending machine that eats a lot of quarters, but the couch next to it is sympathetic on your back."

Akaashi quickly gets himself a cup of crappy coffee. It's better than nothing, though, and he needs his mind to be clear as he begins his sleuthing.

Where would Bokuto be?

Hospitals are confining and probably remind him too much of his father, so he won't be inside. But he'd be somewhere close by, reachable. Instead of roaming outside like a headless chicken, Akaashi starts off by the window closest to him. Rooftops and empty alleyways. Bokuto wouldn't be there.

The North wing's windows offer up a birds eye view of a park adjacent to the hospital and he knows that's where he needs to go. That's where Bokuto would be. Possibly on the swing set.

On his way to the park Akaashi makes a quick stop at a bakery to get some food and by the time he's located Bokuto, he's already made history of three cheese buns.

"Here." Akaashi hands Bokuto a plastic cup. "Be careful. It's really hot."

"I don't like coffee."

"I know that, which is why I got you chamomile tea. It's supposed to be soothing."

Bokuto mumbles his thanks, but instead of drinking it, he places it on the ground safely away from his feet.

"Do you prefer pork or curry?" Akaashi asks, shaking the plastic bunned bag with handles strapped to his wrist in front of Bokuto's face.

"I'm not hungry."

"I didn't ask if you were hungry or not." Akaashi replies, his patience dissipating. All of a sudden, he's crouched in front of Bokuto, stilling the swing.

"Listen to me!" The urgency in Akaashi's voice is enough to get Bokuto's attention, but just to make sure he gets his point across, he lets his fingers dig into Bokuto's thighs. "Are you listening?" Bokuto nods. "We were a mess when Oikawa-san died. And I know this is really tough, but you can't fall apart like that again."

"I won't-" Bokuto begins.

"No, you can't. This time we don't have the luxury of a Christmas break to spiral into self destruction mode."

"I'm aware of that."

"Good. Then you should know you're not doing the team any favors by not taking care of yourself. Nationals are only four day away and since our qualifying match was a disaster, I would loathe to break my promise and disappoint everyone again."

A couple of cherry blossoms from the trees above land on Akaashi's unsuspecting head and Bokuto reaches over to dust them off, but the pink looks cute on him, so instead, he adjusts one behind Akaashi's ear.
The way Akaashi slightly leans into his caressing hand doesn't go unnoticed and a part of Bokuto wonders if he, too, is craving his touch. God. He doesn't even remember the last time they were this intimate with each other.

And he knows who's fault that is. His.

But now's really not the time for that.

So, licking his lips, he simply says "Pork. I prefer pork."

Seeing Bokuto eating and no longer neglecting his tea, Akaashi's spirits lift a little and he lets himself relax on the swing next to Bokuto's.

"So, tell me. How was the party?"

Akaashi shrugs.

"You hated everyone there, didn't you?" Bokuto asks, even though he already knows Akaashi's answer.

"Yes."

"Yeah, you don't have to explain, I totally understand. It's always like that." Bokuto rubs his eyes tiredly. "Oh. Were my parents okay with you just leaving or they don't know?"

"About that... I kind of told them you went to Ayame's house to confess." Akaashi purses his lips. "I'm sorry, Bokuto-san, this must complicate things for you, but it was the only excuse I could think of at a moment's notice."

Bokuto laughs softly, which confuses him.

"Exactly how is that funny?"

"No, it's just- you're always so polite, Akaashi. You're forever saving my skin and instead of bitching me out - which is what I deserve - you're apologizing?" Bokuto shakes his head fondly. "You're always so good and reliable and strong and I don't know how you can do it. How do you do it, Akaashi?"

"I'm neither of those things, but thank you for thinking so."

"But you are. I mean, how can you be thinking about the team at a time like this?"

"Bokuto-san, I'm surprised you would ask me that."

"Really? Why?"

"Isn't it obvious? Nationals are the only thing I can think about without losing my mind."

"I see." Bokuto clears his throat. "Well, I've said it before, but I'll say it again - making you Vice Captain is the best decision I've ever made."

As they head back to the hospital, Akaashi's words linger on Bokuto's mind.

\textit{Nationals are the only thing I can think about without losing my mind.}

Akaashi's always been there for him in his weakest moments, supporting him in every which way. Over and over again, he is there, giving Bokuto his kindness. When Bokuto is unable to take care
of himself, Akaashi does it for him. Just a few minutes ago, he'd made sure Bokuto ate. For Bokuto's well being. For the team.

And what did Bokuto do? He called him a robot.

"Akaashi, I'm so angry with myself. I always do this. I say stupid and hurtful things and then tell you that I'm sorry." Bokuto says through gritted teeth, fingers curling into fists. "But I'm going to stop giving you empty words and give you actions instead. I think that is the best apology I can give you."

"Bokuto-san, you don't have to apologize to me. We all say things we don't mean when someone we love is in pain."

There he is again, being gracious as ever, understanding, loyal to a fault.

Bokuto presses his lips into a small smile, one that conveys his gratitude. But what he's really saying is "I love you". And Akaashi knows that, he is sure of it. Because unlike him, Akaashi is able to read between the lines.

He is a Ravenclaw for a reason.

Kuroo greets them by waving a few probe free fingers at them. Bokuto and Akaashi crowd around his bedside next to Kenma, both touching him, as if to make sure that he is real, that he is really there.

"Bro, thank God… We were so worried." Bokuto croaks out, trying to keep his voice steady.

Kuroo blinks and nods at Bokuto.

“He wanted to take off the oxygen mask earlier, but the nurses said he shouldn’t.” Kenma explains. “Speaking would be a real strain on his vocal chords, so for the time being he’ll be quiet.”

Bokuto’s fighting hard to keep his expression free of emotion, but it’s not fooling anyone. Kenma seems to be having the same struggle and Akaashi doesn’t really need a mirror to know he’s no better.

This must be so much worse for Kuroo, though, having to see his friend’s worry etched upon their faces. And knowing him, he’s probably blaming himself for it.

Akaashi wants to reassure Kuroo this isn’t his fault. He wants to do or say something to make him feel better. But how? It’s so frustrating, because he doesn’t know how to approach Kuroo without making things worse.

Think, Akaashi, damn it, think! In such a tense situation what would Kuroo do?

He would joke to lighten up the mood. It’s what he always does, offer up comic relief when shit hits the fan. And it always works.

But since he can’t right now, Akaashi takes it upon himself to do it.

“So, since you’re alive, I suppose Hell will remain empty.” He deadpans.

With his peripheral vision, Akaashi can see Bokuto and Kenma’s gaping mouths almost comically dropping to the floor, but he keeps his eyes on Kuroo, who reaches out for his hand, squeezing it and blinking.
Yes! It’s working!

“Akaashi!”

“What? Bokuto-san, please stop being a square. Don’t you realize this would probably be our one and only opportunity to roast Kuroo-san? I say we take it.” Akaashi continues in the same snarky manner. “Oh, which reminds me—” He places the plastic bag into Kenma’s lap. “There’s an apple pie in there. It’s no longer warm, but it’s better than nothing. Please eat it.”

“Yeah, I don’t want to give Kuro a chance to bitch me out for not eating later. Thanks.”

Akaashi nods approvingly. Kenma’s already on the same page as him.

Now the only one left is Bokuto…

“Bro, if you’d checked out earlier, you would’ve left me alone with these two monsters.” Bokuto sighs dramatically. “And I have it so much worse than you, y’know? You’re childhood friends with your setter, so you just got stuck with him. Me? I actually picked mine. I’m so fucked.”

“You wish.” Akaashi snorts.

Kuroo gives them a smile and closes his eyes. All three of them watch as a matching set of tears roll from underneath his dark lashes, covering his cheeks in fresh tear tracks. And it fills their hearts with ache, but it’s the bittersweet kind, because this is his appreciation. This is his thank you.

“Kuro, do you know who did this to you?” Kenma asks, eventually.

Kuroo shakes his head.

“But you remember what they look like? Because the police would be back later and they would ask you all these sorts of things I was unable to answer and—”

“Bokuto-san, please don’t fire questions like that. It’s overwhelming.”

“Akaashi! I just want to see if he remembers what happened to him!” Bokuto turns back to Kuroo. “Do you?”

Kuroo nods thoughtfully, then shakes his head and shrugs.

“What does that mean?” Bokuto blinks, confused. “Akaashi! Do you know what that means?”

“It means we should get Kuroo-san some pen and paper, because it would make things easier.” Akaashi replies.

Bokuto is in and out of the room in a flash.

“There you go, bro.” Bokuto pushes a pen and notepad into Kuroo’s hands. “The guard wants those back later, so someone please remind me to return them, because I’ll forget.”

“Don’t worry, Bokuto-san, we will. Kuroo-san, can you write down what happened?”

Kuroo begins scribbling things down, then turns the notepad for them to read.


“So you were drunk before you even went there?” Kenma asks.
Kuroo nods.

“Jesus, bro, why?” Bokuto crosses his hands. “Drinking until you blackout doesn’t sound like fun.”

Akaashi’s eyebrows knit together, because Bokuto is absolutely right. Nobody drinks that much for fun and that’s a damn fact. People drink so much to forget something.

Or someone.

“You’re always telling everyone to drink responsibly, or if getting shitfaced to never do it alone, but with people you trust. You should have called me and told me you needed a drinking buddy.”

“That’s really rich coming from you, Bokuto, considering last time we were together you said you would kill Kuro.” Kenma frowns.

“Hey, I only said that in the heat of the moment! He knows I didn’t really mean it.” Bokuto grunts.

“This is neither the time nor place for a lecture, so both you stop it, please.” Akaashi scowls.

“Kuroo-san, exactly how much did you drink?”

“Until you weren’t real.”

Kuroo crosses out his answer and crumples the note before they can read it. No, he really can’t say that, because it would make Akaashi all kinds of messed up with guilt and he doesn’t want that. It had been his decision to drink and fuck it, he’s not pinning any blame on his friends for the outcome. It’s his own fault for being so weak. And here comes the worst part - he’d drank so much on his own and then later on was forced to drink, but even then he couldn’t get Akaashi out of his head.

He doesn’t feel bad that he nearly died. He’s not suicidal or anything, it’s just that dying would probably hurt less than his stupid, broken heart.

Imagining what these three would say if they could hear his thoughts makes him stop. They’re already so worried, he doesn’t need to burden them further.

Despite the fact he hadn’t said or written a damn thing, Kenma’d kept up with his train of thought. His golden eyes are speaking to him.

“Kuro. You need help.”

It’s not that surprising to be honest. They’ve been able to hold conversations with their eyes for years.

Kuroo steals a glance at Akaashi, then back at Kenma. If there’s one person that can put him out of his misery, it’s Akaashi. It’s gotta be him.

Kenma shakes his head wordlessly.

“No, Kuro, not him. People are not medicine.”

He almost smiles at that.

When one of the doctors comes to check on Kuroo, he politely asks the others to wait outside.
“I’m heading back to Fukurodani.” Bokuto announces, surprising Akaashi.

“Oh?”

“It’s almost time for Study Hall and I have lots of homework to take care of. I literally just got out of room restriction and can’t let my GPA slip again.” Bokuto shrugs. “I don’t know how correct my work would be, but I’m going to make an effort. That should count, right?”

Akaashi nods. To him, Bokuto being responsible is all that counts. And right now he’s being even more responsible than Akaashi, because homework’s the last thing he’s thinking about.

“You’re staying here, right?”

“Yes.” Akaashi licks his lips. “I doubt I can do much for Kuroo-san, but I think it’s better if I stay.”

“I think so too.” Bokuto pats his shoulder. “I’ll tell whichever RC is on duty that you’ll return in time for school tomorrow morning. I hope it’s Rob so I could beg him to come back and stay here too.”

“What if it’s Jared?”

“Then I’ll just have to wait for Study Hall to be over and sneak out.” Bokuto grins. “Wouldn’t be the first time.”

Akaashi offers up a weak smile in return. “And it probably wouldn’t be the last.”

Bokuto takes a step forward and for a second Akaashi thinks he’s going to kiss him? Bokuto looks like he’s thinking the same thing, actually, but he catches himself and instead, gives Akaashi and then Kenma a weird handshake thing.

“I’ll see you guys later.”

“I should go too.” Kenma says. “Whenever my parents aren’t home, he stays with me, so at least I won’t have to lie to anyone. Still, I’ll drop by his house and ask his mom for some dinner, since she knows we’re alone and either of us cooking would result in having to call the fire department.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be here with him.” Akaashi replies, then presses his lips together. “That’s probably what you’re worried about, isn’t it?”

“No. Akaashi, please don’t think I have anything against you or blame you for any of this. You… you know this isn’t your fault, right? Please tell me you know that.”

“I know.” He replies, but even to his own ears, his voice lacks conviction.

“The people that did this to him, they’re responsible. Not you. Okay?”

“Thank you.”

“And, uh, that thing I said the last time we talked? How you should tell Kuro how you feel about him as soon as possible? Please postpone that talk for the time being.”

“Yes, that’s probably for the best.”

“See you in a bit.”
“Take care, Kenma.”

After a while the doctor allows Akaashi to go back inside and one of the nurses brings a tray with soup and jelly.

“You can only stay if you make sure he eats.” She warns Akaashi with a finger.

“Yes, absolutely. I’ll make sure he eats everything.”

“Good. And keep it quiet, alright?”

Akaashi, not daring to make another sound, nods his head vigorously until she leaves.

“Well, Kuroo-san, you heard the boss lady.” Akaashi says softly, pulling up a chair next to his bed. “You have to eat everything.”

Kuroo scribbles down a word on the notepad.

“Help.”

“No, no, no, I’m not eating any of your food, this is all for you. You have to finish it yourself if you want to get better.”

Kuroo’s entire bed shakes as he silently laughs.

Akaashi scowls, because he knows for some strange reason Kuroo finds what he said funny and he’s laughing at him.

His next note explains the reason.

“Help me eat.”

Ohhh. Akaashi’s face turns red. Of course Kuroo was asking for help to eat - not for eating help - God, he’s so dumb!

Akaashi pulls the tray into his lap and as he prepares the first spoonful, Kuroo puts his oxygen mask to the side.

“It’s… been awhile… since I last made… you embarrassed… Angel Eyes.” Kuroo rasps out with a tiny smile. “It’s… nice… to see I still… have the… ability to… do it.”

“Yeah, and I see you still like making people uncomfortable, so I guess some things never change.” Akaashi mutters, bringing the spoon to Kuroo’s lips.

“Aren’t you… going to… blow me… first?” Kuroo asks, batting his lashes innocently, before opening his mouth.

Akaashi shakes his head, unable to hold a chuckle. “You’re a character, Kuroo-san, you really are. People that have near death experiences and then change, becoming better, yeah, that’s all crap that we see in movies and books. Earlier, when I said Hell remains empty? I wasn’t joking.”

“Didn’t think… you were.”

Akaashi feeds him another spoonful.

“I wonder if there’s a parallel universe where you are actually nice? Do you think it’s possible - a universe with a nice Kuroo-san?”
“There’s… lots of… universes, so maybe… But that… Kuroo would be… a disappointment to… the rest of us. I bet… you are cute… in all universes… Angel Eyes.”

“Yes, I think so too.” Akaashi replies and smiles.

“I haven’t… changed… but you have… It’s good… Angel Eyes… Confidence suits you.”

Akaashi doesn’t know if he has Bokuto and Kuroo to thank for that. Maybe not entirely, but the two of them have most certainly played the biggest role in making him feel comfortable in his own skin. And Yukie, because her rigorous training had transformed Akaashi from Chicken Little to like… well, someone who is no longer ashamed of his tall and lanky physique, but feels good about it. And lastly, his own growth as a teenager. Maybe.

Kuroo is a first class champ, because he finishes the soup and the disgusting looking green jello that Akaashi wouldn’t so much as touch with a ten foot pole even if he was starving. He’s proud of Kuroo, that he wants to reward him with something nice, like a candy bar or something sweet that tastes good. But solids would be off Kuroo’s diet for a while and he doesn’t remember seeing any hard candy in the vending machine.

“Kuroo-san, are your tastebuds working properly?”

Kuroo, who is back to wearing his oxygen mask, shakes his head.

Oh. Yeah, now it makes sense why he didn’t complain about the damn jello.

Kuroo writes in the note and shows it to Akaashi.

“Stay with me.”

“I’m not going anywhere, Kuroo-san, I’m right here with you.”

Kuroo gives his bed a side glance, then pats the empty space meaningfully.

“I’m not sure that’s such a good idea.” Akaashi says, uncertain. The bed isn’t exactly small, but Kuroo’s body is bruised all over. “If I lie down next to you, I might hurt you.”

Kuroo shakes his head and scribbles down a “please”.

“Okay.”

Akaashi wedges himself between the machinery and lies down on his side, facing him.

“If I’m hurting you, please tell me.” Akaashi says. “Write it down or - there-” He takes hold of Kuroo’s left hand. “- squeeze my hand.”

Kuroo’s other hand takes the pen and he writes another note for Akaashi.

“That was real smooth, Angel Eyes. But if you wanted to hold my hand, you should’ve just said so.”

Akaashi rolls his eyes. “Actually I know how badly you wanted to do it, so I decided to take pity on you. Just this once, though.”

Kuroo pouts and pretends to wipe at his eyes in disappointment.

“Do you think there’s enough space on the bed for me to lie on my back? The edge of that plastic
arm thing is nudging my back and it’s annoying. If not, that’s okay.”

Kuroo nods and scoots to the side.

“This bed is pretty comfortable.” Akaashi says and as Kuroo reaches for his notepad, he continues. “No, Kuroo-san, it’s not because you’re in it.”

Kuroo gives a “worth the try” shrug. Then he writes something down.

“Would it be ok if I put my head on your chest?”

“It won’t be heavy, because there’s only air in it, so sure, go ahead.” Akaashi replies.

Kuroo places the notepad on Akaashi’s stomach before sliding down a little, situating his head right onto Akaashi’s chest. Akaashi’s nostrils are being tickled by the messy parts of Kuroo’s hair, so he blows at them a few times before realizing they won’t budge. Sighing, he begins to stroke them out of his face. Maybe that would keep them down - it’s a long shot, because Kuroo’s always had unruly hair, but it doesn’t hurt to try.

“My first weekend at Fukurodani.” Akaashi begins. “I fell asleep on you while we were watching Star Wars and you were playing with my hair, just like I am doing now. Do you remember that?”

Kuroo writes his answer down and hands it to him.

“I remember everything.”

Akaashi’s heart does a dangerously loud flop.

Oh no. This is the exact kind of topic Kenma’d told him to steer clear of. And what had he done? He drove himself right into it, headfirst. Yeah, nice going, Akaashi, well done.

Kuroo’s pen is scribbling again.

“Tell me a story.”

“A story, huh.” Akaashi scowls, continuing to stroke Kuroo’s hair. “I’m not very good at those, but let me try.”

He explains to Kuroo about his meeting with Daishou, pausing every now and again to give Kuroo time compose himself from chuckling. And whenever Kuroo does laugh, he gently taps his hand against Akaashi’s chest, shaking them both along with the bed. Akaashi doesn’t mind it, he actually likes the fact he’s able to make him laugh. Kuroo’s been through Hell, he could use a laugh or two.

“Another one please.”

“I’m not exactly a storyteller, Kuroo-san.”

"Make some shit up then."

“Oh no, I’m even worse at those.” Akaashi chuckles. “My father, he’s great with stories. Not just writing, but actually telling them. He just has this gift of capturing your attention with his words - it’s amazing, really. Oh, maybe I could retell you one of his books?”

Kuroo gives him a thumb up.

And so Akaashi begins. Since Kuroo’s such a chemistry nerd, he settles for a story where the
main lead is a combined science teacher, who makes a breakthrough discovery in his field.

A couple of minutes in and Akaashi feels Kuroo’s breathing slow down, his entire body relaxing. He continues talking and playing with Kuroo’s hair until he’s sure Kuroo’s asleep.

Since he himself is unable to sleep, he tries to get his phone out of his pocket, but it’s not there. He glances at the table, spotting it right next to the empty tray. Yeah, he’d kept it in his back pocket and when he’d sat down to help Kuroo eat, he’d left it there. Cool.

Akaashi doesn’t know which would be worse - Bokuto walking in and seeing the pair of them in Kuroo’s bed like this or Kenma. He can’t make up his mind, because in his head, they’re both equally bad, but since he doesn’t want to rouse Kuroo, he doesn’t move. Also, if he actually does move before either of them come, it would be like he’s hiding what they’ve done, like a coward. And they haven’t done anything wrong, to be honest, just him helping Kuroo feel better and fall asleep.

Yeah, keep telling yourself that, his mind screams at him, but Akaashi’s gotten pretty damn good at ignoring his voice of reason. Fuck you, voice of reason, let me push you into the back of my head, like I do 99.9% of the time. No biggie.

Despite his little “I’m ready for a confrontation if it comes to it” thing going on, when the door handle moves, Akaashi’s breath is caught in his throat.

It’s Kenma.

Kenma’s the first one to walk in and his face expression at the sight of them is a bit different from all the scenarios Akaashi’d played in his head. He replayed different angry Kenmas, but not a calm one.

“Has he been asleep long?” Kenma asks quietly.

“Give or take an hour or so.” Akaashi whispers back.

“I brought food. You must be starving, so come join me.”

Akaashi is famished, so he doesn’t wait for a second invitation. He gently moves Kuroo’s head onto the pillow and then quietly steps away from the bed. As Kenma places two bento boxes onto the table, taking the lids off, the room fills with the smell of home cooked meal and Akaashi tries his best not to salivate.

“Here.” Kenma places a napkin onto his lap, handing him a pair of chopsticks, then taking the seat next to him.

“Thank you.”

“Akaashi, relax. You don’t have to be afraid of me.” Kenma says softly. “I was wrong. I thought you were just playing with Kuro, but it’s so clear that you have feelings for him too.”

Akaashi neither confirms nor denies what Kenma’d just said.

“...I’m not afraid of you.” He mumbles, making Kenma snicker.

“Eat up while it’s still warm. We can talk later.”

Akaashi nods. “Thank you for the meal.”
The rice is so undercooked, that Akaashi feels like a munching horse, whose teeth are about to break with each mouthful. The fried duck is chewy, but taste wise it’s better, though that may be because it’s smothered in soy sauce.

“Kuro’s mom’s a vegetarian.” Kenma explains as he chews on a slice of orange. “And if you weren’t able to tell by now, she can’t cook for shit.”

“It’s not so bad.” Akaashi replies quietly, because he doesn’t feel it’s his place to complain about a free, home cooked meal. But even with his awful cooking skills - or lack thereof - he’s pretty sure he can make a better dinner. The rice, at least. He might overcook it, but not under.

Halfway through his bento, Akaashi puts his chopsticks down and wipes his mouth.

“I totally understand if you don’t want to finish that.” Kenma says.

“Oh no, it’s not that I don’t want to, it’s just that Bokuto-san must’ve missed dinner time and during Study Hall we only get fruit and power bars and he’d be hungry when he comes back.”

Kenma’s penetrating golden eyes stare at him and it makes him feel like he’s being studied under a microscope.

“What?” Akaashi finally asks.

“Kuro’s always told me you eat a lot.”

“I do that, yes.”

“And yet you’re not finishing your meal to save it for Bokuto.”

“Yes. And?”

“Nothing. It’s just… you’re not at all what you look like.” Kenma says. “When I first met you, I already had a vivid picture from Kuro’s words, which was totally wrong, because I thought you’d be more like Bokuto and Kuroo, character wise. But I think I’ve told you that before, right?”

Akaashi nods. “You’re good looking, but you have a mean face. And after getting to know you, I realized you have a really gentle heart. So it’s really not that big of a surprise that they both fell for you.”

Gentle heart? Akaashi never really considered that as one of his traits, and maybe it’s a compliment, but after everything Kenma’d said, that’s not what sticks with him.

“Why would you say I have a mean face?”

“Because you do.”

“I have a mean face.” Akaashi deadpans.

“Yeah, I think it’s your eyebrows.”

“Good to know, I suppose.”

“I didn’t mean to offend you or anything. People always say I’m mean and unapproachable, but that’s just my social anxiety.” Kenma shrugs.

“That’s exactly why you should never judge a book by its cover.”

“Yes! That’s why I was staring at you. You left half of your food for Bokuto, even though you’re
still hungry. It’s a small gesture, but it speaks volumes.” Kenma smiles. “But seriously, as crappy as it tastes, you should finish it, because I brought food for all of us.”

“Oh. In that case thank you and Kuroo-san’s mom.”

Akaashi wolfs down the rest of the food, then moves onto the neatly peeled orange slices.

“On my way here I talked to Kuro’s doctor. He said he should be here for a week at least, so they could monitor him. But that’s not going to happen, since your game against Shiratorizawa is this Thursday and there’s no way Kuro would miss it. He wouldn’t care if we have to wheel him in on his bed, he’s going to be at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium.”

Akaashi snorts. “I’d be surprised if he wasn’t there.”

“Our entire team would be there for sure. We have to cheer you guys on, right?”

“That would be nice.”

“Yeah. Nekomata Sensei wants to see your strategy, because we’re going to be playing together very soon.”

“Really?” Akaashi blinks. “I don’t remember anyone telling me- ohhhh! Jamboree!” Kenma nods. “We’re hosting that three weeks after Nationals.”

“Yup.”

“I should ask Bokuto-san about the details of that tournament.”

“Please ask while I’m around, because I’m curious which teams would be there.”

“If I forget, I’ll text you when he tells me.” Akaashi scratches his ear. “I wonder if Aoba Jousai would join us and play.”

There’s been so much going on lately, that he hadn’t talked to Iwaizumi since the last time he’d called which was months ago. Akaashi’d wanted to call him a few times, ask how he’s doing, but he’d stopped, worrying that maybe Iwaizumi would think he’s being nosy.

“Kuro often speaks with Daichi, but from what I’ve heard, Seijou’s not doing too well.”

“It’s understandable.”

“Yeah.”

It’s nearly 11:30 pm when Bokuto joins them.

“Jared was on duty?” Akaashi asks, while Bokuto drops his heavy looking backpack on the floor, and taking the bento Kenma’s handing him with a nodding thanks.

“Uh huh. That fucker Jared was in a bad mood, because someone spilled hot chocolate in front of our room, so he made Konoha and I clean the entire boys floor!”

“Bokuto-san, did you spill hot chocolate in front of our room?”

“Well yeah, but it was an accident!” Bokuto mumbles, mouthful of food. “Oh, this tastes like shit, by the way.”

“We know.” Kenma replies.
“How come Konoha-san had to clean with you?”

“I got two cups, because I’m used to it, y’know? One for you, one for me. Then on my way up I realized you’re not in our room, so I gave it to Konoha, since he was next to me. But I didn’t exactly hand it to him, I just sort of went like “Hey, Konoha! Think fast!”.”

Akaashi bites the insides of his cheeks to stop himself from grinning. “And Konoha-san didn’t think fast?”

“I know, right? What a dumbass hyena!” Bokuto shakes his head, as if it’s unbelieving that someone wasn’t able to catch a steaming cup of hot chocolate being thrown at them. “Him and Saru had lots of math questions for you, so after you help me with them, I have to call them and-”

“Bokuto-san, you’re not going to give them the answers over the phone. I will explain them to you and then I will call and explain it to them as well.”

Bokuto rolls his eyes and looks at Kenma. “That’s Fukurodani’s tutor boy for you.”

Kenma takes the seat closest to the door and busies himself with his PS portable, while Bokuto and Akaashi begin with their homework. Since the table isn’t big enough for the both of them to have their notebooks strewed all over it, Akaashi hands Bokuto The Awakening, instructing him to read the 4 chapters they are required to read, while he takes care of his own assignments.

He is touched that Bokuto’d brought him his school work, but once Bokuto explains he needs help with Math, Geography, Japanese, English and Chemistry, Akaashi’s eyebrows furrow.

“Bokuto-san, just what exactly did you do during Study Hall? Did you do anything at all?”

“Akaashi! I tried doing all of those by myself, but couldn’t.”

“Bullshit. You see this right here?” Akaashi points at Bokuto’s chemistry notebook. “Your answer is literally in the back of the book.”

“Are all the answers there?” Bokuto blinks.

“Yes.”

“And they have always been there?”

“No, I magically put them there a few seconds ago. What do you think?!”

“Oh my God, why didn’t you tell me before? You could’ve saved me from at least 5 detentions!”

“I’m glad you got those detentions, because you deserved them. Now focus while I explain this to you, because I don’t want to repeat myself.”

“Just for your information, I did stuff during Study Hall.” Bokuto mumbles as they are moving onto Japanese.

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, Bokuto-san, but picking your nose and taking a long dump doesn’t qualify as “doing stuff during Study Hall”.”

“Akaashi, you offend me! I learned all my lines for Theater and Drama! And I spent the rest of Study Hall with Yukie, strategizing about our different plays against Shiratorizawa.”

“I thought we took care of that weeks ago? Isn’t that why we practiced Play D and Play F until
the routines were drilled into our heads?”

“Ohhh.” Bokuto pulls a face. “I forgot you were Vice Captain and were aware of that.”

Akaashi sighs. “Let’s just get on with your homework, please.”

Much later, Bokuto’s school work is completed and Akaashi finally allows him to play the game on his phone he always plays when he can’t sleep. Other than going to the bathroom and getting a Coke, Kenma hasn’t moved from his chair and game.

Akaashi doesn’t feel sleepy, so he doesn’t even try to rest. He knows he would regret it around lunch time - that’s when he usually crashes after pulling an all nighter. But lunch is like half a day away, so he doesn’t worry about it too much.

Turning his chair so it’s facing Kuroo’s bed, notebook in hand, Akaashi does what he enjoys most - drawing. He’s never drawn Kuroo before and now, since he’s asleep and unmoving, would be a perfect opportunity.

When Akaashi draws, he goes into his own little world, where nothing but his pencil, blank canvas and subject exist. Nothing else.

It’s true that people, when asleep, look younger. More vulnerable. At peace.

For an artist, it’s easier this way, to capture one’s beauty when their features are serenely slack. The most lively and difficult part is always the eyes, because even the coldest ones have a certain spark about them. If the eyes are off, the whole drawing is shit.

Kuroo’s eyes are always very expressive. Maybe one day Akaashi can draw them when they’re open. Yeah, he would like that. He would like that a lot.

Akaashi is so into his drawing, making sure all those little details that make up his face are there, that he doesn’t even notice Kuroo’s eyes fluttering open.

He watches Akaashi drawing - probably him - through hooded eyes, just in case he needs to feign sleep at a moment’s notice.

Kuroo thinks of the first time he saw Akaashi. He never would’ve in a million years guessed that that same kid that was being picked on the night of his cousins’ 14th birthday would become the most important person in his life only two years later. How fitting, that since day one, unknowingly, he became protector of Akaashi’s happiness and well being.

Kuroo thinks he maybe fell in love the day Akaashi quietly walked into his life when joining Fukurodani. An oxygen tank would’ve been useful then.

That time he pretended to be Bokuto? Yeah, he was probably a goner then.

Now not even the defibrillators could help bring Kuroo back.

“I know you don’t… want to hear this…” Kuroo rasps out after moving his oxygen mask to the side.”And I won’t… say it again.”

He knows perfectly well Akaashi hates heart talk and trapping him in front of an audience like this is unfair. But Kuroo can’t be kind. His brain feels like a clot.

“Oh, just… you should know…” Kuroo says, quieter now, like maybe he can blame it on all the meds in his system and Akaashi would cut him some slack, since he nearly died. “I’m having a
real… hard time… not telling you… that I love you.”

Bokuto watches carefully as Akaashi gets up from his chair and approaches the bed, hugging Kuroo handcuff tight and stays holding on like a cloud of morphine. Suddenly he is remembering Oikawa, before he went to meet God and the angels, he’d often liked to tell him and the rest of the Rat Pack that princes aren’t ever supposed to cry.

Bokuto doesn’t know why he is thinking about that now, because he is no prince. He delicately exits the room and finally, he allows himself to sniff, dampy at the lashes.

A couple of minutes later, the door creaks open and he doesn’t need to turn around to know Akaashi is standing behind him.

“I was always nervous that this day would come, I just didn’t expect it to come so soon. But then again I’ve always known that beautiful things are never harmless.”

“Bokuto-san, what are you talking about?”

“I always knew you would get bored of me and all my emotional luggage and move on. I guess you finally realized Kuroo’s a better fit for you than I’ll ever be.”

“You’re talking nonsense.”

“Akaashi, don’t deny the truth!” Bokuto spits and turns on his heel to face him. "We both know that you love him!”

“You’re right. I do. I do love Kuroo-san. And I’m not denying anything.”

“So there, see? It’s not nonsense.”

“But I also love you.”

Bokuto pulls a face.

“Bokuto-san, it’s not a competition.”

“If it was, Kuroo would be winning.”

“I broke my rules for you!” Akaashi can’t help the rise in his voice. Smiling sadly, he adds. “That doesn’t make you feel loved?”

“Akaashi, for the sake of my sanity, please don’t fuck with my head like this. Please.”

“I’m not trying to fuck with your head and I’m really sorry if I am, but that’s just how I feel.” He swallows hard, unable to control the emotions in his voice. “I…I love you both. I don’t know how it happened, I didn’t even know it was possible, but- but it must be, because it’s how I feel.” He wipes the tears away from his eyes with the back of his hand. “I’m so sorry, Bokuto-san. I’m so very sorry.”

Bokuto pulls him into a crushing hug.

“Shh, it’s okay, Akaashi.” He whispers and he’s crying too. “You don’t ever have to apologize for how you feel. It’s okay. It’s going to be okay.”

“How-can-you-say-that?” Akaashi’s entire body is shaking, racking with hiccups as he tries to get the words out. “When-I’ve-made-such-a-mess-of-things.”
“Oh, there’s plenty of guilt to go around for that, so don’t try to hog all of the spotlight, alright?” Bokuto tries to laugh, but it’s damn hard. “Kuroo and I are to blame as well, it’s not just you.”

“But I definitely hold the idiot crown.” Akaashi sobs.

“Yeah, I’m not gonna deny that. But it’s so unexpected that it’s actually funny in a way? Us three and you’re the biggest idiot? Amazing. I never would have seen it coming.”

“And yet here we are.”

Bokuto nods in agreement. “Here we are.”

Sighing, they let go of each other.

“Akaashi, what are we going to do?”

“I don’t know.”

Silence.

“No, but seriously, what are we going to do?”

“Seriously, Bokuto-san, I don’t know.”

Akaashi doesn’t know why Bokuto is expecting an answer from him. What is he supposed to say? It’s not something he’s experienced before - neither of them have - for him to give a direct answer. And it’s not like he has a manual or a “What To Do When You Find Yourself In Love With Two People At The Same Time” for dummies he can check out.

“Akaashi. This isn’t about Kuroo or me, okay? Don’t think about us, or how either of us would react. This is about you and how you feel.”

Akaashi licks his lips. “I already told you how I feel.”

“Yes, but what do you want?” Bokuto presses.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know.” Bokuto echoes.

“No, I don’t.”

“Well, it’s pretty obvious what Kuroo and I want. You.”

“And I thought I made it clear when I said I want you both?” Akaashi replies, cheeks burning. “Or was that not clear enough?”

“No, it was. But what happens next is your call.”

“Why me?” Akaashi crosses his arms. “You’re both as equally involved as I am, so why should I be the one that gets to call the shots?”

“Oh. I see.”

“Do you?”

“Yes. No. Uhhh.. I mean I don’t know. But come on, it’s us. We’ll figure something out.” He looks at Akaashi for some sort of reassurance. “Right?”
Bokuto’s pleading eyes nearly break his heart and Akaashi doesn’t know if he has any right to give Bokuto reassurance he himself doesn’t have?

He does anyway.

“Right.”

It’s nearly time for school when the police return a couple of hours later. Fuck it, school can wait, the police can’t. Won’t.

One of them starts questioning Bokuto right on the spot, while the other one starts with Kuroo.

“Do you remember what happened to you?”

Kuroo nods.

“Do you know the people that did this to you?”

Kuroo shakes his head.

“But you remember what they look like?”

Kuroo considers this for a moment, then nods.

“So you will be able to describe them?”

Nod.

“Our sketch artist won’t be able to come in until Tuesday, but-”

“That’s tomorrow!” Kenma says, quiet voice marred with anger. “Can’t you call someone to fill in and do it right now?”

“I’m afraid that’s not how it works, kiddo. We’re busy with-”

“What? What are you so busy with? Eating donuts?”

The policeman’s face darkens. “Watch yourself, kid.”

“Or what?” Kenma challenges, but all it takes is one look at Kuroo’s shaking head to make him stop. “Please excuse me. It’s just really frustrating to see my brother like this and know that the people that did this to him won’t be held accountable until who knows when.”

“They will be brought to justice once we locate them.”

“Yeah, uh huh, you only have like, what, 13 million people to go through? That ought to be quick.”

Before the policeman can lose his temper and possibly cuff Kenma, Akaashi steps in.

“Um. Maybe I could help?”

“You? Aren’t you just one of his buddies?” The policeman exchanges a look with the one that’s questioning Bokuto. “This kid-” he points at Bokuto “- told us there were no other witnesses on the crime scene.”

“Yes, but if Kuroo-san can properly remember the person - or people - that assaulted him and
describe them for me, I could maybe sketch them and-

The policeman’s eyebrows disappear into his hairline. “Are you a sketch artist?”

“No, I am not.”

“And you’ve done this before?”

“No, I have not.”

“So you have no experience with this, but you’re telling me you can draw our suspect - someone you’ ve never seen in your life - from the witness's description?”

“Yes.”

The policeman snorts. “Okay, someone has clearly been watching too many cop shows on TV-”

“Akaashi’s not lying to you! He can do it.” Bokuto interjects. “Akaashi, show him the drawing you did of Kuroo earlier.”

Akaashi doesn’t think that’s his best piece, but it’s the only proof of skill he has to give, so he hands it to the policemen, who both take turns to inspect it, looking at it and at Kuroo.

“Okay, it’s settled.” The Kuroo questioning policeman says eventually, looking at Akaashi. “You’re our sketch artist.” He presses his lips into a tight smile. “Do your best, kid.”

Suddenly, a memory swims into Akaashi’s mind. Just before their first volleyball game, he’d been terrified, listing all the things that he could mess up while playing.

“Akaashi! If you want to be a winner, you have to think like a winner! So quit that loser talk right this second and show everyone that you’re champ material!” Bokuto’d told him.

That’s it. Even if this is a really, like really, long shot and the policeman is just humoring him, Akaashi’s going to do this.

“Thank you, officer. I intend to.” He replies confidently and after cracking his neck, he begins to fire questions at Kuroo. “Kuroo-san, was the person male or female?”

Kuroo scribbles down the letter M.

“What’s the shape of his face like?”

Kuroo writes the word “egg”. Then he adds “upside down egg”.

“Like an alien?”

Kuroo gives him a thumb up and nods, as Akaashi begins to trace the suspect's face.

“What about his eyes?”

Kuroo writes the word “almond”.

As Akaashi starts on them, Kuroo taps his shoulder.

“What is it?”

Kuroo points at his forehead and makes his thumb and forefinger expand, signifying the suspect
has a big forehead.

“How big?”

Kuroo shrugs.

“Kuroo-san, I know this is difficult, but please give me as much detail as possible.”

Kuroo nods and removes his oxygen mask.

“This… will save… time… don’t you think… Angel Eyes?” He rasps out, corners of his mouth turning up.

“Yes. Are you sure you can breathe without that thing?”

“Mhm.”

“Then let us continue. You say he has a big forehead?”

“Yes… Think… the letter M.”

“Gotcha.” Akaashi erases the parts he’s dissatisfied with and redraws them. “What about the eyebrows?”

“Thick… and… bushy.”

“Caterpillar like?”

“Yes.”

Bokuto, Kenma, both policemen and Kuroo watch curiously Akaashi’s pencil move. It’s extremely time consuming, but Akaashi is a quick learner and by the time he gets started on the suspect’s nose, he knows not to start sketching until he’s got down all the details Kuroo can flesh out.

“A crooked nose?”

“Yes...like… it had been...broken before.”

“What about the nostrils?”

“They… fan out… making his nose… broader...”

“What about the lips?”

“Flat… Upper one bigger… than the… lower.”

“What about his chin?”

“Looked like…an ass.”

“It’s called a cleft chin, Kuroo-san.”

“Ass chin… is better.”

“Right. Can we go back to the hair? What was it like?”
“Dyed… blond. Like… ash.”

“Big and fluffy or smooth-”

“No… slicked back… He’d been wearing… a mask and his hair… was messy when… he took it off.”

“A mask?” The Bokuto questioning policeman crosses his arms and echoes. “What kind of mask?”

“Horse head.”

“The mask is not what’s important!” Akaashi scowls. It’s hard enough to concentrate as it is, so the last thing he wants is for them to distract Kuroo with stupid inquiries. “Kuroo-san, can you please look at the drawing and tell me what needs to be changed?”

“The cheeks… you made them… too fat. And the mouth… should have lines… here.”

Akaashi amends the little incorrect details, but the more he works on the portrait, with Kuroo agreeing, the more his eyebrows knit together.

Bokuto immediately spots it, but doesn’t comment, because he knows better than to interrupt Akaashi when he’s in his thinking zone. He’d seen him do it a million times before, during Study Hall and classes, but mostly, during practice and games, when he’s making assessment of the other team.

“Kuroo-san, if you had to compare him to a famous celebrity, would it be like, um… a skinnier, younger version of Ryan Gosling?”

Kuroo thinks about it for a moment. “Yes… uglier too, but… yes.”

“And you wouldn’t happen to remember what his teeth looked like, would you?”

“Teeth?” Kuroo blinks.

“Yes. Think about the front right tooth. Was it chipped?”

“Now that… you mention it… yes.”

The Bokuto questioning policeman clears his throat. “That wasn’t a wild guess, was it?”

“Not exactly.” Akaashi replies with a crooked half-smile. 13 million - and over - population and yet, Tokyo feels small. “I know who he is.”

“What’s his name?” Both policemen ask at the same time.

“I don’t know.”

“So how could you possibly know who he is?” The Kuroo questioning policeman asks.

“Because I’ve met him before.” Akaashi replies. “A couple of months ago.”

“You’ve met that monster before?” Kenma gasps.

Akaashi nods.

“Where?” The policemen ask in unison.
“In our school.”

“Who?” Bokuto shouts, leaping to his feet. “Akaashi, who is he? Tell me and I’ll-”

“It’s Saito-san’s friend.” He replies and Bokuto’s strength deserts him. Shoulders slumping, he gazes at Akaashi in horror. Kuroo too. Wetting his dry lips, Akaashi repeats it out loud. “Saito-san’s friend is the one that did this.”

After that there is only silence.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Hello darkness my old friend friends, it's been a while! I hope you guys enjoy this chapter as much as I enjoyed writing the Shiratorizawa squad coming into the mix. As always, thank you for reading and keeping up with my non-regular updates. I love you all~❤

“Kid, this is a very serious accusation.”

“I’m aware of that.” Akaashi replies.

“It could ruin a life.”

“Yes.”

“And you’re sure?”

Akaashi nods. “A hundred percent.”

The policeman that had questioned Kuroo holds his gaze for a moment, then points at the door. “In that case, please come with us.”

He does.

It’s his first time riding in a police car as well as his first time being in a precinct. There’s actually a lot of firsts for Akaashi that follow. He’s seen plenty of procedural cop shows with Bokuto, but what Hollywood doesn’t show is the disgusting amount of paperwork that goes into this kind of thing.

But it’s amazing. All it takes is for him to give a date. And he remembers it vividly, not just because it’d been Friday the 13th. Bokuto’s first play. Kuroo’s birthday weekend. Iwaizumi and Oikawa’s visit. The whole gym fiasco.

Shinji Ryota. That’s the name of Saito’s friend. And there’s a really long list of petty crimes that crop up along with it. Take your pick - DUIs, vandalism, shoplifting.

“A police car has been dispatched.” The policeman tells Akaashi.

“You’re taking the perp in for questioning?”
“Look at you using police lingo.” He smirks. “I was right, wasn’t I? You watch a lot of cop shows?”

Akaashi nods. “My roommate’s a big fan. He’s the one that found Kuroo-san - I mean the victim.”

“The kid with the white hair?”

Akaashi nods again.

“I see. Well, anyway. We have your contact details down, so you’re free to go.”

“Really? I can go?”

“Yeah. Do you want us to drop you off at home? Or would you be going back to the hospital?”

“I’d like to go back to the hospital, but I have school.”

“You don’t have to worry about school, we’ll give you an excuse note. By the looks of it, you haven’t slept, so go catch some z’s. Give yourself a break after all your hard work, alright?” The policeman winks.

“Thank you, but I really have to go back to school. I’m a tutor and have volleyball practice I can’t miss out on.”

“And school and volleyball can’t wait until tomorrow?” Akaashi shakes his head. “Alright. Give me a few minutes and I’ll get someone to give you a lift.”

“Thank you.”

They shake hands, but before the policeman leaves, he pats Akaashi’s shoulder.

“You don’t know this, but I have very high standards. It takes a lot to impress me. And what you did today was beyond impressive. You ever consider a career in Law Enforcement?”

Akaashi shakes his head, cheeks heating at the compliment.

“You should.”

His chest burns with pride.

It’s not just volleyball. Bokuto and him are incredible together - Bokuto’d saved a life and he’d helped catch the bad guy.

As the police car drops him off in front of Fukurodani’s front gate, he waves a goodbye and heads into the building. The secretary at the front desk looks quizzically at him, but Akaashi waves her off, muttering an “it’s okay, I have a note”, before he goes to the dean’s office.

“Ah, you’re back. Excellent.” The dean nods at him. “As you would expect, Bokuto already filled me in on the reason behind your absences from your morning classes. Do you happen to know when Bokuto would return?”

Akaashi tries to act like it’s not news to him that Bokuto isn’t there already.

“Bokuto-san is probably being detained at the hospital.” He says in an even tone.

“I’m sure he is.” The dean snorts. “Well, I guess it can’t be helped. I’m assuming your weekend was quite eventful, so why don’t you go up to your room and get some rest?”
Akaashi blinks. “But what about classes?”

“Classes this week will be rather easy going for the volleyball team. I’m sure you understand.”

Since the dean himself gives him permission to go sleep, Akaashi all but jump dives under the covers.

He sleeps for hours, but it only feels like a couple of minutes since he’d closed his eyes and Bokuto is shaking him awake.

“Akaashi. Akaash, come on, wake up. Aghkashieee!”

“I’m awake, Bokut-ouffff!” His breath is caught in his throat as Bokuto pulls him into a bear hug.

“How did it go?” Bokuto’s lips are at his ear. “All good?”

Since his windpipe is being cut off by Bokuto’s iron gripping arms, he nods.

“They got him?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san. They got him.”

Bokuto exhales, his warm breath sending goosebumps up Akaashi’s spine. He eventually lets go of Akaashi, but not before pressing his lips against his forehead.

“Get changed, so we can go to the gym. I have a surprise for the team.”

Akaashi quickly pulls his sports gear on and they head down.

“Akaashi, aren’t you going to ask me what the surprise is?”

“...What is the surprise, Bokuto-san?”

“You’ll have to wait and see!” Bokuto grins, winking, while Akaashi sighs.

The team is assembled in the locker room and Bokuto joins Yukie at the front, next to the dvd player and TV that have been wheeled in.

“Listen up, Owls!” Bokuto begins, crossing his arms, chest protruding proudly. That’s - as he calls it - his Captain pose. “Since Nationals are just days away, Yukie and I thought of a great way to motivate you guys.”

Akaashi licks his lips. “Bokuto-san, you’re not going to make us watch your rendition of Shia LaBeouf’s “Just Do It”, are you?”

Konoha and Sarukui cover their mouths as they snicker quietly.

“Akaashi, you-” Bokuto blinks. “That’s actually a great idea! I wish I’d thought of it earlier.” He sighs. “I’m gonna do that next time. For now... Hit it, Yukie!”

The entire volleyball team watch a montage of their plays during the season and each player has a featured moment of glory.

“Whoa, this is so cool, you guys!” Komi claps his hands together and the rest of them join. “Let’s watch it again!”
As they watch the replay, Suzuki gasps. “Is that… is that Nickelback playing in the background?”

“Yes, I was thinking the same just now.” Washio grunts. “I can’t tell which song exactly, because all their songs sound the same, but I’m fairly certain it’s them.”

“Oh my God!” Bokuto’s mouth drops to the floor. “Yukieeee! When I left you in charge of the video, I told you I wanted motivational music, like the Chicago Bulls or the Rocky Theme, not fuckin’ Nickelback!”

“Hey, my weekend was plenty busy with me organizing our sponsorship for Nationals! Your beverages, food and snacks - you think they come for free, Bokuto? No! I had to fight the basketball managers tooth and nail for each damn penny, because they have upcoming championships too and the principal said we have to split our budget. So excuse me if the music from the video doesn’t fit your music taste.” She cracks her knuckles, eyes flashing dangerously. “Does anyone else have a problem with the music?”

They all shake their heads in unison. No. Nope. No problem at all.

“Yukie, please ignore Bokuto-san. We’re all very thankful that you took care of everything, like you always do.” Akaashi bows his head. “This team wouldn’t be the way it is, if it wasn’t for you.”

“Can I get a hoot hoot for the best manager ever?” Konoha yells, followed by lots of hooting noises and Yukie’s back to being in a good mood, laughing and thanking them.

“So if it wasn’t you, Yukie-san, who took care of the montage?” Suzuki asks.

“I asked Konoha for his assistance.”

All eyes turn on him, each pair filled with disbelief and silent judgement.

“What? What are you all starin’ at?” Konoha asks defensively.

“Dude… Nickelback, seriously?” Komi shakes his head.

“Konoha and I are roommates, but I want it to be know I had nothing to do with this.” Sarukui presses his lips together, smiling.

“Hey, fuck you, guys! Fuck you all! Saru, fuck you the most! You’re the worst best friend ever, man!”

“Monkey’s just keepin’ it real, you hyena.” Bokuto roars in laughter, then claps his hands, putting his Captain hat on. “Alright, guys. Prepare for laps and warm up!”

It’s not just Akaashi and Bokuto that return to the gym after a quick dinner, but the entire team, practicing all through Study Hall and even after.

The same thing happens the next day and the day after that.

“Akaaaaaashi, come on! It’s almost 10 pm!”

“Bokuto-san, don’t rush me. I still need to brush my teeth. Just call and I’ll join you in a minute.”

Since Kuroo’s stuck in the hospital and he’d sworn he’d skin them alive if they don’t use all of their time to practice, it became a thing for them to skype call him before bedtime.

“Oh ho?”
“Oh ho ho?”

“Do you *really* have to do this every single time?”

When it comes to Bokuto and Kuroo’s ridiculous greeting, the only person more done than Akaashi is Kenma.

And he is so very grateful for Kenma’s existence. A refreshing bit of sanity, peace and quiet, gaming buddy, a bit of setter competition that helps Akaashi grow and someone that would always stand beside Kuroo and have his back.

Especially now that Bokuto and him can’t be there physically.

“So, how did your day go, bro?”

“Bro, I had a very damp morning.” Kuroo replies with a sigh. “Like reeeeally damp.”

Akaashi scowls at his reflection in the mirror and spits his mouthful of toothpaste into the sink. “Is that a sex thing?”

“Huh? No, I meant my Mom found out I was here and she cried for hours. Poor woman. But I like the way you think, Angel Eyes.” Kuroo wiggles his eyebrows.

“Christ.” Akaashi hears Kenma’s exasperated voice as he leaves the bathroom and joins Bokuto on his bed.


“I’m offended you-”

“Yeah, yeah, you’re offended Akaashi said hi to me first, we all get it.” Kenma sighs. “*Must* we have the exact same conversation every single night?”

“Welcome to 2016, people are offensive as Hell.”

“Kuroo-san, how did your-”

“Mom find out? School called her on her mobile that I have too many absences and shit just went down from there.”

“Shiiit. Where’s she now?” Bokuto asks.

“She’s talking to the doctors and arranging the medical bills. She’ll be back soon, so our chat might be shorter than usual. Anywho. Enough about me. What about you, guys? Getting ready to crush Ushiwaka?”

“You know it, bro. Akaashi’s been rewatching Shiratorizawa’s tapes so many times, that even I feel like I can recite each player’s jersey number and name in my sleep.”

“Smart.” Kuroo nods. “Oh, that reminds me! Sawamura called me earlier.”

“Dadchiiii!” Bokuto grins. “What’s crow Dad up to?”

“He’s alright. Asked how I’m doing yadda yadda, you know his polite nonsense.”

“Did he tell you if Karasuno are coming to watch us play?”
“Nah.” Kuroo shrugs. “Doubt their school can afford it, though.”

“Well, Karasuno’s manager is coming.” Akaashi interjects.

“Akaashi! How do you know this?” Bokuto blinks.

“Because I listen, Bokuto-saan. Yukie was really excited about it, saying Shimizu-san is going to visit her this weekend. And while we’re on the same topic, Iwaizumi-san is going to be staying with us too, because I invited him.” Akaashi’s eyebrows knit together at the surprised look Bokuto and Kuroo exchange. “What?”

“Didn’t know you keep in touch with him, Angel Eyes.”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

“It was just a question. Do you know if it’s just him or the rest of Aoba Jousai are coming as well?”

“Yeah, didn’t he say they’d come cheer for us?” Bokuto asks.

Akaashi shrugs. “He’s the only one that confirmed with me, so I assume it’s just gonna be him.”

“Aww, maaaan!” Bokuto groans. “Since Ushiwaka’ll be here I was looking forward to initiating him into our group. It would’ve been nice to have a Rat Pack reunion.”

“Not to dishearten your spirit, but…” Kuroo presses his lips together. “You know it’s not gonna be the same.”

“Yeah. I know. It’ll never be the same.” Bokuto sighs. “But still, the last time we saw each other was—”

At the funeral.

“- a long time ago.” Another sigh. “Oh well, we’ve got training camp and Jamboree, so we’ll see plenty of each other. I’ll speak with Ushiwaka when I see him.”

“You better destroy his hopes and dreams first, though.” Kuroo says, pointing at the camera.

Bokuto, faultlessly, points back. “You know it, bro. I’m just, like, so pumped for Nationals! Hey hey heyyyy!” He fists the air victoriously.

“Bokuto-saan, please don’t be so loud.” Akaashi says glancing at his watch. “I know Rob’s on duty tonight, but the other people on our floor might be trying to study or sleep.”

“Listen, you two.” Kuroo says glancing at Bokuto and then at Akaashi. “I know now’s not the time for it, because you’ve got your plates full, but… Once I’m outta here, I hope the three of us could have a little chat about our situation.”

Akaashi’s skin prickles, but he nods, while Bokuto gives two thumbs up.

It’s way past midnight when they finally say goodnight to Kuroo and Kenma.

“Akaashi?” Bokuto’s voice reaches him in the darkness from his bunk bed.

“What is it, Bokuto-saan?”
“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For arranging things with Yukie and doing all the things I should be doing, but I’m not? You never burden me with any of the Captain-y stuff I should be taking care of and do it all yourself. It really means a lot to me, knowing that I can rely on you for everything without even saying so much as a word.”

Akaashi’s chest tightens. “I feel the same way.”

And so he does. He really, really does.

Akaashi closes his eyes and goes into dreamland, but he only has 5 hours to spare in it.

After all, it’s Nationals week.

Their day to day schedule consists of breakfast, practice, lunch, practice, dinner, practice, sleep and then more practice. Whenever someone is unable to meet Yukie’s demanded record during suicides, they have to line up and start from the top. What’s worse is the serve/receive drills they do - Bokuto serves, while the rest of the team receive.

They might not have an actual coach to give them professional tips, but Bokuto very wisely says the best coaches in the world are always former players. Because they’ve been into the fray, experiencing it and not just observing it from the sidelines, and know what the game’s all about.

Almost every practice since the beginning of the season, Komi’s been walking around, observing everyone’s forms and stances, giving every single member one-on-one tips on receiving, spending the most time with the weakest links, which, of course, are the first years.

“Do you know what Oikawa-san told me the first time I received one of his serves?” Akaashi asks when Komi’s at his side. His lips playfully curve up at the memory, which now feels like from another lifetime. “Receivers don’t improve overnight.”

“Oikawa was absolutely right about that.” Komi replies. “But you’ve been practicing for months and not just overnight.” Slapping Akaashi between the shoulder blades, he grins. “Now show me how much you’ve improved, Vice Captain.”

Bokuto’s spikes are ruthless as ever, and whenever someone is unable to receive the balls he blasts at them, he starts yelling “You think this is hard? You’ll see hard when Ushiwaka is the one doing the serving! I’m top 5, but he’s top 3! Again!”

Akaashi, out of breath, drenched in sweat towel around his neck, joins Bokuto at the serving line and clears his throat.

“Bokuto-san, instead of being so critical, compliment them for all their effort and hard work. Positive emotions always trump negative, so maybe you should try a softer approach.”

Bokuto considers his words for a moment. “Yeah, alright. I can do that.”

Suzuki is up for receiving and Bokuto fires a loudly swooshing ball at him.

“Well that wasn’t too awful, puke guy! Keep that up against Shiratorizawa and we might not get completely wrecked!” Bokuto yells, then turns to Akaashi. “How was that? That was good, right? Right, Akaashi?”
“That’s…” Akaashi sighs. “It’s not exactly what I had in mind, but I suppose it’s better than before.”

Two hours and a half later, they’re all in the locker room, comparing their battle scars.

“Yeah, that one looks pretty bad, but look at mine!” Konoha displays his reddened hands in front of him. “At one point I thought my arms would break off like my shithead sisters’ barbie dolls, holy shit.”

“Bokuto’s serves feel like spikes.” Washio grunts, while inspecting his own limbs.

“You guys, check out Komi-senpai’s!” Suzuki yells in admiration.

Komi hadn’t missed out a single ball Bokuto’d served and he’s truly Fukurodani’s treasure, because his arms and legs from top to bottom, are covered in cuts and bruises, all different shapes, sizes and colors.

“Come on, owls, hit the showers!” Bokuto’s voice booms. “Then get some rest, because we have an important day ahead of us!”

Akaashi thinks he wouldn’t be able to get a wink of sleep, but after all their hard training, the second that he rests his head against his pillow, he goes out like a light.

On Friday morning, at 7:45 am, the entire Fukurodani school is assembled at the front gates in rows and rows of students, teachers and staff members, many faces painted in black, white and gold to show school spirit and they all begin to load up the school buses, to support their team in The Spring Interhigh - one of the most prolific events of the high school volleyball level tournaments.

The very first bus should be the one with the volleyball team in it, but it isn’t. Konoha and Sarukui aren’t to blame for their late departure, though, it’s the absence of their unofficial coach.

And rules are rules - if there’s no coach on the court with them, they have to forfeit the game.

“Oh, fuck him! I’ll be your coach!” The dean yells to Bokuto’s delight. Straightening his tie, he flashes them all a big, winning grin. “Let’s go!”

“Yes, coach!”

The Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium is absolutely grand. Hands down, the biggest venue they’ll ever get to play in their lives - excluding Bokuto, of course.

“There’s so many people.” Suzuki mutters as they shuffle into the crowd, staying together in order to be lead to their locker room. “I’m getting nervous.”

Bokuto whips his head behind. “Oi, Suzuki, don’t you dare puke in here. Once we’re in the locker room and nobody can see, you have my permission to puke your guts out.”

Akaashi’s about to reprimand him, but decides against it, because he did refer to Suzuki by his name. And besides, being nervous at this stage is normal. Taking a look around, Akaashi spots many having way worse cases of the shakes.

“It’s only players down here.” Sarukui smiles. “The tribunes are going to be filled up to the brink.”

“And they’re all going to be cheering for us.” Konoha smirks.
Washio snorts. “Yeah, that’s realistic.”

“Don’t rain on my parade.” Konoha snaps his fingers at him. “Not today, Satan, not today.”

“Nickelback and Broadway, our jack of all trades continues to impress.” Komi snickers.

“Fuck you, Barbra Streisand is amazing. And fuck you again for calling me that.”

“Nori-chan, shhh!” Yukie claps her hands. “Language!”

“N-Nori-chan?” Komi snickers, covering his mouth with a hand.

“Shut up, Komi, you look like Muttley when you laugh like that!” Konoha says, then turns to her.

“Yukieeee! You promised not to call me that in front of them.” He nods his head at rest of the team, scowling, cheeks dusted pink.

“What, I can’t call you by your name?” She chuckles. “You’re so silly.”

Bokuto roars in laughter. “Hah, Nori-chan is always silly.”

“Bokuto-san, please don’t embarrass Konoha-san when you have plenty of embarrassing stories of your own.”

“Aaaaaaaashi! Back me up just this once, won’t you?”

“I am, Bokuto-san.”

“How exactly are you backing me up right now?”

“Konoha-san has plenty of your dirty laundry he could air out, so I’m trying to prevent that from happening.”

“Oh, if this is about Bokuto’s seducing methods during Valentine’s Day, I can safely say we all know about that.” Komi says. “Konoha posted the picture on our Facebook page.”

Bokuto’s mouth does a comical “O”. “Konoha! You said you deleted them all!”

“Yeah, well, guess what, I lied.”

“You evil, lying hyena.”

“Hey, if it’s any consolation, I also uploaded videos from Komi’s 18th birthday. Lots of them.”

Bokuto considers this for a moment. “Yes, it is. Thank you for that. But you still suck.”

Akaashi notices the slight change in the air around them. The name calling and teasing made all the jitters disappear and he’s never been more grateful for having them as his teammates.

“Look, over there in the corner!” Bokuto points in a not at all discreet manner. “Oi, Sakusa! Next time there’s a net between us, I will show you no mercy!”

“Bokuto-san, please pipe down. Last time we played against Itachiyama, you missed three serves straight during crunch time. And please don’t point, it’s rude.”

“Akaashi! Learn to read the situation! I was trying to be intimidating!”

“Ah, if it isn’t Captain Bokuto-kun.” Daishou drawls as he walks up to the Fukurodani volleyball
team, nodding his head at Bokuto. “Back at it again, with the owl hairstyle. Just so you know, it
doesn’t count for your height, got it?”

“Remind me again, Snake Boy, how tall are you?” Bokuto pretends to think about it. “Hmmm,
was it 180 cm? Oh no, wait, you lack 3 cm to reach that.”

“No, it’s only 2.4 cm!” Daishou retorts, then turns to the rest of them, stopping at Yukie. “Well,
well, well, and what do we have here?” He smirks as he eyes her up from head to toe. “A
beautiful swan in the midst of the ugly ducklings.”

“First of all, we’re owls. Second of all, stop looking at our manager. And third of all, who the Hell
you callin’ ugly?” Konoha snarls.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.” Daishou leers. “And you are?”

“Why you-” Konoha begins, but Akaashi puts his hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t mind him, Konoha-san.” He says, turning his attention to Daishou. “Obviously, Daishou-
san’s emotional scars haven’t healed after getting dumped by Mika-chan. And having to go
through such an ordeal just before Nationals must be really tough for him.”

“Ohhh, shit!” Konoha snaps his fingers in Daishou’s face and cackles. “Nice kill, Akaashi!”

The entire Fukurodani volleyball squad roar in laughter and Akaashi is quite certain he hears
Washio mutter “savage” somewhere behind him.

“Wai-wha?!?” Daishou sputters. “I didn’t get rejected by anyone! I was the one that dumped her
sorry ass! And how do you even know her name?!?”

Akaashi smiles sweetly. “Kuroo-san sends his regards.”

“Tch, of course you got your dirt from that scrub.” Daishou clicks his tongue irritably, then reverts
to smirking. “Anyway, I’m really looking forward to seeing Shiratorizawa wiping the floor with
you.”

“Keep dreaming, Snake Boy.” Bokuto smirks back.

“Bokuto-kun, your confidence might be admirable, but it’s so out of place. After all, you’re facing
Ushiwaka.”

“You think Ushiwaka scares me?” Bokuto quirks an eyebrow. “Please. I relish worthy
opponents.”

“Well, let’s see how you feel after your game against the eagles. You only got one setter, who’s a
first year.” Daishou nods his head at Akaashi. “I give Pretty Boy half an hour before he crumples
under the pressure.”

Bokuto is about to spit a retort back at Daishou, but decides it’s not worth it and merely snorts,
turning his back on him.

“Come on, you guys.” He points at the referee that is waving at them. “We don’t have any more
time to waste with this clown.”

Since they are already in their uniforms, they sit on the benches, use the toilets, splash water on
their faces, awaiting to go onto the court.
“How about a pep talk, Capt’n?” Komi smirks. “Speech!”

“How about a pep talk, Capt’n?” They chant, clapping their hands at Bokuto.

“How about a pep talk, Capt’n?” Bokuto begins, unzipping his jacket and throwing it into the air behind him, for an expecting Akaashi to catch it.

Akaashi doesn’t know which motivational speech he will give them, because earlier this morning he’d seen Bokuto rewatching bits from Braveheart and flexing in their bathroom, practicing his “Do it! Just do it! Don’t let your dreams be dreams!”. Doesn’t matter which one it is, Akaashi still closes his eyes, sighing.

“I know - I’ve seen - how hard you’ve all worked during practice. And I appreciate all the blood, sweat and tears you’ve put into this. But at the end of the day, this is Nationals and our opponents are Shiratorizawa Academy. First years - I’m sorry to have to say this, but other than Akaashi and Manami, I’m not putting any of you into our rotation. I don’t care if we have five whole sets - unless someone gets injured, you’re not going to play. The only way we can win is putting our best forward and that’s our starting players. You all know our current strategy - try and take as much pressure off Akaashi until our first time out, so he can make his assessment in peace.” Bokuto announces. “Owls! Don’t let that snake Daishou poison you with fear. It’s true that we’re facing Ushiwaka, but there’s only one of him.” He crosses his arms, smirking. “And there’s six of us.”

“Shiratorizawa also have six players, you fuckin’ goon!” Konoha shakes his head, but he’s smiling. “Christ, how is this even possible? Bokuto’s speech is not making a lick of sense, and yet I feel so pumped!”

“Yeahhhh!”

As the buzzer goes off and they all file out, Yukie gives each of them a kiss on the cheek.

“Good luck out there, boys!” She smiles. “Make me proud!”

Konoha rubs his face where she’d had her lips seconds ago. “Now there’s no way we could lose!”

Akaashi takes his place, right behind Bokuto, who’s holding up a big wooden sign with “Tokyo Fukurodani” written over it.

He feels Sarukui’s hands from behind, patting his shoulders. “Nervous, Vice Captain?”

“Nervous?” Akaashi echoes, remembering his first game, how absolutely terrified he’d felt back then, telling his senpai he’d like to hold his hand to keep him calm.

But he’s not that boy anymore.

And there’s not a single bone in his body that feels even remotely shaky.

“Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2016 Spring Inter-High Volleyball National Championship!”

Stepping onto the court, marching proudly with his head held high and a small smile tugging at his lips, eyes glued to the reassuring jersey #4 in front of him, he replies. “Why would I be nervous, Sarukui-san?”

As they do a full walk around the courts, the voice booming through the stadium announces each team and their representing prefecture.
Teams playing in the first and second matches may approach the courts to begin warming up!

After a jogging lap, Fukurodani start on their training drills with each one working on their shuffling. Small steps front and back, back and forth. Then Akaashi and Suzuki are at the net, setting ball after ball, while the others separate into spikers, receivers and blockers.

They get 15 minutes of formal warm up, before the siren goes off.

"Ladies and Gentleman, please welcome the players of Miyagi’s representative Shiratorizawa Academy and the players of Tokyo’s second representative Fukurodani Academy!"

The roar of the crowd is deafening as both teams approach the court.

"We will now introduce the Shiratorizawa Academy starting line up." The announcer’s voice booms through the speakers. "#1, Nakano Eiji. #3 Semi Eita. #4 Oohira Reon. #5 Tendou Satori. #8 Ushijima Wakatoshi. #12 Kawanashi Taichi. #14, Libero, Yamagata Hayato. Coach, Washijou Tanji."

All 7 Shiratorizawa players spread out into a line.

"Next, we will introduce the Fukurodani Academy starting lineup. #2 Washio Tatsuki. #3 Sarukui Yamato. #4 Bokuto Koutarou. #5 Akaashi Keiji."

Akaashi, following everyone before him, gives Yukie and their dean a high five and lines up next to Bokuto.

"#7 Konoha Akinori. #11, Libero, Komi Haruki. #12 Minami Hiro. Coach, Yamiji Takeyuki."

Their dean pushes his glasses against the bridge of his nose and waves at the TV crew in front of him, then at the stands.

"Ladies and Gentleman, please cheer on both teams and wish them the best."

All players bow their heads, yelling a “Let’s have a good game!”

Bokuto and Shiratorizawa’s Captain exchange a quick handshake before they go up to the referee for the coin toss. Fukurodani win and Sarukui steps at the line for the first serve.

The whistle blows.

“Nice serve, Monkey!”

Shiratorizawa’s libero receives it and the ball is up in the air.

“Konoha-san!” Akaashi yells, realizing that Semi Eita isn’t going to set the ball for a spiker, but do a dump shot. What the fuck, right at the very beginning?!

Konoha puts his foot forward, trying to kick the ball before it hits the ground, but it’s a second too late.

“Yahoo! Nice one, Eita-kun!”

The crowd take a moment of silence, unsure what’d just happened, but after hearing the speaker announce Shiratorizawa scoring the game’s first point, goes wild.

“Don’t mind, Akaashi!” Washio claps his hands. “We’ll get the next one!”
Akaashi scowls. Washio-san’s right, there’s no point in getting mad about that one, because it was impossible to tell, no, he knows that.

What he’s mad about is the boldness of Shiratorizawa’s setter! He’s never seen a play so daring, right at the get go, and Akaashi curses himself internally, because he feels a part of him admiring the opposing setter.

Luckily, he’s had enough practice both on and off court to be able to mask his face of all emotion. Akaashi would rather eat Bokuto’s dirty gym socks than show Shiratorizawa even a hint of doubt.

“Shiratorizawa’s #8 Ushijima Wakatoshi is up to serve next!”

“You’ve got to be joking.” Konoha mutters on Akaashi’s right.

“It’s alright, let him bring it!” Komi rubs his hands together. “I remember Lefty’s serves from last year.”

“Don’t get cocky, Komiyan, Ushiwaka’s nothing like last year!” Bokuto yells. “Everyone, stand back, we’ll have a high velocity missile fired our way!”

Bokuto’s not wrong.

Despite the entire audience cheering, Akaashi still hears the ball’s same kind of wooshing noise he’s only heard come from Oikawa and Bokuto’s serves. It can’t be denied, those three are in a league of their own.

Komi squats into receiving position and the ball slams against his hands, shooting upwards. For a moment, Akaashi thinks it’ll hit the ceiling lights, but then it starts descending - fast! - and there’s no way in Hell he can reach it.

But even if he could, he wouldn’t waste his stamina right this early in the match. His top priority right now isn’t setting, but observing the play with a clear head.

“Cover!” He yells.

Konoha’s already on it, setting the ball up into the air for Bokuto, who hits it with all his might.

It’s been a long while since Akaashi’s seen him face his first spike with such unwavering confidence. And it’s both a fearsome and a beautiful thing to witness.

Because the ball ignores the laws of physics, as well as Shiratorizawa’s #12’s blocking hands, bouncing off straight into the crowd.

Just like the first point, the second one is followed by silence before a thundering explosion of voices across the gymnasium.

“Did you see that, folks? Fukurodani’s Captain, #4, Bokuto Koutarou’s spike smashed all the way to the bleachers!”

“Hey hey heyyyy!” Bokuto yells proudly, each member of the Fukurodani’s team yelling along with him.

Almost fifteen minutes in, with score 8-9 in the first set, Akaashi glances at the dean and Yukie and they call for a time out.

“Do you want the good news or the bad news first?” Akaashi asks, taking small sips from his
“Bad news first, always bad news first.” Washio replies.

“Bad news - Shiratorizawa’s setter. Just look at him. He’s ridiculous.”

“Akaashi! It’s universally known fact fair hair beats dark, but now’s really not the time to be petty!” Konoha grunts. “Just let it go, man.”

“What?! No.” Akaashi shakes his head. “No, Konoha-san, you misunderstand me. I’m not talking about his hair, I’m talking about his skill. He’s good. Really good.”

“So are you, Akaashi.” Manami smiles encouragingly.

“No, I know that.” Akaashi replies and sighs. Why aren’t they understanding? He’s not fishing for compliments or putting himself down, he’s acknowledging the opponent’s abilities! They should all be doing the same. “But Semi-san is a monster, the same type of caliber as Oikawa-san was. It’s not just Ushijima-san’s serves, Semi-san’s are intense too.”

Konoha groans. “Seriously?”

Akaashi nods. Oh, he’s dead serious.

“Good news, Akaashi, give us the good news now!” Washio says.

“He’s a peacock, but we can use that against him. Please try to aim as many of our serves and returns as possible at Semi-san. The closer to the net, the better. Washio-san, Manami, your blocks are vital to pressuring and adding more stress to him. If we stifle their setter, both Ushijima-san and Nakano-san will be incapacitated since they won’t have anything of quality to hit.”

“Anything else?” Bokuto asks.

“Yes. When you’re at the net, please ignore all of Tendou-san’s smack talk. Especially you two.” He points at Bokuto and Konoha. “He’s a troll, and he will try to get under your skin. He reads the attack before I put up the toss and he jumps on intuition. Please be aware his guess blocking so far hasn’t been wrong. I’ve never played against such a style of blocking, but it’s better to think his movements have no regularity to them. Don’t think too hard and get fooled by them. With opponents like this, it’s best to lead them as far left or right as possible. Try to avoid him and if you can’t, do things differently than you usually would. Chances are, he would read through your feints, but using speed against him is our best option.”

“Aim at setter, avoid troll. Got it!” Bokuto grins, putting his hand forward. “Who let the owls out?”


“Who’s gonna win now?”

“Fu-fu-fu-fukurodani!”

The more they play, the more dirt Fukurodani get on Shiratorizawa thanks to Akaashi and Yukie. For example, they now all know that Shiratorizawa’s #12, Kawanishi Taichi, hates synchronized attacks and switches between guess and analytic blocking. He also doesn’t fight any uncertain battles.

But it’s a two way street and Shiratorizawa’s eagle eyes also know Konoha and Sarukui only stick
to cross court spikes and it’s only Bokuto that switches between those and straights.

Halfway through the game’s second set, despite Akaashi’s warning, Konoha is blocked - yet again - and Tendou’s words seem to really be getting to him.

“Nah ah ahhhh! If you wanna get to Wakatoshi-kun, you have to go through me first. And you can’t be serious, not with those predictable and boring spikes. I’ll shatter your lil’ heart into pieces. Achy breaky heaaart.” Tendou taunts in a sing song voice. “Konoha-kun, you lack power.”

“That’s not what your Mom said last night, you demon!” Konoha hisses back.

“Konoha-san!” Akaashi scowls. Who is being petty now? “What did I say?”

“C’mon, Akaashi, he’s pissing me off!”

“I don’t care!” Akaashi barks back. “Get your head back in the game! We’re all counting on you!”

His last sentence seems to register in Konoha’s mind, because he nods, face growing serious.

It happens during the worst rotation possible, when Akaashi’s at the back line, dashing to get to the net, when the ball torpedoes at him, trapping him right in the middle of the court.

Ushijima’s serve makes him feel like he’s staring at his incoming death in 3, 2, 1.

But his body’s prepared for it.

Thanks to Bokuto’s endless practices, Akaashi, as well as the rest of the team, have been conditioned to not shy away from dangerous jump serves. You just have to make sure you’ve got concrete feet, hands ready to sting and burn into next week, gritted teeth.

However, he’s never been on the receiving end of a left handed serve and the spin of the ball is completely different.

The impact makes Akaashi’s entire body shift backwards as the ball bounces off his hands to the side.

“Akonoha-san!”

Akaashi loses his footing, his ass landing with a painful thud to the floor, eyes watering.

“You don’t have to keep yellin’ my name, Akaashi, I got this!”

Akaashi doesn’t know if he’s more impressed by Konoha’s ability to talk back in such a moment or the way he jumps into the air and does a bicycle kick, striking the ball and Sarukui doesn’t even have to spike it, but merely tip it over the net.

The crowd loses it.

“Ladies and Gentleman, did you just see that? What incredible team work from Fukurodani’s #7 Konoha Akinori and #3 Sarukui Yamato!”

“Konoha, you crazy bastard, where did you learn how to do that?!?” Bokuto hoots.

“I didn’t spend all those hours helping my shithead sisters with their football practice over nothing! Chyeahhh!” Konoha bumps his chest against Sarukui’s and then goes up to the net, roaring at Tendou. “Was that predictable and boring for you? Huh? How you like me now, Guess Demon?”
“It’s Guess Monster. But that was pretty impressive.” Tendou claps his hands, while Semi yells at him from behind to stop encouraging the other team.

“Konoha-san, that was incredible.”

“Akaashi, get over here!” Konoha throws his hand over Akaashi’s shoulders, ruffling his hair. “Haaah, that was so cool! Thank you.”

“I should be the one thanking you for saving my skin.”

“No, man, your shitty receive made me look even better.” Konoha grins, while Akaashi’s smile dies on his lips. “Thanks, buddy.”

“...You’re welcome.”

On another positive note, Akaashi’s tactics regarding Semi seem to be working. His desire to stand out and show off his abilities play a nasty trick on him, because he gets completely shut down in frustration.

Since the very beginning of their match, Akaashi’d wanted nothing more than follow Semi’s example and try sneaking in dump shot after dump shot.

But Akaashi doesn’t allow his pride to cloud his better judgement.

Volleyball is a team sport, involving 5 players other than yourself. You can’t get selfish, hogging the spotlight. You shouldn’t. If you do, you’ll pay the piper.

He waits for nearly three whole sets, when Kawanishi is at the front line blocking. He knows perfectly well Shiratorizawa are expecting a synchronized attack, their entire focus on Bokuto.

Akaashi tells them they are all wrong without opening his mouth. He lets his swiping hand do the talking for him.

“As if to laugh in the faces of the blockers, Fukurodani’s #5 Akaashi Keiji does an unexpected dump! Shiratorizawa Academy was caught completely off guard!”

“Nice one, Akaashi!” Sarukui yells.

Akaashi’s eyes quickly dart at Shiratorizawa and only when they stop at a very annoyed looking Semi, does he allow himself to smirk.

There. How do you like them apples?

“Eita-kun, relax. Akaashi-kun’s not a risky player. That was a one time thing.”

“You’re wrong, Tendou-san.” Akaashi says, eyes on Semi. “Please pay attention. I’ll be doing that again.”

“This little son of a-”

“Eita-kuuun, please watch your language in front of the k- ahhh! Stop punching me!”

Semi’s little outburst seems to be the final straw, because the referee’s whistle blows and he gets subbed out for Shiratorizawa’s #10. Shirabu Kenjirou.

While watching their tapes, Akaashi hadn’t seen Shirabu’s play long enough to determine what
type of player he is.

With so much at stake, knowing your enemy is crucial.

And he doesn’t.

It’d started at the end of their second set, the exhaustion of being under constant pressure, and the stress just piling up. Still, back then it had been somewhat manageable. Now, Akaashi is really - really - feeling it, his limbs screaming in protest with each tiny little movement, squat, set, jump.

He needs his mind to stay sharp, he knows his teammates are relying on it.

He thinks he’s lasted this long, because Bokuto is in top form today - he’s absolutely unstoppable - and he hasn’t had to worry about Bokuto going into dejected mode. Not having to deal with their ace’s fragile mental stability is one less burden to carry.

Which is why it comes as a complete and utter shock that Sarukui crumbles. Akaashi doesn’t know when or how it happens, but it happens. And it’s awful.

“I’m sorry, you guys. That one was one me.” Sarukui mumbles when Shiratorizawa score another point.

Bokuto’s hand is on the back of Sarukui’s neck, pushing forward until their sweaty foreheads are touching. “It’s okay, Monkey, hey hey, it’s fine. Komi’s got you, man, I got you. We got you, alright?”

Sarukui nods, but Akaashi can see he’s not alright. He’s not okay.

Akaashi, who hadn’t so much as been a sports observer before joining Fukurodani, had been on the court for months now and he is incredibly aware of how the game gets played.

Sarukui is not the ace. He’s incredible in his own way, just like Konoha. His play could never move the crowd, not in the way that Bokuto does. But he is vital to keep the cogs spinning, moving them forward.

Seeing reliable Sarukui senpai, who is always smiling, even when he isn’t, no matter what pressure they’re under, make rookie mistakes like missing serves, receives, sets, blocks being off and basically being all over the place, unnerves Akaashi. It completely mindfucks him.

Sarukui’s breaking point is also Akaashi’s. Because when the cornerstone topples over, the control tower shakes.

Akaashi’s confidence is shaken further, because they switch courts and nobody asks him anything. No “Vice Captain, what’s your verdict on Shiratorizawa’s #10?” and “Akaashi, what are Shirabu’s strengths and weaknesses? What can we use against him?” Nothing.

He drinks his water, averting his gaze from Bokuto and concentrating on the ever so loud crowd going on and on with their “Let’s go!” chants for both Shiratorizawa and Fukurodani. He can’t hear them. He can see the mouths opening, the clapping hands, everything, but it’s only static noise. The only thing he can hear is his own heartbeat and thoughts ringing between his ears, telling him this is impossible. Shiratorizawa are a looming wall that doesn’t stop growing, higher and higher. They can’t climb it. It just can’t be done.

So this is what Daishou meant, he muses with a bitter smile, to be swallowed by the pressure of Nationals.
Akaashi can feel the golden eyes on him, piercing him right to his very core.

*Please don’t look at me like that.*

He knows. Bokuto knows.

That’s two out of six, Sarukui and him no longer assets to the team, but a hindrance. And as Captain, Bokuto can’t let it spread, he can’t allow the domino effect to come in play.

“Suzuki, you’re coming in.” Bokuto announces, placing his hands on his hips. “No, Manami, don’t sit, it’s not you. Akaashi is taking the bench.”

Konoha actually drops his water bottle. “Bokuto, you can’t be serious. We wouldn’t be close to a fifth set if it wasn’t for Akaashi. Take him out and we might as well wave in the white flag. We need him in.”

“What I need is for you to shut your mouth. We’ll be fine.” Bokuto places his hand on Konoha’s shoulder. “We’ve got you, you stupid hyena. And Suzuki.” He places his other hand on Suzuki, giving a reassuring squeeze and smile. “I gotta tell you one thing.”

“Don’t puke?” Suzuki offers and almost everyone laughs.

“No, that’s not it.” Bokuto shakes his head. “Set for me and me only. I don’t care if all of Shiratorizawa are on me, just make sure you gather them all to me. Can you do that?”

Suzuki nods.

“Bokuto… are you sure?” Washio asks. “I’m not complaining or questioning your judgement, you’re the Captain, so whatever you say goes. You know we’ll all follow through, but… can your legs really handle it? Out of us all, you’ve jumped the most.”

“Don’t you worry about my legs, Washio. They were made to kick ass.” Bokuto smirks. “Now come on, owls, I can’t hear you! Hey hey heyyy!”

“Hey hey hey!”

“Suzuki, wait!” Akaashi yells. He forces his lips into an encouraging smile. “Good luck out there!”

The whistle blows and he takes a seat between Yukie and their dean.

“You were absolutely incredible, Akaashi!” The dean smiles proudly. “You can finally relax now. You’ve earned your rest, Mr Playmaker.”

“Thank you, Sensei.” Akaashi gives a curt nod.

Yukie’s knee nudges his. “I know you’re tired, but please keep your eyes on Bokuto.”

Akaashi nods again.

Now that he’s not playing, he can finally concentrate on getting his read on Shirabu.

He racks his exhausted brain for something. Anything.

Come on, Akaashi! You can do this! You watched him play. What made him stand out?

That’s the thing, though. Nothing makes Shirabu stand out.
He’s got solid hands. Not the most accurate, but solid nonetheless. When the receives are off, he’ll give a high toss that utilizes the wing spiker’s strength. And his setting safety net is their ace.

**He’s just like me.**

He’d spent all this time making sure he didn’t underestimate his opponents, that he completely forgot it’s just as dangerous to overestimate them.

“Give us that service ace!” Konoha’s voice booms loudly as Bokuto lines up for another serve.

Bokuto earns them five consecutive points from serving and serving alone.

“I know I’m new to this - I mean I’ve seen so many of your kid’s games - but watching from here, this close... Bokuto is an enigma, isn’t he? It’s absolutely baffling how such a troublemaker at school can be so different on the court.” The dean says, clapping his hands. “Did you just see his serve? That serve wasn’t human! It couldn’t be. Is Bokuto even human?!?”

“Yes. Bokuto’s on fire today.” Yukie grins. “When he’s not into his dejected mode, he is incredible to watch, isn’t he? I feel like even if he wasn’t on our team, but our opponent, he would make me cheer for him.”

Akaashi couldn’t agree more. He understands why Yukie’d told him to keep his eyes on their ace. Watching Bokuto hit spike after spike uplifts his spirit and he can see it’s not just him, but his other teammates on the court. Even the crowd.

He’s never seen Bokuto like this before, spiking the ball with so much self assurance. A part of him is envious, but there’s no malice behind it. He just wishes he could be like Bokuto. Up to the brink, oozing with confidence.

But he’s not. He never will be. Nobody ever will be. Not like him anyway.

Ushijima slams the ball down and Shiratorizawa score another point.

Well, maybe him, Akaashi thinks.

“Now that you’re feeling better, I gotta tell you,” Yukie’s lips are at his ear, whispering. “Nori-Konoha wasn’t wrong. You’ll be needed for the fifth set, so you’ll be going back in. But your expression tells me you’re aware of that already.”

“I’m aware.”

“Then please use the remaining time you have here to get a breather. I know I’m asking a lot from you, Akaashi, but we’ve only got you.” She bites her lower lip. “I don’t know what Tendou said to Saru to make him like this, but he’s damaged goods and the only reason Bokuto’s keeping him in is his stamina. You’ll be going back in for Manami.”

“I know.”

“I’m not going to waste either of our time telling you what you need to do.” Yukie stares at him. “I know you know.”

“Yes. I do.” He gives her a half crooked smile, getting on his feet. “Next time you hug me, it’s going to be because we’re advancing to our next game.”

“Well, duuh.” She grins.
“Wha- WHAT?!” The dean blinks. “You literally came out five minutes ago, you’re going back in? Oh my God, you kids are so wild! This can’t be good for my heart.”

“You’ll be fine, Sensei.” Yukie laughs.

“Fukurodani Academy are doing a substitute, #12 for #5. Ladies and Gentleman, #5 Akaashi Keiji, Vice Captain of team Fukurodani is going back in! Let’s give him a warm welcome, shall we?”

Akaashi, in passing, high fives Manami and steps onto the court.

“Alright there, Akaashi?” Washio’s voice reaches him from the back.

“Yes!”

With him back in, Akaashi can switch things up a bit, letting Bokuto rest a little, by tossing balls to Konoha, and Washio too, utilizing them for all their worth. He does a few risky dump shots too, because with this close to the end playing safe against Shiratorizawa is not an option.

Thanks to his little break on the bench, Akaashi’s back to his old self, mind cool and composed, not doubting his hands when they get the ball.

They’re at match point and that means two more points. That’s all they need to win. He pays 0 attention to the voice in the back of his head telling him 1 point and they lose.

Oohira serves and it’s a clean received by Komi.

He squashes the voice of uncertainty.

“Bokuto-san!”

It’s the perfect set for Bokuto, really, just the way he likes it. Bokuto jumps, for a moment frozen into the air, before his hand comes down, hitting the ball right at its center.

It shoots straight through Tendou’s grasping hands, but his fingertips graze it.

“Chance ball!”

Everyone is expecting a set for Ushijima. After all, that’s what the entire fifth set had been all about, a battle of concepts, Shiratorizawa’s ace against Fukurodani’s ace, Ushijima and Bokuto, two titans clashing.

Akaashi is now fully aware that Shirabu and him are the same type of players.

Because when your team has a brilliant ace, their very existence is a brilliant decoy.

Just as Akaashi expects it, Shirabu and Kawanishi do a quick, going straight for the center.

“Go, Taichi!”

Unfortunately, Konoha’s quick reflexes and feet are at the back line and Akaashi lunges for the ball, receiving it - just barely - with his right hand.

Shit, he shouldn’t have gotten the first touch.

“One touch!” He yells, hoping that despite the shitty spot the ball is at, Suzuki would be able to set it up for Bokuto.
It’s low, but Suzuki gets his hands on it. Feeling the pressure of the blockers, on instinct rather than sense, he lifts it up high not for the covered Bokuto, but for the free Sarukui.

Bad call, really bad call. The worst one possible.

With his adrenaline shooting up high, he watches in slow motion as Tendou shuts Sarukui’s spike down.

A second, that’s all it takes. And it’s all over.

The referee blows his whistle, announcing the final score. 19-21.

“Ladies and Gentleman, Shiratorizawa’s #5 Tendou Satori scores the winning point! Shiratorizawa Academy are advancing onto their second game of this tournament!”

Akaashi feels like his eardrums would burst from all the noise.

He feels strangely composed as he extends his hand to help Komi up. It seems unreal, really. He can see the rest of his team, still blinking in surprise, dazed and confused, their loss still not fully registering.

“Come on, Owls, it’s time to line up.” Bokuto says in an even tone. “Let’s go shake hands with the victors.”

“Ladies and Gentleman, I still can’t believe we witnessed a game between high school volleyball players! Please give it up for both teams, Fukurodani Academy and Shiratorizawa Academy!”

Fukurodani bow their heads in unison to Shiratorizawa, thanking them for the game, then the crowd, thanking them for all their support.

Normally, this is the part where Bokuto gets swarmed with cameras and microphones pushed into his face, having to answer all the questions fired at him, so Akaashi knows he has to step up into his Vice Captain position and lead the team for a quick cool down and stretching.

Yukie and the dean are congratulating them all for fighting valiantly, good job, guys, that was a great game and you should all be proud of yourselves, but Akaashi’s attention is caught by Ushijima Wakatoshi, on the other side of the net, who is motioning with his hand for him to come.

Akaashi points a finger at his chest. Who, me?

Ushijima nods and Akaashi walks up to him.

“Ushijima-san.” He bows his head politely.

“Akaashi Keiji of Fukurodani Academy.” Even when not playing his voice booms authoritatively. “You could ask anyone you want and they would tell you this. There is nothing that I hate more than baseless confidence. But watching you play today made me hate something else and that’s wasted potential.” His eyes narrow. “Why would you have any reason to doubt yourself with all of your talent? You have so much of it.”

Akaashi can now understand what everyone’d been saying about Ushijima, why his bluntness irks them and makes it difficult to get along with him.

He feels fine, though. Why shouldn’t he? His skill is being acknowledged by a top 3 player in the country.
“I’ll take that as a compliment.” Akaashi licks his lips and extends his hand.

“You take it anyway you want.” Ushijima’s eyes glance at Akaashi’s hand, but he doesn’t shake it. “Players who don’t believe in themselves have no place on the court.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Well, most of you guys were asking for this, so here you go :3c

Akaashi steps over Komi and reaches for an onigiri from the tray Yukie’s offering.

“Komi-san, please don’t sleep on the locker room floor, it’s dirty.”

“Not sleeping, not sleeping, just lyin’ down.”

With Akaashi at the front, setting an example to the rest, they’d kept their chins up while walking off the court, but now that the crowd and the cameras are left behind, the tears fall freely.

Akaashi is the only one that isn’t crying.

“You don’t have to keep a brave face for us, Vice Captain.” Sarukui presses his lips into a wet smile, cheeks shining.

“Sar’s right, Akaashi, we’re shedding man tears over here.” A snot nosed Konoha sniffs. “Feel free to join us.”

“I’d rather not, if it’s all the same to you.” Akaashi replies and bites into his second onigiri, chewing thoughtfully.

Last time he’d done it, crying after a loss, Konoha’d patted his back, saying that sometimes, you just gotta say *tragic* and move the fuck on, man.

Well, Konoha’d been right. Losing always sucks, and it stings him too, but there’s really no point in crying over spilt milk.

“Mou, quit licking your wounds already!” Yukie says, placing her hands on her hips. “You should be proud of yourselves, instead of crying like babies.”

“Do you really have to kick us while we’re on the ground?” Washio grunts, draping a towel over his eyes and leaning against the wall.

“Your manager is right, boys.” The dean claps his hand encouragingly. “You fought incredibly out there! I’m so proud of you all.”

“Thanks, Coach, but Shiratorizawa are advancing, not us.” Komi replies.
“More like Shit-atorizawa.” Konoha quips.

“Nah, they’re not shit, we are.” Sarukui sighs. “Well, I know I was.”

“Listen up, you edgelords!” Yukie crosses her arms, displeased.

Before the vein on her forehead pops, Akaashi quickly unzips his jacket and removes his sweaty uniform, heading straight for the showers.

Hopefully, she’d be too preoccupied giving them some of her tough love, and not finish all the snacks they’ve brought.

At least let there be one chocolate milk left, Akaashi thinks.

He quickly washes the dirt and sweat away, rinsing the shampoo out of his hair, before the rest of his teammates walk in, weeping harder.

“If she thinks this is stinking, she obviously didn’t pay close attention to the game.” Sarukui sighs and closes his eyes, letting the water hit him in the face.

“Scary… She’s so scary.”

Akaashi, now refreshed and smelling of vanilla and honey, sits next to Yukie and pulls his phone out of his backpack, while she chomps angrily on a strawberry pocky.

Two text messages. One from Kuroo - if three crying cat emojis can be considered a text message - and one from Iwaizumi.

“Just about to watch the next game. You staying or going?”

“Our bus isn’t leaving until later on, right?”

“Yeah, we’re stuck here.” She shakes the empty pack, letting the last crumbs fall into her mouth. “Mmm. Why do they make them so small?”

He quickly types back a reply, before turning his attention to Yukie.

“Where did the dean go?”

“Bokuto dragged him to Shiratorizawa’s locker room to help him persuade their coach into letting them join us for dinner.” She rummages her backpack.

“Any chance there’s any-”

“Nope, none. You know I eat when I’m stressed out.”

“That much stress can’t be good for you, because you’re always eating.”

“Akaashi, you are the last person that can say this to me. So don’t sass me when I have no snacks left.” Yukie warns him with a finger. “Guhh, I can’t wait for cocktail and catch up girl time with Kiyoko.”

Akaashi’s phone vibrates with another text message. From his father, wishing him good luck.

“We already lost, but thanks, Dad. Love you and Mom.”

Bokuto returns shortly, a big grin on his face, as he gives the rest of the team the great news that
Shiratorizawa’s volleyball squad will be, indeed, joining them for dinner.

“Ughhh. We’re gonna be breaking bread with the enemy.” Konoha pretends to gag.

“Bokuto?” Yukie presses her lips together. “You didn’t just ditch our dean somewhere in the crowd, did you?”

“Come on, Yuks, give me some credit!” Bokuto says as he shrugs his jersey off.

“So where is the dean, Bokuto-san?”

“He said something about giving it an early start of the day, because he’s had enough volleyball or some shit, and went somewhere, I guess? I dunno, I wasn’t really listening.” Bokuto shrugs as he wraps his towel around his waist, not a care in his pocket. “What’s the matter with you?” He blinks at the entire locker room. “Y’all look like someone fuckin’ died?”

“Yes. We did. Out there. Our game was our funeral.”

“Saruman, pleeeeeease.” Bokuto groans dramatically. “We gave it our best shot, we lost. ‘S alright, dude, we’ll get ’em next time. Lemme hear you! Hey hey heyyyy!”

“I can’t believe this. Can you all believe this?” Konoha shakes his head.

It just happens so fast. One second, Konoha is laughing and the next, he lunges at Bokuto, who slams against the lockers with a loud crash. Bokuto blinks, his surprise written all over his face and his hand is just barely holding his towel in place, but Konoha wastes no time. His fist connects with Bokuto’s face just before Komi and Washio jump to their feet, separating them.

“Back off, Komi!” Konoha snarls, fighting to free his restrained hands.

Bokuto spits, wiping the blood away from his lips with the back of his hand. “Peace, Tatsu.”

Washio looks at Akaashi first, waiting for his nod, before releasing Bokuto.

“Komiyan, let him go. If he wants to take another swing, he can do it. It’s fine.”

“Bokuto! How can you say it’s fine, it’s not fine! You’re bleeding!” Yukie says, hands covering her mouth.

“Relax, Yukie, I’m fine, really.” Bokuto turns to the now free Konoha. “You done?”

‘Oh, I’m only gettin’ started!”

“No, you’re done.”

“You’re a selfish son of a bitch, you know that?” Konoha barks, voice laced with venom. “Where do you get off slapping Saru with that “it’s alright we lost” crap?! Don’t you realize how fuckin’ rich this is coming from you, you hypocritical bastard! We always have to pick you off the floor, whenever you get into one of your dejected modes. Captain, wake the fuck up, because you’re preaching to the goddamn choir! You never see us bitching you out about it. So how about this one time - this single fuckin’ time - you let Saru be upset over the fact Shiratorizawa got luckier than us, alright? Jeez, Ace! Be at least a little fuckin’ self aware and considerate, won’t you?”

“What did you just say to me?”

“You heard me loud and clear!”
Bokuto presses his lips together. “Konoha. You can tell me you’re unhappy with the way I run things as Captain. I don’t mind. I’m open to suggest—”

“Right. Of course you are.”

“Kono, that’s enough.” Sarukui retorts.

“Saruman, I don’t mind his insults. What I do mind is how disrespectful and unfair he’s being towards you guys.”

“What?! I feel like I’ve taken crazy pills!” Konoha smacks his head. “Akaashi, please translate, because I don’t understand what this idiot is trying to say.”

“You said Shiratorizawa got luckier than us. You think them winning has anything to do with luck?” Bokuto shakes his head. “It’s not me, Konoha, it’s you. You’re the one that should wake up. Because this is Nationals, man, and not one team got here based on luck. Which is why I’m so disappointed to hear you belittle all of your and your teammates’ hard work in fighting so hard out there. You think if we’d beaten Shiratorizawa, it would’ve been luck? No. No, it’ll would’ve been all that time we spent in the gym practicing. I seriously considered making you Vice Captain at Yuki’s suggestion at the beginning of the season, but I’m glad I didn’t and you just proved me right. Because you’re sloppy and you’re lazy and your way of thinking, that winning can happen by accident, this is exactly why your nickname, that you hate so much, is jack of all trades. And unless you stop having that mindset - that sports victories are based on luck - then I can assure you, jack of all trades is all you’ll ever be.” Bokuto says, then turns to the rest of them. “Let this be a warning to you all. Next time I hear either one of you mention the word “luck” in here, I will slap you so hard, your eyes won’t open for a week. Understood?”

“This is stupid.” Konoha reaches for his rucksack and pulls his sweaty jersey out, throwing it at Bokuto, who only slightly moves his neck and it falls on the ground. “Bokuto, go fuck yourself!” He kisses his two middle fingers, before pointing them at him and walking out the door.

“Charming! That was just so charming!” Yukie claps her hands irritably. “Bokuto, keep pinching your nostrils to stem the bleeding.” She takes out their first aid kit and begins to dab at Bokuto’s face with a clean washcloth. “Honestly, you didn’t have to tell him what we talked about, it’s called confidential manager and Captain talk for a reason.”

“No, he needed to know. Ouch!” Bokuto pulls a face. “A little more gentle, please?”

“No, he didn’t. You just wanted to add more salt to his wound.” Sigh. “And you know he only said those things, because he was upset we lost.” She says, softer this time.

“You think I’m not upset? Fuck, Yuks, I wanna do this for the rest of my life! Of course I’m upset!”

Sarukui wobbles to his feet, but Akaashi stops him. “Please, Sarukui-san. Allow me.”

“He… he likes watching the clouds. Says it’s calming.” Sarukui says with a gloomy smile.

Akaashi heads for the roof.

A member of the cleaning staff tells him the roof is off limits and Akaashi considers waiting it out until he leaves, but the guy doesn’t seem to be going anywhere. Sighing, he goes down a staircase and heads for the other side, hoping that if there’s any staff there, they would be more lenient.

There’s nobody to stop him and the door is unlocked, so Akaashi steps onto the sunlit concrete. He only takes a few moments to breathe in the fresh air, admiring the view from the top. It’s so
peaceful and quiet up here, not at all like the commotion inside the gym.

He quickens his pace, only slowing down once he sees Konoha’s back, letting his footsteps echo.

“Not in a mood for a lecture, Saru.” Konoha warns.

Akaashi walks into Konoha’s field of vision before leaning against the rail, crossing his hands.

“Oh, it’s you. Well, Saru or not, I’m really not in the mood for a lecture.”

Akaashi doesn’t reply. Instead, he watches a pair of squabbling birds on the opposite roof, fighting over a scrap of meat or bread, he can’t really tell from afar.

He feels Konoha’s stare on him. Silences always make Konoha restless. Especially when he feels guilty.

Akaashi suppresses a sadistic smile, because he is perfectly aware Konoha feels guilty. Poor Konoha doesn’t know this, but one of Akaashi’s biggest talents is his silent treatment.

Ask Bokuto, though, because he knows all about it. He hates all about it.

“So are you gonna start chewing me out or what?”

Akaashi closes his eyes, relishing the sun on his face.

“Oh, I get it. You’re not here to be the diligent Vice Captain that you are and do Bokuto’s dirty work for him. Why are you here then?”

Akaashi sighs. “Is that all you think of me, Konoha-san? Being someone that does Bokuto-san’s dirty work?”

“No, but-”

“Then how about your friend?” He offers. “Don’t you consider the two of us friends?”

“Of course I do.”

“So then stop asking me stupid questions like why I’m here.” He cracks an eyelid open and looks at Konoha. “I know I’m not Sarukui-san, but trust me, I’m a good listener too.”

“You have to be in order to survive, you live with Bokuto.” Konoha snorts. “How you do it - I’ll never know.”

“And I’ll never know how you got our manager to sleep with you in the first place, but you don’t hear me asking.”

“Harsh, Akaashi, that was too harsh!”

“Are you gonna start crying your man tears again, Konoha-san?”

“Shut up.” Konoha sits cross legged and looks up, squinting at Akaashi and the sun. “You’re towering over me and it pisses me off. And yes, Akaashi, I know you’re taller than me. That pisses me off too. Now sit.”

Akaashi does. He sits next to Konoha, with his chin on his knees. Silently waiting until Konoha is ready to say whatever he has to say.
He doesn’t have to wait long.

“You wanna know what really grinds my gears?”

Konoha starts rambling on and on, just how much Bokuto pisses him off, just pisses him off so much. How selfish Bokuto is, how he doesn’t appreciate everything he’s got going for him. How stinkin’ rich his family is, how popular he is at school. How unfair it is that Bokuto gets away with things because of his Captain status. How cool Bokuto is and goddammit, when did he get to be so cool? That really really pisses him off.

Akaashi smiles at that, something soft.

This isn’t the first time he’s been here, sitting quietly, content to enjoy the rush of the traffic below with the cars honking in the distance and the wind rustling against his cheeks.

He’s listened to all of his teammates complaining. Mostly Konoha’s, because he is the complainer. Everything pisses him off.

Doesn’t like his new teacher, got grounded for calling his two younger sisters shitheads, no girl at school appreciates his golden - natural, all natural! - locks.

And it’s not just him.

Komi, not having enough time to nap after lunch. Yukie, not allowed to snack in class, even though she really wanted to finish that dango. Sarukui, not understanding why he got that detention when he wasn’t laughing - not even smiling - at his teacher. Washio, not wanting to get braces, but his parents might make him. Bokuto, having to deal with Jared and his shit attitude.

The list goes on and on.

No, this certainly isn’t his first time being here.

And it won’t be the last.

“Konoha-san, can I ask you something? I’ve always wondered why it pisses you off when people call you by your nickname. Why hate something that you are?”

“Are you really trying to damage me permanently?” Konoha groans. “Jack of all trades, master of none. Tch. Who wouldn’t hate that?”

“I wouldn’t.” Akaashi replies while watching Konoha’s fingers digging at a clump of weeds by his feet. “I know Bokuto-san meant it as an insult, but-”

“It is an insult, Akaashi!”

“No, not really. You know a little about a lot. How is that a bad thing?”

Konoha blinks. “Well… I guess when you put it like that…”

“You gave me your peace of mind, Konoha-san, so how about I give you mine? You asked a lot of questions and I’ll answer them all, but please don’t interrupt me.” Akaashi sticks his thumb up.

“You asked why Bokuto-san didn’t strike you back. It’s not like you think, that he considers you a lightweight. It’s because he felt responsible that we lost. He wanted you to punch him again, because he felt like he failed us as a leader and deserved it.”

“But we’re a team and-”
“I asked you to please not interrupt me.” He scowls. “Yes, we’re a team, and yes, winning is a team effort, but he’s not just our Ace, he’s also our Captain, and since he was unable to deliver us that victory, our loss falls heaviest on his shoulders.” Akaashi puts his forefinger up. “You asked why Bokuto-san didn’t seem upset we lost. I can assure you he’s plenty upset. He just didn’t want to dampen our team’s morale, especially after seeing how broken Sarukui-san was. You know better than I do just how much he’s beating himself up about that last spike Tendou-san blocked.”

“We don’t point fingers at-”

“I am perfectly aware of that, Konoha-san!” Akaashi snaps. “I listened to your monologue, so please open your ears and listen to me for a change.” His middle finger joins the other two in the air. “You asked me why I’m not angry with Bokuto-san for subbing me out. Konoha-san, him benching me wasn’t because he didn’t believe in me. It was me. I didn’t believe in me. So I’m glad he did what he did, because Bokuto-san did us all a kindness.” Akaashi presses his mouth into a small curve. “I’m actually impressed that he was able to put his personal feelings towards me aside and put our team first.” His ring finger shoots up. “I’m not sure it was a question or not, but you said nobody reacted accordingly to you throwing your jersey at Bokuto-san. While I appreciate how symbolic of a “fuck you” that was, nobody really thinks you would quit the team, hence why-”

“Nobody on the team takes me seriously, that’s why.”

“No, it’s because we all know you share a certain flair for dramatics like Bokuto-san. Come on, Konoha-san, you’re not a quitter. Nor are you heartless enough to ditch us crash and burn without you.”

“No you wouldn’t.”

“Please allow me to be the mouthpiece of our entire team and tell you that we need you. We all need you. Especially me.” Akaashi admits. “Konoha-san, you might not be the Ace, but so what? In my eyes, you’ll always be Fukurodani’s MVP. Because I know I can always rely on you. When Bokuto-san goes into his dejected mode, I always rely on you to carry the team. And you do, because you’re our backbone! You protect the spinal cord and hold us all together. You were sick a couple of times and during those games, we didn’t do so great. Doubtless, you know it’s because of your absence.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, thanks for the pep talk. But it’s still annoying what a selfish player Bokuto is. You’re not gonna defend him and deny it, right?”

Akaashi scowls. “Surely you know my critique is always harshest towards Bokuto-san. Yukie’s too. I don’t know why you think he gets away with things, because he doesn’t really.” He sighs. “But you’re right about Bokuto-san being a selfish player. He is and he knows he is. We all do. That’s how our team works, because we have complete trust in each other.”

“He pisses me off so much!”

“I’m aware. But, Konoha-san, you piss him off too.” He replies and gets up, stretching his legs. “That’s how rivalry works.”

“Wait, what?” Konoha blinks, clearly taken aback. “Sit back down and elaborate, please.”

“No, I don’t want to get cramps.”

Konoha jumps on his feet in an instant. “Does Bokuto consider me his rival?”

“Yes.”
“Me, really?”
Akaashi rolls his eyes. “I just said that, didn’t I?”

“Why? What do I have that he doesn’t?”

“Well, for starters, you’re probably the only person in our school who can pull off our disgusting mustard cardigans and look cool wearing it. Bokuto-san envies that ability of yours.”

“Hey! I quite like the mustard cardigans. They’re nice.”

“No, they aren’t. They’re hideous.”

“Is that it? No, that can’t be all. What else does he envy me for?” Konoha asks eagerly.

“You do better in your classes than Bokuto-san does.”

“Oh, please, who cares about that?” He pulls a face. “More, Akaashi, tell me more! Important stuff, okay, don’t give me nerdy bullshit like studies!”

“Well…” Akaashi begins, racking his brain.

Come on, Akaashi, think about this long and hard before you answer, because it might come back and bite you in the ass. Long and hard. Think it through.

“Is there anything?”

Answer faster, Akaashi. Answer faster.

“Yes. There is that, um…”

“Akaashi, are you just lying to make me feel good about myself?”

Answer better. Answer better!

“I used to like you.”

What the fuck.

Why, Akaashi. Why?

“You used to like me?” Konoha scratches his head. “You don’t like me anymore?”

“I do, Konoha-san, of course I like you. But I meant that I used to, uh, like you like you.”

“Like boyfriend like you?”

“Yes. That.”

“Really?” Konoha’s smile is brighter than the sunshine on their skin, dazzling.

“Yes.”

Liar liar pants on fire.

“This is the first I’m hearing of this. You never told me this before.”
“No.” Akaashi agrees.

He never told anyone.

“Why?”

Because it’s not true.

“What does it matter, Konoha-san, you only like girls anyway.”

“Of course it matters, Akaashi, a compliment is a compliment! And having you interested in me, holy shit!” Konoha throws his head back and he laughs and laughs.

Akaashi zips up his jacket, feeling content.

Everything went better than expected.

Konoha’s back to being his usual perky self and there’s no damage done, because it’s in the past.

“Well, to be honest, I’m not completely surprised, you know. I mean it was totally obvious, the way you stared at me, all those pining looks?” Konoha says, patting Akaashi’s back. “It’s alright, Akaashi, you don’t have to deny you were totally in love with me.”

Akaashi presses his lips into a tight smile. “I wouldn’t push it as far as that.”

“Now it makes total sense why Bokuto’s always got a bone to pick with me. He knew you were in love with me first, didn’t he? Of course he did.”

“...Sure. Can we go downstairs now?”

“Yeah, alright.” Konoha hooks his arm over Akaashi’s shoulders. “But I’m not gonna apologize to Bokuto, so don’t try persuading me.”

As he takes the lead, Akaashi gently shrugs Konoha’s arm off, because it’s uncomfortable to be dragged down. “I’m not gonna waste my breath, Konoha-san, because we both know you will.”

“Self righteous people like you really piss me off, Akaashi!”

They find the rest of their team at the stands, meshing in with Shiratorizawa. Komi and Yamagata are in an animated conversation about cool hairstyles like undercuts, while Bokuto’s sitting between Kuroo and Ushijima and he’s got all of Ushijima’s attention, explaining whatever, with Shiratorizawa’s Ace listening and nodding his head in agreement.

But there is a few more familiar faces that are there, which are surprising to see.

It seems that despite low school budgets and exams, Karasuno’s second years were adamant in leaving their manager alone in her trip to Tokyo, because Sawamura, Sugawara and Azumane are all present.

Akaashi greets all three with a handshake, a head nod and a “nice to see you again”.

“Azumane-san, how are you liking Tokyo?” He asks politely.

“It’s big and scary.”

“Don’t mind him, Akaashi, everything scares him.” Sugawara laughs and punches Azumane between the ribs.
Washio smoothly slides next to Akaashi and pats his shoulder.

“Tendou-san, you said something to your teammates about going for some chocolate ice cream, didn’t you?”

“Y-yeah.” Tendou blinks, startled.

“Kiyoko and I also like chocolate ice cream.” Yukie winks at Kiyoko. “Don’t we?” Karasuno’s manager nods. “So, Tendou-san—”

“Y-yu na-na-n ki-!” Tendou stutters and shakes his head. “Please call me Satori!”

“Well, then. Satori.” Yukie bats her lashes and purrs out his name, both her and Kiyoko looping their hands with Tendou’s. “How about us girls come with you and you treat us to some chocolate ice cream?”

Even though the rest of the crowd is roaring their cheers for the ongoing game on the court, all conversations from Fukurodani, Shiratorizawa and Karasuno’s boys cease.

All eyes are on Tendou, Yukie and Kiyoko, staring.

Murderous.

“I would love to treat you beautiful girls to some chocolate ice cream!” Tendou replies and looks up at the roof. “I freakin’ LOOOOOOVE Nationals! Yahooooo!”

As the three of them walk away, Sawamura cracks his knuckles.

“I don’t know which hotel Shiratorizawa are staying in, but I’ll search them all. This Tendou guy better be sleeping with one eye open, because I’m coming for him.”

“Two eyes open.” Azumane adds. “Daichi, I’m coming with.”

Akaashi takes his vibrating phone out of his pocket and picks up, covering his ear.

“Iwaizumi-san! Where are you?”

“If you look towards the other side of the sta- yeah! You see me waving?”

“I see you.” Akaashi waves back. “Stay where you are, I’m coming.”

Despite being tired, Akaashi breaks into a light jog. He can’t suppress the smile on his lips as he navigates through the boisterous crowd as quick as possible.

His heart is tugging at him, the idea of meeting Iwaizumi after months of not seeing him and just text messages and distant phone calls.

Yeah, he’s excited.

But he doesn’t want to pressure Iwaizumi into feigning happiness or being anything that he isn’t,
“Akaashi!” Iwaizumi pulls him into a tight gripped hug, making him choke on his “Hello, Iwaizumi-san.”

Akaashi tries not to stare too hard, but dear God, Iwaizumi looks awful. Irreparable bags under his eyes and hollowed cheeks. Sagging jeans, despite his belt being pulled to it’s tightest, t shirt and jacket drooping over his shoulders and hips. He’d shrunken down, a ghost of his previous self.

Jesus. How much weight has Iwaizumi lost?!

Akaashi, poker face master, doesn’t give himself away. “Long time no see, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Long time no see.” Iwaizumi echoes. “Good game out there, buddy. I really thought you owls had it in the bag.”

“We thought so too.”

“No.” Iwaizumi’s olive eyes zero in on him. “Not all of you did.”

A ghost of his previous self or not, Iwaizumi is sharp as ever.

“Nothing gets past you, does it, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Oh, believe me, plenty gets past me.” Iwaizumi sighs, then claps his hands together. “There’s someone I would like you to meet.” He takes a step back and gently nudges the boy behind him forward. “Akaashi, this is Kageyama Tobio.”

Kageyama Tobio.

Tobio.

His mind’s a little fuzzy, but Akaashi’s heard that name before.

Akaashi extends his hand, but the boy bows his head so low that Akaashi’s fingers nearly poke his face.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Akaashi-san!”

“Kageyama is our - he’s my kouhai from Kitagawa Daiichi.”

Of course. Tobio-chan.

He remembers now.

Kageyama is slightly taller than Iwaizumi, with shortly cropped jet-black hair and his most striking feature is his eyes. Dark blue and unforgiving.

“Pleasure to meet you, Kageyama-kun.”

“Listen, Akaashi,” Iwaizumi begins. “I know I didn’t tell you there’s two of us coming, but I hope it’s not a problem that-”

“Iwaizumi-san, please. I’ve told you already, you’re always welcome at Fukurodani.” Akaashi smiles. “And we’d more than happy to accommodate both you and Kageyama-kun.”

“Akaashi-san! Is it really true that before you joined high school a few months ago, you’d never
played volleyball before? Iwaizumi-san told me all about you—”

“More like he pestered everything out of me the second you stepped onto the court and he saw you play.” Iwaizumi snorts.

“Yes, Kageyama-kun. It’s true. Before last October, I didn’t even know the rules of volleyball.”

Both Kageyama and Iwaizumi’s mouth hang open, ready to swallow flies.

“I thought… I thought that’s just a rumor.” Iwaizumi mutters.

“No, it’s the truth. But please don’t tell Bokuto-san. I think he still doesn’t know.”

“Ladies and Gentleman, please give it up for Tsubakihara Academy and Nohebi Academy!”

As the next game begins, Akaashi can barely catch his breath, because Kageyama starts firing question after question about volleyball, about training, about their game, please, Akaashi-san, tell me everything.

Iwaizumi seems content to sit back, watch the game and only take listening part in their conversation.

Kageyama is a sponge, taking mental notes of every word that’s out of Akaashi’s mouth.

“Akaashi-san, would it be possible for me to join your practice tomorrow?”

“Of course. With you two and Karasuno’s second years staying with us this weekend, practice should be fun.”

“Just me.” Kageyama says. “Iwaizumi-san doesn’t play anymore.”

Akaashi pretends this brand new piece of information doesn’t surprise or affect him.

Well, it’s not all that surprising, really. It does affect him, but he feels Iwaizumi tense up, awaiting a reaction.

Akaashi keep his reaction to himself and makes no remarks on the topic.

When the whistle blows, announcing the end of the last game for the day and Nohebi’s loss, Akaashi can no longer postpone what he’d been postponing. As he leads the way to the parking lot, he wants to shield Iwaizumi away from all the unwanted attention, whispered murmurs and curious eyes. He wants it dearly, but it can’t be helped.

Poor Iwaizumi must be so sick and tired of hearing all the “sorry for your loss” and “how are you doing?”’s, that just keep coming and coming.

The only protection Akaashi can give is letting Iwaizumi take a window seat, with him sitting on the outside. He’s just about to look for Kageyama, when he feels Iwaizumi’s tight grip on his arm.

“I’m gonna kill him.”

Kageyama, oblivious to the foot traffic in the aisle, or not caring at all, sends Semi sprawling on the floor as he butts everyone from Shiratorizawa out of the way, unceremoniously taking the empty seat next to no other than Ushijima.

“Who the Hell do you think you are, kid?!” Semi asks angrily. “And how dare you take my seat next to Wakatoshi?!”
Kageyama ignores him, full attention on Ushijima.

“My name is Kageyama Tobio and next year I’ll be joining your team at Shiratorizawa!” He announces loudly to the entire bus.

“Is that so?” Ushijima’s eyebrows furrow. “I’ve never heard your name before and our school only accepts the best players in our prefecture.”

“I am the best setter in the Miyagi prefecture.” Kageyama’s sincere answer is greeted by a couple of cackles, jeers and two offended huffs from Semi and Shirabu. “So make sure you remember my name, Ushijima-san, because next year I’ll be your setter.”

“Who is this kid, seriously?”

“The nerve!”

“How dare this little shit speak to our Ace like that!”

“Wahahaha, look look, Eita-kun’s vein is popping angrily!”

“I think I saw him tagging along Akaashi and Iwaizumi, he’s with one of the two.”

All eyes turn to them.

So much for unwanted attention.

“Oh great, I was hoping someone would bring that up.” Iwaizumi hisses quietly into Akaashi’s ear. “Quickly, get him before someone beats him up.”

Akaashi doesn’t bother, because Bokuto and Kuroo are already waving and motioning for Kageyama to join them. Despite the small seats, the two sandwich Kageyama between them.

“My, my, Iwaizumi, your little friend sure’s got confidence.” Kuroo smirks at Iwaizumi, who pulls his hoodie over his head and draws the strings tightly enough that his entire flaming with humiliation face is obscured.

Akaashi scowls at Kuroo, who winks in return.

“I’m not that little. I’m already taller than Iwaizumi-san.” Kageyama replies. “But then again Iwaizumi-san isn’t very tall.”

Akaashi hears Iwaizumi exhaling loudly with annoyance.

It’s nearly 8 pm when the bus pulls up in front of Fukurodani and everyone starts to file out, in a hurry to get dinner, because they’re all hungry.

Akaashi ignores his protesting stomach and remains seated next to Iwaizumi, who seems reluctant to get up before they’re all gone.

When it’s just the two of them left, Iwaizumi pulls his hoodie off and sighs.

“Here.” Akaashi hands Iwaizumi his keys.

Iwaizumi blinks. “Huh?”

“You remember where mine and Bokuto-san’s room is, right?”
“Yeah.”

“I’ve laid out some fresh towels on my bed, if you would like to take a shower. I promise nobody will disturb you up there.” Akaashi smiles encouragingly. “I’ll keep an eye on Kageyama-kun, so please don’t worry about him.”

Iwaizumi clutches the keys into his hand and stares at Akaashi wordlessly.

“I’ll join you as soon as I can. And I’ll bring up some dinner for you.” Akaashi adds, omitting his comment on how Iwaizumi doesn’t seem like he eats much, if at all.

“Akaashi, I—”

“You don’t have to thank me, Iwaizumi-san. That’s what friends are for, right?”

Iwaizumi nods. “Yeah, I think I’m gonna go have a shower and try to nap.” He squeezes Akaashi’s shoulder. “Would it be alright for me to use the back entrance to go up?”

“But of course. Do you want me to come with you?”

“No, I know where it is.”

They find Kageyama sitting outside on the curb, waiting. He gets up, dusts his trousers with his hands, looking curiously between Iwaizumi and Akaashi.

“Kageyama-kun, why don’t you come with me?”

They walk through the front door and go at the back of the line for the kitchen, which is so long, it goes all the way to the Geography classroom.

“Oi, you.” Semi, who is in front of them, speaks.

But Akaashi doesn’t appreciate being addressed by “oi, you” and pretends to be deaf.

“Akaashi.”

“What is it, Semi-san?”

“Wakatoshi said something to you earlier, didn’t he?” Semi asks, making Tendou, Kawanishi and Shirabu turn their heads. “What did he tell you?”

“He told me he’s upset there’s people on his team that don’t know how to mind their own business.” Akaashi replies.

“Oh shit!” Shirabu covers his mouth and snickers.

“Akaashi-san, why would Ushijima-san tell you that, instead of his own teammates?” Kageyama asks curiously.

“See, Eita-kun, I told you it’s not just our first years that are like this.” Tendou roars in laughter.

“I seriously can’t believe how rude and impolite they are!” Semi shakes his head, annoyed. “Last year we weren’t at all like this, were we, Satori? Tch! We are your senpais! You kids needs to show us some goddamn respect!”

“Semi-san, respect shouldn’t be demanded, it should be earned.” Akaashi says and smiles sweetly.
While Semi gawps and sputters angrily, Shirabu pushes past him and extends a hand towards Akaashi.

“It’s my absolute pleasure. My name’s Shirabu Kenjirou.”

Akaashi acknowledges him with a handshake and a nod. “I know who you are. Nice to meet you too, Shirabu-san.”

“Just Shirabu would do.” Shirabu grins.

“Just Shirabu, then.”

The kitchen lady adjusts her honey bee hairpin as Akaashi takes an empty tray.

“You look very nice today.” He smiles at her. “New hair color?”

“Oh? Why yes, actually. Just had it done yesterday.” She seems touched that one of the many students that go through Fukurodani’s kitchen spotted the change. “Thank you for noticing.”

“Yes of course. It looks lovely.”

She winks and places a large steak onto his extended plate, overfilling it with wedges.

“Thank you very much.”

His hand picks up the tongs and he wonders if he should have a slice of black forest gateau or red velvet cake, or both, when Tendou appears at his side.

“I still can’t believe Tanji-kun allowed us to come here with you guys for dinner.”

“Bokuto-san can be very persuasive.”

Tendou laughs as he scoops the last bit of chocolate ice cream into his cup. “Speaking of Aces, I saw ours chatting you up. Wakatoshi-kun is well versed in the ways of silence. He doesn’t waste words. If he spoke to you, it must have been important.”

“Ushijima, before I initiate you into our Rat Pack, I must challenge you to a meat war!” Bokuto’s voice booms over the sound of clanking cutlery.

“Bokuto, I don’t know what that is, but I won’t lose.” Ushijima replies, just as loud.

Tendou presses his lips together. “It seems I have misspoken.”

“Don’t worry about it, Tendou-san. Bokuto-san has that effect on people.”

As Akaashi and Kageyama take their trays and go through Dining Hall A, they see Bokuto, Sawamura, Kuroo and Ushijima sitting together.

Kuroo waves at him to join, but Akaashi shakes his head, smiling.

He doesn’t want to interrupt their Rat Pack gathering, especially after he knows how much Bokuto was looking forward to it.

Akaashi leads the way to their usual volleyball table, motioning for Kageyama to sit, when Yukie taps his shoulder.
“There you are! Please come with me for a sec.” She pulls him into the corridor. “Akaashi, I kind of need a big favor. I had no idea the Karasuno boys will be coming with Kiyoko and I was wondering if you could go shopping for snacks and stuff?”

“Sure, I can do that.”

Yukie gives him a big wad of money and the keys to the wing building. “I just turned on the heating, so it should be warm in an hour or so.”

“You want me to go now? Like, right now?” He blinks. Before he can ask if he could eat first, she ruffles his hair, thanks him and disappears up the stairs.

He sighs.

Being Vice Captain can sometimes be annoying.

“Kageyama-kun, I have to go take care of something.”

Kageyama’s already finished eating, so he gets up at once. “May I come with you?”

“If you want. Or I could show you to our room and-”

“No, I want to come with you.”

“Okay.” Akaashi picks up his untouched tray, giving it a longing look.

He’s just about to return it, when Kawanishi tugs on Semi’s sleeve, whispering something.

“Akaashi? Taichi here would like to know if he could have more potatoes, since your kitchen’s closed.” Semi says.

“You can have mine if you want?” Akaashi gives Kawanishi his plate, who takes it and instantly stuffs three wedges into his mouth.

“Taichi, where are your manners?!”

Kawanishi, mouthful of potatoes and face red, mumbles something intelligible, before he walks out of their dining area.

“Taichi says thank you.” Semi translates.

“He’s welcome.”

After signing out at the front desk, Akaashi decides to distract himself from his hunger by talking to Kageyama, asking if he could know more about him.

Since Akaashi’s a newbie in high school, he doesn’t have any kouhai. But seeing Kageyama’s eyes turn all big and wide with awe at being asked that, by someone older, he finally understands the warm and fuzzy feeling all of Fukurodani’s second years - or second years in general - seem to get whenever addressed by “senpai”.

It’s kind of endearing, really, to have someone look up to you. And Akaashi doesn’t really know why Kageyama is so impressed by him, but it’s nice.

Kageyama has a lot to say and he only talks about volleyball. How he hates his current teammates, because none of them are as good as him, none of them even try to hit his sets, which he finds annoying. Apparently none of them seem to care about anything as long as they win. He tells
Akaashi how much he misses his senpais from Kitagawa Daiichi, because Oikawa and Iwaizumi were the only ones who took him seriously and gave their best at all times.

“Oikawa-san actually taught me a lot too.” Akaashi says with a smile.

“Oh. Now I understand what Iwaizumi-san was talking about.”

“What do you mean?”

“During your game against Shiratorizawa, when you were doing a jump serve, Iwaizumi-san asked “Did you see how much your student has improved, Shittykawa?” to the stranger sitting next to him.”

Akaashi is so very glad Iwaizumi isn’t there with them, because Kageyama’s words painfully tug at his heartstrings and he can’t mask the sadness that he feels.

Before his mind starts wondering if Iwaizumi often talks to himself like that, turning to nobody but empty space, he decides to change the topic.

“Kageyama-kun, I can promise you that tomorrow during our volleyball practice, my entire team will be looking forward to spiking your sets. I’m actually very excited to see you play myself.”

“You are? Really?”

“Of course. Maybe I can learn a thing or two from you.” Akaashi winks.

“Akaashi-san, Iwaizumi-san already told me how amazing you were, but I never thought you would be so nice! People are never nice to me.” Kageyama replies. “But having an incredible setter like you ask me to- to teach you something? Wow!” He bows his head. “I will do my best tomorrow during practice!”

“I know you would. Now how about you go get some chips and dip, while I get the rest of our groceries?” Kageyama nods. “Meet you at the cashier in say, 10 minutes?”

Akaashi begins to fill the shopping basket under his arm, mentally ticking off the things he recalls Yukie buying during the last time Aoba Jousai and Karasuno stayed with them.

And that had been October. Holy crap. Half a year since then and how much has changed...

Time really does fly.

He gets some warm, fresh buns from the bakery section, before linking up with Kageyama.

“Kageyama-kun?”

Kageyama looks up from the fridge with drinks he’d had his eyes glued on.

“Anything you want?”

“My wallet’s in my backpack with Iwaizumi-san.” Kageyama blushes violently.

“That’s alright. Just tell me what you want.”

Kageyama mumbles something under his breath, but he only catches “milk”.

“Chocolate milk.”

“Get me one too, please.”

Kageyama seems torn between the tiny boxed ones and the bottled ones, so Akaashi reaches and gets two big bottles, before placing them on the counter.

“Would you be paying cash or credit?” The cashier asks boredly as he bags their groceries.

“Cash.”

When they walk of the store, Akaashi pulls the bakery’s paper bag and shakes it into Kageyama’s direction.

“There’s pork and curry buns in there. Help yourself.”

“I already ate at your school.”

“So?” Akaashi shakes the bag again.

Kageyama pulls one out and bites into it. “Mmm! Curry buns are my favourite.”

“Mine too.”

The two of them gorge themselves and by the time they get back to Fukurodani, there’s not a single bun left.

Kawanishi and Shirabu are sitting at the bottom stairs of their hallway and Akaashi gives a small wave.

“Hello again.”

“Hey, Akaashi.” Shirabu nods. “You busy?”

“Do you need something?”

“Could you maybe give us a show around of your school?”

“Sure thing.”

“C’mon, Taichi!” Shirabu elbows Kawanishi. “Akaashi’s alright. He’s cool.”

Apparently Kawanishi trusts Shirabu’s judgement, because the two of them get up and follow Akaashi into their wing building.

“Is this where we’ll be staying during your Jamboree?” Shirabu asks, walking through the big empty rooms, while Kageyama helps Akaashi placing their groceries into the fridge.

“Yeah.”

“Nice! Your place is even bigger than ours at Shiratorizawa.” Shirabu says.

“Well, our school hosts all of the volleyball and basketball training camps in the Tokyo region, so.”

Shirabu gives an appreciative whistle.
“Would you like to see our gym?” Akaashi asks.

“Yes, please.”

As Akaashi leads the way, Shirabu clears his throat. “So is it true that you guys don’t have an official coach?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah? So who comes up with your game strategies and stuff?”

“Me and Yukie.” Akaashi replies. “Yukie’s our manager.”

“Just you two?” Shirabu and Kageyama ask in unison.

“Mhm.”

“Wow! Akaashi-san you’re so amazing!”

“I don’t like you.” Shirabu nods his head at Kageyama, before turning towards Akaashi. “But I have to agree with him, you are pretty amazing.”

“Thank you both.” Akaashi licks his lips. “We practice every day just like you guys at Shiratorizawa.”

“Sweet! Back in Miyagi our only real competition is Datekou, y’know.” Shirabu replies. “Aoba Jousai used to be the front runner, but ever since they lost Oikawa-san, they’re... Well, surely you’re aware, since you’re buddy-buddy with their Iwaizumi-san.”

Akaashi nods.

“I am friends with Iwaizumi-san too!” Kageyama replies.

“Did I ask you?” Shirabu sneers.

Kawanishi’s phone rings and he answers a quick “Okay” into the receiver, before turning to Shirabu.

“Semi-san says we have to go.”

“Right.” Shirabu turns to Akaashi. “Listen, I know I barely got to play against you, since I’m not a starting setter, but I plan on improving! And next time we face each other, I’ll kick your ass!” He smirks.

“I’d like to see you try.” Akaashi smirks back.

“Promise? Future Fukurodani Captain?”

“You bet, future Shiratorizawa Captain.” Akaashi nods at Kawanishi. “And future Shiratorizawa Vice Captain.”

They shake on it.

“Let’s go, Taichi.”

Akaashi and Kageyama accompany Kawanishi and Shirabu to the front gates and wave as the Shiratorizawa team load up the bus, with Shirabu yelling out a “I’ll add you on facebook!” at
Akaashi.

“Looks like you made some new friends, eh, Angel Eyes?” Kuroo smirks.

“Glad to see you out of the hospital, Kuroo-san.”

“Pfff, tell me about it.”

“Hey hey heyyyy!” Bokuto hoots, draping his arms over Akaashi and Kuroo. “Akaashi! You didn’t see me beating Ushijima into our yakiniku eating contest!”

“Bro, he’s Ushiwaka!” Kuroo grunts. “Why you callin’ him Ushijima all of a sudden?”

“Because Ushijima’s cool, bro!”

“I take it he’s part of your Rat Pack now?” Akaashi asks.

“Yes!” Bokuto grins. “So where did you and Kageyama-kun go off to?”

“Had to run an errand for Yukie.” Akaashi explains. “Bokuto-san, I need your help with something.”

“Tell me, Akaashi!”

“Well, I was hoping you could help me prepare dinner for Iwaizumi-san? You too, Kuroo-san.”

Bokuto gives him two thumbs up. “You got it!”

“I’m not master chef like Bokuto, but I’d love to help in whatever way I can.”

Akaashi is extremely glad Rob’s on duty, because he instantly hands Akaashi the keys to the kitchen, with Akaashi promising not to make a mess.

“Akaashi-san, what about me?” Kageyama asks.

Akaashi glances around, looking to give him something to do, because he wants some alone time with Bokuto and Kuroo and doesn’t want to be rude.

“Kageyama-kun, how about you sit here next to Dadchi and co?” Kuroo offers, pulling a chair at the table Karasuno’s second years are sitting at.

“Yeah, crow dad, be friends with this lil’ one, because you’re all Miyagi folk and all that.” Bokuto agrees, pressing Kageyama’s shoulders down into the seat.


“We won’t take long, Sawamura-san.” Akaashi bows his head. “As soon as me, Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san are done, I’ll take you to our wing building.”

“Oh, don’t worry about us, Akaashi.” Sugawara smiles. “Take your time.”

Akaashi lets Kuroo and Bokuto go inside the kitchen before joining them and closing the door behind him, leaning against it with a soft sigh.

Alone at last.

“So, Akaashi, whaddya want me to cook?” Bokuto asks, washing his hands and putting on an
apron.

“That fried tofu thing is Iwaizumi-san’s favourite.”

“Agedashi tofu coming right up.” Bokuto grins.

“Kuroo-san, could you slice some daikon radish?”

“Yeah, sure.” Kuroo pulls out a cutting board. “What about you, Angel Eyes? What are you gonna do, besides standing there and lookin’ pretty?”

“I’m gonna prepare the trays.”

“Trays?” Bokuto asks as he heats up a pan. “Who other than Iwaizumi is gettin room service?”

“I didn’t see Sarukui-san at our dinner table.”

“Oooo.” Kuroo pulls a face. “How’s that owl dude doin’?”

“He wasn’t too great in the locker room.” Bokuto replies.

“Yeah, he didn’t seem too great on the court either.” Kuroo nods.

“Well, Saruman is Saruman, he’ll be alright.” Bokuto says. “What about us three, you guys?”

Kuroo waves the knife he’s holding into the air. “I have a solution.”

“Do tell, won’t you, Kuroo-san?”

“Polyamory.”

“Polyamory?” Akaashi echoes. “Does that mean what I think it means?”

“I actually read about that.” Bokuto says.

Akaashi blinks. “Where?”

“Online. I didn't know what to do about our situation, so I googled it.” Bokuto explains. “I’m not really sure I understood it, though.”

“It’s pretty simple, bro.” Kuroo replies. “You, me and Akaashi. It won’t be that big of a difference, really, since we do almost everything together anyway.”


“Yeah, Akaashi, that’s exactly my point!” Bokuto points his chopsticks at Akaashi, before using them to place the sliced up tofu into the frying pan. “What are the rules?”

“We decide the rules ourselves.” Kuroo replies. “Us three get romantically involved with each other and nobody else.”

“But how does that work, bro?” Bokuto squints. “You go to Nekoma.”

“I go to a different school than you two, so what?”
“Well, how are me and Akaashi supposed to feel if you get it on with someone from Nekoma? Or someone else, from a club or whatever?”

“Bro, my entire attention’s been turned 360% at Angel Eyes since um, huh, forever, so how about having a little faith in me? I won’t hook up with any outsider, because I have no interest in anyone other than him.”

“Akaashi?” Bokuto raises his eyebrows at him. “How do you feel about that?”


“What about Iwaizumi?” Bokuto asks. “Because me and Kuroo were wondering earlier if—” He stops when he sees Kuroo shaking his head frantically.

“If what, Bokuto-san?” Akaashi asks, scowling.

“If you and him are like… y’know.”

Akaashi sighs. “Me and Iwaizumi-san are friends. He only sees me as a friend and I only see him as a friend. That’s it.”

“You sure about that, Angel Eyes?”

“Yes, Kuroo-san, I’m sure.” He licks his lips. “I have a rule. How about us three always being honest with each other? We tell each other everything. No more miscommunication.”

Bokuto and Kuroo exchange glances.

“I’m alright with that.”

“Same.”

“So, we’re really doing this?” Akaashi asks. “Us three? In a relationship?”

“Yeah, let’s do it.” Kuroo nods, smirking.

“Wait, wait, wait!” Bokuto puts his hands up, after turning the tofu pieces into the pan. “Bro, you only join us during the weekends.”

“So what, bro?”

“You alright with me and Akaashi doing sexy stuff without you?”

Kuroo stares at Bokuto darkly.

“...So that’s a no to handjobs and blowjobs, then?”

“Yes, that’s a no.” Kuroo replies.

“Awwww, man!” Bokuto groans.

“Hey! You already room with Angel Eyes and get to spend more time with him than I do, do you see me complaining about that?”

“Okay, okay, you’re right, bro. I’m sorry!” Bokuto removes the pan from the hot plate. “Sexy stuff are only allowed when all three of us are together, yeah?”
“Yes.” Kuroo nods. “Angel Eyes?”

“I agree.”

“Oh my God! So we’re dating?!” Bokuto hoots, placing the tofu onto the empty plates Akaashi’s holding.

“Yeah, we are!” Kuroo smirks. “Brooooo! We’re dating Angel Eyes!”

Akaashi rolls his eyes, while they high five each other.

“How about giving me your daikon radish, Kuroo-san?”

“Oh, Angel Eyes, I’ll give you anything you want.” Kuroo laughs softly, using his knife to divide the contents of his cutting board onto the plates equally.

“Thank you. The both of you.”

“Akaashi!” Bokuto places his hands on his hips. “How about thanking us with a kiss?”

“Nice one, bro!”

They high five again and Akaashi presses his lips together, suppressing a smile.

“So which one of you should I kiss first?” He asks.

Bokuto points his chopsticks at Kuroo, while Kuroo points into his chest.

“Him.”

“Me, Angel Eyes.”

Akaashi puts down each food-filled plate into a tray, before dusting his hands and turning towards Kuroo.

Kuroo’s tongue invades his mouth the second he buries his hands into Kuroo’s messy hair, messing it up further.

Akaashi is only half aware of Bokuto wolf whistling, because Kuroo’s fingers wrap themselves around his hips, squeezing tightly and it feels so good, it feels so great.

Sighing, they let go of each other and Akaashi, eyes glazed, motions for Bokuto to come closer.

Bokuto’s kiss feels more familiar to him, firm, but tender and Akaashi can’t help the moan that escapes his mouth.

“But holy shit. Any chance us three can have some more alone time up in your room?” Kuroo asks.

“Sorry, Kuroo-san. With Iwaizumi-san and Kageyama-kun staying with us, it’s just not possible.”

“Well, fuck me.” Bokuto groans, readjusting himself into his boxers.

“Me too, bro.”

“Oh, I will.” Akaashi replies. “Next weekend we won’t have any guests, so I will.”

Bokuto and Kuroo stare at each other, before another high five follows.
Akaashi smirks.

He can get used to this, easily.
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

I cried while writing this chapter. I also laughed while writing it. I hope you guys enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it C: (Trigger warning: suicide mention)

Akaashi announces his arrival with a soft knuckle rap against the door.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’m coming in! Oh, good, you’re awake.”

There’s a delicious smell that fills the air as he enters and he is pleased to see Iwaizumi’s mouth watering.

“You made all this for me?” Iwaizumi asks.

“I’m afraid I can’t take the credit. Bokuto-san cooked and Kuroo-san helped. Where do you want to eat?” He glances at his and Bokuto’s desks.

“Uh, just here on the floor would do.” Iwaizumi accepts the tray and places it on top of his crossed legs. He takes a bite and closes his eyes. “Mmm, it’s so good. Did you try it?”

“No.”

“Do you wanna try?” Iwaizumi takes a piece of tofu between his chopsticks and offers it to Akaashi. “You should try, it’s delicious.”

He kind of wants to, but it would be a crime to take even the smallest bite out of Iwaizumi’s food. He just looks so underfed.

Although all things considered, it’s understandable.

“Thanks, but I had dinner earlier. Besides, I already know Bokuto-san’s cooking skills are amazing.”

“Yeah. This actually tastes better than my mom makes it.” Iwaizumi swallows his mouthful. “I don’t remember telling you agedashi tofu’s my favourite.”

“You didn’t. Oikawa-san did.”

Iwaizumi clears his throat. “Where’s Kageyama, by the way? He’s not causing trouble for you, is he?”
“No, not at all. He’s great. I’m glad you brought him along. As for where he is, Bokuto-san took the Karasuno boys to the Wing Building and he wanted to go too. He seems to be getting along with them.”

“Good. He doesn’t really have any friends back home, or anywhere, so I’m happy to hear he might make some here. What? Why are you looking at me like that?” Iwaizumi asks.

“He has you, Iwaizumi-san.”

Iwaizumi gives a noncommittal grunt in reply.

He finishes his food in silence and goes into the bathroom. While he showers, Akaashi checks his Facebook feed and finds that Bokuto has written in their “cool volleyball squad” thread, inviting Komi and Washio for a sleepover and judging by time of their replies, they must already be there.

Putting his phone back into his pocket, he wonders what to do about Iwaizumi. Iwaizumi hasn’t spoken about Oikawa once and when Akaashi had mentioned his name, Iwaizumi hadn’t reacted. No, he had - he changed the subject. Kageyama’s words from before ring inside his head.

“During your game against Shiratorizawa, when you were doing a jump serve, Iwaizumi-san asked “Did you see how much your student has improved, Shittykawa?” to the stranger sitting next to him.”

He feels an overwhelming grief knotting his stomach and tugging at his heart. No, this won’t do. He has to pull himself together.

It’s obvious Iwaizumi doesn’t want to be around people. It’s draining him, Akaashi can tell. And if he doesn’t play volleyball anymore, he probably doesn’t spend time with his teammates. He probably doesn’t do anything with anyone, anymore.

“Akaashi?” Iwaizumi’s voice snaps him back to reality. “This is kinda embarrassing, but I, uh, forgot to pack a spare pair of clothes. You think Bokuto would mind if I borrowed some from him?”

“No, Bokuto-san wouldn’t mind at all. But why would you borrow clothes from him, when you can obviously fit into mine?”

Iwaizumi stares down at his body, as if it hadn’t occurred to him just how much his appearance has changed. It probably hasn’t.

“I guess.”

Iwaizumi changes into the pair of sweatpants, tshirt and zip up hoodie Akaashi hands him and blinks at the way they hang loosely.

“Are these really your clothes, Akaashi? How much have you grown since the last time I saw you?”

“No.” He shakes his head. “I’m the same size I was before.”

Okay, maybe Yukie and Bokuto’s rigorous training had defined his muscles some, but not that much.

Iwaizumi assumes his previous position on the floor.

Akaashi waits, but he doesn’t say anything.
“Would you like to go out for a walk?” He suggests. “It’s a little windy out, but some fresh air might be good.”

“No.”

“Do you wanna watch a movie?”

“Not really.”

It’s a long shot, but Akaashi isn’t one to give up.

“We could go see what the others are up to, if you’d like?”

“I don’t.”

“Iwaizumi-san,” He licks his lips. He knows he has to tread carefully. Gently. “I can’t even begin to imagine what you must be feeling, but-”

“You’re right, you can’t.” Iwaizumi snaps.

Bokuto’d told him once that he reminded him of a ruler. Akaashi’d been stumped, because, well, he’d never been compared to a measuring ruler before.

“Akaashi! Didn’t you ever own a plastic ruler? I used to break so many of them, because I kept bending them, trying to see how flexible they are. They’d always snap in half, and then I’d need a new one. You remind me of that. Whenever you’re handling someone from the team - especially me - you just always seem to know the exact amount of pressure to add before breaking point.”

Akaashi remembers that and he suddenly thinks that maybe his gentle approach is wrong. Maybe he shouldn’t be stepping on eggshells around Iwaizumi. Maybe what Iwaizumi needs is a good kick in the ass.

“Why did you come here, Iwaizumi-san? What was the point of you coming all this way?”

“I thought… a change of scenery would be a good thing.” Iwaizumi replies slowly.

“Yeah? And how’s that going for you? Our four walls any different that yours back home?”

Iwaizumi stares at him.

“Iwaizumi-san, do you know how terrible you look?”

“Wow, thanks.” Iwaizumi rolls his eyes.

“I can see you don’t want to hear the truth. I know you don’t want me to tell you you have to get on with your life-”

“You’re right, I don’t. So please stop talking.”

“-but it’s been three months. You can’t keep blaming yourself for what happened with Oikawa-san.”

“Don’t.” Iwaizumi closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. “Don’t say his name.”

“You can’t keep avoiding the mention of his name, Iwaizumi-san. Get it through your head - Oikawa-san’s gone and he’s never coming back.”
Too much, that’s too much pressure. He has to tone it down, he knows, but he can’t seem to stop.

“Maybe you like being miserable, because it feels right. But that’s no way to go through life.”

“Who said I wanted to live?”

Akaashi stares at him in shock.

“You don’t really mean that.” He says, voice barely a whisper.

“No.” Iwaizumi replies after a while. “No, you’re right, I don’t.”

Akaashi doesn’t dare blink. Pins and needles run up the back of his neck and a lump in his throat threatens to choke him.

“I’m sorry, Akaashi. I shouldn’t have said that.” Iwaizumi licks his dry lips. “I didn’t- I didn’t mean to say that, really. I just- I didn’t expect you to be so damn brutally honest.”

“I- don’t know what I was thinking, blurring all those things out.” Akaashi croaks, covering his mouth. “Please forgive me. I had no right to say any of that to you.”

“No, you had every right to.” Iwaizumi sighs. “I know you’re just trying to help.”

Akaashi nods.

Gingerly, he places a shaky hand over Iwaizumi’s knee. He half expects Iwaizumi to flinch away from his touch, but he doesn’t.

“Do you often have suicidal thoughts?” He asks softly.

Iwaizumi doesn’t reply.

“Please don’t be afraid to tell me the truth. I’d rather know what you’re thinking.” Akaashi’s fingers give Iwaizumi’s knee a gentle squeeze. “So please talk to me.”

“Sometimes I think about… you know, ending it all.” Iwaizumi admits.

“I think it’s common to have thoughts like that after losing a loved one. And it’s okay, just as long as you don’t actually think about acting on them.”

“I could never do that to the people I love. Never.” Iwaizumi sniffs. “Which is why I’m so angry with myself, Akaashi. I’m angry all the time.” He looks at Akaashi, eyes swimming with tears. “We were best friends and soulmates destined to be together. Maybe it was just wishful thinking, but I always thought him and I would end up together. That one day I’d just stop being a coward and tell him how I feel. I thought I had years and years and- how - how I was I supposed to know that I didn’t? That I was running out of time.” The tears are flowing freely now and he makes no attempt to wipe them away. “Oh my God, if only I’d known!”

Akaashi’s eyes are blurry and burning, too, and it breaks his heart to see Iwaizumi in so much pain. But he knows Iwaizumi needs to let it all out. He takes hold of Iwaizumi’s hand for courage.

“Sorry.” Iwaizumi wipes at his face with the elbow of his free hand. “It just kills me- it makes me sick to my stomach that I never told him how special he was. You read his last Facebook post, right?” Akaashi nods. “He said he was no one special. Akaashi, how could he not know that he was special in every single way a person could be?”

“No, Iwaizumi-san, that’s not true.” Akaashi takes a deep breath. “Oikawa-san’s goodbye note
was nothing more than a depressed person that didn’t see another way out. You can’t blame yourself for his choice.”

“No. No, see, this is where you’re wrong. It’s my fault.”

“It’s no one’s fault, especially of all yours.”

Iwaizumi ignores him. “I should’ve told him how much I loved him. He didn’t know.”

“He did know, Iwaizumi-san.”

“No.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “That stupid idiot couldn’t have known. He was a stupid, stupid idiot, because the other option is selfish and he wasn’t selfish. He didn’t know, Akaashi. I’m sure that if he knew, he wouldn’t have- things would be different. Because- because he would’ve known that by killing himself, he would also be killing me.”

Iwaizumi breaks down and Akaashi pulls him into a hug. Iwaizumi’s entire body shakes with sobs and chokes and it only makes Akaashi clutch at him tighter.

He doesn’t know how long they stay like that, but he only lets go, because Iwaizumi pulls away. Hand over his mouth, he runs towards the bathroom and collapses on his knees before the toilet.

Iwaizumi looks so vulnerable - so broken - that Akaashi can’t leave him alone. He feels himself moving along, joining him in there, crouching not close enough, but still close enough.

While Iwaizumi vomits, he pushes the strands of plastered hair from Iwaizumi’s forehead back, his fingers massaging the back of his neck in small circles.

Iwaizumi flushes the toilet and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

“You’re gonna be okay, Iwaizumi-san.” Akaashi says softly, not caring that Iwaizumi’s hand, covered with specks of his dinner, is cupping his cheek, holding him in place. “You’re gonna be okay.”

“Am I really?” Iwaizumi asks, eyes searching Akaashi’s for the truth.

“Yes. Yes, really.” Akaashi offers up a small smile. “You’re going to be okay.”

“How do you know?”

“Because you’re the strongest person I know.”

Iwaizumi looks at his arms, at Akaashi’s droopy clothes, and snorts.

“No, that’s not what I meant. You’re strong in here.” Akaashi’s fingers tap at his temples.

“Well, I don’t feel all that strong in there, either.” Iwaizumi sniffs.

“You get out of bed in the morning, don’t you? You get dressed, you shower, you eat, you go to school.”

“Not always.”

“That’s still better than nothing. Give it some time, Iwaizumi-san.” He replies. “You’ll get by with a little help from your friends.”

Iwaizumi gawks at him. “You did not just quote a Beatles song to me.”
“What do you have against the Beatles?”

“They suck.”

“No, they don’t. Beatles are classic.”

“Oh. You’re one of those people.” Iwaizumi pulls a face.

“Let me guess. Stones fan?”

“Damn right.”

“Oh, I should’ve known you’re one of those people.” Akaashi echoes, rolling his eyes.

To his surprise, Iwaizumi chuckles.

“A few moments ago I was bawling my eyes out and now I’m laughing. Is that normal?”

“I don’t know about normal, but I think it’s human?” He offers. “I have some experience with mood swings.”

“Bokuto, right?”

Akaashi nods.

“How are things with you two, by the way? I heard some rumors that he made a very public confession?” Iwaizumi asks. “You didn’t mention anything over the phone or Facebook.” He swallows. “Or were you just holding back on me, so I wouldn’t get jealous?”

“Jealous?” He blinks. “Of what exactly?”


“No. No. God, no. I never thought- I don’t think you’re that type of person, Iwaizumi-san.” He explains. “I didn’t say anything, because there was nothing to tell.”

“Oh. I’m sorry.”

“No, no. That was before.”

“So you’re together now?” Iwaizumi asks, confused.


“I don’t…” Iwaizumi looks even more confused. “I’m sorry for being a little slow here, but I’m not really following?”

Akaashi laughs. “Yeah, it’s kind of hard to follow. Truthfully, I don’t know how I did.”

“So are you gonna tell me or keep me in the unknown?” Iwaizumi arches an eyebrow quizzically.

“Yeah, I will. But let’s get you cleaned up first. You kind of have…” Akaashi vaguely points at his face. “Sick.”

“Oh.” Iwaizumi inspects his reflection in the mirror and groans. “Christ, Akaashi, you kept talking to me this whole time without bothering to mention I look like shit?”
“I did tell you you look terrible.”

“Right.”

While he washes up, Akaashi opens up their windows, because the room is all stuffy. He takes a deep breath, relishing the night air as it envelops his face.

“Iwaizumi-san, are you tired?”

“I’m okay.”

“What do you say about that walk I offered earlier?”

Iwaizumi nods. “I could go for a walk.”

“It’s after lights out, though, so we’re gonna have to use the window.”

“I’m okay with that.”

Akaashi scowls as he unwraps the rope and throws it out. It doesn’t go unnoticed by Iwaizumi, who grins.

“Afraid of heights, right?”

“You don’t have to looks so happy about it.” He replies, although a part of him is glad Iwaizumi is smiling.

Even if it is at his own expense.

“Lemme go first.” Iwaizumi offers. “That way if you fall, I could try catching you.”

“Ha ha, with those weak ass guns? No thanks.”

“Hey, what happened to “Iwaizumi-san, you’re the strongest person I know?” Iwaizumi mimics. “Look, you help me face my demons, it’s only fair you let me help you face yours.”

“Okay. Okay, fair enough.”

Iwaizumi pulls the rope up and begins to tie it around Akaashi and then himself.

“You know, when I was a kid there wasn’t a tree in my neighborhood that I didn’t climb.” He smiles. “I’d go all the way up.”

“Why?”

Iwaizumi laughs at Akaashi’s face. “Because I wanted to see the view from the top. Or I was chasing after a beetle. I used to collect them.”

“Again, why?”

“I dunno, isn’t that what kids do, collect shit?”

“Our childhoods must’ve been very different, Iwaizumi-san, because I wasn’t the type of kid that collected shit.”

“Hilarious, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi rolls his eyes and gives a firm tug of the rope, pleased with his knots. “Alright, we’re all set. You ready?”
“As ready as I’ll ever be.” He replies through gritted teeth.

Iwaizumi climbs out the window first and Akaashi has to follow, because the rope tugs at his stomach and chest.

“Just don’t look down.” Iwaizumi instructs and he stifles a snort.

As if he had any intention of doing that.

Iwaizumi waits for him to position his legs against the wall.

“Akaashi, you have to spread your legs.”

“That sounds like something Kuroo-san would say.” Akaashi can’t help but shake the both of them as he laughs hysterically.

“Do you want us both to fall and break our legs?” Iwaizumi scolds. “If you keep being this loud, we’d get in trouble, and if that’s the case, we could’ve just used the damn stairs!”

“Sorry.”

He’s never been at such close proximity with Iwaizumi and he’s suddenly very aware how close they are. Too close, actually. His ass is pressing against Iwaizumi’s crotch, and it’s not just his imagination, it is literally - no, physically - getting harder and harder.

“Iwaizumi-san?”

“Shut up, I can’t help it.”

Akaashi feels laughter bubbling inside his stomach once again.

“Before you say anything, I’m not laughing at you.” He explains.

“Oh, right, you’re not.”

“Technically, I’m laughing on you.”

“Christ.”

Iwaizumi’s feet land softly on the neatly cut grass and Akaashi’s follow, not as soft.

The second that the rope releases him, he doesn’t wait for Iwaizumi to throw it back up, he dashes as far away from the school grounds as possible. When he thinks he’s at safe distance, he stops, crouches and holds his stomach, laughing.

Iwaizumi catches up with him shortly.

“Why, Iwaizumi-san, I never knew you felt about me that way.” He wheezes out.

“Well.” Iwaizumi places his hands on his hips. “At least I know the little guy’s still working.”

Akaashi laughs so hard, that he feels tears streaking down his cheeks.

“I’m glad my functioning penis offers you such amusement, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi says, but he’s smiling.

Maybe it’s the fact he’s felt unhappy this long. Or it’s the image in front of him - Akaashi, body
curled up in a ball, laughing as hard as possible. But Iwaizumi suddenly feels lighter than air, Akaashi’s laughing fit infecting him too.

They’re just two idiots, rolling around at the side of the road, cackling in the middle of the night.

Iwaizumi is pleased that the Fukurodani school isn’t surrounded by tall buildings, because lying on his back, like this, he has a clear view of the starry night sky above.

A couple of Akaashi’s fingers tickle the palm of his hand and he turns his head to the side.

“I kept thinking you’d cancel on me.” Akaashi says, his voice softly carrying over the gentle breeze.

“I have to admit that I thought about it.”

“I’m very glad you didn’t, though.” Akaashi smiles.

“And I too.” He agrees, squeezing Akaashi’s fingers with his own.

Akaashi’s feet lead them towards the lake. They get some sodas from the good ol’ gas station, sit on a bench and Akaashi begins to tell Iwaizumi all about Bokuto and Kuroo. He considered giving Iwaizumi the cliff notes, but, well, they’re in no rush. So he takes his time explaining, trying not to leave anything out.

He doesn’t know why confiding in Iwaizumi feels so peaceful to his soul, but it does.

“So you three, huh.” Iwaizumi whistles. “Interesting.”

“Mmm.” Akaashi hums softly.

“I gotta tell ya, I did not see Kuroo fitting into your equation.”

“Neither did I.” Akaashi smiles. “But he belongs.”

“From what I’ve heard about him,” Iwaizumi says and Akaashi knows he means what he’s heard from Oikawa. “He’s a good guy.”

“He is. They both are.”

Iwaizumi’s eyes roam his face before he asks. “Do they make you happy, Akaashi?”

“Very much so.”

“Good. That’s all that matters.” Iwaizumi smiles. “I’m happy for you, you know?”

“I know.” He unties his sneakers, removes them from his feet and takes off his socks. “I’m aware you don’t really like either one of them, but you, Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san have a lot in common. You’d be surprised, if you gave them a chance.”

“I don’t know about that.” Iwaizumi replies cagily.

He watches Akaashi tiptoe his way towards the lake, plopping down at the edge of the muddy bank and dipping his feet in.

“Brrrr!”

“Did you really think the water would be warm?” Iwaizumi snorts.
“No.” He turns his head back. “Why don’t you join me?”

Iwaizumi sighs an old man sigh, but he does.

“It’s your sweatpants that are getting dirty.” He warns as he sits down.

“I don’t mind.”

They watch the water rippling around their feet and Akaashi suddenly smiles.

“This reminds me of the Halloween party we had at Bokuto-san’s house.” He says. “You were sitting by the pool.”

“I remember that.”

“I considered talking to you.”

“Why didn’t you?” Iwaizumi glances at him. “I could’ve used the company.”

“Didn’t look like it.”

“I could’ve used your company.”

“Back then, you intimidated me.” Akaashi laughs at the way Iwaizumi stares at him incredulously. “It’s true. You’re kind of a hard guy to approach, Iwaizumi-san.”

“That’s just my face.” Iwaizumi shrugs. “And besides, who are you to talk, Akaashi, have you seen your scowl?”

“No, but I’ve been told it’s scary.” He smirks proudly.

“Yeah, you could say that.”

Akaashi tries to shake his feet dry into the air, before tucking his chin over his knees.

“Can I ask you something, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Sure.”

“I don’t think you’d like my question.”

“I don’t like a lot of things, so you might as well just ask.”

“You don’t talk about Oikawa-san at all.”

“I know.” Iwaizumi replies. “And that wasn’t a question.”

“Why not?”

Iwaizumi pauses for a while, his foot swirling in the water. “It’s complicated.”

“I’m sure I can keep up.”

“I don’t know how to talk about him.”

“What do you mean?” Akaashi looks at him curiously.
“I only used to call him Tooru when we kids. Then I became Iwa-chan and he became Shittykawa, Trashykawa, Crappykawa. Now that he’s not around, addressing him in such a teasing manner just feels wrong.” Iwaizumi sighs. “And it fucks with my head and my heart that I have to change the tenses from “he is” to “he was”.”

“Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san didn’t really talk about him at first. But now they talk about him all the time.”

“Really?” Iwaizumi swallows. “What do they say?”

“They talk about their Rat Pack stuff, mostly. The way they used to bicker and fight over stupid shit. The way he used to make them laugh, the way he used to really annoy them. They don’t just remember the good stuff there was about him, because Oikawa-san wasn’t always nice. And I think that’s okay.” He steals a glance it Iwaizumi.” Please don’t take that the wrong way, Iwaizumi-san, because they both loved him a lot.”

A tear runs down Iwaizumi’s cheek.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.” Akaashi presses his lips together.

“No, no you didn’t. What you said made me really happy.” He sniffs.

“You don’t really look happy.”

Iwaizumi half cries half laughs. “No, but I am. Really.” He takes a deep breath. “This is kind of why I wanted to get away from home this weekend. I was getting suffocated from all the putrid love. What you said, that he wasn’t always nice, is absolutely right. He wasn’t. He was the pettiest person to walk the Earth. Actually, I always did say he came from planet Oikawa, population one.”

Akaashi laughs with him.

“I don’t want to say anything bad about my classmates or my teammates, but thing is, they- they glorify him with all his positive features and leave out the negative. When they’re just as important, because they made him him.”

“Maybe they’re just trying to be considerate of you.” Akaashi says quietly.

“Well, I loved all of him, good and bad.” Iwaizumi replies. “The only person I can accept glorifying Oikawa is Kageyama. Because he always did and not just now that he’s gone. Back at Kitagawa Daiichi, he used to worship the ground Oikawa stepped on.”

“I can safely say Kageyama-kun still does.”

“I hope that never changes.”

“I’m sure it won’t.”

Iwaizumi stares at him with an unreadable expression.

“What?” Akaashi asks eventually.

“I’m just trying to figure out what it is about you, Akaashi.”

“What is what about me?”

“There’s just something about you that makes me feel-” He shrugs. “I don’t know, at ease. I
shared with you my thoughts and my feelings, things I didn’t think I’d be able to admit out loud.”
“T’m very good with secrets, so you don’t have to worry about me telling anyone.”
“No, that’s not what I meant.” Iwaizumi smiles. “You know Mattsun and Makki, right?”
Akaashi nods.
“I’ve been friends with them for two whole years, nearly three now. I couldn’t say all that stuff to them, and yet I said it all to you. Someone I’ve only known for a couple of months. Isn’t that kinda weird?”
“I don’t think I’d call it weird.” Akaashi muses. “My parents only knew each other for two months before they got married. This year they celebrated their 25th anniversary.”
Iwaizumi arches an eyebrow. “Are you implying you and I should get hitched?”
“Iwaizumi-san, I could only marry you if you can always get it up.”
“Always?! Well aren’t you a princess.” Iwaizumi sighs and shakes his head. “I really feel sorry for Bokuto and Kuroo.”
“Ah, but see, this is exactly why I have the two of them.” Akaashi winks.
“Okay, now I get it. The reason why I get along with you so well is because you’re just as terrible as Oikawa was.”
Jokingly, on a whim, Akaashi throws the peace sign and pokes his tongue out. He instantly regrets doing it, because Iwaizumi stares at him long enough to make him shift uncomfortably.
“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that.” He mumbles.
“No, that was perfect.” Iwaizumi smiles.
Yawning and stretching, Akaashi glances at his watch.
“Iwaizumi-san, you threw the rope back up into our room, right?” Iwaizumi nods. “I see. Well, I hope you’re a fast runner.”
“Fastest one in my year.”
“Good, because our school will be getting a food delivery any moment. If you want to sleep in a comfortable bed, we have to run fast to sneak in from the back entrance.”
Iwaizumi puts his socks and shoes on as he gallops away, leaving him behind.
“Hey, Iwaizumi-san, wait up! That’s cheating!”
By the time they get back at Fukurodani, they are red-faced, panting messes, and Akaashi is beyond impressed that Iwaizumi was able to keep up such a fast pace, when he looks like he hasn’t done any sports in a long while.
Unfortunately, a very sleepy Rob catches them at the bottom staircase.
“Akaashi! Guy I don’t know! Where the hell were you just now?”
“The gym.” Akaashi replies.
“I think you were out all night and are just coming back. Am I right?” He crosses his arms.

Akaashi and Iwaizumi both shake their heads in unison.

“Akaashi, show me your keys to the gym.”

“Well, Rob, funny story - I left them upstairs in my room.” Akaashi explains.

“Which is why we came back to get them.” Iwaizumi adds.

“You guys are so full of shit.” Rob sighs. “What am I gonna do with you two?” He taps his chin thoughtfully. “I could write you down for detention.” He tells Akaashi.

“I’m okay with that. I have to be there for tutoring anyway. But you don’t really like paperwork, Rob, so why bother?”

“True. But don’t think you’re getting away scot-free. Now that I think about it, I have the best punishment for you guys. I have a lot of errands to run today, but I don’t really feel like doing any of them.” He grins sadistically. “You two are gonna them for me. Now go to bed, I’ll slip the details under your door. Oh, and Akaashi, you get room restriction for the rest of the weekend.” He looks at Iwaizumi. “You’re one of the guest visitors this weekend?”

Iwaizumi nods.

“Well, you get room restriction too.”

Iwaizumi watches Rob walk away with an annoyed look on his face.

“God, I hate Americans.” He mutters once they’re inside the room. “I also hate your boarding school rules.”

“You better sleep fast, Iwaizumi-san.” Akaashi yells from the bathroom “And you better do it on Bokuto-san’s bed and not mine.”

It’s seven in the morning, when there’s a loud and continuous knock on their door.

“Keep doing that if you want to die.” Akaashi groans into his pillow.

“Akaashi-san, you’re awake!” Kageyama’s voice comes from outside.

“Make him go away.” Iwaizumi grunts.

“You brought him here, you deal with him.”

After a lot of huffing and puffing, Iwaizumi descends from the top bed and opens the door.

“What is it, Kageyama?”

“Last night Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san told me to sign you both up for the morning lake walk.” Kageyama says. “Everyone’s already downstairs waiting for you. Please hurry up!”

When he leaves, Iwaizumi’s expression is more sour than a lemon.

“Akaashi, I’m gonna kill your boyfriends.”

“Not if I get there first, Iwaizumi-san.”
They both have to run again, because someone has persuaded Masha into reconsidering, that the lake walk should be a lake run, more healthy and energizing that way. And judging by the looks the rest of the Fukurodani students keep throwing at Kageyama, who’s up ahead at the front, Akaashi and Iwaizumi both know he is that someone.

The volleyball table is already occupied by the Fukurodani second years, the Karasuno boys and Kuroo when they get back. They’ve actually pulled an extra table, just so everyone could fit. Every single one of them break in cheers when they see Akaashi, Iwaizumi and Kageyama entering.

“I feel so blessed that Kageyama-kun woke us all up this early.” Kuroo says, holding a hand over his heart. “So blessed.”

“Sharing breakfast with friends is so important.” Bokuto agrees.

It doesn’t go completely unnoticed by Akaashi how Konoha, Sarukui, Washio and Komi don’t quite meet his eye.

“I wonder what that was all about.” Akaashi says quietly to Iwaizumi as the two of them head into the kitchen and begin to fill their trays with food.

“They’re obviously happy they screwed us over with that lake run bullshit.” Iwaizumi mutters.

Akaashi nods, but he thinks there’s more to that. There is something else. He doesn’t know what exactly. What he does know is that he doesn’t like it.

He finds out soon enough.

“Say, Iwaizumi,” Kuroo begins, clearing his throat. “Do you take Theater and Drama class?”

“I don’t.”

“And have you ever considered being in a play?”

“No.”

“Oh. That’s such a shame.” Kuroo says, fighting hard to keep the smirk off his face. “Because I think you should reconsider.”

Iwaizumi doesn’t say anything, because he doesn’t have to. The look he gives Kuroo says it all. He doesn’t give two shits what Kuroo thinks.

“See, I believe you and Akaashi would be great to star in a play together.”

Iwaizumi stares at him, before turning his gaze at Akaashi, who has stopped chewing. He has a budding suspicion of what’s going on.

“And which play should we star in, Kuroo-san?” Akaashi scowls.

“Why, Angel Eyes, I’m very glad you asked me that question, thank you for that. Don’t you agree with me that you two would make a very believable Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn?”

Akaashi knows Kuroo’s sense of humor.

“You think you’re so clever, don’t you, Kuroo-san?” Akaashi’s scowl deepens and Kuroo can no longer stop himself, he roars in laughter. Sighing, Akaashi extends his hand towards Bokuto and him. “I don’t know which one of you has it, but give it to me.”
Iwaizumi is clearly well read, because he’s already on the same page. He looks at Akaashi.

“Is that what we have to do? Painting your school’s damn fence?”

Konoha cackles. “You two have to do so much more than that.”

Everyone laughs at their expense, while Rob’s list of their duties is passed around the entire table.

Despite the fact they have so much stuff to do, neither Akaashi nor Iwaizumi start until all of them have left Fukurodani, going to watch the second day of the volleyball tournament.

“Akaashi! Iwaizumi! I hope you two troublemakers are finished by the time we get back, because I’m postponing our volleyball practice until after dinner.” Bokuto hoots and waves.

“If someone told me a week ago - even a day ago - that I’d be in Tokyo sweeping up birdshit, I would’ve punched them in the face.” Iwaizumi grunts, wiping the sweat off his forehead with the back of his gloved hand. “No, I just wouldn’t have come.”

“Come on, Iwaizumi-san. You’re enjoying yourself.”

“Yeah, you’re right. This is the best day of my life.”

“Just imagine it’s insect shit and you’re gonna be fine.”

“Beetles, Akaashi. I like beetles.”

“So you do like the Beatles.” He snickers.

“Puns? Really?” Iwaizumi sighs. “I kind of hate you a little right now.”

He shrugs, smiling. “I’m okay with that.”

Akaashi works really hard on their bird feeders, using a steady hand and a tender heart. Maybe being laughed at by the others wasn’t that much fun, but he enjoys the physical labor, alongside Iwaizumi. He even takes a few selfies with him.

“These photos better not see the light of day.” Iwaizumi warns with a finger.

Akaashi assures him they won’t. They’re just for him. Okay, maybe he’ll send them to his parents, but that’s it.

Unfortunately, after lunch, their punishment is a lot more worse than painting fences and fixing bird feeders. It’s not an RCs job to clean up the public toilets, Akaashi knows, Rob’s just fucking with them.

But he’s glad it was Rob that caught them and not Jared.

“Akaashi! Akaashi, get over here!” Iwaizumi is screaming his head off and Akaashi runs to the girls bathroom.

It’s completely flooded.

“I only insisted on taking the girls toilet, because they’re clean.” He explains. “I didn’t think girls could be so gross.”

“What did you do, Iwaizumi-san?”
“Me?! I didn’t do anything!”

Akaashi gives a pointed glance at the wet floor.

“Ok. I found this thing by the bin and thought flushing it down the toilet would make it go away, because, you know, that’s what the flush does, making shit go away. But it’s not going away.”

Akaashi sighs and bracing himself for the worst, puts the toilet cover up. He nearly gags at the sight.

“Ok, what the fuck is this?” Iwaizumi points at bits of something white flowing inside the brownish water. “And more importantly, why isn’t it going away?”

“You don’t flush a sanitary pad away, Iwaizumi-san, that’s tampons!” Akaashi groans.

“Well I’m sorry, but I don’t fucking use any of that crap, so how was I supposed to know that?!”

“I don’t use them either!” He barks back.

“How are we gonna fix it?” Iwaizumi asks, slowly shaking his head at the way Akaashi is looking at him. “No. Nuh uh. Nope. I am not going to do that.”

“We’re gonna flip for it.” Akaashi says. “Oh, come on, that’s only fair! Do you have a coin?”

“Yeah, upstairs in my wallet.”

“So rock paper scissors it is, then.”

Iwaizumi stares at him. “Fine.”

Iwaizumi’s scissors cut Akaashi’s paper and he fists the air victoriously.

“Oh, thank God!”

“Two out of three?” Akaashi tries.

“What are you, insane?! Hell no!”

“Iwaizumi-san, I kind of hate you a little bit right now.”

“I think I can live with that.” Iwaizumi grins.

Akaashi crouches in front of the toilet and while keeping his eyes tightly shut, he dunks his hand into the dirty water, pulling out the sanitary pad that’s stuck at the bottom and throwing it into the bin, gagging the entire time.

“There’s a champ!” Iwaizumi claps his hands, while Akaashi cleans his gloves into the sink.

“You’re the one that’s gonna be mopping up this shit and not me.” He says.

“I’ve never even helped my mom clean our bathroom back at home! I’m not about to clean your school’s one!”

“You did this, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Ugh. Fine.”
They have just enough time to shower and get changed before dinner.

“Maybe it’s just wishful thinking, Iwaizumi-san, but you do look good in our school colors.” Akaashi smiles at the matching black shorts and jersey he gave Iwaizumi to wear.

They’re the only ones at the volleyball table and when they finish eating, Akaashi offers for them to go to the gym.

Iwaizumi winces.

“Last time I stepped onto the volleyball court I- uh... It didn't go all that well.” He admits. “Yahaba’s very good, but when my peripheral vision saw it wasn’t Oikawa setting for me, I just- I couldn’t bear it.”

“Is that why you don’t play anymore?” Akaashi asks softly.

“Yeah.” Iwaizumi nods. “Yeah, that’s exactly why.”

“I’m not gonna force you to do anything you don’t want to do. But,” Akaashi licks his lips slowly. “so far you’ve been doing a great job facing your fears.”

Iwaizumi extends his hand over the table and gives Akaashi’s an appreciative squeeze.

“Thanks to you.” His lips curve up. “Oh, what the Hell, I was able to face your shitty ass toilets, what’s a little bit of volleyball practice?”

“You sure?”

“Let’s do it.”

They do a few warming up laps and stretching, before they both line up and start serving.

“I don’t know why or if you’re aware of it, but Oikawa was very fond you.” Iwaizumi says after watching Akaashi do a jump serve. “First thing he said to me when he saw you play was how much he wanted to obliterate you. That was his way of appreciating an opponent he respected.”

“Yeah, I figured.” Akaashi smiles. “He did tell me he was looking forward to crushing me.”

“Of course he did.” Iwaizumi chuckles. “God, what is it with you setters? Every single one of you is just so damn extra.”

He shrugs. “From what I’ve heard, Datekou’s Moniwa-san is quite nice.”

“He’s the only exception.”

“Iwaizumi-san, how can you say that to me, when I was the one that unclogged the girls’ toilet?”

“Right, yeah, you did it out of the goodness of your heart and not because I beat you at rock paper scissors.” He snorts and dribbles the ball down with both hands. “Now quit yapping your mouth and go up at the net.”

Both Akaashi’s heart and his fingers tingle with excitement. There’s no better feeling to a setter than putting the ball up into the air for a good spiker.

And Iwaizumi’s so incredible.

Truth be told, he was a little afraid that Iwaizumi might get overwhelmed, but Iwaizumi shatters
both of their fears away by slamming the ball across the court with a resounding thud.

“How did that feel, Iwaizumi-san?”

“It felt good.” He admits. “It felt really good, actually.”

“Then let’s do it again.”

They go through the entire net of balls a couple of times, before the rest of the boys join them.

“Akaashi! Iwaizumi! I can’t believe you two started without us!” Bokuto yells, but Akaashi can tell he’s really happy.

Nobody looks as ecstatic as Kageyama, though.

“Iwaizumi-san, please hit one of my tosses! Akaashi-san, please, you too!” Kageyama nearly goes cross eyed, staring between the both of them.

“I’m not that good of a spiker, Kageyama-kun.” Akaashi says, but since Kageyama proceeds to beg him, he agrees to do it.

“Hey, there’s gonna be no casualties on my watch!” Bokuto’s voice booms all over the court. “Everyone except for Akaashi and Iwaizumi, get your asses prepared, because it’s warm up time!”

“This is gonna be so good, having two setters!” He hoots, rubbing his hands together, while Kageyama joins Akaashi at the net.

“What the Hell, man, I’m a setter too!” Sugawara complains, but still joins the rest of them as they get into two lines.

“Calm down, Suga, let the kids have the spotlight.”

“God, could you be any more of a dad?” Kuroo smirks.

“Akaashi!” Bokuto waves. “Give me a good one, Akaashi!”

Akaashi does. But his attention is stolen away from Kageyama, who is scowling at Konoha, who, apparently, was unable to hit the ball.

“You’re doing it all wrong, Kan-ke-konda-san.”

“Konoha-san.” Sugawara whispers helpfully.

“Excuse me?!” Konoha snorts. “Listen, kiddo, that was a fuckin’ shitty toss you gave me just now.”

“Language, please!” Sawamura yells.

“Give it here again, kid.” Konoha says, lining up.

Akaashi’s eyes follow the entire thing, but he still can’t quite believe the incredible ball control and precision Kageyama’s set has.

Konoha barely manages to hit it, swearing loudly.

“Kageyama-kun, that was absolutely mind-blowing.” Akaashi says, unable to stop the big smile across his face.
“What kinda drugs are you on, Akaashi, that was awful!” Konoha snorts.

“My tosses are perfect, you’re just slow.” Kageyama makes everyone laugh with his sincere answer.

Except Konoha, of course.

“Listen up, you little shithead-”

“Language!” Sawamura warns again.

“This is just so great, watching Konoha bein’ schooled by a fifteen year old?” Komi snickers. “Priceless!”

Washio nods in agreement. “We should’ve brought some popcorn.”

“Fuck you both!”

“How many times am I gonna have to repeat myself?!” Sawamura’s nostrils flare angrily. “There’s a minor here, watch your language!”

“Oi, Kageyamaaaa! Can you do one of those sets for me?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san!” Kageyama bows his head.

Bokuto spikes down the ball Kageyama throws into the air for him, and he makes it look so easy, so effortless. But it’s not, Akaashi can tell just how difficult it is.

“He’s something else, isn’t he?” Iwaizumi smiles, crossing his arms.

“I’ve never seen anything like that.” Akaashi replies quietly. “I don’t- I still don’t know how he’s doing it.”

“Kageyama-kun’s a genius, Angel Eyes, that’s how.” Kuroo smirks. “I wish Kenma was here to see him.”

“You could send him a video, Kuroo-san.”

“You’re a genius too, aren't’cha.” He winks.

Bokuto isn’t the only one that gets to hit Kageyama’s tosses. In fact, almost everyone does, except for Konoha, who looks more and more outraged with each miss.

“That little shithead's doing it on purpose, I’m telling you.” Konoha grumbles, but quiet, not wanting to have Sawamura yelling at him again.

“Alright, we’re gonna play a little friendly game!” Bokuto grins. “Sawamura, get over here! You’re the other Captain.”

Kuroo blinks. “I’m sorry, am I invisible to you, bro?!?”

“Bro, I got this, alright? You’re gonna be my first pick.” Bokuto replies.

Sawamura wins the coin toss and nobody’s surprised when calls out Sugawara’s name. Nobody is surprised that Bokuto’s first pick is Akaashi either, but Kuroo still tuts.

“Asahi.”
“Crow trio, what a shocker.” Kuroo snorts, before walking towards Bokuto.

“Komiyan!” Bokuto yells.

“Okay, bro, now I’m really offended.”

“Kuroo, over here.”

“Thanks, Dadchi, at least you still love me.”

When it’s just Konoha and Kageyama left, Bokuto taps his chin thoughtfully.

“Akaashi, what do you think?”

They already have Iwaizumi and while Akaashi’s never seen him play with Kageyama, he has a good feeling about the two of them being reunited as teammates.

“I’d go with Kageyama-kun.”

“Kageyama!”

“God, this is so humiliating.” Konoha groans. “I don’t think I’ve ever been last pick before.”

“What are you talking about, you’re always last pick when Yukie’s making up the teams during practice.” Komi snickers, swiftly moving out of the way as Konoha’s foot kicks at him.

As they begin playing, Akaashi is amazed how quickly Bokuto and Iwaizumi get in sync with each other. It’s beyond impressive how smooth Iwaizumi’s game is, considering the fact he hasn’t played for months.

It’s actually him that’s having a rough time coordinating with Kageyama.

“Denied!” Kuroo smirks viciously as he blocks Bokuto’s spike, earning his team a point. “I don’t care about the others, bro, but Imma block your ass, every time!”

“What do you mean you don’t care about the others?” Sawamura yells.

“Oh, man!” Bokuto drops on his knees, sobbing. “I really thought I had that one! I’m sorry, guys!”

Before Akaashi can so much as sigh, Iwaizumi’s fisted hand roughly pulls Bokuto up by the jersey.

“Get up, man!”

Akaashi smirks. Two team moms or nannies, or whatever it is he remembers Konoha calling it, united into fighting off Bokuto’s dejected mode.

This practice game is getting better and better by the second.

By the time they start on the third set, Akaashi and Kageyama no longer clash with each other. Kageyama assumes his setter’s position at the back, clearly understanding that Akaashi’s not as precise as him with tosses from there.

Just like Kuroo, Akaashi wishes Kenma was present, so he could see Kageyama’s dump shots.
It’s only during their last match point that Kageyama loses his concentration. Nobody blames him for dropping the ball.

Because Iwaizumi jumps into the air and yells out “Give it here and let me finish this, Oikawa!”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Ok, so this chapter is a lot shorter than all the others and I'm sorry about that, you guys. I'm totally drained from writing a 17K fanfic abt Konoha/Sarukui and I'm so very proud of it?? So if you're as fond of the lovely owls as I am here's the link ;A; . I've used a lot of my hcs in there that will be making an appearance in here too, bc I take my fukurodani hcs very seriously :3c Have a great weekend, ~everyone ♥

Akaashi doesn’t quite remember the first time he had a panic attack. What he does remember is the cold sweat, the pounding heart, the inexplicable but very real, crippling fear that something’s really wrong and it won’t go away.

He used to get them a lot, before. But just because he was aware that he was having one, didn’t make it any less scary or less traumatizing than the previous. Didn’t matter if he was home alone or in a public place around a lot of people. Panic attacks are easily the scariest thing he’s ever experienced.

Watching Kageyama clutching at his chest, the dry mouth and short breath, the fear in his eyes? It’s textbook.

“Kageyama, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to.”

Lightly, Iwaizumi touches his arm, a barely there rub of fingers, but it shocks Kageyama so strongly that he flinches back hard, until he’s pressed flush against the net pole.

Kageyama looks at him like he has no idea who Iwaizumi is. That, more than anything, is what kills.

“Kageyama?”

Upon hearing his own name, his hands fly over his ears, covering them, trying to protect himself.

Akaashi wants to scream at the walking and talking walls, circling Kageyama with their worried “Are you okay?”’s, but he doesn’t dare raise his voice. Last thing he wants is to disturb Kageyama further.

He’s aware, of course, that they are all well meaning, but Kageyama isn’t, brain unable to process information like that.

Akaashi considers telling Iwaizumi he should leave Kageyama alone, that he’s doing more harm
But he doesn’t have time to think.

When he sees Iwaizumi’s hand reaching out for Kageyama again, he hooks his fingers into Iwaizumi’s shoulders, fingernails painfully sharp, giving a tug backwards.

Iwaizumi’s eyes are filled with concern - guilt too, lots of guilt - towards Kageyama, he doesn’t want to be pulled away from him, and since Akaashi doesn’t loosen his grip, his hand instinctively comes up and hits Akaashi so hard, so squarely in the stomach that Akaashi goes flying back, colliding into Komi’s legs.

There’s a mess of limbs on the floor and Akaashi is so stunned for a moment, by the debilitating pain, unable to regain his wind.

Bokuto and Kuroo each hook an elbow under Iwaizumi’s arms, hauling him to the side, away from Kageyama. He doesn’t fight.

“Akaashi! You okay?”

He tries to reply to Bokuto, but all that comes out is a cough.

“His diaphragm is partially paralyzed, because he got hit in the solar plexus.” Kuroo replies.

Akaashi feels a wave of gratitude wash over him, for Kuroo’s choice of words. Because there’s no “Iwaizumi punched him”, no blame or anger behind his voice.

Once Akaashi catches his breath, he accepts Komi’s helping hand in pulling him up.

“Where’s Kageyama-kun?”

“Don’t worry about him.” Komi says. “Sawamura and Sugawara took him outside for some fresh air.”

Akaashi is very touched by Bokuto and Kuroo’s protectiveness, but what makes his heart swell with appreciation and love is the two of them only exchanging a nod with him, before giving Iwaizumi a pat on the back and joining the rest of the Fukurodani second years and Azumane in putting the balls and net away.

“What am I gonna tell Kageyama’s parents tomorrow, Akaashi?” Iwaizumi asks softly. “When he- when Oikawa died, Kageyama was a mess. I know, that’s so rich coming from me, right?” He snorts. “But I told them that this trip here would be good for him. They both trusted me and left him in my care. And what did I just do?”

“Iwaizumi-san-”

“Don’t say it wasn’t my fault, Akaashi, this was entirely on me.”

“No, what I was actually going to say is that we should go back upstairs, because we have room restriction.” He pauses. “I guess you don’t really have to, since you don’t attend our school. But cleaning up toilets isn’t something I wanna be doing again, so I’m going. You coming?”

Iwaizumi casually volunteers to shower first, but his tone is too casual.

Akaashi’s not stupid. He’s made the mistake before, letting Kuroo leave in the middle of the night without trying to stop him. He’s not about to make it again with Iwaizumi. No fuckin’ way, he’s
not Fukurodani tutor for nothing.

The second that he hears the shower water running, Akaashi locks up the door and puts the key in his pocket. Untying the rope from the bed is not something he can do with his bare hands, though.

Iwaizumi must have been a boy scout for sure.

The scissors he has in his desk drawer are small, only intended for arts and crafts, but Akaashi is very persistent and after a good five minutes, manages to cut the rope, making a mental note to buy a new one.

Maybe he’s wrong, thinking that Iwaizumi is gonna try and leave while he’s in the bathroom. But he’d rather be paranoid than take any chances.

“I left some clothes for you to change over there.” He says to Iwaizumi, pointing at his bed.

Akaashi quickly shampoos and rinses his hair, not bothering with drying himself off with a towel, pulling on a fresh pair of sweatpants and tshirt. When he walks out of the bathroom, Iwaizumi arches an eyebrow at him.

“Training for the military?”

“Maybe I am.”

“You’d be a terrible soldier,” Iwaizumi’s finger lightly touches the knot still tied around the bedpost. “if you can’t even deal with a simple knot.”

“But wouldn’t you agree with me that I’d make an excellent tactician?”

“What gave me away?”

“Nothing.”

“So how did you know I’d try and skip?”

“I might not be a Guess Monster like Tendou-san, but you condemning yourself and taking the blame for everything, it’s getting redundant, Iwaizumi-san, don’t you think?”

“Can’t you see, Akaashi? This is what I do! If I’m not hurting myself, I’m hurting those around me!” Iwaizumi swallows hard. “I made Kageyama’s anxiety worse. I hit you. And my plate’s a little full here, I can’t handle any more guilt.”

“Iwaizumi-san, I know you like History, you’ve told me it’s one of your favourite classes. So should I maybe start calling you Atlas now? Would you like that?”

“I was just trying to do the right thing.”

“Since when is the right thing ditching like a coward?”

“Oh, fuck you, Akaashi.”

“Yeah, fuck me for being honest with you. How could I ever do such a thing, right?” Akaashi absolutely doesn’t mean to raise his voice, so he takes a few breaths to compose himself. “Iwaizumi-san, what happened in the gym was an accident. Nobody blames you for it.”

“Well you should. You should blame me.”
Akaashi ignores him. “Do you know what I feel like? I feel like having some tea. Tea makes everything better, wouldn’t you agree, Iwaizumi-san?”

As he pulls a kettle out of his side of the wardrobe, Iwaizumi’s eyes follow him.

“Why do you keep that in there?”

“We’re not allowed to have them in our rooms. Safety precaution and all that.” Akaashi explains. “But if the girls upstairs can have hair straighteners and curlers and whatever, I can have tea.”

“Never took you for such a rule breaker, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi snorts.

“I have to admit that Fukurodani’s changed me a lot. Not all good. But I guess it’s alright to be bad sometimes.” He shrugs. “Gotta find the right balance.”

“Have you?”

“No, that’s still work in progress. And it’s going to take a long while, maybe even forever, but I’m fine with that.” Akaashi replies. “Jasmine or green tea?”

“Jasmine. Green tea doesn’t agree with my stomach and I’ve seen enough shit for today.”

Akaashi snickers and places both mugs on the floor in front of them.

“Jared caught me drinking tea once. He’s the other RC on the guy’s floor. When he asked me how I made it, I just said I left the hot tap water run for a really long time and the water boiled. He actually believed me, because when I was passing his room to go see Konoha-san and Sarukui-san, I saw him trying to make tea in his bathroom.” He laughs at the memory.

Iwaizumi offers half a smile, but his mind seems to be elsewhere. Miles away.

Akaashi doesn’t bother asking pointless questions.

“Iwaizumi-san, I said it before and I’ll say it again - I’ll say it as many times as it takes for you to believe me, okay? What happened in the gym was an accident, so please stop beating yourself up about it.”

“I hurt you both.”

“The only person that you’re hurting is yourself.” He says softly. “No matter how many “what if” and “if only” scenarios you replay in your head, you couldn’t possibly change the outcome of things any more than you could’ve stepped off a tree branch and flown. As great as you are, Iwaizumi-san, you are not a God. Because the fact of the matter is Oikawa-san had a mental illness. He made a choice and he wouldn’t want you to blame yourself for it.”

“Oikawa doesn’t want shit, because he’s fucking dead!” Iwaizumi shrieks.

Akaashi sits opposite Iwaizumi in silence, sipping his tea patiently, allowing him to continue.

Three months ago, he went through the exact same thing with Bokuto. It had been awful, but Akaashi knows it made him stronger.

He’s not immune to heartbreak, God, no. But his mental state isn’t as fragile anymore. He knows he is capable of offering a helping hand, an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on.

So if Iwaizumi wants to cry, he’ll cry with him. If he wants to scream, that’s okay too.
“Do you know what I miss? I miss going to bed at night with absolutely nothing on my mind. I miss enjoying things, like watching TV, eating food, playing volleyball. Do you know what food tastes like now, Akaashi? I’ll tell you. Like nothing. It tastes like nothing. I could be chewing on a piece of cardboard for all the difference it would make, because nothing has flavor anymore. I force myself to eat in order to survive. Food is just another formality I need to check off my “things that normal people do” list. And watching TV or movies is just a distraction, something to help me pass the time. I miss losing track of time. I miss having a reason to wake up in the morning and I actually hate the feeling when I wake up, because there’s nothing to look forward to.” Iwaizumi takes a deep breath and sighs. “I miss running my fingers through his soft hair. I miss our secret jokes and passing notes in class with him. I miss having sleepovers and sharing a bed with him. I miss laughing with him so much that my stomach would ache. I even miss our stupid fights over who’s turn it is to treat for a soft drink or pastry. I miss consoling him when he’s crying. All he ever needed was a hug from me and God, I miss that too. Oh, Akaashi!” He wails. “I miss him, Akaashi. I just miss him so fucking much!”

Akaashi offers his hand for support and Iwaizumi grabs it, squeezing it as if it’s his lifeline.

“I have all of his X-Files DVDs by my bed. This mad ugly spaceship he built for a science project back in grade school. He was just so damn proud of it. He left me most of his clothes and I don’t know if he intended for me to wear them, or just y’know, for keeps. But his tshirts don’t smell like him anymore. His scent is gone, just like him. I’ve held every single item he left me, clutching it to my heart, trying to feel closer to him.” Iwaizumi shakes his head, the tears running down his face. “All that stuff he left me, they used to be so full of life. But they’re not anymore. Without him, they’re just things.”

Iwaizumi, not wanting to let go of Akaashi’s hand, uses his free one to wipe his face.

“He haunts me. He haunts me all the time. Walking your school hallways, being inside your gym… even being here, in your room. He’s everywhere. But at the same time he’s not. I’m acutely aware that he’s out of my reach forever, and I can keep wishing until the fucking cows come home, but-” Iwaizumi’s voice cracks and he coughs, clearing his throat. “I know, okay? I know I can’t wish him back to life. All I’ve got is just years of memories, but you can’t touch those or- or smell them or hold them and they fade with time. Because the truth is, his face and his voice are becoming more and more vague in my head every single day. And I feel so fucking useless, Akaashi, because that’s just another thing I have no control over.”

Iwaizumi’d been dreading this, breaking down with the painful bundle of thoughts and feelings inside his head and chest. He doesn’t feel embarrassed by it, though, no.

In fact, it somehow makes him feel a bit better, sharing it all.

And he’s grateful that Akaashi acts like the whole thing’s just so normal. Maybe it is. Maybe this is normal.

Eventually the tears stop falling.

“Have you tried visiting him?” Akaashi asks softly.

“No.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “No, I’m not gonna do that.”

“Why not?”

“I have no interest in holding a monologue with a gravestone. I’m not in denial, if that’s what you’re thinking. I just- he’s dead. When you die, nothing happens to you.”
“You sound so certain, Iwaizumi-san, but you couldn’t possibly know that. None of us do.” Akaashi replies. “I think that when you’re ready, you should go.”

“Why? What difference would it make?”

“Well, you did say he haunts you. Maybe this is his way of asking you to visit him.”

“You’re crazy.”

“I’m okay if you think that.” Akaashi shrugs. “But that’s the place where Oikawa-san rests.” He looks at Iwaizumi, waiting to hold his gaze, before continuing. “Personally, I believe he would like you to see that he’s finally at peace.”

“God, I don’t know anything anymore.” Iwaizumi groans loudly. “But I guess I could try doing that. Maybe you’re right.”

“Or maybe I’m wrong. It wouldn’t hurt to try, though.”

Akaashi makes more tea. It’s kind of nice to not be drinking alcohol, for a change.

They both lie on the floor in comfortable silence.

“I know I’m not the only person that misses Oikawa.” Iwaizumi says after a while, and sits up. “But I’m not like the rest of you guys.”

Akaashi finds himself mirroring his movement and tilting his head curiously at Iwaizumi.

“I don’t have any hobbies or special talents or things like that. I lived my entire life being interested only in him and him alone. I mean, I only got hooked on volleyball, because he did. In fact, everything I ever did revolved around him. In a way, being his best friend is all I’ve ever known, that’s all I’ve ever been good at. And now...” Iwaizumi sighs softly. “I didn’t just lose my best friend, Akaashi, I lost me too. Without Tooru, I’m no one.”

“Iwaizumi-san, you might’ve lost your way, but not your identity.” His hand gently taps Iwaizumi’s knee and remains there. “It’s pretty obvious you like being around Kageyama-kun and I, because you feel closer to Oikawa-san when you’re with us, right? We both remind you of him.”

“You… you think I’m so fucked up that I’ve lost my grip on reality and can’t tell the difference? I know I called Kageyama by his name, but that was a slip of the tongue. I’m not that fucking crazy, Akaashi, but thanks for thinking that way, man, really appreciate it.” Iwaizumi says, snappy and rude.

Akaashi shakes his head. “You’re so busy getting all defensive that you completely missed my point.”

“Well if you do have one, I suggest you get to it. Now would be a good time.”

Iwaizumi might not be able to help the bark in his voice, but Akaashi is able to stop himself from rolling his eyes.

“Iwaizumi-san, tell me why Kageyama-kun and I remind you of Oikawa-san.”

Iwaizumi arches an eyebrow. “Because you can’t see the similarities for yourself?”

“Humor me.”
“Okay. You’re setters that he taught things to and was fond of. Your extra personalities, although Kageyama is just unaware, while you are completely aware and just - I don’t know - like being bitchy, I guess?”

Akaashi lets the dig go.

“No, that’s not all of it. That’s not even the most of it.” A smile appears on Akaashi’s lips, soft and tender. “You still can’t see it, Iwaizumi-san, can you?”

“What exactly am I supposed to see?”

“It’s you, Iwaizumi-san. You’re the common denominator.” His smile turns triumphant. “You’ve helped all three of us through tough situations, because that’s your thing. You save the damsel in distress. You’re a-”

“A what, hero?” Iwaizumi snorts.

“That’s not actually the word I was going for, but okay, sure, we can go with yours.”

“What word were you going for?”

“Pillar, Iwaizumi-san. I was going for pillar.” Akaashi says softly.

Iwaizumi’s sardonic expression changes in an instant. He stiffens, face full of emotion. Jaw tight, eyes dampy at the lashes.

“You’re loyal and you’re strong and you’re incredibly supportive and that’s why people lean on you.” He squeezes Iwaizumi’s knee. “Just because Oikawa-san isn’t here anymore doesn’t mean you stop being a pillar, Iwaizumi-san. Because you weren’t just his, but also Kageyama-kun’s and mine. And your teammates. And your friends.” Akaashi offers a small smile. “You still are, you know. And you always will be. Because that’s who you are. A pillar.”

Iwaizumi blows out a ragged breath through his nose and resolutely doesn’t answer him. He can’t. Iwaizumi can’t talk at all. He makes a little noise, though, a verbal nod.

It’s an unspoken thank you. And truth be told, no words can actually portray the gratitude he feels so overwhelmed by.

Akaashi sees it. Akaashi understands it. It’s kind of hard to miss it, really.

Iwaizumi goes into the bathroom to wash his face. And also to give himself some me time.

Again, Akaashi understands. He’s totally cool with it.

When Iwaizumi comes out, he ruffles Akaashi’s hair in passing and blinks. Then he laughs lightly.

“Damn, Akaashi. You just- you found my thread and you didn’t even have to tug and you- I fucking unraveled. You’re good. You’re real good. It’s no surprise you’ve got both Bokuto and Kuroo wrapped around your finger.” Iwaizumi’s smile is still at his lips. “Speaking of, they must hate my guts.”

“Why would they?”

“Well, you three just got together, right, officially?” Akaashi nods. “I totally stole you away from
them this entire time and if it wasn’t for me, you could’ve been doing fun couple-y things. Instead you got my ugly mug, so, uh, sorry about ruining your weekend.”

“Iwaizumi-san, I’m aware that you don’t hold the highest of opinions about either Bokuto-san or Kuroo-san. But if you say something like that to me again, I will knock your teeth down your throat.” Akaashi warns. “How could you even think that there’s anything more important than your well being to not just me, but everyone here? Tch. Pardon my French, Iwaizumi-san, but fuck you very much.”

“That was actually Japanese and not at all French.” Iwaizumi presses his lips together.

“You made fun of my puns, but this is what you give me? I mean, seriously, Iwaizumi-san?” Akaashi shakes his head in pretend disgust. “You were right about one thing, though. You really do have an ugly mug when you cry. You bite your lower lip and there’s snot and tears and it’s really not a good look, I’m sorry.”

“Apologies, princess.” Iwaizumi nods curtly. “Not all of us can be pretty when we cry.”

“It’s tough, but I guess I’ll just have to live with that.” Akaashi smirks.

“Not as tough as me having to live with you liking The Beatles, man. Now that is tough.”

“Okay, you’re eventually gonna have to let that one go, Iwaizumi-san. It could be way worse, you know.”

“How could it possibly get worse than The Beatles?”

“Konoha-san likes Nickelback.”

“Sorry, not that good with names. Which one was Konoha again?”

“Jersey Number 7?”

“Ah, gotcha.” Iwaizumi sighs. “So I guess it’s like a Fukurodani thing, huh, having terrible taste in music?”

Their conversation had been an emotionally draining experience, for the both of them. But a very necessary thing. And Akaashi feels content, he feels touched that Iwaizumi trusted him enough to admit it all, everything, to allow his pain and grief to be shared. And hopefully, his burden to be halved.

So now it feels really good to smile and joke around. Who doesn’t like comic relief?

“Iwaizumi-san, I can promise you that you will enjoy yourself again. Not just in pretense, but genuinely.” Akaashi smiles. “But you have to stop isolating yourself from the people that care about you. You always help everyone, so let us all help you get better.”

“Mm. I’ll get by with a little help from my friends, right?” Iwaizumi half snorts and Akaashi laughs.

“Exactly.”

“Okay. Just promise me one thing first.” Iwaizumi says, tone serious. “Promise me that nobody’s gonna be breaking into song and dance like we’re in High School Musical.”

“Iwaizumi-san, I loathe to break my promises. Which is why, I’m afraid, I can’t give it.” Akaashi
pulls a face. “Bokuto-san’s tried on multiple occasions to get our volleyball team to “Break Free”.”

“Hey, if it’s Queen’s-”

“No, it’s not.”

Iwaizumi sighs. “Were you the Gabriella to his Troy?”

“Me? Of course not.”

“Kuroo?”

Akaashi nods.

“Well. I loved my idiot, I guess you love yours.” He smiles.

All it takes is one quick phone call and not even fifteen minutes later, they hear the approaching loud footsteps and voices echoing into the hallway.

_Bang! Bang! Bang!_

“What’s the password?” Akaashi asks, winking at Iwaizumi.

“How’s “Fuck you and open the goddamn door, because I’m carrying way too many hot pizza boxes” for a password?” Konoha yells.

“Password recognized.” He unlocks the door and steps out of the way, allowing the throng of people to come in.

“You really need to do something about that mouth of yours.” Sawamura says, shaking his head at Konoha.

Konoha ignores him and sniffs the air. “Someone open up a window, it smells like sex in here.”

“How would _you_ know what sex smells like?” Komi snickers.

“Fuck you, Komi! Your mom taught me everything I know.” Konoha leers.

“Komiyan knows whatsup! Hey hey heyyyy!”

Their room is suddenly overcrowded and bursting to the brim, with the Fukurodani and Karasuno second years, Kuroo and Kageyama, all taking up the floor, the beds, the chairs. There’s not even space for a tiny little mouse to fart in.

Kuroo claps his hands, asking for everyone’s attention.

“Kageyama-kun! Why don’t you show Iwaizumi and Angel Eyes what you learned last night?”

“Wait, bro, wait!” Bokuto frantically searches his drawers and gives a happy hoot when he finds what he’s looking for. Triumphantlv waving a baseball cap in the air, he places it on Kageyama’s head backwards. Then he fishes out a pair of sunglasses and puts them on Kageyama. “Ok, Kageyama, go!”

“I like big butts and I cannot lie! You other brothers can’t deny! My anaconda don’t want none unless you got buns, hun!” Kageyama throws the peace sign. “Fuck bitches, get money!”
The room explodes in jeers and laughter, Bokuto and Kuroo the loudest and proudest. It’s their doing, after all.

Iwaizumi’s head snaps accusingly towards Akaashi.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’m not the culprit here, so you can stop looking at me like that.” Akaashi scowls back.

“I thought bringing him here would be an enriching experience, helping him grow, being surrounded by mature people.” Iwaizumi mutters. “Instead, I brought him to the house of horrors.”

“I tried stopping them, but I couldn’t.” Sawamura shakes his head in shame. “I’m really sorry, Bokuto and Kuroo’s desire to ruin today’s youth was stronger than me.”

“C’mon, Dadchi, cheer up!” Bokuto slaps Sawamura between the shoulders, grinning. “We were just looking out for Kageyama, making sure he’s enjoying himself.”

“You know, kid, it’s really too bad you’re so set on going to Shiratorizawa next year.” Kuroo says to Kageyama.

“Shiratorizawa’s volleyball team is the strongest one in my prefecture.” Kageyama replies.

“Mmm maybe so. But I think you should consider going to Karasuno.” Kuroo smirks. “Dadchi and Mama Suga already care for you like you’re their son.”

“Bro, I think Sugamama’s better than Mama Suga.”

Kuroo wipes at his eyes in mirth. “Bro, you complete me.”

“Other than teaching Kageyama-kun your usual nonsense, what were you doing?” Akaashi asks.

“Akaashi!” Bokuto’s eyes gleam happily. “I was showing everyone why my nickname is Quicksilver!”

Akaashi sighs.

“Oi, Iwaizumi! Aren’t you gonna ask me what that means?”

“I would ask you if I cared, Bokuto. But I’m sorry, I don’t.” Iwaizumi shrugs.

“Oh shit!” Konoha cackles. “Does anyone have any ice? That was a sick fucking burn!”

“What are you laughing at, you hyena? You actually cried earlier!” Bokuto sneers.

Akaashi pinches the bridge of his nose and then extends his palm in front of Bokuto and Kuroo. “Give them back. Now.”

“How dare you, Angel Eyes, we won fair and square!”

“No, you didn’t.” Akaashi wiggles his fingers. “I’m waiting.”

Groaning, both Bokuto and Kuroo empty their pockets and put all of the money into Akaashi’s hand.

“Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san don’t just enjoy playing poker.” Akaashi explains to Iwaizumi, whose eyebrows have shot up into his hairline. “They love hustling people.”
Bokuto and Kuroo laugh and fist bump.

“There’s a reason why Bokuto-san’s nickname is Quicksilver.” Akaashi turns to Sawamura, Sugawara and Azumane. “Clearly, you weren’t aware of that before. But that’s okay, because you are now. Here. Take back whatever money Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san stole from you.”

“Akaashi! We didn’t steal anything!”

“I don’t want to hear it, Bokuto-san.”

“What about him?” Sawamura points at Konoha. “He lost the most.”

“Ah, no. Konoha-san ought to know better by now, but he has a gambling problem. It’s his own fault for losing all of his money.”

“No, Kono didn’t lose all of them.” Sarukui smiles. "He did save his last money for-

“Shut the fuck up, Saru, man!”

“Uh, everyone?” Washio clears his throat. “Shouldn’t we eat the pizza before it gets cold?”

“Yeah, and save some for the girls!” Komi yells. “Otherwise Yukie’s gonna kill us!”

“Your managers are allowed to be on the boys floor?” Iwaizumi asks Sarukui. “I thought your school had a no mixed company policy?”

“Yeah, we do, but Yukie asked our RC and he gave them permission.” Sarukui explains. “They just went upstairs to change first.”

Akaashi doesn’t have to kick any shins or use his sharp elbows to get himself some food, because there’s an untouched pizza box left on his desk. He eats an entire slice and while chewing on his second one, offers some to Iwaizumi.

“I’m good, thanks.” He replies, but when he sees the cheese stretching as Akaashi takes a third slice, he can’t help the craving in his stomach. “Oh, what the Hell.”

As Iwaizumi takes one, Akaashi’s greasy mouth gives him an approving smile.

“Oh. Akaashi, look!” Iwaizumi points at the inside part of the box, where the words “I know this is cheesy, but will you go out with me?” are scribbled out. “Shouldn’t it be go out with “us” and not just “me”, though?”

Akaashi finishes chewing and swallows, before replying. “No, I don’t think- Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san both know my favourite pizza is Salami and not Margherita.”

“Hey hey heyyyy! I heard my name!” Bokuto grins.

“Yeah, same.” Kuroo smirks at Iwaizumi and Akaashi. “What’s up, nerds?”

“Kuroo-san, did you and Bokuto-san get the pizzas?”

“No, Angel Eyes, we didn’t. Why?”

Akaashi points in explanation to both Bokuto and Kuroo’s curious eyes.

“What the fuck.” Bokuto says softly, before turning to everyone. “Which one of you fuckers here is trying to seduce Akaashi?”
“Language, you guys, please.” Sawamura sighs. “I’m not reaching for the stars here.”

“Who ordered the pizzas?” Kuroo asks.

Heads start turning left and right.

“The biggest loser did.” Komi grins at Konoha.

“Konoha-san, is this a joke? For what I told you yesterday?”

“What are you talking about?” Konoha asks.

Before Akaashi can reply, Bokuto takes the pizza box out of his hands and puts on display for everyone to see.

And laugh. Everyone laughs.

“Explain yourself, hyena!”

It’s almost comical, really, the way Konoha’s eyes turn saucer-like in terror.

“Bokuto, relax.” Washio says, grinning. “If you think about it, Akaashi’s not the only person on our team that can be seduced by food.”

“Oh no. No, no, no, no, no, no.” Konoha massages his temples. "This isn’t happening right now. This can’t be happening. I’m just asleep. Someone please wake me up. Saru! Wake me the fuck up, Saru, man, please, I beg you.”

Sarukui shakes his head and presses his lips together in what Akaashi can recognize is his “I’m internally screaming” smile.

“I’m sorry, Kono. This is as much of a nightmare for me as it is for you.”

Poor Konoha.

“Oh my God! I can’t breathe!” Komi wheezes out on all fours, clutching his stomach from laughing. “Tatsu, you and I should become boarding students next year too!”

“As much fun as this is, I could never be a boarding student here.” Washio replies.

“What’s the matter, Tatsu?” Bokuto grins. “Not up to having curfews, huh?”

“No, that’s not it. I just can’t leave Honey.”

“Well, it’s true that Akaashi eats like, most of our honey, but I’m sure there’ll be some left for you too.”

“No, Honey’s my neighbor’s dog.” Washio explains. “She’s the most beautiful girl in the world and I get to dogsit her whenever my neighbors go somewhere.”

“Ahhhh.” Bokuto nods. “Yeah, not having pets here is the shittiest rule ever.”

There’s a knock on their door and Rob pokes his head in. “Nobody’s naked here, right?”

“No yet.” Kuroo smirks.

Rob sighs. “Whatever. I don’t really get paid enough to care.”
He allows Yukie and Shimizu to enter, mumbles a “You girls have an hour” and closes the door. “Hey, everyone!” Yukie greets with a wave and stuffs her hands into the pockets of her denim overalls. Cute. “You saved us some pizza, right?” “Oh, Yuks, there was actually-” Bokuto begins. “Bro code! Bro code, Bokuto!” Konoha yells, eyes wild.

“There’s leftovers, but they’re cold.” Sarukui smiles, offering a nearly untouched pizza box in front of them. “We could order fresh pizzas for you?”

“Aw, that’s really sweet, Saru, but both Kiyoko and I prefer it cold.” Yukie replies, taking a slice. “Oh, you guys don’t have to move, we’re okay with sitting on the floor.” She says to Washio and Komi, who all but jump off of Akaashi’s bed.

“You all heard her!” Konoha barks, pushing everyone in his vicinity out of the way. “Make some fucking space, you assholes!”

Iwaizumi, unimpressed and annoyed, doesn’t even budge an inch.

Akaashi presses his lips into his ear, whispering. “Move, Iwaizumi-san. Let him be.”

"Again?” Iwaizumi recoils back, face contorted in disgust. "Akaashi, that's too many Beatles quotes for the time being. Try again next year or something."

"I said let him be, not let it be.” Akaashi enunciates, scowling. "Konooha-san's in love with her. I think?"

"Oh." Iwaizumi instantly scooches.

“So what are guys up to?” Yukie asks. “Anything interesting?” Nobody replies, but all of the Fukurodani second years are looking at Konoha, smiling and snickering.

“Nothing? Really?” Yukie asks again.

“Well, Yuks, we did play poker.” Bokuto grins.

“Oh my God! Let me guess! You made Nori-chan cry, didn’t you?” Yukie laughs.

“Not much of a guess, sweetheart.” Kuroo smirks. “Not when it’s just the usual thing.”

Lots of teasing and laughter ensues and surprisingly, Konoha doesn't use his rude mouth, at all. Or his middle fingers. Other than being red at the ears, he takes it all in good stride.

Akaashi wouldn't have believed it had he not seen it with his own eyes.

“I’m going to bed.” Konoha announces, rising. "Night."

“I’m glad Kinoa-san is leaving.” Kageyama says sourly. “Because I really wanted to discuss volleyball tactics, but he wouldn’t stop talking about you, Yukie-san.”

Akaashi sighs, his heart going out to Konoha. Obviously Kageyama has no idea what “bro code” means. He also, obviously, doesn’t know what Konoha’s name is, either.
“Konoha-san.” Sugawara offers helpfully. “His name is Konoha-san.”

“Kinoa-san!” Komi roars in laughter. “Oh my God, I’m dying!”

“He was talking about me the whole time?” Yukie asks softly.

Kageyama proceeds to explain to Yukie all about the pizza that was ordered for her, but “Akaashi-senpai and Iwaizumi-senpai ate it”.

“Oh no, Kageyama, what are you doing?” Iwaizumi squeezes his eyes shut and groans.

“Nori-chan, did you really-?”

Konoha tugs on his earlobe and drops his gaze. “Yeah, I guess I did.”

All pairs of eyes are glued on Yukie as she walks up to Konoha. Lifting his chin up with both hands, she kisses the bejesus and the bedevil out of him.

The room fills with wolf whistles and Hey hey hey!s and Oh ho ho!s.

“Holy shit.” Komi laughs delightedly. “I was totally gonna make fun of him that a 14 year old's got more game than him.” He smirks at them, still kissing against the door. “Guess I was wrong.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Okay, this is it, 14005 words of brand new chapter, signed, sealed, delivered. Guess what? Ch 30 is BoKuroAka smashing and it was terrifying af to write, because idek how to smut?????? [screams] Thank u, Kris, for your, as always, endless support❤

On Monday morning Yukie, Bokuto and Akaashi get called into the dean’s office.

“You know how much we encourage sports here at Fukurodani.” The dean begins. “We are proud of all our teams, because each and every one has brought us so many victories and trophies and medals, honorable mentions and recognition. Our football and baseball teams are incredible, but Fukurodani is considered a powerhouse school because of our basketball and volleyball ones. After all both teams have two star athletes whose skill and talent are recognized by the entire country.”

Bokuto, proud as a peacock, turns to Akaashi and Yukie, whispers, but doesn’t really whisper a grinning “One of them’s me.”

“Yes, Bokuto, one of them is you. I’ve watched all your games from the stands and, I have to say, it’s very impressive how you kids have been able to accomplish so much, everything, on your own. After watching your game against Shiratorizawa I realized something.” He pauses, licking his lips. “I’d like for you to have an official coach.”

The dean leans back into his chair, crossing his fingers against his chest, while the three of them exchange tense glances.

Bokuto is first to react.

“Sensei!” He jumps on his feet and slams his hand against the desk. “I know last year we came second in Nationals and everyone expected the same this year, but I can assure you that my team gave it’s damn best against Shiratorizawa! You said- you told us all how proud you were and yet here you are telling us we’re not good enough and that we need help! You should consider getting new glasses, Sensei, because you’re obviously blind!”

“Bokuto, sit back down.” The dean replies calmly.

Bokuto stares at him for a few seconds, silently, and ever so obviously offended, but he does take his seat.

“I did not say you weren’t good enough or that you need help. Quite the contrary. I’ve seen all
your games from the stands, but watching you up close, courtside, the way you kids played...” The dean shakes his head, smiling fondly. “You moved me. I wasn’t a star athlete in high school, but I have a lot of experience managing and guiding people, lending hands wherever and whichever way I can. Which is why I spoke with the principal and as of today, I’m officially your volleyball Coach.”

Bokuto scratches his head, tugs on his earlobe and then smirks. “Well, I knew you were gonna say that, Sensei, but I take my Theater and Drama class very seriously, which is why I gave you a little display of my abilities.”

Yukie throws her head back and laughs, while Akaashi fights hard to suppress a smile.

“The dean claps his hands together. “Shirofuku, during your free periods this week, I’m going to be joining you in the Dining Hall, so you can help me catch up with all things volleyball.”

“Yes, Sensei.”

“As for you, Akaashi,” The dean nods at him. “Since your exams are approaching, I’m going to need you to create revision guides for everyone on the volleyball team and help them study. I’m leaving you in charge, so make sure we’re not going to have any slackers stuck in detention due to poor grades.” He gives a pointed glance at Bokuto.

“Yes, Sensei.”

“There’s something else. Jamboree is right after the Easter holidays and that’s a very big event for both basketball and volleyball teams. Lots of preparations to do, as a lot of schools will be coming here. So please remind your Studio Art teacher that just like the previous years, your class is going to be working on creating banners and decorations and whatever arts and crafts you kids usually do.”

“Yes, Sensei.”

“And last but not least.” The dean turns to Bokuto.

“That’s right, Sensei, leave the best for last.” Bokuto grins. “What can I help with?”

“No, Bokuto, I have a very important announcement for you. I’ve spoken with your father regarding your Easter break.”

Bokuto tenses up. “I’m supposed to go with my parents to Europe.”

“You’re not going to do that, because you need to be right here in Tokyo. So you can relax.” The dean says softly.

“How-” Bokuto swallows hard. “How did you manage to convince my father?”

“I received a very important phone call on Saturday. And it’s my greatest pleasure to inform you that you have been invited to the National Youth Intensive Training Camp. Wait, there’s more. We’re going to have scouts come over during Jamboree, although it’s already been decided.” The dean smiles. “Congratulations, young man. Starting this summer, you will be joining our men’s national volleyball team.”

“Oh my God!” Yukie covers her mouth with both hands.

Akaashi feels his vision blurring, the dean’s words going through his ears, registering in his brain,
following through all of his senses and muscles and matter, reaching all the way to the swelled knot of his heart.

Akaashi, who by the age of seven was already stuffed in a box labeled Freak, because he was too interested in Math and not at all interested in playing kickball with the rest of his P.E. class.

Akaashi, who during most of his life considered jocks to be good for nothing but kicking or hitting a ball, brainless bullies that carried themselves as if they owned the universe and everyone had to make way as if they were walking a red carpet, to acknowledge and worship them.

Akaashi, who was ready to run in the other direction, but for the sake of his begging senpais, joined the volleyball team for one practice, unwillingly.

Akaashi, who wouldn’t have considered this to be something to get emotional over, before, just an after school activity that borderlined torture, with all of the pain and effort and sweat and running suicides.

Because volleyball is just a meaningless sport.

It’s just a club.

Half a Fukurodani year later, he is singing a completely different tune.

And it’s not because the volleyball team was the first time in Akaashi’s short life that gave him the sense of belonging somewhere, being a part of something, with others, a needed setter between the ranks, yet so much more.

It’s because of Bokuto.

Bokuto, who when playing in top form gives Akaashi the most incredible feeling.

Bokuto, who made Akaashi fall in love with the beautiful game and, in turn, with him.

Bokuto, who makes people turn green with envy, because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, upper class all the way.

Bokuto, who grew up and to this day is still unfamiliar with a parent’s word of praise and approval.

Bokuto, who is the endless butt of people’s jokes for his mood swings, his dejected mode.

Bokuto, who set himself a goal and despite all of the hindrances has worked towards it, fighting so damn hard, tooth and claw, to create a name for himself, instead of simply assuming his status, son of a world known surgeon and fashion designer.

Bokuto, who has taken all the steps, dream no longer just a dream, about to start living it.

Volleyball, a meaningless sport, except for the ways it means everything.

“Sensei, look what you just did!” Bokuto groans loudly. “You made Akaashi cry!”

“Oh, it’s not me, Bokuto, it’s you.” The dean replies cheerily. “Or perhaps Akaashi is upset for missing out on breakfast.”

Akaashi, overly emotional, chokes on laughter, wiping the wetness away from his eyes with the back of his hand.
The dean dismisses them with a warning finger to not be late for their first class and as the three of them walk out of his office, they see Konoha lingering around the corner, a wrapped up toast sandwich in his hands, offering it to Yukie.

Making half of it disappear with one bite, she mumbles out a happy “Best boyfriend ever.”

Akaashi doesn’t stick around for chit chat, to hear Bokuto complain that her standards are too low - just a pizza and a sandwich, damn it, Yuks, why? - nor for Konoha telling Bokuto to fuck off, and pushes ahead.

Unfortunately the kitchen’s already closed and there are no coins in his wallet.

Oh well. At least he had a cup of coffee earlier. And maybe Bokuto’s great news can keep his mind occupied with pride and joy, so he wouldn’t feel the-

Krrrr!

Yeah, food for thought isn’t enough to satisfy his stomach.

“Akaashi, think fast!” He catches the powerbar Bokuto throws at him. “Good thing I always have one or two of those stashed in my locker, otherwise you’d be hungry and I would’ve lost to the hyena.”

Akaashi chews, aware of Bokuto’s eyes on him the entire time. He looks so damn happy just watching him eat.

So very silly. So very smitten.

Akaashi, resolute, after checking to see that they’re alone in the Dining Hall, kisses jittery Bokuto against the vending machine, smiling a little when he’s kissed immediately back. Their knees bump together, arms wrapped around tight like small children.

After leaving Bokuto’s mouth tasting like him, vanilla coconuttty, Bokuto beams and blooms and says “I should start carrying powerbars in my pockets.”, breathless.

Akaashi makes it in time to the History classroom before the warning bell, but, somehow, Bokuto is late and ends up in detention.

“Totally worth it.” Bokuto grins, Cheshire cat big.

Akaashi sighs.

- 

On Tuesday, the weather insists on making everyone feel like a drowned rat as much as Akaashi insists on reminding everyone exams are coming up and hands out revision cards, which he promises to quiz them on.

“I spend so much time styling my hair and what a waste of gel.” Bokuto complains during lunch. “The humidity is killing me.”

“Bokuto-san, you could try an umbrella instead of that towel you put over your head.” He offers, mouthful of yakiniku.
“Bokuto, if you use one, please don’t carry it the way Konoha does.” Komi says and all of the second years laugh.

It’s true. Konoha walks around with his umbrella against his neck, hands in his pockets, carelessly cool. Akaashi actually thinks Konoha pulls it off and looks pretty dapper, but he would rather grind in Bokuto’s month old dirty laundry that admit it out loud to the table.

Konoha is in such high spirits that he could give Mr Gene Kelly a run for his money, singing in the rain and walking on sunshine. The rest of the squad finds the change somewhat bothersome, the lack of his endless trademark complaints, his eyes not scrunched up in disgust, but crinkled with happiness, pointed like the tip of a heart at the corners.

Akaashi likes the change, prefers it even. One less person on the team to worry about. As far as he’s concerned, Yukie took all of the Konoha responsibility when she kissed him. Plus they have the dean now as their Coach that joins them at practice and he has a very low bullshit tolerance.

Coach made Komi run extra laps for being late, because Komi took a longer than intended power nap in their locker room. He also made Sarukui stay behind to do 100 jump serves, because he was off his game.

“I wish I had a magic wand, so I can repel the rain like Hermione did for Harry.” Sarukui says, wiping his glasses clean.

Akaashi looks up from his plate with unmasked excitement. “Konoha-san finally convinced you to read the Harry Potter series?”

“Yeah. Well. Since I can’t sleep, I’m devouring books.”

“Why can’t you sleep?” Washio asks.

“It’s kinda hard to get some shut eye when Yuks and Kono shake the bed so much.” Sarukui sighs. “I’m afraid that they’re gonna break it and squish me.”

“They do it with you in the room?” Komi pulls a face.

Sarukui nods and then shrugs. “You don’t get much privacy in a boarding house.”

“Ugh.” Komi shudders. “I take back what I said, being a boarding student must really suck. If you want you can check out during weekends and stay at my place. We’re currently housing my brother’s bridezilla, but the garage is safe. Besides, if you come, you can help me work on my baby.”

“No way!” Bokuto gawps. “Your brother gave you the Pimpala?”

“Yup, sure did.” Komi grins. “I was actually expecting his motorbike, but since I’ve been putting up with his fiancee’s nonsense, he said if I can fix the Chevy, it’s mine.”

“Damn, I’m so jealous!” Bokuto groans loudly.

“Bokuto-san, who cares about some dumb car, when you get to play volleyball for our national team?”

Akaashi’s words manage to offend the entire table, everyone staring accusingly.

“Well, if you think that smart car is dumb, then you better not go near our national team.” Washio echoes, shaking his head. “No. No, that ain’t right. Bokuto, Akaashi
educates you so much, you should educate him back.”

Bokuto dabs at his dry eyes dramatically. “Akaashi! Komiyan’s car is a Chevy Impala, the sweetest ride in the world.”

“That’s great. And congratulations, Komi-san, I didn’t know your brother’s getting married.”

“Thanks, Akaashi. The wedding’s in three weeks and I can’t wait for it to be over and done with. Although I’m gonna miss my brother.”

“Is he moving away?” Akaashi asks.

Komi nods. “Hayato’s sister wants them to live in Sendai, so they’re gonna live in Sendai.”

Akaashi had seen Komi and Yamagata being all buddy buddy after their game, but he simply assumed they were getting along because of the whole greaser vibe they shared. Apparently, it’s more than that.

“Saru, should I tell my dad to send an email that you’re checking out this weekend? It’s gonna be so great, man, we’re gonna jam out to AC/DC and work in the garage.”

Sarukui smiles. “Maybe next weekend, Komi, this weekend I can’t.”

“Why?”

“Kiko and Kira are visiting and I promised Kono I’d be here to help him cope.”

“They’re gonna be here this weekend?” Washio asks. “Oh, I’m definitely coming over.”

“Yeah, me too!” Komi nods.

Akaashi takes a spoonful of chocolate pudding. “Are Kiko and Kira Konoha-san’s sisters?”

“His hot twin sisters.” Washio replies. “And they’re actually Akiko and Akira.”


“Kono’s always hated the three of them being Aki, although nobody ever calls them that.” Sarukui explains.

“Wasn’t Konoha the one to name their Shiba Inu Akio?” Washio asks.

Sarukui nods, laughing. “That’s right, he did.”

“Hmmm.” Bokuto scratches his chin thoughtfully. “Maybe I was wrong. Konoha looks more like a Shiba Inu than that stupid looking hyena from The Lion King.”

“Ohhhh! So that’s why you call him hyena.” Komi snickers.

“Bokuto-san, you were - are - wrong. Konoha-san has a fox-face, not a hyena-face.”

“That doesn’t really matter, Yukie seems to like wild animals. She’s very good at taming them too.” Washio smirks.

Everyone laughs, except for Sarukui, who puts on his pretend smile.

Akaashi notices, tucking away a small note to the catalogued repertoire in his mind, which he
keeps of all his teammates. Strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, that sort of thing.

This is the first he adds to Sarukui’s weakness folder.

-On Wednesday, a most unexpected, but very welcome, visitor shows up and joins them for dinner.

“Happy hump day, everyone.” Kuroo greets, winking at Akaashi.

“I thought we were gonna- Akaashi! Bro! How come you didn’t tell me?” Bokuto groans. “If I knew, I would’ve given little Bokuto a haircut last night!”

Kuroo clutches his stomach and laughs and laughs and laughs.

Ignoring the completely speechless stares from Konoha and Sarukui, Akaashi pinches the bridge of his nose.

“Bokuto-san, hump day means Wednesday. The middle of the week.”

“Oh. I thought it meant-

“Bro, we all got what you thought it meant, no need to elaborate.”

“I have a question for you guys.” Yukie says, pointing her chopsticks at Bokuto, Akaashi and Kuroo.

“If it’s about us three dating, then yeah, you are correct.” Kuroo grins.

“No, I already knew that.”

Akaashi and Kuroo look at Bokuto.

“That’s right, I told her!” Bokuto replies. “It’s only fair. Akaashi, you told Iwaizumi and bro, you told Kenma, so.”

“And then I told Nori, who told Saru, who told Komi, who told Tatsu. But don’t worry, you guys, it stays between us. And we’re all really happy for you.” She grins at them.

“Love is in the air.” Sarukui says.

“Saru, man, you could say it with a little more enthusiasm.” Konoha snorts.

Kuroo clears his throat. “So, if that wasn’t your question, what did you wanna ask?”

“Right. Well, Bokuto mentioned shaving and I’ve always wondered, does the carpet match the drapes?”

Konoha sputters, shocked.

“Konoha, how does it feel to know your girlfriend thinks about one of my boyfriend’s dick?” Kuroo sneers and both him and Bokuto laugh.
Akaashi sighs.

“Yukie! Why the fuck would you wonder about that, what- why?”

“Oh, so you guys can ask between each other about us girls, but we can’t? That’s bullshit.” Yukie replies, then turns towards Kuroo. “And I wasn’t thinking about Bokuto’s dick, just his pubic hair.”

“Aaand we’re done with the wakame salad.” Sarukui pushes his plate away.

“Yes, Yukie, Bokuto-san’s carpet matches the drapes.” Akaashi replies after he’s wiped his mouth clean with a napkin. “Bokuto-san has an absence of pigment in his hair, which is why his pubic hair is completely white.”

Kuroo nods in agreement. “Bokuto has partial albinism.”

“Ooooh, really? Can I take a peek?” Yukie asks.

“Oh, for cryin’ out loud, why?” Konoha groans.

“Because I’m curious to see!”

“Again, why? It’s pubic hair. It’s Bokuto’s pubic hair.”

“So, wait, it only affects the hair on his body?” Sarukui asks. “I’ve never heard of such a thing. Albinism is always associated with various types of eye conditions, like photophobia, nystagmus and amblyopia, and Bokuto has perfect eye vision. And during summer he never protects himself from the sun.”

Kuroo gives a low whistle. “And I thought Angel Eyes is the only well-read owl between you lot.”

“Sarukui-san, you’ve never heard of such a thing, because it doesn’t exist. At least I don’t think it does? I was only being sarcastic earlier, because I found the question ridiculous, but Kuroo-san took it and ran with it. Bokuto-san dyes his hair every month.”

“Akaashi! Why did you give my secret away?”

“Bokuto-san, call it payback for my Joy Division tshirt you made me stain that first time I helped you do your hair.”

“Is it kinda weird that I’m a little disappointed Bokuto’s dick isn’t covered with white hair?” Yukie pouts.

“It’s not just kinda weird, it’s really fuckin’ weird.” Konoha replies and Akaashi has to agree there.

Sarukui purses his lips. “I can’t believe I let you guys drag me in a conversation about Bokuto’s pubic hair over dinner.”

“Can we please talk about something else?” Konoha groans.

Yukie claps her hands together. “Let’s talk about Kiko and Kira visiting this weekend! I’m so excited, I haven’t seen them since Christmas!”

“I take it back. I would rather talk about pubic hair than my shithead sisters.”
“This is so great! Angel Eyes, when the twins came last year, watching the Konoha trio was the funniest thing in the world.” Kuroo smirks. “And this year’s gonna be so much better, because Konoha has a girlfriend and that’s way more humiliating than just your friends laughing at you.”

“He had a girlfriend last year.” Bokuto scratches his forehead. “That uh.. What’s her name? She’s in our class, I sat next to her in Chemistry last year! Akaashi, help me out here.”

“Bokuto-san, I wasn’t here last year.”

“She’s in our English class, she sits right behind us!”

“Misaki-san?”

Bokuto clicks his fingers together. “That’s the one! Konoha was going out with her last year, right?”

“Konoha-san got two smart girls to date him. Impressive.”

“Better than the way you’re doing it, Akaashi, dating two idiots at the same time.” Konoha smirks.

“At least Akaashi never hated me.” Bokuto sticks his tongue out.

“Nor me.” Kuroo adds.

Konoha snorts. “Akaashi never hated me either.”

“You dumb fox, I wasn’t talking about Akaashi.”

“Then who were you talking about?”

“Me.” Yukie replies. “Bo was talking about me.”

Konoha blinks, surprise written all over his face. “You...you hated me?”

“No, not hate, that’s a really strong word, I just couldn’t stand you last year.”

“Why?”

“Because you were vain and rude and really disrespectful.’

Bokuto laughs. “He’s still all those things-ow! Akaashi, did you just kick me?”

“Nope, that was me.” Sarukui replies.

“No, why is that such a surprise to you? You’ve always been handsome and it’s not like you were ever blind to it-”

“Tch, blaming a guy for being too handsome?” Kuroo shakes his head. “It’s alright, buddy, I get that all the time.” He tries to pat Konoha’s shoulder, but Konoha pulls away.

“Get your paws off me, man! And I’m not your fuckin’ buddy.”

Yukie clears her throat. “What I was saying, before I got interrupted, is that your good looks didn’t excuse your terrible attitude towards girls, especially Misaki.”

“What did I do?”
“Nori, you dumped her, because you said she was too fat. Then every time you would check a girl out in the hallways, they would question themselves, *does he think I’m fat, is that why he’s looking at me?*. You gave half the girls floor body issues, because you broke up with your girlfriend, who wasn’t skinny enough for your taste!” Yukie points an accusing finger at all of them. “And then you guys have the audacity to laugh at us for the crazy diets we go on and only order salads when you take us out on dates!”

Konoha nods slowly. Then he plasters a smile on his face and forces a laugh.

“Yeah. Yeah, Yuks, you’re right, last-year me was an asshole.”

“Kono, what the Hell are you doing?” Sarukui asks.

“Saru, man, take a chill pill, that shit’s old, like who cares?”

“I do! I care! Kono, we’ve known each other since we were five years old, you can’t seriously expect me to just sit by quietly and listen to you being accused of things that aren’t even remotely true!” His frown deepens. “If you don’t tell them the truth, I will.”

“You will do no such thing. Just shut up and let it go.”

“No. No, don’t tell me to shut up and let it go. Why don’t you want to tell them what really happened?”

“You know why!”

“Kono, the one time you have the chance to show everyone how cool you are and not just how cool I’ve always found you, you’re not gonna take it? Kono, you won, man, you got the girl already, you’re living the dream!”

“I swear to God, Saru, if you tell, when you fall asleep tonight, I will shit in your mouth!”

Akaashi sighs. Sure, they talked about pubic hair already, it’s only natural feces come up while they’re eating dessert.

“Kono, you might be okay with the others thinking you’re an asshole, but I’m not. I’m sorry, but it really bothers me that my best friend’s name has been dragged through the mud, when you’re innocent. How can you be okay with Yuks thinking so poorly of you, man? Even if it was about last year.”

“Now I really want to know what went down.” Bokuto says eagerly.

“Nori, Saru, which one of you two is gonna tell me what’s going on?” Yukie asks, looking between the two of them.

“I’m not saying jackshit. If Saru wants to humiliate me,” Konoha waves with a hand. “Go right ahead, man, the floor is yours.” He shakes his head in disgust. “Some best friend you are.”

“Konoha-san, I don’t think Sarukui-san would ever do that. He’s obviously just trying to help.”

“I agree with Angel Eyes. Whatever Sarukui has to say about you, it’s gonna be better than this. ‘Cause, right now, amigo, let me tell ya, you don’t look so good.”

Bokuto crosses his arms and nods. “Hear, hear.”

“The short story is that Misaki is full of shit. The long story,” Sarukui takes a deep breath. “It was
during one of our school parties, I don’t remember which one it was exactly, but doesn’t really matter. You could ask Komi and Tatsu to back up my story, because they were there too. Anyway. We were talking about all kinds of stuff and when the conversation shifted about girls, Tatsu asked which Fukurodani girl we thought is the prettiest and Kono just flat out said “Shirofuku, duuh.”. Misaki didn’t really like hearing that her boyfriend’s answer wasn’t her, but you, Yuks.”

Konoha groans and buries his head in his hands.

“Dude, that’s a cardinal sin.” Kuroo shakes his head. “You don’t tell the girl you’re dating you find another girl prettier.”

“I didn’t say Kono was a saint.”

“You said he was innocent.” Kuroo replies.

“Yes, in my eyes he is innocent. He was just being honest, how is that a crime?” Sarukui asks, but since neither of them reply, he continues. “After that, Misaki started getting crazy jealous and possessive. I would know, she used to come to our room after lights out, just like you do now, Yuks. She would flip shit over such small and pointless things, like how he sat next to you during lunch or you texted him.”

“But I only ever texted and talked to Nori about volleyball?”

“Yeah, I know.” Sarukui sighs. “The only time the weight thing was brought up, it was by Misaki herself, who kept comparing the two of you and saying she was way skinnier than you, and how could Kono find you more attractive than her? She called you all kinds of ugly names and words and Kono, obviously, wouldn’t listen to any of if. So she gave Kono an ultimatum - either he quits the team, since you were our manager, or she dumps him.” He looks at Bokuto, Akaashi, Kuroo and then Yukie. “Isn’t that absolutely insane?”

“So what happened?” Bokuto asks. “Konoha, did she break up with you?”

“No, Captain, we’re still together.” Konoha snorts, takes his tray to the kitchen and doesn’t return to the Dining Hall.

They all turn to look at Sarukui, who opens his mouth, but no words come out. Then he shakes his head.

“Oh, what the Hell, Kono’s already mad at me, so to borrow Bokuto’s words, if I’m gonna jump in the shit, I might as well jump with both legs.” He grins at Bokuto, who nods enthusiastically, giving him two thumbs up. His attention turns towards Yukie. “I would understand if you choose not to believe what I’m about to say, because I admit, I’m biased as Hell. Kono’s been my best friend for 13 years, and you guys can all bet your heads even if he kills someone, I’d be the first one to grab the shovel.” He smiles fondly. “Kono and I have been conjoined at the hip and do everything together, have since we were 5 years old. Last year, during our first week here at Fukurodani, we were discussing which after school club we should join. I was leaning towards dodgeball, but you guys know between the two of us, I’m the pushover, so I went with his choice. And you know what he said to me? His exact words were “Saru, man, we should join the volleyball club, because they have a cute girl, a really cute girl, that’s their manager, and she’s also a first year, but I don’t have the courage to talk to her, so maybe if we join the team, she’ll talk to me.”. And that’s exactly why Kono and I became members of the volleyball team.”

There’s a stunted silence that follows, Sarukui’s words sinking in.
Bokuto is the first one to break it.

“Wow. If it wasn’t for Yuks, you two would be on the dodgeball team. Tsk, tsk tsk. I gotta agree with the hyena- fox, the fox - that is humiliating.”

Kuroo throws his hand over Bokuto’s shoulders and laughs. “I freakin’ adore you, bro.”

“Girls can always tell when someone likes them.” Yukie says softly. “But I never knew that- Nori never- last year, nothing he ever said or did signified even a little that he liked me?”

“Kono never thought he stood a chance. I mean, come on, Yuks, all you ever talked about was Oikawa. This year too. And you only started noticing Kono, when-” Sarukui doesn’t finish. “He dated Misaki, and hooked up with other girls, because he was just trying to get over you. The truth is, since day one, Kono’s always had his eyes on you and you alone, zoom in focus and all. He never saw anything else.”

On Thursday, during Studio Art Mori-sensei excuses himself to take an important phone call and leaves them to their own devices.

Sarukui rests his head against the table and watches Akaashi’s pencil moving, slowly transforming his sketch of the volleyball team into something so accurate and realistic, he almost expects Washio to speak.

With the rain softly pelting against the window sills, Akaashi, unaware of himself, unaware of how every time he cracks his knuckles with a thumb, doesn’t let go of the pencil and sways it in the air, soft and rhythmic, maestro in the making, lost in another world.

It’s just a habit he’s been adopting awfully often, ever since Mori-sensei started playing classical music during class. Says it’s inspirational and helps their creativity and imagination.

Monday was Mozart, Tuesday was Erik Satie, Wednesday was Vivaldi and today, it’s Tchaikovsky.

“Training for the ballet, Potter?” Sarukui grins.

He laughs softly. “Someone got really hooked on the series, huh, Sarukui-san?”

“Yup. I’m surprised you haven’t asked me yet which house I got sorted in.”

“Don’t need to, you belong in the dungeons.”

“Am I really that transparent, Akaashi?”

“No, not at all. But you did say you would help Konoha-san bury a body. That’s the most Slytherin answer I’ve ever heard.” He smiles. “It’s nice, though, now we have representatives of every Harry Potter house on our team. Bokuto-san and Komi-san are badgers, Konoha-san and Yukie are roaring lions, you’re a snake and Washio-san and I are eagles. I actually always thought Konoha-san would be a Slytherin just like you.”

“Nah, Kono belongs with Yukie, not me.”
Tiny, tic-tac small, comments like that have been piling up and lodging themselves in Akaashi’s mind for a while and now he’s finally starting to get it. His photographic memory has never failed him.

Sarukui was right. He is transparent. He has been all along, it’s only that Akaashi never paid close attention, not there, never there, at least not before their loss against Shiratorizawa.

Akaashi continues working, like he didn’t just have a, no - the - revelation, why Sarukui’s been so… well, a lot of words come to mind, but he supposes off can sum everything up. Off his game. Off his usual self. Just off. Off works.

Maybe this weekend would be good for Sarukui, considering the fact every one of the second years on the team has been bleeding Akaashi’s ears dry how absolutely ecstatic they are about Konoha’s sisters visiting, excluding, obviously, Konoha himself.

Sarukui goes back to resting his head against the table, following Akaashi’s pencil moving across the canvas.

“My God, Akaashi, if someone handed you play-doh, you’d build the Taj Mahal. How can one person hold so much talent? Just look at those eyes.” Sarukui points at his freshly drawn Konoha.

“A single stroke of your hand contains a dozen emotions, it captures a feeling and a mood and a color, and everything you draw is strung together with the utmost care, with such precision and delicacy and purpose. And it’s not just about your drawings, it’s in volleyball, in school, it’s in everything you do, every single thing about you, that care, that quiet choice. Honestly, how do you do it? Do you have miracle hands?” He puts his glasses back on and looks at Akaashi’s hands. “Yeah, I guess you do. Your fingers are like elegant spiders.”

Akaashi drops his pencil and spreads his fingers, staring, repulsed. “Why, Sarukui-san, why spiders? Why couldn’t you say I have elegant fingers like a pianist, why did you have to say spiders? There’s absolutely nothing elegant about them.”

“Akaashi, are you- are you afraid of spiders?”

“Yes, I completely and wholeheartedly agree that Harry and Ron should’ve followed the butterflies, instead of spiders. Damn you J.K. Rowling. Sarukui-san, don’t laugh, it’s a legitimate phobia.”

“So, fear of heights and spiders. Noted.” Sarukui laughs at his dumbly blinking expression. “Akaashi, you’re not the only person on the team keeping tabs on everyone.”

No, apparently not.

Sarukui Yamato is a 100% Slytherin snake.

On Friday, when Akaashi tells Kuroo to take the bench, instead of joining them for practice like he was planning to, Kuroo becomes the poster-boy of offense.

“Kenma texted me your doctor hasn’t cleared you for playing sports yet.”

“Angel Eyes, I am shook. Bro!” He calls out for Bokuto across the court. “Bro, I am so shook
right now! Did you know that our setters scheme between themselves?”

Akaashi rolls his eyes.

Just as they’re finishing up with their suicides, Yukie forgets all about timing them, gives out a screeching noise and torpedo-fast sprints out the gym.

Kuroo jumps off the bench and follows.

“Oh, crap.” Konoha groans.

Since Bokuto is buzzing with excitement, Akaashi has to step up to the plate, reminding them they’re not done yet, so please, everyone, spread out. Stretching is half-assed and the second they’re done, Bokuto, Komi and Washio run out faster than they do during suicides.

Akaashi takes one look at Konoha and Sarukui, who start taking the net down, gathering the balls. It’s unusual for either of them to stay behind, especially on a Friday.

Actually, it’s not just unusual, it’s a first.

Sarukui notices him staring, the calculating look.

“What? We’re just helping out.”

“Sarukui-san, there’s no need to dress it up and call it what it isn’t. I know you’re avoiding Konoha-san’s sisters.”

“No, not avoiding, we’d just rather skip the first wave of greetings.” Sarukui explains.

Akaashi knows what that means, Sarukui must’ve given him at least a dozen of heads up during Studio Art, how flirty and shameless Konoha’s sisters are. He has no siblings, but he knows that’s just one more thing on the everlong list of things that piss off Konoha, witnessing his sisters getting giggly and touchy-feely with everyone on the team.

What they’re asking for, without actually asking, is some time.

Akaashi can give them that, gladly.

“All the empty bottles need to go in the bin, then the trash taken out the back. The court needs to be mopped, the second one too, since some of the first years practiced serves there. So, here.” He throws the gym keys at Sarukui.

Konoha yells after him. “Hey, Vice Captain, you’re a superhero in disguise!”

“Please don’t forget to lock up.”

Since the days have been getting longer and the weather is really nice, plus the fact there’s no impending doom of exam stress just yet, the Dining Halls are a ghost town. It’s nice not to have to deal with foot traffic in the kitchen, for a change.

Bokuto and Kuroo are the only ones at the volleyball table as he takes his seat.

“Bokuto-san, why are you still here?”

“Huh? Where should I be?” Bokuto blinks.

“Upstairs, in our room. You take forever to get ready.” Akaashi quirks an eyebrow at the both of
“I was under the impression that we’re all going out?”

“Angel Eyes, you really wanna go out?”

“Why wouldn’t I? Do you two actually think I enjoy staying cooped up at school all the time?”

“Akaashi, no! We just assumed you might not want to, since the the last time we all went out for a good time, it went to shit.” Bokuto says.

“I agree, Bokuto-san, it was all kinds of catastrophic. Kuroo-san, you nearly died, and you, Bokuto-san, you saved his life. Me, I was stuck with Daishou-san pretty much all night.” He bites into his fish burger, munching. “That’s exactly why I would like to go out.”

Kuroo sniffs and wipes pretend tears out of his eyes. “You poor, poor thing, Angel Eyes, you obviously had it the worst. No wonder you desperately wanna go out and get that bitter taste out of your mouth.”

“Akaashi, if you want the bitter taste out of your mouth, don’t eat that shitty burger. The twins made reservations at this really nice Latin bar, and we’re gonna have tapas and all that nice food and it’s gonna be so awesome! Kiko and Kira just got back from Spain after some soccer exchange program and- oh, maaaan, I’m so jealous!” Bokuto groans. “I mean I’m real happy about volleyball and not having to deal with my parents for two whole weeks, but I was also kinda looking forward to going to Europe. I miss Marbella. And Barca! God, I miss Barca so much!”

Akaashi glances at his watch. “Bokuto-san, it’s nearly 6:00 pm. I need 15 minutes tops.” He scowls. “Why are you still here?”

Bokuto dashes out of the Dining Hall as if someone set him on fire.

Excluding going out for dinner with parents, Akaashi never really acquainted himself with nightlife in Tokyo. To his utmost delight, he discovers that he doesn’t have to leave Japan, or even Tokyo, for that matter, to get a taste of the Hispanic culture and lifestyle.

He discovers a lot of things, actually.

For starters, he finds out that those tapas things Bokuto was speaking of are very delicious.

He finds out why everyone is enamored with Konoha’s sisters.

The Konoha clan trio all share the same oblong eyes, dirty blonde hair and rude mouths. In fact, they look so alike each other, that Konoha could pass off as a triplet.

First time he meets them is just outside of Fukurodani. One of them, Kira, he finds out eventually, is hugging Sarukui impossibly tight, while the other one, Kiko, is laughing at something either Komi or Washio must have said.

The second he walks out of the door after Bokuto and Kuroo, their entire attention switches to him.
“Mira, Kira, mira!”

“I couldn’t believe what I was living.” Kira pulls her phone out of her purse and presses it against her ear. “So I called my friend Johnny and I said to him ¡Johnny, la gente está muy loca! What the fuck?!”

They both laugh in unison.

“My shithead sisters, ladies and gentleman.” Konoha waves at them. “They spend three months in Spain and now they think they’re Spanish.”

“Big brother, just like there’s people all over the world that are fascinated with our culture, we’re fascinated by Westerners. So please go fuck yourself.” Kiko says sweetly, before she extends a hand at Akaashi. “Hi, I’m Konoha Akiko, but everyone calls me Kiko.”

“And I’m Konoha Akira, but everyone calls me Kira.”

“I’m Akaashi Keiji and it’s my pleasure to finally make your acquaintance.” Akaashi shakes both their hands at the same time.

Neither of them let go, pushing their faces in his personal space, scrutinizing him from real up close.

“Even our turd of a big brother, who only ever trash talks handsome guys, admitted that he finds you upsettingly pretty.” Kira says.

“Don’t fucking put words in my mouth, you shithead, I just said Akaashi’s good looking!” Konoha barks. “And c’mon, anyone with two working eyes can’t deny that.”

“Being as beautiful as you are, Keiji, you must have a really shitty personality.” Kiko concludes. Akaashi smiles at her. “Why, is that the case with you two?”

“Oooh! Good one, Angel Eyes, landing a compliment and a kill at the same time.” Kuroo laughs.

“Like I said, Akaashi, superhero in disguise. I’m totally buying you a drink tonight.” Konoha cackles.

“It’s okay, Kiko, Keiji’s only saying that, because he’s clearly taken aback by how gorgeous we are.” Kira flips her long shiny hair at him and bats her lashes. Maybe that sort of thing would work on the likes of Komi and Washio, who Akaashi is certain hears swooning somewhere from behind. On other guys too. Girls too, probably. Not on him, though. Totally barking up the wrong tree. “It’s okay to stare, Keiji, we know we’re the most beautiful twins you’ve ever seen. Maybe even the first twins you’ve ever seen.”

“No, neither of those things ring true.” Akaashi says in all honesty. “I’ve never officially been introduced, but last weekend we had the Spring Inter-High Volleyball National Championship and there was a team from the Hyogo Prefecture, Inarizaki High School and—”

Yukie gasps, clapping her hands together. “Oh, the Miya twins! Osamu and Atsumu are living proof that God is real.”

Konoha turns murder red, staring daggers. “Goddamn it, Akaashi, why’d you have to go rogue?! Tch! You can fucking forget about that drink.”

Kiko and Kira blink, surprised. Clearly, they aren’t used to someone - anyone - denying them like
that. Then they laugh.

“Now why would you say something like that, Keiji?” Kiko mouthpieces for both. “You’re hurting all of our feelings.”

Akaashi likes that, *all of their feelings*. Because Kiko and Kira share that certain dramatic flare with their brother, and also with someone else he holds very dear, most dearest even. That same someone, who just that morning was complaining that his life is unbearably sucky, because he stepped on a piece of gum with his brand new sneakers.

He glances at Bokuto fondly.

“Every last one?” Akaashi asks. “Really?”

“Well,” Kira shrugs. “We might have one or two left. We might still have a feeling.”

He has a feeling too, that him, Kiko and Kira would get along.

They obviously share that feeling, because Kiko and Kira immediately hook themselves onto him, looping their hands on each of his side. They start babbling about how maybe it’s for the best that the Fukurodani soccer team sucks, otherwise they would’ve joined the school and that would be very unfortunate for everyone else, because Akaashi must already be enough of a distraction for his class, and if the three of them were together - they’re practically teen royalty, as they put it - that would be too much beauty in one place for the entire school to handle.

Another thing he finds out, an hour or so later, is that he doesn’t mind the hazed barsmoke they’re engulfed in. The atmosphere is just so lively and fun.

The twins bring a tray full of tequila shots and start distributing them in front of everyone.

“Sorry, doll, none, nada for me.” Kuroo shakes his head at Kiko. “I don’t drink, I don’t smoke. I’m a model of fuckin’ perfection.” He smirks. And yet, when she’s about to swipe the glass away, he protects it with a hand. “No, keep it here.”

Kiko shrugs. “Alright. Suit yourself, Mr Model Perfection.”

The second she’s out of earshot, both Bokuto and Kuroo slide their glasses in front of Akaashi.

“Thank you, but I don’t want those. I’m just having this.” He motions at his beer, before taking a sip.

“You might wanna reconsider, Angel Eyes.”

“Are you trying to get me drunk?” He asks.

“Akaashi, you’re not gonna get drunk with two shots and a Corona. We’re just trying to help relax your nerves.” Bokuto explains.

“Relax my nerves? Bokuto-san, I’m not tense.”

“Akaashi, come on! My first time, I was terrified. And when we go back to Fukurodani, the three of us are gonna… well, y’know.”

“I’m not nervous about that.” He smiles. “Why would I be? I trust both you and Kuroo-san would take good care of me.”

Bokuto and Kuroo both clutch at their chests, speechless, touched by his words. Incredibly so.
He laughs. Their expressions are ridiculous.

“Another cerveza for big brother.” Kira says, handing Konoha a Corona. Then she gasps. “Oh my God, they’re playing- I can’t believe they’re playing this here! Yama-kun, please, you can’t turn me down, this is Despacito!” She tugs at Sarukui’s arm and he doesn’t look too happy, but he complies, getting off his seat.

“A beer. Would it fuckin’ kill her to call it a beer and not a goddamn cerveza? Tch! Such shithead wannabes!” Konoha mouths into his Corona bottle, sipping, annoyed. His mood is uplifted a few moments later, because Yukie winks at him across the dance floor, motioning with her fingers for him to join her.

“I’ve never heard this Desperado song before, but it’s a total jam. It just flows so smoothly.” Bokuto says happily. And then he tries to do a body wave, try being the key word.

“Bokuto-san, I believe Kira called it Despacito, not Desperado.”

“Okay, I don’t get it, Angel Eyes, so you have to explain it to me.” Kuroo says. “How is it that since the get-go, you’ve been calling Kenma Kenma and not Kozume, and you just met Konoha’s sisters, but you call them Kiko and Kira? Bo and I are dating you, but you still insist on the honorifics and call us by our family names?”

“Kuroo-san, the answer is very simple. I don’t like yours or Bokuto-san’s given names.”

“Oof!” Komi pulls a face, then roars in laughter. “Shot straight through the heart!”

Washio shakes his head. “Savage, I tell you.”

Bokuto and Kuroo look like he just slapped them and Akaashi can’t help snickering.

“That was a joke. I was only joking. The real reason is because I do it out of respect. Kenma, Kiko and Kira are the same age as I am, whereas you two are older than me. That’s why I do it.” He says softly. “Besides, Bokuto-san, you always call me Akaashi, while you, Kuroo-san, you always call me Angel Eyes. Since neither of you have ever addressed me as Keiji, I didn’t want to be disrespectful and so I stick to what I know.”

“I like calling you Angel Eyes.” Kuroo replies.

“I do too, Kuroo-san.”

“Keiji. Keiji. My boyfriend, Keiji.” Bokuto rolls his name around his mouth. It’s like trying on shoes, testing, unfamiliar, unsure of the feeling at first. Until the shoe fits. “I like it.” He concludes, looking at Akaashi. “I really like the sound of your name, so I’m gonna call you Keiji.”

“I like the sound of my name on your lips, Bokuto-san, so please do.”

Komi chokes on his beer, and points. “Look, look!”

They all turn their heads and see Kira lying on top of the bar, a wedge of lime between her lips, pulling her top up and exposing her stomach, which Kiko salts and then eagerly slaps a very unwilling looking Sarukui between the shoulder blades.

He takes the body shot.

Kuroo smirks. “Nice.”
“I just don’t get it.” Washio shakes his head. “Saru’s probably the only person Konoha’s okay with dating one of his sisters and yet Saru’s so—”

“Stupid!” Komi says. “Saru’s goddamn stupid!”

No, stupid isn’t the right word, Akaashi thinks, it’s uncomfortable. Sarukui looks all kinds of uncomfortable and he knows why that is, now.

He gently squeezes Bokuto and Kuroo’s arms. “We still have time until curfew, but I think we should head back before Konoha-san gets all bitchy.”

“Yeah, Keiji, let’s bounce!”

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The second they step inside their room, Bokuto raises his hands in the air, grabs his tshirt from behind, fingers pulling it over his head, before balling it and throwing it against his desk.

“Bro, this certainly brings memories from last year, doesn’t it?” Kuroo smirks.

“Yes, I know, bro, it really—” He blinks. “No, no, it doesn’t, it’s totally different! Last year there was a girl between us and now there isn’t and, oh God, there’s gonna be one more dick that I’m used to.”

Kuroo places his hands on each side of Bokuto’s face. “Bo, Bo, shhh, shh, don’t freak out, just breathe, okay? It’s alright, I got you. Last year there was you and your dick and there was also me and my dick, right? And it’s just Angel Eyes and his dick, and come on, bro, you know his dick, you like it a lot, you’ve told me so many times before. Right?”

“Oh. Yeah. Yeah, bro, when you put it like that.” Bokuto nods.

“Don’t you worry about a thing, bro, I’ll put it any way you want me to.” Kuroo laughs and presses his lips against Bokuto’s, before releasing his face. “Now, come on, why don’t you play some jams on your laptop, while I get the mattresses off the beds. And you, Angel Eyes, d’you mind getting the lube and the box of condoms— Angel Eyes, you alright?”

Acutely aware of both pairs of eyes on him, concerned, he nods his head vigorously.

“Oh, absolutely, Kuroo-san, I’m fine. I’m just gonna go get a soda real quick. I’m suddenly craving one.” He laughs and before either of them can say anything, he flies out the door and down the stairs.

Punching the buttons of the vending machine, Akaashi sighs. He doesn’t want any stupid soda. What he wants is to journey back to when he was being offered those shots and drink them. Despite his big talk about not having any nerves, Bokuto’s panic got to him. Seven Hells, he really should’ve drank the tequila and he knows it. It would’ve helped settle his butterflying stomach, which feels like it’s eating itself.

Taking tiny sips of Coke, Akaashi leans against the cold frame of the vending machine and tries to logically eliminate the reasons behind his shaky legs, the swallowed down hearts.

It’s just Bokuto and Kuroo and in the past he’d gotten pretty damn close to sleeping with the both
of them, separately. Valentine’s Day with Bokuto. Handjobs and blowjobs, those are great, they’re fantastic, he’s shared so many of those with Bokuto, before. And Kuroo, that time they were playing that charade game thing, but then Kuroo called it quits before they even- what the fuck, Kuroo and him haven’t even seen each other naked? Like, ever.

But the concept of Kuroo seeing him naked doesn’t make him nervous, no, no, no, not at all. It makes him laugh excitedly, full of anticipation. He’s actually really looking forward to it.

The stretch of months between October and March is not that long, but that’s too many times to count, always, really, the way Kuroo’s eyes have repeatedly lingered on him, staring a beat too long, like holy shit, Angel Eyes, are you even real. Same thing applies to Bokuto, who, even when he wasn’t looking, was still looking, making Akaashi feel like anything but ordinary.

Bokuto and Kuroo, and he, himself, have all worked too damn long and too damn hard to make him feel as comfortable as he feels in his own teenage skin and bones, so really, why the actual fuck would he get jitters from being closer with them, as close as physically possible? It’s them and it’s him.

Bokuto and Kuroo are sprawled out in nothing but their underwear, flicking through a car mag when he returns and locks the door. They look up and Akaashi grins, and then waves, like an idiot.

Carefully tiptoeing over both, he joins them on the mattresed floor, sitting cross legged.

“You remember how I said I have a rule? That we should always be honest with each other?”

When they nod, he raises his hand. “Confession. When I heard the words lube and condoms, my mind just went into overdrive, imagining what it would be with those in the picture, and I’m not familiar, I’ve never used either of them before and,” He licks his lips. “I panicked.”

“Well, Angel Eyes, if it’s any consolation, you’re not gonna use them, Bo and I are gonna use them on you.”

“Bro! Keiji’s telling us what he’s afraid of and you’re making a joke?”

Kuroo raises his shoulders. “What joke? I was just keepin’ it real, bro. It’s the truth, right, that’s what we’re doing, isn’t it?”

“Bokuto-san, it’s fine. It actually calms me that we can joke and laugh about it, instead of pretending. It makes me happy.” He smiles.

“Keiji, maybe you’re okay with it, but I’m not. I mean it’s already tough enough to admit out loud what I’m scared of, but to have you guys laugh at me about it?” Bokuto swallows. “No. No, I don’t want that. That shit’s gonna kill my ego.”

“Bo, I don’t laugh at you, I laugh with you. I swear, I’m not gonna make a joke or laugh.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Bokuto nods slowly. “Okay. Alright. I didn’t really freak out, because- oh, sorry.” He raises his hand. “Confession. I didn’t freak out, because we’re all guys and there’s no girl. It’s because, well, bro, you’ve got way more experience than I do and that’s intimidating as Hell. You know all the tricks with girls and guys and I don’t have the first clue about what it’s like to have anal sex. I mean I appreciate the tips you’ve been giving me and the pep talks and all those porn videos we watched last weekend, but watching and doing isn’t the same. My first time, I didn’t really care if I
was shit in bed, I was just over the moon that I’m gonna have sex. And it was just some girl I never saw again, so I didn’t care if I satisfied her or not, because I knew you got my back and you’ll step in and pick up my slack. But Keiji’s not some random hook up. Keiji, I never wanna disappoint you in anything that I do and I know sex is not the most important part of a relationship, but it’s important and I just wanna make you feel good.” He sighs. “I know, I know it’s not a competition, blabla, but I don’t wanna be like some loser that can’t keep up with you, Kuroo.”

“Bokuto-san, you’re perfect and you already make me feel good.” Akaashi smiles. “You don’t have to worry about disappointing me, especially of all in bed. I have the least experience here, but it doesn’t bother me, because I know you and Kuroo-san will show me the ropes, and I’ll learn, eventually. You didn’t become a star athlete overnight, so you know better than anyone that practice makes perfect. And you’re right, it’s not a competition. I don’t hold you two on some scale that tips in someone’s favor. Look,” He takes both Bokuto and Kuroo’s hand and places them on the left side of his chest. “It’s big enough to love you both equally and unconditionally. Us three, we’re a team. Together.”

Bokuto perks up, grinning. “Hey hey heyyyyy! We’re a great team together, aren’t we?”

“Not just a great team, bro. We’re simply the best! Better than all the rest!” Kuroo belts outs. “Toneless as ever, Kuroo-san.”

“Keiji, you are literally the last person who gets to say that.” Bokuto laughs. “I mean Kuroo and I are pretty bad at singing, but you? Worst thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Well, Bokuto-san, I can’t be good at everything.”

“Modesty is a thing of the past, huh.” Kuroo smirks. He shrugs. “Modesty is for those that don’t hold other qualities.”

“Hmmm I wonder where I’ve heard that one before? Oh, right, from me.” Kuroo’s smirk spreads. “But damn, that confidence oozing out of you? Very hot, Angel Eyes.”

“Kuroo-san, instead of stating facts, how about you tell me and Bokuto-san what’s making you chicken? Surely, there’s something?”

“We’re still on that?” Kuroo sighs, shaking his head. “Back at it again with the Breakfast Club. Alright. But I’m not putting my hand up and saying “confession”, because I’m neither in class, nor a sinner at church.”

Bokuto grins and pushes Kuroo’s elbow up. “Confess your sins, bro!”

“Just promise me first you won’t get mad.”

“Don’t give a reason to get mad and I won’t.”

“Bokuto-san, just promise him you won’t.”

“Fine, bro, I promise.”

Rolling his eyes, Kuroo sticks his hand up. “Confession. Bo, I lied to you. About my first time. Having sex. It wasn’t when I said it was.”

Akaashi’s mouth forms a small “o”. “Kuroo-san, was your first time when it was Bokuto-san’s?”
“No, that can’t be right. My first time was last year right after our loss at Nationals - hey, just like now!” Bokuto grins. “But Kuroo’s was way before that, his first week at Nekoma. Bro, you told me you fucked that new girl from homeroom when she enrolled, in the equipment office. Was that not true?”

“Oh, no, that’s very true, I did do that. But she was my second time. My first time was during the summer before I joined Nekoma.”

“Oh my God, bro, you had sex before joining high school? That makes you way cooler!” Akaashi snorts. “Wait. You know it makes you cooler, but you didn’t brag about it?”

“Oh, you’ll know why in a minute. Not even Kenma knows. Or maybe he does, I don’t know, but I never told him. I never told anyone, ever.” Kuroo licks his lips. “And the reason why I didn’t is the person I did it with.” He pulls a face.


Kuroo buries his face in his hands and mumbles something out that’s way too quiet to hear. He peeks between his fingers, sees there’s no reaction and repeats, louder.

“Daishou.”

“And you thought I’d be mad, bro.” Bokuto covers his mouth, hiding away the broadening curve of his lips. “You laughed so much when I told you he roofied me with those brownies and now… Oh, this is the gift that’ll keep on giving.”

“I laughed because we used to get stoned all the time, man, and you knew hash is chocolate, we ourselves call it that. I just couldn’t believe you’d be tricked by that or that you’d accept anything Daishou would give you.”

“This coming from the guy who accepted his dick! Fu! Fu! Fu!” Bokuto snickers.

Akaashi finds himself unable to control the snort-giggle that comes out. “Kuroo-san, how did you two even meet?”

“Our moms signed us up in the same dance class, long story, doesn’t matter.”

“But how do you end up having sex with someone you hate?”

“Okay, Angel Eyes, first of all, hate sex is a thing, a very hot thing. And second of all, we never really hated each other, we were just, I dunno, frenemies.” Kuroo shrugs. “After we hooked up, I don’t know why, but he got all weird. I can only guess that he either freaked out that I would tell someone about it or maybe he was embarrassed, and that’s fuckin’ offensive, right? Right?!?” Bokuto and Akaashi nod mutually, agreeing. “So, anyway, he started spreading shit- which, by the way, is why I was kinda scared when you confessed you’re in love with Angel Eyes so publicly, because your parents run in the same circle.”

“No, bro, after what you just told us, I can assure you, I’m safe. Daishou’s dad is just like my father.”

“Maybe that’s why Daishou-san freaked out? For being with a guy and that his dad might find out?” Akaashi offers.

“Huh.” Kuroo scratches his neck. “That makes way more sense that him being embarrassed from sleeping with me. Well, who cares.” He shrugs. “Point is he started talkin’ shit and like, in my previous school I was known as Science Boy and it’s like whatever, I like Chemistry, so what.
But Daishou’s rumors spread and by the time I joined Nekoma, people were already saying I’m vapid and a nympho and my dick might fall off from chlamydia. And then, well, you guys know what high school’s like, rumors sprout more rumors.”

“Like what?” Bokuto asks.

“Uh, like, how I banged our Math teacher, so she’d bump up my B- into and A or how I keep a notebook with all the notches on my bedpost, y’know, stuff like that.”

“Whoa, bro, I thought the notebook thing was legit? I even told Akaashi about it.”

“No way, bro, that’s tacky and lame as Hell. I mean, yeah, I’ve slept with a lotta people, but I remember every single one in my head and I don’t write about it, like _Dear Diary_ and shit like that. What kind of a loser keeps count of how many times they’ve had sex?” Kuroo pulls a face.

“Wow. Daishou-san’s a bigger asshole than I thought.”

“Good morning, Vietnam.”

“What he did to you was awful.”

Bokuto laughs. “Akaashi, when Kuroo and I met last year, girls were lining up to have sex with him and guys too, or they would go to him for sex advice. You’ve seen and heard everyone on our team, and basically everyone else admiring Kuroo’s skills and game. He didn’t even have to _try_ to get laid, and he would.” He laughs again. “I bet that snake is eating his heart out, ‘cause he tried ruining you, but instead made you a fuckin’ legend, bro.”

Bokuto and Kuroo high five each other.

“Kuroo-san, you told me and Bokuto-san in our gym, months ago, that relationships terrify you, that the mere idea of putting your feelings out there and getting rejected scared the shit out so much, that you would much rather not do it at all and continue with the one night stands.”

“That’s right, I did say that. You actually quoted me word for word. Nice photographic memory.”

“Don’t you think Daishou-san’s responsible for that?” Akaashi asks. “He’s the first person you were intimate with and then he betrayed you and-”

“Calm down with your psychoanalysis, Dr Phil. You and I aren’t cut from the same cloth, Angel Eyes, so don’t measure us with the same ruler. Right now, you’re putting yourself in my shoes and you’re thinking that he crippled me emotionally and that he broke my heart or my trust, and that’s not the case, because there was never anything like that there.” Kuroo smiles and it’s not pretense bravado, a carefully constructed mask to cover up pain. No, it’s a genuine smile. “I’ve never been bothered by people spreading rumors about me, because well, they’re just that, rumors. They’re neither true, nor do they define who I am. And even if the things they were saying were true, I still don’t care, because I’m not ashamed of loving sex, or having sex. I fuckin’ love who I am. And you guys do too.” Kuroo smirks, then winks. “What Daishou did, it’s all in the past, water under the bridge. Let bygones be bygones.”

“That’s so big of you, bro. If I were you, I don’t think I would’ve been able to just let it go like that.”

That’s exactly it. That’s exactly what Akaashi thinks too.

Quirking an eyebrow, he asks. “Kuroo-san, did you really just let it go?”
“Fuck no!” Kuroo scoffs. “I fucked his sister and then every single one of his girlfriends. Mika actually dumped him, because she wanted to be with me.”

Bokuto shrieks in laughter. “Oh hooo! Oh shit! Does Daishou know?”

“Dunno about the others, but I was makin’ out with Mika behind Nohebi Academy’s bike shed and by pure coincidence, he just happened to pass on by to get his bike, so, yeah, I guess he fuckin’ knows.” Kuroo starts laughing.

“I demand the highest of fives, bro!”

“Don’t high five each other for that.”

He rolls his eyes. Of course they would high five each other for that.

“Akaashi, that snake bitch had it coming! So join us in here, won’t you?”

“Yeah, Angel Eyes, you were the one that said we’re a team.”

“I already did join you. Before I even knew about this.”

Bokuto asks “When?”, while Kuroo asks “How?”.

“Bokuto-san, you were there. When Daishou-san approaches us before we played against Shiratorizawa?”

“Oh my God, I remember that! Tell the story, Akaashi, tell the story, Kuroo doesn’t know. Bro, you’re gonna love this.”

He sighs. “Daishou-san was trying to intimidate us and he was being a dick towards Konoha-san, so I told him he must be having a really rough time getting dumped by Mika-chan just before their game. And when he asked me how I knew her name, I said “Kuroo-san sends his regards”.”

Bokuto and Kuroo howl in laughter and truthfully, Akaashi can’t help himself, and laughs along. Not as loud, but still, laugh he does.

“Akaashi fuckin’ nailed him Lannister style.”

“Bo, please tell me you played The Rains of Castamere on your phone right there and then.”

“Nah, there was no time. It was still fuckin’ epic, though.” Bokuto wipes at his tear-streaked cheeks. “You know what, bro?”

“What?”

“You shouldn’t have stopped at sister and girlfriends, you should’ve gone with the mom, too.”

“Bokuto-san!”

“No way, bro, I only fuck hot people.”

“Ziiiiiiiiing!”

“Horrible. So horrible. Kuroo-san, if there’s such a thing as Hell, you’re going there.”

Kuroo smirks. “Oh ho ho, you think just because you’ve got angelic eyes on you, you’ve secured yourself a spot in Heaven? Hahaha. Oh, Jiminy Cricket, I don’t have your photographic memory,
but I don’t need it, ‘cause it wasn’t that long ago you and Bo were cheatin’ on Ayame, so hey, if I’m goin’ down, you two are comin’ with.”

Maybe it’s the nerves, or maybe they’re just obnoxious and totally assholish, because it’s not that funny, in fact, it’s not funny at all, because it’s the truth, and yet all three of them start laughing hysterically.

And it takes a while to stop.

Kuroo is the first one to speak. “Angel Eyes, I never answered your question. You asked me what makes me chicken and honestly, this is it. Undressing and fucking strangers, that’s what I know, that’s what I’m good at. But this isn’t like that, the feelings part, the bearing of the soul, it’s all new to me. It’s kind of ironic, really, because I feel like the biggest virgin here. It’s not a bad feeling, though, it’s just new.” He chuckles. “Two weeks ago, I was just me being idiotically in love with you, Angel Eyes, and trust me, I’ve wished about this an endless amount of times, but it’s nothing like I’d ever imagined, mostly because I never thought it possible. And Bo, when we were having a threesome with that girl, I stood back, because, y’know, last year you were all no homo, but I’ve always been a 100% full homo. Watching you screw that chick, pfft, it got me off like nothing before, man. And I’m not saying this to pressure you into anything, no way, dude, I’m saying it, because I’m being totally sincere here and thought I should put it out there that, y’know, I can be your well, whatever you want me to be. I’m perfectly content with us stayin’ bros like we’ve always been and dating Akaashi, but, we can be more than that, if that’s what you wanted. The point is, you two are the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” He takes a deep breath and blows it out of his nose. “Wow. Shit. That was a lot less terrifying than I actually thought it would be.”

Akaashi smiles. “Feels good, though, doesn’t it, Kuroo-san? Being honest?”

“Yeah. Yeah, it does. Feels fuckin’ great.”

“Bro- I mean, Kuroo-”

Kuroo laughs. “Bo, you can keep calling me bro.”

“Right. Uh.” Bokuto scratches his forehead. “About what you said. You’re not you’re not like, expecting me to give you an immediate answer, like right now, right?”

“No, of course I’m not.”

Akaashi clears his throat. “I take it we’re done with the talking part?”

Bokuto and Kuroo nod.

“Good. Because I want three things right now. One?” He puts his finger up. “If you insist on having music on, that’s fine, but please stop Fireflies, because I swear to God, if I have to hear it one more time.”

Bokuto soundly slams his laptop shut.

“Bro, you didn’t actually have to turn it down, you could’ve put on some Marvin Gaye, y’know what I’m sayin’? Playin’ “Let’s Get it On” while we’re gettin’ it on.” Kuroo smirks.

Akaashi’s middle finger joins his forefinger in the air and he wiggles both. “Would you like to know what’s number two?”

Bokuto and Kuroo once again nod.
“Kiss me. Both of you.”

“At the same time?” Bokuto blinks. “How is that even gonna work?”

“I don’t know, Bokuto-san, but there’s only one way to find out.”

It’s a little bumpy and awkward at first, but they make it work.

He’s never had two tongues in his mouth before this and he finds he likes it. Really, really likes it.

There’s tons of tongue involved and it’s only after Akaashi’s lips have been burned to a red blister, before he breaks away, almost gasping for air. First thing he’s greeted with when he opens his eyes is Bokuto’s caterpillar eyelashes, the honey orbs diluted black. Then the tiny sun-specks Kuroo’s got everywhere on his face. The rays are right to be smitten with him. Akaashi is, too.

Bokuto breathes out a heavy “Keiji, what’s three?”

He doesn’t bother sticking his ring finger up.

“I would prefer it if you could call the lube lubricant and not “lube”.”

Bokuto and Kuroo exchange glances and laugh.

“I like the laughter, but please know I’m dead serious.”

“Keiji, what’s the difference?”

“Bokuto-san, you know how some people hate the word “moist”? Well I hate the word “lube”.”

Kuroo clicks his tongue. “Oh, Angel Eyes, don’t hate it, ‘cause that bottle right there? It’s gonna be your new best friend. Mark my words.”

“I don’t doubt that, Kuroo-san, but like I said, my ears would prefer hearing the full name of it and not the short version.”

“Keiji, if that’s what bothers you, we could call it something completely different? Like, we could call it, uh…”

“Banana squirt?” Kuroo offers.

“No. Kuroo-san, please don’t call it banana squirt.”

“How about- Oh, I got it!” Bokuto claps his hands and then fingerguns. “Snake juice. It totally works.”

“No, Bokuto-san, it really doesn’t.”

“I gotta agree with Angel Eyes, that doesn’t work for me either.”

“Bro, you’re only saying that, ‘cause you’ve gotten your fair share of snake juice in the past.”

“I knew this was gonna come up sooner rather than later.” Kuroo shakes his head.

“I told you, it’s the gift that’ll keep on giving.” Bokuto snickers.

Akaashi sighs. “I cannot believe that both my boyfriends are in their underwear and I don’t feel even a little turned on.”
“Oh, Angel Eyes, both your boyfriends will gladly fix that for you.” Kuroo’s hand slides over Akaashi’s thigh, going straight for the inside and squeezing.

“Keiji, you’re incredibly overdressed, don’t you think?”

Akaashi definitely thinks. He raises his hands up in the air and Bokuto wastes no time pulling his tshirt off.

“Keiji, we can’t take those jeans off unless- Never mind.”

Kuroo’s swift fingers have already unbuttoned, unzipped and all but ripped them off Akaashi’s legs. Then along come his boxers.

Akaashi naked is a thing of beauty. It’s hard for Kuroo to not just stare. Staring might be rude, but not staring at Akaashi’s body is way ruder. The rudest. Mission fucking impossible. Especially now that Kuroo knows he can, that he’s allowed.

Akaashi’s all satin skin and flat belly, laid out on his back, one leg bent at the knee in invitation. The way his long - stripper fuckin’ long - slender legs curve out in a soft arch, like they were just made to hold someone between them, Kuroo has to take deep breaths. He’s never ever touched anybody so beautiful before.

Akaashi’d been right in anticipating this moment with excitement, because both Kuroo and Bokuto are devouring him with hungry eyes and it feels incredible.

“Since it’s my first time, I think you should indulge me and let me call the shots.”

“Keiji, doesn’t matter which time it is, first or 10000th, please feel free to always call the shots.”

“Good.” He says, gets up on his feet and pulls the chair away from his desk. “Kuroo-san, why don’t you take a seat?”

Kuroo does.

“Keiji, if you’re doing this, because I didn’t say- you don’t have to- Don’t snub Kuroo like that!”


Bokuto licks his lips. “Kuroo, is that what you really want?”

Kuroo nods.

“Of course it is. Up, Bokuto-san. And underwear off.”

Bokuto rises, in nothing but his boxers and a nervous smile.

Soon, it’s just the nervous smile.

Akaashi kisses Bokuto, before he kneels, reaching out to wrap his hands around the back of Bokuto’s knees, urging him closer. Then he takes Bokuto’s cock into his mouth, deep and thorough, but he never takes his eyes away from Kuroo as he does it.

“Jesus fucking Christ, there’s nothing angelic about those eyes.” Kuroo groans. “Bo, how does it feel? Tell me, Bo.”
Bokuto is so hopelessly turned on that he can’t think. He buries his fingers into Akaashi’s hair and lets his head loll back.

“Oh.” He says, again and again, while Akaashi fists him, rough and quick. Just the way Bokuto likes it. Loves it. Prefers it.

“Kuroo-san, if you’d like to know what it feels like, why don’t you come join?”

Kuroo nearly stumbles out of the chair, pushes his boxers down, sliding them off one ankle carefully, and waits patiently as Akaashi spits into his fingers, clutching the base of his dick hard. Then Akaashi’s pink-born puffy lips open up and wrap themselves around him and Kuroo can completely understand why Bokuto’s unable to speak.

Kuroo can’t help himself, not really, the way his back arches and his hips mechanically thrust forward, trying to force more of himself into Akaashi’s mouth.

Akaashi is putting both his hands to good use and has no intention of stopping, grinning, relishing the way he’s making Bokuto and Kuroo’s knees quiver. It makes him feel all kind of powerful, having both, literally, by the balls, in the palm of his hands.

“Kuroo-oh God.” Bokuto sighs. “Keiji’s-”

“I know, he’s getting drunk on power.” Kuroo finishes for him.

Akaashi laughs softly, delightedly. And then his laughter is cut short, because Bokuto and Kuroo, upon mutual and silent agreement, tag-team him, kneeling, pushing him onto the mattress, each one covering vital parts of him, Bokuto working on his dick, while Kuroo keeps their lips busy, kissing and kissing and kissing. Making sure Akaashi is familiarized with his lips, his kiss.

Akaashi loves it. The attention, the tender care. Having things done to him without even asking.

“Oh. Bokuto-san, that’s so good.”

“He can make you feel even better if you spread your legs.” Kuroo’s murmur comes somewhere against his ear, making him shudder, mindfucked with excitement.

Akaashi not only spreads, he hitches his leg up higher, giving Bokuto an eyeful on purpose, and Bokuto stares, presses his thumb against the spot like he just can’t help it and he can’t, he absolutely cannot.

When he rubs at it, soft and questioning, Akaashi’s back bows off the mattress and the tip of Bokuto’s thumb sinks in, just a little, fingernail deep. It’s wet.

Akaashi gasps, shocky good, and Bokuto wants to ask, wants so bad to press for details, get that visual, but he doesn’t want to embarrass Akaashi, not when he’s already so vulnerable.

Akaashi wraps a leg around Bokuto’s waist and pulls him close, holds him pressed up against Akaashi’s ass. He wraps his arm over Bokuto’s neck and hugs him real tight, softly licks up into his mouth. Bokuto’s fingers drag across Akaashi’s scalp and his dick fucks sloppy paths against Akaashi’s hipbone, desperate.

“Bokuto-san, Bokuto-san please.” But Akaashi can’t say what he wants, probably doesn’t even know.

Bokuto fingers him in earnest, best as he can, and Akaashi lets go of him, bones gone soft and sprawled, hands scrabbling to clutch Kuroo’s, entwining their fingers. Akaashi’s head falls back
like he’s maybe dying and he starts panting for Bokuto and god and jesus and fuck and Bokuto scoots down unnoticed.

He gets there just in time to get Akaashi into his mouth, and Akaashi’s murder-scream ricochets at the walls.

Bokuto works as much as he can between his lips and it isn’t very long before Akaashi’s reaching down to cup the back of Bokuto’s head, sweet. He tries to let off some sort of warning, a choky little cry when Bokuto sucks hard, but Bokuto doesn’t let go, and he doesn’t move, and Akaashi comes in his mouth.

It’s warm and way more than Bokuto is expecting. He works to take it all down, little pools dribbling messy at the corners of his mouth, his chin.

“That was. That was,” Kuroo says.

Akaashi agrees. It really was.

“Bo, he’s ready. Give it to him.”

Before anything else, Bokuto kisses Akaashi’s hand.

He thinks that the inside of Akaashi’s ass is just as perfect as the outside, a place of dreams, where he gets to stick his dick. Dead tight, honey warmth.

That first slide in is absolutely unforgettable.

It’s the first time Akaashi’s ever had another person in there, in him, and it’s also a first for Bokuto, and neither of them are prepared of things being so shockingly messy, nervous but encouraging smiles, filthy, rude noises of skin slapping and it’s the first time Akaashi finally understands what the whole fuss is about.

Akaashi cries out, bringing Bokuto’s snapping hips into a stuttering halt.

“Keiji, what’s wrong?”

“D-do that again, please.”

“Oh.” Bokuto chuckles. “Is that all.”

In the next ten minutes that Bokuto spends driving his cock madly inside Akaashi’s thrashing body, it’s everything he’d ever wanted it to be. Akaashi’s soft sighs, his perfect moans. It’s what Bokuto’s always pictured.

They’re Akaashi’s legs, Akaashi’s muscular thighs that he holds in his hands. They’re Akaashi’s ankles that are trembling against his shoulders, Akaashi’s knees that are shaking.

“Bokuto-san, don’t stop.” Akaashi’s upper lip slips between his teeth. “Please, don’t-”

Bokuto kisses the side of Akaashi’s foot and his peak hits like a small death, it’s arrival inevitable but no less devastating as it slams through him.

It’s a small entity before Bokuto is able to brain again.

“Bro, good thing there’s two of us.” He raises a lazy high five, which Kuroo slams his palm into, before tagging himself in.
Once again, Akaashi feels that sweet kind of pain at first, like it burns a little, but then it becomes
good, so good.

After, when Kuroo’s shot off inside Akaashi, all three of them are laying cat-curled onto the
mattresses, spooning in a slippery, stickied tangle of euphoria and exhaustion.

Even though Akaashi’d filed his nails just that same afternoon before practice he’d still used them
against Bokuto and Kuroo, leaving red traces of his passionate fingers across their chests, backs
and sides.

His lips and teeth have marked them both, too, leaving a string of hickies and bite marks all over.
He tries counting, but they’re endless.

“Keiji, you were magnificent.” Bokuto says, soft and tired.

Then he kisses the top of Akaashi’s hand.
Akaashi Keiji is awoken incredibly early by Bokuto and Kuroo laughing between him.

“I still can’t believe you had sex with Daishou, bro. Which is why I have the perfect song for you.” Chortling, Bokuto reaches for his phone and puts on Drake. “Started from the bottom now we here!”

“Started from the bottom now my whole team fucking here!” Kuroo immediately sings along.

“It’s Saturday morning and I get that you two won’t let me sleep in, but the least you could do is wake me up in a more pleasant way.” He says and he’s not really annoyed, of course. With Bokuto and Kuroo it’s hard to be.

“Angel Eyes, we are the perfect boyfriends, so how do you feel about breakfast in bed?”

He is not delusional. He knows there’s not gonna be any food served to him right there and then. He knows exactly what Kuroo’s gonna say, before he actually says it.

“How do you feel about morning wood?” Kuroo smirks, laughing.

“Oh, absolutely, Kuroo-san.”

“R-really?”

“Uh huh, totally. I’m starving.” He motions with his hands. “Give me both those morning woods, I’m going to woodpeck them right off”.

Bokuto, aghast, shakes his head. “Keiji’s getting nowhere close to my area until he’s gotten some grub in him. I can’t have him bite off my bing bong and chickadees!”

“Your what?” Kuroo blinks.

“You know, my goodies.”

“No, I got that, but I mean, shit, Bo, I’ve heard a lot of euphemisms, but bing bong and
chickadees? What the fuck, bro, I’m crying.” Kuroo howls in laughter.

“I could call it dick or cock or penis, but that’s the obvious choice. I like keeping it interesting.” Bokuto reasons.

Chuckling, Akaashi gets up, but not before Bokuto grabs his foot.

“Where you going?”

“To take a leak and wash my face. Let go, Bokuto-san.”

Bokuto puckers his lips expectantly. “Akaashi! I demand my stinky besitos!”

Apparently the Konoha twins and their Spanish are rubbing off on Bokuto.

“No way, Bokuto-san, neither of you are getting any kisses before you wash your disgusting morning breaths away.”

“I don’t think I have a-“ Kuroo breathes into his curled palm, sniffing. “No, I definitely do.”

A few seconds after Kuroo takes his turn in the bathroom, he starts screaming his head off and walks right out, dick in hand, eyes wild.

“What the fuck! My bing bong and my chickadees are blue! They’re blue!”

“Are bing bong and chickadees really going to catch on? Seriously?” Akaashi asks.

“Bro, I had the exact same reaction the morning after Keiji first blew me.” Bokuto laughs. “He likes to use his teeth.”

Kuroo stares, horrified. “Jesus fuckin’ Christ, Angel Eyes, what are you, a wild animal?”

“Kuroo-san, I don’t remember you complaining last night.”

“Yeah, because I was caught in the heat of the moment, y’know, in the throes of passion. I didn’t realize you were gnawing on my dick like it’s a fucking candy cane.”

Akaashi’s butt is kinda sore and he doesn’t hear neither Bokuto nor Kuroo saying sorry about it, so he shrugs, unapologetic.

It’s just the three of them downstairs at the volleyball table and they start making plans for the day.

“I think we should take Angel Eyes out.”

“Like kill me?” He asks, sucking honey off his thumb.

“No, like on a date. Although we probably already kill you with our incredibly good looks.” Kuroo smirks.

Akaashi laughs as he tucks into his toast.

“I think that’s a great idea, bro!”

The twins join them for practice and Akaashi wishes they could always join, because everyone is bringing their A game, obviously trying to impress. Kira definitely is, by just one person, though.

“Yama-kun, you’re incredible!” She yells every time Sarukui scores a point.
When they break for water, she throws herself into his arms, nearly jump tackling him to the floor.

“Yama-kun, you’re all sweaty.” She says, but doesn’t seem to mind.

“Then maybe you shouldn’t hug me, Kira.”

“I don’t mind. Why don’t you take off your tshirt?” A couple of the first years immediately remove their tops and Kira pulls a face. “Ew, not you guys. Please put your shirts back on, nobody wants to see that. I was talking about him.” She says and points at Sarukui, like it’s not crystal clear who him is.

“Oh, my.” Kuroo smirks. “Girl knows what she wants and she ain’t afraid to ask for it.”

“Fuck’s sake, you shithead, stop being so fucking obvious! I don’t give a fuck if you’re gonna humiliate yourself, but stop embarrassing Saru!” Konoha spits angrily. “I’m sorry, Saru, man, so fuckin’ sorry.”

“Big brother, stop being such a dickbreath fuckass.” Kiko sticks her tongue out.

“Nori, be nice!”

“Un-fucking-believable. My shithead sister calls me a dickbreath fuckass and my girlfriend reprimands me.” Konoha fingerguns his temple and pretends to blow his brains out.

“Alright, everyone, get your heads back in the game!” Bokuto’s voice booms authoritatively.

As they switch courts, Kira starts clapping her hands. “Let’s go! Let’s go! Let’s go, Yama-kun!”


“It’s incredibly disheartening, isn’t it?” Washio mutters.

“Go Owls, I guess?” Kiko says.

Akaashi snorts. “It’s the “I guess” that makes it such a great cheer.”

“Well, it’s- we’re not cheerleaders, Keiji, okay, we’re players too!”

“Then you guys know you should stop chanting and disrupting our practice. Otherwise I’m gonna ask you to leave the gym.” He scowls.

“Oh yeah, Vice Captain, make them go away!” Konoha whoops.

“Ooooh, Keiji, you’re one bossy ass bitch! Muy caliente!” Kiko starts fanning herself.

Kira joins and Kuroo doesn’t help matters by wolf whistling and clapping his hands, encouraging. Then somehow - girl power or whatever - Yukie gets dragged too and when all three of them start giggling and dancing around each other, practice goes to shit, because everyone is staring.

“Akaashi, you should’ve ignored that like I do.” Sarukui shakes his head, lining up for suicides.

“I realize that now, Sarukui-san, but I’m afraid it’s a little too late.”

Just as they’re finishing up with stretching, Bokuto’s father calls and demands for Bokuto to join him for lunch.

“Plans, like rules, are meant to be broken.” Kuroo says and pats Bokuto. “It’s alright, Bo, Angel
Eyes and I will wait for you here and I promise we won’t do anything above PG rated.”

“What? No, bro! You guys should go out and have fun. Or you could stay here and get sexy with each other. I’m cool with either.”

Kuroo blinks. “Are you serious?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Bo, I was the one that said I don’t want you two to do anything sexual without me. Remember?”

“Yeah, bro, I know, I remember. But that’s like your thing, not mine? I don’t want you two to be like sitting ducks, that’s stupid. Just because I’m not present, doesn’t mean you two shouldn’t have fun without me. You both know I’d much rather be with you than with my father, but I have to go.”

“Bo, that’s so mature of you.”

“That’s because you and Keiji help me grow as a person.” Bokuto grins.

Kuroo swallows. “I feel like a fucking moron right now. I actually can’t believe that I said that to you and- bro, you’re totally fucking right.” He raises his hand. “Permission to veto my original statement.”

“Veto?” Bokuto echoes.

Akaashi always did consider that was ridiculous of a rule, since they all love each other, but he’s just glad all three of them are finally on the same page.

“Permission granted.” He replies, before turning towards Bokuto. “Veto means a constitutional right to reject a decision or proposal made by a lawmaking body. What Kuroo-san means by saying veto is that he takes back what he said, about the two of us not getting it on unless he’s here.”

As they head out of school and walk towards the bus station, Bokuto, beaming a thousand times brighter than the sun, leads Akaashi and Kuroo in a happy jaywalk across, holding both of their hands like a folk dance.

“Bro, I can’t give Keiji what you can give him, so please hold his hand and kiss him for the both of us, yeah?”

Akaashi’s smile falters at that, because it’s the truth and the truth hurts his heart. Because Bokuto would never be able to experience the feeling of being himself in public, free. Not as long as there’s paparazzi lying in wait for the next gossip and scandal to break out from one of their snapped photos. Not as long as Bokuto lives under his parents roof.

“Keiji, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you sad.”

He feels ridiculous that Bokuto is comforting him, when Bokuto should be the one being comforted.

“Don’t worry about a thing, Bo, I’ll make sure Angel Eyes’s smile doesn’t leave his pretty little face, until the three of us are back together.”

“You two enjoy yourselves and send me selfies, okay? I’ll catch you guys later.” Bokuto grins, waves and leaves.
“Angel Eyes, quit pouting and—”

“I’m not pouting.”

“Let’s enjoy ourselves like Bo said, okay?”

“Okay.”

Akaashi and Kuroo walk around, through the busy streets, noise, street performers and tourists, burning daylight in comic book stores and video game arcades.

By 2 pm, they’re both ravenous, looking for a place to sit down and eat.

“Angel Eyes, let’s go there.” Kuroo points. “You deserve to be treated to a really nice place.”

“Kuroo-san—”

“No, I insist.”

As soon as they step inside, they know they should step out.

It’s not just the red velvet on the walls or the Titanic chandeliers, or the tuxedoed men whisking around. It’s not just the red napkins folded to look like swans and the china plates piled up beneath them, or one of the waiters holding a bottle, wrapped in a red folded napkin, tilted high over his head, and the bottle, iced with a rainy sheen on the neck, filled with champagne.

And it’s not just them, that they are in high school, Akaashi a sophomore and Kuroo a junior, with their clothes all wrong for a restaurant like that, too bright, too rumpled, too zippered, too slapdash and casual and sporty and just wrong.

It’s the menu, of course, of course, presented on a little podium by the door and how goddamn much everything goddamn costs and how much goddamn money they don’t have on their goddamn selves.

So they leave, walk right in and then leave, but not before Kuroo swipes a box of matches from the enormous brandy snifter by the door and presses it into Akaashi’s palm, a gift, a secret, another time and reason to lean in and kiss him. And Akaashi kisses him back, with his hand full of matches on the back of Kuroo’s neck.

They end up get sandwiches and onigiri from 7-Eleven and head for the closest park and they don’t mind that all the benches are taken and they have to sit on the grass. Who cares about grass stains when washing machines exist and you’re young and stupidly in love, which is the official descriptive phrase for happy.

Akaashi and Kuroo take folders worth of selfies, pulling faces and being silly and it feels great to hold each others hands and kiss with their mouths open, laughing, and nobody bats an eyelash in their direction, because nobody cares.

He sends most to Bokuto and then others, carefully selected, to his parents. His father immediately replies with a “LOL!”, making him chuckle and explain to Kuroo that his dad thinks “LOL” stands for lots of love.

“LOL.” Kuroo says, laughing.

They play a little game of trying to guess what the unknown passers-by in the background of their photos are talking about, two nurses arguing in scrubs, joggers, moms on the phone with the
groceries in the laps of the kids in the strollers.

And then they lie on their backs and point at the clouds above, trying to figure out what each one looks like.

Akaashi props his chin up in his hands, admiring the dusting of freckles over Kuroo’s face, not pretending to be interested in anything but them. It takes a while before he notices the corners of Kuroo’s eyes are wet.

“Kuroo-san?”

“Don’t worry, Angel Eyes, those are happy tears. I used to play this exact same game with my dad. Staring at the clouds and pointing at the funny looking ones. So yeah, I’m happy.” Kuroo laughs softly.

“I am, too.” He says and thumbs the tears away, before lowering his head and kissing Kuroo completely quiet.

“Ugh, get a room.” Someone says, making them laugh.

“We have a room and we’ll think about you when we use it!” Kuroo yells, making Akaashi snicker and clamp a hand over Kuroo’s mouth.

Kuroo, of course, darts his tongue out, licking his fingers.

“Kuroo-san! My hands are dirty!”

“Mmm, I love dirty.”

“Don’t I know it.” He snorts, before gently tracing Kuroo’s jaw. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Anything.”

“Did you feel guilty when-”

Kuroo laughs. “C’mon, Angel Eyes, you know I don’t do guilt, okay, it’s not a feeling that I have or experience. You sure I’m the right person to ask about it?”

“I was kinda being serious here.”

“Alright, so ask me and I’ll try to be serious.”

“Did you feel guilty when you knew Bokuto-san and I had something and you realized you had feelings for me? Since he’s your bro and all that.”

“No, I didn’t feel guilty, because it’s not like I could help it? I felt bad for myself, but not guilty.” Kuroo tilts his head curiously. “I’m sure there’s a reason behind your question and I’d like to know what it is? Tell me, Angel Eyes. What’s going in that beautiful, busy head of yours?”

“I’m worried about Sarukui-san. And you don’t have to look at me like that, because I know you know.”

“You know?!” Kuroo sits up.

“I do. But you’ve known all along, haven’t you, Kuroo-san? When we were at that fair together, drinking at that bar? You said you had dirt on all of us owls and then you whispered something in Sarukui-san’s ear that made him shut up and this was it, wasn’t it?”
“Yeah, it was. I’ve known since I met him. Them. Last year at training camp.” Kuroo scratches his chin. “Sarukui’s probably been feeling that way a lot longer than that, though.”

“I think so too. And I wish I could unsee it, because now it’s all I can see.” He sighs. “And it sucks, because Sarukui-san is always so kind and nice and-”

“He’s so quiet and brave you forget he is suffering.”

“Wow. Hemingway, huh. I’m impressed.”

“Of course you are, Angel Eyes. I’m an impressive guy.” Smirk.

“You are indeed, because I never knew you could read.”

“Shut up.”

“Why don’t you make me?”

Kuroo does. In fact, he shuts him up real nice.

The sun starts setting over the horizon and since it’s getting dark and chilly, they get up and begin walking. Kuroo swings his hand over Akaashi’s shoulders, while Akaashi wraps his on Kuroo’s lower back.

“I gave my word to Bo that you’re gonna enjoy yourself on our first date.”

“I am enjoying myself.”

“Then wipe that gloomy and worried expression off your face. C’mon, Angel Eyes, let’s go get you a donut.”

“Okay.”

Kuroo fishes his wallet out of his pocket and hands a bill to the girl behind the stand.

“Do you wanna give me a honey donut? Oh no, keep the change, beautiful.” He adds, winking.

The girl blushes and insists on giving Kuroo another honey donut, even though the change is a lot less. Because she obviously finds him charming.

When they continue walking, Akaashi snatches the second donut out of Kuroo’s hands before he can bite into it.

“That’s mine.” Akaashi says, munching.

“Hey, that one was mine!”

“No. I just watched you shamelessly flirting with someone in front of me on our first date, so this is the compensation I deserve.”

Kuroo blinks. “You…you were jealous?”

“No, just hungry. Your expression was priceless, though.” He laughs.

“You’re such a dick, Angel Eyes.” Kuroo laughs too.
“Thank you, Kuroo-san. And speaking of, how’s yours doing? Do you want me to sing it a song to make it all better?”

“I’m listening.”

“I’m blue da ba de da ba daa.”

Kuroo throws his head back and roars in laughter. “Oh my fucking God, Bo was totally right, your singing is the worst. And anyway, my dick’s probably purple by now. Thanks a lot.”

“You’re welcome a lot.”

They exchange thick kisses on the train and then bus ride back to school, with nobody but them leaned out of the last row of seats and the driver with his eyes on the road, knowing it’s none of his business.

Then they kiss some more at the bus stop, before they walk back into Fukurodani, Akaashi signing himself in at the front desk. Jared doesn’t allow them to go up until they each use the breathalyzer.

“Jared, you could kiss me a little before asking me to blow, man, ‘cause now I feel all cheap.” Kuroo shakes his head, sad, making Akaashi desperate to laugh. But he can’t - he knows he shouldn’t - because Jared looks absolutely unamused. Which makes it all the more funny and Akaashi feels his eyes water up, struggling to keep his face composed.

Damn you, Kuroo.

Their room is dark and empty and Akaashi types out a message to Bokuto, before he leaves his phone on his desk and just as he heads for the bathroom, it starts going off, vibrating loudly.

“That’s Kenma’s ringtone.” Akaashi says.

“Then you should probably get that.”

“Kuroo-san, could you-”

“If Kenma wanted to speak with me, he would call me.” Kuroo grabs Akaashi’s phone and hands it over. “Answer it.”

Akaashi does nothing more than eye Kuroo, distrustfully. He looks rightfully hesitant, because Kuroo’s eyes are gleaming, but it keeps on and on, and eventually he slides the green arrow across.

“Hey, Kenma.” Akaashi says and Kuroo gets right to work, no second thoughts.

Kuroo slides down until his knees hit the floor and he tugs Akaashi’s jeans and boxers off his thighs, spreads Akaashi’s legs as much will allow.

Akaashi’s eyes go all large and panicked when he sees what Kuroo’s doing, and he’s shaking his head and trying to move away, but Kuroo’s hands are holding him tightly in place. A muffled little cry escapes his lips and he looks down at Kuroo helplessly, silently begging for Kuroo’s mercy, but Kuroo hardly has any of that stuff anyway.

“Hey, Akaashi, how’s it going?”

“I’m pretty good, thank you. Yourself?” He says into the phone, obviously into the phone, but
Kuroo smirks like it’s meant for him and drops his mouth down onto Akaashi’s dick, getting him all nice and wet on the first try.

“I’m good too. I was just calling to ask how your date went.”

“Oh. That’s very nice o-of you.” He chokes a little, making Kuroo’s smirk spread.

Kuroo takes serious fucking pride in the fact that he can deepthroat Akaashi enough to get him most of the way down. It’s sloppy and noisy and more than once Akaashi has to press his thumb over the mouthpiece when it passes the point of being just a little licking and stroking.

“So what did you three do?”

“Uh, Bokuto-san had to go meet his father, so it was just me and Kuroo-san. We were just hanging out in a park.” He clips, speaking in choppy bursts, and if Kuroo could, he’d grin at that. But his mouth’s full, his throat’s stuffed, and he thinks Akaashi might actually kill him if he survives any of this. As is, Akaashi looks ready to go off any second. It just makes Kuroo try all the harder. “What about you? What did you do?”

“I was playing Pokémon.”

“God! I mean Go. Pokémon Go.”

“No, of course not. Are you insane?”

“Yessss.” He hisses and Kuroo buries the godawful lovestruck smile he’s got going right in the warm crease at Akaashi’s thighs. “I’m uh—” He tries, after a few recovering breaths. Kuroo makes his way back to where it’s all spitty and twitchy and gets his mouth back around again. Shit. He feels like he’s losing his mind. Kuroo is blowing his mind, among other things.

Kuroo’s hard in his own underwear, stiff and sticky against the thin material, and he’d do something about it, except he doesn’t care about that as much as he cares about this.

“Akaashi, are you okay? You sound- ugh. Kuro’s going down on you right now, isn’t he?”

“Uh, I’m gonna call you back later, okay?” He struggles to say and hangs up, dropping his phone on the floor. “Oh, God!” His head rolls back and he very loudly and very efficiently pulses down Kuroo’s wrecked throat in warm runny bursts, and Kuroo feels incredibly cheery about the whole thing.

“Mmm. Thanks for the meal, Angel Eyes.” Kuroo licks his lips, smirking, like a cat with telltale milk whiskers. “Oh no, no, no, I’m not quite done with you yet. I’m still hungry. I wanna get you used to my tongue, ‘cause I use it a lot.”

Kuroo get Akaashi onto his bed, part-naked and comfortable, on his elbows and knees and Kuroo’s so damn excited, because he knows he’s going to be Akaashi’s something first. He sinks his teeth into Akaashi’s right cheek, slaps the left, mutters a “I’m gonna rock your fuckin’ world right now” and pushes his tongue into Akaashi’s damp and warm and waiting hole. A string of unintelligible noises escapes Akaashi’s lips and Kuroo relishes every single one, the way Akaashi’s hands clench into fists against the material of his pillowcase and sheets, all waddled up between his fingers.

Akaashi groans and wraps his hand around his dick, pumping with reckless abandon. If anyone walks in and interrupts them, he would kill them, right on the spot, and make Kuroo continue. If Kuroo stops, he could ask anything of him and Akaashi’d do it. So long as Kuroo finishes the sweet torture he’d started on him.
“Kuroo-san, I’m gonna come again.”

“That’s exactly what I’m going for, Angel Eyes, so do it.” Kuroo murmurs, but Akaashi doesn’t hear it, he’s no longer listening, already lost in another world.

A change of boxers later, Akaashi rests his head over Kuroo’s chest, cuddled up, waiting for Bokuto. Without even asking, Kuroo’s fingers lazily start playing with his hair and Akaashi likes it. He likes it a lot, actually.

“This is nice, Kuroo-san. I could almost fall asleep, if it wasn’t for your deafeningly loud heartbeat.”

“What a strange thing to say, Angel Eyes.”

He raises his head, chin digging into Kuroo’s armpit. “You expected me to say it’s comforting? In a way it is, I suppose.”

“No, that’s not it. I’m surprised I have one, because you’re just so damn beautiful, you make my heart skip.”

“Oh, Kuroo-san, what a line.”

“It’s not a line, shut up. I was just trying to be romantic or some shit.”

“My God, Kuroo-san, the amount of cheese you grated on is seriously giving me the cringe.” He roars in laughter, while Kuroo presses a kiss on top of his head.

“You’ve no idea how good it feels to know I can make you laugh.”

Akaashi has an idea, because to him, it feels the same.

“And I know how I can make you laugh harder.” Kuroo says, fingers poking into Akaashi’s sides.

“Kuroo-san! Stop! Time out! Don’t- Wahahaha!”

Kuroo’s game of tickle torture transforms into a playful bout of wrestling and first thing Bokuto does when he walks in, is slide across the floor and goes for a count.

“Bokuto-san, please help me suplex Kuroo-san straight through the gates of Hell where he belongs.” He pants out, breathless. “Kuroo-san, that’s strike number two.”

“What was number one?”

“Thanks to you I won’t be able to look Kenma in the face next time I see him. He knew!”

“Duuh, he’s not a fuckin’ idiot.” Kuroo smirks.

“Knew what? What did Kenma know? I wanna know!”

Kuroo proceeds to tell Bokuto and, of course, they both start laughing.

“Kuroo-san, you’re an asshole. Huh. I guess the saying is true, you are what you eat.”


Akaashi’s sneer turns into a gawp.
Kuroo lifts a finger to his chin and pushes upward gently, almost laughing again.

“Show me, Bokuto-san.”

“It’s already gone.”

“Oh really, Bokuto-san? So you didn’t screencap it?” He doesn’t even bother quirking an eyebrow.

“Yeah, I did!”

When Kuroo sees Akaashi’s scowl appearing, he swallows hard. “Angel Eyes, are you mad at me?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Really? Oh. I didn’t think it’s a big deal, ‘cause it’s, y’know, Bo, and we snapchat dick pics all the time.”

“No, you and Bokuto-san snapchat dick pics all the time and include me.”

“So you don’t want us to include you anymore?”

“Did I say that, Bokuto-san?”

“No, but—”

“And speaking of, you did it over my email too, Kuroo-san. Just two days ago, our Physics teacher was absent, so we had Study Hall and I opened my laptop and there was your dick. And the students behind me and Ayame saw it too.”

“What business is it of theirs to look at your laptop?” Bokuto snickers. “And why would you open your email in class if it’s a dick pic?”

“Because the subject didn’t say it’s a dick, Bokuto-san, it was I can haz cheeseburger 9gag cat. Don’t you dare laugh, Kuroo-san! I’m very upset with you right now. How could you send that picture without telling me first?”

Kuroo lowers his head in something that’s almost resembling shame. Almost, but not quite. Closest he’d get to it, probably. Definitely. “I’m sorry.”

“You should be sorry. Because it was blurry as shit, and if I knew, I would’ve posed a little better. You know, strike a pose. Vogue.” He throws a peace sign and winks. “Haha, gotcha.”

“Yeah, you totally did, Angel Eyes. What the fuck. Bo, we created a fuckin’ monster.” Kuroo shakes his head, laughing.

“A sexy beast of a monster.” Bokuto adds.

“I don’t think you guys should take all the credit for that. See this jawline?” He strokes his face. “All my parents.”

“Yeah, thanks Akaashi’s mom and dad.” Bokuto hoots.

“Absolutely. Angel Eyes, your parents did the world a favor by fucking without a condom. Thank you Mrs Akaashi’s eggs and Mr Akaashi’s sperm.”
Ugh. It’s his own damn fault for bringing up his parents.

And speaking of.

“Bokuto-san, you’ve been back here for a while, haven’t you?”

“Yeah. How’d you know?”

“You left with us dressed up and now you’re wearing your gym clothes.”

“Oh, Angel Eyes, you’re like a detective, aren’t you?”

He snorts. “Yes, Kuroo-san, I’m up to Sherlock Holmes’s level, because I do the incredibly difficult task of using my eyes.”

“Hey, I use my eyes too. They’re just always on you.” Smirk.

“Enough with the cheesy lines already.” He sighs. “Bokuto-san, how did it go with your father?”

He doesn’t suppose it went too well, since Bokuto must’ve been blowing off steam spiking balls in the gym and working off the frustration in the weightlifting room.

And obviously, because it’s his dad and his dad is not the most pleasant of people.

“It was just the usual, my father being my father. Actually, no, he reached a new—” Bokuto sighs. “Okay, let me start from the beginning. So, uh, you know how I’ll be joining the National Youth Intensive Training Camp? Well, my father couldn’t let me have this just for me, no, he’s already all kinds of involved, sticking his famous world class surgeon hands in all the pies. He thought he’s doing me a favor by agreeing to some morning TV host for an interview from my whole family, and get this - he asked for Ayame to join us. Said it’d be good for my image to have my girlfriend supporting me. When I imagined her there, in the studio, blurt out all the shit we did to her on national fucking TV, I totally freaked out.” He shakes his head. “Then I realized she could’ve made a real bigshit out of it months ago, because she knew about us. You two were friends and you’re back to being sorta friends, but she was never my friend. She was my girlfriend until she wasn’t anymore and it ended real ugly. And she could have easily made it just as ugly for me. But she didn’t. And I don’t get why she kept quiet this whole time. Maybe she’s just that nice. Or she must’ve really loved me a lot. I don’t know.” He rubs his eyelids tiredly and groans. “My father was saying there’s been all kinds of ugly talks about his son, blabla, and I can’t tarnish my family name like that, more blabla, so I need to have my girlfriend there with me to put them all to rest. He was going on and on and I was just sittin’ there, thinking to myself how I’m so fucking tired of pretending and lying all the time and I just- ugh. I wanted it to be over. The whole honesty thing worked out for us, right, and I thought I’d try it with my father. So I told him Ayame won’t be joining us, because I broke up with her, after being unfaithful.”

Akaashi sucks in a breath. “Bokuto-san, did you tell your father about us?”

“Hardly. I mean, in a moment of complete fucking insanity, I was about to. Oh God, you should’ve seen his face.” Bokuto shake his head and laughs, but it’s cold and harsh and bitter, without a trace of humor. “I just said no and my father was ready to tear me a new one. Because that kinda shit doesn’t fly in my family. I don’t get to tell my father no, never, no, Sir. I guess all those hours we spend watching cop and detective shows are beneficial to making me think on my feet, because I was able to unfuck myself outta the honesty corner I drove myself into.”

“How?” Kuroo asks.

“By reaching into my pocket for more lies. Didn’t even have to reach that far, not really. Yukie’s
my only friend I have that’s a girl that I know I can depend on, that she’d help me out no matter what. So I told my father she was the one I was being unfaithful with and since I’m dating her now, she’d join us for the interview. I just dropped Yukie’s name and he was fucking sold. Because he’s always liked - no, loved - Yukie, of course, and shit, who doesn’t? She’s smart, beautiful, funny and she’s not just our manager, she’s all about volleyball. His mood changed just like that.” He snaps his fingers. “Started saying Yukie’s a way better fit for me anyway and that he’s just so happy that he wants us to meet up tomorrow for brunch, so we can have a meal together, while discussing the interview and my mom can help prep her for it.”

All thoughts that go through Akaashi’s head, that Bokuto has to be careful and tread gently and right on the dot, accordingly, coordinate with Yukie his not so little and not so white lies, because it’s a house of cards that doesn’t need much to collapse on itself, he keeps to himself.

“I told my father I cheated on a girl, that I broke a girl’s heart and he didn’t just laugh and congratulate me, he actually ordered another champagne bottle and made a toast about it, saying he’s so damn proud to hear his son is such a stud. I just-” Bokuto says, quiet like funerals. He looks into Kuroo’s and Akaashi’s eyes, both of them, and smiles all too truthfully, too softly.

Bokuto doesn’t finish and they don’t make him. Why should they? Not everything needs a decibel to it.

The three of them look between themselves in completeness and sit this way for a while, staring and smiling, just watching each other. Little heys and it’s okays and shhs, and it’s not boring at all.

“Bo, did you talk to Yukie?”

“Yeah. First thing I did when I came back was to talk to her and Konoha. Not like I had any doubts, but she was just so great about it, y’know? She was all ooooh and ahhhh, Bokuto, I love fancy food and I love TV and she was saying something about mustaches and beards or whatever, I didn’t really get that part, but she basically made it sound like I was the one doing her a favor and not the other way round.”

“What about Konoha?”

“What do you think happened?”

“Ah. You want us to play the guessing game.” Kuroo chuckles, rubbing his hands together. “Alright. Tell me if you spoke with them separately. Because if they were together, he would’ve been all cool to impress his girlfriend. But if you and him were alone, he would’ve gotten his panties in a twist.”

“I spoke with Yukie and Konoha together.”

“Then you already have my answer. He was cool as a cucumber, wasn’t he?” Kuroo smirks.

“Haaa, nope. He got real pissed off.”

Akaashi takes Bokuto’s lopsided grin into consideration before he speaks. “My guess is that Konoha-san got pissed off-”

“Keiji wins.”

“Wha- Bo, you literally just told us, how is that a win? And Angel Eyes, what kind of a guess is that after Bo just told us?”

“I wasn’t finished.” He scowls. “Bokuto-san must have said something that made Konoha-san
pissed off.”

He’s instantly rewarded with a broadened Bokuto smile.

“Again, Angel Eyes, how is that a guess, when it’s fucking obvious Konoha got mad after hearing that his girlfriend will be Bo’s in front of cameras and shit? My God, you guys are so fucking bad at this game.”

He rolls his eyes. “No, I didn’t mean it was a jealousy thing. It was something else.”

“Oh ho ho? You compared yourself to Sherlock Holmes earlier, so let’s hear your sleuthing.”

“I was being sarcastic, Kuroo-san.”

“Whatever. C’mon, detective Angel Eyes, close this case.”

Bokuto rocks back and forth, eyes gleaming. “This is so exciting!”

I’m thinking. Or at least I’m trying to. *Oh. I got it.* He replies after a few minutes and smiles because of it. “Bokuto-san knew Yukie would be okay with it, but not Konoha-san, because it’s breaking bro code or whatever that nonsense you “bros” call it. So Bokuto-san felt guilty towards Konoha-san and wanted to make up for it. And since Konoha-san works as a model during summer, Bokuto-san probably offered him - well, I don’t know what exactly - but something to do with modeling and his mother.”

Bokuto claps his hands, impressed. “10 000 points for Ravenclaw! Keiji, you should open a detective agency, because holy shit, that was amazing!”

“Bo, you can’t give him 10 000 points. And it’s not a fair victory, because I don’t go to your school, I don’t know your squad as well as you do.”

“Bro, you’ve spent more time with our crew than Keiji, you’ve known them since last year.”

“Yeah, but I don’t have all the insider knowledge. How the fuck was I supposed to know Konoha is a model? He never told me.”

“Nor did he ever tell me. I knew, because Sarukui-san mentioned it once.”

“Well I wasn’t there during that once he mentioned it, so.”

“Kuroo-san, you were wrong to guess Konoha-san got mad out of jealousy, but you were also wrong when you said he would act differently depending on Yukie being there.”

“Really, Angel Eyes? You think he’d miss out an opportunity to score points in front of his girlfriend?” Sneer. “Oh, young Padawan, you’re still so green and naive. You’re giving him way too much credit.”

“I agree with Kuroo. Of course he’d try to impress Yukie. That’s how we guys think.”

“Do I look like a girl to either of you?” He snorts. “You’re both wrong, because gender has nothing to do with this and everything to do with character. I didn’t say Konoha-san is above trying to impress girls, because he does that. But he’s never been one to keep quiet when something pisses him off, no, he always lets it be known straightaway. It’s not me, but you two that are giving him way too much credit, because Konoha-san is not that good of an actor.” He smiles at the light bulbs that switch on above Bokuto and Kuroo’s heads. “So really, Kuroo-san, there’s no need for you to be such a sore loser over the fact my reasoning was better than yours.
and just accept defeat.”

“Shut up.”

“I wonder if it feels as bad for you to lose your beloved mind game as it feels good for me to
win?” He pretends to be in deep thought.

“Bo, what do you say we wipe that smirk right off his face just like we did yesterday?”

“Yeah, maybe later.”

“You have a better idea what we should do?” Kuroo looks incredulous.

“Nah, I wouldn’t say it’s better, it’s just something else I had in mind.”

“Oh? I’m intrigued. Do share with the class, bro.”

“Keiji, you’re always saying finding the right balance is important, right?”

“Yes, I do say that.”

“And you believe it to be true, finding the right balance?”

“Uhm. Unless I’m being sarcastic, I rarely tend to say things I don’t mean.”

“And you’re always saying planning ahead is important too, right?”

“Bokuto-san, what is this in regards-”

“Oh my God, Angel Eyes, don’t get philosophical, we know what a brainiac you are, okay? It’s a
yes or no question, so just answer it.”

No, that’s not it, showing off is not his intention. It’s the way Bokuto is looking at him that makes
him wary. Bokuto’s got such a serious expression on his face, like Akaashi’s answer comes down
to a blue or red wire.

“Yes, Bokuto-san.” He replies slowly, expectant of the kicker Bokuto delivers less than 0.3
seconds later.

“Well, I’ve been good and proper all day and I have to do the same thing all over again tomorrow
and that’s really exhausting, y’know? And I don’t want the world to go off balance, so it’s time to
be bad.”

Akaashi doesn’t bother wasting time and effort in sighing, because the twinkle in Bokuto’s eyes
and Kuroo’s smirk are the furthest thing that come from a shocker. With the two of them, nothing
surprises him anymore.

“Bro, I’m in.”

Akaashi knows no good is to follow, but then again that’s the whole point, right?

So.

“I’m in too.”

“We’ll get the party started as soon as the usual suspects get here.” Bokuto grins.
Konoha and Sarukui who are always late, the last ones to arrive and everyone has to wait for, join them right on the dot at 2 am. Of course the one time they are punctual like a Swiss clock is because they don’t want to miss out on Bokuto’s plan, which is definitely going to involve breaking school rules. Hopefully nothing illegal.

“You guys ready to Rock’N’Roll? No, I take that back. First we roll and then we rock.” Konoha smirks, rubbing his hands together.

He sighs. “Just a second ago, I was hoping that we wouldn’t be doing anything illegal, but I suppose that was a stretch too much.”

“Calm down, Vice Captain, smoking pot is totally legal in Amsterdam.”

“And are we there, Konoha-san?”

“No, but after we smoke the snake that Saru just rolled, we will be.” Konoha’s chuckle is accompanied by a smile from Sarukui.

They’re all well aware that Bokuto is a showman and that he would surely die without their attention, so when he clears his throat, all pairs of eyes are on him, watching him produce a mass of keys out of his pocket, dangling them in the air, meaningfully and showily, grinning.

“Oh ho hoo, color me impressed. Quicksilver has struck again.” Kuroo applauds.

“Thanks, bro, but I was only able to swoop in and borrow the keys from the RCs room after Konoha and Sarukui caused a diversion at the front desk.”

“O Captain! My Captain! There’s no need to give Saru and I any credit, because it was your genius idea that we put into motion.”


“Akaashi’s always saying planning ahead is important, so the Captain just listened to the Vice Captain.” Bokuto says, uncharacteristically modest.

“Teamwork is also very important and you guys just proved that.” Kuroo smirks.

“Kuroo-san, what happened to not drinking and smoking and being a model of fucking perfection?”

“Please, Angel Eyes, that was so yesterday. And you’re the one that said there should be balance between good and bad, so what happened to that, huh?”

“I still believe that to be true, but there’s no balance, this is all bad. This is, hands down, the worst idea I’ve ever heard in my life. In anyone’s life. Never has there been an idea as bad as this one.”

“Calm down, Norma Rae.” Konoha laughs.

“Kuroo-san I understand, he doesn’t go to our school, so he obviously doesn’t care about our rules. Or rules in general. But the rest of us are going to be in a lot of trouble if we get caught smoking on school grounds. I genuinely don’t understand what’s the deal, are you adrenaline junkies or something?” He takes turns looking at Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui. “This is not a good plan, to “borrow” the RCs keys so we could get high in one of our classrooms? That’s just crazy.”

“Akaashi, you didn’t understand the plan.” Bokuto pulls a face. “The plan was to do it in the
kitchen, because there’s food and we’ll get the munchies.”

“Bokuto-san, your selective hearing never ceases to impress me. You just took what I said and- I love that you’re looking at me like I’m the crazy one here, like me saying classroom is the part that’s crazy.” He shakes his head and laughs. “Look, I’m all about getting that full high school experience, doing stupid shit with friends that we can laugh about later, I’ve been doing it since I joined Fukurodani. But there’s a thing such as too stupid, so please let’s be at least a little reasonable here. We get caught smoking pot in the building? Immediate suspension, our parents notified, room restriction, no volleyball, manual labor. Whereas if we get caught sneaking out, it’s just room restriction and cleaning toilets and painting walls and fixing bird feeders.”

“That’s right, you got caught with Iwaizumi last weekend.” Kuroo laughs. “We all had a real good chuckle over that one.”

“Yes, Kuroo-san, it’s hilarious.”

Sarukui pats Akaashi’s shoulder. “Don’t worry, we’ve all been there. Kono and I’ve gotten our fair share of mopping floors and dusting and fixing library books in alphabetical order.”

“Hah! I’ve never had to do that, because I never got caught.” Bokuto hoots.

“Yo, Captain, get off that high horse of yours. You live with a fuckin’ tutor and you still got room restriction for your shitty GPA.” Konoha snickers.

“You got me there.” Bokuto acknowledges with a nod, before clapping his hands. “Okay. This is what we’re gonna do.”

While Bokuto lays out their new less risky plan of action, Akaashi gets the rope out of their wardrobe and ties it up against their beds into a reliable knot he has Iwaizumi to thank for. He’s glad he had the good sense of remembering to replace the one he’d cut. First thing he did Monday afternoon, actually.

“We’re doing this?” Bokuto places his hand in the middle and they all pile up on top. “Let’s do this!”

- 

Akaashi, Konoha and Sarukui run past the gym and straight ahead, deeper into the thick of the woods. Akaashi glances back a few times to make sure they’re undetected, that nobody’s following, aware. There’s no one. Unable to stop, he bites his lower lip a lot, doesn’t say shit as they trudge on into the quiet night.

When it seems like they’re at a safe distance and at a still shaded by woods spot, Konoha stops, halting them too.

“This’ll do.” Konoha says, sits on the grass and starts typing on his phone.

Sarukui jams a Lucky Strike between his lips and takes a long drag. “Yukie?”

“Komi.”

Akaashi makes himself comfortable and tucks his chin on his knees, wondering when Sarukui
made the switch from Marlboro Reds.

When Sarukui notices his curious eyes, he shakes the pack, offering.

“No, thank you, Sarukui-san. I don’t smoke, although it looks fantastic in films.”

“Right? When I saw Fight Club, first thing I wanted to do’s try what a cigarette feels like, ‘cause it looked so cool, smoking?” Konoha gives out a chortle. “Clothes and breaths stinking of ashtray, though? Not so cool.”

Sarukui showily raises his hands, taking a sniff, before shrugging. “I don’t smell anything, but my aftershave.”

“Saru, you’re a smoker, of course you don’t mind it.”

“I actually do, even if I am a smoker.” Sarukui objects. “My eyes kept burning all of last night from the smoke curtain in that bar we went to. And your girlfriend is a social smoker, but you don’t seem to mind kissing her after she smokes.”

“That’s because Yukie always has gum.”

“As do I.”

“Are you implying you want a kiss, man?” Konoha grins before puckering up his lips, making kissy noises.

“Wh-what? No, I wasn’t implying anything.” Sarukui backtracks, flustered. “I was just saying.”

“Saru, chill, man, I know, I was only making a joke.”

Not a very good one, Akaashi thinks, but keeps it that way, to himself. Just a thought - a not so fleeting one - between his ears.

“Carrying gum is always a smart choice, though, not just for smokers.” Is what he says, aloud.

Because it’s true. And it’s always the same thing, isn’t it, people that need gum, always turn it down. Like please, do realize if it’s being offered to you, it’s not out of a good heart.

Just another reason Akaashi dislikes huddled up class discussions after breakfast and lunch.

Kuroo, like a mind reader, texts him, as he begins to worry, whether there are any RC obstacles that are keeping them away.

“Apparently Bokuto-san felt the need to prepare-”

“Our Captain’s the motherfucking MVP. He not only came up with tonight’s plan, he’s thinking about the future stoned us. Instead of grabbing cereal and shit from the kitchen, he’s making us his awesome sandwiches.” Konoha puts his hands together in a prayer. Then, because it’s Konoha and he can’t not complain about something, “Too bad it’s taking them so long, though, because it’s fucking cold.”

“Konoha-san, you probably should’ve thought ahead too and taken a jacket with you.”

Not a second to waste, Sarukui removes his hoodie. “Here, Kono.”

“Thanks, man.”
Does it surprise him that Sarukui would take the clothes off his back to make sure Konoha’s warm, even if he ends up shivering? Not really, no.

What’s surprising is how long it took him to catch up, now that he’s aware. It’d be hard to miss it, actually, if you know where to look. Because just like Kuroo said, it’s always been there.

The way Sarukui would always share things with Konoha, everything, even if he ends up at a disadvantage. The way Sarukui moves on the court, always in sync with Konoha, even more so than Bokuto and himself. The way Sarukui is in their hallways, when Konoha drums out his beloved rock tunes against lockers and then launches himself onto Sarukui’s back, tackling him, both ending up on the floor, and Sarukui laughing, like he’s just happy to be there, included in yet another silly Konoha thing, another best friend shenanigan.

Over time, Akaashi has learned to differentiate Sarukui’s smiles. The genuine from the fake, the real from the unreal. Him and Konoha are the only ones that can do it, he is aware of that. What Konoha doesn’t know though, is that Sarukui has a special smile and if Akaashi has to call it anything, to give it a name, it’d be the Konoha smile. It’s reserved and only makes an appearance for Konoha.

Sarukui’d called himself a pushover, which he isn’t, he really isn’t. He’s only that way with Konoha, or when Konoha is involved, and Konoha always is. Just like he’s the only one allowed to call Konoha Kono.

Just like Sarukui is the only one allowed to date Konoha’s twin sisters, the only one that gets the Konoha stamp of approval for it. The way Konoha wouldn’t flip shit if Sarukui gives in, caves in, to Kira’s endless and obvious flirting, and take her if he wants, all the bags, all the gold.


Sarukui’s discomfort at Kira’s advances, while the rest of the volleyball squad seethe with jealousy, envy.

He supposes more than a decade of friendship would do that. Best friend privileges and all.

No, it’s more than that.

He recalls a time he was rockin’ that same boat, when Bokuto was dating Ayame. Back then, all he could think was “I know you way better, I could make you happier than she ever could”.

Sarukui, though, has been nothing but supportive. No malicious thoughts in the back of his mind, no ill bearing towards Yukie, no fake politeness, nothing.

Same boat, completely different passengers.

Just like the love Konoha and Sarukui share for each other. Worlds away. Galaxies apart.

Akaashi has never thought himself a stranger in the face of true love. Not when his parents have always set a picture perfect example.

He’s a grasshopper when it comes to experience, but he’ll admit, finding someone you love who loves you back is a wonderful, wonderful feeling. The best there is, maybe. Probably. And Akaashi considers himself lucky that he has not one, but two people to share that with.

He wonders what it must be like for Sarukui. How he could be so selfless, content with staying hidden in the shadows, in the wings, supporting his best friend in his happiness as a secondary character, from the sidelines, while sweeping his own feelings under the rug, ignored on the
backburner.

Then Sarukui’s words from Art Class, his “Kono belongs with Yukie, not me”, swim into his mind, resonating.

No. He most certainly does not want to put himself into Sarukui’s shoes. He can’t. He absolutely cannot, because it makes his heart ache and it’s too much to bear.

He does wonder about something else, though. How this all came to pass.

“How did you become friends?” He asks, curious, glancing between the two. “You must have met when you were 5?”

“Oh? I’m surprised Saru hasn’t told you already, when it’s like, his all time favourite story to tell.” Konoha slaps his knee and laughs.

“I’m all ears, Sarukui-san.”

Sarukui reaches for another cigarette and smiles at Konoha, his smile, then at Akaashi.

“Kono and I live a couple of doors from each other, so we’d seen each other around the block, but we officially met in the summer of 2003. Mrs Konoha sent Kono over to our house with a bowl of freshly picked vegetables from their garden. Kono asked my mom if he could borrow me, so I’d help him with some volunteer work he was doing.”

“Volunteer work, at the age of 5? Really.” He arches an eyebrows, which makes Konoha snicker.

“Oh God, Saru, man, I still can’t believe both you and your mom fell for that!”

“Yup. Akaashi, you have to know, it was different times than now-”

“Sarukui-san, I was born a year later than you.”

“Right. So, anyway, my mom all but shooed me out of the house, because she thought Konoha was just sweet, so sweet, and charming, charming too.” Sarukui flicks his cigarette butt away and grins. “Kono was feeling particularly crafty that afternoon, because his volunteer work was making stink bombs for Kiko and Kira. And he needed me for the final component.”

“No, man, you’re telling it all wrong!” Konoha rolls his eyes. “God, Saru, 13 years and you still haven’t figured it out. I didn’t actually need you for anything, but I wanted you, man. I wanted to be your friend, I wanted you as my partner in crime!”

“Oh.” Sarukui says, soft and quiet.

“I know you never had 20/20 vision, but seriously, how blind are you? Pffft.”

No. Despite the glasses, it’s not Sarukui that’s the blind one.

“So what happened? What was the final component to Konoha-san’s stink bombs?”

“Hair. It was hair.” Konoha grins.

“My hair. I was too busy ogling Kono’s room, checking out his hot wheels and toy soldiers and stuff, to notice the snip snip snip noise coming from right behind me. It was already a little too late when I saw Kono with his scissors and fists full of my hair in his hands and he just shrugged and told me he couldn’t cut his hair, because it was way too pretty. Apparently mine wasn’t. And then he reassured me that I’ve got lots of it, so it’s okay.” Sarukui shakes his head and grins. “When I
“Saru’s nickname was sour patch kid for like two whole months.” Konoha clutches at his stomach, laughing.

“I was never really sour, though.” Sarukui replies, but it's drowned over Bokuto and Kuroo’s arrival.

“Hey hey hey!”

“T ook you guys long enough.” Konoha smirks.

“What were you talking about?”

“Akaashi was asking how Saru and I met.”

“The fuck?! Yo, Angel Eyes! You’ve never asked me how Kenma and I met. How come you never ask me any personal questions? Don’t you wanna know more about me?”

“Not really. You’re not all that interesting, Kuroo-san.”

“I have never been more offended in my entire life.” Kuroo dramatically covers his mouth.

Konoha, tears streaking down his cheeks from laughing so hard, presses his phone against his ear.

“Yes, hello, 911. I’m calling, because I just witnessed a fucking murder!”

“Now that the main characters have stepped into the scene, it’s time to get the party started!” Bokuto claps. “Saru! Pass over the good stuff, I wanna go first!”

As Kuroo and Konoha circle Bokuto and light up, he uses it as an opportunity to slide right next to Sarukui.

“May I ask you something?” Akaashi whispers out, his words almost ghost against the shell of Sarukui’s ear.

Sarukui consents with a nod.

“That bowl of vegetables from your story. Did it happen to have daikon radish, by any chance?” Sarukui blinks, before his lips curve up, smiling.

“You got me. It was all daikon radish.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Hey hey hey, guess what? I'm back at it again with the KonoSarus. I can't help myself, because I'm (◠‿◠) you know I'm bad, come on, you know I'm bad I really wanted to post this as a mid-August update, but rl is kicking my ass hardcore, so apologies. Hope y'all enjoy and have a great weekend~

“Konoha-san, you look almost disappointed I didn’t cough out a lung.”

“No, not disappointed. But I was kinda expecting it.” Konoha snickers.

The five of them sit in a tight circle, passing the cigarette between their fingers. Kuroo plays some music on his phone, but it’s so low that the chirping of crickets and insects around drown most of it out. It’s nice, though. Less risky, too.

“Exams are coming up real soon.” Konoha says matter-of-factly. Him of all people bringing up exams, at a time like this, it surprises Akaashi. “Saru, you’ve got stuff ready for that, right?”

“Of course, Kono.”

“You guys do this before exams?” He blinks.

“Sometimes tests too.” Sarukui notes.

“Is it to help with the stress?”

“Nah, not so much stress as much as concentration.” Konoha muses. “Not everyone has a photographic memory and it makes revision less dull. How else do you think Saru and I make Honor Roll, Vice Captain? It’s only Honorable Mentions and not High Honors like you, but our names are still up there, so.”

“Interesting. I mean I’ve only tried it once before this and it was mixed with alcohol, but I don’t think I could sit down and study and remember things.”

“Oh, no, no, Akaashi, it depends what you smoke. This doesn’t make you concentrate, it makes you feel relaxed.”

Akaashi blocks out the talks around him and thinks about this instead, for a while.

He recalls the previous time he tried pot. He didn’t do it out of peer pressure, because he is
certainly sure none of the people there, Bokuto, Kuroo, Iwaizumi, Matsukawa and Hanamaki would have said anything if he turned it down. He did it because he wanted to feel nothing, he wanted to numb the fresh pain and grief from losing Oikawa, just like everyone else.

But there isn’t any of that now and yet here they are. Does he feel stressed about anything? No, not in particular.

Maybe it’s a rebellious thing, doing forbidden stuff on - technically - school grounds.

Then he wonders about all other people that aren’t bound by boarding house rules or living with their families, but on their own, adults.

Obviously there’s some that use it as medication, but what about everyone else?

“Why do people smoke pot?” He asks, but nobody hears him.

Konoha, Bokuto and Kuroo have their heads into the backpacks, searching and picking between the available food they are craving.

One person does hear him, and it’s the one that’s sitting right next to him.

“Because they’re unhappy.” Sarukui replies softly and places a Lucky Strike at his lips. He sucks in, blows it out through his nostrils, speaks again. Speaks further. “Because they feel like they’re missing something. Maybe it’s care, love, money, attention. They feel like there’s something lacking out of their life.”

Unlike Konoha, who is munching happily on a tin-foiled, crustless sandwich, Akaashi doesn’t miss the longing look Sarukui shoots him.

But he doesn’t wanna deal, not now. He would maybe try to reach out to Sarukui in a way, but definitely not now. Some other time, in a more private setting. Maybe.

Now, Akaashi only reaches out for the sandwich that’s being launched at him like a hand grenade.

“Peanut butter and grape jelly. Your favourite.”

“Thank you, Bokuto-san.”

The flavors hit his taste-buds and that’s when he realizes how ravenous and hungry he feels. He eats two more, chewing happily.

“What did you do today?” Kuroo throws a question at both Konoha and Sarukui.

“We went to the mall. The girls wanted to buy underwear and while they were being Charlie’s angels—” Sarukui is interrupted by a laughing Konoha.

“Victoria’s Secret angels. Not Charlie’s. They went into Victoria’s Secret.”

“Sorry, Kono, I’m not as familiar or into fashion like you.”

“I know, I know, Saru, man, you’re into writing books, like James and the Giant Peach.”

“Oh. That was my favourite book when I was a kid. My mom would tuck me into bed and read it to me.” Akaashi says.

“No fuckin’ way! It was Saru’s favourite when we were growing up, too. It’s still his favourite.”
Sarukui nods, smiling *that* smile, the Konoha one. Because his best friend remembers a tiny little detail like that.

“Your girl went to buy lingerie and you didn’t tag along? Phah, you dumb fox.” Bokuto snorts, before shaking a box of rice crispies empty into his mouth.

“Captain, I don’t fucking fancy the idea of seeing my shithead sisters in slutty underwear, so Hell fucking no, I didn’t tag along. It’s not like I missed out, Yukie would show me what she bought anyway.” Konoha smirks. “I do love surprises.”

“Sarukui-san wasn’t finished explaining what they were doing, while Yukie, Kiko and Kira were shopping.”

Sarukui opens his mouth, but is, once again, interrupted by Konoha.

“Lemme just show you guys.”

“Kono, we shouldn’t-” Konoha rips out the cellophane tape around his ankle, revealing reddened skin with the letters S.Y. in a smooth script. “Were you not listening to the aftercare instructions?”

“Yeah, yeah, but I rubbed that ointment shit that guy gave us, so it’s cool.”

“Well, that’s stupid and tacky.” Bokuto says, unfiltered. “I mean you guys have been dating for just a week. What are you gonna do if you break up?”

“Why would we break up?” Konoha asks.

“I dunno, I was just sayin’.”

“Bokuto-san, it’s not what you’re thinking. I’m fairly certain if you look at Sarukui-san’s leg, you would see K.A. there.”

“Why would Saru get your—Oh! I never realized Yukie and Keiji share the same initials as you two.” Bokuto grins. “So you guys got matching tats of each other’s initials? Whoaaa, that’s like the coolest thing ever!”

“Bro, 5 seconds ago you said it was stupid and tacky.” Kuroo laughs.

“Yeah, because I didn’t know it’s a bestfriend thing between Saru and Konoha. Did you guys just come up with the idea today?”

“Nah, Saru and I’ve been thinking of ways to commemorate us turning 18 since, like, forever. But it’s definitely the coolest idea I’ve ever had, right, Saru?”

“You’ve had many of those over the years we’ve known each other, but yup, this is, hands down, the coolest one.”

Konoha grins proudly, then chuckles. “You guys should’ve seen Yukie’s face when I showed it to her, because she thought the same as you and totally flipped shit. Like the good kind, I mean. I think it’s pretty cool that the two people I hold most dearest share the same initials.”

That is the moment Sarukui’s smile dies on his lips and Akaashi wants nothing more than to unsee it.

He always thought it’s just him being perceptive and observant of the people around him, knowing stuff without being told, being able to read between the lines, the character, the mood.
But he realizes it’s more than that, it must be, because he feels a dull - not as dull as he would like it to be - ache in his heart.

It’s not a pity thing, it really isn’t, he doesn’t feel sorry for Sarukui.

It’s compassion.

He genuinely wishes there’s a way for him to ease, even remove, Sarukui’s silent suffering, to help him in whatever ways that he can, if he can at all.

God, being an empath sure feels overwhelming sometimes.

Sarukui, oh, what a good liar he knows how to be. All he does is clear his throat, plaster a smile and reach for another cigarette. His lighter fails him, though.

Well. There is something Akaashi could do about that, at least.

“Here you go, Sarukui-san.” He fishes the matchbox out of his jacket pocket, handing it over.

“Thanks.”

“Saru, pass me that for a sec.” Bokuto reads the graceful swirls and blinks. “Keiji, where’d you get that?”

“Kuroo-san gave it to me.”

“When?”

“Today.”

Bokuto pulls a happy face. “My father and I were there too! I’m surprised I didn’t spot you guys having lunch.”

“Of course we didn’t, bro, we just walked in and walked right out. Like Angel Eyes and I could afford a restaurant like that.” Kuroo laughs.

“What is this place? Is it nice?” Konoha asks.

“It’s really nice, Konoha-san. It looked really nice.”

“Yeah? What about their food? What would you recommend, Captain?” Konoha asks again, phone at the ready to type down the details.

“Uhhh, I had Beef Wellington and I’ve tried their fish before, so I’d recommend anything off their menu. Their kitchen’s excellent. Oh, the lobster. Definitely the lobster.” Bokuto clicks his fingers.

“You plan on taking Yukie there?”

“Damn right.”

“Yukie doesn’t care about that stuff.” Sarukui says.

“You think I don’t know that?” Konoha arches an eyebrow. “She’s my girlfriend, man! I wanna treat her to someplace nice, because she fucking deserves it. Is that a crime?”

“No, Kono, of course not. I’m just saying.”

“Well, don’t “just say”. You and Bokuto both, being all negative with your “you guys are gonna
“break up” and you telling me shit that I already know.” Konoha snaps, before softening up a little. “I believe Yukie’s the right one for me. I don’t think I’m wrong, because it’s how I feel. But even if I am, Saru, who cares? Just be a friend, okay? Be supportive.”

Sarukui swallows hard, remains silent. He clearly doesn’t know what to say.

“Look, Konoha, you got this all wrong, man. I wasn’t attacking you or being negative about your relationship. I was just thinking ahead, you know, like wayyy in the future.” Bokuto replies.

“Okay, you’re thinking ahead, way in the future. What makes you think Yukie and I would break up?”

“Have you ever been involved with someone where you haven’t broken up?” Bokuto asks.

“No, I haven’t. But it only needs to happen once.”

Bokuto scratches his forehead. “So what you’re saying is like, what, Yukie’s your soulmate?”

“Did you hear me say that?” Konoha snorts. “No, I don’t believe in soulmates. But if I did, I’d say Saru’s mine.”

“R-really, Kono?” Sarukui croaks out, overwhelmed. So obviously overwhelmed.

“Yeah, man, of course. You don’t think I’m yours?”

Sarukui nods his head furiously. “Oh, I do. Believe me, I definitely do.”

“I’m a little confused here. Is it just me?” Bokuto looks around, between them.

“Bokuto-san, what are you confused about?” He asks.

“Keiji, did you not just hear them both say they’re each other’s soulmates?”

“I did. And what of it?” Akaashi prods.

Bokuto looks at Konoha and Sarukui. “Why aren’t you two dating then?”

“What?! Oh my God, this is the craziest thing I’ve ever heard.” Konoha throws his head back and laughs.

“What’s so crazy about dating your best friend?” Bokuto asks.

“Because it’s weird. Tell him, Saru.”

“Um… Kono, what do you want me to say?”

“Keiji’s my best friend and Kuroo’s my bro and I’m dating both. How is that weird?”

Konoha thinks about it for a moment. “Well, Captain, I guess we just have different explanations of what best friends and soulmates mean. To me, both of those are purely platonic with no romance there whatsoever. Saru’s like a brother to me and nothing more.”


“What about her?”

“You said she’s the right one for you.”
Konoha motions with his hand at Bokuto, like that’s not self-explanatory as it is. “And?”

“Did you mean that like… y’know, like, your future wife? Like you two getting married?”

“Yeah. I mean it obviously all depends on her and if she’ll have me, but Hell yeah, exactly like that.”

Konoha’s answer is followed by Bokuto gawping like a goldfish, a “Holy shit!” from Kuroo.

And then there’s Sarukui, who looks like he’s just seen a ghost.

“How do you think about stuff like that? You and Yukie and your future together?” He asks softly.

“Of course I do, Akaashi. Why wouldn’t I?”

“Maybe because you’ve only dated for a week?” Bokuto says.

“Yeah, and maybe also because you’re only 18?” Kuroo adds.

“I’m aware of both those things, but so what? My parents are high school sweethearts and they got married when they were the same age. Who’s to say that that’s not gonna be me and Yukie?” Konoha glances around and chuckles, amused, at their faces. “Look, I’m not expecting you guys to understand how I feel, because you obviously don’t get it.”

“Then tell us, man, so we can get it.” Kuroo says. “C’mon, Konoha, try us, we’re a smart bunch here. Humor us, if you will.”

Bokuto nods enthusiastically. “Yeah, Konoha, just do it, man. Saru already told us you’ve had a crush on Yukie since, like, forever, so go from there.”

“No, no, that’s the thing, it was never just a crush. I was half fucking in love with her when I first saw her. God, I remember it like it was just yesterday.” Konoha closes his eyes, smiling fondly. “It was our school’s opening ceremony and she walked into the auditorium with her posse. She sat right in front of me and her hair was tied up in a ponytail by a blue ribbon that’s just like the Fukurodani ties we wear. She was looking around, talking and giggling with her girlfriends and her hair, all thick and shiny and pretty, kept swooshing at me, you know, smelling fresh and coconuty and stuff? Then it slapped me in the face, so I automatically kicked at her chair, like, it was a knee-jerk reaction. Well, that and the fact I really wanted to talk to her, but words failed me, so.” Konoha laughs, shrugging.

“What happened then? Did Yukie say something to you?” Bokuto asks eagerly.

“No, no, she didn’t. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t distract me. Playing footsies counts.” Konoha bites his lower lip, unable to stop or hide the budding and blooming smile that’s there. “I know Yukie couldn’t stand me before, you guys were all present when she said it, and you also know how most of this year she didn’t see me as anything more than just a somebody from the team she has to manage. Then we had winter break and it was the fucking worst.” They all nod their heads in unison, remembering. “And she was just so fucking sad, and God, seeing her like that was worse than torture, y’know, it was killing me. The one person I always wanna see happy, with her big, beautiful smile on her face was crying and crying and I felt so fucking useless, because there was nothing I could do about it.”
Konoha’s words, his "I felt so fucking useless" give Akaashi a sense of déjà vu, a mirror feel of how it was when he was talking to Iwaizumi.

Which is what makes him reach over and squeeze Konoha’s shoulder.

“Konoha-san, it may sound like a cliche, but sometimes just being there is enough.”

“Yes! Yes, Akaashi, that’s exactly what it was with Yukie and I! The two of us were just hanging out in her bedroom and she was crying on me, with her head on my chest. One second we were like that and then the next she was kissing me and tearing at my clothes.” Konoha takes a deep breath and sighs loudly, heavily. “I wish I could say it’s because it was the holidays, you know, the season of perpetual hope and all, and that it was a Christmas fucking miracle that she finally saw me the way I’ve always wanted her to see me. I could wish on that forever, but it wouldn’t change the fact that Yukie only kissed me, because I was there. She didn’t do it, because she wanted me. I’m not delusional. She did it because she was hurting and feeling vulnerable and wanted comfort sex.” Konoha half-smiles, sadly. “Maybe it was wrong of me to take advantage and y’know- do it- but, c’mon, it’s Yukie we’re talkin’ about and she threw herself at me, so what the fuck, do I look like fucking Superman?! Like I could ever say no to her.”

Kuroo pats him, knowingly. “Konoha, if a woman wants to have you, she’ll have you and there ain’t no nothin’ you can do about it.”

“Right? It’s like, pouring a glass of whiskey in front of an alcoholic and saying “Don’t drink”, then you leave him alone, not just with the glass, but with the entire fucking bottle.” Konoha licks his lips. “Look, you guys, I don’t know much, if anything at all. But I do know I’m crazy about her. And I know she’s only just starting to look at me like her boyfriend - which still feels totally surreal - and I also know I’m a fucking idiot that screws up more often than I care to admit, but there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for her. She’s just…” Konoha searches for the right word. “God, the way she makes feel when we’re together, it’s like, pffft, I dunno, like I could fucking fly, like I could do anything. When she’s by my side, she makes me feel invincible. And I never want that feeling to stop. Yukie makes me happier than I’ve thought possible and if she’ll let me, I’d like to spend the rest of my life trying to make her feel the same.”

A short silence follows, which Kuroo interrupts by slapping Konoha between the shoulderblades, draping an arm over Konoha’s shoulders and pulling him closer.

“Dude. Konoha, dude, that was really romantic and lovely, but spare some of that jazz for your girl and riddle me this. What’s your number?”

Konoha blinks. “You want my phone number?”

“No, man, like how many people have you slept with?”

“Two.”

Akaashi feels a slight drop of his mouth in shock and surprise. He can’t help it, because it’s Konoha, who’s always so-

Okay, so he’s no lady-killer or the most popular guy at Fukurodani, but Konoha has this way of carrying himself that’s cool. Maybe it’s the way he always has his hands in pockets, or how he doesn’t filter anything that comes out of his mouth, rudeness, warts and all, which in a really strange way is kind of charming. Or maybe it’s the way he looks.

Akaashi doesn’t know the exact factor that makes Konoha cool, but he is. Really cool.

Except for whenever he’s trying too hard to be. No, then it just goes away in a puff of smoke.
That’s what happens most of the time, but not all the time, not always.

What Akaashi does know, though, is the many a time he’s heard girls from his class giggling and whispering about Konoha, volleyball jersey #7, he’s a starting player, Konoha-senpai. Akaashi’s also seen some of the 2nd and even 3rd year girls throwing him the eye whenever he walks the Fukurodani hallways.

With him being acutely aware that Konoha’s had plenty of opportunities to sleep with more than just his ex-girlfriend and his current girlfriend and didn’t take them is definitely surprising for Akaashi to hear.

“You’re 18 and you’ve only had sex with two girls in your entire life. We live in a wide, wide world, my friend. Doesn’t it make you wonder, about all the other chicks?"

“No.”

Kuroo turns skeptical and sneery. “Yeah, okay, sure. I believe you.”

“Believe me, don’t believe, doesn’t matter to me, but it’s the truth. I got no reason to lie.” Konoha chuckles. “Now you tell me.”

“If you think I’m gonna tell you my number just because you gave yours-” Kuroo shrugs, non-apologetic. “Sorry, amigo, we’re not that close.”

Konoha gives a curt shake of the head. “No, that’s not at all what I was gonna ask, because I don’t care about that.”

“Then just ask me already.”

“Out of the five of us, you have the most experience sleeping with different partners.”

Kuroo rolls his eyes. “That’s a fact, not a question.”

“Right. But my question is - could you honestly tell me you’d replace what you have with Akaashi and Bokuto for a one night stand with a stranger? That is, if you aren’t too chickenshit to tell the truth in front of them.” Konoha challenges.

“I’ve had plenty of good sex.”

“Oh, I’m sure you have. You won’t hear any of us here doubting that. That’s not what I asked, though, is it?”

Konoha and Kuroo stare at each other, Konoha’s smirk growing bigger and bigger by the second.

“Cats are extremely capricious beings. Not stupid. Never stupid.”

“No, of course I wouldn’t.” Kuroo admits, eventually, which makes Konoha fist the air victoriously. “But this is different, buddy, you’re talking about life-long commitment to another human being. Let’s put aside the fact you’ll never get to experience another first kiss-” He shudders. “What about everything else? Girls are messy as fuck and they PMS and they’re like mad ugly in the morning before they put on makeup.”

“Nice, Kuroo-san.”

“C’mon, Angel Eyes, I’m just keepin’ it real.”

Konoha rubs at his eyes with the back of his hands. He hasn’t even said anything yet and he
already sounds tired.

“Kuroo, I honestly don’t know how to phrase it any different for you to get it, when I already said it all.” Konoha sighs. “I don’t want to experience another first kiss. And I don’t know why you feel like I’m unaware of what living with a girl would be like or what PMS is, when I grew up in the same house with my two shithead sisters. I don’t even have menstrual cramps and I’m like, a thousand times more bitchy and whiny and complain-y than any girl whatsoever, and I’m talking daily basis here.” Konoha snickers. “As for the whole makeup thing, Yukie rarely ever wears any and that’s nothing new to me, nor does it matter.”

“Dude, are you serious? The way she always looks- that’s natural?” Kuroo gawps.

“Mhm.”

“Holy crap, your girlfriend’s fucking beautiful.”

Konoha snorts. “Thank you for telling me, Kuroo, I wouldn’t have been able to see it had you not mentioned it just now.”

“No, like, for real, she’s like a freakin’ supermodel.”

“Nah, she’s way better.” Konoha smiles.

“Okay. Alright.” Kuroo rubs his hands together. “You can picture yourself marrying your manager, right?”

“I honestly don’t know how you could come up with an idea this outlandish, when, clearly, I’ve been bullshitting you guys all night.”

“Konoha, don’t be a smartass and just answer the fucking question.”

“Yes. Yes, Kuroo, I can. You make it sound like it’s hard, when it’s the easiest thing in the world.”

“So if you can see yourself marrying Yukie, you could also see yourself living with her, right? Just the two of you, together, in a house or a flat or whatever.”

“Yeah.”

“The idea of you coming home and seeing her all the time doesn’t freak you out? Like you going to bed, every single night, with her there, and then she’s also there when you wake up, every single morning, the same face over and over again? That doesn’t fucking terrify you, man?”

Konoha’s eyes turn a little hazy and he’s looking at nothing in particular, at something the rest of them can’t see, at the domestic little picture Kuroo painted for him and he just looks so damn happy.

“No. Not at all. There’s actually nothing I’d love more than that.”

This is the second time in Akaashi’s life that he hears someone indirectly confess so purely about their feelings. The first time being with Iwaizumi, of course. Of course.

He isn’t starved for love or tender care or attention, because he gets so much of each, and so much more, from both Bokuto and Kuroo. And he’s lucky and grateful for everything they give him and he hopes he is able to reciprocate, tenfold.
But this, this right here, is completely different.

Because the way Konoha talks about Yukie and the way Iwaizumi talks about Oikawa, well, it makes his skin goose-pimply with emotion, relishing the feeling, savoring. Because they let the honesty and sincerity behind their words seep and spill, like water from an open bottle, pouring all out and over.

And when you listen to them, to Konoha and Iwaizumi, the way they speak of and about their special ones, you just know, doubtless, that you’re in the presence of true love.

It’s the type of love that’s patient and kind and selfless, always giving without expecting even a pinch in return. It’s the type of love that could make a deaf man hear and a blind man see. It’s the type of love that could turn the biggest cynic into the biggest believer. It’s the type of love that could mend a broken heart and make it beat just like before it shattered. It’s the type of love that makes you want to turn a new leaf and fall again, hard and fast, fearless, taking a leap of faith, trusting.

Because it’s real. And you can’t not feel it.

His train of thought is interrupted by a loud snuffle on his left.

Oh no.

“Kono, I never realized you love Yukie this much, man. I mean-” Sarukui’s voice cracks. He wipes at his glassy eyes with the back of his hand and clears his throat.

Konoha smiles at him fondly, waiting.

After a bit, when Sarukui thinks his voice will back him up and he won’t choke on emotion again, he continues.

“We’ve known each other since we were five and to me you’ll always be the golden haired boy that lived a few doors from mine that always wore pulled-up white socks and swore like a sailor, with whom I’d build blanket forts and watch Mighty Mouse on Sunday mornings and the two of us would be called “the twins” from our parents and everyone from the neighborhood would fear us for egging or spray painting their garages. 13 years down memory lane and now you’re talking about all these adult stuff, like marriage and starting a family and I’m just, I’m feeling nostalgic, is all. But I’m so happy for you, Kono, I can’t even-” Sarukui sighs, smiles. “I mean, just look at you. You’re all grown up. And I couldn’t be more proud of you, man.”

“Saru, that really means so fucking much to me. I love you, man.”

“I know, Kono. And I do too. I love you too.”

“Should we hug it out?” Konoha smirks.

Sarukui nods. “I think we should definitely hug it out.”

Konoha hops on his feet and walks over to Sarukui, hauls him up and pulls him into a big bear embrace. Sarukui’s hands wrap Konoha impossibly tight, fists curling into the back of his hoodie Konoha is wearing, like he’s holding on for dear life, a lonely survivor in the changing sea of adulthood storm, clutching at straws, clinging onto childhood memories and once-befores, desperate and needy. It’s almost as if he’s trying to put pressure into the open, bleeding wound in his chest, and silence the deafening sound of his heart breaking.

And witnessing it isn’t just bad, it’s fucking awful.
Akaashi looks at Kuroo, hoping Kuroo would give him a silly face or tell a joke to lighten the terrible atmosphere that Konoha and Bokuto are completely unaware of.


Regrettably quick, Konoha is first to let go, completely oblivious, which is the part that truly kills.

But Sarukui is excellent at playing the part and pretending things are wonderful and dandy and lovely. He simply forces his lips into a crooked smile and words, paper-thin and breakable, come out.

“Thanks, Kono. I really needed that.”

And then Bokuto, big goofy and soft-hearted Bokuto, plays Stacy’s Mom on his phone and the mood shifts completely.

Akaashi vividly remembers the day, months, half a year ago, when Konoha showed the entire volleyball squad a photo of Sarukui’s gorgeous mother and then orchestrated for them all to sing Sarukui a rough, out of tune version of the song with a lot of lewd extras that were never in the original.

Bokuto, Konoha, Washio, Komi and Yukie all ended up being written up for detention, because they were causing too much ruckus during lunch break. Sarukui got dragged in the middle of it all, even though he never sang, just pressed sour lemon lips together, asking them to stop, please, but of course nobody listened. Akaashi got dragged too, although he did sing the chorus parts, toneless as ever, but he was okay with it, he was already gonna be in detention for tutoring anyway. Nobody regretted it, because it was good. It was great.

And right now, it’s same as it was, back then.

Bokuto and Konoha know and sing the entire thing and Kuroo, faultless, catches on quick, with Akaashi only joining in for the chorus.

“Saru’s mom has got it goin’ on! She’s all I want and I’ve waited for so long! Saru, can’t you see? You’re just not the guy for me! I know it might be wrong, but I’m in love with Saru’s mom!”

When they finish, Sarukui’s face is ever so disapproving and unamused. Okay, maybe a little amused. But that’s only because Konoha throws his head back and laughs like a maniac, hysterical.

“Kono, it’s not that funny.”

“No- it’s not the song, Saru, I just remembered Komi during opening ceremony and-” Is all Konoha gets out before his voice turns chipmunky and then he clutches at his stomach and bursts into a fresh fit of laughter.

They understand nothing. Well, Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi don’t.

Sarukui must have, because he chuckles a “Yeah, that was hilarious.”

“What was? C’mon, monkey, tell us!” Bokuto demands, eager and curious.

“Kono can tell you the story.”

They have to wait for a couple of minutes for Konoha to compose himself, because he’s crying from laughing too hard.
“Konoha, man, what did you remember about Komi during opening ceremony?” Kuroo asks.

“Oh, God.” Konoha takes a deep breath, holding his ribs between his fingers. “I feel like I just got a 6 pack from laughing so hard.”


Konoha ignores the jab. “Alright, lemme tell you guys the thing. Last year, during opening ceremony—”

“You fell in love with your girlfriend, blah blah, yeah, we got it.” Kuroo rolls his eyes.

“No! Well, yeah. But that’s not all that happened that day.” Konoha says. “Komi was sitting on Saru’s other side and Saru and I made friends with him, you know, small talks during the boring, long ass opening speech, same grade, yadda yadda yadda. Then we got up and joined our parents. You guys know what Saru’s mom looks like, right, all young and beautiful?” Konoha asks, snickering.

Bokuto and Kuroo nod, eyes wide.

Akaashi sighs. He can definitely see where Konoha’s story is going. He already feels second-hand embarrassment.

Konoha grins. “Komi didn’t know. He thought Mrs Sarukui is Saru’s older sister, a senior at Fukurodani. She’s a lovely lady, so she chatted him up, but he completely misunderstood that she was just being friendly with her son’s classmates. So he started hitting on her, like hardcore. You know what Komi said to Mrs Sarukui?”

“Konoha-san, please stop. Don’t tell us anymore, I already feel dreadful.” Akaashi scrunches his face.

“Nooo! Tell us, fox!” Bokuto hoots.

“We wanna know everything!” Kuroo smirks.

“Komi, not even officially a first year here, still wet behind the ears, a fucking 16 year old asked Mrs Sarukui—” Konoha starts laughing again, and Bokuto and Kuroo turn to Sarukui for answers.

Sarukui sighs. “He asked my mom “Have you ever been on a motorbike? Whether you have or haven’t, you should join me for a little spin. I promise to give you the ride of your life and I don’t just mean on my Kawasaki.””

Bokuto and Kuroo join Konoha in laughing into oblivion, while Akaashi facepalms his burning face. The story got way more mortifying than he thought it would.

“Hold your horses, guys, there’s more.” Sarukui says.

How could this possibly get worse?!

Konoha recovers enough to deliver the finishing blow. “Komi came up to me and said “That Sarukui chick wants to bone me.”. And he did this obscene body wave thing, totally unaware that Mrs Sarukui was standing right behind him.”

...Yeah, it definitely got worse.

“Ever since our opening ceremony last year, Komi runs away and hides whenever Saru’s parents
“Visit.” Konoha cackles.

“Yeah, no shit!” Bokuto scoffs.

“Um, I don’t mean to break the party~” Akaashi begins.

“And yet…” Kuroo teases.

“Shut up, Kuroo-san. We should take this in the gym. We’re too loud and I really don’t want Sarukui-san to catch a cold.”

“I’m fine, Akaashi.” Sarukui says.

Yeah, Akaashi is sure that he is. But he’s not willing to take any chances. Besides, he’s feeling cold himself.


“Bokuto-san! It’s nearly 5 in the morning.” He chides.

“Akaashi! Why do you think phones were invented if not to call your friends in the middle of the night or the early hours of the morning and tell them you love them? And also to remind them to wash behind their ears when showering.”

“Yes, Bokuto-san, I’m sure you’re correct that that’s the main reason phones were invented, but it’s definitely not the only one.” He rises, alone, the rest of them unmoving.

Well, whatever. Whether they want to stay or join, he’s going.

“Yo, Angel Eyes, where’s the fire? Wait up, we’re coming too.”

“Actually I feel like having a beer.” Konoha says. “Bokuto, wanna come with me?”


“Yeah, you, really. Like Akaashi said, I don’t want Saru to catch a cold either. And I kinda need to talk to you, anyway.”

Bokuto, motivated by curiosity and excess energy Akaashi has no clue where he gets from after getting high, shoots up on his feet faster than lightning.

“Let’s go, Konoha. See you guys in a bit.”

Kuroo and Sarukui file up behind Akaashi, following close.

“Angel Eyes, can you take a stab at what Konoha wants to talk to Bo about?”

“Yes, Kuroo-san, I can.”

“Care to share with the class?” Kuroo asks, using his phone’s flashlight to help him find the right key from the bundle in his hand.

“I’d say Konoha-san is going to suck it up and accept Bokuto-san’s offer about modeling for his mom.” Akaashi inserts the key inside the lock, twists, swings the gym door wide open and steps in.

Sarukui chuckles. “Akaashi, I’m once again impressed by the way you’re able to read Kono. It’s
almost like you know him as well as I do.”

“Oh, no, Sarukui-san, I’m just putting into consideration everything Konoha-san told us about Yukie.” He glances over his shoulder, offering Sarukui a small smile, before crouching down to unlock the storage room. “Nobody could know him as well as you do.”

Kuroo enters it first, pulling up five mats from the pile in the corner, passing them over to Sarukui and Akaashi to spread out on the floor.

When all three of them lie down comfortably, Kuroo reaches a hand over and entwines his fingers with Akaashi’s.

“Well, one thing’s for damn certain and it’s that Konoha definitely, definitely does not have commitment issues.” Kuroo says, making Akaashi wince slightly.

Just a little. Sympathy pain and all that.

“Akaashi, don’t make that face.” Sarukui sighs.

He opens his mouth to protest, but Sarukui presses.

“Please, Akaashi, you’ve been looking at me like that all night and I’m not an idiot. I know you know.”

“Just for the record, I didn’t tell Angel Eyes jackshit, alright? He figured it out by himself.” Kuroo says.

“No, I know that. Does Bokuto-?” Sarukui asks and laughs. “No, of course not. What a silly question. If he knew, everyone else would too. It’s just the two of you.”

“Sarukui-san, your secret is safe with Kuroo-san and I. And if you need someone to talk to, we’re here to listen.”

“Thanks, Akaashi. But I’m fine.”

“Yeah, of course you are.” Kuroo rolls his eyes. “Look, man, what Angel Eyes is saying is that you don’t have pretend for us. Don’t deny yourself from unloading your burden, when we’re both giving you a shoulder to cry on.”

“I’m not pretending anything.” Sarukui replies.

“Oh my God, dude, seriously!” Kuroo groans. “Your best friend - the guy you’re hopelessly in love with - declared his eternal love for his girlfriend and you’re saying you’re okay with it? Like it doesn’t fucking kill you on the inside that you have no chance whatsoever of being with him, ever?”

“Kuroo-san, don’t. Just stop.”

“I’ve always known I have zero chances of Kono seeing me as more than just a friend. That’s nothing new to me.” Sarukui says softly.

“Sarukui, can you really look me in the eye and tell me you can just accept what Konoha said? Like, honestly, man, it’s not difficult for you?”

“I can, Kuroo, because I don’t have an option any other than accepting it.” Sarukui licks his lips. “And how could you possibly think that it would be difficult for me to see my best friend happier
than he’s ever been? It’s not difficult at all. To me, it’s easier than breathing.”

Kuroo blinks, swallows and nods his head slowly, accepting the information. Then all of a sudden his voice rises up high, high, high, echoing through the empty gym.

“So, what the fuck are you saying, man? You’re just gonna ignore your feelings for Konoha and put them aside?!”

“Hey, I’ve been doing it since the fourth grade! I’ve gotten pretty damn good at it!” Sarukui snaps back, voice just as loud, matching Kuroo’s. He takes a deep breath and sighs. “I’m sorry, I really don’t like raising my voice and yelling, so please don’t make me. I’m not being ungrateful here, I appreciate what you’re both offering me, really, I am. But I would prefer it if you would drop the topic and just let it go. I’m comfortable with doing my own thing and I’d like to keep it that way. If I ever feel the need to talk about it, I’ll talk to you, I promise. Well, to Akaashi, at least.”

“You won’t hear me speak of it again.” Kuroo drags his fingers across his mouth, zipping it up and throwing the invisible key into the nothing.

Akaashi shifts the topic into something less relationship and marriage oriented.

“Sarukui-san, Konoha-san mentioned earlier you want to write books. Have you written anything so far?”

Sarukui nods. “Yeah. I mean it’s only short stories and tidbits like that, nothing bigger. It’s kind of hard to get started when you don’t have the right person to push you in the right direction, you know? I took creative writing courses last summer, but it was a big class, so my teacher wasn’t really able to give me the amount of attention I wanted.”

“You could send me everything you’ve written and I’ll forward it to my dad. He can give you an opinion and some pointers.” He offers.

Sarukui blinks, perplexed. “Uh. That’s kind of unexpected, but.. thanks, Akaashi.”

“I think the pot is making **someone** slightly forgetful. What Angel Eyes failed to mention is that his dad’s a writer.” Kuroo explains.

“Ohhh. Okay, now it makes sense.” Sarukui smiles at Akaashi. “I thought you were just trying to be nice to me.”

“Yeah, because Angel Eyes is the type of person to offer things just for the sake of being nice. I heard he might get a Nobel Prize for all his generous and charitable work.” Kuroo laughs.

“I don’t know about winning it, Kuroo-san. But I sleep with you, so that’s more than enough charitable work done to get me nominated for one.”

Kuroo’s smile freezes on his lips and transforms into a sour pout. Well, what the Hell was he expecting, to just dish it out and not get some of it in return? No, that’s not how it works.

Sarukui high fives him for the nice kill and gets right back to the point. “What kind of books does your dad write? Anything I might’ve read?”

“No, I know you’re not a fan of science fiction, so I doubt it. I doubt you’ve even heard of him, because he’s kind of obscure.” He notices the way Sarukui is nodding his head, but there’s that something he wants to know, but doesn’t ask. “He has his plenty share of readers, Sarukui-san. If I can afford tuition here, I’d say he’s pretty successful.”
“I didn’t mean to be so transparently rude, I’m sorry.” Sarukui laughs, embarrassed.

Akaashi grins. “No, you’re not, I was just saying it to reassure you of things I myself would worry about when I start applying for apprenticeship. And speaking of, my dad started working on a new book and I helped him all of last summer doing research for it, but it wasn’t really that enjoyable for me—”

“No way, Angel Eyes, you don’t enjoy doing research?!”

Akaashi shoots Kuroo a glance, because he doesn’t appreciate being interrupted.

“As I was saying, I helped my dad with his book and he’s really looking forward to it again this summer, but I’m not at all interested in the field, which is why it wasn’t enjoyable for me. Just something I had to do. But Sarukui-san, if you’re serious about pursuing a career as a writer, I could talk to him and you could intern for him. I’m sure he’d love to share his passion and pass on his knowledge and familiarize you with the way things work in the business, even introduce you to the right people, publishing agents, PRs and all that stuff. You’re gonna be a senior in a few months and it’s always nice to think ahead and get some experience under your belt for your resume, as well a recommendation letter for university and future jobs.” He stops, aware that Sarukui is overwhelmed by the flood of information. “That is, of course, only if you’re interested.”

“Akaashi, I don’t know what to say.” Sarukui croaks out, speechless.

“A yes would suffice.” He smiles.

“Yes. Oh my God, yes. A thousand times over, Hell yes!”

“Then it’s settled. My parents are gonna be here in two weeks and when they come, I’m going to properly introduce you to my father, Sarukui-san. He can answer whatever questions you might have and give you a lot more information than I did.”

“That’d be amazing, Akaashi, thank you. Wow. This is the best news.”

“Do you mean best news in general? Because if you mean just for tonight, well, the bar is not that high, I mean, what with your best friend telling us—” Kuroo stops as Akaashi’s head snaps dangerously at him, shooting death glares and Kuroo chuckles, forced. “I’m just gonna shut up and not talk until the others come back.”

“You do that.” He scowls.

“Since we were talking about jobs, it reminds me of the first one I ever had.” Sarukui says. “I worked in a sandwich shop and it was kind of like Subway - you have the menu things and then you pay extra for whatever toppings you pick. My manager was this stingy, rude bitch that would always scream at us in front of customers and that was humiliating. I would be making a sandwich and she’d stick her disgusting, ungloved hands in and dismantle it, just because I put way too many tomato slices in or whatever. Right in front of the customer. How disgusting is that?” Sarukui pulls a face. “Anyway. I complained to Kono about it and he came to the shop. He pretended to take his time choosing, just to make sure my manager would be the one to get his order. He bought a sandwich, left and then returned five minutes later, all fired up, saying he’d file a complaint, because he’d put dirt and some hair inside the sandwich - of course my hair, again, because you know how he is about his hair, and I did wonder earlier that morning why he’d wanted to cut off a chunk of it, but I didn’t question it and let him - and he got all bitchy like what the fuck is this, I don’t recall asking for the topping of extra gross?” Sarukui laughs. “My manager started apologizing and kissing his ass, all please have some nachos and dip and a new sandwich on the house and I was trying not to piss myself from laughing, because it was hilarious. Kono
was relentless, demanding to speak to a higher-up and he wouldn’t let it go until my manager was demoted and another colleague of mine, a really nice and friendly girl, got her position.”

Akaashi and Kuroo are both smiling, and before they could say anything, Sarukui starts again.

“We were eleven, when I was first told I had to wear glasses. I did not want to wear glasses, because they were lame and I didn’t want to be ridiculed and mocked for it. Ma and Pa wouldn’t listen to me crying how I’d give anything not to wear them at school, because I needed them. But Kono did. And the next day, when I went to his house so we’d walk to school together, he was wearing glasses too. He’d removed the lenses from an old pair of his father’s, and they were yellow and gold-wire framed and looked way more terrible than mine, because they sloped down Kono’s nose all wrong. Almost everyone at school made fun of us and Kiko and Kira actually cried, because some of the kids in their grade were calling them geek burgers and nerd bombers by default, because of their older brother being one. But Kono didn’t care one bit.” Sarukui licks his lips. “Make no mistake - Kono’s always cared about his appearance, even back then. But he chose me over looking cool. Because he knew how insecure I felt and he wouldn’t let me feel lame by myself.”

It is exactly because Akaashi is aware of Konoha’s care for his looks and how quickly he prioritized Sarukui over them, that makes Akaashi’s stomach jump and drop low.

Sarukui continues once more.

“During the Christmas holidays when we were six, Ma told me Santa wouldn’t visit that year, since Pa was away for work and couldn’t dress up. I was really upset, because I thought I was a bad kid. Obviously, I still believed in Santa Claus, but Kono and his sisters knew he’s not real. Kono not only reassured me, he promised Santa would come. So Kono asked me to join his mom, Kiko and Kira in baking cookies, because Santa would be disappointed if he came with all the presents and not have cookies and milk set out on the table for him.” Sarukui chuckles. “Kono had his dad dress up, come over to my house and let me sit in his lap and babble my kiddie things for God knows how long. Just think about it. Kono’s dad was probably looking forward to relaxing, being with his own family and not having to do that, since all three of his kids already knew Santa’s bullshit. But Kono made his dad do it. For me. Just so I would have the perfect Christmas. Making sure I would have that one last time believing the magic, before I turned too old and learned the truth.” Sarukui finishes and looks at them both, smiling.

Akaashi was wrong. It’s not just Iwaizumi and Konoha, but Sarukui, too.

Konoha and Sarukui share a different kind of love for each other, but so what? So what any of it? That’s not what matters. Love is love and even if it’s not reciprocated in the same way, it doesn’t make it less real, because it’s there. And it always will be.

He lets it be known, aloud.

“Sarukui-san, I could listen to you for hours and hours and hours, endless. And I would still want more.”

“I agree with, Angel Eyes.” Kuroo gives a low whistle of appreciation. “Damn, Sarukui, dude. You are one smooth talker.”

“Well, I did have a reason for telling you guys all that. And it’s because I see the way you look at us, Kono and me. Not just you two. People always look at our friendship and think it’s unevenly matched, that I’m the giving one, while he’s the selfish one that’s always taking and that couldn’t be further from the truth. Kono just doesn’t give a fuck what people think, but I do. And it really bothers me when people think poorly of him.” Sarukui sighs softly. “He’s my best friend. And the
things he’s done for me, over the years, they’re just so many, I could talk forever. Hell, I could even write a book about it and it still wouldn’t be enough.”

“So why don’t you?” Akaashi asks.

Sarukui blinks. “What?”

“Write a book about your friendship with Konoha-san. You don’t have to make it into a memoir, because using people’s real names can be tricky and there’s a whole lot of legal matter I’m not familiar with, but know exist. So you could just use pseudonyms or make up your own original characters and then draw from your personal life and experiences and write about it.”

Sarukui considers the idea and scratches behind his neck. “Really? You think someone would be interested in reading about that?”

“Absolutely. I, for one would be.” He replies.

“Same here.” Kuroo adds.

“Sarukui-san, a few months ago, my dad told me that writing stories is the easiest thing in the world, which is how he makes a living out of it. Because they’re not facts, they’re feelings. If he’s right, then you have tons of material to work with, because you obviously have so many feelings to share. Which I really believe you should.” He smiles encouragingly.

Sarukui still looks unconvinced.

“Look, Sarukui-san, my childhood was completely different than yours. Growing up, I was the nerdy and dorky loser that was a teacher’s pet and I had nobody I could call a friend until I came to this school. But you know what’s the one thing my childhood did have?” He asks, eyes on Sarukui, who shrugs, unknowing. “Books, Sarukui-san. Lots of books. You hold one in your hands, take the smell of parchment in and when you open it and start reading, you’re no longer just a kid reading in your bedroom. You become a traveler, whisked away in another world - Wonderland, Narnia, Hogwarts, Middle-earth. And that’s the most incredible feeling, isn’t it, the way books make you feel? That’s exactly how I felt just now, when you were talking about you and Konoha-san. If it was a book, I would like to read all of it.”

“Maybe it’s just you being a good listener, Akaashi. After all, no story lives unless someone wants to listen.” Sarukui smiles.

“That’s actually brilliant, Sarukui-san. Did you just make that up?” He asks.

“As if I could say something as profound.” Sarukui chuckles. ”No, I was quoting J.K. Rowling. I’m surprised you didn’t know that before, considering you’re the quote master. I believe Bokuto mentioned once you have a notebook where you write down your favourite quotes. I do too, by the way.”

“You two are a lot more alike than I thought.” Kuroo muses.

Since he hears familiar laughter and footsteps approaching, he quickly says “Sarukui-san, do think about it. The book thing.”

Bokuto’s “Hey, hey, heyyyy!” bounces off the walls and he flails both arms at them, waving. Then he pushes himself up onto the pile of mats, sits cross-legged and looks down at them.

“Heeyyy, whatcha guys talking about?”
“Oh, Angel Eyes was just bumming us out talking about his pre-Fukurodani days.” Kuroo grins.

“Ah. You know what they say, bro, you can’t buy happiness.” Bokuto nods knowingly.

Akaashi chuckles. “Hahaha, that’s bullshit, Bokuto-san. You can buy anything. Buying happiness is called buying coffee.”

“I agree with the Vice Captain. Whenever I’m sad I buy myself beer and I’m happy.” Konoha starts taking out beer cans and passing them around. He cracks one open and takes a long gulp. “There. Is this not instant happiness in a can?”

“Bokuto, tell me, did Kono reach the stage...?” Sarukui asks.

“Yeah, he sure did.”

“What stage? Huh? What?” Kuroo looks between Saruku and Bokuto curiously.

“Whenever Kono smokes and drinks, there’s a point where he gets all worked up and starts calling everyone “bitch”.” Sarukui explains.

“Saru, what are you talkin’ about? Bitch.”

Sarukui shakes his head, laughing. “This is my favourite part.”

“Yeah? You like that, bitch?” Konoha grins, laughing too.

“Konoha, if Yukie was here, would you call her “bitch” as well?” Kuroo asks.

“Bitch, are you crazy?! Have you seen what my girlfriend looks like? She’s a freakin’ goddess, man. There ain’t no way I’m callin’ her anything but that.”

“Believe me, I have seen and I agree, she is a goddess. In fact, I tried hooking up with her last year and, boy, was Bo pissed when he found out.” Kuroo chuckles.

“Damn right I was. I love you, bro, but you just wanted to have sex with her and I couldn’t accept that. In my eyes, nobody’s good enough for Yuks.” Bokuto replies.

“You don’t think Kono is good enough?” Sarukui asks.

Bokuto considers it over. “He’s okay. But I’m only saying that, because I know he’s serious and because she seems happy.”

“There’s such a thing as protective and overprotective. And you’re not her dad, Bokuto.” Sarukui says.

“I know that, Saru. But I consider Yuks my sister and last time I checked, family didn’t end with blood.”

Konoha pats Sarukui’s shoulder. “I appreciate you havin’ my back, like you always do, but I actually agree with the Captain. Yukie and I would never be equals, because she’s far more superior. She’s like, running a million light years ahead of me, but I like it that way. It motivates me to chase after her and be the best version of myself. She makes me wanna be a better person.”

Akaashi doesn’t have to think about it too hard. It wasn’t that long ago Konoha was making rude jokes about Bokuto being pussy whipped and whatnot. Yukie’s given him a completely different perspective of things, and he’s changed for the better, especially after he found out he stood a chance.
Konoha might have always been crazy about her, but Akaashi definitely can see Yukie being just as crazy about him, too.

“Konoha, I have to give it to you, my man. Committing relationships have always terrified the living shit out of me, but the way you talk about Yukie, without any doubt whatsoever, you just sound so fucking certain, that it makes me feel silly for ever being afraid of relationships. You’re kind of my hero, man.” Kuroo says.

“Thanks.” Konoha smiles. “Me and her, it just feels right, y’know?” His smile spreads. “This is why dating a friend is the best, because you both know what you’re like. Yukie’s already seen me at my fuckin’ worst and it can only go uphill from there. The passion is there - she makes my toes curl and my knees go weak whenever I see her, but there’s no awkwardness, no cold sweat.”

“I’m with Kono, there. Dating a friend that you know and knows you back means you’re free to be yourself and you needn’t worry about filling the silence with small talk, because you’re comfortable with each other. Having to impress someone all the time is not only tiring, but it also sucks.” Sarukui says.

He nods. “This is exactly why I could never date someone I haven’t been friends with first.”

“Really? All three of you?” Kuroo looks at Konoha, Sarukui and Akaashi. “Because I totally see your point and I kinda agree, but I’m more 50-50, on the fence of each. I’m talking hypothetical here, but say you do date a friend and it doesn’t work out with happily ever after. What happens then? You break up and you lose that friend.”

“Not necessarily, Kuroo-san. If the two of you respect each other, even after breaking up, you could still remain friends.”

“Okay, Angel Eyes, fair enough. Let’s say it’s a respectable break up, where you mutually agree to part ways. But you can’t honestly tell me you’d be alright seeing the person you were used to kissing and sharing a bed with that way with someone else.”

He shrugs. “I’ve never been in that situation before, Kuroo-san, so I couldn’t possibly know. I’m sure it would be difficult, but maybe with time, I’d be happy for them or they’d be happy for me. I really haven’t a clue.” Another shrug. “I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it.”

“Konoha, what about you? You and that Misaki girl? Were you two friends before you started dating?” Kuroo asks.

“Uhhh, we did know each from our previous school, but I wouldn’t say we were ever friends. And when she broke up with me, it kinda sucked, but it wasn’t because I was sad for her, it was more of the fact I was alone. And she started dating someone right after - I think she’s still with that guy - but even back then, I didn’t feel jealous, because I didn’t miss her or the way we used to be. Our relationship was baaad.”

“Oh, no, Kono, it wasn’t just bad, it was real toxic shit.” Sarukui says, making Konoha laugh.

“Yeah, man, I suppose it was.”

“So since neither of you three has ever dated someone you didn’t know, how could you so easily dismiss the possibility of it?” Kuroo presses. “Konoha, Sarukui, I don’t know about you guys, but Angel Eyes, you love mysteries. Doesn’t the idea of meeting someone new you really like excite you? Y’know, you start going out and with each date, you find something new and interesting about that person, things you have in common, things you don’t?”
“Kuroo-san, I’m a huge fan of all things Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, books, movies, tv series, even anime-”

“Oh my God, same!” Konoha grins. “Akaashi, do you know Detective Conan?”

“Of course I do, Konoha-san, I absolutely love it. I got Bokuto-san hooked too, when I started a rewatch and-”

“Okaaaaay, this is really wonderful and great, but you guys can discuss this Conan Detective some other time. Can we please get back to the point?” Kuroo asks.

Akaashi sighs. He really needs to talk to Konoha about it, though, because it’s rare to meet another fan and he really, really wants to hear Konoha’s opinion on the plot twists and things.

“As I was saying, Kuroo-san, I’m a big fan of mysteries, but not in my personal life. The idea of dating someone I don’t know doesn’t make me excited at all. I’d take the comfort of a friend over a stranger in a blink of an eye.”

“Hmmm. I think I kinda agree with Kuroo. Getting to know someone as you start dating doesn’t sound so bad.” Bokuto says.

“Really, Bokuto-san, you would say this, really? Need I remind you what a mess of nerves you were when you started going out with Ayame? You didn’t even want to be alone on your first date, you asked me and Kuroo-san to tag along. Or did you forget about that?”

Bokuto scratches his head. “Yeah, I did forget. You know what, I take it back. Dating a stranger is the worst.”

Konoha, Sarukui, Kuroo and Akaashi laugh in unison at his quick change of heart and Bokuto grins proudly, glad he was able to make them all laugh. He hops off the tower of mats and crouches between Konoha and Sarukui, pulling a bottle of chocolate milk out of the blue plastic bag and snapping the cap open.

“Bokuto, what the fuck are you doing?” Konoha gawps.

“What, I just wanna have a sip. It’s alright, Konoha, Keiji doesn’t mind sharing.”

Konoha snatches the bottle out of Bokuto’s hands. “It’s not his to share, man, I got it for Yukie.”

“But... she’s not here?” Bokuto blinks.

“I know. But it’s her favourite and since breakfast starts in an hour, I’ll see her and give it to her. You can have some of it then, if she lets you.”

“Ohhh. It’s Keiji’s favourite too and when I saw you buying it, I thought it was for him. My bad.” Bokuto grins sheepishly.

“Oh Captain, my Captain, you can be such an idiot sometimes.” Konoha cackles.

Akaashi is not really drowsy, but he kind of feels like taking a step back from the conversation and just chilling, without having to participate. So he crawls over to the wall and relaxes his back against it, beer in hand, sipping slowly.

“Yo, Konoha, Angel Eyes mentioned you’re a model. Knowing your personality, it kinda shocked me that you don’t brag about it. What’s that about?” Kuroo asks, making Konoha and Sarukui look at each other and burst in laughter.
“Of course I do, man. I just don’t do it in front of guys, because I see no point in it.”

“Ah. So you do like impressing girls.” Kuroo notes.

Konoha snorts. “Who the fuck doesn’t?”

“Well, I don’t think gay guys care for it. Angel Eyes?”

“Kuroo-san, do you really need to ask me that when you’re way gayer than I am?”

“I see where you’re coming from, Angel Eyes, but technically I’m not gay gay like you. I’m pan.”

Sarukui raises his hand. “Same.”

“Oooh!” Bokuto claps his hands together. “Pancakes!”

“Bro, you’re the fucking pancake here. What I meant - and Sarukui too - was pansexual.”

“No, no, bro, I know what pan means, I’m just craving pancakes right now, is all. But monkey! I had no idea you were pan like my bro!” Bokuto hoots. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt more proud of how diverse our volleyball team is - straight, gay, pan, bi. We got everything! It’s fucking awesome!”

“Who on our squad is bisexual?” Konoha asks. “Is it Komi? Tatsu?”

“I don’t know about them, but I meant me.” Bokuto replies.

“Bokuto-san!”

“Bro!”

Kuroo and Akaashi grin at each other, on the exact same mental wavelength.

“What?”

“Bokuto-san, this is the first time you’re talking about your sexuality and that’s a big deal.”

“Considering the fact I have an ex-girlfriend and currently have two boyfriends, isn’t it already a given that I like both girls and boys?” Bokuto blinks.

“Well, it’s like Angel Eyes said, this is the first time you’re talking about it out in the open - freely - and that’s a huge deal. You should be as proud of yourself as Angel Eyes and I are. This is what it’s all about, bro, there’s nothing better than playing for both teams.” Kuroo smirks.

“Yeah, bro! Let’s give it up for team Both Teams!” Bokuto high fives Kuroo and Sarukui. “Hey, hey, heyyyy!”

“Bro, who do you envision as straight from your volleyball squad? Konoha?”

“Yeah, bro.”

Kuroo laughs. “Yeah, he’s not 100% hetero.”

“Excuse me?” Konoha arches a challenging eyebrow.

“Duude! C’mon, dude, you said you find Angel Eyes upsetingly pretty. I mean, shit, Bo and I are both dating him and even we wouldn’t say that.” Kuroo snickers.
“No, no, Kono never said it like that, that was Kira.” Sarukui objects.

“Thank you, Saru. This is why you’re my best fucking friend, man, you always have my back.”

Akaashi listens to them talking, perfectly content in his little corner. Less than 20 minutes until the kitchen opens and he’s really excited about that. He finishes his beer and yawns lazily.

Then something comes to him and it’s suddenly all he can think about.

“Bokuto-san? On Friday, after we came back from that bar, do you remember how you said Kuroo-san gave you pep talks?”

Bokuto raises his shoulders. “Which one in particular, Keiji? Kuroo gives me plenty of those.”

“Don’t we all?” Konoha chuckles.

“You said Kuroo-san showed you a lot of porn videos last weekend, which you watched together and since you were in the Wing Building, I have to ask.” He licks his licks slowly, already expecting to hear the worst. Which, he does. “Was Kageyama-kun there too?”

It’s not just Kuroo that clutches his stomach and laughs heartily, it’s also Bokuto, Konoha and Sarukui.

And that’s more than enough of an answer, but he still shakes his head in disbelief.

“There’s no way the Karasuno boys, especially Sawamura-san, allowed that to happen.”

“Angel Eyes, we know how to pick our audience. The crows were all hitting the showers. Oh, c’mon, Angel Eyes, somebody had to educate Kageyama about the birds and the bees.”

“Oh my God, I knew it.” He sighs. “Kuroo-san, Bokuto-san, I hope you know when Iwaizumi-san comes here for Jamboree, he’s going to kill you both.”

“Nah, there’s no way he’d do that, Keiji, when he already knows how much you love us.” Bokuto says, beaming.

“Yeah, Angel Eyes, you’d protect us from Iwaizumi, won’t you?”

“No. Absolutely not. I’m actually really looking forward to Iwaizumi-san tearing you both apart. It’s not like you two don’t deserve it.” He scowls.

Bokuto and Kuroo don’t seem in the least bit perturbed.

Yeah, they’ll see.

Soon.

“Speaking of Iwaizumi,” Bokuto begins, putting his hands up and crossing them behind his head. “He reminds me of a gypsy.”

Kuroo taps his chin. “I see it in- nope, there’s no way I see it.”

“A gypsy.” He echoes. “Bokuto-san, do you even know what a gypsy is?”

“Yeah, like those traveling people that do fortune telling and stuff.”

“Right. But how is Iwaizumi-san like that?” Akaashi asks.
“I don’t know? Don’t ask me, Keiji, ask him. He’s the gypsy.”

He sighs. “Bokuto-san, your logic is impeccable as ever.”

“Akaashi, do you think Iwaizumi’s hot?” Konoha asks and it makes both Bokuto and Kuroo turn their entire attention to Akaashi, awaiting his answer.

He doesn’t know how exactly he’s able to suppress his laughter at the question as well as their expressions, but he does, simply settling for an amused smile.

“Why, Konoha-san, do you?”

“No. Let me put it differently.” Konoha clears his throat. “Lets say you weren’t dating Bokuto and Kuroo, alright?”

“Konoha-san, I see where you’re going with this, so I’m just going to stop you from wasting your words and tell you that no, I wouldn’t consider Iwaizumi-san someone I would date.” He replies.

“Why not, Akaashi? You said it yourself, you would only date a friend and he’s your friend, right?”

“Yes, but it’s different.” He tries searching for a way to explain it to Konoha, without having to use the obvious example, which would make him feel like an asshole. He finds nothing, so he goes for it, asshole or not. “You said it yourself too, Konoha-san, you wouldn’t date Sarukui-san.”

“Do you think Iwaizumi is hot?” Konoha asks.

“Konoha-san, just because I’m gay, doesn’t mean I look at all guys as potential dates, that’s not how it works. I don’t make friends rated on how hot people are.”

“Look at all four of us. We’re all-” Konoha begins and Akaashi interrupts, laughing.

“I am looking, Konoha-san, that’s exactly why I said it.”

“That’s harsh, Akaashi.” Sarukui says, making him laugh more.

“Konoha-san, I don’t have any siblings, so I don’t know what having one would be like, which is why I don’t use the term as freely as Bokuto-san does with Yukie or Kuroo-san does with Kenma. Or the way you do with Sarukui-san.” He sighs. “But if I had to pick, then I would say I see Iwaizumi-san something of an older brother figure.”

“Don’t you get it, you dumb fucking fox?” Bokuto groans. “What Keiji is trying to say is that, yes, he finds Iwaizumi good looking, but that doesn’t mean he’s attracted to him.” He looks at Akaashi for confirmation. “That’s what you meant, Keiji, right?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san, that is precisely what I meant.”

Kuroo glances at his watch and smirks. “This is great, you guys, but guess what? It’s breakfast o’clock. I say we bitches go get some grub.”

Nobody bothers putting the mats away, they all get up and head straight for the kitchen.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

For the time being, I'm putting a closure on the KonoSarus and getting back to the KuroAkas... Along with the IwaAkas, because I can't help myself. And also because I don't want to help myself (°____°)

Bokuto wasn’t lying when he said he’s really craving pancakes, because he mountain-stacks a plate, smothering it with maple syrup and some freshly cut fruit.

There’s nobody but them present, but that doesn’t stop Akaashi from barricading the toaster, sipping hot coffee and patiently waiting for his bread to be ready.

“Kuroo-san, pass me some of those spreads.”

“What’s the magic word, Angel Eyes?”

“Immediately.”

Kuroo laughs and drops off his handful of butter, grape jam, honey and nutella into Akaashi’s tray.

Konoha and Yukie are standing right outside, in the corner, as they leave the kitchen, overhearing their conversation.

“Nori, thank you for getting me chocolate milk.” She wraps her arms over Konoha’s shoulders and smooches his cheek. “You’re the best.”

“Oh, honey, if I’m the best, it’s only because you make me that way.”

As they walk into Dining Hall B, joining Bokuto and Sarukui at the volleyball table, Akaashi can’t help smiling.

“That was really cute.”

“What the fuck, Angel Eyes, I’m offended. How is it that whenever I’m trying to be romantic, you shoot me down, but when Konoha does it, you’re all oh, that’s really cute.” Kuroo says, in disbelief. “How come you don’t ever call me and Bo any cute nicknames like honey and sweetheart?”

Bokuto nods. “Yeah, yeah, I totally agree with my bro. You love honey, you’re always eating it,
Keiji, so why don’t you call me that? Look at those.” He points at his eyes, bulging them out at Akaashi. “What, they’re not honey colored enough for you?”

“Totally, bro. It’s always the same Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san, and for what, to be respectful and polite? Pfff. Angel Eyes, you’re the rudest fucking person ever and there’s no amount of “sans” that are ever gonna change that.”

He slices banana over his chocolate toast, an amused curve playing at his lips. “What would you two have me call you?”

“Like Bo said, you could call him honey.” Kuroo says.

“Okay, honey. What else, Kuroo-san? What about you?”

“I’ve heard Yukie call Kono pookie bear and also Boo Boo Bear?” Sarukui offers, as Kuroo racks his brain.

“Boo Boo like Honey Boo Boo?” Bokuto quizzes.

“No, like Boo Boo Bear, from The Yogi Bear Show. The Hanna-Barbera cartoon.” Sarukui explains.

“That’s perfect! If Bo’s honey, I could be one of those cute cartoon bears. How about that, Angel Eyes?”

“No.”

“No? C’mon, Angel Eyes, you didn’t even think about it!”

“Okay, let me think about it.” He pretends to be in deep thought. “Admittedly, both you and Bokuto-san snore like bears… but it’s still a no.”

“Why?”

“Because, Kuroo-san, you remind me more of that asshole ranger that never lets them have their picnic, than Yogi and Boo Boo.”

Sarukui throws his head back and laughs, while Bokuto mutters something that sounds an awful lot like Keiji has no heart.

“Thanks a lot, Angel Eyes, I’m really feeling the love.”

“You’re welcome a lot, Kuroo-san.”

“Morning, guys.” Yukie greets with a big grin and a little wave.

Konoha pulls a chair for her, but she shakes her head and sits right in his lap, making him grin from ear to ear.

They’re both in love with each other and it’s so obvious and fucking cute, it makes Akaashi want to punch himself in the face. But, of course, he doesn’t.

What he does is get up and head straight for the front desk, because he hears his name being announced through the speakers. He already knows what he’s being called for and smiles, while the rest of the table goes completely quiet, thinking he must be in some sort of trouble.

As he returns, all eyes are on him and when they see him carrying a parcel in his hands, they
relax, but they’re still just as curious.

“Keiji, did your parents send you that?”

“No, Bokuto-san, I bought some stuff online.”

“I bet my head it’s coffee.” Konoha smirks.

“Konoha-san, it’s too bad you didn’t bet any money on it, because for once, you wouldn’t have lost.” Akaashi replies, as everyone but Konoha laughs, with him rolling his eyes and groaning. “Coffee’s not all I bought, though.”

“Awww that’s like my favourite hobby!” Yukie claps her hands excitedly. “I actually wish I could put it down in my resume, but somehow I don’t think “I like to drink wine and shop” would sit right in a college application.” She sighs. “They’d hate me almost as much my credit card does.”

Konoha tucks a strand of her hair behind her ear and smiles. “Honey, all you have to do is add your photo and any college admission person would love you.”

Yukie nuzzles against his neck and he places a little kiss on the top of her head.

“Oh my God.” Kuroo gawps, looking around. “Did you guys not hear that? Holy fuck, that was the smoothest thing I’ve ever heard. Goddamn, Konoha, dude, when did you get so much game, man? I could just reach across the table and make love to you right here, right now.”

“I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t.” Konoha purses his lips into a tight smile.

Akaashi takes his knife, wiping it clean into a napkin and cuts through the tape and Amazon Prime stickers.

“What’s in the booox?” Bokuto asks.

“Was that supposed to be Brad Pitt from Seven?” Sarukui scrunches his nose.

“Mmm, yeah, you were pretty good in that play the Theater and Drama class did, but Oh Captain, my Captain, you gotta work on your impressions, ‘cause maaaan that was fuckin’ terrible.” Konoha adds.

“Shut it, fox, you knew what it was, so I’d say it was pretty damn good.” Bokuto replies.

“Yeah, I knew what it was, because everyone’s seen Seven. It's like The Godfather.”

“I’ve never seen The Godfather.” Yukie says, making all the boys gasp in shock.

“Yuks, you’ve never seen The Godfather?” Bokuto gawps.

She shrugs. “No. I’m not Italian, so I don’t care.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Sarukui asks, almost scandalized. “Your favourite food is Italian! You eat pizza all the time.”

“Yeah, because pizza’s delicious. The Godfather is just a movie.”

Another round of gasps, even more shocked than before.

“Just a movie, she says.” Kuroo shakes his head. “God, Yukie, 21 century and you haven’t seen The Godfather, you’re like the freakin’ Holy Grail.”
“What’s the big deal with you guys and that movie?” She laughs.

“Uh, it’s only like the best movie in the world.” Sarukui replies, nodding his head at Konoha, who is clutching at his heart, speechless. “Just take a look at Kono, you gave him a heart attack.”

“It certainly feels like one.” Konoha croaks out. He takes a few sips of his water and a deep breath, composing himself. “Honey, do you care about me at all?”

“Nori, is it really necessary for you to be so dramatic? Of course I do. You know exactly how much.”

Smiling, Konoha coughs into his fist and does his best Marlon Brando. “I’m gonna make you an offer you can’t refuse.”

“Nicely done, Kono.” Sarukui claps, then glances at Bokuto. “Now that was an excellent impression.”

Akaashi has to agree there. That was good. That was really good.

“So what’s this offer I can’t refuse?” Yukie asks, once again making all five boys ready to weep.

Bokuto, drama queen number 2, groans. “For the love of God, Yuks, pleeeeeease just watch the movie with Konoha. Please, I beg you.”

“Alright, alright, if The Godfather really means that much to you all, I’ll watch it.” Yukie rolls her eyes.

“Not just the first one. You gotta see all of them.” Sarukui notes.

“Konoha! As her boyfriend, it is absolutely your duty to make sure you show her what she’s been missing out on.” Bokuto says, in all seriousness.

Konoha solemnly nods his head, accepting full responsibility of what his Captain assigns him.

Since that’s settled, Akaashi finally empties the contents of the box, handing each to it’s designated receiver - a Rowlet t-shirt for the biggest owl lover and a pair of boxers with the words “love me tender” for the biggest Elvis fan.

“See, Bokuto-san? You can buy happiness.”

For a moment, Bokuto and Kuroo are completely quiet, blinking at their gifts, at each other, at him. Then it’s a deafeningly loud explosion of overlapping “Akaashi!” and “Angel Eyes!” and pairs of arms pulling him into a suffocatingly tight hug.

Yukie cuddles up to Konoha and smiles at Akaashi. “That’s so sweet.”

“Awww.” Sarukui opens his arms at the empty space. “Oh, no, wait a minute. I have no one.”

“Saru, what are you talking about? You have me and Nori. Come, so we can both hug you.”

“I assure you, Yuks, it’s not the same.” Sarukui says.

“Saru, don’t be a little bitch. You heard her. Get over here!” Konoha, once again, nails the impression.

Wow, he’s really good at this stuff. Akaashi never knew.
“Kono, I’m fine, really.” Sarukui replies.

But that’s a lie, as clear as summer-blue skies.

“Oh my God! This reminds me of Bokuto’s Halloween party.” Yukie claps her hands and laughs. “You guys know Nakano, right?”

“Nakano-san as in the Captain of the basketball team?” Akaashi asks.

She nods. “Yeah, exactly. He was dressed up as Scorpion and—”

“Wait a minute. Yukie, you know who Scorpion is?” Kuroo gawps.

“Duuh. When I was younger, most of my pocket money went for buying coins for arcade games like Mortal Kombat and Tekken.”

“Holy shit, you’re an actual fucking Godsend angel, aren’t you?” Kuroo turns to Konoha. “Dude, marry her. Marry her right now.”

Konoha smirks. “Told you she’s a goddess.”

“Yes, I am. Can I get back to telling my story now?” She asks, making them all zip up their traps. “As I was saying, Nakano was dressed up as Scorpion and as soon as I saw him, I made a joke that I’m pulling him up with a rope and did the same “Get over here!” impression Nori did. He didn’t get it. He was dressed up as the character and he didn’t get it.” She shakes her head, smiling. “Nakano thought I was flirting with him and told me “Yukie, I’m really flattered, but I’m here with my girlfriend tonight, so maybe some other time.”” She finishes and bursts into laughter.

“Yuck. What a douchebag.” Sarukui pretends to throw up, gagging.

“This is exactly why I’ve always hated the basketball team. They’re all so fuckin’ lame and rude.” Konoha says, earning nods of approval from Bokuto, Sarukui and Kuroo. Heck, even Akaashi.

But that’s only because Akaashi hates the way Yukie and him always have to fight with the managers of the basketball squad for the assigned school budget for each team.

He has no problems or personal beef with any of the players, he doesn’t care about them one bit. It’s the managers that he’s got bones - entire skeletons - to pick with.

“That’s not true.” Yukie objects. “They’re always so lovely.”

“That’s because they wanna sleep with you.” Bokuto says. “Why else do you think they’d be so lovely with you, Yuks?”

“Oh, to be nice?”

“Yeah, right.” Bokuto snorts. “Hey, bro, are guys ever nice to girls for no reason?”

“No, only for sex.” Kuroo replies.

“There you go.” Bokuto smirks.

“Bokuto, I have actual friends from the basketball team.”

“I’m sure you do. That doesn’t change the fact they all wanna sleep with you.” Bokuto shrugs. “I’m sorry, Yuks, but you’re a girl and you wouldn’t understand how we guys think. You don’t
know. You’ll never get it.”

“No, I do get it. You’re trying to tell me that a friendship between guys and girls can’t exist and I completely disagree with you.” Her brows furrow.

“That’s not what I’m saying, Yuks. It can exist and it does. But my point is that every guy friend that you have, that’s been nice to you for no apparent reason, at one point or another, has thought about sleeping with you.” Bokuto replies, looking at the rest of them for confirmation.

“Akaashi’s nice to me and I’m sure he’s never had sex in the back of his mind.”

Kuroo laughs. “Angel Eyes doesn’t count, he’s gay.”

He actually thinks gay people do count, because there are some girls on the cheerleading squad that would give anything to get it on with Yukie, but he doesn’t feel like mentioning it.

“All right, fine!” Yukie crosses her arms. “Let’s take Saru, for example. Saru, you’ve never thought about sleeping with me, right?”

“Nope.”

“Monkey’s totally lying.” Bokuto chuckles.

“Am not.”

“Then you don’t count either, because you’re Konoha’s best friend and you know he’s always had feelings for Yuks.”

“What about you, Bokuto-san? You consider Yukie your sister, right? You’re not blood related, but I believe you told us earlier family didn’t end with blood.” He can’t help, but grin. Nor does he want to help it.

“Keiji! I meant before we became friends and I got to know her!”

“Ew, Bokuto, really?” Yukie pulls a face.

“What ew, Yuks? It’s not like I spent hours fantasizing about you or anything! You see a really attractive girl and for a moment you think to yourself I wanna tap that. It’s not feelings, it’s just a passing thought. You can’t control those.” Bokuto shrugs, not seeing why he’s being blamed without actually being blamed.

“You can’t control feelings either.” Sarukui adds quietly.

Kuroo, like a real bro and a friend who knows a secret, shifts the entire attention from both Bokuto and Sarukui to Konoha. “This topic’s making you really uncomfortable, isn’t it?”

“No. It’s making Yukie uncomfortable, but not me.”

“It doesn’t piss you off that your teammates have thought about sleeping with your girlfriend? That other guys are nice to her, because they wanna have sex with her?” Kuroo asks.

“No. What would piss me off is people - not just guys, but girls too - being rude and mean to her.”

Kuroo’s expression remains the same, there’s no sneers, no smirks, but he can tell Kuroo is amused by Konoha’s answer.

“It’s cool, man, I get it. You don’t do jealousy, I don’t do guilt.”
“Kuroo, I’m not sure there was a question for me in there.” Konoha says, uncertain.

“I’m asking you if you’re a jealous person or not?”

“Yes and no.”

“That’s quite the contradictory answer, don’tcha think? Please, Konoha, the floor is yours.”

“What I meant is that I used to get crazy jealous whenever Yukie talked about Oikawa, because I knew she liked him. Or whenever she talked about other guys like that, saying they were handsome or pretty or cute. I was jealous that they would get her attention when I couldn’t. Yukie is one of the most popular girls in our school - she could easily have her pick of the litter and she picked me. I know it’s fuckin’ crazy, right? Me. Hard as that is to believe.” Konoha laughs happily.

“It is pretty fuckin’ crazy. Maybe she’s gone crazy.” Kuroo smirks.

“It’s a lot less crazy than Akaashi dating you and Bokuto.” Sarukui says, giving Akaashi a hard time suppressing a chuckle.

“Hey!” Bokuto pouts. “I know what you mean, monkey, but still. That hurt.”

Yukie’s hands wrap around Konoha’s shoulders, fingers locking behind the back of his neck and gazes into his eyes. Then says, “The only crazy I am is about you.”

“Yeah?” If there’s such a thing as a million dollar smile, Konoha’s would be it. The two of them are in their own little world, Sarukui, Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi nothing but background.

Suddenly, as if a soap bubble has been popped, Kuroo clears his throat.

“So what you’re telling us is that, what, since you two started going out, you no longer get jealous?”

Akaashi doesn’t know why Kuroo wants to push Konoha’s buttons, but he does know Kuroo wants that. Probably just for shits and giggles, because Konoha is hot-headed and the easiest one to rile up. After all, there’s a reason Kuroo’s known as master of provocation.

“Yeah, exactly.” Konoha nods. “I have her attention now, so I’ve got nothing to be jealous of.”

Kuroo seems to think he’s found Konoha’s thread and continues to tug, joyous in the unravel.

“Man, are you really that arrogant?”

“Arrogant?” Konoha echoes. “How the fuck am I being arrogant?!”

“Okay, maybe not arrogant, but you just sound so damn self-assured and doubtless.” Kuroo reasons. “You’ve got a lot more to lose now than you did before she started dating you. Say your girl goes out with her basketball buddies, right. Wouldn’t it make you jealous, not even a little bit? I’m sorry, Konoha, man, but, if you love her as much as you say you do, you must feel at least a tiny sliver of jealousy.”

“This guy…” Konoha shakes his head in disbelief. “If you’re asking me if I find other guys intimidating - which, by the way, thanks a lot for not doing earlier, before Yukie joined us, but whatever, I don’t hide shit - then yeah, I have insecurities. I’m not a fuckin’ hammer, man. Of
course I doubt myself at times, but not her, never her. And Yukie actually went out with them a few days ago. So? Are you saying I’m supposed to be jealous that she’s got her own friends?” He asks, eyebrows disappearing into his hairline. “’Cause I’m not. I respect the fact she’s got a life outside our volleyball team.”

“No, no, the jealousy part is where we all know guys thinks with their dicks and wanna fuck.” Kuroo raises his hands innocently.

Kuroo does get a rise out of Konoha. But it’s probably not the one he expected.

“Just because guys wanna have sex with my girlfriend doesn’t mean they automatically get to, does it?”

“No, but-”

“It’s called trust, genius! When you really love someone, there’s no room for jealousy!” Konoha barks. “Maaan, do I feel bad for Bokuto and Akaashi.”

Yukie gently swipes Konoha’s bangs to the side to get his attention. “Nori? Is what Kuroo said true? You tell people you love me?”

Ear tips red and cheeks posy like rose petals, Konoha swallows hard, sucks in a breath. “Yes, it’s true. I would never lie about my feelings for you. I’m madly and stupidly in love with you and I’ve always been. I’ve loved you all along. Guess that throws my expectations of telling you in a more romantic setting than the dining hall out the window. And I’m sure I would’ve done a better job if these 4 weren’t staring at me-”

“Konoha, you’re doing great- Ahhh!” Akaashi silences Bokuto with a kick to the shin.

“-Or interrupting me. But the fact of the matter is I love you, Yukie. I’ve loved you since I’ve known you. I just didn’t wanna freak you out by saying it too soon.” Shaky and nervous, he smiles small at Yukie.

Yukie smiles back, huge. “You didn’t freak me out, silly. Because I love you too.”

“I’m going to kiss you now.”

“You better.”

Konoha makes good of his word and Akaashi has to cover Bokuto and Kuroo’s staring eyes with both hands. He doesn’t have to worry-itch about Sarukui, because he’s already looking down and away.

“Nori, I’m going upstairs to check on your sisters. Give me 20 minutes and I’ll meet you in your room, so I can show you just how much I love you.” Yukie says in this- this voice. Seductively low and husky and that’s it, Konoha already looks like he got his skull bashed in by a fucking sledgehammer.

Somehow, his brain is able to command his muscles to move and makes a beeline to the kitchen. The second Konoha’s out the door, Kuroo’s elbow nudges Bokuto’s chest.

“Bro, a week ago he was a fuckin’ goober and now he’s this Casanova that got your manager? How did that happen?”

“Honestly, bro, I dunno. Beats me.” Bokuto shrugs, then grins. “But you were totally right when you said Yuks was the freak in the bedroom.”
“Uhhh ya, of course I was fuckin’ right. Just look at him! He wears blazers and ascots and shit in his spare time, like who the fuck does that?”

Akaashi snorts. People with an actual fashion sense do. Something neither of them has ever had and never will, which is ironic, at least for Bokuto, considering that his mother is a freakin’ clothes designer.

He’s always admired the way Konoha dresses, pulling off things that would look ridiculous on somebody else, but somehow Konoha makes them work. Bokuto does too, actually. He’s lost track of the many a time Bokuto’d get envious how Konoha would wear two month unwashed jeans and a simple white tee with an ink stain, which Konoha would hide by tying into knot at his hip, nonchalant, casually cool.

Akaashi doesn’t think it has anything to do with Konoha being a model, familiar with the industry. He thinks it’s got everything to do with Konoha being one of those people - a trendsetter. Maybe Konoha’s trendsetting ways are how he got the attention of an agent and became a model in the first place.

Kuroo smirks. “Preppy guys are always vanilla in bed.”

“How I wish that were true.” Sarukui says. “I promise you, Kono’s anything but vanilla. I’m not just saying it, because he’s my best friend and overshares details I never asked for or wanted to know. I live in the same room with him, have for the past two years, and the things I’ve walked in on and hear almost every night” He shakes his head, both pained and disgusted. “Kono would do anything to make sure his girlfriend gets off. Anything.”

This brand new chunk of information makes Kuroo look more excited than Santa Claus on Christmas Eve on Prozac in fucking Disneyland.

“Seriously? This guy?” Kuroo points his thumb at Konoha, who returns with a plate full of fudge squares, marshmallows and strawberries he begins to dip and roll into nutella mini cups, placing them to dry all neat and pristine.

Without even looking up, Konoha swats Kuroo’s hand away. “Why the fuck are you pointing your nasty paws at me, man?”

“Hah! Speaking of nasty…” Bokuto laughs.

That gets Konoha’s attention, eyes studying their faces, eager and curious. “What? Tell me, I wanna know!”

“Ah, the filth awakens. Excellent.” Kuroo presses the tips of his fingers together into a pyramid. “You best bud here was just telling us there’s nothing you wouldn’t do in the bedroom.”

Konoha both shrugs and nods in agreement, which makes Bokuto and Kuroo conspiratorially wink at each other.

Akaashi doesn’t miss it.

“Kono, would you ever consider a threesome?” Kuroo asks.

“I have, before. My ex offered me one with Yukie and her.”

“Oh my God! What did you say?” Bokuto gawps.

“I said no, because I knew it was a fucking trap. Misaki wasn’t actually thinking of going through
Konoha taps his chin, thinking for a moment. “Yeah, I could do that with him.”

“So if Yukie-” Kuroo begins.

“Oh, no, no, you misunderstood me.” Konoha interrupts. “I meant that hypothetically, if I’m not dating anyone and the opportunity arises, I’d be fine sharing a girl with Saru. But I’m not sharing my girl with anyone.”

“So you’d get jealous?” Kuroo smirks.

“About this? Yes, absolutely.”

“What if Yukie offers you a threesome with another girl?” Kuroo presses.

“Man, I don’t give a shit about the gender, I’m telling you I’m not down with sharing her.” Konoha says.

“Maybe Yuks suggests you a threesome, because she’s unsatisfied with your performance and wants someone to fill in after you?” Bokuto snickers.

Konoha seems somewhat aware that Bokuto and Kuroo are trying to fuck with him, which is what prompts him to leer at Bokuto.

“Is that what happened with you and Akaashi? And that’s why Kuroo’s in the picture now? Oh Captain, my Captain, that’s hilarious.”

Bokuto is visibly upset and to Akaashi, that’s not okay.

He gets to make fun of Bokuto and Kuroo as much as he wants, because they’re his boyfriends. Other people are not allowed to do it, that’s unacceptable.

It’s time for the empire to strike back.

“Obviously Konoha-san would never agree to a threesome, because he already knows disappointing Yukie is more than enough. If he wanted to disappoint two people at the same time, he would just have dinner with his mom and dad.”

Bokuto and Kuroo double over, howling and clutching at their ribs. Sarukui’s chuckling too and after Konoha’s mouth overcomes the initial shock of an “o”, starts laughing along.

Akaashi is surprised Konoha would take the joke and laugh at his own expense, but at the same time he isn’t, because Konoha is happy and in love. He feels incredibly pleased with himself, for making all four of his senpais laugh themselves sick, almost puking.

“Angel Eyes went in and took no hostages.” Kuroo claps Akaashi’s back proudly.

“Tatsu was right, you really are savage, Vice Captain.” Konoha grins. “I was the first student you introduced yourself to here at school on your first day. Remember?”

Konoha doesn’t have to say remember. Nervously anxious and desperately seeking to make friends lonely boys don’t ever forget.
Photographic memory plays no part in it.

Konoha Akinori was the very first to put a mark into Akaashi’s brand new life.

“Of course I do, Konoha-san. Not even 5 minutes after we met, you gave me an important piece of advice which I abide by til this very day.”

Konoha’s laughter rings softly at the recollection and they smile at each other, at the tiny little inside funny between them.

“Akaashi, I totally saved your ass and this is what you give me now, saying I’m a fuckin’ disappointment to the love of my life and my parents? Man, you used to be so polite, just what the fuck happened to you?” Konoha asks. Nothing malicious, just happy.

“Life at Fukurodani Academy happened to me.”

“Jokes aside,” Bokuto says. “Konoha, aren’t you kinda worried that you smoked and drank a lotta beers? Because like as much as I also wanna play, I don’t think right now I’d be up to using my jing jang and the mahjong.”

“Nah. I mean I do feel buzzed, but I’ve got a treasure box of ways to make a pussy weep and they don’t all involve my Johnson, so I’m not worried.”

Akaashi pulls a face he wasn’t even aware his muscles were capable of pulling.

“Just look at these.” Konoha wiggles his fingers. “That’s 10 dicks right here.”

Despite not liking the conversation they’re having, he finds himself incapable of keeping his mouth shut.

“Konoha-san, I’m sorry, but fingers are not dicks. It’s just not the same.”

“They might as well be, the way I use ‘em.”

Kuroo claps his hands, utterly awed. “Dude, you already became my hero, but now I’ve got all the respect points for you.”

“That coming from you means a lot. Thanks, man.” Konoha smirks, fist bumping Kuroo, before picking up his plate and rising from his chair. “As much fun as it is talking to you guys, I’m going upstairs to ask my girl to sit on my face, so I can spell out the alphabet with my tongue. See you bitches in a few.”

“Konoha-san, don’t be late for practice!” He yells after Konoha, who’s already out the door.

“Keiji, relax, he’s with Yuks.” Bokuto reassures.

Yeah, he supposes that’s true. While Konoha, alongside Sarukui, is always late for shit, Yukie never is, so she’s definitely gonna drag his ass on time.

As all four of them take their trays back into the kitchen, Bokuto asks. “Monkey, wanna come up with us?”

“No thanks, Bokuto. If I wanted to catch a live sex show, I’d just go to my room.” Sarukui replies, voice dim. Slightly bitter too, if you can catch the tone.

Bokuto does not.
“Hey! I was just inviting you to chill, since your room is occupied.”

“Oh. Well, thanks, but I’d rather go to the gym and work on my jump serves.”

“That’s a brilliant idea!” Bokuto hooks his arm over Sarukui’s unexpecting slumped shoulders, glancing back at Akaashi and Kuroo. “You guys comin’ too or?”

“I know I am, bro.”

He thinks about it for a few seconds. He kinda wanted to take a quick nap, but those never really work for him - he ends up either sleeping for half a century or wakes up more tired and cranky. Besides, he’s past the sleepy stage, so he might as well just go.

What is even sleep when you’re caffeinated up with 5 cups of Joe?

“Me too, Bokuto-san.”

“Hey hey heyyyy!”

Sarukui doesn’t just get to work on his jump serves, but everything else as well, because Bokuto demands they play a game, two on two. There is no gasps of surprise, no shock factor, when he slides up next to Akaashi, message crystal clear.

Kuroo makes no objections, because he enjoys playing on the opposite side of the net from Bokuto, helps him grow as Middle Blocker and all-around player.

Sarukui doesn’t either, because he simply doesn’t care.

The four of them have all worked up a heavy sweat by the time the entire volleyball team is assembled, done with warm up laps and stretching. The only one that doesn’t join is the dean, but nobody expects him to on weekends. He’s not needed anyway - Yukie and her whistle have always run a tight ship with the squad. A lot tighter than he does, actually.

In all honesty, Akaashi isn’t all that excited when Konoha and him end up on the same team, because Konoha looks like he’s fucked the last of his brains out. Akaashi assumes he would be totally out of it, since he keeps grinning like an idiot.

He is a little iffy at first, tossing to Konoha, but he’s wrong. Konoha takes all of his unnecessary worries and squashes them down by playing like a goddamn pro.

They switch courts and he pats Konoha’s lower back, complimenting him for the beautiful game. Bokuto is about 50 times more vocal with the praise, giving Konoha noogies after every scored point, whooping how the fox is fucking untouchable.

Akaashi chuckles softly, because both of his boyfriends are so impressed by Konoha, for different reasons, admittedly, but equally loud and gushy. It’s fun to watch, especially since Konoha doesn’t quite know what to do with his newfound glory. He adjusts very quickly, though. After all, being acknowledged by his Captain and peers, people he admires, is what he’s always wanted.

When Bokuto and Yukie leave for brunch with Bokuto’s parents, Konoha, Sarukui, Kuroo and Akaashi decide to wrap up their burgers and have lunch on the school benches out the back. The weather is too nice to stay cooped up in the dining area, but not nice enough to get their lazy asses off school grounds.

“Kono, I thought you were having lunch with your family?”
“Yeah, Saru, that’s exactly what I’m doing. You’re my family.”

...It’s probably Konoha saying shit like that, that made Sarukui fall for him in the first place. You listen to that kind of sweet talk for years, you can’t **not** think there’s something there.

Goddamn it, Konoha. Could you be **any** more blind?

“Uh, yeah, of course. Of course.” Sarukui nods, shaking both feet against the ground, shaking the rest of them too, fidgety and nervous, from the weight of Konoha’s love for him. “But I meant your parents, Kiko and Kira.”

“Nah, since Yukie wasn’t gonna come, I decided not to go. I got my shithead sisters in a cab and sent them on their merry fuckin’ way, telling them to pass on to mom and dad I had a fuckton of revising to do. Which I actually **do** have, but I ain’t doin’ any school shit until Study Hall. What I need to do is catch up on fuckin’ sleep, since Yuks is coming down to our room after Lights Out. Saru, I suggest you do the same.”

Kuroo balls up his napkin and free-throws it into the trashcan. “You know what’s a good birthday gift other than matching tats? Earplugs.”

Sarukui looks like he can’t feel his cheeks from forcing smiled sunshines all day.

“Konoha-san’s revision talk reminds me I have a very important math problem that I need to solve.” He admits.

“Vice Captain, don’t look at Saru and I, we come to you for math. And you take AP Calc, man, there’s just no fuckin’ way we can help.”

“Kuroo-san, I’m sure you could help me.”

“I’m not so sure, Angel Eyes, I’m more of a Chemistry whiz. But I suppose I could give it a whirl.”

- 

“Jesus fuck, Angel Eyes, I can’t believe I thought you meant actual math.” Kuroo groans, sprawled out into Akaashi’s bed, with Akaashi straddling his hips.

“Oh, but I **am** doing math, Kuroo-san.” He says, flashing Kuroo his screwing smile.

For a long time, Kuroo used to hate his freckles, getting teased in elementary school, all the chicken pox taunts. When you’re young and insecure, everything has the potential of hurt, so it took a while to accept them.

Kuroo sends a silent thank you out into the universe for little big miracles like Akaashi, who begins solving his math problem, soft, counting Kuroo’s freckles like a galaxy and Kuroo sees full color stars.

“They’re lovely everywhere, Kuroo-san. Like this one here.” He kisses the sharp line on Kuroo’s nose.

“And these here.” He touches his lips against Kuroo’s cheeks, one for each, kiss kiss, bang bang.
“Here.” The tiny one sitting prettily in the center of Kuroo’s plump lower lip and Akaashi spends a particularly long time on it, lingering.

“That one there.” Crawling below Kuroo’s neck, right on the collarbone.

Kuroo is beautified with them all over - eyelids, cheeks, belly, back. Of course he has them down in his secret spot.

Akaashi hooks his fingers on the top of Kuroo’s boxers, but doesn’t tug them off completely, just past the thighs, that’s enough to reveal what he’s looking for.

He runs his slender fingers over Kuroo’s dick, making it blurt out a drip. It makes Kuroo hum and arch his hips, off and onto the mattress, ready to be plucked, honey-sweet.

He continues to roll call each freck there, but it’s not necessary, because Kuroo forgets to listen for it anyway.

Admittedly, Akaashi doesn’t usually study all things he finds fascinating with a dick in his hand and between his lips, so Kuroo doesn’t exactly feel like a math project, not really. But even if he did, he wouldn’t mind one bit, Akaashi can conduct as many experiments on him, on his body, as he fuckin’ wants to.

Kuroo’s fingers find a home on each side of Akaashi’s head, big palms covering his ears, catching on ends of messy curls.

Boxers in the way, Kuroo doesn’t know how to properly open his legs, but that makes it all the more fun for Akaashi, watching him squirm and trash.

Akaashi is slurping and sucking and Kuroo is dying. It feels like Akaashi’s tugging his heart right out through his dick. Best fuckin’ death ever, no competition.

Kuroo’s feet go scrabbling at the bed, toes spreading out in alarm. Cross-eyed, he gets out a sobby, ragged “Angel Eyes- I can’t- It’s coming.” and since Akaashi make no effort to move, doesn’t want to, Kuroo lets go.

Akaashi feels warm jets of liquid fountaining past his teeth and tongue, down his burning throat. He accepts everything Kuroo gives him, swallowing every last drop, not wasting any.

“This is why I only had the burger for lunch. I was saving room for dessert.” He smirks.

“Fuck me, Angel Eyes, that was incredible.” Kuroo smiles back, lazily.

“You wanna?”

Kuroo laughs. “Wow, don’t overestimate me like that, Angel Eyes. The human body doesn’t work like that. Well. The female one does, but last time I checked I didn’t have one.”

“Yeah, I checked too. You really don’t.” He laughs too.

“I know. That’s yet another reason why women are superior to us. Fucking multiple orgasms.”

He pretends to be annoyed. “Tch. Those bitches.”

Kuroo laughs again, before moving his hand back and forth at Akaashi.

“Angel Eyes, come cuddle with me or some shit.”
The noise that comes out of him is both a snort and a chuckle. Kuroo, always with the *or some shit*, whenever he says something trying to be cute. Romance is totally Kuroo’s second name.

Or some shit.

Akaashi rests his head in the crook of Kuroo’s arm, fingers tracing little nothings on Kuroo’s chest and stomach. His abs are quite prominent, Kuroo must’ve been working out more, after being discharged from the hospital.

It’s nice.

No, it’s not just nice, it’s very nice.

He’s a weak, weak thing when it comes to abs. He’s always admired Bokuto’s. Kuroo’s now, too.

“Kuroo-san?”

“Hmm?”

“What’s shower sex like?”

Kuroo presses a kiss against his temple. “Angel Eyes, give me a few more minutes and I’ll show you.”

“I was hoping you would say that.”

-

Half an hour later, Akaashi regrets his words, dearly.

Not just because the showers in Fukurodani’s rooms are intended for one person and one person alone.

Crammed up space by long limbs aside, there’s also the part where everything is too slippery, too dangerous and quite frankly way too fucking tricky.

Shower sex should come with a warning of “Do not try this at home.” like WWE and Jackass.

Why it is glorified as much as it is, made into this bigshit thing, Akaashi will never know.

He tries to look on the bright side of things, that he can tick it off his *been there, done that* list, but it’s kind of hard to be positive when it wasn’t the deliciously sweet-ache he expected, just pain. Lots of it. Like house-of-fuckin’-pain pain.

Towels wrapped at their hips, Akaashi steps out of the bathroom, zig-zagging, Kuroo following right behind, limping just as bad.

They stand in the middle of the room, staring at each other wordlessly.

Eventually Akaashi breaks the silence, says “Oh my god.”

“Oh my god... good?” Kuroo blinks in disbelief.
“No, oh my god I can’t believe that was so bad.” He shakes his head. “On a scale of 1 to 10 of worst things we’ve ever done, I’d rate this a 12.”

“No, oh my god I can’t believe that was so bad.” He shakes his head. “On a scale of 1 to 10 of worst things we’ve ever done, I’d rate this a 12.”

“Really, Angel Eyes?” Kuroo crosses his arms.

“You wouldn’t!”

“Oh, I’d rate it a 15.”

Akaashi nods slowly, agreeing. 12 isn’t high enough, 15 is more like it.

Then he licks his lips and asks. “Kuroo-san, you’ve done it before, right, shower sex?”

“Yeah, many times.”

“So if you knew… Why, Kuroo-san, why did you feel the need to show me? I asked you what it’d be like, why didn’t you just tell me?”

“Angel Eyes, I’ve only done it with chicks before. Y’know, girls that are all petite and tiny, so short that they could blow me standing. I wanted to show you, because I thought it’d be just as epic.” Kuroo sighs. “The only epic this was, was epic fuckin’ fail.”

“Yeah. You can say that again.”

“Epic fuckin’ fail.”

Despite the caught on sarcasm, Kuroo repeats his sentence, an admission of just how fuckin’ terrible the whole thing was, for the both, and it makes them laugh, roaring and vivacious, laughter full of lungs and bellies and just- it’s hilarious.

Still chuckling, big smiles all around, they each pull a chair away from the desk and sit down, allowing their bodies to dry.

“Kuroo-san, I think I need new kneecaps. I’m pretty sure mine got busted being pressed against the wall.”

“I feel you, Angel Eyes, I’m certain I could do with a hip replacement.” Kuroo says. “There’s no way I’m doing that again. Sex and water, not a good combo. Unless we go to the seaside and do it on the beach where there are no walls.”

He scrunches his face. “There’s sand, though, which scrapes against the skin. Getting sand in your holes doesn’t sound too sexy to me.”

“Mmmyeah, it really doesn’t.” Kuroo scratches the side of his neck. “I suppose doin’ it in Bokuto’s jacuzzi would be nice. There’s no need to stand and there’s no sand.”

“Speaking of Bokuto-san,” He says. “You two sure took your time making those sandwiches.”

“So you noticed, huh. Typical of Detective Angel Eyes.” Kuroo smirks.

“Oh, come on, Kuroo-san, the bread wasn’t even toasted.” He snorts. “And it wasn’t just me, Konoha-san and Sarukui-san noticed too. The difference is that they didn’t care to know, but I do. Did something happened between Bokuto-san and you?”

Kuroo’s smirk spreads, except it’s not so much a smirk now, but a big happy smile.

“We kissed.”
Akaashi arches an eyebrow, making Kuroo laugh.

“Alright, fine, Angel Eyes, we had a full-blown makeout session. Happy now?”

“Very much so.” He grins. “So does that mean you two are…?” He presses his forefinger and middlefinger together.

“I don’t know. I mean I think so, but I- I honestly don’t know.” Kuroo shrugs. “It’s not like we talked about it.”

“Since you didn’t talk, am I to assume neither of you took any pictures?” He presses.

Kuroo nods.

“...Unbelievable. Bokuto-san snapchats me butterflies and ladybugs, and you snapchat me stepping into cow shit—”

“It was actually horse shit.”

“No, Kuroo-san, this is horse shit!” He scowls. “You keep flooding my feed with this nonsense crap, and the one thing I’ve been dying to see, you don’t document, even for 3 seconds.”

“Would seein’ Bo and I kiss turn you on?” Kuroo asks, expression gleeful.

“Congratulations, Kuroo-san. You win the award for dumbest question ever asked.” He slow claps. “I hope you know Bokuto-san and you have a lot of making up to do to me.”

“Oh, c’mon, Angel Eyes, you know if it depended on me, Bo and I would be doing a whole lot more than just makin’ out. But it doesn’t depend on me now, does it?” Kuroo takes a deep breath and pats Akaashi’s knee gently, leaving his hand to rest there. “Have a little patience with him, okay? You know what he’s like. If I could be patient for an entire year and then some, you could be too, for a little while longer. Yeah?”

“Yes. Yes, of course, Kuroo-san, you’re absolutely right.”

The last thing Akaashi wants to do is make Bokuto uncomfortable, by forcing him into doing something he’s not ready for. Kuroo feels the same.

They’d be no different than Bokuto’s parents if they did that.

No. Real, loving boyfriends don’t pull that kind of shit on each other. Never.

“You know what, Angel Eyes? It makes me kinda sad than in a few hours I’d have to leave you guys and go home.”

Akaashi feels that, he feels it too.

“So don’t go, Kuroo-san.” He blurts out. “Stay here and we’ll set an alarm for you extra early. I tend to sleep through my alarms, but I’ll ask Bokuto-san to wake me up too. Then you can go back to your house and do your homework before school.”

Kuroo cups Akaashi’s cheek fondly and he twists his face to press a kiss into Kuroo’s palm.

“Believe me, Angel Eyes, I really wish I could. But I have midterms coming up too and I really need to prepare for them, otherwise I’d end up fucked and I don’t mean in the good way. Like—”
“Shower sex?”
“-shower sex.”

They smile at each other.

It’s probably not great minds thinking alike, but two idiots having the same thought.

Idiots in love, that is.

“Don’t worry, Angel Eyes, we’ll get plenty of us time during the holidays. I mean I know Bo’s gonna be crazy busy with volleyball, but at least he’s not going to Europe. All three of us will be right here.”

Murphy’s Law exists for a reason, it’s totally a thing. It’s statement goes like this: Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

This isn’t quite like that, not really. It’s not. Because nothing goes wrong, just different than expected.

Kuroo stays until their Study Hall, but before that, when Bokuto and Yukie return in time for dinner, joining Akaashi, Kuroo, Konoha and Sarukui at the volleyball table, with both Bokuto and Yukie waxing poetic how Bokuto’s mom fell in love with Konoha’s portfolio, just loved it, loved it so much, and Konoha beaming like he’s made of gold, Akaashi doesn’t get to tuck in his lasagna, as much as he wants to, because his phone starts going off. Recognizing the ringtone as his parents, he puts his fork down and dashes to the boys’ bathroom for some peace and quiet, leaving the loud voices and cutlery clanking against plates behind.

“Hey, Dad.”

“Keiji! I hope I didn’t interrupt your study hour.”

“It’s called Study Hall, Dad, and if you did, I wouldn’t be able to answer, because we get our phones and laptops taken and- It’s not of import. What’s up?”

“Thing is, Keiji, your mother and I won’t be able to make it back to Tokyo for your Easter holidays.”

“Oh.”

“I know, son, all three of us were looking forward to family time together, but alas.”

“Dad, is everything alright with you and Mom?”

“Yes, absolutely. I didn’t mean to worry you, Keiji, we’re doing great. In fact, we’re doing terrific.” His father chuckles. “Your brilliant mother was able to get me a meeting with a publishing agent I’ve wanted for years and now that I’ve pitched in the idea of my new book, she’s all kinds of interested. Which is why during this time it would be impossible for us to leave Sendai and return home. But I’m going to send an email to your school and tell them we’d be there, so you don’t have to worry about being stuck in that boarding house, you’ll be free to do as you like with your friends.” He overhears his mom clearing her throat over the line. “Keiji, your mother and I know how responsible you are and we trust you completely in making the right choice, when being on your own, without any supervision.”

Akaashi isn’t thinking about wrecking the good ol’ house he grew up in by hosting wild parties in the least. His mind is already scheming completely different things.
“So for the next month you and Mom would be in Miyagi?”

“Probably more than just the next month. But, Keiji, as soon as the negotiations are done, we’ll come back to Tokyo.”

“I see.” He smiles against the receiver. “Thanks for letting me know, Dad.”

“Son, are you going to be okay, being by yourself? I could call your-”

“No, Dad, there’s no need for you to call grandma. Please don’t worry about me, I’ll be fine. I promise to call you and mom every day to check in.”

His dad gives a proud little chuckle. “That’s my boy.”

“Oh! Dad, wait! Before I forget - I have this close friend, who really wants to be an author, just like you. I know you’re really busy, but would it be alright if I send you the things he’s written so far, so you can give him a professional opinion? I don’t mean right now, but when your schedule clears up and you have some time on your hands.”

“Keiji, email me your friend’s work straightaway. I could always make time for helping mold Japan’s youth.”

“Sure thing, Dad, I’ll email you before tomorrow. Thanks a whole bunch, you’re the best Dad ever. Tell Mom I love her. Love you too, Dad.”

“Keiji, we both love you and miss you too. Good luck on your exams.”

The second his father hangs up, Akaashi starts punching buttons on his phone screen, unable to shake off his excitement.

“Akaashi!” Iwaizumi’s familiar voice reaches his ears. “What a pleasant surprise!”

“Hi, Iwaizumi-san, how are you doing?”

“I’m great, thanks for asking. Yourself?”

“Likewise.”

“I was just thinking about you, Akaashi.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. But I guess that’s not such a big deal, since I think about you a lot.” Iwaizumi chuckles faintly. “Anyway. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Right.” He licks his lips. “Iwaizumi-san, remember how we talked about me visiting and staying with you for a weekend during Easter break?”

“Of course. I was actually thinking that, uh, the time has come and I’m ready. I mean, when you come here. I… I would really like to go see him, but I don’t think I could do it without you. Akaashi, I’m gonna need you by my side.”

He swallows hard, suppressing down the emotions from Iwaizumi’s words.

Akaashi is internally wowing, stumped, completely overwhelmed. It’s just- he never knew Iwaizumi thought so highly of him. He doesn’t just want him there, he needs him there, to visit
Oikawa’s grave.

He takes a couple of deep breaths to calm himself down, before speaking.

“Iwaizumi-san, I just spoke with my dad and there’s been a slight change in our plan.”

“Oh.” Iwaizumi says softly. “I see. You won’t be able to come up for a weekend, because you’re gonna be with your family.”

“No, Iwaizumi-san, I’m-”

“Akaashi, it’s fine, I get it, okay? I know I’m not a boarding student like you, but I’m aware that family comes first and I understand. There’s no need for you to apologize. It’s all good, Akaashi, we’re gonna see each other during your Jamboree.”

“Iwaizumi-san! Listen to me!” He raises his voice. “Please.” He adds, using his usual tone. “You misunderstood me. What I was trying to tell you is that my parents are gonna be in Sendai for my entire Easter break. And they have no idea that I plan on coming up there.”

“What?” Iwaizumi sniffles and Akaashi can actually picture him swiping his long sleeves against his runny nose.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’d really like to surprise my mom and dad by showing up there, but I’m going to need your help for that.”

Iwaizumi uses something to blow his nose - Akaashi can only hope it’s a tissue and not what he’s wearing - and clears his throat.

“Akaashi, is this real? Are you seriously telling me that you won’t be here just for a weekend, but your entire break?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san, that’s exactly I’ve been trying to tell you!”

*Finally,* they’re on the same page.

“Oh my god.” Iwaizumi sniffs again, only this time it’s due to happiness. “Akaashi, I get to have you for 12 whole days. That’s almost 2 weeks!”

“Good job, Iwaizumi-san. I hope you have an A+ in math. You deserve it.” He says and laughs.

“Akaashi, you have no idea- I don’t even remember the last time I felt *this* happy!” Iwaizumi laughs along. “I’m so excited to see you and spend time with you!”

“Me too, Iwaizumi-san. Me too.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

So here I go, once again, projecting my shippy ways and my bullshit onto you all lol (｀▽´)/ 34 chapters in, at this point, I really don't think I should be held accountable for y'all keeping up with my nonsense. But I'm still eternally grateful you continue being troopers and reading~ ♥

The easiest way to tell exam time is upon them is how extra nice and friendly his classmates become towards Akaashi. People who’ve barely spoken words to him start fighting over treating him coffee and offering extra tickets to concerts and the sort, please, Akaashi, on me, he doesn’t have to move a finger and doors are being held for him, chairs pulled. Everyone wants to be in his good graces, in hopes of getting his notes and study guides, tips on writing better structured essays and mnemonic devices.

He knows it’s only temporary, of course, their fake as Hell politeness, and once exams are over, they’ll fall back to not even greeting him good morning, but he doesn’t mind at all. Why would he, when he’s already got more than enough true friends and besides, who doesn’t like getting free shit?

The only people that walk the Fukurodani hallways that aren’t nice to him, are his real friends, the volleyball squad. But admittedly, they have their own attitude adjustments. It’s fear. They are conditioned to fear him every time they see him, aware that his arrival means quizzing time.

“Uh oh, here comes Mr Dictator.” Washio subtly coughs into his fist as Akaashi carries his tray over.

Konoha, the absolute antonym of subtlety, doesn’t bother covering anything up, never did. “Look down, look down. Don’t look him in the eye.”

“Kono, for once I know the musical you’re singing about.” Sarukui laughs. “Les Mis.”

“Yeah, it’s exactly what we are, Saru. Les Miserable fucks, that is.”

It’s funny, but a hungry Akaashi equals a cranky Akaashi, everyone at the table is painfully aware that’s the simplest math equation in the world, easier than 2+2.

He doesn’t stress out when it comes to his own achievements during exams, but with his tightly packed schedule of tutoring and aiding students in whatever ways that he can, he is feeling the pent up and burdening stress, has little to no time for jokes. He wishes he did, because laughter is the #1 way to destress.
Bokuto’s always had mad good intuition, or simply knowledge, when it comes to Akaashi, so he decides to cheer him up by displaying that Akaashi’s efforts during Study Hall aren’t fruitless.

“Keiji’s omnipotent.”

Mouth stuffed with an enormous piece of chicken picatta, he is unable to speak, but smiles his appreciation at Bokuto.

“Eh?” Yukie blinks and then grins. “Bokuto, that’s a really big and fancy English word, well done!”

“And we all know what it means!” Komi shakes his head in disbelief. “Jesus, Bokuto, he’s your boyfriend, you shouldn’t just reveal stuff like that, it’s private!”

“Huh?” Bokuto scratches his forehead.

“Omnipotent, Komi-san.” He sighs. “Not impotent.”

“Oh.” Komi pulls a face. “I don’t know what that is.”

“Bokuto-san, why don’t you explain to Komi-san, and everyone else, what it means?”

Bokuto is inexplicably happy to get everyone’s attention, especially because it’s for something smart.

“Omnipotent is to have great power and influence. Or unlimited power, when it comes to a deity.”

“Mr Burns would be so proud of you, Bokuto-san.” He smiles. “As am I.”

“Tch.” Konoha rolls his eyes. “Vice Captain, you actually drilled it into him straight outta the textbook, didn’t you? Akaashi, can’t we enjoy lunch without you being such a perfectionist for every single tiny little thing? I mean, that must be tiring as fuck, right?”

“Nori, he can’t help being who he is anymore than you can help yourself being-”

“Dick.” Washio finishes for Yukie.

“Bokuto-san, I’m not a perfectionist.” He replies, making everyone at the table laugh, even though he wasn’t making a joke.

“Akaashi, that’s like saying the ocean and the sky aren’t blue.” Washio says.

“Well, they aren’t. Washio-san, they only appear to be, because red, orange and yellow are absorbed.” He begins and cuts himself short, since everyone laughs further, gleeful stares right back at him. “I’m not a perfectionist.”

“Ch’yeah, okay, sure.” Konoha smirks. “I bet you’ve never received a grade lower than A- in your entire life.”

“You’re right, Konoha-san, I haven’t.” He replies. “I just don’t see what’s the point of doing something, if you’re not going to give it your all. Why would you bother half-assing stuff and then having to repeat it, instead of giving it your best shot in the first place?”

“I read this article that said a perfectionist would never refer to themself as one, because they are completely unaware how it’s ingrained in them. I thought it’s bull, but—” Sarukui finger guns at him, smiling. “Case in point.”
It takes Akaashi a few milliseconds to determine his options. One - he refutes Sarukui by calling himself a perfectionist, but then everyone would be all ha-ha, so you admit that you are. Two - he drops the topic and finishes his food in silence.

He goes for the latter, as it’s less troublesome.

Konoha, though, is not so willing to just let it go. He’s in a mood to tease and since he rarely ever gets a chance to do it with Akaashi, he takes his blessings where he can.

“What’s the matter, Vice Captain? Why suddenly so quiet?”

“The ability to speak does not make you intelligent.” He replies, while Bokuto hoots a “Way to go, Keiji, you’re a Jedi!” Then he adds a biting “Something you, Konoha-san, are unaware of, but please take note.”

Everyone jeers, while Konoha sputters, annoyed that his teasing ways completely backfired.

“I know I’m repeating myself, but damn is Akaashi savage.” Washio says.

“Totally nailed Konoha.” Komi snickers.

Yukie cackles right along, and it’s Sarukui that’s torn, since he doesn’t want to betray his best friend by laughing, even if it’s all in good humor.

In the end, Sarukui purses his amused lips and says “Spoken like a true Ravenclaw that knows how to have the final word. This is exactly why knowledge is power.”

Konoha smirks. “Aaaand now, ladies and gents, Saru showed us all Pottermore makes no mistakes in sorting people into the right houses, as he’s a true snake.”

Akaashi heads up to his room for Study Hall, but since he has 15 more minutes of lunch break to spare, he indulges himself in catching up with the messages left on his phone.

Iwaizumi isn’t the only Miyagi based person aware of his going there for Easter, he also notified Shirabu. Admittedly, he’s real curious to see what Shiratorizawa Academy is like, but the main reason for contacting Shiratorizawa’s fellow setter was because he would like to broaden his friendship horizons with non-owl students that are in the same grade as him. They both love volleyball and will be seeing lots of each other in the next two years of high school, so why not start as soon as possible?

They’d only met each other during Nationals, but he considers himself a pretty good read of character. Not the best, but still pretty good. And the vibe he got from Shirabu was friendly enough, it’s what prompted Akaashi to send a Facebook message in the first place. A one line of a sentence, straight to the point, easy breezy. After all, he didn’t know how Shirabu would react, and he most certainly didn’t mean to impose.

The reply Akaashi got was equally short, a simple “Give me your phone number.”

And so he did and Shirabu wasted no time shooting him back with a wall of text, five phone numbers accompanied with full names: Shirabu Kenjirou, Futakuchi Kenji, Yahaba Shigeru, Ennoshita Chikara and Terushima Yuuji.

Other than Shirabu and Yahaba, he didn’t recognize anyone, they’re just names to him, meaningless. But he still input everyone into his phone’s contact list, certain they would all carry meaning in the near future, possibly after he visits Miyagi or Fukurodani’s Jamboree. Why else
would’ve Shirabu bothered sending them?

That’s how Akaashi found himself added into a WhatsApp group created by Ennoshita Chikara on 23/03/2016 and he also found himself laughing heartily at the subject title. Honestly, how could he not, when it read “Rat Pack 2nd Generation.”

The various welcomes he received reminded Akaashi of that one game Kenma’d been telling him about, Mystic Messenger.

And after sending thank you’s and greetings in returns, he’d asked why Kenma wasn’t added to their group and the replies he got were Terushima’s “No offense, Owl Boy, but who the fuck is Kenma?”, Futakuchi’s “LOL Nekoma sucks.” and Ennoshita scolding both, telling them to play nice, unless they fancy being blocked.

At first, Akaashi, unless being directly addressed with a question, didn’t add anything to their thread, simply read everything that was being written. Less than 24 hours later, he was incapable of not replying to the discussions of music and movie preferences, bonding over all the things they love and all the things they hate, things they agree and will forever disagree on.

Since everyone is at school, catching up with the ongoing conversation takes Akaashi less than a minute.

Futakuchi: Enno, I gotta commend you for coming up with such a perfect name for us, man, everyone loves the Rat Pack. But why 2nd Generation?
Terushima: Dibs on Frank Sinatra!
Yahaba: I call Dean Martin.
Shirabu: You both wish.
Ennoshita: No, I only borrowed the name from Sawamura-san’s Rat Pack, hence the 2nd Generation. I believe Fukurodani’s Bokuto Koutarou came up with it.
Akaashi: That’s correct.
Terushima: Owl Boy, pls explain further.
Akaashi: Bokuto-san is the original founder of the volleyball Rat Pack. He came up with it last year and involved players he assumed would make Captains in the future. And while I love owls, do call me by my name.
Yahaba: No wonder Oikawa-san was a member.
Shirabu: Just FYI, Ushijima-san is too.
Terushima: How come my Captain isn’t?
Yahaba: Bc your team isn’t good enough.
Shirabu: For once I agree with Yahaba.
Ennoshita: You two agreeing on something ought to be a Guinness World Record.
Terushima: LMAO.
Futakuchi: All of you need to catch up to me, since Moniwa-san made me Vice Captain two weeks ago.
Yahaba: Datekou hasn’t qualified for Nationals for 100000 years.
Terushima: same, but OH SNAP.
Ennoshita: Congratulations, Futakuchi. It’s really impressive that you’re only a first year and already made Vice Captain.
Shirabu: No, the impressive one is Akaashi, who made Vice Captain a week into joining Fukurodani, eventho he never played volleyball before. And Akaashi and their manager come up with all their game strategies, since they don’t have a coach.
Akaashi: Thank you, Shirabu.
Terushima: no offense, but how are u 2 even friends lol. shirabu is never nice to ppl.
Ennoshita: What do you mean? He’s always nice to me.
Terushima: that’s bc everyone is nice to u, enno, ur like bambi ;)


Futakuchi: I second the Bambi thing.
Ennoshita: ...thank you, I think?
Akaashi: Shirabu’s nice to me too.
Shirabu: I’m only that way with people that are on my level. Something Yahaba would know nothing about.
Yahaba: I’m not on your level, because I’m way above.
Shirabu: In your dreams.
Futakuchi: You know what they say - keep your friends close, your enemies even closer. That’s the real reason why Shirabu is nice to people.
Ennoshita: Futakuchi, please don’t stir things up on purpose.
Futakuchi: Okay, then let’s get back to the point that Akaashi and I are both impressive for making Vice Captains when we’re only first years.
Akaashi: Not really. Bokuto-san became Fukurodani’s Captain at the end of his first year. And just like Ushijima-san, he is a top five volleyball player in the country. That, to me, is beyond impressive.
Ennoshita: Wow, that’s incredible!
Futakuchi: Akaashi, why you gettin’ your panties in a twist when it comes to your Captain? What is he, your boyfriend??

Saved by the warning bell that rings through the speakers, he turns off his phone’s WiFi. He wouldn’t answer even if it didn’t, as his relationship with Bokuto is on the hush hush. It’s fine, the question will get buried and forgotten, by the flood of everyone saying things.

Wondering how his 15 minutes of freedom he had from lunch break passed in a blur, Akaashi gets his head right back into revision mode.

- 

He’s absolutely wrong, because the next time he checks his phone, their topic of conversation hasn’t shifted, it’s in the exact same vein where he left it off.

Shirabu: Even if he is dating his Captain, what’s it to you?
Futakuchi: I’m just curious.
Terushima: Same tbh.
Ennoshita: Well, as curious as you two might be, Akaashi doesn’t owe you an answer.
Futakuchi: He doesn’t, but I still wanna know.
Yahaba: Akaashi is obviously in a polyamorous relationship.
Shirabu: How would you know that?
Yahaba: Bc I go to the same school as Iwaizumi-san.
Futakuchi: …. And?
Yahaba: Iwaizumi-san talks about Akaashi a lot and I actually listen to my senpais. Unlike some people, Futakuchi.
Shirabu: What was the point of saying some people, when you called him out? Lol u dumb.
Terushima: Omg Akaashi has 2 bfs when ppl don’t even have 1?? I’m rly sad. (;´∀´; ) :\nFutakuchi: Now u made me sad too. Thinking abt ur life always makes me sad lol.
Terushima: At least we’re not the 4ever alone club anymore.
Yahaba: What do u mean?
Terushima: Akaashi is in a relationship, unlike the rest of us.
Futakuchi: I’m single by choice.
Shirabu: Lol.
Yahaba: lol.
Terushima: LMAO.
Ennoshita: Haha, that was a good one.
Futakuchi: I don’t want Shirabu and Enno to fight, since they’re both crushing on me.
Yahaba: I see you’re delusional as ever.
Ennoshita: Futakuchi, nobody is fighting over you.
Shirabu: I’ll CRUSH you next time I see u.
Futakuchi: Lol okay u tiny little peanut minion, good luck with that.
Terushima: Ok, but I gotta question for Shirabu and Yahaba.
Yahaba: ?
Shirabu: Wat.
Terushima: U two have met Akaashi, so pls tell me if he’s hot?
Yahaba: ….
Shirabu: I’m not in the habit of replying to stupid questions, so I’ll pass.
Terushima: He’s the only one here that idk what looks like. Wat if he lowers our hot-o-meter?
Shirabu: Yahaba already does that for us.
Yahaba: Fuck u.
Ennoshita: Terushima, we’re all going to see Akaashi next week and I don’t think you’re giving him a very good impression of yourself by asking such superficial things.
Terushima: Sry, bt I’m worried, bc I don’t like to be seen with ugly ppl lol.
Shirabu: And yet you have no problem hanging out with Yahaba.
Yahaba: Seriously, fuck off, Mr Shittiest Bangs In The Universe.
Futakuchi: This is very entertaining :)
Ennoshita: From everything I’ve heard from Shirabu and Daichi-san, Akaashi is lovely.
Terushima: Thx Bambi, bt my question was if he looks good.
Shirabu: Yes.
Yahaba: Yes.
Futakuchi: Akaashi’s attractive in an obvious kind of way.
Terushima: Lol you made it sound like obvious beauty is the worst, when it’s the best? Bc then u don’t have to work to find someone attractive, since it’s already there right in yr face.
Yahaba: Saying that doesn’t make you sound like a douchebag at all.
Shirabu: Terushima is a fuckboy, bt at least he’s honest abt it.
Ennoshita: The honesty part doesn’t make it okay, though… How do you think Akaashi would feel when he reads all this?
Akaashi: Thank you for worrying, but you don’t have to.
Terushima: OMG!!! Ur here, bt ur lurking XD
Akaashi: No? I just don’t see why I should add anything to a pointless conversation.
Ennoshita: I second this.
Yahaba: Terushima, if you want something from Akaashi, ask him directly.
Terushima: Send a selfie!!!!!!
Terushima: Lol send nudes.
Shirabu: Stop.
Akaashi: I don’t know what some of you look like, but you don’t see me asking for selfies?
Terushima: You want my selfie?
Akaashi: No.

Despite his answer, Terushima sends one and Akaashi finds himself looking at it. He has an undercut, spiky blond hair with a tiny tuft falling over his forehead. Pierced ears and tongue, which is stuck out, adding further amusement to his grinning expression.

Terushima: U don’t have to tell me how handsome I am ;)
Yahaba: Literally nobody is telling you that.
Terushima: I kno I am, tho (੭•͈ᴗ•͈)੭
Shirabu: Ew.
Ennoshita: Can we talk about something else?
Akaashi: Yes, please.
Terushima: BTW!! Futakuchi, how did u know wat Akaashi looks like when u’ve never met?
Ennoshita: I’ve never met him either, but I know what he looks like, because the media is exploding with interviews, articles and photos of Fukurodani’s Captain and Akaashi appears in lots of them.
Futakuchi: I’m not a media whore like our Bambi, but I watched Nationals on TV, so.
Shirabu: I was too busy participating in the arena to see it televised.
Yahaba: Yeah, u sure did a lot, warming up Shiratorizawa’s bench.
Terushima: OH SNAP.
Shirabu: Yahaba, we won 2 consecutive games, and I helped. Something Aoba Jousai wouldn’t get to experience, since your King isn’t among you anymore and he was your only shot at making it there.
Futakuchi: Ouch.
Ennoshita: If you can’t say something nice, don’t say nothing at all.
Terushima: LOL BAMBI.
Akaashi: Technically it’s Thumper, but I agree. Not only was that really unnecessary, it was also shitty and completely untrue. Seijouh is a very strong team, which stepped down from participating out of respect for Oikawa-san. And his memory isn’t something you should make off-remarks or joke about, Shirabu.
Yahaba: Thank you, Akaashi.
Shirabu: I'm sorry, I wasn’t aware.
Ennoshita: Which is exactly why one shouldn’t speak unless one knows.
Terushima: … Anw! I still don’t kno if Akaashi is mad ugly, bc I didn’t see Nationals lol.
Akaashi: That must be due to the fact Johzenji High sees no point in having a TV, as they would never be on it.
Yahaba: LOL.
Shirabu: 3rd degree burn.
Ennoshita: Oh no.
Futakuchi: Veni, vidi, vici @ Akaashi.

Well, at least they’re no longer discussing his relationships.

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One of Bokuto’s coveted bedtime rituals, which used to be watching movies together, is put on the backburner, replaced by sex.

It becomes a pattern for them, every night, coming up with different ways to get each other off before falling asleep together, Bokuto kissing Akaashi awake, minutes before the morning bell echoes. Akaashi didn’t know he could head downstairs for breakfast with a big smile on his face without having coffee in his system, before.

It’s not just laughter that is a destressor, carnal pleasures could be too, are, Bokuto shows him that the hard way, not figuratively but literally. Akaashi feels himself all kinds of relaxed, as Bokuto fucks away all of the frustrations layered upon him.

Being on top, riding Bokuto, is probably his favourite position. He loves it, absolutely adores it, the way the familiar golden eyes look up at him as he moves, not only starved and hungry, but in complete and utter awe. Other than his mind, Bokuto worships his body, makes him feel powerful, like a God. Another good word to use would be omnipotent.
Always in control, being the one to call the shots, in the driver seat, Akaashi wonders what it would be like to not be. He wants to feel it, he wants to lose control. So he asks for it, gives Bokuto the honors of taking the reigns.

And so tonight is different.

Permission to be as rough as he pleases granted, with a single swipe of hand, Bokuto’s notebooks and textbooks land on the floor and to Akaashi and his dead tidy manner, a mess like that would normally be a complete turn off. But he couldn’t care less, not when Bokuto gets him on his back, right at the edge of his desk, sprawling his legs into a lewd shape, a perfect L like love.

“Oh my god, Bokuto-san!” Is all Akaashi can gasp out and moan, repeatedly, again and again.

Bokuto doesn’t shush him, enjoys every sound that comes out of him, but Akaashi doesn’t want an RC to knock and interrupt for all the noise after lights out, so he tries to lower his loudness by sinking his teeth into Bokuto’s shoulders, his invitingly long and bare nape of neck. That in itself makes Bokuto go all the more wild, harder.

Bokuto displays his incredible stamina obtained from rigorous hours spent in the weightlifting room, as well as on the volleyball court, picking Akaashi up into his arms with the same kind of ease one would pick up a feather, slamming his back against all the hard surfaces in their room, the door, the wardrobes, the cupboards, the walls, holding him, while fucking him sweetly.

For the grand finale, Bokuto gets them back to basics, where they first started, only this time he bends Akaashi over his desk.

It’s perfect, the way his knees tremble and shake, perfect, the way Bokuto runs his loving hands across Akaashi’s spine, following the trail with his lips, fingers squeezing his hips painfully tight.

“Bokuto-san, I don’t think I can again-”

Slick with sweat, Bokuto presses their foreheads together, mutters a “Don’t worry, Keiji, I’ll make sure you do.”, fastening the rhythm of his hand over Akaashi’s dick and recaptures his mouth, sliding his tongue across Akaashi’s lower lip, soft and rough at the same time.

The way Bokuto kisses him is sloppy and messy and beautiful and it’s exactly what spikes Akaashi’s pulse, what pushes him over the edge, unraveling completely. He comes, seeing stars and colors behind tightly shut eyelids, limbs melting into a puddle, bones floating away.

Bokuto’s big when he’s soft, huge when he’s hard, and just- really threateningly thick in that perfect moment right before he blows. Despite the overuse of lube, when Bokuto’s dick swells and starts flexing, born to play and fuck like a goddamn beast, Akaashi is all kinds of aware he will feel the burn tomorrow, maybe even the day after.

Serene and slack, physical hunger satisfied, they lay comfortably in Akaashi’s bed, spooning. Bokuto is stroking Akaashi’s hair, uncharacteristically quiet and when Akaashi looks up, his expression is the way it gets when he’s in deep thought.

He’d give anything, all the gold and riches in the world, not just a penny, to take a trip into Bokuto’s head as he is letting his mind swirl around, wondering what could possibly be keeping Bokuto awake, still, what is currently holding Bokuto’s silently acute interest.

Akaashi’s always been fascinated by Bokuto’s mind, the way it works. While Bokuto tends to blurt out a lot of silly things, he still finds them fascinating, because Bokuto is the amusing kind of goofy. Just like Konoha’d said at the beginning of the year, if you look at Bokuto’s stupidity from
a slightly different angle, it’s kind of genius. And Akaashi completely agrees with the last part, as Bokuto, in his own way, is a genius.

The way he gets all vivacious and animated talking about volleyball, the way you can practically feel his excitement as he bounces off his feet, the way his smile is so infectious that you can’t not return it, the way he has this childlike honesty and curiosity about him, dove-white and pure.

Okay, so he gets mopey and dramatic, but it’s whatever, nobody’s perfect. Despite everyone on the team feeling a little bad for Akaashi having to deal with Bokuto’s Bokutoness, like he’s a handful, he is so much more than his dejected modes. And Akaashi loves that part of Bokuto just as fiercely and equally as all the others, they’re what make him him.

While Akaashi doesn’t enjoy seeing Bokuto sad - that to him is a crime - he loves providing Bokuto with comfort, he loves the fact he is able to do so, to shower him with attention and compliments and kisses, that tender care Bokuto needs in that moment when things are kind of heavy.

Since day one at Fukurodani, Akaashi’s life hasn’t been dull and about 80% of that is accredited to Bokuto and Bokuto alone.

Placing a small, chaste kiss against Bokuto’s tomato red neck, he asks Bokuto to think aloud and the second Bokuto starts talking, Akaashi feels his lips stretching into a smile.

“I had this dream last night where I had these giant foam hands, like the ones they sell at games. You know which ones I’m talking about, right?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san, I know. Please proceed with your story.”

“Well I’m trying to remember more of the dream, but I can’t.” Bokuto sighs. “Ughhhh. It’s times like these I wish I had your memory.”

“Actually, unless I’m having a lucid dream-”

“What’s that?”

“When you’re aware that you’re dreaming.”

“Ohhh.”

“I remember nothing of what my dreams were about. There’s little to no information on that, but from what I’ve read online a lot of people with photographic memories have a harder time recollecting their dreams than people who don’t. I don’t know if that’s legitimate, as it’s not been scientifically proven or anything, but for myself personally, I definitely know it to be true.”

Bokuto nods slowly, before his mind goes elsewhere, just as curious. “Do you think if Yukie went up to Konoha with this giant ass dildo and asked to use it on him, he’d say yes?”

How their conversation shifted from dreams to that, Akaashi would never know.

“I think I would rather not think about it, Bokuto-san.”

“Why not? Don’t you remember what Saru said, about Konoha being open to almost anything to please his girlfriend?”

“I do remember. And while I’m okay talking about sex with our friends, picturing details of their do’s and don’ts in the bedroom makes me feel a little weird.” He replies, running his fingers over
Bokuto’s abs. “But your question makes me wonder why you would think about it?”

“You asked me to share my thoughts and it just popped into my head.” Bokuto laughs. “And since Konoha only likes girls, I don’t think he’d be up for something like that.”

Now it’s Akaashi’s turn to laugh. “Bokuto-san, anal sex doesn’t mean gay sex. It’s not like Konoha-san would be doing it with another guy.”

“Well yeah, but still. I don’t know.” Bokuto exhaled loudly. “Doesn’t it hurt?”

“Yes, at first it does. But it’s, uh- it’s a sweet kind of ache that goes away in less than a minute. And then it’s so good.” He gently taps the tip of Bokuto’s nose, playful. “Are you curious to find out what it feels like?”

“Keiji, is this you offering to fuck me?”

“No really.” He snickers. “I was thinking of Kuroo-san and not me, because I like bottoming as it is. I mean I’d be up for trying it if you want me to, but in all honesty, I don’t think you do.”

“No, you’re right. I don’t. Not with Kuroo, not with you, not with anyone. My ass is exit only. I’m sorry, Keiji, but I don’t want anything going up there. Nuh uh. Nope.”

“Bokuto-san, you don’t have to say sorry for your preference. If you’re happy, Kuroo-san and I are happy. That’s what’s important to us, okay? Please know that.”

“I know, Keiji, of course I know. But I love you so much for saying it. Thank you for saying it.”

Akaashi cranes his neck to kiss him, twice, once for himself and once from Kuroo, before nesting his head comfortably on Bokuto’s chest.

“I love you too.”

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The arrival of the new month brings them plenty of excitement before even 8 am.

Akaashi is sporting a baggy case of butterfly eyes, due to the less than 200 minutes of shut eye. It’s all thanks to Bokuto, the three deliciously mind numbing orgasms he was able to milk out of Akaashi. Akaashi requested them in the first place, to which Bokuto gladly complied, so he doesn’t mind his sleepy state one bit.

Bokuto, as well as the goddamn Rat Pack 2nd Generation that are forever buzzing his phone with messages, which, once again, Akaashi doesn’t mind, enjoys a lot.

“I’m so full.” Yukie says. “Akaashi, Bokuto, do you want the rest of my Oreos?”

“I’d rather not.” He replies. “And Bokuto-san, I really don’t think you should either.”

Bokuto accepts her offering and stuffs an entire cookie into his mouth. A second after he begins chewing, he pulls a face and spits it out into his plate.

“Bokuto-san, Yukie sharing her food in itself alone should’ve told you it’s not edible. And honestly, how could you fall for it, when mere minutes ago Kuroo-san bullshit you over the
phone that he’s going to transfer to Fukurodani next year.” He sighs.

“Ew, Yuks, toothpaste instead of cream, really?” Bokuto groans and wipes his tongue clean into a napkin.

Yukie throws her head back and roars in laughter, clapping her hands. “Hah! Aside from Akaashi, I April fooled every single one of you suckers!”

“Bokuto, don’t feel too bad.” Washio reassures him with a pat. “Komi and I also ate the toothpaste Oreos.”

Komi snickers. “Saru’s prank was the worst.”

“Monkey, what did she do to you?” Bokuto asks.

“She saran wrapped our toilet seat and I went to pee. Barefoot.” Sarukui presses his lips tightly, his internally screaming smile. “That was a lot of fun.”

“Konoha, what about you?” Bokuto demands.

“She told me she was late.” Konoha says.

Bokuto glances at the clock and laughs. “You dumbass fox, how could you fall for that, when we’ve got half an hour until the warning bell?”

“You’re the dumbass, Captain, late as in pregnant.” Konoha replies, before turning to Yukie. “Honey, I know it’s all in good humor, but this is the second time you cry wolf about that. One of these days, when you’re really telling me I’m gonna be a babaydaddy, I’m not going to believe you.”

“Nori, you think about us having a child together?”


Sarukui accepts the information smoothly, without reacting on the outside, and it’s actually Komi that starts blinking rapidly as if green spots go off behind his eyes.

“Water. Water, please.” Komi croaks out and Bokuto slides his glass over, helpful. When Komi drinks all of it, he stares between Konoha and Yukie. “You’re already talking about having kids? This is crazy scary, you guys, we are kids.”

“Yeah, it is crazy scary, but the good kind, y’know?” Kohona smiles.

Komi shakes his head. “I don’t.”

“I like kids.” Yukie says. “But I’d prefer to have them once I’ve finished studying and got a job with a steady income.”

“Well, of course, honey, me too, but sometimes things like that happen unplanned. Condoms only work 97% of the time.” Konoha reasons.

“Yuks, at least you don’t have to worry about a shitty and irresponsible boyfriend that ditches you after he gets a bun in your oven.” Sarukui tries to make it come off light and jokey, but to Akaashi’s ears it sounds heavy and pained. Maybe it’s just him, though, knowing what he knows. “Oops, sorry - twin buns.”

She pats her belly and chuckles. “No hot cross buns in this oven just yet, thank you very much.”
“Aww, I love babies!” Bokuto exclaims. “With their tiny little toes and tiny little fingers - they’re just so cute.”

Konoha laughs. “You love them, because you’re one of them.”

“The biggest one, in fact.” Washio adds.

Bokuto ignores the jabs, but still pouts. “It’s too bad Keiji can’t have my babies.”

“Biologically speaking, no, I can’t.” He says. “But technically, I do, Bokuto-san, I have your babies when they slide down my throat.”

Bokuto, Yukie and Komi laugh, Konoha makes a choking noise and shudders, Washio shakes his head.

Sarukui sighs. “I just wish we could have a meal when we wouldn’t be discussing pubic hair, feces or any DNA matter. Just this once.” Another sigh. “Kono, how did that song go, I dreamed a dream?”

“Yes, totally. But don’t worry about a thing, Saru, I have the perfect distraction from that now that everyone’s here. I’ve actually been waiting for this moment since last night.” Konoha smirks. “Well, no, before that, but-”

Komi rolls his eyes. “Man, just tell us what it is already!”

“I’d rather show you.” Konoha pulls his backpack into his lap and unzips it open. Aware that he’s got everyone’s full attention, eager and curious, he still takes his time to tuck a strand of hair behind Yukie’s ear and cup her cheek. “Honey, I love how you look so excited, even though you already know what it is.”

“Of course I’m excited, Nori, this is huge! And I’m really proud of you.”

“Kono, do I know?” Sarukui asks.

“Nah, you don’t. Only she does.”

Had Konoha punched Sarukui straight in the gut, it probably would’ve hurt a lot less than to have him hear that best friends and girlfriends no longer share equal secrets privileges. This is way more of a heavy blow.

Konoha places a glossy thick magazine right smack in the middle of the table, for all of them to see.

Akaashi’s entire knowledge of fashion mags pertain to no more than his mom’s ones, stacked up in their bathroom at home, and he would leaf through them only because he forgot his phone. But he still recognizes the fancy title from that time Bokuto and him visited Mrs Bokuto’s atelier.

Everyone starts oohing and ahhhing at the Konoha staring back at them from the cover. Admittedly, he looks slightly different than the one they know in real life, as he’s been retouched and polished up with Photoshop, but still completely recognizable.

Konoha must’ve gotten a spray tan, because his skin tone has been transformed caramel and he’s sporting mirrored sunglasses, turtleneck a lurid shade of peach that shouldn’t look good, but God it does, the pastel colors blending with his hair, perfect. The sleeves of it are so long, that he’s buried his fingers in them, giving him a vulnerable look. Akaashi wonders if that’d been Konoha’s
own thing or the photographer’s request.

He vividly remembers the feeling of being under the heavy lights and endless demands how to stand and pose and smile and blink. After that photoshoot he took part in, his muscles ached more than when he first joined the volleyball team, which is how he got a newfound respect for models.

Konoha has an entire spread to himself, wearing different trench coats with sweaters and high collared shirts beneath, but the one that stands out the most is a white tux with a black bowtie and a little red colored flower thing pinned to his chest.

Konoha looks incredible.

“Kono, you… you sure clean up nice, man.” Sarukui, somehow, finds the strength to tear his eyes away from the Konoha from the pages and directly into the real deal. “You look like James Bond.”

“Uh, guys?” Yukie begins tentatively. “Is it just me keeping my eyes on the prize or can you actually see Nori’s double oh’s as well as his seven?”

“No, it’s not just you.” Washio says. “I’m glad I wasn’t the one to bring it up, though.”

“What?” Konoha scowls, then gasps. “Oh my God, I can literally see my dick! What the fuck?!?”

“With that gun in your pants, you sure got licence to kill.” Komi snickers. “This is a good thing, man, just think how popular you’ll be with all the ladies.” Yukie raises her eyebrows at him and he clears his throat. “Or not.”

“Konoha-san, as a model, you ought to know provocative always sells.” He says. “It’s an excellent marketing strategy.”

“Yeah, that’s great, Akaashi, thanks, but my concern is my entire family seeing a whole lot more of me than needed.”

“Aw, maaaan, I can’t believe this!” Bokuto groans.

“What’s wrong, Bokuto?” Yukie asks.

“Konoha’s the featured model of April, Yuks. There’s even an article about him being a Fukurodani Wing Spiker and stuff. And my mom owns this whole thing!”

Sarukui suppresses a smile. “In any case, we should put some peanut butter on Bokuto, because he’s jelly.”

“No, Sarukui-san, you’re wrong.” He replies. “Bokuto-san really hates it when his volleyball is associated with his parents.”

“So if it’s not a jealousy thing, what is it?” Washio asks.

He shrugs. “I don’t know, Washio-san. Maybe you should ask Bokuto-san and not me.”

“Bokuto?”

“I’m upset, because I didn’t know about this.”

“Bokuto, aside from Konoha and Yukie, none of us knew.” Washio replies.

“Okay, Tatsu, yeah, but I meant stuff in general.” Bokuto gesticulates. “It’s just so typical. I’m
always the last one to know everything.”

“You’re not.” Komi squeezes Bokuto’s shoulder, smiling. “We tell you stuff.”

“Nuh huh. I was the last one to know when Yuks and Konoha hooked up for the first time. I was the last one to know when Tatsu got bit by the peacock during our school trip at the zoo. I was the last to know you had a crush on Saru when we joined the volleyball squad.”

“What?” Sarukui blinks.

“Oh.” Bokuto grins. “Looks like I was second to last.”

“Fuckin’ knew it.” Konoha says smugly.

“How could you possibly know when I only told Bokuto?” Komi asks.

“Because Saru’s a carbon copy of his mom and you liked her.” Konoha laughs. “Besides, I notice things when it comes to my best friend. I’m not fuckin’ blind.”

It takes a lot of effort for Akaashi to only snort internally.

“If we’re talking about past crushes, I had one on Konoha at the beginning of last year.” Washio admits.

Konoha smirks. “You did?”

“Yes, but that was only at the very first start, before you opened your mouth and I got to know you. Then the feeling went away.” Washio says. “I think you’re best when you don’t speak.”

Komi nods. “And that works perfectly for your modeling career. You just have to shut up and look pretty.”

Konoha clicks his tongue, tells them both those kind of compliments needn’t be shared, but kept in their heads. And then to go fuck themselves, of course.

Aside from getting a rickroll from his dad, Akaashi doesn’t fall for any pranks. And in all honesty, despite the title of “barn owl talks like a human”, he knows what the link contains and still clicks it. Because it wouldn’t be an April Fool’s if he doesn’t hear Never Gonna Give You Up at least once.

On Wednesday after PE, he notices the school is buzzing, whispering and bringing their heads together, huddled up, discussing, giggling. Since his first period is History with their principal, he has 0 opportunities to find out what the commotion is about.

He does during Physics, when Ayame passes him a note.

“Did you fill it out already?”

He scribbles back a “?” and she chuckles quietly, before her elbow nudges him. With his peripheral vision he sees a list, which Ayame’s folded and refolded, highlighter art around the edges, sparkly gel-pen hearts and stars between neatly written names in the empty margins.

It’s the Yearbook Superlatives and by lunch break, it’s all everyone is talking about.

The volleyball table is no different.

“Bokuto, you can’t put him down for everything just because he’s your boyfriend.” Yukie says.
“Course I can. He’s perfect.” Bokuto replies. “Hey, Keiji! I took the liberty of taking your list from your locker, wanna fill it?”

“I didn’t say he isn’t, Bokuto, but Akaashi doesn’t fit the Loudest category.” Yukie sighs.

“No, Bokuto-san, I want to eat.”

“I could write for you, while you’re eating?” Bokuto offers happily. “That okay?”

“Sure, Bokuto-san.”

Konoha smirks. “Unlike our Captain, our Vice Captain is objective, so this is gonna be hilarious.”

“I think it’s going to be a disaster.” Washio says. “Bokuto’s probably going to end up crying.”

“That’s the hilarious part.” Konoha laughs.

Komi also starts snickering. “Too bad we don’t have popcorn.”

“Shut up, everyone!” Bokuto claps his hands. “Keiji, who should I put down for Life of the Party?”

“Yourself, Bokuto-san.”

“Hey hey heyyyyy! What a great start! What about Most Unique?”

“Again, that’s you, Bokuto-san.”

“I’m loving this!” Bokuto hoots.

Bokuto proceeds to roll call each Most Likely to be/do/say category and Akaashi proceeds to answer, while munching on his cheesy jacket potatoes.

When they reach the Bests category, it’s not just Bokuto that begins to get upset.

“Best hair?”

“That’s easy. Komi-san.”

“What?” Bokuto and Konoha gasp in unison, shocked to their very core.

“What what?” He pops a chicken nugget into his mouth. “I think undercuts are really cool.”

“Thanks, Akaashi.” Komi looks like he’s about to crack a rib from trying not to laugh so hard.

Bokuto mutters something under his breath that, to his ears, sounds an awful lot like Maybe Kuroo and I should consider getting undercuts before asking further. “Best Eyes?”

“You, Bokuto-san.”

“That’s more like it.” Bokuto grins. “Best smile?”

He thinks about it for a moment. While he loves Bokuto’s, he wants to keep things fair and involve as many people from the volleyball squad as possible and there’s one person who’s smile is a permanent wave of amusement, which in itself is amusing, and prompts him to say “Sarukui-san.”
“Best Laugh?”
“Yukie.”

Right on cue, her melodic laugh rings and she blows him a kiss.

“Best Dressed?”
“Konoha-san, obviously.”

Konoha smirks proudly. “That’s right.”

“Best Personality?”
“Washio-san.”

“Best couple?”
“Yukie and Konoha-san.”

“Akaaashi! What about us?”

“Bokuto-san, our relationship isn’t exactly open to the public eye or knowledge. And besides, Yukie and Konoha-san are very cute together. I’m sure everyone else put them down too.”

“I know I did.” Konoha grins.

“You’re not really supposed to put yourself down for the categories.” Washio says.

Konoha snorts. “It’s anonymous.”

“I know that, but it still doesn’t change the fact it’s douchey.” Washio replies, which makes Konoha stick his tongue out at him.

“I actually didn’t put Nori and myself for that category.” Yukie says.

“Case in point. Only douchey people do.” Washio smiles.

Konoha ignores the insult, turns to Yukie. “Honey, if not us, who’d you write down?”

“Probably her roommate and her boyfriend.” Bokuto replies.

Yukie shakes her head, giggling. “Just like last year, my friends and I all put down Nori and Saru.”

Sarukui chokes on his bread and even though Komi smacks his back loudly, he continues to cough.

“Yuks...” Konoha blinks. “Why would you do that?”

“Nori, it’s really simple. Before, I mostly had friends that are girls, and then I became your manager and all of a sudden I was surrounded by just boys. And I absolutely love it, of course, I love every single one of you, but you gotta understand from my point of view, you guys are all so shippy with each other and you’re not even aware how suggestive everything you do and say is, which makes it so fun for me and my friends to talk about.”

“Shippy?” Bokuto echoes.
“Let me give you an example.” Yukie says. “At breakfast this morning Nori was complaining that there were no bananas left in the kitchen and Saru said “Kono, you can have mine.” Hahaha.”

“Oh God.” Sarukui says. “I wasn’t being suggestive when I said that, I was just offering Kono my banana-” Yukie laughs, flustering him further. “-a banana. Kono, man, you gotta know I didn’t- I wasn’t- you know?”

“Yeah, Saru, I know.” Konoha says. “Honey, you should get your head outta the gutter.”

“Ha.” Washio snorts. “This is a serious case of the pot calling the kettle black.”

Yukie seems to have another example up her sleeve, to clear the cloud of confusion. “It’s also like the way Akaashi and Bokuto are with each other. We totally shipped you guys before you got together.”

“I still don’t know what this is.” Bokuto says. “But, Yuks, could you and your friends maybe do this ship thing about Keiji and I to Singapore? I’ve only been there once, but I’m sure Keiji would love their chilli mud crab.”

“Not that kind of shipping. Shipping is short for relationship.” Yuie explains patiently.

Bokuto scratches his forehead, perplexed. “I’m so lost right now.”

Glancing at the entire table, everyone else is too. Aside from Yukie, nobody has a clue what she’s talking on about.

“Saru, you want to be a writer, right?” Yukie asks and he nods. “You must know what fanfiction is.”

“I do, but- while I know what it is, Yuks, I don’t know what you mean.” Sarukui shrugs helplessly. “Are you saying you and your friends want to… write fanfiction about Kono and I? And the rest of the team?”

“If somebody doesn’t tell me what’s going on, I’m going to start screaming.” Bokuto says.

“Don’t do that, please.” Washio says. “While you’d be happy to spend more time with Akaashi during detention, I’d rather not get written up and go home after practice.”

“Alright.” Yukie rubs her hands together. “Since all of you guys have seen the TV series Sherlock or the movies, you’re familiar with the characters, so I’ll use them for another example. When you watched Sherlock Holmes and John Watson’s scenes together, you could feel their chemistry, right? It’s palpable.”

“Well, that’s already a given.” He says. “If the main character and their sidekick don’t have chemistry together, they wouldn’t have been cast to play the roles in the first place.”

She shuts her eyes and sighs. “I knew you would all be slow on the uptake, but my God, you guys are killing me.”

“Honey, I’d hate to break it to you, but you’re the one that’s doing the killing over here.” Konoha says.

“Yukie, just get straight to the point.” Komi says. “Sherlock and John have chemistry together. What of it?”

“Okay, fine. When you were watching the two of them together, didn’t you find yourselves
rooting for them to become a couple?”

“Oh. That.” He says, the final missing piece completing the puzzle. “I see what you mean.”

“You do?!” Konoha gawps. “How?”

“It’s Akaashi.” Washio replies. “He knows everything.”

“Yes, Konoha-san. At least I think I do.” He says. “Yukie, you’re talking about slash, aren’t you?”

“Yes! Exactly!” She beams. “This is perfect, Akaashi! Now you can help me explain to the rest of them what I mean.”

“I thought Slash is a musician?” Bokuto asks. “And I also thought Sherlock had a thing for that Irene chick? They had a thing for each other, right, Keiji?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san, you are correct. Sherlock and Irene have history together, although the nature of their relationship isn't specified. And Slash is, indeed, a musician, but I’m not referring to him when I say slash.” He says and chuckles. “Who knew Supernatural would be such an educational show.”

“I love Supernatural!” Yukie claps her hands in excitement. “I rewatch it every year religiously.”

“Are you a Sam girl or Dean girl?” He asks, amused.

“What do you think?” She asks, equally amused.

“Yukie, if I had the answer to that, I wouldn’t be asking you in the first place.”

“C’mon, Akaashi, please take a guess.” She grins. “You’re very good at this sort of thing, reading people and their likes and dislikes.”

His process of guesstimation only lasts for a blink, a spare second between think and go.

“Sam girl.”

“Pfff, damn right I am!”

“Me too! Except the girl part, I mean.”

Yukie and him high five, smiling at each other, before she turns to Komi. “You should definitely check out Supernatural, if you haven’t already. You’re the biggest rock music fan I know and their soundtrack is just- Komi, you’ll love it. You even drive a Chevy Impala like Dean does!”

“Thanks, Yukie, but I don’t watch a lotta TV.” Komi says. “I prefer working on my baby in the garage.”

“That’s such a Dean thing to say!” She throws her head back and laughs. “Akaashi, my birthday is coming up and I would really love it if you could draw me something.”

The gleam in her eyes is burning and a little mad too, which tells him she is requesting filth and not flowers blooming and birds chirping and evening sunsets.

“I can do that, as long as you are aware it’ll be fictitious characters.” He says. “I don’t want to imagine and draw any of our teammates naked. Except maybe Bokuto-san.”
“Keiji, draw me like one of your french girls.” Bokuto hooks his hands on his hips.

“Ohhh, I’m so happy, I’ll have Supernatural fanart!” Yukie says. “There’s three things I can’t live without: pizza, sex and Supernatural.”

“In that exact order, honey?” Konoha grins. “Since I know how much you love that show, I’m all kinds of flattered I come before it.”

Komi snickers. “She didn’t specify that it was sex with you.”

“Funny you should say that, when I’ve got all shades of your mom’s lipstick over my dick. And her butthole.” Konoha leers.

Washio sighs. “Instead of making the same old your mom jokes, you should be asking your girlfriend why she wrote Saru and you down as best couple. Although I can kind of see it, as you two are like a married couple.”

“Just for the record, I don’t recycle jokes, I always make new ones.” Konoha says. “But you’re right. Honey, I still fail to see what Saru and I have to do with any of this slash stuff.”

“Konoha-san, it’s slashing two characters together. Slash as in together together.”


“Komi-san, I’m aware of that, but still, you have my thanks for the input.” He replies, voice dripping and oozing with sarcasm. “But this is why LARPers exist.”

“The fuck is a LARPer?” Konoha asks.

“Live action role-player.” He clears his throat. “Think about it this way, Konoha-san: ten years down the line, when you’re a famous model and Sarukui-san is a famous writer, the media will dig up all about the close bond you share with each other and people that are your fans would cherish your relationship by creating fanfiction and roleplaying you two.”

“Why would they do that?” Konoha asks again.

“Because, it’s what fans do when it comes to something they love? It’s just like cosplayers at Comic-Con. Fans relate to a character and want to experience a taste of what it’d be like to step in their shoes, while sharing it with others who feel just as equally passionate about it.”

“So you’re telling me some fuckin’ yahoo whack job would get their kicks from dressing up and pretending to be me while getting it on with someone who’s pretending to be my best friend?”

“Well, no, Konoha-san, I wouldn’t exactly put it like that. It’s not necessarily sexual, it could just be platonic. I’m not familiar enough with the topic to tell you more.”

“Either way, Akaashi, how can you say that’s showing love and appreciation, when it’s completely fucking disrespectful towards Saru and my personal lives? And especially towards our future spouses! The fuck is wrong with you?” Konoha barks, snappy and rude.

“Hey!” Bokuto says, frowning, not a- not a threat, but, “Don’t use that tone on Keiji, alright?”

“Bokuto-san, thank you for your concern, but it’s fine.” He smiles softly. “I know Konoha-san is only getting worked up, because he’s having a hard time wrapping his head around the fact Yukie and her friends moon over various scenarios of him being with Sarukui-san and other guys.”
“Okay, Vice Captain, you can stop being a nutcase, because it really doesn’t suit you.” Konoha rolls his eyes. “C’mon, man, that’s my girlfriend you’re talking about.”

“I’m not a nutcase and I know she’s your girlfriend.” He says. “But that doesn’t change the fact she fantasizes about you and other guys being together. Konoha-san, we literally just went over this. That’s what slashing and shipping is.”

The cogs in Konoha’s brain start reeling.

"Honey, is what Akaashi said true? Do you really… fantasize about me with other dudes?”

Konoha’s question makes every single one of them look at her and Yukie’s laughter whooshes out, loud and unabashed. It’s more than enough of an answer.

“Yuks, you tryna tell us if Komiyan or monkey made out with Konoha, you’d get your freak on?” Bokuto asks.

“No, not really, because I’d get jealous.” She replies. “I do get excited fantasizing about it, though.”

Konoha groans. “Fuck’s sake, Yuks, honey, why - why - would you do that? Why would you fantasize about me with other dudes when we’re dating?”

“Because it’s freakin’ hot!” Yukie says, greeted by a sea of lost and confused faces. “Oh, c’mon, you guys, don’t look at me like that! Girls love boys together, because it’s a turn on. Just like you love girls together.”

Akaashi decides to sit this one out and not get involved, as he’s got an entire dessert plate waiting for him to work his way through. And he’s too gay for this kind of convo anyway.

“That’s totally different.” Konoha says.

“It’s the same, Nori.”

“No, it isn’t. And I’ll explain to you exactly why it isn’t.”

“Just so you know, I’m not gonna listen if you’re gonna be a pig.” She crosses her arms.

“Honey, I don’t intend on being anything but honest with you, but if I do come off as a pig, I apologize in advance.” Konoha says. “The reason why guys enjoy seeing two girls together, is because we like to fantasize ourselves in between those girls and being responsible for giving them a good time.”

Yukie snorts. “Because girls can’t enjoy themselves without you?”

“No, I’m sure they can, I just said it’s a fantasy. Honey, don’t attack me when I’m only trying to understand how your minds work. ‘Cause us, guys? We’re simple as Hell. It’s you girls that are complicated as Hell.” Konoha says. “Now tell me, honey. When you look at two dudes together, what do you fantasize about? Being between them?”

“No! I don’t wanna intrude or join or anything. I just like fantasizing about them getting it on with each other, because it’s aesthetically pleasing.” She shrugs. “I don’t know why I like it, but I know I like it.”

“But you’re not incorporating yourself into the fantasy, Yuks.” Sarukui, the number one defender of Konoha’s justice and basically all things Konoha, says. “Which means Kono was correct in the
first place.”

Konoha smirks peacock proud, especially when Yukie acknowledges it with a smiling “You were right, darling. It is different.”

“Yukie, I hope you realize what you just did.” Washio murmurs.

“What?”

“You told Konoha in front of his entire guy friend circle he’s right about something.” Washio rubs his forehead, as if he’s already sporting a heavy headache. “Boy, are we never gonna hear the end of it.”

He picks up his tray, but Bokuto’s firm hand keeps him in his seat.

“Keiji, you still have one last superlative left. Best Looking.”

“Konoha-san.” He replies with all the rapidity of a rifle shot.

And just like a rifle shot, it leaves casualties behind.

Well. Just the one.

Bokuto refuses to talk to him for the next three periods and under normal circumstances he’d be pouting for the rest of the day. But with their last exam over and done with and the bell dismissing them for Easter break, he thinks he’s got no time left.

Even Kuroo shows up in their room before 4 pm.

“Angel Eyes, didn’t you pack already?” Kuroo glances around. “Where’s your suitcase?”

“No, Kuroo-san, I didn’t see a point in doing it just yet.” He replies, a smile blossoming. “Not when I changed my train ticket to tomorrow, as I wanted to spend the rest of the day with Bokuto-san and you.”

- 

Bright and early on Thursday morning, Bokuto and Kuroo are the epitome of mother hens doting over their little one, sending him off on his merry way to Miyagi at the train station. In fact, they’re fretting more than his own parents do.

“Keiji, please have your phone with you at all times.” Bokuto says. “And as soon as you arrive, call or text, alright?”

“Yes, Bokuto-san.”

“Angel Eyes, you sure you put your canned coffee and onigiri in your bag?” Kuroo asks.

“Yes, Kuroo-san, I’m sure.”

“Kuroo and I don’t want you to starve.”

“Bokuto-san, I sincerely doubt I would, as we just had breakfast and my ride is only one hour and
As he pecks their cheeks and embraces them both, he feels a sudden heaviness in his chest. And that’s exactly why he finds himself mirroring their worried manner.

“Bokuto-san, don’t overwork yourself during volleyball camp. And if you’re having difficulty falling asleep - or with anything - call me. Doesn’t matter what time of the night it is, just give me a ring. Kuroo-san, same goes for you. Don’t overdo your gaming marathons with Kenma and get enough rest.” He smiles. “You two take care of yourselves, alright?”

“You too, Angel Eyes.”

“Keiji, we’re gonna miss you.”

“No more than I’ll miss you, Bokuto-san.”

He gets another bone crushingly tight goodbye hug from Bokuto and a nipple twist from Kuroo before boarding the train and waving at them through the window. Then the train picks up speed and everything becomes a blur.

Earbuds in, he puts on in happy-feel playlist, which mostly consists of good ol’ Beatles songs and he can’t help smiling when he imagines Iwaizumi’s abysmal face.

He is happy, impossibly so. And how could he not be, when it’s his very first spring break, which he gets to spend with friends. Same time last year, he didn’t have any.

Originally, Akaashi’d wanted to acquaint himself with Sarukui’s written works, as his father raved about them, praise sky-high, you should really read everything, Keiji, your friend has so much talent and potential, I’m really looking forward to meeting him.

Yeah, that was the plan, except Bokuto, Kuroo and him stayed up all night, not catching any Z’s whatsoever.

And so he sleeps through the entire journey, until the very last minute, when the train finally stops at the platform.

Suitcase in hand, he steps out, phone loudly ringing with Twist & Shout. He doesn’t even get to pick up when he hears-

“You have got to be kidding me.”

Akaashi turns his head at the familiar voice, which sounds half-happy and half-annoyed.

To his pleasant surprise, his welcoming committee doesn’t just consist of Iwaizumi.

“Akaashi-san!”

He thinks Kageyama is going in for a hug, when he’s only going for a handshake and it gets a little awkward, because Kageyama’s hand ends up pressing against his crotch.

“Nice to see you again, Kageyama-kun.” He says, smiling.

“When I told Kageyama you’d be visiting, he wouldn’t stop pestering me until I promised to take him along.” Iwaizumi explains, uncrossing his hands to pull him into an embrace. “If you want us to remain friends, you’re going to change that ringtone straightaway.”

He hugs Iwaizumi back, laughing. “Hi, Iwaizumi-san, nice to see you too. My train ride was
He hugs Iwaizumi back, laughing. “Hi, Iwaizumi-san, nice to see you too. My train ride was good, thank you for asking.”

“Don’t give me that crap, Akaashi, and change it. Change it now.” Iwaizumi says, trying his best to be annoyed, but failing. “Beatles aside, it’s real good to see you, man.”

He’s the first one to let go, giving Iwaizumi a long head-to-toe glance.

“Iwaizumi-san, you’ve gained weight since the last time I saw you.”

“Is this you callin’ me fat?”

“No, this is me calling you buff.”

“Oh. Alright then.” Iwaizumi grins. “If that’s the case, I’ll accept it.”

Iwaizumi insists on taking his suitcase and leads the way to the parking lot, to his if-you’re-able-to-keep-your-grades-up car, instantly reprimanding Kageyama for belting himself shotgun.

“No, Kageyama-kun, stay.” He says. “Iwaizumi-san, I don’t mind being in the backseat.”

“Well, you might not, but I do.” Iwaizumi says. “I want you right beside me.”

He really can’t see what’s the big deal, but Iwaizumi refuses to put the key in the ignition until Kageyama and him switch.

“You know, Akaashi,” Iwaizumi says as he starts driving. “Before you even left Tokyo, Bokuto and Kuroo both texted me that if so much as a hair falls off your head, they’d hold me accountable.”

He blinks. “I wasn’t aware you had each other’s phone numbers.”

“Yup, had them since last year.” Iwaizumi replies. “He- Oikawa put them in my contacts list.”

“Iwaizumi-san, I’m sorry if they bothered you. They’re just really overprotective of me.”

“No, no, they didn’t bother me one bit.” Iwaizumi smiles. “In fact, this is probably the very first time I agree with Bokuto and Kuroo on something.”

As Iwaizumi puts on the radio, Kageyama asks. “Akaashi-senpai, could I talk to you now?”

Cute.

He finds it real cute that Kageyama would address him as senpai, as well as asking for permission to talk to him.

Iwaizumi must’ve instructed Kageyama about it.

“Of course you can, Kageyama-kun.” He laughs softly. “Please talk to me, I’m all ears.”

Kageyama waxes poetic about volleyball, about his teammates, about Iwaizumi helping him study for his entrance exam. He talks and talks, all until Iwaizumi drops him off at his house.

“Kageyama, I already told you Akaashi and I are running a tight schedule today.” Iwaizumi taps his fingers on the steering wheel. “It’s time for you to make yourself scarce.”

The second Kageyama leaves, Akaashi arches an eyebrow.
“Iwaizumi-san, I wasn’t aware we’re running a tight schedule. Or was that just a ruse to get rid of Kageyama-kun?”

“No.” Iwaizumi laughs. “Not a ruse.”

“So… what are we doing?”

Iwaizumi smirks. “Akaashi, how do you feel about going to a wedding?”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

My, oh my. This chapter completely got out of hand, as it's 15625 words long. Oops? No apologies, though, the Iwaaka is stronger than me (°ω°) Have a good week, everyone and enjoy~

Akaashi can recall Komi telling the entire volleyball table his brother and Yamagata’s sister would be getting married in three weeks time, but he wasn’t aware it’d be today.

There’s another thing he wasn’t aware of.

“I’d say I feel unprepared, as I wasn't aware I’m invited.” He replies.

“‘Course you’re invited.” Iwaizumi laughs. “I told everyone you’re coming.”

“Them knowing I’m coming and actually being invited are two different things, Iwaizumi-san.” After all, shouldn’t Komi have said something to him if he was invited, explain the seating chart, anything?

“If that’s what you’re worried about, my invitation is with guest, so you can be my plus one.” Iwaizumi says as he changes into 3rd gear. “Don’t sweat it, Akaashi, I’m telling you, it’s fine.”

“That does ease my mind some.” He says. “But a heads-up would’ve been nice, Iwaizumi-san, as I didn’t bring any formal attire appropriate for wedding attendance. The only thing I have is dress shirts. Everything else is casual - jeans, tshirts, zip up hoodies.”

“You can relax, man. I have a suit you could borrow.”

He doesn’t feel relaxed, though.

“That’s very kind of you to offer, Iwaizumi-san, but you are stockier than-”

“I thought I was buff?”

“Yes. But I wouldn’t refer to myself as buff and I was making a comparison between us.” He explains. “And while a slightly loose suit at the shoulders wouldn’t look too terrible, there’s the pants part and I sincerely doubt yours would even cover my ankles.”

Iwaizumi parks into the driveway, in front of a small two story house, before resting his elbow
against Akaashi’s headrest pillow, looking him directly in the eye.

“You callin’ me short, that’s strike number two.”

Aside from having some general knowledge of sports, he’s got nothing, but that’s plenty for Akaashi to feel the muscles around his mouth and eyes tugging with amusement.

“My first strike was The Beatles’ ringtone, wasn’t it?”

“Technically, that was your first 50000th strike, but yeah, pretty much.”

“I’m not changing it, Iwaizumi-san, so you’re just going to have to deal with that.” He says as Iwaizumi pulls his suitcase out of the trunk. “And for the record, I didn’t call you short. Just shorter than me.”

Stepping out of the car, he can’t help but stare at the neat and pristine garden, covered with splotches of color from all the flowers Akaashi isn’t familiar with the names of, aside from daffodils and hyacinths. It must take hours of dedication to maintain, with nurturing, able hands.

Iwaizumi has those, and while he never knew Iwaizumi had a green thumb, he can totally picture it, now. Iwaizumi, mowing the lawn with surgical precision, wiping his sweaty brow with the back of his hand, possibly getting dirt over his face, and clothes, while digging soil and planting seeds, half looking up with shielded eyes at the beating down sun, giving life, a fond smile.

“That’s a lot of beauty in one place, Iwaizumi-san.” He says softly, hoping his tone conveys his full appreciation and it makes Iwaizumi preen on the inside, knowing for sure that his garden is being rightfully looked upon, admired properly, Akaashi, another happy honeybee sipping nectar he helped churn.

“Same thing could be said about you.” Iwaizumi’s hand gently pats Akaashi’s lower back, ushering him towards the front door. “C’mon, princess, we don’t have all day. The flowers aren’t going anywhere.”

“Iwaizumi-san, do we have to go?” He sighs, following Iwaizumi up the stairs.

He doesn’t mean to be spoilsport or anything, really, it’s just- it’s the first day of spring break and he was looking forward to an empty schedule after crazy exam week, not having to do jackshit, but relaxing with friends. Weddings mean parents and parents mean being proper and polite, at least until everyone gets their drink on. But that’s still exhausting.

Iwaizumi stops moving, which makes Akaashi trip over his own suitcase.

“Careful!” Iwaizumi warns a tad too late. He hooks an elbow under Akaashi’s arm, grips his back and hauls him back up on his feet. “I’m the best man, so I’d say a definite yes.”

He blinks. Something’s not adding up, because Iwaizumi wouldn’t be the best man to the Komi - Yamagata family union.

“Exactly whose wedding are we attending, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Will you see.” Iwaizumi smiles mysteriously, leading the way into his bedroom.

Akaashi busies himself marveling over the array of colorful posters and flags tacked up along the walls, haphazard and crookedly charming. He can’t help it; the plastic green toy soldiers and G.I. Joes, the collection of Hot Wheels, Godzilla sculptures and dinosaur memorabilia. They all seem miles away from his own bedroom with plain white walls and stacks of books. Galaxies apart.
“I really like your room, Iwaizumi-san.”


“If you visit me in Tokyo during summer break, you’ll see it.” He smiles. “It’s pretty bland and boring, though, nowhere near as exciting as yours.”

“I’ll definitely take you up on that offer.”

Only after satiating his curious eyes, does he notice the suits laid out on Iwaizumi’s bed, one classic black, the other a sky blue. The second one has all these frills, it’s all flashy and showy and there’s just no way it’s Iwaizumi’s. Which means…

“You’re letting me borrow Oikawa-san’s suit.” It’s not a question.

Iwaizumi nods. “I’m sure it’ll fit you. And you don’t have to wear it if you don’t want to, you can just put on jeans and a shirt. But it would make me real happy if you do.” He adds.

It doesn’t just fit, it fits like a glove, perfect. Almost as if it was tailored specifically for him.

In all honesty, Akaashi would rather not stand out by wearing something so colorful and fashion-forward, he prefers more subtle, like Iwaizumi’s suit. Checking his reflection in the mirror, he thinks he looks kind of ridiculous and he has to bite down his tongue from saying it aloud, because he doesn’t mean to offend. But that’s not all of it, that’s not even most of it.

It’s Iwaizumi’s face, practically glowing with delight and joy. He really wasn’t lying when he said he’d be happy if Akaashi wore it.

So Akaashi doesn’t mind sucking it up a little.

“You look perfect.” Iwaizumi says, cupping and patting his cheek.

He doesn’t mind it at all.

-  

It’s Matsukawa and Hanamaki, they’re the ones getting hitched.

There are no parents present, not one, it’s only the Aoba Jousai volleyball team and Akaashi. And after a very quick stop at City Hall that only requires two signatures, their wedding reception - if you could call it that - is held in Pizza Hut, of all places.

He has never attended a wedding like this, so casual, the only formal thing about it being the suits they’re all wearing. He finds he likes it a lot. Big pizza plates instead of three course meals, crystal champagne filled glasses exchanged for Heineken beer bottles. There are no seating charts with printed names, it’s just one big table filled with smiling faces, tripping over themselves to congratulate the married couple.

Beer bottle in hand, he lines up too, right in front of Iwaizumi, because Iwaizumi will definitely be taking his time, whereas he only gives Matsukawa and Hanamaki the generic congratulations yadda-yadda bullshit.
Everyone else is talking among each other and he sips his beer slowly, if only to give his mouth and hands something to do. Probably should’ve gone after Iwaizumi, because then Iwaizumi would’ve already been sitting and he wouldn’t be standing a little to the side, unsure of what to do next.

He really didn’t think this one though.

He fights off the temptation of fishing his phone out, because that would make him seem unapproachable and rude, and he doesn’t want to be either. He also doesn’t want to embarrass Iwaizumi in front of his teammates.

Just then, he feels a tap against his shoulder.

“Hey, Akaashi.” Yahaba, his savior, greets with a little hand wave. “Glad to see you’re finally here.”

“Glad to finally be here.” He smiles. “It’s been a while since we last saw each other.”

“It has been, yeah.”

“Well. Here’s to our 2nd Generation Rat Pack seeing more of each other in the future.” He clinks his beer against Yahaba’s, who gasps, grinning.

“Ohhh, speaking of, let’s take a selfie! Terushima’s been dying to see what you look like.”

“Would you say he’d get jealous we’re hanging out together?”

“Oh, yeah, definitely.” Yahaba says.

“Let’s do it then.” He smirks.

Yahaba laughs and they both throw the peace sign, posing. Yahaba is unsatisfied until the 4th selfie and after hitting send, high fives Akaashi, grinning conspiratorially.

“Oi, Shigeru!” Hanamaki claps his hands together. “There’ll be plenty of picture time later. Now quit hogging our guest of honor’s entire attention, as we would like to have it too.”

He can’t tell if Hanamaki is being sarcastic or not, but Hanamaki sits in Matsukawa’s lap and meaningfully pats the chair he just emptied.

Aware that all eyes are on him, he takes it, glad Iwaizumi is on his right.

“Excellent.” Hanamaki says. “Akaashi, we would all like to know you better, so please.”

“Please what?”

Hanamaki laughs, but only sort of. “Tell us about you.”

“Just ask me what you would like to know.”

Matsukawa and Hanamaki both look slyly at him. It makes him want another beer.

“And you’ll answer me no matter what I ask?” Hanamaki presses, wrapping an arm over Matsukawa’s shoulders.

“No.” He says. “I’ll only answer what I’m comfortable with answering.”
“Fair enough.” Hanamaki says. Noticing that Akaashi doesn’t have a drink, he slides him a new one, smiling. “Relax, Akaashi, this isn’t an interrogation.”

Akaashi doesn’t say how Hanamaki telling him to relax is doing the complete opposite or how this feels exactly like an interrogation. He says nothing, simply wraps his fingers around the beer bottle.

“So.” Hanamaki begins, conversationally. “Hajime tells us you’ll be staying here for Easter break.”

“Yes. Iwaizumi-san was very kind to let me stay with him.”

“You know the pleasure’s all mine.” Iwaizumi says.

“Yeah.” Hanamaki says. “Yeah, Hajime’s like that with people he really cares about.”

While he hasn’t been acquainted with Iwaizumi as long as Hanamaki and the rest of them, he already knows this, is aware, and doesn’t see a point in commenting.

He takes a sip of his beer.

“Thing is,” Hanamaki says, “some people take advantage of other people’s kindness.”

“Makki.” Iwaizumi warns. He obviously doesn’t like what Hanamaki is implying.

But Akaashi understands. Any way you slice it, no matter how polite and welcoming they are, smiling, he is the odd one between the Seijouh ranks. He’s not offended in the least, he’s glad to hear how much they all care for Iwaizumi’s well-being, as he does too.

“Yes, Hanamaki-san, some people are like that.” He says. “And you can be as wary of me as you please, because, obviously, me reassuring you with words that I am not one of those people isn’t going to be enough. But I’d still like to say that I hold my most dearest people in the center pocket of my heart and I consider Iwaizumi-san one of them.”

“Well put.” Matsukawa nods in approval. “Glad we’re on the same page and you’re not being a little bitch about it.”

“Mattsun!” Iwaizumi growls.

Matsukawa shrugs slowly, like he is showing and explaining to everyone the definition of confusion.

“Akaashi,” Hanamaki says. “I don’t know what the Tokyo tradition is like, but here, if you attend a wedding empty-handed, it’s considered rude.”

“I believe that’s considered rude everywhere.”

“So where’s our wedding gift?”

Oh. Akaashi finally understands what this is, why they gave him the main seat and everything, why everyone is staring. They wanna see how he’s gonna deal with intrusive questions, wondering how he’d react. It’s a test, they’re testing him.

Fuck it, he thinks. Iwaizumi knows what he’s like, likes what he’s like, and so there’s no reason for him to bend over backwards to please the others by being polite. He’s gonna be himself and if that’s rude, they can all kiss his Fukurodani ass.
“Where’s my wedding invitation?”

Matsukawa hands him a greasy napkin with pen-scribbled Wedding Invitation for princess Akaashi Keiji. He didn’t know Iwaizumi’s “princess” nickname is catching on. It makes him chuckle.

And since Matsukawa improvised, he decides to do the same.

“Well. As this is the happiest day of Matsukawa-san’s and your lives and you are so in love with each other, I don’t think materialistic things are of import.” He says. “So how about you consider me gracing you with my presence enough of a gift for you two?”

Everyone roars in laughter.

Iwaizumi clicks his tongue and shakes his head. “Jesus Christ and his biological Father.” He covers his eyes with a hand, but Akaashi can see his mouth twitching. “You’re unbelievable.”

“Thank you, Iwaizumi-san.” He smiles.

“It wasn’t a compliment.”

It totally was.

“Oh wow, Akaashi, I don’t know what to say.” Hanamaki, amused, rolls his eyes. “That’s just too generous, you really shouldn’t have.”


“Issei, darling, it’s alright.” Hanamaki grins. “At least now we know he has a type - pretty and cocky setters that know how to push his buttons.”

“Guys.” Iwaizumi coughs into his fist. “You promised me you won’t be weird and you’d be nice to him.”

“We’re always nice.” Matsukawa says.

“No, you never are.” Iwaizumi says. “And I love you for it, sometimes, mostly, but c’mon-“

“Hajime, if he’s going to be your whatever he’s going to be,” Hanamaki says, “then he should see us as God supposedly made us, in our natural environment. All I mean is that if we’re all going to hang out together-”

“Maybe we won’t.” Matsukawa says. “Maybe it won’t be that way. Maybe we’ll just see them at the wedding, or-”

“Stop it.” Iwaizumi grunts. “What did I just say about you two being weird? Don’t scare Akaashi on his very first day here.”

“Don’t worry, Iwaizumi-san.” He says, smiling. “Unless it’s a movie or clowns, I don’t scare easy.”

“Oh?” Matsukawa arches an eyebrow. “Challenge accepted.”

“Please, Matsukawa-san, do your worst.”

“Akaashi,” Hanamaki says, “while you clearly have excellent taste in picking boyfriend material, I’m afraid the same thing couldn’t be said for your fashion taste. It’s funny you mentioned you’re
afraid of clowns, when, well, have you *seen* what you look like in the mirror?”

Everyone laughs and he doesn’t mind being roasted, because it’s fine, really, it is, he knows how to take a joke.

He is a 100% sure that besides Iwaizumi and himself, Matsukawa and Hanamaki also know exactly whose clothes he’s wearing. But once again, they’re merely awaiting a reaction.

“Hanamaki-san, laugh all you want, because even though this isn’t the suit I would buy for myself, I’m proud to be wearing it.” He says, in all honesty, and wets his lips. “And I’m certain it’s original owner would be happy it’s being worn on your wedding day.”

“I like him.” Hanamaki announces to everyone, addressing Iwaizumi in particular. “I like him a lot.”

“Told you you would.” Iwaizumi smiles. Then he places his hand over the back of Akaashi’s neck and gently squeezes, a non-vocal thank you.

Despite the fact Pizza Hut is overcrowded with different customers walking in and out, one of the 3rd years decides to take on the role of wedding band and DJ, and yells “It’s time for the married couple’s first dance together!” and plays Unchained Melody on his phone.

Instantly, Matsukawa and Hanamaki get up on their feet and, lovingly, start swaying in rhythm of the music, right around their table. Then Matsukawa’s hands slide down Hanamaki’s back, squeezing his ass.

Romantic.

As their waiter begins to bring out their orders, he takes his designated seat, Iwaizumi on his left and Watari Shinji, Aoba Jousai’s first year Libero, on his right. He can see Yahaba right across, waving his hands to get his attention, but even if he was blowing a goddamn vuvuzela in Akaashi’s face, he wouldn’t care, not when his Pepperoni Feast is served in front of him, hot and smelling delicious. He hasn’t eaten anything since breakfast and he’s fucking starving. Yahaba’s whatever can wait; his pizza cannot.

Yahaba doesn’t seem like he wants to wait and since he can’t get to Akaashi, goes for the closest thing.

“Iwaizumi-san,” Yahaba says, “can I take a photo of Akaashi and you?”

“Please do.” Iwaizumi says. “But you have to wait for him to finish eating first.”

Mouth-stuffed, unable to speak, he shoots Iwaizumi a greasy lipped smile.

Two pizza slices short of finishing his entire plate, another 3rd year claps his hands and yells “Speech!” and then everyone else joins in and start chanting “Speech! Speech! Speech!”

Iwaizumi takes a deep breath and rises, clinking his knife against his beer bottle. Akaashi swallows down the unchewed piece in his mouth like a turkey, just like everyone else, eagerly awaiting the best man’s speech. Gobble gobble, bitch.

“You guys all know I’m not very good with words, so I’m gonna keep it short and sweet.” Iwaizumi says, looking around the entire table. “Finding someone you love and who loves you back is a wonderful, wonderful feeling. But finding a true soulmate is an even better feeling. A soulmate is someone who understands you like no other, loves you like no other, will be there for you forever, no matter what. They say that nothing lasts forever, but I am a firm believer in the
fact that for some, love lives on even after we’re gone. I know a thing or two about having
someone like that, and I know that Mattsun and Makki have found a soulmate in each other. I’m
glad to tell you a bond like that will never die.” A lump forms in Iwaizumi’s throat and he takes a
moment to compose himself before continuing. “I am both honored and petrified that Mattsun and
Makki asked me to speak today.”

Everyone laughs.

“But I am delighted to have been asked to share this beautiful day with my two best friends. So
let’s all raise our - bottles - and toast to their future happiness together, as a family.” Iwaizumi
smiles. “To the newlyweds!”

“To the newlyweds!”

Aware that Iwaizumi hates speeches and presentations with the same kind of burning passion as
him, Akaashi really wants to tell him, congratulate him, on it, but so does everyone else.

He decides to do it later, when there’s no Aoba Jousai traffic all around.

Somebody asks how Matsukawa and Hanamaki decided to tie the knot so suddenly, out of the
blue, was it on a whim, whose genius idea was it, were they drunk when they agreed upon it?

“Since Issei and I were already living together,” Hanamaki says, “we thought, okay, we’re either
gonna break up or stay together forever. And we didn’t really feel like breaking up, so. Oh, and
yes, there was some alcohol involved, but we weren’t drunk.”

“Only drunk in love.” Matsukawa entwines their fingers together and kisses Hanamaki’s hand.

Akaashi finishes his food in silence, thinking about Bokuto and Kuroo. Not being cynical of love,
but being his practical self, he doesn’t think their together will be forever. He loves them both,
dearly, of course he does, and he enjoys being with them and everything, but, honestly, who
would dare to think that, forever? Some love-crazed idiot, who’s seen way too many romcoms,
who wouldn’t know how things played out in reality.

His mind doesn’t work like that. It just doesn’t.

Then he’s asked to pose for many, many photos with Matsukawa, Hanamaki and Iwaizumi, and
he complies, smiling at all the phone cameras that flash in front of his face.

- 

He finds himself huddled up close with Yahaba, knees knocking together, while snickering at
their phones, childish and amused, reading the comments after Yahaba’s sent photos.

Terushima: Yahaba, who dis??
Shirabu: That’s Akaashi.
Terushima: OMG WTF?? ( *отов ) ...... !
Ennoshita: Wow, you guys look great!
Futakuchi: Any reason why you two are dressed up so fancy?
Yahaba: Ya, wedding.
Terushima: Not Akaashi’s tho, right?????? PLS *prayer hand emoji*
Yahaba: Lol no, my senpais.
Shirabu: Which ones?
Yahaba: Why would I tell u.
Shirabu: *middle finger emoji*
Terushima: Yahaba, did u get a good angle or is that wat Akaashi rly looks like?!!
Futakuchi: There’s about 5 different photos he sent. You can see for yourself Akaashi looks like that.
Terushima: fUCK.
Terushima: he looks hotter than all of us。:゚(。ノω̥̥")・。
Shirabu: I’d like to believe Akaashi and I are equally attractive.
Yahaba: Just because you believe it, doesn’t make it true.
Terushima: I’m (♥ω♥*) but imma need proof. Yahaba, where u guys @?
Yahaba: I’m not gonna tell you, ur gonna show up and my senpais would kill me.
Shirabu: Let them.
Terushima: pls don’t be selfish, acaashi doesn’t belong to aoba jousai.
Yahaba: He just told me he doesn’t want to see you, so no.
Terushima: OMG WAT；___；WHY?? ARE U SRS??
Akaashi: Yahaba was joking... Partly.
Futakuchi: lol nice.
Ennoshita: Akaashi, you must have a busy schedule, so please tell us when would be the best time for you to meet up.
Akaashi: Anything after tomorrow works.
Terushima: whatcha doin tomorrow??
Akaashi: Not seeing you.
Shirabu: Lol.
Ennoshita: Serves you right for being nosey like that.

Akaashi forwards all the photos to Bokuto, Kuroo and his parents and he has to take a quick trip to the bathroom, as his mom, ecstatic, calls to tell him how dashing he looks. He gives a couple of “yes, mom”s and “no, mom”s and then a “sorry, I can’t talk more, mom”, before hanging up.

As soon as he takes back his seat, he removes his jacket, wondering how everyone else isn’t doing the same, as it’s so stuffy and hot.

Yahaba instantly begins filling him in on all the other members of their 2nd Generation Rat Pack and every now and again Akaashi glances over to Iwaizumi, talking with Hanamaki and Matsukawa, catching his eyes with fleeting smiles.

He’s gathered some details and pieces from their phone conversations, but listens, silently rapt, as Yahaba throws in tidbits about the other first years.

Apparently, Ennoshita is a huge movie junkie, loves film noirs, wants to be a director.

“Enno’s always talking about movies,” Yahaba says, “which none of us have even heard of, because they’re like, so old and indie and obscure.”

“I see.” He says. “He likes art movies.”

“Uh, art movies?”

“Yeah, like they’re typically serious and aimed at a niche market rather than mass market audience.”

“You mean like, blockbusters?” Yahaba asks, unsure.

“Yeah, they’re the exact opposite of blockbusters. They’re mostly made for aesthetic reasons
instead of commercial profit.”

“You seem to know a lot about that. You like those movies too?”

He laughs. “I like art.”

“Uh, yeah, I like art too, but—” Yahaba pulls a face and laughs. “Our first time hanging out together, Ennoshita organized for the five of us to go to the movies and it was at this really dodgy cinema place and it was some Portuguese vampire movie that was basically a porno. It was so dull. And we thought it was garbage, but Enno kept commenting on the lighting, how it’s a total masterpiece? I don’t know what the title was, something like ”Night and Day”, but I do remember Futa saying the movie should’ve been called “We Fuck at Dusk”.” He laughs again.

Futakuchi, apparently, is really easy-going and chill, loves to stir things up for shits and giggles.

“He’s really fun,” Yahaba says, “but you’ll never hear his senpais at Datekou say that.Whenever our teams play together, he’s always arguing with Kamasaki-san. You haven’t played against them this year, have you?”

“No, not yet. But we will at our Jamboree.”

“Yeah, I’m so excited about that!”

“Me too.” He grins. “It’s gonna be a lot of teams together. I almost feel bad for Yukie.”

“Who’s Yukie? Oh, you mean your manager?”

“Mhm.”

“She’s so pretty.” Yahaba sighs. “You tell her everyday she’s pretty, right? I wish we had a girl manager.”

“I don’t. But I’m sure Konoha-san does.”

“He’s one of your Wing Spikers, isn’t he?”

“Yes.” He says. “He’s also her boyfriend.”

Yahaba sighs again and then shakes his head. “What was I talking about?”

“You were telling me Futakuchi is always arguing with his senpais. Kamasaki-san, in particular.”

“Oh. Yeah, Kamasaki-san is one of Datekou’s Middle Blockers and Futakuchi takes great pleasure in riling him up.” Yahaba grins. “It’s a really hilarious thing to witness, which, you’ll see for yourself very soon.”

“Would you say Futakuchi has a problem with authority?”

“Yeah, I guess you can say that.” Yahaba laughs. “Because it’s not just Datekou’s senpais he loves taunting, it’s everyone. He used to clash horns with Oikawa-san a lot. Like a lot a lot. But Oikawa-san always talked very highly of him - behind his back, I mean. He did the same with you.”

He nods, stealing a glance at Iwaizumi.

Apparently Terushima is never serious. No, he does get serious - real serious - but only when it comes to parties and fun things.
“Teru’s always go-go-go,” Yahaba says, “like he’s always so energetic. I don’t know your Captain, but what I’ve heard from Oikawa-san is that he’s really energetic too?”

“Yeah.” He says, smiling fondly. “Bokuto-san is like that.”

“Well then, I guess aside from fawning over you, one of your Boyfriends and Terushima also share the same character.”

“Was that you trying to ask me indirectly if I’m dating Bokuto-san?” He grins.

“...Yes.” Yahaba shrugs, apologetic. “That wasn’t as smooth as I thought.”

He avoids the question, says, “From the way you described Terushima, he sounds like a hedonist?”

“Yeah. That and partyboy are the two words that sum him right up.”

“Bokuto-san isn’t like that.”

“I wouldn’t know, Akaashi, he’s not my boyfriend.”

He laughs. “Yahaba, I’m gonna punch you.”

“I’d rather have you punch me, than you asking Iwaizumi-san to punch me for you.” Yahaba laughs too.

“Smart call.”

“More like obvious call.” Yahaba says. “Especially now that Iwaizumi-san is back to working out.”

He waits for Yahaba to continue, but Yahaba only motions at their waiter for more beers.

“Yahaba?”

“What?” Yahaba asks. “Oh, you didn’t want another one?”

“No, I do. But aren’t you forgetting someone?”

“Who?” Yahaba blinks. “Akaashi, what are you talking about?”

“You talked about every single member of our Rat Pack, except for our Shiratorizawa representative.”

“Ugh. Him.” Yahaba sticks his tongue out. “I wish I could forget him. And anyway, you’ve already met Shirabu, so you know what he’s like.”

“I only met him that one time we played against each other at Nationals.”

“And that’s already one time too many.”

It’s funny, at least to Akaashi, because Oikawa’s rivalry with Ushijima has passed the baton over to Yahaba and Shirabu. They are literally the 2nd Generation Rat Pack.

“Instead of talking about Shirabu,” Yahaba says, “can we talk about something else? Like the way you handled my senpais earlier? That was really awesome. If I were you and they put me on the
spot like that I probably would’ve shat myself.” He laughs.

“Well,” Akaashi half-smiles, half-shrugs. “I can see where Hanamaki-san and Matsukawa-san are coming from. They’re only looking out for Iwaizumi-san, as he’s been through a lot this year.“

“You know, just before you got here, Iwaizumi-san held a team meeting and instructed everyone, especially Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san, to be really nice to you or deal with the consequences.”

“That explains why you’ve been so nice to me.” He teases.

“Ha-ha.” Yahaba rolls his eyes. “No, but seriously, like, volleyball aside, when Iwaizumi-san stopped coming to practice, it was the worst. I mean I respect all my senpais, but Iwaizumi-san is the only one that can keep Hanamaki-san and Matsukawa-san in check, and I like them better when he’s around, because they can be so mean. For three whole months I didn’t get to eat any dessert during lunch at our cafeteria, because Matsukawa-san kept taking mine. And even now that Iwaizumi-san’s back, Hanamaki-san still continues to steal my cream puffs!”

It’s so entertaining to hear other team’s dynamics and he can’t help himself from throwing his head back and laughing loudly, especially when Yahaba looks so pouty.

“What- Akaashi, that wasn’t a joke!” Yahaba says, but he starts laughing too. “I was totally serious!”

“I know.” He nods, clutching his stomach. “That’s what makes it funny.”

“You obviously don’t have that kind of problem back at Fukurodani, huh.”

“No, my senpais are all acutely aware that if they take any of my food, I’ll break their hands.”

“You’re just like Futakuchi.” Yahaba says. “You have a problem with authority.”

“No, what I have is a problem with people taking my food.”

“Well, I respect my senpais too much to say anything.”

“I respect mine too.” He explains. “But it’s got nothing to do with respect. You just have to be firm when you establish boundaries.”

“Eh. I’m just not as ballsy as you.”

“You know, this whole talk about it makes me wanna get some.”

“Must be nice.” Yahaba sighs.

“You could get some too.”

Yahaba barks an ugly laugh. “Yeah, Akaashi, with whom other than my hand?”

“Dessert, Yahaba.” He presses his lips together. “I meant getting some dessert, as you were talking about sweets.”

“Oh. God.”

“Glad to know where your head’s at, though.” He grins. “And that you’re comfortable enough to share it with me.”
Yahaba, cheeks flushed, busies himself checking out the menu. “Yeah, I’m just gonna pretend that didn’t happen.”

“Don’t. It’s fun.”

“For you.”

“For me.” He agrees. “You left me with a craving for profiteroles, so I’m getting those.”

“Oh no, Akaashi, don’t-” Yahaba grins. “Actually, do get them. I’d love to see how this plays out.”

“You want me to get the shared option, since you seem to like them too?”

“No, get the single one.” Yahaba says. “You’re just gonna have it stolen, anyway.”

“That’s not gonna happen.”

“I promise you,” Yahaba says, “Matsukawa-san or Hanamaki-san will take it. Or at least some of it.”

“And I promise you,” He says, “the only way I’ll allow that to happen is over my dead body.”

When the waiter brings his order, he immediately pops a cream puff in his mouth, while Yahaba stares at him with unmasked envy.

“Akaashi, can I-”

“No, you can’t.” He sucks the cream and stickiness off his forefinger. “I specifically asked you if you wanted to share, and you said no.”

“Please?” Yahaba gives him his best puppy-dog eyes.

Yeah, that kind of shit doesn’t work on him.

“Akaashi, I beg you. I just want one.”

“Yahaba, go beg in a church.”

“I’ll split the bill with you?”

“No, it’s not about the money.” He says. “And it’s not about you, if that’s what you’re thinking. Ask Iwaizumi-san, if you don’t believe me.”

“I’m not gonna ask him!”

“Come on, Yahaba, I dare you.” He adds, smirking.

“No way, I’m not crazy enough to interrupt-” Yahaba gestures at Iwaizumi, Matsukawa and Hanamaki. “They’re talking to each other.”

“So?”

“No, no, no, Akaashi, you don’t get it. We’re the kouhais here. We can’t do that.”

“Really?” He shrugs. “I can.”
“Oh, please don’t-”

“Iwaizumi-san?” Akaashi’s voice rises over all the rest to get his attention.

Yahaba was right. Apparently the Aoba Jousai first years don’t get to interrupt their senpais, because aside from Iwaizumi, he’s left alone with a shell-shocked table.

It’s unfamiliar to him, why that’s such a big deal, because if he was back home, not one of his teammates would blink or bat an eyelash.

He has to remind himself he’s not home.

...Oops?

Suddenly, one of his favourite Bokuto phrases pops into his head, his "Akaashi, if you’re gonna jump in the shit, you might as well jump with both legs." and he grins, unabashed.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’d share my food with you, right?”

Iwaizumi chuckles. “Good one, Akaashi.”

Some at their table are still staring at him, but let it go, because he made Iwaizumi laugh. Possibly. Probably.

“See?” He smirks at Yahaba. “The one thing you have to understand, is that when it comes to food I have certain rules - no, just the one - and it’s that I don’t like sharing it. Not with my mom, not with my dad, not with anyone. **My food is mine.**”

“Holy crap, Akaashi! I can’t believe you just did that!” Yahaba clutches his arm, voice filled with awe. “You know what? You just gave me courage to get profiteroles for myself.”

“You should, they’re really good.” He smiles. “But I’m glad to be of help.”

Yahaba places his order with such discreteness, that you might as well say he’s an agent for MI6. He’s floating on air, eyes closed and chewing happily.

“It’s been so long since I ate them, I’d forgotten their taste.”

Akaashi shakes his head. “That’s the saddest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Welcome to my life.”

Yahaba stuffs his mouth like a hamster, cream puff in each cheek, eyes watering from the strain.

“Yahaba,” He says, worried Yahaba might choke, “unlike myself, you’re clearly not used to inhaling your food, so don’t.”

“I gotta.” Yahaba croaks out, mouth slobbering.

“Just stop that, it’s disgusting.” He says. “You really don’t have to worry about Matsukawa-san or Hanamaki-san taking your dessert, because I have the same one.”

“No, Akaashi, it’s different. They wouldn’t take yours, because of Iwaizumi-san.”

“You’re joking, right?” He says. “That’s **exactly** why they would. I wasn’t born yesterday, Yahaba, I’m impossibly aware that I’m getting the best friend special. I know they’re gonna try roasting me again.”
“Yeah.” Yahaba, finally, slows down and smiles. “But you didn’t exactly let them have their way, because you know how to answer them. I wish I could be more like that.”

“Like what?”

“Like not care when I’m being teased. Like you don’t.”

“But I do care.” He admits. “I care a whole damn lot.”

“Oh.” Yahaba says. “Since you look so cool and composed, I thought you don’t.”

“Looks can be deceiving, because I’m lowkey dying on the inside.” He says and laughs. It feels good to let it out, to share. “If you haven’t noticed already, I’ve been sweating bullets all night. I want your teammates to approve of me, and aside from Iwaizumi-san and you, I’m totally feeling the pressure.”

“It’s just them, though. Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san, I mean.” Yahaba says. “I hope you know my whole team already adores you, because when Iwaizumi-san came back from visiting you, he began reverting to his old self. He stopped avoiding us, started showing up for practice again, that sort of thing. And we all know it’s because of you.”

“Thank you for saying that, but I didn’t really do anything.”

“Akaashi, you did everything. You made him happy again. That’s something none of us thought we’d see for a really, really, long while.” Yahaba smiles. “Don’t mind that Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san are extra judgemental, because that’s just how they are.”

Yahaba busies himself with finishing his plate, while he busies himself replaying Yahaba’s words in his head. Relaxing his back against the seat, holding his beer bottle close to his chest, right to his fucking heart. It’s almost bigger than him. His heart feels huge.

While it’s nice to be acknowledged and appreciated, it’s even nicer to know Iwaizumi is looking better, feeling better, just — better. Happy.

“Hey, Akaashi, can I ask you something?”

“Sure.” He says. “You’re not gonna ask me again if I’m dating Bokuto-san, are you?”

“No.” Yahaba chuckles. “You already established that boundary with me. What I wanted to ask is—”

Yahaba doesn’t get to ask anything, because Matsukawa, standing right behind them, says. “Well, well, well, Akaashi, what you havin’ there?”

Somehow Seijouh’s talks among each other cease to exist - not even silverware clattering - and Akaashi’s got all eyes on him, afresh.

Round number two of his roast is beginning.

Akaashi puts on his boxing gloves and dancing shoes, ready.

“A conversation, Matsukawa-san.” He says, acerbic. “I was having a conversation.”

“Mmmyeah, sure,” Matsukawa says, “but I was referring to that deliciously looking dessert plate. Everyone here knows profiteroles are Takahiro’s favourite.”
“I didn’t know that, but as they are your husband’s favourite, I would recommend you to treat him to some.”

“Of course you wouldn’t know, Akaashi. How could you, when you’re an outsider?” Matsukawa sneers.

“Mattsun!” Iwaizumi’s voice rises, warning.

“What?” Matsukawa shrugs. “Hajime, he’s a guest here. That doesn’t make him one of us.”

“He’s my guest.” Iwaizumi says. “So quit hazing him, alright?”

“Hazing?” Matsukawa gasps, feigning shock. “Absolutely not. I’m just giving him a warm welcome. But,” He says, glancing back to Akaashi, “if he can’t take the heat, then maybe he should get out of the kitchen.”

Iwaizumi looks both outraged and apologetic, but Akaashi gives him a reassuring smile and a wink. He wants to handle this by himself, he wants the other Aoba Jousai members to know that he won’t be intimidated, that he’s able to hold his ground on his own, without Iwaizumi’s shield, without Iwaizumi lending him any hands.

There’s a reason why at Fukurodani, Bokuto, aside from volleyball Captain and Ace, is known as “Quicksilver”. Along with Konoha’s reckless gambling and both his boyfriend’s hustling ways, he’s learned exactly how to deal the cards he’s been handed.

“Matsukawa-san,” He says, “I don’t play with fire, because I don’t like to be burned. But if there’s something I deeply cherish in the kitchen, I’ll stay and take the heat, gladly. I’ll stay even if it’s completely drenched with gasoline and a match is struck, torching the whole thing down.” He licks his lips, tongue sand-textured and rough. “Do forgive me, if I came off too strong and left the impression I’m trying to be one of you, because I’m not, I’m perfectly content with my own school and team. The only thing I’m trying here is to be accepted, as we hold a mutual interest in Iwaizumi-san and it’d be really great if we could get along. However,” He says, staring Matsukawa directly in the eye, unblinking, “if you’ve already decided not to like me, there’s nothing I can do about that. And if you expect me to be a pretend stranger just for your sake, you’ll be greatly disappointed, as I have no intention of being anyone but myself.”

“Well,” Matsukawa says, eyes twinkling with delight, “you sure know to speak your mind, kiddo, dontcha?”

Kiddo?

Akaashi hardly thinks a one year age gap of a difference makes him more of a kiddo than Matsukawa himself. But, hey, he’s just rolling with the punches.

“As I have one, Matsukawa-san, I like to use it.”

To his utmost surprise, Matsukawa bends and kisses the top of his head, then ruffles his hair.

“We like you just fine.” Matsukawa grins. “We were just fucking with you to see if you’ll go cry to mama, or Hajime. But you did neither, so congrats, Akaashi. You passed the initiation test with flying colors.”

“That’s not surprising to me, as I don’t fail tests, ever.” He dares, smirking.

“Nerd!” Hanamaki yells.
“You know,” Matsukawa says, “you’re not Aoba Jousai, but you’re not too bad for Fukurodani.”

Gee. Was that supposed to be a compliment?

“Matsukawa-san,” He says, “we’re from different schools, not different worlds. I wasn’t dropped here in a spaceship.”

“Yeah, you were. On a spaceship of *love*.” Matsukawa, chuckling, gives him a noogie.

Ugh. So annoying, he hates those.

And for some reason, everyone is crying with laughter.

...The fuck?

“Shigeru!” Matsukawa says, not releasing Akaashi from his tight grip. “Take note of this one, you can learn a lot. Lord knows you need it.”

“Yes, Matsukawa-san.” Yahaba replies, eartips deep shade of pink.

Matsukawa, arm still wrapped around Akaashi’s neck, motions at their waiter.

“12 tequila shots, please.”

“Unfortunately, Sir, we only serve beer, wine and whiskey.”

“Then whiskey shots it is, my good man.” Matsukawa says.

“Yes, Sir. Certainly.” The waiter bows his head and leaves.

“Matsukawa-san, please—” Akaashi finally pulls away, standing straight. “Be right back.” He announces, and chases after their waiter, waiting for him to come out of the backroom.

The second their waiter appears, tray full of whiskey shots, Akaashi sort of stands in his way, blocking.

“Excuse me,” He clears his throat, “but just a few minutes ago, you failed to mention you serve champagne.”

“Yes, Sir, apologies about that.”

Yeah, right.

Apologies his ass.

“We’re celebrating a wedding at our table,” Akaashi says, “and I believe your restaurant chain offers free champagne or free meal - the newlywed special - and we would like to have the champagne option, please.”

“Of course, Sir. I’ll bring the glasses and bottles straightaway.” The waiter bows his head.

“Thank you.” Akaashi bows back, feigning the same kind of courteousness he’s receiving. Taking back his seat, Yahaba’s hand squeezes his arm.

“Akaashi, I was so worried you left your profiteroles—” What’s Yahaba’s deal with cream puffs, anyway? “-unattended, right in front of Matsukawa-san, but oh my God, you made him respect you so much by standing up for yourself that he didn’t even take one!” Yahaba grins, starry-eyed.
“Establishing boundaries,” He says, “very important. Vital.”

“Now that the person I wanted to raise my glass to is back at our table,” Matsukawa says, “let’s all drink to Akaashi, who is not too bad for Fukurodani.” He winks. “I’m toasting you with Bourbon, the strong stuff, as you are strong stuff. So here’s to you, kiddo. Welcome to the club.”

“To Akaashi!”

Touched to be toasted, he downs his shot and sucks in a breath, reaching for his water. He is so not used to drinking hard liquor without ice.

“Yahaba, what were you trying to ask me before?”

“Oh, right.” Yahaba says. “Uh, thing is, I’ve never been in a relationship before, so I was just wondering, isn’t the long distance difficult?”

He takes a few seconds, considering how to form his answer. Him dating Kuroo is not under wraps and everyone from their 2nd Generation Rat Pack is already suspecting him of dating Bokuto. Kinda strange how Yahaba actually knew, for sure, that he is in a polyamorous relationship, when he is certain Iwaizumi would never tell, Akaashi asked him not to.

Huh. Word about Kuroo and him dating must be traveling fast. It seems it’s not just Fukurodani’s boarding house, but volleyball players in general, being gossipy.

Definitely a high school thing.

“It doesn’t really feel difficult.” He replies. He can’t really tell, as it’s only been a day. Or maybe Yahaba is referring to the fact Kuroo is Nekoma. “Or do you mean, because we go to different schools?”

“Yeah.”

“To be fair, it’s not that far.” Akaashi says. “And aside from Skyping each other every night, we also use WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber, Snapchat the whole time.”

“I wish I had someone like that.”

“Just so you know,” He says, “it’s my first time being in a relationship too.”

“Really?” Yahaba blinks. “You just look so—”

“Cool and composed?”

“No, no,” Yahaba grins, “I meant you look and sound so mature, I just thought it comes from experience.”

“Nope.” He grins back. “No experience whatsoever.”

“Yeah, but still. You guys must trust each other so much, to do the whole long distance thing.”

“Yes, we do.” He nods. “Trust is the most important thing in any relationship. When you really love someone, you can go the distance.”

Iwaizumi turns to him with a smile, a soft rub on the back of his neck, and even softer, “Hey, you.”
“Hi.” Akaashi smiles back.

“Couldn’t help overhearing your conversation with Yahaba.” Iwaizumi says. “The whole “I can go the distance”, that was a Hercules reference, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san.” He chuckles. “It was.”

“Disney, a big improvement from The Beatles.”

“Wow, wow, wow,” Hanamaki says, “now hold on for a hot minute here. Akaashi likes The Beatles?”

“He loves them, Makki.” Iwaizumi says, voice filled with all the pain in the world. “They’re his favourite band. You wanna know what he did to me today? Haven’t seen him in weeks, first thing that happens is— wait, I’ll show you.”

Hanamaki waits to be shown and so do Matsukawa and Yahaba, as Iwaizumi takes his phone out, calls Akaashi and Twist & Shout starts ringing loudly from his pocket.

“Oh, my.” Hanamaki covers his big grinning smile with a hand. Then he shrieks in laughter. “I can totally hear the wedding bells, Hajime in the sky with diamonds”!

“Jesus, Makki, why?”

“Really?” Matsukawa grins. “Because it sounds to me more like divorce bells ringing.”

“Mattsun, not you too!”

The grooms and their best man go off on a tangent, talking about their whatevers, while Yahaba’s still looks kinda pouty, so Akaashi pats his back, smiles.

“Cheer up, Yahaba.” He says. “It’s a wedding, not a funeral.”

“Could’ve been yours.” Matsukawa jokes.

“What, my wedding or my funeral?” He jokes back.

“Funeral, obviously.”

Hanamaki laughs. “Hajime is so proper and protective of you, you’d probably have to wait for your wedding night to consummate—”

“Jesus Christ, Makki!” Iwaizumi scowls.

Uh... okay?

Yes, Iwaizumi is both those things, but what the Hell are they implying, that he needs Iwaizumi’s permission to have sex with Bokuto and Kuroo, like he’s his warden or something?

He doesn’t really get it.

“Akaashi,” Yahaba tries, “you meant “Cheer up, Yahaba” like I-could-finish-your-dessert kind of “Cheer up, Yahaba?”

“Sure.”

“Really?” Yahaba blinks.
“Yes,” He nods, “if you wouldn’t mind spending the rest of volleyball season on the bench, due to all your broken bones.”

Iwaizumi, who’d just been taking a sip of water, chokes, laughing.

Yahaba pouts further.

Then, finally - *finally* - their waiter brings champagne glasses and bottles, pops one open with a loud popping *thwack* and starts pouring.

“Oh,” Matsukawa says, “who ordered that?”

“The gentleman,” The waiter nods his head at Akaashi, “over there did. You have our entire staffs, here at Pizza Hut, congratulations and best wishes on your happy union.”

It’s hilarious to Akaashi, how he is the only Fukurodani there and yet all of Aoba Jousai’s eyes are blinking and staring, owl-like.

Iwaizumi, first to recover, leans over, whispering. “Akaashi, you didn’t have to do that.”

“Trust me, Iwaizumi-san, it’s no trouble at all.” He whispers back, smiling. “And since everyone is staring at us——”

“You. Not me.”

“— I think you should make a toast to Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san.”

“Me? Why me?” Iwaizumi asks. “I already gave my best man's speech——”

“Oh, by the way, Iwaizumi-san, I didn’t get a chance to congratulate you on it earlier, but it was really beautiful.”

“Akaashi, now’s not the time for by the ways!” Iwaizumi hisses. “Everyone’s still waiting! And now thanks to you, they’re staring at me too!”

“They’re your people, Iwaizumi-san!” He hisses back. “So I suggest you hurry up!”

“Oh, *fuck you*, Akaashi!”

“Yeah, maybe you could do that later, but now’s——”

“What.”

“It was a joke, Iwaizumi-san. You know, you make a funny, people laugh, ha ha.”

“That was a shitty joke, Akaashi, just like your shitty music taste——”

“Oh, *please*, you two,” Hanamaki rolls his eyes, “take all the time you need, it’s not like we’re all standing, glasses in hand, waiting for you or anything.”

Akaashi gives Iwaizumi a nudge and Iwaizumi, staring daggers, rises, joining everyone else.

He follows suit.

“Uhm,” Iwaizumi clears his throat, playing with one of the buttons on his suit. “… To the newlyweds!”
They all drink, take back their seats.

“Iwaizumi-san,” Akaashi whispers into his ear, “that was really deep.”

“Shut up, Akaashi.”

“You must’ve practiced that in front of the mirror for hours, because I felt it coming straight from your heart.”

“I made the perfect speech and now you ruined it with this—“

“You toasted your best man’s speech with beer.”

“Akaashi, we are having a wedding reception at fucking Pizza Hut. Who toasts with champagne at Pizza Hut?”

“We literally just did. It’s traditional to have a wedding with champagne.”

“Then why didn’t you order it earlier?” Iwaizumi scowls.

“I have my reasons.”

“Oh, you know what, Akaashi, if you’re just gonna be all mysterious about it, then fuck you all the harder.”

“That’s just the way I like it.” He smirks.

“I really didn’t need to know that.” Iwaizumi pulls a face. “But thank you for sharing.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Because of you everyone is still staring.”

“They’ve been staring at me all night, it’s only fair they stare at you too.”

“Oh, so just because you’re suffering, you have to make me suffer along with you?”

(Of course.” Akaashi smiles. “What else is friendship for?”

“Nice.” Iwaizumi, despite trying not to, also does.

“Iwaizumi-san, I could very easily make them stop staring at you.”

“How are you gonna do that?”

“I’ll tell you, but you have to say the word first.”

“The word first.”

Akaashi yanks on Iwaizumi’s necktie, pulling him closer, heads nearly bumping together, table-leveled, foreheads touching.

“It’s real rich of you to say my jokes are shitty, when yours are even worse.”

“No, they’re definitely better than yours.”

“That’s where you’re wrong.”
“Akaashi, we can do this all night long.”

“Lets.”

“Lets not. And what happened to you saying you can make them stop staring?”

“I said I can make them stop staring at you.”

“Well, okay, you sure knocked that one outta the park.” Iwaizumi snorts. “Now they’re actually laser beaming.”

“If it’s any consolation, I’m feeling the same.” Akaashi smiles, slender fingers still rubbing at the silk of his tie, holding him in place.

“It isn’t.” He mutters, but in all honesty, he doesn’t mind.

If he did, he would’ve pulled away from the get-go.

To Iwaizumi it’s surprising and quite strange, as he is really big on details, how he never really paid attention to just how plump Akaashi’s lips are, or their raspberry-pink color.

Then again he never really looked at Akaashi with zoom in focus, not like this, never like this. Akaashi’s big doll eyes, staring, the shade of them, an intoxicating blend of metal and dust.

They have some girls, at Seijouh, real and true mascara addicts, but none of them and their makeup products can hold a candle to Akaashi’s thick and long lashes, all natural, goddamn fucking miles long, how is it even possible they don’t get all tangled up every time Akaashi blinks? No, no, the comparison between those girls and Akaashi is almost laughable and crazy and there’s just zero room for it.

How could he possibly not see Akaashi’s peach skin, perfect, like goddamn wow, holy shit, Akaashi’s real pretty.

Hanamaki’s “Get a room!” sounds really far, background noise, like a detuned radio, Iwaizumi noticing all the Akaashi things he didn’t before, everything.

The way Akaashi’s tongue darts out, running over his upper lip, then the bottom one. A flash of pearly whites and then they move and they move and they move and he watches them moving.

Feeling slightly mindfucked, Iwaizumi hears nothing, he can’t really brain.

Maybe it has everything to do with the mix of alcohol, maybe it has everything to do with Akaashi, maybe it has everything to do with today.

He wonders, doesn’t know.

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Huh?” Iwaizumi blinks, like an idiot.

At least he’s responsive of his name.

Akaashi pulls slightly away, grinning. “You did not even hear one word of what I just said, did you?”

“No, I heard everything.”
“Bullshit.”

As Akaashi laughs, he feels his warm breath against his cheeks, burning, burning, burning, and realizes, finally, Akaash is just too damn close.

Iwaizumi removes himself from Akaashi’s personal space, sits bolt-tight straight, face sobered.

Trying to be.

“Fine. I didn’t even hear one word of what you just said.” Iwaizumi admits. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I sometimes zone out too. Especially when people are being annoying and—”

“No! You weren’t—“

“I know, Iwaizumi-san. I didn’t mean you you, just people.”

“You’re not just people to me, Akaashi.”

“I know that too. So you don’t have to say it.”

“No, I want to say it. I know you know, but I just, I need to say it, okay? I don’t want to make the same past mistake—” Iwaizumi’s voice cracks. “Not with you. Not with anyone. Not again.” He sighs. “Saying it makes me feel better.”

“Then,” He places his hand on Iwaizumi’s thigh, gently, like a flap of butterfly wings, “you say it as many times as you want, Iwaizumi-san. And I’ll say it too. You can keep repeating it, and I’ll repeat it right back.” He smiles. “Because you’re not just people to me either, Iwaizumi-san.”

Iwaizumi, nodding, blows out a ragged breath through his nostrils. Then he smiles, too.

“Now,” Akaashi says, “as you did give me ”the word first” before, it’s time for me make them stop staring at you.”

“Oh, God. Please tell me you’re not gonna do a magic trick.”

“I’m not gonna do a magic trick.”

“Good. Because those are really lame and knowing my teammates, they’re gonna taunt you forever and ever about it.”

“Rest assured, Iwaizumi-san, what I’m about to do next is gonna be a funny joke at their expense.”

“A funny ha-ha joke or your kind of funny?”


“I am.”

Akaashi rarely ever makes promises, but when he does, he keeps them.

Besides Iwaizumi and Yahaba, he’s already had everyone’s staring eyes on him already, all night long, so he doesn’t feel dreadful, he’s almost used to it.
“Matsukawa-san, Hanamaki-san,” He says, “I want you to know that I didn’t pay for the champagne, I just asked our waiter if they had any and ordered it.”

Their reactions are all hilarious, to him and him alone. He did tell Iwaizumi the whole thing, but Iwaizumi wasn’t really listening, which is why he is the only one smiling.

Matsukawa spits his gulp back into his glass. “Oh, you little Fukurodani shit, I’m gonna kill you!”

“Christ.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “When you said the joke was gonna be at their expense, I didn’t think you meant that literally.”

“No!” He says, voice rising to get everyone’s attention. He has it. Murderous attention, that is. “Guys, please calm down, I was only kidding about the champagne thing.”

“Oof!” Hanamaki sighs in relief. “Oh, thank fuck, you nearly gave me a heart attack. We’re all broke-ass bitches here, man.”

“Gotta respect the student life.” Matsukawa adds, fist patting the left side of his chest.

“Well, I’m not exactly Rockefeller’s son either, I’m just like you. A broke-ass bitch.” His lips curve up big, exposing his teeth. “I was only screwing with you.”

“Why?” Hanamaki asks. “Why would you do that?”

“Uh, maybe because Matsukawa-san and you have been screwing with me all night and I wanted to get you back?”

“Pettiness.” Matsukawa smirks. “Another common trait we’re all used to.”

Everyone laughs.

“Akaashi,” Iwaizumi says, “if you’re broke, how could you possibly afford champagne? It’s not just one bottle, there’s three.”

“Iwaizumi-san, it’s free of charge, as it’s the newlywed special.”

“But,” Hanamaki says, “champagne is not even on the menu. How could you know?”

“Like you already said, Hanamaki-san, I’m a nerd.” He grins. “This is what us nerds do, we know things.”

Matsukawa snorts. “You’re not like any of the nerds we know.”

“No, but, seriously, Akaashi,” Hanamaki says, “how did you know?”

“Our manager, Yukie, she’s very fond of pizza. And we’re all very fond of her, so whenever we go out, we take turns treating her. But she eats a lot and that was burning a hole in all our pockets, so I did a little research online.” He explains. “Pizza Hut is a chain restaurant that offers the newlywed special of choosing between a free meal or free champagne, so now whenever we go out, instead of paying, we all take turns pretending to be her husbands. And,” he shrugs, “I took the liberty of making the choice for you and asked for the champagne. Pizza Hut stops working at midnight and that leaves us with plenty of free champagne to be had.”

“Wow.” Hanamaki gives a whistle. “Had Issei and I been aware of that before, we wouldn’t have bought an entire case of it ourselves for the after party back at our place, but something else. Oh, whatever, champagne will do. Akaashi, that’s really cool.”
“Consider it a wedding gift from my teammates and I. You know, us not-too-bad-to-be-Fukurodani folk.”

They laugh.

“Wait, wait.” Matsukawa says. “Akaashi, if you knew about the newlywed special thing, why didn’t order it before? We could’ve been drinking champagne all night long.”

“I expected that question to come up. Iwaizumi-san asked me the same thing, why I didn’t order it earlier.” He licks his lips and smiles, at everyone. “It’s very simple, Matsukawa-san - I wanted to get your honest approval first, without the influence of the free liqueur. Although, to be fair, I planned on using that as my trump card, if you guys started lynching me.” He laughs, part-joking.

Matsukawa, laughing, just like everyone else, gets up from his seat.

“Hajime, I fuckin’ love this guy.”

Akaashi gets another unavoidable noogie, but it’s worth it.

Iwaizumi’s beaming sunshines.

-  

Many, many champagne glasses, toasted, aside from the obvious reason, to silly things, like “I bought new knee pads” and “I got a rejection letter from my dream college, but I don’t care” and bathroom breaks every now and again, Akaashi steps out of Pizza Hut, relishing the cool breeze on his skin.

Stretching his legs, he paces back and forth, before half-sitting against the empty bike rail.

He instantly gets a text message from Yahaba.

**Thursday, 04 April 2016; 22:49 pm**

“I wanted to join u for some fresh air, but Matsukawa-san is not letting me go ;__; He said I’ve had ur attention too long, so I can’t, bc it’s rude. Pls come back & save me ;A;”

He already knows he can be straight-forward with Yahaba, texts back a “Lol no. Fuck u, be strong :)” and laughs.

Then he bites on his lower lip and replays, for the thousandth time, the video Bokuto’d sent him hours ago, which is almost three minute long and consists of Kuroo and him making out, with the title “Kisses from Tokyo”. It’s all kinds of hot and steamy and— totally unfair, to be fair.

He’d shot back a “Hell is filled with people like you two ❤”, because, honestly, he’s at a goddamn wedding, can’t do a goddamn thing about the ample wetness he’s feeling inside his boxers.

God.

Why are both Miyagi and Tokyo in the mood to fuck with him tonight?

What did he do to deserve it?

Glancing down at his crotch, wondering if his hard-on is visible through his suit, Iwaizumi joins
“Hey, you.”

“Hi.”

“Akaashi, I’m sorry. For tonight, I mean. I wasn’t aware Mattsun and Makki would give you a hard time.”

“Don’t be, Iwaizumi-san. They didn’t. Okay, maybe just a little.” He chuckles. “But I was already expecting it. Comes with the best friend territory and all.” Another chuckle. “Yahaba told me you warned everyone to be nice to me. That was very considerate and kind of you.”

“I think that in itself did more harm than good. Which is strange, because you’ve met all my teammates before.”

“Not like this, though. The only time we’ve seen each other without a volleyball net between us is from Bokuto-san’s Halloween party. Do you remember, Oikawa-san told you Matsukawa-san and I looked like long lost brothers. And you said—”

“That you two look nothing alike.” Iwaizumi laughs. “I forgot about that.”

“It’s different now.” Akaashi says. And before Iwaizumi assumes he means Oikawa, adds. “Because I’m here with you.”

Iwaizumi doesn’t assume anything, nods a “I know.”

It’s almost like their minds are connected, reading the same mental wavelength.

It feels really good.

“Here.” Iwaizumi shrugs off his jacket and places it over his shoulders, before undoing his tie and mirroring Akaashi’s stance.

Akaashi accepts and nods his gratitude, knowing it doesn’t have to be vocalized.

“You and Yahaba seem to be hitting it off.”

“Yahaba’s great.”

Iwaizumi crosses his arms and listens to Akaashi explain about the 2nd Generation Rat Pack.

“You guys are doing the same silly thing, huh.” Iwaizumi laughs.

“Yes.” He grins. “Silly is exactly what it is, but that’s the part that makes it fun.”

“No, it’s really great.”

“I do feel kinda bad for Yahaba, though. Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san seem very keen on making him suffer, especially Matsukawa-san.”

“Yeah.” Iwaizumi shakes his head, smiling fondly. “First year fresh meat is their favourite kind of chew toy. You were fearless tonight, facing them both, head-on.” His smile broadens. “You charmed everyone back in there by sticking to your guns and being yourself.”

“That and the free booze.” He jokes.
"And the free booze, yes." Iwaizumi laughs.

"You know, Iwaizumi-san," he says, "I didn’t want to interrupt Matsukawa-san’s toast in my honor, because that would’ve been rude—"

"You are rude. The respectable kind of rude."

"— which is why I didn’t say anything. But I kept thinking how much I wanted to say that the reason why I’m “strong stuff” is because I learned that from you."

Iwaizumi blinks.

"Guess I’m saying it now. I look up to you, Iwaizumi-san. You’re the one that taught me how to be fearless—no, not fearless, but able to face my fears. I’ve told you before and I’ll tell you again— you’re the bravest person I know. You’re so brave and calm and in control." A reached out palm, he rubs Iwaizumi’s arm. “Had I been in your shoes today, I wouldn’t have been able to keep my game face on. I would’ve broken down halfway through the ceremony.”

Iwaizumi start blinking rapidly, trying to keep the glassiness away from his eyes. “I’ve literally been smiling the entire time. So much, that I can’t feel my face.”

"Smiles can be plastered, even when you’re falling apart on the inside."

"Are you implying—"

"I don’t imply things, I say them."

"—that I’m only pretending to be happy for my two best friends? Oh, fuck’s sake, Akaashi!" Iwaizumi snarls, fingers curled defensively, ready to throw a punch.

"I don’t take Psychology this year, but I tutor people that do. Iwaizumi-san, do you know what I learned about anger?"

"That you’re gonna feel mine if you don’t stop talking?"

"I’m serious."

"As am I. Or did that sound like a joke to you? You have a shitty taste in jokes, so that’s possible."

Answering a question with another question and trying to change the topic - a strategy Akaashi himself uses, a lot.

But he’s not letting Iwaizumi off the hook.

"Anger is a secondary emotion that’s triggered by primary emotions, like fear or sadness. A defense mechanism that protects you from feeling what you really feel, deep down. It’s autonomic. Which means—"

"I know what all the big words mean, Akaashi, quit acting so fucking superior all the time!"

Iwaizumi is just so stubborn.

Then again, he is too.

"You quit acting so goddamn defensive all the time, Iwaizumi-san, because it’s total crap and I’m not falling for it!"
“Ha!” Iwaizumi places his hands on his hips. “You read a textbook and now you think you’re Freud?”

Iwaizumi is in the mood to fight and argue and be angry, because it’s easier.

Akaashi isn’t in the mood for any of it, he just wants to help. Unlike Bokuto, he doesn’t get gut feelings, he uses logic. And logic tells him it’s time for the gentle approach.

“No, Iwaizumi-san.” He sighs. “I know your happiness for Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san is genuine, but I also know you envisioned this day to happen with Oikawa-san by your side.” He says, voice cotton-soft. “This whole night your teammates made sure I know my place, that I’m not one of you. But that’s a good thing, because with me, you needn’t worry about dampening your team’s spirit and morale or whatever it is that prevents you from displaying how you truly feel.”

Iwaizumi sighs, doesn’t say jackshit.

“I’m your friend and as one, I want you to know you can be a 100% real with me. Don’t bottle yourself up and box your emotions, because it’s okay to feel emotional and vulnerable. It’s okay not to be okay.”

Iwaizumi sniffs.

“You don’t always have to be the pillar, Iwaizumi-san. So please don’t be afraid to lean on me.”

Akaashi doesn’t wait to see Iwaizumi’s shoulders slump and then shake, no, he immediately turns over and embraces Iwaizumi, hugging away the barrier Iwaizumi has been trying so desperately to keep between them, from him, from the world.

Akaashi, fingertips against the back of Iwaizumi’s neck, presses down, showing Iwaizumi he can rest his weary bones, that he can handle the weight, that heavy feel. And of course he can, how could he possibly not, when Iwaizumi himself taught him that?

“It’s okay, Iwaizumi-san, you can let it all out. I promise it’ll make you feel better. It’s okay. I’m here for you.”

Iwaizumi stops holding back. He clutches at Akaashi, dead-tight, and Akaashi feels hot tears against his neck, wet, on his shoulders and arms and chest. Iwaizumi holds onto him like his safety swim-belt, a drowner at sea, far away from the shore, Akaashi the only thing keeping him afloat, Akaashi’s soft and gentle words assuring him that his head won’t get submerged, he needn’t worry about a thing, because it’s okay, Akaashi is there for him.

Akaashi sounds so damn certain in his reassurance that it calms Iwaizumi. He believes him.

Tears dry, Iwaizumi feels cathartic, is the first to let go. Wiping the remaining traces of sadness away from his eyes, he takes a breath, lung-full.

“I don’t know if you noticed, but I still can’t talk about Oikawa.”

“You do talk about him.”

“Yes. But only with Kageyama and you.” Iwaizumi says. “I can’t do it with everyone else. I tried, but it just felt wrong. I don’t know, maybe it’s all in my head.”

“Iwaizumi-san, you shouldn’t force yourself to if it makes you feel uncomfortable. You’re entitled
to take all the time you need, to do things at your own pace.”

“I don’t know whether to be sad or happy when I talk about Tooru with other people. It’s like if I’m happy when I talk about him, certain people judge and expect me to be crying my eyes out. When I’m upset when talking about him, it makes people uncomfortable.” Iwaizumi sighs. “I can’t talk about things he told me in confidence, because I don’t want to give his secrets away, because they’re his secrets. I just don’t quite know how to remember him in conversation. It doesn’t mean I don’t remember him up here,” He taps the side of his temples, “all the time. And here.” He taps the left side of his chest, his heart. “Always here.”

Akaashi nods, understanding.

“Some days are good. I feel almost back to normal again. But others are just—” Iwaizumi sighs. “Last time we saw each other, you promised me— no, not exactly a promise, but— you said I will enjoy myself again. Not just in pretense, but genuinely. And you were right. I expected today to be one of the really rough days, but it wasn’t. I discovered I’m really enjoying myself, I’m not just pretending to laugh and find things mildly amusing, I’m genuinely happy. And that makes me even happier.”

“Me too, Iwaizumi-san.” He smiles. “It makes me really happy to hear that.”

“You know, Mattsun and Makki’s original wedding date was two weeks ago. I have a feeling - no, I’m sure - they changed it for my sake. I have a feeling they felt bad for me and didn’t want me to be alone, so they waited until you got here.” Iwaizumi says. “And I have to admit that I’m real glad they did, because I sincerely doubt I would’ve been strong enough to cope had you not been by my side today to support me.” His eyes catch Akaashi’s. “Now tell me that doesn’t make you feel like I’m all kinds of pathetic and self-centered and a shitty best friend.”

Oh.

It’s time for Iwaizumi to receive some tough love, which Yukie taught him best how to lay down, thick.

He slaps Iwaizumi right between the shoulder blades. “Pull yourself together, Iwaizumi-san, and stop being ridiculous!” He says, nostrils flaring. “You are neither of those things and I have never, in all the time we’ve known each other, thought such things about you. You are the bravest, most selfless person I know and you’re the type of friend everyone deserves to have. Iwaizumi-san, I’m not only proud to know someone like you, I’m proud to have you in my life as such a close friend.”

“You did it again.” Iwaizumi says, smiling small. “Akaashi, how are you always so damn good at finding my thread?”

Mouth corners curved up, he shrugs. “I’m just always that good, Iwaizumi-san.”

“You must be magic or something.”

“I’d rather not be, as you said magic is lame, earlier.”

“No, magic tricks are lame. Magic isn’t.”

They grin at each other.

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Akaashi.”
“You know what I’m going to say next.”

“Yes. Don’t.”

“But I have to.”

“No, you don’t.”

“It’s our thing.”

Iwaizumi arches an amused eyebrow. “We have a thing now?”

“We have things, Iwaizumi-san. Not just the one.”

“Like me calling you princess, that’s a thing?”

“No.” He shakes his head. “That’s your thing. I’m talking about you-and-me things.”

“Like what?”

“Like you saying “hey, you” and me saying “hi”.”

“Okay, that’s a thing.”

“Our thing.”

“Okay, that’s our thing.” Iwaizumi crosses his arms, smiling. “What else you got?”

“You don’t baby me, I don’t baby you. We don’t sugarcoat it for each other.”

“Yes, we have that.”

“We also have The Beatles thing.”

“That is so not our thing.”

“But it is.”

“No, Akaashi, that’s your thing.”

“You like beetles.”

“Not The Beatles.”

“The only differences are the “the” at the front and the spelling.”

“The “the” at the front and the spelling are what make all the difference.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Akaashi.”

“You’ll get by with a little help from your friends.”

Iwaizumi groans. “Did you really have to say it?”

“Of course I did. It’s our thing.”
“Fuck you, Akaashi.”

“You saying “fuck you, Akaashi” is also your thing.”

“It’s prompted entirely by you, so I’d call it our thing.”

“Or maybe, Iwaizumi-san, you’re just trying to make it become our thing?” He wiggles his eyebrows.

“Oh, just fuck off.”

They’re really getting better at this, with each other, almost like playing tennis, the bounce-bounce of dialogue.

That’s so good.

Iwaizumi leans back against the bike rail. “I’m the best man. I should head back.” He adds, sighing.

“So go.”

“I don’t feel like it.”

“So don’t go.”

“Helpful, Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san, If you really wanted to go back in, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

For a while, neither of them says anything, enjoying the night air and each other’s presence, the comfortable silence.

Then Iwaizumi turns over, fastens a button on the jacket he lent Akaashi and embraces him.

Before he can ask what the hug is for, he feels Iwaizumi’s warm breath against the shell of his ear, ticklish.

“Akaashi. The suit. I know you only put it on for my sake and I want to thank you for doing that, because a part of me really felt like Tooru was here with us, tonight. I also want to thank you for not running in the other direction, when Mattsun and Makki were being... Mattsun and Makki. And I want to thank you for looking out for me and letting me lean on you. I’m so very lucky to have someone like you during such a difficult time in my life. No, in my life in general.”

He already knew all those things, of course, but Iwaizumi really wanted to tell him. He really wanted him to hear.

And so he listens and hears and then tightens his grip around Iwaizumi’s lower back, before letting go.

“We look out for each other, Iwaizumi-san.” He smiles.

“That’s another one of our things.” Iwaizumi smiles back.

“You learn fast.”

“You’re not the only quick learner, princess.”
“Guess you’re not too bad for Aoba Jousai.”

“And I guess you’re not too bad for Fukurodani.”

Laughing at inside jokes is the best part.

Akaashi watches, gleeful, as Iwaizumi tries to fix his tie.

“What are you doing?” He asks and he’s very entertained.

“My tie. Or does it look like I’m picking grapes?”

He shakes in silent laughter.

“Are you laughing at me?”

“Absolutely. The mighty Iwaizumi Hajime, who can do impossible knots with ropes can’t tie his own tie.”

“Shut up, Akaashi, I’m doing it.”

“Struggling, Iwaizumi-san, is what you are.”

“Am not.”

“It looks like you’re braiding a lanyard.”

Iwaizumi grunts, frowning at his tie.

“As fun as this is, let me help you fix it.”

“I’ve got it, Akaashi.”

“No, you don’t.” He slaps Iwaizumi’s hands away and lets his long and slender fingers move. His eyes on Iwaizumi’s tie, his mouth smiling at Iwaizumi’s scowl.

“You don’t have to look so goddamn smug about it.”

“That’s just how I look.”

“I’m gonna have the same face when I find out all the shit you can’t do.”

He taps Iwaizumi’s tie back into place, smirking. “You’ll never have that face, because I can do everything. I’m magic, remember?”

“As magic as you are, everyone’s got a chink in their armor. And I’ll definitely find yours, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi smirks, too.

“I’m quaking in my shoes, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Glad to know I have that effect on you.”

Still standing so close, they’re interrupted— no, not interrupted as there is nothing to be interrupted— joined by the rest of Seijouh, the last Pizza Hut customers, the place turning down their lights as soon as they step out.

“Yo, Romeo and Juliet!” Matsukawa says as Hanamaki places Akaashi’s - technically Oikawa’s -
jacket on top of Iwaizumi’s shoulders, with a “You two are matching now!”, grinning. “Hajime, you can confess to him later when you go back to yours. Because now,” He throws an arm over Yahaba’s unexpectant shoulders, pulling tight and taking the lead, “is time to party.”

Confess?
Confess what?

Akaashi, blinking, all kinds of confused, waits for Hanamaki to loop his hand with Watari and falls into a stepping line behind them, next to Iwaizumi, before mouthing a silent “Confess what?”

“They think I’m sweet on you.” Iwaizumi whispers, as they all trudge on forward.

Well.

That definitely explains all the remarks and the teasing, it was directed at Iwaizumi.

Now everything makes sense.

He can’t help himself, throws his head back and laughs. “Iwaizumi-san, I think this is the first time that phrase has been used since the Paleozoic era.”

“Oh, my.” Hanamaki turns his head back, smiling broad. “Akaashi, you’re a dino nerd too, aren’t you?”

“Hanamaki-san, while I am a nerd, what makes you think I’m a dinosaur one?”

“You just said—”

“Hanamaki-san,” He says, “dinosaurs are in the Mesozoic era.”

Hanamaki blinks. “Ha?!”

“Different eras, Makki.” Iwaizumi says.

“Did I hear that right?” Matsukawa yells. “The very first difference? Akaashi?”

“Yes, Matsukawa-san?”

“What would you pick between aliens and dinosaurs?”

He understands why he’s being asked that question. He finally understands - the comparisons, all night, the things in common.

While Akaashi can see they are well-meaning and flattering, it still feels all kind of insulting. Because, yes, while Oikawa and him share a lot of common traits and similarities, at the end of the day, he’s his own person with his own identity.

He doesn’t want Iwaizumi’s teammates to think of him as a watered down version of a replacement. Just a someone that is there, similar enough, to fill the gap.

And, especially of all, he doesn’t want Iwaizumi to think that. Don’t his teammates realize they’re not doing Iwaizumi any favors by putting things like that in his head?

No. No, that’s crazy, he’s just being oversensitive and paranoid.

That’s not what this is.
It can’t be.

Because Iwaizumi would never ever insult Oikawa’s memory like that.

Iwaizumi simply finds comfort in the similarities. Just like he does with Kageyama.

Akaashi doesn’t know how to bring that up in conversation with Iwaizumi, as it’s a very touchy topic and he really doesn’t know how Iwaizumi would take it.

But he still feels the needs to put a stop to the whole comparison thing and the only option he sees out of the current situation is to lie through his teeth.

He enjoys Jurassic Park as much as the next guy and while he doesn’t know jackshit about dinosaurs, he finds them pretty neat.

He’s just about to answer Matsukawa, when Iwaizumi replies for him.

“He prefers aliens, Mattsun!”

“Still no difference then!” Matsukawa laughs.

No, everyone laughs, not just Matsukawa.

Akaashi isn’t laughing. He feels like somebody poured a bucket full of ice and water over him, like he was given the ice-bucket challenge without his knowledge.

For the very first time tonight, he feels totally out of place.

Iwaizumi, of course, notices something’s up. But he’s excellent at poker-facing and Iwaizumi doesn’t read him well enough to notice that it’s a big something that’s up.

Not yet anyway.

“Hey, you.” Iwaizumi’s gentle hand and whisper are at his side. “Feeling alright?”

“Hi.” He pulls a small smile that’s believable. “Feeling great, just a little tired. Yourself?”

“Myself too.”

They stop walking as they’ve reached their destination - right under the glow of a neon pink sign shaped like the mudflap girl. Akaashi’s mood immediately lifts and he laughs.

Matsukawa and Hanamaki get married and this is the first thing they do - bring them all to a goddamn fucking strip club.

Incredible.

3rd years all filed in already, Matsukawa, still holding Yahaba’s head under his arm, sneers at him.

“Akaashi, you know Hajime’s our best man, so Takahiro and I gotta buy him lap dances.”

“You do that, Matsukawa-san.”

“What’s the matter, you the jealous type or something?”

“No, I’m the underage type, just like Yahaba and Watari.”
“Aw, fuck.” Matsukawa looks at Hanamaki. “We forgot about that.”

“Oh, who cares?” Hanamaki grins. “Let’s ditch the young ones for a while, they’ll be alright waiting back here for us senpais.” He stares at Watari. “You’ll be alright, won’t you?”

“Yes, Hanamaki-san.” Watari stammers. “We’ll be alright.”

“No.” Iwaizumi says. “Absolutely not. We came together, we stick together.”

Matsukawa smirks. “Of course you don’t want to ditch your precious Akaashi even for a second.”

“No, I don’t. I’ll wait here too.”

“Iwaizumi-san,” He says, “you don’t have to do that. Go inside, we’ll be fine here. It’s Hanamaki-san and Matsukawa-san’s wedding day, you can’t say no.”

“I can, Akaashi, and I believe I just did.” Iwaizumi crosses his arms in a manner.

“Well,” Hanamaki looks at Matsukawa, “I suppose all the lap dances Hajime wants are from Akaashi.”

“Christ, Makki!” Iwaizumi pinches the bridge of his nose.

“Alright. I’ll just go get the others.” Hanamaki says and disappears inside.

“This sucks.” Yahaba pouts. “I can’t get in a strip club to watch pretty ladies get naked. We don’t have a girl manager. Everything just sucks.”

“Oh?” Matsukawa smirks. “Is that what troubles you, Shigeru? Because I can put on a wig for you and wear a real nice flowy dress that accentuates my chest. But there’s nothing I can do about the massive cock between—”

“Jesus fucking Christ, Mattsun!” Iwaizumi groans.

“—my legs. But I haven’t gotten any complaints, so you’d probably like it.” Matsukawa winks.

“Matsukawa-san,” Yahaba says, “I don’t need that kind of generosity from you.”

“Wow, you sit next to Akaashi for a few hours and finally start answering back?” Matsukawa grins. “Akaashi is good influence on two of our members now. Nice. I’m impressed.”

“Matsukawa-san,” He says, “you should be. I’m an impressive guy.”


No. It’s the furthest thing from excellent, at least by his book.

Unfortunately, he’s the only one reading it.

Matsukawa and Hanamaki’s one bedroom apartment is perfect for 2 people. With 12, it’s all kinds of overcrowded and packed and bursting at the seams. They each get a bottle of champagne and somebody puts on loud music, blasting, the type of stuff the neighbors will be complaining about, and the after-party begins to begin.

Akaashi and Iwaizumi are only allowed to leave after their bottles are completely empty - a newlywed’s careful instruction upon arrival for all.
They opt out of calling an Uber or hailing a cab, decide it’s best to go on foot. Some walking definitely ought to do them good.

It’s just so fucking far.

“I think,” Akaashi stutters out, laughing, “I should’ve followed Watari and Yahaba’s example and fallen asleep on the floor.”

“No, leaving was the right choice. They would get woken up either from Mattsun and Makki’s nasty pranks or wedding sex.” Iwaizumi says and laughs.

Why does Iwaizumi live so fucking far?

“God, I feel so screwed right now.” Iwaizumi says.

“No, I love getting screwed.” He says. “But this isn’t it.”

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“You don’t always have to share everything with me.”

“What else is friendship for?”

They’re both stumbling, not knowing who is leaning onto whom for support, and laughing like idiots.

They paint quite the picture.

A quick pit stop at 7-Eleven for some canned coffee, Akaashi insists they sit for a bit.

“Come, Iwaizumi-san.” He pats the bench next to him. “Indulge me, please.”

“Why?” Iwaizumi asks, sitting.

“Because I want to watch the sunrise.”

“It’s just the sun rising, Akaashi, you’ve seen it before.”

“Yes, but not here in Miyagi. And we’ve never watched the sunrise together.”

“There’s plenty of things we haven’t done together.”

“I agree.” Akaashi offers his can. “Here’s to changing that.”

They clink.

A minute or two later, Iwaizumi starts bouncing his knees, shaking the entire bench.

_Jiggle, jiggle, jiggle._

“Stop.” His hand rests on Iwaizumi’s right knee. “Iwaizumi-san, you have to learn how to appreciate the small things in life. Watching the sunrise is one of them. Look at how beautiful—”

“The sun’s beautiful everywhere, Akaashi. Let’s go.”
“—the colors are. Look at that soft hue, the scattering of light.”

“Great. Can we go home now?”

“Don’t be so ignorant of nature, Iwaizumi-san.”

“I’m not ignorant, Akaashi, I’m just not as arty as you. I pick sleep over watching the sun rising.”

“I also love sleep. And what’s the point of rushing, when you’re on break too, we can both sleep in.”

“I thought you wanted to surprise your parents today?”

“Ohh.” He pulls a face. “I forgot about that.”

Iwaizumi sighs. “Just tell me what time, so I can set my alarm. I know you sleep through yours, but I’ll wake you.”

“I like to be woken up with breakfast in bed.”

“Princess, there’s about minus 99% of that happening.”

“How rude of you, when I’m a princess.”

“Just shut up and give me the time.”

“My dad’s having a signing at 9, so I guess 11:30 would do.”

“So I’ll kick your ass straight-outta bed at 11:30 sharp.”

“I’m not looking forward to it.”

“Tough.”

It’s nearly 6 in the morning when they reach Iwaizumi’s house and then his bedroom.

As they begin stripping off their suits, Iwaizumi, of course, can’t keep in the annoyed grunt of “Had it not been for you and your arty bullshit sunrise, we would’ve been asleep half an hour ago.”

And because Akaashi is Akaashi, he doesn’t keep in the “At least I can do my own tie.” He then adds. “And if you’re gonna blame it on anyone, blame it on your best friends and their stupid champagne rule.”

“You can’t say no to newlyweds on their wedding. You said it yourself.”

“And yet you said no to the strip club.”

“Yes, I did.” Iwaizumi smirks. “It’s called best friend privilege.”

Akaashi knows exactly how to wipe that smirk right off.

“Iwaizumi-san, I hope you’re not expecting any lap dances from me like Hanamaki-san said you’d be. At least not tonight, as I’m so tired. Maybe tomorrow. But I’m not making any promises.”

It totally works, Iwaizumi is gawping, half-annoyed, half-disbelieving.
Akaashi, snickering, pushes his fingers up against Iwaizumi’s dropped chin.

“Oh my God, I’m gonna kill you.”

“Not if I kill you first.”

“Oh yeah?” Iwaizumi sneers. “Please, Akaashi, hit me with your best shot.”

For a puny little punk, Akaashi’s got a mean right gutpuncher. He socks Iwaizumi right in the sternum, surprising his ass up real good, and they both fall to the floor shrieking, trying to strangle each other in nothing but their underwear, laughing loud and long and hiccupped.

It’s an unavoidable outcome, not like Akaashi expected anything different than him ending up with his back on the floor, body pinned down by Iwaizumi’s weight, arms pinned down above his head, Iwaizumi grinning down at him like a shark.

“Do you surrender?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san. Fukurodani is waving the white flag of surrender, well done.”

Iwaizumi, laughing like a baby at bubbles, gets up and offers him a helping hand.

He accepts, allowing Iwaizumi to haul him up.

“That was really fun.” Iwaizumi smiles. “I actually had a lot of fun today and it’s all thanks to you, Akaashi.”

“Not all thanks to me, but,” He smiles back, “I had a lot of fun today too, Iwaizumi-san. And by the way.” He points at his suitcase. “My sleeping bag’s somewhere in there.”

Iwaizumi snorts. “You’re telling me this by-the-way for a reason, which I’m failing to see.”

“When Oikawa-san and you visited us at Fukurodani, Bokuto-san and I took your sleeping bags and slept on the floor, while you got my bed.”

Iwaizumi hops into his bed. “Don’t be so petty, Akaashi.”

“I’m not being petty, Iwaizumi-san, I’m being fair. Which you are not.” He scowls. “I’m your guest! I shouldn’t have to sleep on your floor.”

“And I’m not asking you to, am I?” Iwaizumi says, pulling his blanket covers away, inviting. “Come on, man, I don’t mind. My bed’s big enough for the two of us.”

That’s true. It’s a king-sized bed, nothing like the single ones they have at Fukurodani.

But still.

“Iwaizumi-san, are you sure?”

Iwaizumi sighs, turns over. “Good night, Akaashi. Enjoy the hard floor.”

No, fuck that.

He joins Iwaizumi into his bed, making sure to stick his cold feet on Iwaizumi’s lower back.

“Ugh!” Iwaizumi’s shudder makes him laugh heartily. “The fuck is wrong with you?!”
“Good night, Iwaizumi-san.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Well, what do you know. I'm hooked on the Iwaaka interactions and I'm milking it out for all it's worth. Thank you, guys, for continuing to read and kudo and comment, I'm forever grateful and appreciative of it ;A; It totally fuels me to write and update more, so thank you ❤ Have a lovely and too spoopy weekend~

Iwaizumi often used to create scenarios in his head about what their future would be like, together. Oikawa, Mattsun, Makki and him, four boys on top of the world, unstoppable.

After graduation, he imagined they would all attend the same college and share dorm rooms, doubtless. Wondering what kind of majors they would all pick. Oikawa, of course, of course, would continue volleyball professionally - unless his bad knee got in the way.

Because, Iwaizumi, even in make belief and pretend, dreaming big, wanted to keep things as real as possible. Just because.

No longer offering Oikawa just his comforting words and hugs and kisses, especially at Oikawa’s invitingly bare nape of neck, his weak spot, where Iwaizumi knew he loved to be kissed the most, he imagined he would ask Oikawa out, nice and proper, officially. Then when they - no, Oikawa, duuh - would announce to everyone they were dating, nobody would be surprised, because that’s always been in the cards for them, everyone said so, everyone thought so.

And after living on their own, Iwaizumi imagined he would do an excellent job of creating the perfect date night for Oikawa, before getting on one knee and popping the question. Oikawa would cry, emotional, while Iwaizumi would laugh, lovingly, the happiest, and point out what an ugly cryer Oikawa was. He wasn’t really, but Iwaizumi wouldn’t miss out on an opportunity to tease him, just like Oikawa never did.

Mattsun and Makki, he imagined, would definitely insist they got married on the same day, because that wouldn’t just be happiness shared, but happiness quadrupled. Oikawa would never allow such a thing, obviously, because he would never allow anyone, not even his best friends, to steal his thunder. Nobody could. Nobody would ever dare to. Nobody ever did.

After their big day, he imagined they would consider getting a pet and Oikawa being a crazy cat lady in the making would plead and beg in that annoyingly soft and perfect whine Iwaizumi could never say no to, please, Iwa-chan, please. But Iwaizumi would be strong, he would put his foot down and say they either get a dog or no pets. Oikawa would relent, but just this once, Iwa-chan. And so a dog they would get.
Then Iwaizumi imagined they would talk about kids and while he would like to adopt, Oikawa would insist on using a surrogate mother. *Iwa-chan, how dare you, my perfect genes need to be passed on!*. If they had a girl, Oikawa would have a difficult time picking the name, because he would want their little angel to bear the name of fellow angels, his mother or his sister. And as pricey as it would be, Iwaizumi would work his ass off to be able to afford for them to have two perfect little girls, so Oikawa wouldn’t have to choose.

Iwaizumi would forever smile at the thought of Oikawa being a father; he would have been terrific. He could imagine Oikawa being incredibly patient while helping their children with their homework at the kitchen table. He could imagine Oikawa being overprotective if their daughters ever brought a boy or a girl, a significant other, home. He could imagine never hearing the end of it, and he imagined he would tell Oikawa to calm down, because they shouldn’t forget what it was like to be young, too. And he imagined his reassurances at Oikawa would have his face masked away by the evening newspaper propped up at his knee, because that’s what grown-up dads did, reading the evening news. And he imagined he wouldn’t be able to read a single letter of a word, because he would be seeing splotches of red and green all across the paper and his eyelids, the same kind of anger and jealousy he imagined Oikawa would be feeling, only a thousand times stronger.

Imagine if, imagine if, imagine if… he was imagining and remembering old stories and details, inventorying all the souvenirs he allowed himself to keep without a trace, all locked up in his head and lodged inside his ribs, hidden, but not forgotten. He had so many to choose from, so many years, so many memories.

But Iwaizumi needed to stop living his life in his head. He needed to stop dreaming impossible dreams. It would never get him anywhere.

And in March, after his weekend trip to Tokyo with Kageyama, he finally stopped. Akaashi dropped all the cold, harsh truths on him he didn’t want to, but needed to hear.

Sometimes Iwaizumi would find himself wondering - had he cancelled on Akaashi and not gone to Fukurodani, would he still be incorporating his dreams and fantasy sequences inside his head? Would he still be completely out of touch with reality?

Yes. Most definitely.

But Iwaizumi dismisses those thoughts, banishes them away, because they are no good for him. Why bother with such scenarios, when he *did* go to Tokyo, it’s a done fact, just zip up your fly and say goodbye, thank you very much for coming.

He wants to be healthy again and he knows he’s on the recovery track. Baby steps is what he is taking, but Iwaizumi is proud of his progress. Because he’s no longer standing still, or worse - looking back over his shoulder, at all the could have, would have, should haves.

He no longer fights the nighttime when it comes, with tons of freshly brewed coffee pots he would drown himself into, anything to battle and avoid the shut-eye period, a sleepless night filled with the same kind of nightmares, drenched in cold sweat, waking his parents up with screams in the dark.

He, now, sleeps peaceful.

Because, while Oikawa still comes to his dreams, he no longer haunts them.

Oikawa comes to him, soft and peaceful. An uninvited, but very welcome guest. Always.
Oikawa comes, quiet, not wanting to disturb. He sits down and looks into the darkness, at Iwaizumi, to see him, watching over him while he sleeps. And when he’s satisfied, needs fulfilled, he kisses him goodbye, _until next time, Iwa-chan_, and leaves.

Whenever Iwaizumi is having the worst of days, Oikawa always knows, those are the days he visits him in dreamland. Oikawa doesn’t come empty handed, he brings him a happy memory. Them, not even 6 years old, playing the floor is lava. Lazer tag with Matsun and Makki. Building blanket forts to hide away from the crackling and lightning thunderstorm outside. Watching Mighty Mouse, while drinking hot cocoa with those tiny little heart-shaped marshmallows that melt inside.

Different things, every time, but something Iwaizumi can smile about in the drowsy in-between period. And even when fully awoken, Iwaizumi would still be momentarily comforted, before the loneliness hit him like a ton of bricks.

Of course, Iwaizumi knows it’s all in his subconscious and it’s not real. But he has no control over what he dreams about. And so he takes his blessings where he can, taking in the little bits and pieces of comfort the only place he can, in his sleep. That’s the only place they can still be together.

It’s what happens when twin souls - soulmates - are suddenly and cruelly separated. No longer sleeping in the same old room, cracking jokes and rattling wheezes, under the same white ceiling. Iwaizumi’s bed has been hideously empty for nearly four months, just like his heart, and Matsun and Makki’s wedding must’ve taken it’s toll on him, as tonight Oikawa is being particularly generous.

Because even after Iwaizumi slides his finger against his phone, silencing the alarm, he can still feel Oikawa’s presence, lingering, almost tangible.

He wants, so desperately, to open his eyes, to see Oikawa again, just once more, but he knows the warm and fuzzy feeling would vanish the second he blinks.

Iwaizumi knows that in a few moments it’ll all go away, so before it does, he decides to relish and enjoy it, as much, and as long as he can.

His hands automatically reach out and to his utmost surprise, they’re not grasping at empty air, but at a warm body, right next to his, and it’s silk-skinned and soft and Iwaizumi clings to it, molds his own against it. Nervous, but daring, he allows his hands to move up and feel the soft hair, letting his fingertips bury themselves into the familiar texture.

Eyes tightly shut, he clutches on, a silent _please, please, please, stay with me and don’t leave me, Tooru._

...Tooru?

Tooru’s not here anymore.

His brain kicks into gear, doing the full throttle.

He realizes the body he has wrapped himself all over like a boa constructor, the scent and then the voice mumbling “Mmfph, Iwaizumi-san” instead of “Iwa-chan” are all wrong.

Not wrong.

Different. Unfamiliar.
Shock is one helluva drug, because Iwaizumi, wide awake, removes himself from Akaashi’s still sleeping form and the bed like he is at the Olympics, jumping hurdles.

Luckily, Akaashi’s good memory only works when he’s awake and he’s only about 15% human before getting caffeine in his system, so he won’t remember shit.

Feeling not exactly guilt, but something, Iwaizumi heads down to the kitchen. Fixing a fresh pot of coffee, he busies himself preparing a breakfast tray. He plucks three oranges, directly from the garden and then, not so much on a whim as much as out of habit, a lilac hydrangea, which he places in the same matching glass as the freshly squeezed orange juice.

He’s halfway up the stairs, when he suddenly halts, remembering the last time he did this, breakfast in bed. That wretched December morning before everything changed.

Iwaizumi’s stomach drops and his knuckles turn white from clutching the tray, so it doesn’t drop, too.

No. He’s not doing that for Akaashi, that’s not going to be one of their things. It was a thing, used to be, between Oikawa and him, it was theirs.

Returning back to the kitchen, all at once he feels like a traitor for even considering bringing Akaashi breakfast in his bedroom. The very thought of it, of sharing that with someone other than Oikawa, disgusts him.

Sighing, Iwaizumi gives himself a few moments, before he yells. “There’s coffee and breakfast downstairs!”

Akaashi joins him five minutes later and as he passes by, yawns loudly without covering his mouth, but it’s minty fresh. Had he given Iwaizumi a whiff of sour breath doing that, Iwaizumi would’ve punched his rude little mouth tightly shut.

Akaashi is sleepy-pretty, hair sticking out in all directions, eyelids heavy. He’s wearing a faded Ramones shirt that is about three sizes too big, hanging loose at his shoulders, exposing his clavicle. It makes him look all small, like a frail baby bird, but Iwaizumi knows that not to be the case. The big tee is hiding away the actual, physical strength he discovered to be there, last night, during their bout of wrestling. Akaashi’s a lot tougher than he looks and it makes Iwaizumi feel proud. He’s so not the same scared, helpless little boy that was being harassed in their Fukurodani gym all those months ago.

Akaashi doesn’t greet good morning, doesn’t say shit, takes a seat at the table and picks up his steaming mug of coffee between both hands, taking a few sips, before downing the entire thing.

Iwaizumi, who’d been relaxing his back against the wall, uncrosses his arms and without hopping off the kitchen counter, reaches for the coffee pot and pours Akaashi a refill.

“I like your shirt.” Iwaizumi says.”The Ramones are great. But it’s a little too big on you, don’t you think?”

“I like big things, Iwaizumi-san.”

… Why is he always saying such things. Just why?

Iwaizumi blames Fukurodani. It’s a very corrupting place. It ruined Kageyama, too. Fucking Fukurodani and fucking Bokuto and Kuroo, the unholy trinity that’s to be blamed.
“And I just threw it on, because I’m not in the habit of frolicking naked in people’s kitchens.” He adds, before giving Iwaizumi a pointed glance.

“I’m not naked.”

“You’re in your underwear.”

“Yeah, and?”

“I’m about to have breakfast.”

“Which, by the way, I prepared for you, so a thank you would be nice.”

“You know what else would be nice, Iwaizumi-san? Some clothes.”

“Akaashi, I’m in in my own damn house, I can do as I please.”

“Sure you can, but I have to inform you it’s very unappetizing.”

“Unappetizing?!”

“Is there an echo in here?”

“Wow, you’re really bitchy in the mornings, aren’t you?” Iwaizumi snorts. “No, forget I said that, you’re always bitchy.”

“You’re sitting on the kitchen counter, where food is prepared. Or do you, perhaps, consider your ass to be a delicacy, Iwaizumi-san? Because if that’s the case, Kuroo-san and you have a lot more in common than I thought.”

Iwaizumi gawps, speechless.

Akaashi uses his silence as an opportunity to add “And I sincerely hope that’s orange juice you spilled over yourself and didn’t pee the bed”, then takes an onigiri in each hand and starts eating.

He immediately glances down at his white Calvin Kleins that are, indeed, covered with splotches of orange.

“It is orange juice!” Iwaizumi barks. “And quit staring at my crotch!”

“I could say it’s staring at me.”

“My crotch has no eyes and I assure you, it’s not staring at you.”

“Why else do you think people call a penis a one eyed snake?”

“Alright, that’s it, Akaashi!” Iwaizumi hops off the kitchen counter, takes the chair right across from him. “I’m cutting off your coffee.” He says, smirking and triumphant, the perfect Akaashi punishment for teasing.

“Coffee is my life-giving brew, Iwaizumi-san.” He explains, spooning mouthfuls, without so much as looking up from his cereal bowl. “The less I have of it, the more you suffer.”

“...Princess, would you like a second pot?”

He laughs. “Please. I feel almost human again.”
“Really? Because I don’t see it yet. After the fourth of fifth one, maybe.”

“Funny.”

Iwaizumi refills his cup again and this time there’s something else at his eye-level he stares at. Something he didn’t notice before.

“Nice nips, Iwaizumi-san. When did you get them pierced?”

“Oh dear God in heaven. Nice nips? Who the fuck says that, Akaashi?”

“Kuroo-san does. And I believe I just did, too.”

“You’re getting all the bad influence from your knuckleheaded boyfriends.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “They’re the ones that spread your wings.”

“And legs.”

“Now was that really necessary? You could’ve just kept the leg part to yourself.”

Akaashi shrugs, smiling. “I spend most of my time with Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san, so I’ve started to adopt their mannerisms.” His smile grows. “By the end of Easter break, I’ll probably be mirroring all your Jesus catchphrases.”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi chuckles. “Jesus catchphrases, I like that.”

“You still didn’t answer my question.”

“What?”

“When did you get your nipples done?”

“Oh. Last Saturday.” Iwaizumi smiles. “Mattsun and Makki decided to throw me a surprise birthday party and the rule was I either get inked or pierced and,” He shrugs, “I chose piercings, because I can take them out whenever I want.”

“I thought your birthday is the 10th of June?”

“Yeah, it is, but Mattsun and Makki said it wouldn’t be a real surprise birthday party if they threw it in June.”

Akaashi, all kinds of used to Bokuto logic, laughs. “That makes perfect sense.”

“You’ll be here for my real birthday, right?”

“Of course, Iwaizumi-san.” He smiles. “Wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

He’s always thought piercings and tattoos are cool, he likes them very much and would like to get some at one point, eventually. He wonders just how much it would hurt, though, because getting a needle to pierce through a layer of your flesh must hurt like a bitch. Especially on a body part as sensitive as the nipples.

“Did it hurt a lot?”

“Nah, not at all. I was too liquored up to feel any pain.” Iwaizumi laughs.

It’s somewhat reassuring to hear the copious amount of alcohol consumption isn’t just a boarding
house rebellious thing, but just a teen thing. Just another teen thing.

“They suit you, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, I think they look hot. And speaking of,” He chuckles, “Konoha-san actually asked me if I thought you’re hot.”

“Which one is Konoha again?”

“Jersey number 7.”

“Ah, the Nickelback Kinoa guy.”

“It’s beyond impressive you would remember his music taste and Kageyama-kun’s nickname, but not his actual name. Which is Konoha-san.”

“Whatever. You know I’m shit with names.”

“Yeah, and I think Kageyama-kun learned that from looking up to you.” He laughs.

“He looked up at Oikawa.”

“And you.” He says. “But this makes me wonder, Iwaizumi-san, what did you use to remember me by before you learned my real name? Jersey number 5? Fukurodani’s setter?”

“No, Tooru talked about you a lot, so your name stuck with me from the very beginning. Then he started calling you “Aka-chan” after, but you knew that already.” Iwaizumi says. “Anyway, back to your story. What’d you tell Kinoa?”

“Konoha-san.”

“Konoha.”

“I told him that while you’re very attractive, I don’t look at you that way, because I consider you like an older brother.”

“Really? You think of me like that?” Iwaizumi asks softly and he looks so touched.

“Of course. I thought that was pretty obvious already.”

“It’s— it feels very nice to hear it.”

He makes the same kind of mental note he uses for his teammates strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes, a little sticky memo on top of his Iwaizumi catalogued folder, a little reminder that Iwaizumi likes hearing and talking about the values of their friendship, that it makes him feel better.

“So you think I’m attractive?” Iwaizumi smirks a little.

He rolls his eyes a lot. “You know you are. Don’t fish for compliments, Iwaizumi-san, that’s lame.” He adds as he picks up his empty plates and goes at the sink.

“No, I wasn’t—”

“Thank you for the meal.”
“You’re welcome. And don’t do them by hand, Akaashi, just rinse and chuck ‘em in the dishwasher.”

He does as he’s told, then takes back his seat.

“Now that I’m wide awake and fully functioning, you can tell me what’s been troubling you all morning.”

Akaashi’s face is obscured from his, probably, seventh cup of coffee he’s holding in his hands, but his eyes are staring, a careful owl.

Those steel eyes say it’s not the time to play around, but Iwaizumi decides to play around; it’s easier to joke.

“You.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Akaashi.”

“I’m going to ask you again and this time you’re going to tell me.”

God. So fucking bossy.

“What’s troubling you?”

“What makes you think I’m troubled?” Iwaizumi crosses his arms.

“You have that look.”

“What look?”

“This one.”

“Sorry, I don’t have a mirror to know what this look is.”

“You’re doing your defensive pose.” He nods his head at Iwaizumi, who immediately uncrosses his arms. “So don’t pretend, Iwaizumi-san, because you can’t fool me. And I suggest you stop doing it altogether, because you know it’s not working.”

Iwaizumi props an elbow up, cheek resting against his fist, fingertips drumming against the table, feeling slightly annoyed, but no, not really annoyed, more admiring, how observant Akaashi is, his tenacity. It’s actually scary how good he’s gotten at reading his moods, his body language, everything.

Fidgeting a little, he sighs.

“I was gonna give it to you in bed.” Iwaizumi, not looking at Akaashi, says to his hands. “You told me you wanted it, so I was gonna do it for you, but—”

Akaashi makes a little noise that sounds like a chuckle and when Iwaizumi glances up, realizes it had been a chuckle. Akaashi’s serious mouth is replaced by a small wave of amusement.

“Are you laughing at me?”

“No, Iwaizumi-san, I’m smiling at you.” He licks his lips. “It’s what you just said— how you said
it. It must’ve sounded different in your head than it sounded in mine.”

Iwaizumi starts blinking like a car turning signal. “What? What the fuck did I just say?”

“You just told me you were gonna give it to me in bed.”

“Breakfast, Akaashi! I was talking about giving you your breakfast in bed. Jesus fucking Christ, a minute ago you were telling me you consider me like a brother to you.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “This is not very brotherly, man, it really isn’t.”

“Maybe you should think about your word choices a little better.”

“My God. You actually thought I want to—” Iwaizumi pinches the bridge of his nose and sighs.

“No. I thought you were just, I don’t know, fucking with me, I guess.”

“This another word play of yours, Akaashi? Another one of your fantastic ha-ha puns?” Iwaizumi snorts. “And then you dare tell me to think about my word choices.”

“Okay, the second I said that out loud, I realized I should’ve gone with joking with me. Let’s go with joking. Iwaizumi-san, I thought you were joking with me.” He says. “Now tell me what you were trying to say.”

“No, I’m not gonna tell you now!”

“Why not?”

“Because you ruined it.”

“Oh. I ruined it.”

“Yeah, Akaashi, you did.”

“Well, Iwaizumi-san, you know what this means, right?”

“What?”

“It means I’m not the only princess here.”

“Tch. Makki was right. You really do push all my buttons.”

“I find your buttons very pushable.”

“Are you…” Iwaizumi sits up straight, clears his throat. “Akaashi, are you flirting with me?”

“Why, Iwaizumi-san, do you think I’m flirting with you?” He asks, amused.

“No, no, don’t turn this around on me. Don’t ask me what I think and tell me if you are, because I’d like to know.”

“What other intention that flirting do you think I’d have when I said I find your buttons very pushable?”

“No, you’re doing it again, you’re evading my question with another question.”

Akaashi smiles. “You do that too.”
“Yeah, but you always call me out on it. So now I’m calling you out on it.”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san, of course I was flirting with you.”

“Of course? What do you mean of course, Akaashi? We don’t flirt with each other, that’s not our thing.”

“It is our thing. We do it all the time.”

“We do?” Iwaizumi blinks at Akaashi’s nod. “Huh.” He scratches his forehead. “Am I really that big of a square not to realize it?”

“You’re not a square, Iwaizumi-san.” He smiles. “Our verbal banter, the exchange of wit we always have? That’s flirting.”

“No, that’s teasing, Akaashi. We tease each other.”

“To me,” He says, “teasing and flirting are two faces of the same coin. I don’t see a difference between them, because they’re both done for the reaction. Do you?”

“There is a difference.” Iwaizumi says. “Teasing can be hurtful, whereas flirting isn’t.”

“That’s true. But our kind of teasing isn’t hurtful, Iwaizumi-san, it’s playful.” He smiles. “Just like flirting is playful.”

“Yeah, I guess when you put it like that… But it’s weird, isn’t it? Kinda?”

“No. Weird would be dancing naked in front your pets.”

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“I have no pets, but if I did, why the fuck would I dance naked in front of them?”

“I didn’t say you would. I was just giving an example of what would be weird.”

“Well, that was a shitty example. Just like—”

“My sense of humor and my music taste. Yes, Iwaizumi-san, you’ve covered that already.”

“That’s good, Akaashi, now that you’re aware of the problem, you can fix it.”

“Things that aren’t broken needn’t be fixed.”

“No, you definitely gotta do something about that awful sense of humor. For the love of God, Akaashi, please do something about it.”

“I’ll have you know that my sense of humor is excellent.”

Iwaizumi, looking all kinds of sorrowful, shakes his head. “No, it really isn’t.”

“It’s of acquired taste. If you don’t get my jokes, Iwaizumi-san, you ought to acquire better taste.”

They laugh with their mouths open. Laughing both with and at each other.

And it feels so great, the natural way it just pours out and flows, like water from an open bottle,
with such ease and simplicity.

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“While this thing we have between us makes me feel really good and it’s really fun, I’m not the one with two boyfriends back in Tokyo.”

“Ah. You’re worried about Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san getting jealous.”

“No, I’m not worried about them in the least. It’s you I’m worried about. I don’t want to throw a wrench in your relationship and cause some kind of trouble in paradise for you.”

“Iwaizumi-san, I assure you there’s nothing to worry about. Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san wouldn’t get jealous over something like this. Kuroo-san does it all the time, that’s why his nickname is Master of Provocation.”

Iwaizumi tilts his head curiously. “And that doesn’t bother you?”

“No, absolutely not.” He smiles fondly. “Teasing and flirting are integral parts of Kuroo-san’s character. And I admit, when he first started doing to me, I felt like a deer caught in headlights.” He laughs. “But then I got comfortable around him and started reciprocating his provocations and — it’s just one more thing that made me fall in love with him.”

Akaashi tries to picture himself wrestling with Konoha or Sarukui or Washio or Komi the way he did with Iwaizumi. The way he is with Iwaizumi in general, the things they say to each, how they say them. And he absolutely can’t, because his relationship with Iwaizumi is completely different than the ones he has with the rest of his friends. Obviously excluding Bokuto and Kuroo, as they’re dating and that makes it different.

“...Earth to Akaashi?” Iwaizumi waves. “Hello?”

“Oh.” He wasn’t aware he was spacing out. “Sorry, Iwaizumi-san, you said something?”

“I was asking you what’s got you in such deep thought.”

“I was thinking about my teammates.” He says and tells Iwaizumi. “I could never do the whole verbal, harmless flirting thing with them, because you and I can read between the lines and know there’s nothing more to it. You’re the only one I can do it with and—” He shrugs, smiling.”—I guess it lets me feel that I’m being myself and sharing an authentic part of my personality I never even knew I had.”

“I feel the same way, Akaashi. I could never be this way with my teammates, either. Hell, not even with my best friends.” Iwaizumi smiles. “You’re the only person who knows exactly what to say to me to calm me down and ease my pain. Alive.” He adds, voice quiet like a morgue. “You’re the only person alive that can do that.”

“Well,” He licks his lips, “since you said that I’m the only person alive that knows what to say to calm you down, could you please finally tell me what’s been bothering you all morning, so I could help you?”

“I told you already!”

“What you told me is that you wanted to bring me breakfast in bed, because I said I wanted it. Which, Iwaizumi-san, you really didn’t have to do.”
“I know, Akaashi, but I still wanted to. I just couldn’t, because it made me think of Tooru, how I used to do it for him. And I felt too guilty. Tell me, why would I feel guilt over something like that?”

Akaashi smacks his lips together and shrugs.

“You want to laugh again, don’t you?”

“Only a little.”

“Knock yourself out.” Iwaizumi sighs.

Akaashi gives a small chuckle.

“Ok, now you’re gonna explain to me why you laughed, because my wording held no innuendoes whatsoever.”

“Last night you said “You read a textbook and now you think you’re Freud?” and now you’re asking me about guilt, when Freud was an expert on it.” Akaashi grins. “That was a little funny to me.”

Iwaizumi shakes his head. “You need a better sense of humour, this is just plain embarrassing.”

“I also need a million dollars in my bank account, but nobody’s giving it to me.”

“Well, if you’re as good as Freud, you can become a psychoanalyst and get your money in no time.”

“While he came from a wealthy Jewish family, Freud himself certainly didn’t have a corner on the market.”

“How very insightful, Akaashi. Thank you, it’s exactly what I was going for.”

Two overly-sarcastic people in one kitchen with a kitchen not big enough to hold all the sarcasm.

“Iwaizumi-san, guilt is an emotion people experience, because they’re convinced they’ve caused harm.” He says. “You used to bring Oikawa-san breakfast in your bed, so of course you would feel guilty for—” He notes the way Iwaizumi shrinks and cringes. He knows that look, because he’s all kinds of familiar with it. He’s experienced it, first-hand. “You felt like you were cheating on Oikawa-san.”

“Yes!” Iwaizumi nods his head furiously. “Yes, that’s exactly what it felt like, Akaashi, like I was cheating on him.” He swallows hard. “How could you possibly know that?”

“You already know how I know. But this isn’t about Bokuto-san and I, it’s about Oikawa-san and you. So, please talk to me, Iwaizumi-san. Tell me.”

“What the fuck do you want me to tell you, Akaashi? That I’m all kinds of crazy for feeling like a cheater, when Tooru and I never dated? That I’m fucking incapable of doing something as simple as breakfast without feeling emotionally crippled? God fucking damn it, Akaashi, you already know that even better than I do!” Iwaizumi barks, eyes wild. Then, because he is feeling the layered up frustration, he angrily swipes at Akaashi’s empty orange juice glass.

It falls to the floor, smashing into tiny little shards, it shatters like his heart and soul, mind automatically replaying a part of Oikawa’s goodbye note, his Iwa-chan. My dearest Iwa-chan. Please don’t be mad. I love you very much.
Glass breaks again, in his ears, ringing, distant. Again and again and again.

Akaashi doesn’t just look, of course. He stares. And aches, internally. Externally, he doesn’t even bat an eyelash, he’s just sitting in his chair, silent, like it’s totally normal for him, like he sees glasses being flung around all the time.

That in itself alone, the zero reaction, is what prompts Iwaizumi to smash the stupid glass with the stupid fucking flower too.

“God, you make me so fucking mad!” Iwaizumi is angry and yelly, lashing out like a wounded animal.

“Me? I didn’t do anything.”

“That’s exactly why you’re making me mad, Akaashi!”

“What would you have me do, Iwaizumi-san?” He asks, calmly. “Scold you for being a Godzilla in the kitchen? I’m not your parent. You can Godzilla your way through the entire house, if you wish to, and I’m not going to stop you. But it’s not going to make you feel any better.”

“Oh yeah, and sitting here and talking about my feelings with you will make me feel all healed up and perfect, won’t it?” Iwaizumi crosses his arms. Defensive as ever.

“No, not healed up and perfect, but slightly better. Talking about your feelings might help you understand yourself more, why you feel the way you feel.”

“Or I can just ask you about the verdict, as you’re my fucking shrink, Akaashi, aren’t you? So go right ahead, tell me what’s wrong with me.”

“I’m not your shrink, Iwaizumi-san, I’m your friend. And there is nothing wrong with you.” He says, having a difficult time to keep his tone low. “You’re only clinging to your anger so stubbornly, because you know once the anger is gone, you’ll have no other choice, but to deal with your pain.”

“You don’t just sound like a fucking shrink, you act like one too. No, you actually act like a fucking robot. Are you robot, Akaashi? You must be.”

In a fit of anger, Bokuto’d called him a robot before and this time it stings the same way.

Akaashi recoils back like he just got slapped. No, it’s worse than a slap. It makes him feel like his chest got kicked open, like Iwaizumi’s got his nails needling in, breaking inside just to disorganize the careful vault of contents.

“Just because your pain is understandable, Iwaizumi-san,” He scowls, eyes flashing, “doesn’t mean your behavior is acceptable. I am not a fucking robot.”

Iwaizumi could tell, immediately, that Akaashi is upset; it’s the first time he answers him back with a swear word.

“I touched a nerve there, didn’t I?”

“No, you touched all the nerves.” He scowls.

“All of them? Really?” Iwaizumi can’t help the muscles around his mouth tugging. “I’m sorry, Akaashi, I didn’t mean to do that.”
“Here’s a little piece of advice, Iwaizumi-san.” He is having a hard time keeping his annoyed face on when Iwaizumi is looking at him amusedly. “When you apologize to someone and you’re laughing, it just doesn’t seem all that genuine.”

“I’m not laughing!” Iwaizumi says, biting the insides of his cheeks. It makes him look like a fish.

“Yeah, you’re not, I can see you’re barely able to keep the tears of regret at bay.”

Iwaizumi barks a laugh and covers his eyes in his hands. “I’m sorry, man, really, I’m so fucking sorry. I genuinely didn’t mean to upset you.” He unmasks his face. “Yesterday I said you acted all superior and that didn’t bother you, did it? Because I didn’t actually mean it. I say things I don’t mean in the heat of the moment.”

“I’m aware you’re hot-headed, Iwaizumi-san.” He says. “And no, it didn’t bother me.”

“So why would me calling you a robot bother you? Just because I say something, doesn’t make it true, you know it doesn’t. And you called me Godzilla first.”

“You love Godzilla, you have a life-sized statue of him next to your bed.”

“What do you have against robots?”

“Nothing. It’s just—” He sighs. “Bokuto-san’s called me a robot before and it was meant as an insult, so that hurt my feelings.”

“Oh, Akaashi,” Iwaizumi says softly, “I do apologize if I insulted you. It really wasn’t my intention to hurt your feelings, but I’m sorry all the same, if I did.”

“Thank you.” He nods his head graciously. “Apology accepted.” Then, curious, he adds. “What was your intention?”

“To get a rise out of you.” Iwaizumi admits. “You’re always so composed and calm and patient and this is going to make me sound like a total ass, but it kind of made me feel a little victorious that I was able to push your buttons too.” He shrugs, apologetic. “Next time I do it, I’ll make sure it’s not in a hurtful way.”

He licks his lips. “So you enjoy pushing my buttons.”

“It’s a two-way street, princess.”

“My robotic buttons, Iwaizumi-san?” He snickers.

Iwaizumi rolls his eyes, but he’s real glad that Akaashi is able to joke about it now, knowing he didn’t mean any harm. He takes the dustpan and brush from under the sink and before he begins to clean up his mess off the floor, picks up the hydrangea and stares at it for a moment, before offering it to Akaashi.

“For me?” Akaashi asks quietly. It’s the tone he uses that makes Iwaizumi aware he is actually asking if it was originally plucked for him or, subconsciously, for somebody else.

“The Hydrangea symbolizes heartfelt emotions. It’s used to express gratitude for being understood.” Iwaizumi explains, smiling soft. “It is for you, Akaashi.”

Only after hearing the confirmation does Akaashi accept it, studying it close.

“Nobody’s ever given me a flower before.” He says and smiles back, just as soft. “Thank you,
Iwaizumi-san.”

“Never?”

“No.”

Iwaizumi says nothing, but his eyebrows knit together as he starts sweeping the glass shards into the dustpan. He’s gonna have a word with Bokuto and Kuroo, because they’ve been dating Akaashi close to a month now. How do you date someone as precious and incredible and amazing as him and not gift him with something as meaningful as a bouquet?

He steals a glance at Akaashi, who is still admiring the hydrangea with a tiny little smile, while twirling it between his fingers.

Cute.

Iwaizumi thinks Akaashi is beautiful and soft, just like a petal, but he can also be thorny and stemmy. Akaashi has the ability to cut and slit, right down to the marrow, but he doesn’t. He never leaves bloodstains; he remains graceful and gentle, the epitome of a white-winged seraph.

...Except the times he’s being a playful little devil. But that’s always fun.

Iwaizumi dumps everything in the trash, deciding it’s not his place to meddle in a relationship that is not his. He won’t be saying shit to Bokuto and Kuroo. Instead, he’ll make sure he himself gives Akaashi all the flowers he deserves.

Standing in front Akaashi, he opens his arms. “Come here, you.”

Akaashi gives a surprised little *oh* before he goes in for the hug.

“Akaashi,” Iwaizumi’s lips brush against the shell of his ear, “I used to think you’re able to understand me so well, because you’re so analytical with your brilliant, sharp mind. But I know now that was wrong on my part. Not entirely, but. You don’t use logic to get me, because feelings aren’t always rational and logical. That’s why they’re feelings.” He smiles against Akaashi’s neck. “You empathise and you’re always so compassionate, I honestly don’t know how it doesn’t stretch you thin. Maybe it does, but you still don’t show it, for the sake of others.”

“It doesn’t, Iwaizumi-san, because it helps me understand my friends a little better.” He whispers back. “But I admit, my pokerface is a defense mechanism I developed in the process. Whenever my face features seem blank, that’s when I feel things the most.” He pulls away to look at Iwaizumi. “You already knew that, though, didn’t you?”

“I did. But I appreciate you sharing it with me.” Iwaizumi smiles. “So I give you my promise, Akaashi - from now on, I’m putting all my defensive walls down. I’m going to be 100% straight with you. Even more than before. No bullshit.”

“Then I promise to do the same. No bullshit.” He grins. “And, just so you know, Iwaizumi-san, you don’t have to be straight, you can be a 100% gay with me.”

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph.”

He laughs, and Iwaizumi, shaking his head, chuckles too.

Iwaizumi hops back onto the kitchen counter and swings his feet, knocking against the cupboards beneath, while he remains standing.
“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Don’t get smug, but you were right.” He says, and before Akaashi can get smug, he continues. “Talking out loud about my feeling with you does make me understand myself better. It made me realize why I felt guilty.”

Akaashi gives a curt nod.

“See, sharing my bed with you was okay, because nothing happened. But the breakfast in bed was not okay, because my brain associated it with something more than friendship. Every time Tooru and I—” He cuts himself short. This isn’t something he has ever admitted and shared with another living soul, because it’s just so fucking private and personal. But it’s Akaashi. Akaashi’s not the gossipy or prying type, he isn’t nosy or intruding. Never. That must be why everyone feels at ease with him, dumping all their secrets and emotional crap, everything. Himself included. “Tooru and I used to get intimate with each other.”

His greens search Akaashi’s metals for some sort of mockery or ridicule, for his choice of words, for his inability to say fuck, because that’s not what it was. But he also can’t bring himself to say made love, either.

He finds nothing resembling either, so he goes on.

“The morning after, I’d always bring him breakfast in bed. Along with a red rose. Never a hydrangea.”

Iwaizumi stares at Akaashi, awaiting a reaction. He really needs him to know he doesn’t—

“Iwaizumi-san, I know you don’t have romantic feelings for me.” He reassures. “I understand how you feel.”

“You really do, don’t you?”

“Yes. Of course.” He says. “I have common sense, Iwaizumi-san. You were very much in love with Oikawa-san when we lost him at the end of December and we’re at the beginning of April. Instant closure doesn’t exist, it’s a gradual process that takes time, years of it. You don’t just fall out of love all of a sudden solely, because Oikawa-san’s not around anymore.”

“Common sense isn’t that common, Akaashi, because my entire team thinks I’m halfway in love with you.” He sighs. “It surprises me that even Matsun and Makki, who’ve known my feelings for Tooru the whole time, believe I’m interested in you in that way.”

“Well, this is no consolation whatsoever, but my teammates think there’s something more than friendship going on between us as well.”

Iwaizumi sighs again. “Tell me, Akaashi, why are they all so fucking stupid?”

“People, in general, are stupid, Iwaizumi-san.” He says and smirks. “At least you and I are smart.”

“Yeah, that makes us an even more extinct breed than dinosaurs.” Iwaizumi grins.

“Who’s being superior now, Iwaizumi-san?”

Iwaizumi laughs and ruffles his hair affectionately. “Come on, princess, it’s time to get ready.”
Two refreshing showers later, soldier-quick, Akaashi scowls at his reflection in the mirror, pressing his fingers down on the wet, unruly sea of waves on top of his head, trying to control them from sweeping outwards the way they do.

“Iwaizumi-san, do you have a hat I could borrow? My hair’s gotten too long and my mom told me to go to a barber two months ago, and I said I’d go, but I didn’t and now she’s gonna nag.”

“’Course I do.” Iwaizumi pulls a drawer open that’s filled entirely with baseball caps and beanies. It’s more loaded than a freakin’ hat shop. “Pick whichever you like.”

He makes a mental note - hats are a safe bet, a good birthday gift for Iwaizumi - and says, “Obviously, you really hate hats.”

“Obviously.”

He finds it both hilarious and disturbing that Iwaizumi owns one the exact same mustard color as the Fukurodani cardigan that Konoha loves wearing, Konoha, possibly, the only person in the entire school that does.

He settles for a dark blue beanie and places it over his head, content with the result.

“I like your hair this way.” Iwaizumi says. “I think it looks really good on you.”

Akaashi gives him a funny look.

“What.”

“You liking my hair this way, longer, you don’t think that’s weird?”

“No, Akaashi, weird would be dancing naked in front your pets.”

He makes a huffy snort. “Don’t attack me with my own attacks, Iwaizumi-san! Be original. You can’t just steal my lines and feed them back to me.”

“What else is friendship for?” Iwaizumi asks. And then he laughs, incredibly pleased with himself. This is a declaration of war. Aoba Jousai just declared war on Fukurodani.

Akaashi smirks.

Oh, it’s so on.

“Hey,” Iwaizumi says, as they head out the door, “what do you say we bike?”

“I didn’t you know owned a motorbike.”

“I don’t. Which is why I asked “What do you say we bike”, not “What do you say we motorbike.”” Iwaizumi flicks Akaashi’s ear. “You forgot to wash those, didn’t you, that’s why you can’t hear me.”

He swats Iwaizumi’s hand away like it’s an annoying fly. It kind of is.

“No. Let’s take your car.”

“Why?”

“Why not?”
“Well, why not bike there?”

“Cars are more efficient.”

“You know what else is efficient, Akaashi? Robots.” Iwaizumi grins, doesn’t move out of the way as Akaashi’s elbow jabs him in the ribs. He deserved that one. “Cars pollute the air.”

“How environmentalist of you, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Look, man, Sendai’s not that far. Biking there would be good exercise.” Iwaizumi glances at his watch. “We got time.”

“Let’s take the car and then later we can go running for exercise.” He replies. “I’m your guest, so —”

“You can’t keep using the guest card, princess.” Smirk. “Tell me what you have against biking.”

“I— Nothing. I just had a shower, I don’t want to sweat.”

“We can go slow, Akaashi.”

“No, thank you, Iwaizumi-san, I prefer it hard and fast.”

Ha, Seijouh, ha.

“Tell me.”

“I’ll pay for the gas myself.”

“I don’t care for your money, I want your answer.”

“If I wanted to ride a bike, Iwaizumi-san, I would’ve joined my school’s cycling team. Which I did not, so let’s quit talking about it and just take the damn car already!” He says, realizing he’s being a little too defensive.

Iwaizumi notices, too, of course.

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“No bullshit rule. You can’t ride a bike, can you?”

What a stupid fucking rule.

“No, I can’t.”

Iwaizumi is looking at him with such a joyous expression and Akaashi hates him for it. It makes his blood boil. To be fair, he himself was very gleeful when Iwaizumi was incapable of doing his tie. But this is war and war means no room for fairness.

He strategically decides to give Iwaizumi ammo now, so Iwaizumi falls into a false sense of security and then he can crush him.

“I also can’t swim.” He admits as he gets inside the car, belts himself in.

Iwaizumi throws his head back and howls in laughter.
Yeah, yeah, get your laughs in while you can, Seijouh, you don’t know what’s coming for you. Fukurodani will have the last laugh and that’s a damn fact.

“I’m glad my shortcomings offer you such amusement, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Me too, Akaashi.”

... Whatever. At least he can tie his own goddamn tie.

He watches as Iwaizumi syncs the Bluetooth of his phone with the car stereo, swiping his finger down through the long playlist library.

“Fan of Styx, Akaashi?”

“Yes.”

“I know exactly what to play for you.”

“Don’t you dare, Iwaizumi-san.”

Iwaizumi dares. Smiling, he starts the engine and sings along.

“Domo arigato, Mr Roboto!”

When it’s over and shuffles to the next, Iwaizumi laughs.

“This is the perfect song for me to play whenever I want to zing you.”

“Zing me, Iwaizumi-san?”

“What, people say zing.”

“People stopped saying zing 10 years ago.” He says, turning to look at Iwaizumi. “Where do you get your slang phrases from, Iwaizumi-san, to be sweet on someone, zing? From a museum, where they belong? Or perhaps your friends, the dinosaurs.”

“I’m old school.”

It’s Akaashi’s turn to grin. “You sound like a fossil.”

“Shut up, you’re the fossil.”

“Good one, Iwaizumi-san. You totally got me there.”

“Fuck you, Akaashi.”

“That a promise?” He asks, sweet and innocent.

Iwaizumi clicks his tongue, mutters something that sounds like you’re unbelievable, then turns the volume on highest and puts Mr Roboto on replay until their ears are bleeding.

~
When they pass the “Sendai - 5 km” sign, Akaashi takes his phone out and calls his mom.

“Hey, Mom. How did Dad’s signing go?”

“Oh, Keiji, it went really well.” She sounds so happy. She’s gonna get a whole lot happier in a bit. “Your Dad and I are currently having lunch to celebrate the fact he signed a contract with a new publishing agent.”

“The one that Dad wanted for years and you got him a meeting with?”

“That’s the one.”

“Wow, Mom, that’s incredible. Tell Dad— no, don’t tell him anything. I have a friend—” He glances at Iwaizumi, who’s got his eyes on the road. “— No, he’s not actually my friend, because he’s really annoying. But I asked him for a favor, to drop something off to you and Dad for me, so could you tell me where you are?” He puts his phone on loudspeaker as his mom announces the location, then hangs up.

“I’m really annoying.”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san, I’m glad you agree.”

Iwaizumi arches an eyebrow. “Have you met you?”

“No, unfortunately not.” He smirks. “That’s why I’m jealous of you - I wish I could meet me.”

“You’re such a fucker.”

“I prefer to be fucked.” He says sweetly.

“Jesus fucking Christ. I sincerely hope you wash that filthy mouth of yours with soap before you kiss your mom hello.” Iwaizumi says, then adds. “No. Soap wouldn’t do. Bleach, though, bleach ought to do the trick.”

“You’re the one that’s always swearing, not me. But I’ve noticed you don’t do it in front of Kageyama-kun, so that’s commendable.”

“I don’t want to be bad influence on him.” Iwaizumi scowls. “Unlike your boyfriends.”

“Is this about the porn?”

“What porn?”

Akaashi tells him.

“Oh, I’m gonna rip off Bokuto and Kuroo’s dicks next time I see them.”

“Don’t do that.”

“No, I will.”

“That would deny me of my carnal pleasures and I can’t let you do that, Iwaizumi-san.” He shakes his head. “Unless you yourself are offering to step up to the plate and fulfill my needs.” He says. And then he laughs. Little and hateful and delighted with himself.

Akaashi knows what to say to loosen Iwaizumi’s tongue just as well as he knows exactly how to make him clam up, and he enjoys alternating his tactics to achieve the exact reaction he wants.
Iwaizumi doesn’t know how to feel about it. It’s fun, of course it is, and it’s really flattering too, an instant ego booster, that someone as attractive as Akaashi would be so playful and flirty.

It shouldn’t mean anything. It doesn’t. Akaashi himself said it’s harmless flirting and Iwaizumi would be a fucking idiot to read anything beyond simple playful banter. But the way Akaashi looks back at him, out of the corner of his eye, whenever he catches him looking, he gives this secretive smile as if there’s something going on that neither of them are saying.

No. That’s all kinds of crazy and last time he checked, he wasn’t crazy.

As Iwaizumi parks in front of The Sizzling Griddle Cafe & Diner, he says. “Call me when you want me to pick you up.”

“I’m not going to call you,” Akaashi says, “because you’re coming with me.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“I don’t wanna meet your parents.”

“They’re not cannibals. They won’t eat you.”

“I’m not meeting your parents, Akaashi.”

“You will.” He nods once, like it’s settled. He’s deemed it so. “Yes you will, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Nope. Not happening.” Iwaizumi crosses his arms.

“You really mean a lot to me, so I’d like for my parents to meet someone that’s so important in my life.”

“Akaashi, you must think I’m a goddamn fool. That you can just butter me up with your sweet talk and I’ll agree to do whatever you want.”

“Iwaizumi-san?” He says, baiting sugar voice.

Iwaizumi swallows, mouth dry, tongue cotton.

Akaashi leans in, real close, and his proximity feels like a mortal risk.

“I really want you to meet my mom and dad.” Every word is a teddy bear pout. “Please, Iwaizumi-san? Please?”

Oh no.

Fuck.

Where did Akaashi learn how to make that annoyingly soft and perfect whine, the one he never mastered how to say no to?

He can’t say an outright no to that face. He can’t. He absolutely cannot.

And he’ll never learn.

“Akaashi, you are totally right.” He says, sighing in defeat, reaches for the glove compartment and
pulls out his safety-lucky black Yankees cap. He fixes it over his head backwards and looks at Akaashi’s smarmy and victorious face. “I am a goddamn fool.”
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Oh, this chapter is kinda really short *insert guilty emoji* but thing is, you guys, I think rl is gonna be real busy for me in the next 3 weeks and I will ~try my best, but I don't think I'd be able to update D: Anyway! I hope you enjoy ❤

Iwaizumi, just like Akaashi, has often been called too serious and too mature and too responsible for his age. Which isn’t exactly true, because he’s done plenty of stupid shit.

While he himself never experienced it, he knows Mattsun and Makki despise their parents. Their fathers especially. He’s also heard many of his classmates complaining, *corny* and *lame* and *fuckin’ tragic* being the most overused adjectives when forced to speak of their moms and dads.

He’s heard it all, so many times, the rebellious teen angst bullshit. It’s not a big deal. Hating parents is a rite of passage.

Iwaizumi feels all kinds of happy to discover with his eyes and see that he shares another thing in common with Akaashi, that he is so close with his parents.

It’s perfect, the way Akaashi doesn’t shy away from his mother’s affections, with a *Mom, please, you’re embarrassing me*, but ostriches his head in her arms like a little boy, letting her coddle him. It’s perfect, the way Akaashi embraces his father, earnest and sincere, and Iwaizumi can practically feel the overwhelmingly happy burn in Akaashi’s eyes. The kind you get when you haven’t seen the people you love most in a while and then you’re reunited and it’s perfect.

Before he even thinks about feeling like an intruder, uncomfortable and awkward at such a private family moment, Akaashi says, “Mom, Dad, I was only able to surprise you, because I got by with a little help from my friends.” and winks at him.

Iwaizumi sighs, because Akaashi thinks he’s being cute.

Well. Akaashi’s wrong. He’s *the worst*.

And so are The Beatles.

Akaashi’s mom, smiling, shakes his hand, introduces herself as Akaashi Yukiko. And then immediately expresses her gratitude for letting Akaashi stay with him, thanking and thanking.

“The pleasure is all mine, Mrs Akaashi.”
“And this is my husband, Akaashi Yoshimoto.”

Iwaizumi starts blinking stupid.

Did he hear that right? Akaashi Yoshimoto?

What.

How could Akaashi not tell him his dad is a science fiction writer? The one that wrote When Planets Collide and Stellar Spacer and Quantum Crash?

Tooru’s absolute fucking favourite.

Jesus Christ on a cracker, and on tortilla wrap and garlic bread.

“Wow. Uhm. Wow. Mr Akaashi, it’s such an honor to meet you.” Iwaizumi stammers like an idiot. He can’t help it, he’s never met a famous person before. “My Tooru— I mean, my best friend’s your biggest fan. He gave me all your books and I’ve read them all, I have them in my bedroom.”

“I’m very happy to hear that, Iwaizumi-kun. Perhaps next time Keiji and you could bring your best friend along? I would love to meet my biggest fan.”


Akaashi’s father, still shaking his hand, clasps his left one atop, offers Iwaizumi the comfort and kindness he’s familiar with, the same kind his own son is always giving him.

“Iwaizumi-kun, bring me those books, so I can sign them for Oikawa-kun.”

It’s meaningless. Except for the way it means everything. To him. To Tooru, too.

Iwaizumi, touched, manages a choked little “Thank you, Mr Akaashi.”

When the four of them sit down, Akaashi’s dad turns to his wife.

“Honey, I would really like for you to let me introduce myself to at least one of Keiji’s friends as Hi, I’m Dad.”

God.

Like father, like son.

“I see the incredible sense of humor is a trait that runs in your family.” Iwaizumi grins like a shark.

“Why, thank you, Iwaizumi-kun.”

Akaashi, smiling all kinds of angelic while scanning the menu, kicks at Iwaizumi under the table, foot connecting with his shin, and it hurts so fucking bad, Iwaizumi is seeing stars.

Totally worth it.

“I’ll have the double trouble burger.” Akaashi announces.

“I’ll have the same.”

“How fitting for you two,” Akaashi’s dad says, “as you obviously think you’re above curfew.
Room restriction must have been a high price to pay.” His eyes twinkle. “But you shouldn’t do the
crime, if you can’t do the time.”

Iwaizumi and Akaashi turn their heads towards each other like two magnet pieces that are unable
to stop the attraction.

Silent conversations, that’s another one of their things, it seems.

Because Iwaizumi needn’t ask aloud how Akaashi’s parents know about their sneaking out.
Must’ve been an email or phone call from one of the damn RCs.

Iwaizumi notices that the gunmetals are now oxford blue, the color brought out by his beanie,
Akaashi’s tshirt and hoodie, like a stormy sky before it rains or spilled ink.

Akaashi’s eyes are always speaking, even when he isn’t running his rude ass mouth. They’re his
most expressive feature. And if what people say is true, that the eyes are the windows to your
soul, then Akaashi’s is really, really beautiful.

Then again, so is he.

It’s not shocky for Iwaizumi, he is all kinds of familiar with the excessive type of pretty, that
shouldn’t really work, not with so many focal points - the eyes, the jaw, the nose, the lips. But
work it does. God, it just fucking works.

Oikawa was a lot of things and for all the things he was or wasn’t, he’d always been one thing
and that was beautiful. Everybody knew it. Oikawa was never blind to it.

That’s the thing about beautiful people. They’re always aware that they are and that’s the part that
makes them dangerous. They compel you with their strong jawlines and candy apple lips and
captivating eyes that make you go weak-kneed. You fall under their spell, that’s their magic.

Oikawa knew how to use his looks to his advantage and always did. He’s the one that made
Iwaizumi both completely immune and completely susceptible.

Never once had Oikawa given chase, or waited on someone’s stoop wearing a bowtie and a zit on
his forehead, or picked petunias off a lawn as a last minute gift.

Oikawa didn’t know the back of a pretty girl’s head, save from when he himself put her that way.
He knew nothing of suffering a crush, staring out of windows and daydreaming in a state of
lovelorn catatonia. He never heard no from a lipsticked mouth. He never knew what love sickness
was, the feel of all his arteries grasping and shoving at once.

The storybooks all say that kings are merciless, and it’s true.

Because Oikawa was as cold and as cruel and as beautiful as a king should be. He was a Grand King and Aoba Jousai was his kingdom of reign. And it wasn’t just their school he

Oikawa was the best at spotting raw talent and nurturing it, careful and gentle, under his wing, his
guidance. He saw it and knew it and felt it, which is exactly how he picked his favourite kouhais.

And Iwaizumi finally realizes it wasn’t just volleyball skills that spiked his radar. It was also the
royal blood, the fellow I am not a follower, but a natural-born leader gene.

Akaashi, while princess pretty, is Boy King. Kageyama is too. King of the Court.
Those two aren’t just protégés, they are Oikawa’s legacy and that must be why Iwaizumi feels closest to them, why he holds them most dearest.

And while Kageyama still has a lot to learn of one’s manipulative ways, Akaashi grows, day by day, minute by minute, assuming his kingly role.

The best part? They don’t use a filter.

That’s what made Iwaizumi fall in love with Oikawa, forever and ever. The fact he never masked the ugliest of thoughts, all the jealousy and the envy, but shared, instead.

It takes a lot of bravery to be real when people are fake as fuck, saying things they don’t really think or believe in, only saying them to impress and please, just for the likability factor.

Only dead fish go with the flow and Iwaizumi hates - he absolutely loathes - people that agree with him solely because they’re too chickenshit to argue, too weak to stand and hold their ground.

Realness, courage and loyalty; those are the human traits Iwaizumi values most and just like Oikawa, Akaashi and Kageyama home all three.

That’s so good.

“Iwaizumi-kun,” Akaashi’s mom says, “would you like to have a glass of wine with us or do you prefer beer like Keiji?”

“Oh no, Mrs Akaashi, I never drink when I’m with the car. I’ll have a Diet Coke.”

“Make that two.” Akaashi says. He doesn’t feel like having alcohol this early or after the night before. Fucking champagne.

They clink their glasses, toasting, to his dad’s success and then food is served, so he stops talking and stuffs his face, while listening to Iwaizumi asking his dad all kinds of questions about his books.

Only when his plate is completely polished, does he look up, ready to join the conversation.

“So, Keiji,” His dad says, “how is Bokuto-kun’s volleyball training camp going?”

“Today’s the first day, Dad. I’ll ask him about it later.”

“Make sure you say hello to him from your mother and I.”

“I will.”

He doesn’t have to worry-itch about not warning Iwaizumi beforehand that his parents don’t know they’re in a relationship. Iwaizumi’s got smarts, he must know his mom and dad wouldn’t approve of sharing a room with someone he’s dating.

“Bokuto-kun.” His dad smiles, addressing nobody in particular. “Such a charming boy.”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi snorts. “Not the word I would use to describe him, but I suppose he could be when he wants to be.”

“Oh? So what word would you use to describe him, Iwaizumi-kun?”

“Loud.”
It’s the tone Iwaizumi uses, the slight note of not exactly dislike, but an estranged cousin of it, crystal clear.

“He is, but I find his loudness quite charming.” Akaashi’s dad smiles. “I take it you two don’t exactly get along?”

“Not exactly.”

“I see.” His dad nods slowly. Then laughs. “It’s a rivalry thing about Keiji, isn’t it?”

“What?! Dad, no!” He says, glancing at Iwaizumi, so Iwaizumi can confirm it’s not true.

But Iwaizumi looks like he’s decided to have some fun.

“Yes, Mr Akaashi. That’s absolutely correct. But I want to assure you our intentions towards your son are entirely honorable.”

“Honorable, Iwaizumi-san?” He rolls his eyes. “You say such old man things.”

“And here we thought,” Akaashi’s mom says, smiling at his dad, “chivalry is dead.”

“Pft.” He snorts. “Iwaizumi-san sounds like a knight from 10000 years ago.”

“Thank you, Akaashi.”

“Don’t thank me, it wasn’t a compliment.”

“Sure sounded like one.” Iwaizumi’s lips twitch.

“If you were a knight, you wouldn’t be riding a horse into battle, but a dinosaur.”

Iwaizumi doesn’t consider that a jab, when he should, because it is. He completely ignores Akaashi, turns his entire attention towards his parents.

...That can’t be good.

“Mr and Mrs Akaashi, please tell me what is the right and proper way for me to really secure myself a spot into your son’s heart.”

Iwaizumi’s such a friggin’ jerk.

Unfortunately for Iwaizumi, so is he.

“I’m recording you, Iwaizumi-san,” He says, phone in hand, “so I can later show it to all your friends and then I will be the one laughing. They would be too.”

“Well,” Akaashi’s dad says, “I would say—”

“Dad! Please say nothing.”

“Keiji, don’t be like that. It’s my father’s duty to embarrass you in front of your friends.”

“Thanks, Dad, but it’s really not necessary.”

“Iwaizumi-kun,” His dad says, “it’s books. Keiji loves reading, but you obviously share that in common. Say, who is your favourite author?”
Akaashi sighs. “It must be Shakespeare, as Iwaizumi-san seems to enjoy drama.”

“No, I don’t like tragedies.” Iwaizumi says. “I don’t like Shakespeare either. I prefer Molière.”

“Molière?” Akaashi blinks. “I’ve never read a single one of his works.”

“You should, Akaashi. He’s considered to be one of the greatest masters of comedy in Western literature. So you really should.” Iwaizumi grins all broad and big.

Oh, he is so giving Iwaizumi a payback for all the shit later when they’re alone.

“Keiji is also very independent. He doesn’t like relying on people by sharing his troubles, not even to his mother and I. He prefers finding the solution by himself.” Akaashi’s dad says and laughs. “Iwaizumi-kun, he probably never told you this, but when Keiji was 7 years old, he had to stay at his school’s library for study hall. We were always busy with work and it was always past dinner time when one of us would be able to pick him up from school and go home. So we signed him up to have dinner at the cafeteria, as it was optional and a lot of students remained back, like him, waiting for their parents. They all had to use coupons, to show their meals were paid for.”

Iwaizumi nods, understanding. Oikawa’s and his parents used to do the same, leaving them at school until one of the four was able to pick them up and take them home.

It feels like a million years ago, bittersweet, recollecting such childhood memories.

“We left Keiji all of his monthly dinner coupons on his desk. But as September was ending, he saw that he was running out of coupons.” Akaashi’s dad grins. “And instead of asking his mother and I to buy him more, he didn’t want to bother us with such a matter, so he xeroxed an entire month worth of coupons and kept using those through October.”

Iwaizumi roars in laughter.

“Wow! Akaashi, I’m beyond impressed you were able to think of that when you were only 7 years old!”

He chuckles, goofy and proud. “Thanks, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Yes, I was all kinds of impressed by our son’s thinking.” Akaashi’s dad says. “Keiji’s always made us proud, but that was so great.”

“Honey,” Akaashi’s mom shakes her head in disapproval, “that’s not something to be proud of.”

Sorry, Mom, but you can’t understand. You’ll never get it.

Because it’s the male sort of thinking, the pride you feel from outsmarting the system. Men’s brains are wired differently than women’s. Which is why Moms would nag about something like this, whereas Dads would be proud.

Two hours later, after the cappuccinos and the desserts, he hugs his mom and dad goodbye with a promised word of seeing them whenever they’re free, and leaves with Iwaizumi, back to his car.

Not feeling like talking, when Iwaizumi plays his most beloved Stones, Akaashi ups the volume at loudest.

Iwaizumi couldn’t agree more.

I can’t get no! Oh, no, no, no!
Hey hey hey!

Lying flat on his belly, feet in the air, he is facetimeing Bokuto, while Iwaizumi makes tea in the kitchen.

“Hey, Ushijima! Come say hi to my boyfriend!”

Somewhere close by, he hears Ushijima’s voice ask “Why?”

“Keiji is saying hi to you!”

Keiji is not saying hi to him.

But Bokuto’s phone shakes and then both Bokuto and Ushijima’s faces are in focus.

“Say hi to Keiji!”

“Hello.” Ushijima says.

“Hello, Ushijima-san. I’m glad to hear your practice went really well today.”

“Yes.”

“Hey, Keiji, guess what!”

Before Akaashi can ask a “what”, Bokuto continues.

“I made the perfect song for Ushijima! Wanna hear it?”

“Of course, Bokuto-san.”

“Waka Waka hey hey! ‘Cause this is Africa!”

He joins Bokuto in laughing, while Ushijima looks confused.

“It must be an inside joke between you two, because I still don’t understand it.” Ushijima reasons.

“I’ve been called Japan before, but why Africa? I’ve never even been there.”

“It’s a song.” He says. “By Shakira, I believe.”

“I see.” Ushijima says. “I’m not familiar with it.”

Bokuto slaps his forehead and makes that “Ohh!” noise he makes whenever he realizes something, which Akaashi’s always found really cute. Bokuto is really cute.

“I was wondering why it was so familiar.” Bokuto laughs. “It was the official song of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, right, Keiji?”

“I wouldn’t know that, Bokuto-san.”

“Bokuto,” Ushijima says, “I didn’t know you like football.”
“Oh, I always watch when there’s the World or European Cup. But I don’t really follow teams or — Ohhh! Keiji! We’ve got another Rat Pack member here!”

“‘Sup, Angel Eyes?” Kuroo appears on Ushijima’s left side with a smirk.

“Hello, Kuroo-san.” He smiles.

“Please excuse me. I must go practice more serves before the gym closes.” Ushijima bows his head curtly. “Have a good evening, Akaashi.”

“Yoooo, Waka Waka! Wait for me!” Bokuto hoots, passing his phone over to Kuroo. “Keiji! Love you! Talk to you tomorrow!”

“Love you too, Bokuto-san.” Then. “Please don’t overwork yourself!”

“He didn’t hear that.” Kuroo grins.

He sighs. Even if Bokuto did hear it, it’s not like he would listen.

“Kuroo-san—”

“Akaashi!” Iwaizumi yells from downstairs. “Honey?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san!” He yells back.

“Oh.” Kuroo pulls a face. “Iwaizumi sure feels comfortable with you, Angel Eyes, doesn’t he? Calling you honey, I mean, isn’t that too comfortable?”

“What— No!” He laughs. “Iwaizumi-san’s making us tea. He was asking if I wanted any honey in it.”

“Oh. Okay. I thought he was—”

“Kuroo-san, you know it’s not like that. We’ve talked about this.”

“I know it’s not like that from your side, Angel Eyes.”

“I assure you, it’s from both sides, not just mine.”

“If you say it, I believe you.” Kuroo nods. “So, how was meeting your parents today?”

“It was great. They were both so surprised and got so happy.” He smiles. “I should’ve asked Iwaizumi-san to take a video of their reactions for Bokuto-san and you.”

“He was there too?”

“Yes, I asked him to meet my mom and dad and stay for lunch.”

Kuroo goes silent for a moment. “Angel Eyes, when you come home, I want you to meet my mom. Ok?”

He feels his heart flutter from the words. Of course, Tokyo, Fukurodani, are his home, but it feels so great to hear it, to be awaited, to go back. To come home.

“It’s more than ok, Kuroo-san. I’d love to meet your mom.”

Kuroo smiles without a hint of smirk. “She’d totally love you. She already does from what Kenma
and I’ve told her about you.”

“Speaking of parents—”

Once again, just before he gets to ask, his attention is stolen by Iwaizumi, because Iwaizumi
returns and hands him his tea before sitting cross-legged on his bed.

“Thank you, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Hey, Iwa, how’s it goin’, dude?” Kuroo greets.

He shifts from the floor a little to get Iwaizumi into the camera too.

“That’s Iwaizumi to you. And don’t dude me.”

“Jeez.” Kuroo smirks. “Angel Eyes, what’s up with Iwa?”

He snickers at Iwaizumi’s scowl, at Kuroo’s teasing.

This is excellent.

“Kuroo-san, I wanted to ask you about Bokuto-san.” He says. “He seems very open about our
relationship and I’m worried word will carry to his parents. His dad, specifically.”

“Mm, gym’s still packed, but it’s just Ushijima, Bo and I on the court here.” Kuroo says. “So
don’t worry about Ushijima, because he won’t say shit. Neither would Sawamura. They’ve
known about us dating since day one, but they’re trustworthy, Angel Eyes.”

“I never said they weren’t, Kuroo-san. I’m just saying the circle of people that know about us is
growing bigger and bigger and we should be more cautious. Bokuto-san told my entire team and
obviously your Rat Pack, you told Kenma and I told Iwaizumi-san.”

“Like I said - all trustworthy people.” Then. “Wait, you haven’t told your 2nd Generation Rat
Pack buddies?”

“No.”

“Huh. I thought you guys were friends, since you’ve been talking so much over the phone.”

“We are, I suppose. But I haven’t told any of them, even though they keep asking me about it.”

“That’s smart.” Iwaizumi says.

“A little paranoid too.” Kuroo notes.

“I’d rather be safe than sorry.” He says and takes a sip of his tea. “Oh. There’s barely any honey
in it.”

“I know you love honey, but,” Iwaizumi says, “since you drink your coffee black, I assumed you
want your tea less sweet.”

“Coffee is coffee. I love tea with lots of honey, or sugar, and a slice of lemon.”

“Noted.”

“Angel Eyes, if you wanna make it sweeter, just dip one of your fingers in.”
He snorts. “Kuroo-san, don’t say such cheesy things.”

“Oh, come on. You know you love it.” Kuroo winks.

“If I loved it, I would’ve said “Kuroo-san, I love it.” Which I did not.”

Iwaizumi starts laughing and Kuroo looks like he really wants to say something, a snide remark, a something, but reconsiders, says nothing. Akaashi is sure he is only keeping his sharp claws retracted for his sake.

“What are you and Bokuto-san doing tonight? I thought I saw Kiko and Kira in the back of one of your selfies earlier?”

“Yeah, they got here today and they’re staying.” Kuroo grins. “Bo and I are actually going out with them, Konoha, Sarukui and Yukie for dinner. And then maybe sneak out after curfew and go clubbing or something. Haven’t decided yet.”

He laughs. “I can already hear Konoha-san’s you shihead complaints from here.”

“Yeah. The twins saw your English teacher in the hallways—”

“Mr Burns?”

“Yeah. They spent the entire lunch talking to Yukie about him and saying his name is perfect for him, ’cause he’s so hot he burns. They got into full teacher fantasy kinky mode and Konoha was frothing at the mouth like a rabid dog.” Kuroo cackles. “It was fuckin’ hilarious.”

“Of course.” He says and looks up at Iwaizumi. “Konoha-san’s back and forth with his twin sisters is one of the top 10 most entertaining things I’ve ever seen in my life.”

“Who was Konoha again?”

Well, honestly. How could anyone be so fucking bad at remembering names?

“I literally told you this morning.”

“This morning, Akaashi. Now it’s evening.”

“Someone’s got a goldfish memory.” Kuroo grins. “Tut, tut, tut. Shame on you, Iwaizumi, how could you not know Angel Eyes’s teammates names?”

“Why should I?”

“My teammates are all my friends.” Akaashi scowls. “I know all of yours.”

“You have a photographic memory, Akaashi. You see their names on a piece of paper, you remember them. It’s not the same.”

“Then you will make an effort to learn them, Iwaizumi-san.” Akaashi says, Boy King voice commanding, not leaving any room for disagreement or dispute.

“You’re right, Akaashi, I should.” He says. “I will.”

“Oh ho ho.” Kuroo smirks. “Don’t worry, Iwa, this is why—”

“Iwaizumi.”
“— Bo and the rest of the Fukurodani squad call Angel Eyes a Jedi with his mind tricks.”

“Jedi?” Iwaizumi scoffs. “Don’t be ridiculous, Kuroo, your boyfriend is a goddamn Sith Lord.”

All three of them start laughing, loud and unfiltered, and Akaashi is certain this is the first time Iwaizumi and Kuroo have an exchange that’s not catty, but full of chuckles.

Star Wars is a good common ground for maybe, hopefully, a friendship between his boyfriends and Iwaizumi and the thought of it makes him feel all kinds of happy and proud.

Laughing to himself, he thinks he’s like Nokia, connecting people.

...Or tequila. Tequila connects people, too.

“Kuroo-san, could you do me a favour?”

“Anything for you, Angel Eyes.”

“Whether you go out or stay in, please keep a tab on Sarukui-san for me.” He says. “With Kira and Konoha-san and Yukie, just— add as much fuel to the fire as you wish with teasing Konoha-san - do it for me too - but please look out for Sarukui-san.”

“I will. I promise.” Kuroo says softly and gives him a sad little smile. “Angel Eyes, you know you should just enjoy yourself and stop worrying about others.”

“I can do both at the same, Kuroo-san.” He smiles. “And send me pictures. And videos. I thoroughly enjoyed the one Bokuto-san and you sent me last night.”

“We will.” Kuroo blows a kiss. “I hope you know Fukurodani’s empty without you.”

“I miss you too, Kuroo-san.” He makes a kissy face. “Have fun. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

He rolls on his back and closes his eyes, smiling. He feels all kinds of relaxed and loved. So very loved.

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“What are we doing tonight?”

“What are our options?”

“We could go running like you suggested earlier.”

“Mhm.”

“We could join Mattsun and Makki for dinner. They texted me they’re going to TGI Friday’s.”

“We could do that. I love their crispy duck.”

Silence.

“Wanna stay in and just chill?”
“Like Netflix and chill, Iwaizumi-san?”

His joke goes completely unappreciated, because Iwaizumi blinks at him.

“What the Hell is Netflix?”

“My God.” He shakes his head. “It’s 2016, Iwaizumi-san. How can you not know what Netflix is?”

When he explains to Iwaizumi, Iwaizumi makes an old man turtle face of dissatisfaction.

“That’s garbage.”

“You’re such a bad millennial, Iwaizumi-san.”

“I don’t wanna be a millennial, Akaashi.”

“That’s good, because you’re not. You’re a dinosaur.”

“I’d rather be a dinosaur than a consumerism-crazed robot like you.”

Their barely 15 seconds long scowls turn into amused grins and they both start laughing.

Iwaizumi shows him his record player and he wows, genuine, because he’s never seen one that was touchable before. The ones he’d seen, live, were all glassed in museums. Then Iwaizumi, all kinds of proud - which he should be, because it’s beyond impressive - shows him his vinyl record collection. It’s endless.

He spreads them all on the floor and starts pouring over them, studying and admiring each, letting his eyes read and his fingers glide.

Damn.


Everything, all the rock classics, except one.

“Your collection is incomplete.”

“No, it’s complete.”

“How can you own all the rock classics and not The Beatles, when they are the most influential acts of the rock era?”

“I only own and listen to good music. Which The Beatles are not. They suck.”

“No, you suck.”

“And you blow.”

“Yes, I do.”

“Wow, what an unforeseen comeback.” Iwaizumi rolls his eyes. “Color me shocked.”
Then.

“Hey, you.” Iwaizumi, standing, lets his fingertips dance against the back of Akaashi’s neck, tickling.

“Hi.” He looks up and smiles.

“Akaashi, wanna see something beautiful?”

“Is it a mirror, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Unbelievable.” Iwaizumi sighs. “A robot programmed to be narcissistic - worst thing ever.”

“Still better than a Beatles-hating dinosaur.”

Iwaizumi clutches the edge of his hoodie and shirt and hauls him up on his feet, effortless, like he weighs no more than a feather. Then he leads him to the window, opens it wide and points out.

“It’s not a mirror, but tell me, princess, isn’t it beautiful?”

He stares at the night sky, filled with twinkling stars, speechless.

It’s very beautiful.

“Iwaizumi-san,” He grins, “are you about to take me on a magic carpet ride to show me the world?”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi snort chuckles. “That depends. Did Aladdin ever offer Jasmine to get take-out and roll up?”

“Probably, in the modernized non-PG version.”

“That a yes, Akaashi?”

“It’s a Hell yes.” He smiles, then frowns. “Wait. Can you roll?”

“Obviously.”

“You have to teach me how to do it.”

“Another thing you can’t do, huh.” Iwaizumi smirks.

“I’ve only smoked twice, so no.”

“Oh.” Blink. “You sure you wanna?”

“Yes, absolutely. I loved the feeling both times and I want it again.” He replies sincerely. “My head’s kind of swimmy, so I’d like to not think and just— chill.”

“Netflix and chill?” Iwaizumi snickers.

“Iwaizumi-san, I know you’re trying to be cool and hip, but you’re still a 100% unaware that that’s a euphemism for sex.”

“What.”

It’s his turn to snicker. “You dinosaur.”
“Robot.”

Bare feet and insects, alive and loud, cricketing into the night air, along with REO Speedwagon blaring through the window, they perch on the roof of Iwaizumi’s house, sharing a fat one between their fingers.

Nighttime hunger, smoke in his lungs and on his lips, Akaashi stares at the banana moon above their heads, feeling completely serene and slack.

“I love it.” He says, soft. “This. The stars and the moon.”

“I thought you loved sunrises.”

“Sunsets too. I love all three. But the only time I enjoy the sun rising is when I haven’t slept and stayed up all night. I’m a night owl, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Me too. I prefer the night sky. It’s so peaceful and quiet.”

The silence is beautiful.

He rests his back against the roof tiles and closes his eyes.

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“Akaashi.”

“Your best man’s speech yesterday. It really made me think. No, it’s not just that. It’s the way you always speak about Oikawa-san. Matsukawa-san and Hanamaki-san do that too, about each other. And I’ve also heard it from Konoha-san and Sarukui-san. Jersey number 7 and Jersey number 5.” He adds, aiding Iwaizumi’s craptastic name memory. “All of you have this way of talking about the ones you love that’s really moving. It’s so lovely.” Tongue darting out, he licks the dryness away from his lips. “Bokuto-san is my very first kiss and Kuroo-san is my second and they’re both my firsts in getting intimate.”

Iwaizumi takes a deep drag, nods, listening.

“I love Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san. So very much. They’re objectively the greatest human beings walking the planet. To me, they are.” He says, quick and defensive, because he thinks Iwaizumi might get sarcastic.

Iwaizumi, of course, doesn’t. He wouldn’t, not about this. He remains silent and respectable.

“But as much as I love them, I can’t, for the life of me, empathize with the forever and ever type of certainty Matsukawa-san, Hanamaki-san, Konoha-san, Sarukui-san and you have, when you speak about love. I’d like to know, Iwaizumi-san. I want to understand how you’re only 18, your lives only just starting, and you’re so certain and know for sure that that kind of love is forever.”

“Akaashi, I don’t think you’d like my answer, because it makes no sense at all.”

“I’d still like to know.”
“You either have the feeling or you don’t.”

He lets the words sink in, resonating.

*You either have the feeling or you don’t.*

It’s beautiful and he finds that he loves and hates Iwaizumi’s answer at the same time.

He frowns his 8-year-old-boy frown and, childish, asks. “Is there something wrong with me?”

“Oh, princess,” Iwaizumi’s hand ruffles the hairs on the back of his neck, “there’s *nothing* wrong with you, so please don’t fret. You’re trying to use textbook logic, when it’s feelings.” His lips curve up and smile fondly. “And feelings grow.”

“Konoha-san told me the first time he saw Yukie - Jersey number 7 and our manager - he was half in love with her. He just knew she’s the girl he wants to marry.” He says, searching Iwaizumi’s eyes for answers. “Was it that way with Oikawa-san and you?”

“No.” Iwaizumi shakes his head, chuckling. “There were no blinding lights and angels singing in the background when we first met. We were three and a half.” He smiles. “You remember the first time you met Bokuto and Kuroo?”

“Yes.” He nods, feeling his mouth mirroring Iwaizumi’s. “First time I met Kuroo-san, I thought he was a territorial jerk. As for Bokuto-san, I thought he was tacky as Hell.” He laughs. “I never would have, in a million years, imagined dating either.”

Iwaizumi grins. “But here we are.”

“Here we are.”

“My mom and Tooru’s mom kept seeing each other whenever they would drop us off and then pick us up from kindergarten. Then at the park between our houses, where we’d always play.” Iwaizumi smiles. “Tooru loved the swings, while the monkey bars were my favourite. The swing set we had was all creaky, with red and white chipping paint and bits of rust and that’s why nobody, aside from Tooru, would use them.”

Akaashi, trying to get a better visionary, closes his eyes and lets his imagination roam, Iwaizumi’s words painting him a picture.

“His mom was real busy work, so Akemi started accompanying him to the park.”

“Oikawa-san’s sister?”

“Yeah, Akemi was his older sister. 10 year of an age gap, but they were so close.” Iwaizumi sighs. “His mom and his sister died in a car crash. Drunk driver. All three dead, right on the spot.” Another sigh. “Tooru was never the same after that.”

“Condolences.”

“Mhm.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “Anyway. Whenever Tooru used the swings, he would go as high as possible, despite his mother and sister’s warnings to be careful, and he would laugh and— Akaashi, I honestly think he expected a spaceship to come over and just beam him up.”

He laughs.

“Tooru looked *so* damn happy whenever he used our shitty swings, it made me want the same.
His joyous laughter, that’s what made me join him.”

Akaashi can totally picture it, an almost baby Oikawa and Iwaizumi competing with each other, trying to swing higher.

It makes him smile.

“Back then I didn’t know what it was.” Iwaizumi says. “I was too young to understand. But years later, I realized it was love. It was always love.”

“The feeling.” He says. “That’s when you knew you had it.”

“Exactly.”

“Please tell me more about the feeling, Iwaizumi-san.”

“You got any childhood friends you keep in touch with?”

“No. I never had any.” He admits. “Konoha-san was the very first friend I ever made. Jer—”

“Jersey number 7.”

“Yes.” He smiles, happy and proud. Iwaizumi is definitely making an effort, like he said he would. “That’s the one.”

“Well. Tooru was my very first friend. He was basically all my first everythings.”

“Right.”

“Whenever he saw me and my mom approaching, he would throw his milk bread on the ground, let go of the balloon in his hand, forget all about his toys in the sandbox, and grinning, from ear to ear, he would run towards me, as fast as he could. He would trip and fall and get up and continue running. Then he would pinch my cheeks, throw his arms around my neck with an Iwa-chan! and hug me so tight, it would stop my breath.” Iwaizumi says and wipes at his wet eyes with the back of his hand. He swallows, emotional, taking a moment to compose himself. “Akaashi. If some day Bokuto and Kuroo make you feel like that, the way a child hugs their favourite person- don’t ever let go of them. Because that’s it. That’s the feeling.”

“The feeling.” He echoes quietly, lost in his own head and thoughts.

“But,” Iwaizumi adds, “know that that’s my feeling. You’ll get your own, Akaashi. You will have your own feeling.”

Akaashi looks perturbed for a split second, before he masks it with a grin.

“I have a feeling, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Do tell, Akaashi.”

“I have a feeling I wanna eat Thai food and watch Looney Tunes.”

Iwaizumi barks a laugh. “You are a looney tune.”

“Oh, your comebacks are always so great.”

“As is your sense of humor.”
Sprawled out in front of Iwaizumi’s TV, they gorge themselves with take-out, eyes on Boomerang, all their favourite childhood shows.

Akaashi, laughing, points his chopsticks at the screen. “If you were a cartoon, Iwaizumi-san, you would be The Flinstones.”

“You’re already a cartoon, Akaashi, but in the Cartoon Network Universe, you would be The Jetsons.”

“Bamm-Bamm Rubble, that’s totally you, because you’ve got muscles-for-brains.”

“And you’re totally Rosie, the household robot, because you’re a fuckin’ robot.”

“No, she’s too outdated and domestic.” He grins. “I am neither of those.”

“Whatever, you’re both robots.” Iwaizumi waves his chicken curry in Akaashi’s face. “Wanna finish it? I feel completely stuffed.”

He nods and accepts, grin growing bigger.

“I’ve never seen anyone get this excited over food. No. I’ve never seen anyone capable of eating this much in one sitting.” Iwaizumi shakes his head, chuckling. “I’m impressed.”

“You obviously don’t know my manager very well. She’s a whole lot more impressive than I am. I think.”

Iwaizumi smiles. No, he doesn’t know Fukurodani’s manager at all, but he does know she had a thing for Oikawa. All the girls did. He could always see it, clear as summer-blue skies. And so could Oikawa.

Feeling the oncoming food coma, Iwaizumi wills his limbs to move towards the bathroom. When he returns, he finds Akaashi asleep on the floor.

He can’t help but stop and stare, because for a few soft minutes Akaashi’s fan of hair looks like a little crown, or a halo. Then Akaashi rolls over and his gnarled flippies return to their natural horn shape.

That makes Iwaizumi smile a lot.

Crouching, he begins to pick at the bits of carpet fiber stuck to Akaashi’s hair.

“Mmm.” Akaashi mumbles, half-asleep and content. “You did that this morning as well.”

Iwaizumi stills his hand.

Oh.

Oh no.

Akaashi remembers.

“No, Iwaizumi-san, please don’t stop. I love it when people play with my hair.”

“Akaashi.”

No reply. Akaashi has retired from the world for the night.
Not wanting Akaashi to hurt his back, Iwaizumi gives a soft sigh, before carrying him into bed.

Then he plays with Akaashi’s hair until he, too, falls asleep.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

Hey hey heyyy~ Life isn't as hectic as I assumed it would be. Or maybe I'm just overeager to write more and more of Akaashi in Miyagi :3c I hope you guys enjoy the update and have a lovely week ❤

Despite getting more than 10 hours of sleep, Akaashi, still feeling tired, scratches his rumbling tummy, while blinking the z’s away.

Iwaizumi yell out a “Waffle, Akaashi?” from downstairs.

“Just one?” He yells back. “Iwaizumi-san, I know you’re a dinosaur, but I didn’t know you’re a Cheapasaurus.”

He’s just about to walk into the kitchen, when he registers three different laughters and freezes on the steps. One of them belongs to Iwaizumi. The other ones must belong to—

“You heard him, Ma.” Iwaizumi says. “Stack ‘em up.”

Oh. What a terrible way to become wide awake.

“Iwaizumi-san?” He calls out gently. “Could you please come up for a minute?”

Iwaizumi joins him, fully dressed and smiling. “What’s up?”

“Why didn’t tell me your parents are here?” He hisses.

“Did you think I live on my own?”

“No, but I’ve been here for two days and haven’t seen them once!”

Iwaizumi can practically see the flash of “Error. Error. Error.” across Akaashi’s face. It makes him grin.

“Yeah, adults have this thing called jobs, Akaashi. But it’s Saturday, so obviously my mom and my dad are home.”

He finds Iwaizumi’s big amused smile annoying and stupid and wipes it right off by pinching Iwaizumi’s arm with his forefinger and thumb, as hard as possible, then twists.

“Aghh!” Iwaizumi gasps, inspecting the damage on his skin. “Jesus fuck! I can actually see my
blood! Look!”

“Good.” Akaashi has a vicious little smirk and a madman’s look in his eyes, pleased with himself. The sadistic fucker.

“Heed that as a warning, Iwaizumi-san, to not get smart with me before I have coffee.”

Iwaizumi watches Akaashi transform the second he walks into the kitchen, introduces himself to his mom and dad, bowing his head courteously and shaking hands, joking and smiling, voice honey-sweet and sugary.

So Akaashi can pre-program himself to be nice in the mornings. To parents.

Joining his family and Akaashi at the table, Iwaizumi thinks Akaashi is like a fucking gremlin that turns pure evil before coffee. Massaging his arm, he never thought he’d pity all the Fukurodani folk that get to witness, on a daily basis, morning Akaashi. Especially Bokuto.

Rest in goddamn fucking pieces, Bokuto.

Actually, how is Bokuto still alive, not torn to shreds and fed to piranhas - the most suitable pet for the likes of Akaashi?

Hm. He makes a note to ask Bokuto about it. Then instantly reconsiders, because knowing Akaashi, it’s sex.

Well. Admittedly, morning sex is really nice and amazing, and hands down the best way to wake up, but that’s so not the point.

Akaashi is just gonna have to suck it up and endure sexless wakeups until he goes back to Fukurodani. And he is just gonna have to suck it up and endure the bitchy wakeups until Akaashi goes back to Fukurodani.

“Boys?” Pa calls out, dotting with his pen.

Akaashi, tucking into his waffles dripping and oozing with teeth not just rotting but falling out sweet amount of honey, mumbles out a “Mr Iwaizumi, could you please read it out?”

“2 Down. Classic story about an orphaned Swiss girl. E and I.”

“I don’t know that one.” Iwaizumi says.

“Keiji-kun?”

Iwaizumi pinches the bridge of his nose. Oh my God, Pa, first name basis, really?

“How many letters?”

“Five.”

“Mmm.” Akaashi thinks for a moment. “Heidi.”

“Ah! Yes, perfect.” Pa fills it out and smiles. “Keiji-kun you enjoy crosswords?”

“Oh, yes, Mr Iwaizumi, absolutely. My father’s always encouraged me to do them.”

“Your father’s a good man.” Pa chuckles. “I do the same with Hajime.”
Iwaizumi’s annoyance with Akaashi’s bitchiness ebbs away and completely disappears, when he sees and hears Akaashi bonding with his mom and dad.

He actually can’t help but smile, because it’s been a while since he had anyone over and Akaashi isn’t just anyone. Last time his parents got the chance to connect with some of his close friends were Mattsun and Makki, nearly half a year ago.

He doesn’t count Tooru, of course, because Tooru was always family.

“Hajime,” Ma says, “you haven’t forgotten Tobio-kun has a game today, have you?”

Oh!

Kageyama, of course.

He had Kageyama over just a couple of days ago.

Then again Kageyama, like Akaashi, isn’t just a close friend.

“No, Ma, of course I didn’t. I’m the one that told you about it.” He turns towards Akaashi. “Wanna go watch?”

Akaashi nods his head, all kinds of enthusiastic. Eyes gleaming, he says, “I wouldn’t want to miss Kageyama-kun playing for the world.”

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Akaashi is surprised the strands aren’t completely packed and bursting at the seams as it’s a Saturday. Maybe two junior high school teams playing isn’t that big shit of an event, because aside from the occasional proud parent here and there to cheer and support, there’s a handful of scouts, probably, and just Iwaizumi and him.

He never really liked overcrowded spaces, so he enjoys the half-empty gym.

He takes a seat during the warm up, but Iwaizumi makes a come motion with his hand and so he joins him at the rail.

“Jersey number 5 and 6 are my kouhais.” Iwaizumi says. “Kindaichi and Kunimi. They’re in the same grade as Kageyama.”

“Oh.” He has an instant recollection of the two names he’s heard Kageyama talk and complain about the most. “Let me guess. The turnip head is Kindaichi and—”

Iwaizumi snickers. “Turnip head!”

“— the lethargic looking one is Kunimi?”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi chuckle snorts. “A little rich for you to call Kunimi lethargic, when you’re always sporting the same expression.”

“He a robot too, Iwaizumi-san?”
“No, no, no, most definitely not. Robots are efficient, they do things efficiently. Kunimi is the laziest person I know. He’s always cutting corners. I’ve never seen him put full effort during matches and he’d often skip practice.” Iwaizumi points discreetly. “You saw that spike just now?”

“Yes. But this is just warm up.”

“Nah,” Iwaizumi shakes his head, “even when they start playing, he’s still gonna be like that.”

“No wonder Kageyama-kun is frustrated with him.”

“Well, Kageyama is frustrating too.” Iwaizumi smirks. “But it’s only natural you would empathize with a fellow setter.”

“Not just me.” He shakes his head. “There’s nothing more disheartening than giving out a good toss and the Wing Spiker half-assing their job.”

“Kunimi still gets points in, though.”

“That’s not the point. Hahaha, the point is not the point.”

“At least you find your puns and jokes amusing. You and yourself alone.”

“I’m a robot, therefore I’m completely self-sufficient. I don’t need confirmations of how hilarious I am from dinosaurs that are too lame to understand something as sophisticated.” He replies, chin held higher than necessary for effect.

The effect makes Iwaizumi laugh, then add a, “Dinosaurs aren’t lame, they’re cool.”

“While that may be true, you are the only one I’ve met in real life, so I speak from personal experience. And before your crappy memory forgets the point I was trying to make—”

“My memory is excellent—”

“What’s the name of my team’s Jersey number 7?”

“Konoha.”

He gives a mildly impressed nod. “And what about my team’s Jersey number 3?”

“It’s the guy that’s got a permanent smile on his face.”

“Name, Iwaizumi-san, I want a name.”

“Victor.” Iwaizumi snickers.

That was so lame, he doesn’t even bother with an eye-roll. “His name. Fukurodani’s Jersey number 3.”

Iwaizumi scrunches his face, eyes closed, racking his brain for answers.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’d like the answer today, please.”

“Shut up, Akaashi, I’m thinking!”

“Obviously, that’s not a task you do very often.”

“Oh, fuck you!”
“You keep saying that, but you never deliver.”

Iwaizumi’s knuckles punch his arm and, shit, that’s definitely gonna bruise!

“Um- ow.”

“Payback for the morning, princess,” Iwaizumi grins, shark-like. “Look, man, my memory is great with everything, but names, and I know you were gonna say the point isn’t Kunimi scoring for his team, but the way he doesn’t give you the satisfaction of watching his half-assed spike, and that feels like it’s a wasted toss.” He says, knowing. Smiling. “I could never be a setter, but watching Tooru taught me a thing or two how to think like one.”

Akaashi smiles back. “Whenever I watch Bokuto-san playing in top form, it gives me such a good feeling.”

“Bokuto playing in top form gives everyone a good feeling,” Iwaizumi says. “Not just your team and the crowd, but the opposing team as well. I have no doubt he’s gonna go pro and real big too. In a few years, not just Japan, but the whole sports watching world will know Bokuto’s name.”

He feels a burning pride in his chest, agreeing 100% with everything Iwaizumi is saying, and it’s even better that a fellow Wing Spiker that’s all kinds of skilled, one he admires and looks up to, would admit and share the feeling. And the best part is that such heartwarming words are coming from a close friend.

Both pairs of eyes on the court, along with everyone else, they watch Yukigaoka’s Captain score.

“Damn can that red haired shrimp jump.” Iwaizumi says. “How tall do you reckon he is?”

“I wouldn’t give him more than 160 cms.” He replies. “Which makes his jump all the more impressive.” He chuckles. “Kageyama-kun doesn’t seem too happy about that spike.”

“Kageyama hates losing. I mean, obviously, nobody likes losing, but he hates the fact the rest of Kitagawa Daiichi aren’t as insistent on obliterating the green jerseys.”

“Yukigaoka.”

“I don’t care.”

Akaashi thinks Yukigaoka is already being obliterated, with an 19-06 point gap. There’s no way to recover from the game set as it is, and everyone seems to know that.

Everyone seems to accept that, aside from the orange haired kid, who continues to jump all over the court, trying to block every spike and receive every set. It’s completely futile, but at the same time admirable, how he doesn’t give up and fights on.

It reminds him of the way Karasuno’s team played when they were on the court together. Karasuno knew they were going to lose, but never gave up and stopped trying, never waved in the white flag until Yukie blew the whistle, the final game over.

“I hope Kageyama-kun gets accepted in Shiratorizawa.” He says. “If Kageyama-kun and Ushijima-san ever paired up as a duo, the rest of us high school volleyball teams are doomed.”

“How do you think it would go if Kageyama and Ushijima went against Oikawa and Bokuto? How do you think it would’ve gone?” Iwaizumi corrects himself.

“That’s a tough one.” He says, thoughtful. “I think—”
“We’re too biased to tell?”

“And too loyal to state otherwise.”

Nudging each other’s shoulders, they both laugh.

Well into the second set, Akaashi takes his phone out and starts recording.

“Shrimpy?”

“Mhm.”

“His presence on the court is so energetic, it reminds you of Bokuto.” Iwaizumi says and then smirks, because he knows he’s right.

He is.

“It’s like staring directly into the sun.” Akaashi smiles fondly. “Except for the fact it doesn’t blind you, but lights you up.” He fishes the leaflet programme out of his pocket and reads aloud.

“Hinata Shouyou. Whichever high school Hinata-kun joins, if he continues to play volleyball I’m certain we’ll be hearing his name in the future a lot.”

“Hinata Shouyou.” Iwaizumi echoes.

If Akaashi himself says the name is important, then it’s definitely worth remembering.

Boy King knows.

And so does King of the Court. Kageyama noticed it way before Akaashi did, Iwaizumi could tell straightaway, by the very visible irritation Kageyama’s feeling with shrimpy’s refusal to bow down and bend the knee.

Kageyama takes out his silent fury on the rest of his teammates, because Kings are never ever satisfied with less than 120% and he’s only getting one third of that.

When the green jerseys score another point, Kitagawa Daiichi’s side of the court becomes a warzone.

Kindaichi and Kageyama both explode, and Kindaichi has always been very vocal about disagreeing with Kageyama, and that’s fine, but when he shoves Kageyama flatly across the chest, making him fall to the floor - that’s not fine.

“Oi, Kindaichi! Kageyama!” Iwaizumi barks.

Both boys look up in surprise, at the familiar voice.

“Iwaizumi-senpai!”

“Iwaizumi-san! Akaashi-san!”

“Pull yourselves together!” Iwaizumi yells. “You’re in the middle of a game!”

“But Kageyama is—”

“But Kindaichi said—”

“Don’t make me come down there, you two, because you know I will!”
Kageyama gets subbed out, spends the last few points on the bench, and then the ref is blowing the final whistle.

“To the victor go the spoils.” Iwaizumi says, quiet. More of a sigh, really. Then he fixes a broad smile on and yells out to Kageyama. “Go shower! Akaashi and I are waiting for you in the parking lot!”

15 minutes later, Kageyama joins them in the car, hair wet and glistening, smelling of soap, but still dressed in Kitagawa Daiichi’s volleyball uniform.

“Kageyama,” Iwaizumi says, “do you want to catch a cold?”

“No, Iwaizumi-san.”

“So why are you still wearing your sweaty jersey?”

“I don’t mind.”

Iwaizumi opens the trunk and hands Kageyama a fresh pair of socks, shorts, tshirt and a hoodie. “Good thing I always keep a spare change of clothes in the car.” He belts himself back in and says, “It’s also a good thing people’s heads are attached to their necks, because honestly, Kageyama, I feel like you’d forget yours somewhere. How could you forget clothes to change into? Did you come wearing your volleyball uniform?”

“No, Iwaizumi-san.” Kageyama replies as he changes in the backseat.

Iwaizumi glances at Akaashi somewhat amused, like Kageyama makes no sense at all. But Akaashi sees Kageyama’s expression in the rear-view mirror and that’s enough for him to understand. No. It’s not even the expression or the tone, it’s the unwillingness to explain further. Akaashi is first class familiar with the feeling. Middle school was a nightmare.

“What?” Iwaizumi says, voice barely a whisper.

He shakes his head, mouths a silent Later.

“Alright.” Iwaizumi claps his hands. “It’s time we go to Scoops n’ Smiles for some scoops and smiles.”

“Iwaizumi-san,” Kageyama says, “we’re going for ice cream?”

“Yup. My treat.”


“Not you, Akaashi. I’m treating Kageyama, because he deserves it after winning.”

“That’s not nice of you, Iwaizumi-san.”

“You’re a freeloader in my house for 2 weeks. Is that not nice of me?”

“Cheapasaurus.”

“Oh, fu—you fudge you, Akaashi.”

“Could you fudge me too, Iwaizumi-san?” Kageyama asks. “I love fudge.”
Iwaizumi sighs, Akaashi laughs.

- 

Their pink and white booth crinkles as they slide in and the place mats suggest they quiz each other with ice cream facts.

“Hey, Akaashi,” Iwaizumi says, “true or false, it takes about 50 licks to finish a single scoop ice cream cone?”

“I don’t know, Iwaizumi-san, I prefer to suck on my ice cream.”

“Me too, Akaashi-san!”

Iwaizumi shoots daggers.

“Akaashi.”

“Iwaizumi-san.”

“It was a true or false question. I did not ask how you prefer to eat your ice cream.”

“True, I suppose. Although—”

“No. Don’t.”

“—some people are real talented with their tongues, so it’d probably require less than 50 licks.” He grins. “I believe Kuroo-san would be able to finish his in less than 20.”

“Aaand we’re done with the quizzing game.” Iwaizumi slams the mat back into place.

“Well, at least tell me if I was right or not?”

“No.”

“That must mean I was right.”

Kageyama pulls the mat out, reads it and looks at him in awe.

“Akaashi-san, how could you tell you were right, when Iwaizumi-san said no?”

He shrugs, smiling. “I’m magic, Kageyama-kun.”


Iwaizumi and Akaashi exchange glances.

“Kageyama,” Iwaizumi says, “what do you mean by that?”

“Oikawa-san was magic and everything he touched, he turned magic. Akaashi-san and I were both his students, so he made us magic too.”

Iwaizumi couldn’t think of an answer more on point. And he wonders if this is how the mind of a
genius works - because while Kageyama is all kinds of oblivious to most things, he is completely lucid when it comes to anything even remotely related to volleyball.

Either way, it’s truly fascinating.

Akaashi sips on his chocolate milkshake, makes a joke at Iwaizumi for picking the vanilla flavor, while Iwaizumi mouths an F U. They do their usual thing, the bantering, but the truth is, Akaashi’s mind is concentrating elsewhere.

Iwaizumi, of course, notices and lowkey arches an eyebrow at him.

“You’re doing your hand thing.”

“Mm?” He glances down. “Oh. Yes. I do that—”

“Whenever you’re uncomfortable or nervous or confused.”

“Well spotted, Iwaizumi-san.” He almost smiles. Bokuto was able to read that about him 5 days into joining Fukurodani.

Akaashi feels a sudden pang of nostalgia, missing Bokuto.

“So which one are you now?” Iwaizumi asks.

“Neither. I guess I do it when I’m thinking too.”

“About what?”

Akaashi’s thinking how junior high school were the worst three years of his life. How panic attacks were an everyday occurrence. How all his classmates disliked him. How he hated school trips. In fact school trips, back then, meant getting so anxious the night before, he felt physically ill. That his mom would write excuse notes for him, just so he wouldn’t have to attend. That he didn’t belong to any after school sports clubs and hated sports. That he was already stuffed in a box labeled weird, because he was too interested in reading books and not interested enough in playing kickball with the rest of the boys during recess. That PE was a whole lot worse than school trips, because school trips always had teachers around to supervise and weren’t mandatory. But PE class was mandatory and there were no teachers or coaches present in the locker room and that was a nightmare he couldn’t pinch himself awake from. That he burned with red hot humiliation whenever he walked up to his gym locker, as it was always splashed with graffitied slurs all over. Different colors every week, but mostly black. That he was too afraid to tell his mom and dad about the spray painted words. That he was only 13 and not ready to come out, too afraid his parents wouldn’t love him anymore.

He doesn’t mind sharing any of it with Kageyama and Iwaizumi, but he doesn’t want to burden them with things of the past.

It’s about the present and it’s all about the present Kageyama is experiencing.

And while he waits for Kageyama to demolish his sundae and be loaded up on happy carbs, he considers his approach. He wants to make himself relatable, so Kageyama would open up, but how do you do that without making it about you?

He’s learned how to be blunt, so he can definitely work with that. It’s probably the best policy to use when it comes to Kageyama.

And he’s got Iwaizumi there. He can reach out to Kageyama and then let Iwaizumi take over,
because Iwaizumi is an excellent senpai like that.

Bluntness and Iwaizumi.

That’s it. That’s his plan of action.

“Kageyama-kun, do you know how Iwaizumi-san and I became friends?”

“Volleyball.”

“Yes. We became acquainted with each other through volleyball.” He says, using the same kind of patient tone he has with all the students he tutors. “But the first time I realized I could consider Iwaizumi-san my friend and not just somebody I know, was after he saved me from two bullies. That happened just 6 months ago. Iwaizumi-san stood up for me, when I couldn’t stand up for myself.”

Kageyama’s eyes are locked on him, so he continues.

“It was the very first time in my life I was physically bullied.”

Akaashi knows Iwaizumi is comfortable with physical contact between the two of them. That whenever they’re talking and Iwaizumi is feeling down, he could squeeze Iwaizumi’s shoulder or hand or knee, and that would feel good, silent support.

But as much as he wants to reach out across the table and place his hand on top of Kageyama’s, he doubts Kageyama would be okay with this sort of thing coming from him.

Maybe he’s wrong. Maybe Kageyama wouldn’t flinch or pull away from his touch, but he’d rather not risk it. He’d rather leave this part to Iwaizumi.

“But bullying isn’t always physical, Kageyama-kun, it comes in many shapes and forms.” He clears his throat. “Unfortunately, you already know that.”

“Akaashi,” Iwaizumi says, “are you implying Kageyama is—”

“Iwaizumi-san, I’ve already told you I don’t imply things, I say them.”

Iwaizumi shakes his head. “What you saw on the court, that wasn’t— Kageyama and Kindaichi have never gotten along. They bicker a lot. They bicker all the time.”

“No, Iwaizumi-san, it’s more than just not getting along.” He insists. “I have three entire years of experience under my belt when it comes to vandalized lockers and all my things in the trash can or flushed down the toilet to know Kageyama-kun did not forget his clothes. He is being bullied and I doubt it’s only Kindaichi-kun.”


Eyes cast downward and lashes blinking, Kageyama busies himself with twirling the sugar shaker on the table.

“Kageyama?” Iwaizumi tries again. “Are they really bullying you?”

Kageyama continues to play with the shaker.

“Tobio! If I went back to the car and opened up your duffel bag, would I find your spare clothes in there?”
“Yes, Iwaizumi-san.”

Akaashi watches the passing emotions on Iwaizumi’s face.

Anger, shock, apprehension, more anger. Then, disappointment. Iwaizumi’s disappointment with his former junior high school team is so deep, Akaashi can practically feel it too.

“How long has this been going on?”

Kageyama’s shrug speaks volumes. Probably since Iwaizumi and Oikawa graduated Kitagawa Daiichi.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because I don’t care about my clothes or my locker.” Kageyama says. “I don’t care if my teammates all hate me, because I don’t care about them. I wish I could receive, toss and spike by myself instead of having to rely on them, when they are so unreliable.”

Talk about brutal honesty.

“Hm.” Iwaizumi crosses his arms. “So what do you care about?”

“I care about winning volleyball games and getting into Shiratorizawa. My dream is to be like Oikawa-san. That’s all I want. That’s all I care about.”

“I see.” Iwaizumi nods slowly. Then he clocks Kageyama with a knuckled fist. “That’s for wasting my time in helping you study for the Shiratorizawa entrance exam.” He explains, face and voice stern, as Kageyama’s hands fly over his head, gingerly touching the soon-to-be bump. “You shouldn’t even bother applying, because you will get rejected. And it won’t be because of your grades. Shiratorizawa will reject you, because of your oppressive and egocentric attitude, the disregard you have towards your teammates and their well being. Your setting skills have no equal, but they won’t matter one bit - not when you fail to understand the fact when you’re on the court, there are 5 more people standing there with you. You might think you’re above them, but you’re dead wrong.” He shakes his head. “Volleyball is not an individual sport, Kageyama, and unless you acknowledge that and change your attitude, no school would want to have someone that plays so selfishly on their team.”

“Fukurodani’s Bokuto-san is a selfish player and he’s their Captain.” Kageyama objects.

Akaashi needn’t wonder where Kageyama learned the defensiveness from.

“That’s true, Kageyama-kun,” He says, “Bokuto-san is a selfish player. But there is a huge difference between him and you.”

“Yeah,” Iwaizumi snorts, “you can say that again.”

“Is it because he’s a Wing Spiker?” Kageyama asks. “Or because he’s a player on National level?”

“No,” He shakes his head, “neither. It’s just like Iwaizumi-san said - it’s the attitude. Bokuto-san has complete faith in our entire team, just like we have complete faith in him. We all trust each other a 100%. I believe in my teammates abilities whenever I set for them, just like they believe in mine and jump in the air to spike.”

“Akaashi-san, how can I trust my team a 100% when they don’t give me their best?”
“Well,” He purses his lips, “for starters, you need to forget words like “I” and “me” and start using “we” instead.”

“What does that mean?” Kageyama blinks.

“It means you need to think as one.”

Another blink. “What does that mean?”

“Kageyama-kun, could you picture a wheel with 6 cogs?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Now, what would happen to the wheel if one of the cogs goes backwards, while the others go forward?”

“It would get stuck.”

“And? Would it be able to turn?”

“No, because it’s stuck.”

“That’s correct. Now tell me, how you would get the wheel to spin?”

“By getting all cogs to go in the same direction.”

“And how do you do that?” He asks with a small smile.

“By changing the backwards cog.”

“Exactly.” He nods in approval. “Every cog is a team member on the same side of the court as you and every single one has a vital part to play to get the wheel spinning. Unless the cogs cooperate with each other, it’s not going to spin.”

Kageyama takes a few moments to assimilate the given information, before giving a soft oh of realization.

“I am the backwards cog.” He looks between Iwaizumi and Akaashi. “Please tell me how I can go forward with the rest of the cogs.”

“Not cogs, Kageyama.”

Whether in shame or apology, Kageyama bows his head.

“My teammates, Iwaizumi-san.”

Both, perhaps.

Akaashi decides to do the honors and Iwaizumi seems content to let him.

“Kageyama-kun,” He says, “while nobody can deny you’re a genius setter and your ball control and aim are both impeccable, it is your job to accommodate the hitters and give them the tosses they prefer.”

“But—”

“No.” He interrupts. “While you may think you’re setting up the ball in the best position and the
best way possible to get past the blockers, you *always* need to take into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of your teammates.”

“But—”

“No buts, Kageyama-kun. Today was the first time I watched you play an official game, and while as a setter I was completely mind blown by your talent, your tosses were inconsiderate and awful, regarding your teammates.”

Kageyama is drawing up a blank.

“The reason why Kindaichi-kun missed more than a dozen of your tosses isn’t because he wasn’t trying to hit them. It’s because he *couldn’t*. And since you kept setting the ball up in the same way, he stopped trying.” He says. “You pay 120% attention towards your opponents, but you’re paying zero attention to the people wearing the same jerseys as you.”

“What am I doing wrong, Akaashi-san?”

“You’re too controlling, Kageyama-kun, when every player wants to have their freedom of play. You’re trying to control the *exact* way you want the ball to be hit and while it is entirely *your* call who you give out the toss to, the way the spike is delivered is *not* your decision to make. That is the Wing Spiker’s job, not yours.”

“How am I supposed to know what a Wing Spiker wants when they don’t tell me?”

“*Ask*, Kageyama-kun. It’s as simple as that.” He smiles. “All you have to do is ask. That would show your teammates you *care*.”

Kageyama *hmphs*, bites the side of his lip, more pout than teeth.

“Obviously,” Akaashi says, “you don’t want to do that. But you should be the bigger person, while you still have the chance.”

“You mean before I graduate?”

“I mean before your Coach stops letting you play.”

“But I’m the best player.”

“But you are *not* a team player, Kageyama-kun. Kitagawa Daiichi has another setter, and while skill-wise you are worlds apart, he is cooperating with the others.” He says and then adds. “Remember how I said I was being bullied by two guys? One of them used to be our official setter. But he was selfish and didn’t care about the team at all and as Captain, Bokuto-san decided I’m a better fit for the team despite my newbie status. I had zero experience, my receives were abysmal, my blocks were never timed right and my tosses were more than a little rough around the edges. Just two weeks after joining Fukurodani, Bokuto-san gave me the starting setter position and it wasn’t because I was a better player than Saito-san, but because I was a better team player. I kept asking everyone what kind of tosses they want and even though I wasn’t always capable of delivering the ball as accurately as a setter should, I never ignored my teammates preferences. My entire team was patient with me and they were strong enough to carry me while I learned. Kitagawa Daiichi is a strong team too, Kageyama-kun, so if you put in some effort to try and understand them, I assure you, they will be patient with you and become your safety net you can rely on. They *will* support you when they know they have your support in return. That’s what teamwork means.”

“I don’t think Coach would change my starting position.”
“That’s what you got from Akaashi’s words? Really, Kageyama?” Iwaizumi massages his temples.

Akaashi tries a different approach.

“Maybe I’m wrong and your Coach won’t change your starting position. But your teammates are already fed up with your self-centered attitude. It’s only a matter of time you set up the ball and it’ll fall to the floor, because nobody will be willing to spike it. Tell me, Kageyama-kun, doesn’t that sound scary?”

Kageyama’s eyes are wide, terror written all over them.

“I… don’t want… that to happen.” Kageyama admits slowly.

“It will, unless you’re willing to change your attitude.”

“I want to change, Akaashi-san! I just… don’t know… how.”

“Kageyama-kun, if you give me your word, Iwaizumi-san and I will help you.”

“What word do you want me to give you and Iwaizumi-san, Akaashi-san?”

“Just promise us you will try.” He says and extends a hand.

Kageyama promises and blinks confused at his hand.

“Shake on it, Kageyama-kun.”

Kageyama takes his hand and then Iwaizumi’s, shaking both with determination.

“Since you gave me your word, I give you my promise that Iwaizumi-san and I will help you.” He smiles. “So don’t worry about anything anymore.”

“May I ask you something, Akaashi-san?”

“Of course, Kageyama-kun.”

“Why are you so nice to me?” Kageyama tilts his head curiously. “Iwaizumi-san has always been nice to me and I don’t know if it’s because he is just nice to everyone or because of Oikawa-san or because our parents know each other, but— “

“Akaashi and I are your friends, you dumbass.” Iwaizumi says. “It’s as simple as that.”

“Really?”

“Well,” Akaashi says, “what did you think we were, Kageyama-kun?”

“You’re my senpais.”

“And your friends.” He replies with an encouraging smile.

“Oh.” A splash of pink settles on Kageyama’s pale cheeks. Then he bows his head. “Thank you very much! I’ve never had friends before.”

The sincerity seeping out of Kageyama’s lips gives Akaashi such a familiar feeling, it tugs on his heartstrings.
But his smile doesn’t falter.

Instead he says, “Here is your first helpful tip, Kageyama-kun: bear in mind not everyone is a genius. It’s not just your teammates that have difficulty hitting your tosses. Remember when you practiced with my team?”

Kageyama nods.

“Konoha-san was having a real hard time hitting your sets and he’s an excellent Wing Spiker.”

“Which one is he?” Kageyama asks.

“Fukurodani’s jersey number 7,” Iwaizumi replies and then gasps. “I got it, Akaashi!” He smirks. “It’s Subaru! Fukurodani’s jersey number 3 is named Subaru!”

“Nice try, Iwaizumi-san.” He snorts. “His name is Sarukui-san.”

“Tch, what are you, his boyfriend?!” Iwaizumi pulls a face, then sighs. “Whatever. I’ll learn his name eventually.”

Iwaizumi insists on covering the entire bill and as they walk out of Scoops n’ Smiles, he turns to Kageyama.

“I will speak with your Coach and your teammates. But if they continue bullying you, I want you to tell me. You got that?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san!”

“Oh, and I nearly forgot.” Iwaizumi’s fist, once again, connects with Kageyama’s head, before ruffling his hair affectionately. “Stop trying to be like him, Tobio. Be better.” He offers a soft smile.

Kageyama blushes violently, fully appreciating the compliment.

“Y-yes, Iwaizumi-san! Thank you!”

As they drop him off at his house, Kageyama plays with the strap of his duffel bag. He is waiting for something.

Iwaizumi seems to know what that something is.

“Rest up and prepare with your studies, Kageyama. I’ll see you tomorrow.” He glances at Akaashi. “Maybe if Akaashi is free, he’ll come as well. He’s an actual tutor, so he’d probably be better at helping you prepare for your exam.”

“I’d love to join.” Akaashi smiles. “We’ll see you tomorrow, Kageyama-kun.”

“See you tomorrow, Iwaizumi-san! Akaashi-san!”

Iwaizumi nods his head in rhythm with The Killers and when they’re caught in a traffic-jammed red light, he looks at Akaashi.

“Kageyama is just like you.” He says. “He doesn’t like asking for help, because he doesn’t like admitting he needs it.”

It seems Iwaizumi, too, pays very close attention to details.
Akaashi suddenly snickers.

“What?” Iwaizumi asks.

“I don’t know if you could hear it,” He says, smiling, “but Kageyama-kun kept calling Hinata-kun - the orange haired shrimp - a dumbass.”

“Yeah, I heard it.”

“He definitely learned that from you.”

Iwaizumi laughs.

-

Akaashi waits for Yahaba at the corner of the street, noting Yahaba isn’t the most punctual of people.

He decides to call Bokuto and Kuroo.

“Keiji! Hi! How are you?”

“Hey, Angel Eyes.”

“Hi. I’m great, Bokuto-san, thank you. How about you two?”

“Kuroo and I woke up just like an hour ago.”

“What’chu up to, Angel Eyes?”

“I’m about to meet the 2nd Generation Rat Pack.”

“Nervous?” Kuroo asks.

“Not at all.” He admits. WhatsApp is a good ice breaker.

“Keiji!”

“What is it, Bokuto-san?”

“After you sent me that video, I’m all kinds of tempted to come to Miyagi to meet my son!”

He laughs. “You mean Hinata-kun?”

“Yes! Him! Do you know which high school he’s going to? Did you tell him to join Fukurodani?”

“No, Bokuto-san. I didn’t get a chance to talk to him.”

“Aw, maaaan!” Bokuto groans. “That’s such a loss! Keiji, make sure you procure him for our team next year!”

“Uhm. Sure, Bokuto-san. If I see him again, I will try to.”
“Angel Eyes, how’s the blueberry doing?”

“The blueberry, Kuroo-san?” He echoes, confused.

“Yeah.”

“Are you referring to a person, Kuroo-san?”

“Mhm.”

“Who?”

“Kageyama, of course.”

Kuroo says of course in a tone that implies Akaashi ought to know Kageyama is a blueberry. Why that is he can’t, for the life of him, understand.

...Blueberry? Really?

“Well.” He says. “Kageyama-kun’s team won.”

“Awesome!” Bokuto and Kuroo say in unison.

He considers telling them Kageyama is being bullied, but decides against it. He’ll tell them about it when he’s back in Tokyo and they’re face to face.

“Did you guys go clubbing last night?” He asks.

“We did, Keiji!” Bokuto says. “It was so fun!”

“I hope you were being careful of paparazzi, Bokuto-san.”

“Yeah, yeah, I was.” He can practically see Bokuto rolling his eyes. “The funny part is that Kiko, Kira and Yuks were able to climb the rope from our room better than Kuroo and I. The girls were real troopers, Keiji!”

“What about Konoha-san and Sarukui-san?”

Bokuto roars in laughter, so Kuroo takes over.

“Since Konoha was useless, Yukie gave him the keys to the gym, so he could sleep in the storage room.”

“Alone?” He can’t quite believe it.

“No, Sarukui stayed with him.”

Of course.

“I see.” He says. “Are they okay?”

“They are.” Kuroo confirms. “Konoha texted us to go out for dinner in— shit, Bo, go shower! We’re meeting them in half an hour!”

“Bye, Keiji! Love you!”
“Love you too, Bokuto-san.” He says and hears the bathroom door slammed shut.

“The girls wanted to have their girl time, so it’s just gonna be the four of us.” Kuroo explains. “And honestly, Angel Eyes, I’m glad. Kira gave me a real hard time last night, because she was all over Sarukui. Damn, is that girl determined.” He laughs. “Don’t worry, though, I’m an excellent cockblocker.”

“Thank you, Kuroo-san. I really appreciate you looking out for Sarukui-san.”

“Don’t mention it, Angel Eyes.”

“How is he?”

“The usual.” Kuroo says. “’Y’know, silently suffering.”

He sighs softly. Some things can’t be helped, unfortunately.

“Well,” He says, “enough about my teammates. How’s it going with Bokuto-san and you?”

“Oh, Angel Eyes, it’s going great.”

“I’m so glad.” He smiles and sees Yahaba approaching with a wave. He waves back.

“Just this morning Bo asked me to—”

“Yahaba is here!” He hisses into his phone. “I’m sorry, Kuroo-san, but I have to go.”

“No problem, Angel Eyes. We’ll talk later.”

“Please text me what Bokuto-san asked you to do.” He says, sure it’s a blowjob.

“I’ll do you one even better, Angel Eyes. I’ll film it for you next time.”

It’s definitely a blowjob. His stomach butterflies at the thought.

God, he really wants to see that.

“Hell yes, please do that, Kuroo-san.”

Kuroo laughs. “I love you.”

He mutters out a quick “Love you too” before hanging up and returning Yahaba’s high five.

“Boyfriend talk?” Yahaba asks.

“Maybe.”

“Thought so.” Yahaba smirks.

They are the last ones to arrive at Happy Bar & Grill, with Ennoshita, Futakuchi, Terushima and Shirabu waiting for them near the entrance.

“Sorry we’re late.” He says immediately. “Yahaba was—” He makes a jerkoff motion.

Everyone laughs, except Yahaba.

Pretty good first impression, Akaashi thinks, pleased with himself.
“No, I wasn’t!” Yahaba objects. “My sister took too long in the bathroom, so I had to wait.”

“Yeah,” Shirabu sneers, “that’s what they all say.”

“Oh, fuck you, Shirabu.” Yahaba says.

“You wish.”

Before Akaashi knows what’s happening, Terushima takes his hand between both of his and kisses it, right under the knuckles. Akaashi is tempted to ram it in Terushima’s face.

“My God,” Terushima says, “you’re even more beautiful in real life! Akaashi, you’re gonna make me cry.”

“Weep away, Terushima.” He pulls his hand away and showily wipes it into his sleeves. “Does anyone have bleach?”

Laughing, Futakuchi introduces himself and shakes his hand. “I like you, you’re funny.”

“I wasn’t joking about the bleach.” He deadpans, making Futakuchi laugh harder.

He’s definitely on a roll.

Where is Iwaizumi, to see him being center of attention with his sense of humor being fully appreciated?

Ennoshita introduces himself next, very formal and polite, bowing his head before taking his hand for a shake.

Akaashi, smiling, says. “Nice to finally meet the glue that holds this—” He motions at them all, “together. You’re just like Sawamura-san.”

“Oh. Thank you.”

He knows he landed the perfect compliment, because Ennoshita’s cheeks turn red and he feels proud of himself about it.

Then he wonders if it’s just his imagination or Futakuchi really wants to separate the small distance between Ennoshita and him, with Futakuchi going between them, draping his arms over their shoulders, saying they should go inside before they lose their reservation.

Definitely not imagination.

Akaashi’s discovery of Futakuchi’s weakness makes him smirk. It’s always good to know.

Making sure he is seated as far away from Terushima as the table allows, he ends up between Ennoshita and Shirabu and Yahaba seems sulky about the whole thing. He probably expected Akaashi to sit next to him.

Tough.

Can’t happen when Yahaba plopped himself right next to Terushima.

Before he even tries the taste of their food, Akaashi decides he totally loves this place. It’s a little run down, but the atmosphere is perfect, with crooners carrying over the stale soupy air and the clanking of cutlery.
He shoots a text to Iwaizumi.

**Saturday, 06 April 2016; 20:21 pm**

“You ever been to Happy Bar & Grill?”

A second later he gets a reply.

“*Love that place. The atmosphere is perfect.*”

Akaashi smiles and he’s just about to write back, when a second text arrives.

“*The sashimi combo is amazing.*”

He laughs, fingers flying over the touchscreen.

“*I was just about to order that *sunglasses emoji* *peace sign emoji*”

“No onigiri?”

“*Side.*”

“*Of course.*”

He locks his phone, placing it on the table, finally paying attention to the ongoing conversation.

“No offense,” Terushima says, “but this place totally sucks. I’m sure my great grandma listened to this kind of music. Futakuchi, I can’t believe you made a reservation here. I’m totally disappointed.”

“Actually,” Ennoshita says, “it was me that chose the place. I thought the music would be fitting.” He offers an apologetic shrug.

“It is fitting.” Akaashi reassures him. “It’s perfect. I love the atmosphere.”

“Thanks, Akaashi.”

“I’d love it too,” Terushima says, “if they played more Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, but they keep playing these unknown-”

“Bobby Darin, Bobby Vinton and Billie Holiday are *not* unknown.” He says. “Perhaps you ought to educate your music taste, before you speak nonsense and embarrass yourself.”

“Nice kill.” Shirabu high fives Akaashi.

“I just meant,” Terushima says, “this kind of music doesn’t put me in the mood to party, but makes me wanna go to bed and sleep.”

“It’s a family restaurant.” Ennoshita says. “Not a night club.”

“Yes.” He nods, then adds a biting, “And maybe if that’s how you feel, Terushima, you should go home and sleep. I promise we’ll all mourn your absence.”

“You *really* have no filter.” Futakuchi cackles. “I love it.”

“Akaashi, why are you so mean to me?” Terushima asks, pouting.

“Don’t flirt with me and I won’t be.”
“I can’t help it when you’re so pretty.”

“Then neither can I.” He replies, eyes twinkling.

Terushima’s not too bad, once you get used to him.

He is still in the process of getting used to him.

When they all have drinks, they’re about to raise their glasses to them, the 2nd Generation Rat Pack, when Yahaba snorts.

“You’re having white wine, Akaashi?”

“Obviously.”

“We’re all having beer. Except you, obviously.”

“So? Is that a problem for you?”

“No, not a problem.” Yahaba says. “I just thought you preferred beer is all.”

“I do, but sashimi goes well with white wine.” He explains. “I’ll switch to beer after dinner.”

Terushima mutters something that sounds like No offense, but drinking wine is so pretentious.

“It’s a free country, Yahaba.” Shirabu says. “Akaashi can drink what he wants.”

“Shut up, Shirabu, I wasn’t talking to you.”

“A toast!” Ennoshita clears his throat. “To all of us finally meeting up!” Smiling, he looks around the entire table. “Here’s to many, many more Rat Pack meetings!”

“Hear, hear!”

Their food arrives, and for a while they’re distracted with pepper mills and wasabi and some side dish of vegetable chips their waiter seems to think they ordered. Too curious to try non-potato chips, they don’t return it and all take turns trying the kale, carrots and parsnips.

Judging by the mutual faces of disgust, they all agree they should have returned it.

“Ugh!” Yahaba groans. “Yuck!”

“This shit tastes like cardboard cutouts.” Futakuchi takes a swig of his bottle.

“This plate is a travesty of justice.” Shirabu shakes his head. “Further proof no vegetable aside from potatoes should be turned into chips. If Taichi was here, he’d be so upset.”

“Can’t believe I put that in my mouth.” Terushima says.

“Terushima,” He says, lips twitching, “this is probably the least questionable thing you’ve put in your mouth.”

Terushima laughs, loud and open-mouthed, giving them all a peek of his glinting tongue piercing. Then he reaches across the table to high five Akaashi and Akaashi takes his time, but, to be fair, doesn’t leave him hanging.

“Akaashi,” Futakuchi says, half smirking, “you keep texting.”
“As do you, Futakuchi.”

“Is it your Captain?”

“It is.”

“So are you finally gonna tell us if you’re dating or what?”

“Or what.”

Futakuchi grins. “You totally are.”

“Yeah,” Shirabu says, “I asked Ushijima-san about it, since he’s at training camp with Bokuto-san.”

“And Ushijima-san answered you?” Akaashi arches an eyebrow, surprised. “I find that hard to believe.”

Admittedly, he’s only met Ushijima once, but he didn’t strike him as the gossipy type that would share personal information, especially one that isn’t his to share.

“What did Ushijima say?” Terushima asks.

“He said that instead of sticking my nose in other people’s businesses, I should do something more productive that benefits my volleyball.” Shirabu turns beet-root red.

Akaashi smirks.

Of course he wasn’t wrong about Ushijima.

He orders himself a beer and can’t help smiling at the menu.

“Yahaba.”

“What is it, Akaashi?”

“They have profiteroles.”

Yahaba laughs, giving him a thumbs up.

“Since we’re all free this week,” Ennoshita begins, “I was thinking we could go to Flamingo—”

Everyone, but Akaashi groans.

“Noooo!” Shirabu presses his fists against his eyes, rubbing. “Not another one of your special movies, Ennoshita, please.”

“But,” Ennoshita tries again, “they’re showing this really good movie I wanted to see.”

“What’s the name of it?” He asks.

“The Silver Pearl.”

“Oh, I know that one. I haven’t seen it, but I’m familiar with what it’s about.”

Ennoshita beams happily, before Akaashi continues talking.
“I’ve heard from Yahaba before you took everyone to see a vampire movie that was—”

“Porn!” Yahaba, Futakuchi, Terushima and Shirabu reply in unison.

“—an erotic movie and The Silver Pearl is the same.” He gives out a tiny amused smile.

Yahaba sighs. “Enno, why can’t you be normal like the rest of us and just use Pornhub.”

“You guys,” Ennoshita says, “it’s not about the sex, it’s about the art of—”

“Fucking?” Futakuchi suggests. “Yeah, we all know the art of fucking. Except Yahaba, the forever virgin.” He adds with a sneer.

“Hey, I’m not the only virgin here!” Yahaba says. “Aside from Teru and,” He glances at Akaashi, “probably Akaashi, nobody else has had sex.”

Akaashi chooses not to answer, takes a sip of his beer.

“I’m not a virgin.” Shirabu says.

“Neither am I.” Ennoshita says.

“Same.” Futakuchi replies with a smirk. “Like I said, Yahaba, it’s just you.”

“What?!” Yahaba stares at them, aghast. “I can’t believe this! Am I the only one?” He stares desperately at Akaashi, his final hope.

Akaashi nods.

“Oh, God. I am the only one.”

“Yahaba,” Ennoshita says, “it’s not a big deal.”

“Yeah, not for you, when you’ve had sex!”

Ennoshita shrugs. “It’s just sex.”

“You’re such a loser, Yahaba.” Shirabu leers. “It’s not the virgin part, but the fact you’re being all sad and pathetic about it that makes you a loser.”

“Someone shut him up for me. Futakuchi?”

Futakuchi mouths a no.

“Ennoshita,” He says, “Yahaba also told me you want to be a director?”

“Oh, yes, absolutely.” Ennoshita says. “It’s my dream job.”

Akaashi suddenly remembers when he was younger he created a cardboard pinhole camera for a school project and he would always go around the house pretending to snap photos. He tells Ennoshita about it, making him smile.

“So,” He smiles back, “if I ever go into the movie business, I’d be very interested in being a DP.”

“Shit!” Terushima grins. “Me too!”

“Really, Terushima?” Ennoshita blinks. “You’re interested?”
“Tchyeah!”

...Something doesn’t quite add up.

The penny drops, when Terushima says, “Akaashi, it’s perfect for you, since you have two boyfriends, so what are you waiting for?”

Ennoshita is completely affronted by Terushima. Akaashi just thinks Terushima’s a moron.

“DP,” He explains with pressed lips, “stands for director of photography, or cinematographer. Not double penetration like you’re thinking.”

“Oh.” Terushima says. “Yeah, no, I’m not interested in that at all.”

“There’s two movie nerds now.” Shirabu says. “I don’t know how to feel about this.”

“Better a movie nerd,” Yahaba says, “than just a nerd like you.”

“At least I’m not a loser like you.”

”Kids,” Futakuchi says, “play nice, don’t play nice, I don’t really care - it’s actually more entertaining when you don’t - but either way, I’m game for going to see a movie together.”

“I’m game too.” He says.

“Me three.” Shirabu says.

“Me four.” Yahaba says.

“Ugh.” Shirabu rolls his eyes. “Must you always be such a parrot and copy me, Yahaba?”

“Terushima,” Ennoshita interjects before Yahaba gets a chance to retort, “what about you?”

“Yeah, I’m down as well.”


“No.” Terushima says. “Not there, that’s the worst place to go to the movies. No offense, Ennoshita, but your taste sucks.”

“You keep doing that.” He scowls at Terushima. “This is the 6th time you did it, just tonight, and you keep doing it on our messenger as well.”

“What did I do?”

“Yeah, Akaashi, what did Terushima do?” Futakuchi asks with a gleam in his eyes.

Yahaba wasn’t lying when he said Futakuchi loves stirring the trouble pot.

“You keep saying no offense when you say offensive things. It’s not a free pass.”

Terushima tilts his head at him, like a dim puppy wondering why the newspaper’s on the floor.

It’s kinda cute. Just a little.

“Akaashi, are you mad at me?” Terushima asks.
“No, not mad.” He says. “I’m real patient, so it takes a lot to make me mad. You’re ok for now.”

“Thanks.” Terushima grins.

“That was more of a warning than a compliment.”

“D’awww, you totally like me.”

“You’re ok.” He repeats, but this time actually smiles.

When the kitchen closes down, their waiter asks them to move to the bar area. So they move to the bar area.

A while later, Akaashi discovers he is unable to open the snapchats he keeps getting from Bokuto and Kuroo and goes outside for some fresh air, and hopefully better phone reception.

Good thing there’s nobody on the street, because as he searches for a signal somewhere, he probably looks like he’s replaying the scene from The Lion King where Rafiki is holding out Simba for all of Pride Rock to see.

“Aaaaaah!” He hears his own yell of shock before he clocks what’s happened. There’s a twisting pain in his shoulder. His fingers feel scratched. A figure on a bike is pedaling swiftly towards the end of the road. He only has time to register an old gray hoodie and skinny black jeans before the bike turns the corner.

His hand is empty. What the fuck—

He stares at his palm in numb disbelief. It’s gone. That guy stole his phone. He fucking stole it.

His phone is his life. He can’t exist without it. It’s a vital organ.

“Hey, asshole!” He calls out to the dark and empty street. “Come back! You can have my kidney, but return my phone!”

The thing about panic is, it creeps up on you. One minute you’re still quite calm, still telling yourself It’s okay, it’s just a phone. And the next a voice inside your head is screeching, Oh my fucking God, your phone is missing! Your fucking phone!

No. Do not hyperventilate, Akaashi. Stay positive. He just needs to look at this from a different angle. Like… what would Poirot do? Poirot wouldn’t flap around in panic. He’d stay calm and use his little gray cells and recall some tiny, vital details which would be the clue to everything.

He squeezes his eyes tight. Little gray cells. Come on. Do your best.

Thing is, Akaashi is not sure Poirot had a glass of wine and 3 beers before he solved the Murder on the Orient Express.

It’s useless, because there is nothing. It wasn’t a motorbike or a car that he could try recollecting the registration plate of. It was a fucking bike and oh wow, Akaashi has never hated bikes more in his life. He’s never hated anything as much as he hates this.

Terushima pops out for a cigarette and his distress must be crystal clear, because Terushima is suddenly by his side, talking to him in a worried tone.

“Akaashi, did something happen?”

“I… I’ve been mugged.” He somehow manages to stutter. “My phone just got stolen.”
“God, are you okay?”

He blinks. Did Terushima not hear him? His phone! Of course he’s not okay!

Terushima gives him a glance over, making sure he isn’t physically hurt, when he notices and lifts Akaashi’s bleeding hand, giving a sympathetic wince at the wound.

He blinks again. Huh. It felt like being scratched by fingernails, but it must’ve been a knife or something just as sharp and stabby, judging my the big gash across the back of his hand. He is definitely gonna need—

“This is definitely gonna need stitches.” Terushima says and gently wraps a supportive arm around, ushering him inside.

First thing Terushima does is sit Akaashi on a barstool, then slaps his hand against the bar for attention.

“Barkeep-san! We need a clean cloth and—” He glances at Akaashi. “A double scotch. Neat.”

By the time Ennoshita, Futakuchi, Shirabu and Yahaba see something is wrong and come over, Terushima’s already called an ambulance and is tightly wrapping Akaashi’s not just dripping, but gushing hand.

All of their faces are motionless and jaw-dropped, like a row of versions of the painting *The Scream*.

He can’t really focus from all the “Oh my God!”s and “Akaashi, are you okay?”s and “Akaashi, what happened?” that are crowding around him and is really grateful that Terushima hands him the whiskey and starts explaining in his stead.

Ironically, it’s the guy he least trusts from their entire Rat Pack that makes him feel slightly better.

He completely misjudged Terushima.

“We’re all so stupid.” Ennoshita says. “We should’ve warned Akaashi there’s lots of pickpockets in the area.”

“My phone was stolen from my hand, not from my pockets.” He says, taking small sips.

“Chancers, Akaashi.” Shirabu says. “We call them chancers and you have to be so careful of them in this neighborhood.”

“Great. Well, that’s really helpful, Shirabu, thank you.”

Futakuchi suddenly laughs, at everyone’s dismay. “If in such a situation Akaashi is still able to be sarcastic, he’s gonna be fine.”

“I’m always sarcastic.”

“Yeah. And if you’re capable of joking, you’re going to be okay.” Futakuchi smiles reassuringly.

His words make sense, but at the same time, Akaashi doesn’t feel all of his senses. It must be the rush, the adrenaline pumping in his brain - he can hear the pulsating echo through his ears - that numbs everything, because the tightly pressed white and black checkered cloth is soaked red, but he doesn’t feel any pain whatsoever.
“I should call Iwaizumi-san.” Yahaba says.

“No! Don’t call him.” He says.

“Akaashi, he’s gonna flay me alive if I don’t.”

“And I’m gonna flay you alive if you do.”

“I’m a lot more scared of him than you, so—”

“Please, Yahaba. Don’t. Iwaizumi-san is overprotective and—”

“After what happened with Oikawa-san, of course he is. It’s only natural.”

“I know that. I just don’t want to burden him with nonsense.”

“But it’s you, Akaashi.” Yahaba says softly. “You were hurt! That’s not burdening with nonsense, are you crazy?! When it comes to you, even if I’m to call Iwaizumi-san at 3 am and say you’re craving ice cream, he will get it for you.”

Akaashi knows that to be true, more than a 100% and having confirmation from Yahaba, who is also Seijouh, makes him feel— Iwaizumi is just so endlessly gentle and kind and caring. Which is exactly why he wants to postpone Iwaizumi finding out as long as possible. Iwaizumi was already upset enough as is today, when he found out Kageyama was being bullied, now this?

No, no.

The later, the better.

When he hears the ambulance sirens approaching, Akaashi downs his glass. Just making sure he won’t be feeling the sting of the needle.

“Good call.” Terushima smirks.

He doesn’t feel a thing, even though he ends up with 18 little blue sutures all across his right hand. The medics tell him he’s lucky it’s just under the knuckles, otherwise it would’ve hurt a whole lot more and when they leave, he finally gives Futakuchi a well deserved middle finger for taking photos.

A few moments later, Shirabu gasps.

“Fuck! You didn’t just—”

“Yup.” Futakuchi grins.

Shirabu shakes his head, laughing. “You’re such a dick.”


Shirabu shows everyone his phone screen, which is Akaashi’s Facebook wall and atop everything, it’s darling Futakuchi’s post of him getting stitched up, along with the title Brave little hero didn’t cry at all.

Wonderful. Now it’s not just Iwaizumi, but also Bokuto and Kuroo and everyone on his team that is going to start worrying.
He would have been great at public executions, Futakuchi. He would have been the one at the
front, jostling for a good view of the axe, already sketching the gory bits to put up on the village
notice board, in case anyone missed it.

Or, you know, whatever they did before Facebook.

““The boyfriends will now be notified.”” Futakuchi says.

“Futakuchi, you absolute imbecile!” Yahaba groans. “What the fuck did you do that for?”

“Oh, cry me a river, Yahaba, I did the right thing.”

“How, Futakuchi?” Ennoshita asks. “How is this the right thing?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Futakuchi replies. “Iwaizumi-san is gonna see it and he’s gonna show up and
that’s good, because he’s obviously way better at providing Akaashi with comfort than all of us.
Look at him,” He nods his chin at Akaashi, “he’s still too shocked to react.”

“I thought you said he was gonna be okay, because he’s being sarcastic and joking?” Ennoshita
arches an eyebrow.

“‘C’mon, Enno, what the fuck do I know?”” Futakuchi snorts. “I’m always saying shit all the time,
I thought by now you ought to know not to listen to everything I say.”

“Any second now,” Yahaba says, “Iwaizumi-san is going to call me and ask where we’re having
dinner. What should I say?”

“Tell him,” Terushima says, “Tonight we dine in Hell!”

“I’m gonna say the moon.” Yahaba says. “No, the moon is not far enough.”

“How about Uranus, Yahaba?” He says, giving out a little snuffle.

“You think this is funny, Akaashi?” Yahaba asks and can’t help but chuckle. “Fuck’s sake,
Iwaizumi-san is gonna kill us all. You too, Akaashi. He still doesn’t know your phone got stolen,
so he’s gonna be livid you’re not picking up.”

“Well, Yahaba,” Shirabu says, “at least you don’t have to worry about dying a virgin, because
Futakuchi totally fucked you over.”

Everyone, literally everyone, laughs.

And that’s comforting. It’s very comforting and, God, it’s so great to have terrible friends you can
make terrible jokes with at the most terrible of times.

Now that he’s calmed down a bit, he’s starting to churn with murderous thoughts. Does that
hoodie guy realize he’s wrecked his life? Does he realize how crucial a phone is? It’s the worst
thing you can steal from a person. The worst.

And it wasn’t even that great a phone. It was pretty ancient. So good luck to hoodie guy if he
wants to type Z on the touchscreen. Akaashi hopes he tries and fails. Then he’ll be sorry.

_and he hurt his hand and his shoulder. Bastard. Maybe he could sue him for millions. If they ever
catch him, which they won’t.

Contact numbers… memorable photos… screenshotsed quotes… game scores… everything gone.
Wait.

His photos. His videos.

Oh no.

Oh, this is bad.

This is so fucking bad.

How could he be so fucking stupid? Of course he should’ve called Iwaizumi straightaway. Iwaizumi has Bokuto and Kuroo’s numbers and there’s so much damage control that could’ve been done, but he was too fucking slow and stupid and if Kuroo sent him the video he said he would, it’s— it’s game over.

Don’t panic, Akaashi. Do not panic.

...Of course he is panicking. His ribcage feels too constricting, not wide enough for his heart which feels like it’s going to explode.

He tells himself to calm down.

It’s not helping. Doesn’t work.

He is obviously hyperventilating, because he hears Ennoshita yelling at the barman for a paper bag and then Ennoshita is handing it to him and telling him to just breathe.

Since everything starts spinning and it’s a blur of voices and it’s just all too much, Akaashi closes his eyes.

So much for a good first impression. Some things, apparently, never change.

Maybe one day well into the future the 2nd Generation Rat Pack would look back and go like Hey, remember the first time we met Akaashi and he had a complete meltdown? and then they would all laugh about it.

Maybe, but that day is not today.

He only dares to open his eyes when he feels a pair of warm hands cupping his face accompanied by Iwaizumi’s soothing voice reassuring him he is okay. Everything is going to be okay.

“Iwaizumi-san, I’ve been trying so hard to be careful - even borderline paranoid - and yet tonight, I might’ve single handedly destroyed Bokuto-san’s relationship with his family, as well as his volleyball career, when it’s only taking off.” He says quiet, expression grave.

“Akaashi, calm down. Yahaba explained to me what happened and I immediately called Bokuto and Kuroo to pass on the message. Kuroo told me to tell you he didn’t send anything, so you needn’t worry, okay?”

Iwaizumi knows the way he thinks. Iwaizumi knows the things that make him freak out and panic. They’re always honest with each other, so if Iwaizumi says he needn’t worry, Akaashi chooses to believe him.

“Okay.”

And really, Iwaizumi is right.
While Bokuto’s mom and dad are popular not just in Tokyo and not just in Japan, he shouldn’t worry about a paparazzi scandal. Because he has never saved a photo or a video of Bokuto and himself that could be seen as anything more than teammates or friends. Whoever stole his phone won’t be able to find any data worth selling, aside from the phone itself.

Sure, there is the chat and messenger logs, but those could be photoshopped and he can easily cut the access by changing his passwords. Which he will do as soon as he gets his hands on his laptop.

Iwaizumi gives him a glass of cold water and he doesn’t put it down until it’s empty. And after a few moments, Akaashi feels like the heavy fog in his mind has completely lifted.

He even gets to smile, without a force, at Yahaba, Terushima, Ennoshita, Futakuchi and Shirabu and say, “You were right in your assumptions - I am dating Bokuto-san. His parents are high profile and his father is extremely homophobic, which is why we keep it a secret.”

“A secret.” Shirabu says. “And yet you’re telling us.”

“Well, you guys kept asking and asking and—” He shrugs, smile broadening. “I trust you all.”

After they all exchange good words with curved lips, Akaashi covers his tab and pockets his wallet. And as he is zipping up his hoodie, he watches Iwaizumi pat Yahaba’s shoulder.

“Next time something like this happens, you call me straightaway. I know Akaashi told you not to call me, but you do it anyway, got it?”


“As for you.” Iwaizumi says, staring straight at Futakuchi. It’s not the most friendly of expressions. In fact, Futakuchi looks like he wants to back away, only there’s nowhere to go. “I know you only uploaded Akaashi’s picture for shits and giggles, but I’m still grateful you did. Had it not been for you, I wouldn’t have been aware. So… thank you.”

Futakuchi, looking slightly dazed, accepts Iwaizumi’s hand and shakes it, nodding.

Then Iwaizumi turns his attention back to Akaashi and smiles.

“Come on, princess. I’m taking you home.”
Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

I would like to say I'm sorry for all the obvious (and super lame) jokes, but I'm really not :V

Aside from their footsteps and Akaashi, ever so quietly, humming to himself, there’s nothing but silence, which feels really comfortable. Well. There is also Iwaizumi recognizing the tune and asking a soft “Hey Jude, really?” and he replies with an even softer, “It calms me.”

The sidewalk is a little narrow, with their elbows rubbing against each other every now and again, but that, too, is comfortable.

With the effect of the alcohol wearing off and his senses restored back to normal, Akaashi feels battered, especially when he imagines the string of missed calls and messages that must’ve been left on his phone that he’ll never get. And while the scary thoughts of executioner’s guillotine in the form of public scandal involving Bokuto have been put to rest, there is also all of his photos and videos that are missing, which he’ll never see again. Half a year of snapshots with his teammates from away games, his first date with Kuroo, his parents in their school auditorium on his 17th birthday, a couple of selfies with Oikawa, which Oikawa’d insisted on him to take, screenshots proofs that could be used for blackmail whenever Konoha wrote dumb things that could get him in trouble with Yukie - there were so many, he created an entire folder - the 12 second vid of Bokuto napping with a toothpasted hand - courtesy of Konoha - with Sarukui snickering in the background as the face tickling ensues. Recording Iwaizumi saying embarrassing things to his mom and dad - just yesterday, damn it. God. There’s just too much there, so many memories that he wanted to document for keeps, because the moment had been so perfect, that he could just browse through his gallery, a day from now, three months, maybe a year, and go like hey, I completely forgot this happened and then smile.

Yeah, well. So much for that. Fuck’s sake, he doesn’t even know his parent’s phone numbers by heart, which means he has to contact them via email.

It makes him hyperventilate slightly whenever he thinks about it. So he has a new coping technique - he’s not. It can wait till tomorrow.

He needs to restore his energies first. And so, by the time they’ve reached Iwaizumi’s house, he has a plan.

Tonight: watch comfort DVDs, consume a ton of carbs, sleep.
Tomorrow: break news to world that his phone got stolen, get a new one, deal with the hassle of inputting all numbers into phone contacts, etcetera, etcetera.

When they’re in Iwaizumi’s bedroom, he sighs.

“You don’t have a goodie drawer, Iwaizumi-san.”

“What in God’s name is that, Akaashi, a drawer filled with porn mags?”

“No, it’s a drawer filled with snacks.”

“We got snacks.” Iwaizumi grins.

They raid the kitchen pantry, which is overflowing with all the things Akaashi is looking forward to stuffing his face with. He takes a bag of Doritos, M&M’s, and Reese's pieces, while Iwaizumi makes popcorn.

Halfway up the stairs, Akaashi halts.

“Wait!” He whispers, not wanting to wake up Iwaizumi’s parents, in case they’re sleeping.

“What?” Iwaizumi whispers back.

“We forgot the most important one. Ice cream.”

“You want ice cream?”

“Well, of course.” He replies matter-of-factly. “What kind of a movie marathon would it be without any ice cream?”

“Yes of course.” Iwaizumi chuckles quietly. “Here, take the popcorn and pick what DVDs you wanna watch. I’ll get the ice cream.”

Pigging out to your heart’s content means there should be no constricting clothes, so first thing Akaashi does is removing his jeans and neatly folding them into suitcase. Then he pulls on his Ramones sleeping tshirt and pours over Iwaizumi’s DVDs. Just like his vinyls, it’s a quite impressive collection.

Something more impressive than the collection itself is the fact Iwaizumi has actual DVDs and not video tapes. But that doesn’t change his dinosaur status, Akaashi thinks, snickering to himself.

There are the entire X-File series, E.T., Arrival and Interstellar. Akaashi knows who they used to belong to. It’s not some big secret.

Indelible. That’s such a good word. Iwaizumi, Bokuto, Kuroo, Matsukawa, Hanamaki and him will always have indelible memories of packing up all of Oikawa’s things together. It was actually him, that put all of Oikawa’s DVDs into a cardboard box. All it means, he looked it up online to be sure, stays in your head. Unable to be forgotten. Before, he’d only heard it about ink.

As much as he loves all those - Interstellar is one of his all-time favourites - and is always up for a rewatch, the idea of sitting through a sci-fi movie with Iwaizumi is, hands down, the worst call in the world. Worst choice ever.

Akaashi wonders which one of the two of them it would be more terrible for - Iwaizumi, who would be thinking about Oikawa the entire time, remembering the times they’d watched those movies together, right here, in his bedroom, or him - who would be thinking of Iwaizumi
projecting Oikawa onto him.

Oh. That reminds him he still needs to talk to Iwaizumi about it. He most definitely needs to have that conversation with Iwaizumi, but he still hasn’t thought of a way to approach the topic and it makes his stomach twist and— no. Stop it, Akaashi. Just fucking stop thinking about it.

Tomorrow. Or the day after tomorrow.

Not tonight. Tonight he doesn’t wanna deal. He refuses to deal with anything.

Right. So. Comfort movies.

He settles for cartoons. Because nothing beats Disney. Nothing.

Iwaizumi returns as Akaashi’s picked 3 DVDs.

“Sorry if I took too long. There was a big line at the cashier's.”

“It’s fine.” He says, absentmindedly, wondering what order they should watch the movies in.

Then.

“What cashier’s?” He glances over his shoulder and stares, dumbstruck. Iwaizumi has plopped himself down on the floor, cross-legged, taking tub after tub of ice cream out of a plastic bag. There’s 8 of them. “I thought you were just downstairs in the kitchen.”

“No, we had no ice cream, so I went to get some.” Iwaizumi says. “I know you love the chocolate one, but I didn’t know which one’s your favourite, so I bought all the chocolate flavoured ones they had. And a coffee one, just in case. I know I can’t go wrong with coffee.”

“You…” Akaashi swallows. “Iwaizumi-san, you didn’t have to do that.”

Iwaizumi smiles. “What else is friendship for?”

They watch The Emperor’s New Groove and Akaashi demolishes two pints of Ben & Jerry’s - Chocolate Fudge Brownie and Chocolate Therapy. By 1 am they are on Big Hero 6 and he realizes he is completely relaxed. And during the very beginning of Zootopia, he is sitting with his legs stretched out in a V, eating the pistachios Iwaizumi’s mom spiced and put in an elegant tin for them. He is eating them and perfectly lining up the shells in half circles, getting smaller and smaller, like parenthesis in parenthesis.

“Hey, you.” Iwaizumi gently ruffles his hair.

He looks up from the floor with a little smile. “Hi.”

“I know not having a phone for you equals the Apocalypse, but if you are to look on the bright side of things, buying new technology must be exciting for a robot such as yourself.”

“Not really. The idea of it is kind of giving me a headache, because it’s such a nuisance.”

Iwaizumi goes quiet for a few moments, racking his brains for ways to make him feel better. ...Does Iwaizumi not know he already did?

“Well. At least now you can make that new phone who dis? joke.”

Nothing cheers him up more than dinosaur Iwaizumi being trendy and hip, knowing memes, like
the cool kids.

He throws his head back and laughs until his stomach aches.

When he finally composes himself, he glances at Iwaizumi, who is already looking at him. He opens his mouth, but Iwaizumi is faster.

“There’s no need to thank me, princess.” Iwaizumi says. “For months, I was sinking like a stone to the sea and you—” He shakes his head. “Akaashi, when everything was dark and I was lost, you helped me see light and hope and reason. I’ve still got a long way to go, lots of pieces to pick up, but.” He smiles softly, “what’s a 5 minute walk and a pint of ice cream in comparison to you taking me back in time to when I was unbroken?”

Akaashi could say his few words of sincerity and his listening ear were just as effortless, but he doesn’t. Because Iwaizumi and him can go back and forth about it all night, and then day, and then some more.

So instead of saying anything, he goes for a hug.

Little things make a big friendship. It’s always the little things that matter.

-

Akaashi is surprised he awakes before Iwaizumi. Quietly, he goes to take a shower, then dresses up and takes his laptop, busying himself with emails and social media. His stomach insists on making the rumblies and a few times, he clears his throat loudly, just so Iwaizumi would wake up.

Iwaizumi doesn’t.

Mornings have never been his thing and since he is hungry as Hell, he decides Iwaizumi’s had enough sleep and throws a flip flop at his head. Perfect aim.

He gets Iwaizumi right on the nose.

“Akaashi!” Without even wiping the sleep away from his eyes, Iwaizumi is already scowling. “What the Hell?”

“Get up, Iwaizumi-san, I’m starving.”

“Then fucking go eat, goddamn it. You know where the kitchen is.”

“I don’t wanna be alone with your parents.”

“Oh, it’s Sunday.” Iwaizumi’s speech is muffled with toothpaste. “They aren’t here, so you can go downstairs.”

“What?”

“I said.” Iwaizumi reappears back into his bedroom, “you can go downstairs, since my parents must’ve already left the house to go visit my grandma. They go every Sunday.”

“That’s nice of them.”
“Yeah. So we’ll be home alone until they come back tomorrow morning before work or tomorrow afternoon after work.”

He arches an eyebrow, lips twitching. “Iwaizumi-san, is there a specific reason why you’re telling me you and I will be home alone until tomorrow?”

“Ugh. No. Shut up. I was just saying.”

“Mhm. Of course you were.”

“Fuck off.”

“You know, Iwaizumi-san,” He says as they enter the kitchen, “you could’ve put some clothes on before coming down.”

“No.” Iwaizumi says, pouring them both cups of coffee. Then he takes his usual seat at the kitchen counter. “My parents aren’t here, so I can have breakfast in my underwear.”

“You’re killing my appetite.”

“Then starve. Oh! Hi, Mrs Kageyama.” Iwaizumi mouths into his phone. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m home. No, they left. Yes. Anytime is good for me. If you can’t bring Tobio- No- Okay. Yeah, sure. A friend and I are- yes. Yes, that would be Akaashi.” He glances at Akaashi, who is making himself right at home, opening the fridge and helping himself to whatever he pleases. Yeah, what happened to that killed appetite, he thinks and snorts internally. He continues to talk over the phone with Kageyama’s mom, while watching Akaashi with a little smile. “Yeah. That’s great, thank you. Yeah. I love it. I’ll make sure to leave some for mom and dad.” He laughs. “Yes. Of course.”

“Wow, your mom made rice pudding? Nice.” Akaashi whispers happily, before spooning himself a mouthful.

“What? No!” Iwaizumi covers the speaker with his thumb. “That’s a semolina pudding with raisins!”

Iwaizumi watches him gagging with disgust and covers the speaker again, because he can’t help snickering.

“Yeah. Okay. See you in a bit, Mrs Kageyama.” Iwaizumi hangs up and roars in laughter. “My mom makes it for my grandma, because she has difficulty chewing solid food. She must’ve left some for you to try.” He explains, wheezing.

“She shouldn’t have.” Akaashi says, after washing down the terrible taste with coffee. God. Last time he tried semolina was in school when he was 7 and he nearly vomited. 10 years later, the taste is still the same. No, it’s even worse now, as it’s combined with raisins. Gross. So fucking gross.

“Sorry about that, princess.”

“You’re not at all.”

“Drink your coffee and cheer up.” Iwaizumi grins. “Kageyama’s mom made mac and cheese and she’s coming over to drop him off in half an hour. You can have that for breakfast.”

Hmph. That mac and cheese better taste good, he thinks, scowling.
It tastes amazing. Either that, or he’s just really hungry.

He helps himself to a second plate, while Iwaizumi quizzes Kageyama on Japanese. The next subject is English and he has never wished he had a phone more than in that moment, if only to record how hilariously terrible Kageyama is and how frustrated Iwaizumi is getting.

“Kageyama, you have all the words in the box, you just had to match them to the picture.”

“That’s what I did, Iwaizumi-san.”

“You should have learned the meaning of the words first. What you wrote is- you like snacking on pencils while writing exams with yogurt.” Iwaizumi sighs.


“Oh my God, if you don’t shut up, I’m gonna put your head through a wall, I swear.” Iwaizumi closes his eyes and massages his temples. “And I thought I was bad in English.”

“You are bad at explaining it, Iwaizumi-san.” Kageyama says. “Maybe if I took French like you, you would be able to help me more.”

Akaashi stops chewing. “You take French, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Yeah. So?”

“I didn’t know that before.” He says. “Did you read Molière’s original works?”

“Yeah.”

“Wow. You must be really good in French.”

“I’m alright.” Iwaizumi shrugs modestly.

“If you read the books in French, I’d say you’re more than alright.” He smiles. “Say something in French.”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know. Something.”

“I don’t know what.”

“Just something. I want to hear you speak French.”

“Give me a sentence, Akaashi.”

“Anything, Iwaizumi-san.”

“Ta gueule.”

“What does it mean?”

“It’s the rude way of saying shut up.”

“Say something longer than that. Something with a “r”.”

“Why?”
“Because everyone says the French accent is sexy and I want to hear it.”

“Yeah, but that’s the French accent of French people. Which I am not.”

“Please, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Akaashi, tu es un roi.”

“I haven’t got the slightest clue what you just said, but that was quite sexy.”

“I said you’re a king.”

“Oh? And this whole time, I thought I was a princess?”

Iwaizumi chuckles, because Akaashi doesn’t know he’s both. “You take advanced English, so here, take my seat. You’d be of better help to Kageyama than me.”

“Thanks.”

“I’m gonna make more coffee. Want some?”

“You know I could never say no to coffee, Iwaizumi-san.”

An hour and a half later, Akaashi calls for a little break, giving Kageyama a breather, since he looks dead. While Kageyama is in the bathroom, Iwaizumi pours Akaashi another cup of coffee.

“Kageyama’s really bad with his studies, but you’re so patient and soft with him. You didn’t lose your temper once.” Iwaizumi says. “I assume you are the same way with the students you tutor back at Fukurodani?”

“Of course. It’s my job to help people understand the material they’ve been given. There’s no room for temper. If I was to yell, that wouldn’t help anyone, but stress them out further and maybe even make them hate the subject they’re having difficulty with. I don’t want that.” He says. “I like explaining things, no matter how slow or how long it takes, because it’s such a good feeling to me when I see that little light bulb switch on whenever they understand. When they’re finally able to let go of my hand and continue on their own.”

Iwaizumi takes a sip of coffee, eyeing him over the top.

“What?”

“You ever consider being a teacher, Akaashi?”

“Not really.” He admits.

“I think you should.” Iwaizumi smiles. “I think you’d make a terrific teacher.”

He recalls hearing something similar from Bokuto and Kuroo. Them saying they might pay attention in class if he was their teacher. Well. The way they were talking about it was slightly different from the way Iwaizumi is.

They tackle Geography and Combined Science next and then it’s time for another break. While Kageyama relaxes - his relaxation is tossing a volleyball back and forth with Iwaizumi in the hallway - Akaashi can’t help but think of Kuroo, how much better he would’ve been at explaining the Chemistry bits to Kageyama.

“Kageyama-kun, there’s just History and Math left. Which one would you like to go over first?”
“History.” Kageyama says. “Math is the worst, so I want to leave it for last.”

“Your face, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi laughs into his water. “It’s like Kageyama personally offended your entire family by saying he hates Math.”

“He didn’t say he hates it. And I’m just surprised, is all.”

“What’s so surprising? Plenty of people dislike Math.”

“Kageyama-kun has a really logical way of thinking when he plays volleyball, so it baffles me he wouldn’t like Math, when logic is all you need for it.”

“Pfft.” Iwaizumi rolls his eyes. “Kageyama’s a genius with all things volleyball, but Math is not volleyball.”

“Hm. Then how about a little friendly challenge, Iwaizumi-san?”

“I’m listening.”

“History is your favourite subject, Math is mine. What do you say we both help Kageyama-kun in each and then he would tell us which one he prefers?”

“You’re an actual tutor, Akaashi.”

“So you already know you’re gonna lose.” His mouth twitches. “Good call, Iwaizumi-san, there’s no shame in admitting defeat before—”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi snorts. “I’m never one to turn down a challenge, no matter how unfair it is. The scales are tipped in your favor, which is why I’ll enjoy winning all the more.”

“Your confidence, while admirable, is completely out of place.”

“Ha! Plenty of people have challenged me to running and arm wrestling and baseball and they all live to regret doing it. You will too.”

He pretends to yawn, unimpressed. “That’s all muscles and stamina.”

“A challenge is a challenge, Akaashi. All I’m saying is, I don’t lose those.”

“You say that, because you’ve never been challenged by me.” He smirks.

“Bring it on, princess.” Iwaizumi smirks back.

As Kageyama, ever so unwillingly, leafs through his textbook, Akaashi can’t stop himself from trying to emotionally sabotage Iwaizumi. All’s fair in love and war and this is a 100% war.

Fukurodani vs Seijouh.

“You know, Iwaizumi-san, people aren’t wrong when they say size matters. Because it does matter.” He says, voice honey sweet and innocent. Only thing missing is the halo. “The bigger, the better.”

“First, I’m gonna make Kageyama kick History ass. And then I’ll kick yours for talking about sex at a time like this.”

“The brain, Iwaizumi-san. I was talking about the brain.” He says and laughs at Iwaizumi’s
expression, which is the perfect mixture of bashful and murder.

It’s hilarious.

A moment later, Iwaizumi shakes his head and laughs too.

“Your way of thinking is rubbing off on me.” Iwaizumi says and takes two things out of his back pocket, one a protractor, the other a pen. “Kageyama, I’m gonna make you a little plan with the dates that’s gonna be very easy to follow.”

Biting his lip in concentration, Iwaizumi sketches out a few things, unwavering and neat, and Akaashi is the one that moves their mugs and glasses away, so he would have more room to see it better. He smiles and smiles at Iwaizumi and keeps forgetting to look at Kageyama’s notebook - which he should, as it’s the enemy’s strategy - until Iwaizumi catches him and taps his pen.

“Kageyama, take a look and tell me if you understand.”

As Kageyama reads over the notes, Iwaizumi leans his head back and whispers, “Your staring is distracting me, so please quit it.”

“Do you always use that?” Akaashi asks quietly, pointing at the protractor.

“This? Yes. Let’s not start saying the other one is a nerd, Akaashi, because I will win that game.”

“I’m not. I like it.”

Iwaizumi rolls his eyes and probably doesn’t believe him, but it’s true, Akaashi really likes the way Iwaizumi’s mathy brain powers him across the paper.

“Iwaizumi-san,” Kageyama says, “why did you circle and underline this part in the middle?”

“Because it’s the most important one, Kageyama. Ok, here.” Iwaizumi explains, scribbling a few more things in and making dot, dot, dot lines all over the neatness. “There. Voilà!”

Kageyama blinks, doesn’t voilà! back.

“I guess that’s enough History for today.” Iwaizumi says, sighing soft.

“Iwaizumi-san, do you carry the protractor with you at all times?” Akaashi asks, taking it into his hand.

“Yes. It helps me map out my thinking.”

Akaashi feels a sudden rush of fondness towards Iwaizumi, as he twirls the protractor between his fingers, smiling big. It’s cute that Iwaizumi carries it around to help him map out his thinking. Cute in his pocket all the time.

“So what?”

“Nothing. It’s cute.”

The second he sees Kageyama’s difficulty with the word problems, Akaashi realizes he wasn’t wrong to assume Kageyama would be good in Math. It’s just the words that are confusing him.

“This is impossible.” Kageyama says, staring blankly at his textbook. “I can’t solve this, Akaashi-san. I don’t even know what I’m being asked to do.”
Iwaizumi crosses his hands, only this time it’s not defensive, but smug and smirky in an *I told you so* manner.

Akaashi already knows he will be the one to have the last laugh.

“Yes you will, Kageyama-kun.” He smiles reassuringly. “Just stop thinking about Car A and Car B. Imagine it’s 2 servers on each line and the first one does a normal serve, while the second one a jump serve. You need to calculate the exact moment both balls will meet over the net.”

Kageyama goes starry-eyed and then his pen starts moving mad fast across the blank page. He glances at Kageyama’s answer, which is correct, and then lets him continue with the rest of the problems.

“I’ll be damned.” Iwaizumi says and shakes his head. “Well played, Akaashi.”

“It’s all about perspective, Iwaizumi-san.”

Their eyes meet and, challenge forgotten, they smile at each other. A silent and mutual agreement that the most important part is Kageyama progressing with his studies. They promised they’d help him and that’s exactly what they’re doing.

Then, Akaashi wouldn’t be Akaashi if he doesn’t mutter a “Totally won that one.” and Iwaizumi wouldn’t be himself, if he doesn’t reply with a “Plenty of future challenges for me to kick your ass.”

“It’s nice to dream, Iwaizumi-san, when dreams cost nothing.”

“One victory, Akaashi, does not make you a conqueror.”

“It’s better than one defeat.”

Kageyama glances at their verbal exchange like he’s observing a ping pong match.

“Akaashi-san, you’re 17?”

“I am.”

“And Iwaizumi-san, you’re going to be 19 in June?”

“Yes.”

“Are you married?”

He laughs. “I’m not even of legal age to get married yet.”

“What the Hell kind of question is that, Kageyama?”

Kageyama shrugs. “I’m just trying to understand what your mom meant when she said you and Akaashi-san are like an old married couple.”

“When did you hear my mom say that?”

“Yesterday afternoon. She came over to our house to have tea with Mom, while I was doing my homework and they kept talking about the two of you.”

“Kageyama. Were they really drinking tea?”
Kageyama nods.

“Tea had Brandy in it, didn’t it?”

Kageyama nods again.

“Sweet Jesus.” Iwaizumi rubs his face, then screws his fists in his eyes. “Why don’t mothers have anything better to do in their spare time than hit the sauce and gossip nonsense?”

“Why did your mom say that, Iwaizumi-san?” Kageyama asks with a child’s curiosity. “When you and Akaashi-san aren’t married and you’re not old.”

“Iwaizumi-san is actually a dinosaur.” He grins.

To his utmost delight and Iwaizumi’s disbelief, Kageyama laughs.

“Why are you laughing?”

“Because Akaashi-san made a really funny joke.”

“Wasn’t a joke.” He says and high fives Kageyama, but only after explaining he is going for a high five.

“Oh dear God in Heaven, there’s two of you now.” Iwaizumi sighs. “That’s too much unfunny in one place for me to handle.”

“Iwaizumi-san, you have to find a way to handle it, because Mom said I should stay here until dinner time, since there’s nobody home.”

“I know, dumbass, she told me.”

“That’s perfect.” Akaashi smiles.

Ha!

If Akaashi thinks this is perfect, Iwaizumi wonders what he would say in an hour. He smiles to himself, keeping a little secret.

Normally, he would warn Akaashi, as he knows Akaashi hates surprises. But this is the kind of surprise you just don’t ruin. This is the kind of surprise Akaashi would absolutely love.

And Iwaizumi finds himself anticipating the moment he gets to see Akaashi’s face light up. Akaashi’s gonna be real happy and seeing Akaashi happy makes him happy too.

That’s so good.

He busies himself with household chores - laundry, emptying the dishwasher, removing dead flowers from vases and putting fresh ones - while Akaashi creates a study guide for Kageyama with Kageyama right beside, answering each of his questions.

By the 3 pm mark, Akaashi grows hungry and tries the buttery approach.

“Iwaizumi-san, you insist on being a domestic goddess, so how about making us lunch?”

“Domestic goddess, Akaashi?” He snorts. “We’re gonna eat in a bit.”

“Like I just said, in a bit.”

“Why not now?” Akaashi asks.

“Because I’m a little busy here, princess.”

“You’re texting.”

“Ergo I’m busy.”

“Because texting requires all your mental capacity?”

“It does. Why don’t people just call?”

“Spoken like a true dinosaur.” Akaashi shakes his head. “Texting is a whole lot more efficient, because you can get right to the point, instead of wasting time with hi, it’s me calling, how are you blabla.”

“Spoken like a true robot.”

“Akaashi-san, when Oikawa-san was our Captain in Kitagawa Daiichi, he would text us for practice only using emojis and xoxo’s and Iwaizumi-san would always get so angry about it.”

“Iwaizumi-san is always angry.” He grins.

“Tch. You setters always give me a reason to be, because you’re always annoying.”

“Kageyama-kun, has Iwaizumi-san ever texted you emojis? I’ve never seen him use them.”

“I don’t know—”

“No.” Iwaizumi says. “Never used an emoji in my life.”

“—Akaashi-san, but I could check.”

“What about xoxo’s, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Nope.”

“Hm. I haven’t seen it being used in years, but It always reminded me of tic-tac-toe.”

Iwaizumi laughs.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

He keeps his eyes on Iwaizumi, because it’s obviously something.

“Just a little inside joke.” Iwaizumi adds, eventually.

He lets it go, because it’s not one that involves him. Maybe Matsukawa or Hanamaki.

No. Iwaizumi’s smile definitely meant Oikawa.

“Hm. I always did wonder why that stands for hugs and kisses.” He muses and then sighs. “Too bad I don’t have my phone to Google it.”
“I’m no Google,” Iwaizumi says, “but it dates back to the Middle Ages. A Christian cross used to be drawn on documents and letters at the end to signify sincerity and honesty and then the signer would kiss it to display their sworn oath. As for the O, it’s speculated that it derives from Jewish immigrants in North America, because they wouldn’t use the cross to sign documents, and used it instead.”

“Well,” He smiles, “you are definitely a history Google.”

Iwaizumi smirks. “When it comes to History, not even MC Hammer can touch me.”

“Oh, that was such a bad joke, Iwaizumi-san. I’ll probably still be cringing about it when I’m 80.”

“You better have your hearing aids, Akaashi, because I won’t text you to check - I’ll call.”

“Stop.” He rolls his eyes, laughing. “And not—”

Iwaizumi, laughing, says, “For Hammer Time?” and Kageyama looks so completely lost, that it makes it even funnier.

It’s so silly.

All three, ravenous, are digging their forks into the meager mac and cheese leftovers, when the doorbell rings.

“Akaashi, go get that.”

“I’m not your housemaid, Iwaizumi-san. Go get it yourself.”

“I ordered food.”

Akaashi shoots out of his seat and reaches the front door in a flash, wondering if it’s pizza or Thai or Indian or—

It’s neither.

The thing with your heart’s desire is that your heart doesn’t even know what it desires until it turns up. Like a tie at a tag sale, some perfect thing in a crate of nothing, his heart’s desire is just there, uninvited, grinning from ear to ear, one saying *Keiji, hey, hey, heyyy!*, the other *hey, Angel Eyes.*

Swallowing down hearts and face all blurry hot with happiness, feeling like in a haze of a dream, Akaashi embraces and embraces and kisses and kisses and then he kisses some more, until his lips turn two sizes puffier, the color of ripe strawberries.

“How did you two even get here?” He asks, breathless.

“Borrowed my father’s Lambo.” Bokuto says, pointing a thumb over his shoulder, at the shiny black car behind.

“Bokuto-san, you have volleyball practice tomorrow morning.”

“Which is why, Angel Eyes, we can’t stay longer than the afternoon, as much as we want to.” Kuroo smiles. “You were upset and needed cheerios, so of course we came to see you. Plus, we really, really missed you.”

“You drove for 4 hours and you have 4 hours back. That’s an 8 hour drive to see me for an afternoon.”
“Keiji,” Bokuto grabs his face with both hands, slotting his thumbs along the line of his cheekbones, rubbing back and forth. “We’d drive for 10 hours to see you for a minute.”

Then Bokuto softly kisses him on the mouth, zero tongue, and his bones melt.

Bokuto and Kuroo are unfuckingreal.

Akaashi feels like a murder scene. The contents of his heart are sprayed everywhere.

-

The air outside is balmy, with a hint of summer, even though it’s only the beginning of April.

Aided by Iwaizumi’s texts, Bokuto and Kuroo are prepared with groceries and the 5 of them all work together in setting up a barbecue in the backyard.

Kuroo, as their DJ, plays power ballads, while Bokuto jams out at the grill, totally in his element. Kageyama, puppy-dog loyal and frothing at the mouth with excitement, is by his side, yapping away about volleyball this volleyball that, wow, Bokuto-san, really, you’re so amazing! Hey hey heyyy!

Iwaizumi and him are left with the simple task of bringing napkins, plates, forks, knives, chopsticks and glasses out from the kitchen, and while Akaashi wants to help as well, he really doesn’t feel like being away from Bokuto and Kuroo even for a second. Iwaizumi notices, of course, and stares at him, arms akimbo.

Akaashi snickers, making Iwaizumi arch an inquisitive eyebrow.

“The way you’re looking at me makes me feel like I’m a student stuck with their teacher, while the rest of the kids,” He nods his head at Bokuto, Kuroo and Kageyama, “are all having fun at the playground.”

“God, you’re so fucking rude.” Iwaizumi laughs. But he really can’t hold it - anything - against Akaashi, not when he looks the way he does. Happiness personified.

That, too, seems to be rubbing off on Iwaizumi.

“Go boyfriending, Akaashi. You deserve it.”

And so he does.

Bokuto puts his impeccable cooking skills to use and prepares a feast for them all. He’s the only one that doesn’t start eating right away, glancing around with an eager smile and Akaashi and Kuroo both know that is his fishing for compliments face.

Well, he shouldn’t have to, Akaashi thinks. Not when he worked so goddamn hard, by himself, making sure everyone’s favourite is at the table - grilled mackerel pike, agedashi tofu, pork curry with an egg on top, boiled rapeseed plants with karashi mustard, onigiri and yakiniku.

Akaashi is just about to open his mouth, ready to not spare any compliments to the chef, but lay them down, thick, when Iwaizumi starts.
“Shi—itake mushrooms, Bokuto. The food is incredible.”

“You can say shit, Iwa.” Kuroo snorts. “Kageyama knows what shit is.”

“I take a shit every day before practice.” Kageyama says and it’s the simple manner he announces it in, that makes Akaashi’s mouth twitch. Like he’s talking about the weather and not bowel movements. “Unless I’m constipated, but that rarely happens.”

Iwaizumi looks like he can say a lot of things to Kuroo - he has plenty to say to both Bokuto and Kuroo - but doesn’t. Scowling, he says, “Don’t Iwa me.”, and then, not scowling, says, “The food really is incredible. Where did you learn to cook like that?

“Thanks, Iwa.” Bokuto grins and, ignoring Iwaizumi’s Iwaizumi, not Iwa, explains about his mom and dad traveling all over the world, bringing him along during their business trips and him wandering into hotel kitchens and the chefs teaching him things. “That’s how I learned.”

Iwaizumi blinks. “And your parents just left you to your own devices?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“Of course?” Iwaizumi blinks again. How could Bokuto’s parents just whisk him off into different countries - Heck, different continents - where people don’t speak Japanese and leave him to saunter off by himself? “You were just a child.”

Bokuto laughs at Iwaizumi’s expression. “My parents don’t give a damn what I do, as I long as I don’t embarrass them in public. Oh! Speaking of,” He looks at Akaashi, “my interview is this Wednesday at 6 pm.”

“I’m aware, Bokuto-san. Yukie already told me.”

“Right. I meant to tell you myself, but I forgot.” Bokuto pulls a face. “Sorry.”

“That’s okay, Bokuto-san. I know you have a lot on your mind.” He smiles. “And I completely agree. Your cooking is always so delicious, I could eat anything you make.”

“Even semolina with raisins?” Iwaizumi asks.

“Even semolina with raisins.”

They both laugh and Kuroo gives them a funny look.

“Anywho.” Kuroo says. “I’m having a foodgasm, bro, and the only thing more delicious than your food is your—”

“I’d appreciate it if you didn’t finish that sentence.” Iwaizumi interjects. “The food tastes delicious, let’s leave it at that.”

“Thanks, Tetsu.” Bokuto winks, open mouthed and happy.

Tetsu?

Well, that’s definitely new.

Akaashi feels his smile spreading.

“What’s a foodgasm?” Kageyama asks.
“It’s when you eat food so good,” Kuroo explains, “that you’re practically having an orgasm.”

“Oh. In that case,” Kageyama bows his head, “thank you for the multiple orgasms, Bokuto-san.”

Aside from Iwaizumi, they roar in laughter and Kageyama beams, incredibly pleased with himself. Bokuto, all kinds of cheery, swings an arm over Kageyama’s shoulders.

“You’re so very welcome.”

Kuroo looks in the mood to tease.

Isn’t he always?

“Hey, Angel Eyes, you reckon Iwa would mind if we go upstairs for a quickie?”

“Yes,” Iwaizumi glowers. “I would mind. I would mind very much.”

“Can I come too?” Kageyama asks.

“Coming,” Bokuto snickers, “is the main idea behind quickies.”

“I love quickies.” Kageyama says. “They’re delicious.”

“No.” Iwaizumi says. “What you love is quiche.”

“Quickies are even more delicious.” Kuroo smirks and there’s another burst of laughter.

If looks could kill, Akaashi, Bokuto and Kuroo would be.

Kageyama tilts his head curiously. “Do they have dairy? I love all things dairy.”

“No, Kageyama-kun.” He says. “A quickie means having sex in a short amount of time. Quickly, hence the the name.”

“Oh. That makes sense.” Kageyama nods slowly. “Thank you for clearing it up for me, Akaashi-san. I don’t want to give my classmates another reason to make fun of me. They always used to, when they would talk about creampies, because I didn’t know what it was, until Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san showed me videos—”

Iwaizumi slams his hand against the table. “That’s enough!”

“Tch.” Kuroo rolls his eyes in annoyance. “You’re looking at Kou and I like we’re the enemy here, when it’s you that’s not doing Kageyama any favors by sheltering from everything. Maybe in your mind that’s the right thing to do, but your uptight and proper ways, Iwaizumi, are alienating him further from his peers.”

Kou is also a new thing.

… Just how much did he miss out on in the span of 4 days?

“And I suppose watching porn with him and teaching him obscenities, in your mind, Kuroo, is the right thing to do?” Iwaizumi crosses his arms.

“You heard him yourself - his classmates would make fun of him for not knowing things all teenagers think and talk about. And you know what, Iwaizumi?” Kuroo continues, clearly not done. “You might not realize it, but you’re such a hypocrite.”
Iwaizumi’s face is austere; his dark green eyes as intense as ever. Akaashi is suddenly reminded of the very first time they bonded, that night he was being bullied in their gym, when Iwaizumi beat the shit out of Saito and his friend.

Iwaizumi has the same look now.

“I wasn’t gonna bring this up, but I can’t not talk about it, when you’re being such a self-righteous prude. You’re getting all worked up we’re talking about sex in front of Kageyama, when you were already having sex by the time you were his age.”

Iwaizumi is definitely taken aback by Kuroo’s words. His shock is all kinds of visible.

“Bro, that’s not cool.” Bokuto shakes his head. “I’m shit with secrets and confidential things, because I forget they are, but you aren’t.” He shakes his head again. “That was really not cool.”

“Sorry, Kou, but Iwaizumi’s being a hypocrite and that’s not cool either.”

“He told you.” Iwaizumi says, more to himself than anybody else. “I can’t believe he told you.”

Akaashi isn’t the only one that could tell Iwaizumi needs a time out, because Bokuto asks for his help to bring out the dessert.

One of the traits Bokuto homes that Akaashi’s always admired - and there are so many of them - is that he has mad good intuition.

Bokuto knows how to be soft and when he is, even cotton would be envious.

So Akaashi doesn’t have to worry itch. He’s actually glad. Because there’s nothing he would like more than for his boyfriends to get along with Iwaizumi.

Which is why he needs some alone time with Kuroo.

“Kageyama-kun, could you go inside and fetch Iwaizumi-san’s volleyball? After we eat the carrot cake Bokuto-san prepared for us, we could play a little friendly game.”

Kageyama jumps out of his seat like it’s on fire. “I would love that, Akaashi-san!”

“I know.” He smiles. “Oh, and could you please make us some coffee? It would go well with the cake.”

“I don’t know how to make coffee.”

“Then ask Iwaizumi-san or Bokuto-san to show you.”

“Yes, Akaashi-san. Of course.”

The second Kageyama is out of earshot, Kuroo already has his speech at the ready.

“Angel Eyes, I’m not apologizing to Iwaizumi, when I was only speaking the truth.”

“I don’t expect you to, Kuroo-san.”

“But you want me to.”

“Not at all.”

Kuroo hmpfs, scratching his chin. “Well, you definitely want something.”
“I do.” He stares at Kuroo, point-blank. “I want you to bury the hatchet with Iwaizumi-san.”

“There’s no hatchet between us.”

“Yes, there is. It’s only in your head, Kuroo-san, but I know it to be there.” He says. “You used to flirt with Oikawa-san all the time and you know that used to get on Iwaizumi-san’s nerves. And now you think he’s doing the same with me to get back at you, which isn’t the case at all.” He licks his lips. “I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again - Iwaizumi-san and I are just friends.”

“You’re right, Angel Eyes.” Kuroo sighs. “I’m sorry for being so insecure. I just— I love you a whole damn lot and I don’t wanna lose you.”

“You won’t. Because I love you a whole damn lot, too. And I’d be damned if I let your insecurities ruin what the three of us have.”

Smiling, Akaashi leans over the table and kisses Kuroo. And then, because he wants to and because he can - and Hell, just because - he gets up and sits in Kuroo’s lap. Wrapping his arms tightly around Kuroo’s neck, he gives out another butterfly kiss and Kuroo looks like he’s on cloud 9.

“I couldn’t help, but notice Bokuto-san and you are on first name basis.”

“Yeah.” Kuroo grins. “That’s a thing now.”

“It’s a great thing.” He grins in return.

“Angel Eyes, would you believe me if I told you—”

“Bokuto-san asked you for a blowjob?”

“Yeah, exactly.”

He laughs heartily. “Bokuto-san does that.”

“He does.”

“And I’m sure you did.”

“You know me.” Kuroo smirks. “It’s too bad the three of us won’t have any privacy until you return to Tok—”

“Oh, we will, Kuroo-san.” He pats Kuroo’s hand, grinning. “I’ll make sure we do.”

“Under the puritan’s roof?” Kuroo snorts. “Yeah, Angel Eyes, good luck with that.”

“Luck is for losers.“

He remains seated on top of Kuroo’s thighs as Iwaizumi, Bokuto and Kageyama return and he still has his hands wrapped around Kuroo’s neck, so Kuroo feeds him spoonfuls of cake.

“So, Kageyama,” Kuroo says casually, as he squeezes Akaashi’s ass, “you’re still set on Shiratorizawa?”

“Yes, Kuroo-san.” Kageyama says. “Iwaizumi-san and Akaashi-san were helping me with my studies before you and Bokuto-san got here.”
Bokuto waves with a hand. “If Keiji is helping you prepare for the exam, rest assured, because you’re in safe hands.”

“I appreciate the vote of confidence, Bokuto-san,” He smiles, “but I actually wanted to talk to Kageyama-kun about it. I have a friend from Shiratorizawa, who told me their entrance exam is really difficult. Which is why I need to ask if you’ve thought about your safety school?”

“Akaashi-san, what is a safety school?” Kageyama asks.

“It’s your backup school, in case you don’t get accepted into Shiratorizawa.”

Kageyama’s head tilts. “You think Shiratorizawa would reject me?”

“It’s not what I think, Kageyama-kun. What I’m saying is, it’s always good to have a backup plan. Plan B.”

Kuroo nods. “Karasuno would be a good plan B for you.”

“Karasuno?” Kageyama blinks.

“No,” Akaashi shakes his head, “not Karasuno. Kageyama-kun, I really think you should consider Aoba Jousai as your safety school. Iwaizumi-san would be a familiar face for you, and from what I’ve observed, I believe Seijoh would be more fitting for you than Karasuno.”

Kageyama goes silent, letting the information sink in.

“In fact,” Akaashi, perhaps a little too biased and tipping the scales he’s supposed to keep even, says, “I would love nothing more than to face Iwaizumi-san and you as teammates across the court against Bokuto-san and I.”

“Akaashi-san, that would be a dream come true.” Kageyama says, resolute. “I want to face you on the court with Iwaizumi-san by my side more than Ushijima-san, even though Ushijima-san is the better Wing Spiker.”

Bokuto and Kuroo throw their heads back, cackling, and as much as he wants to join them, Akaashi doesn’t. He takes a sip of his coffee and remains as neutral and diplomatic as Switzerland.

- 

Without a net and being an uneven number, the 5 of them end up playing the toss-and-don’t-drop-the-ball game. They’re all playing against each other and as competitive as they all are, the game could go on forever - nobody is willing to let the ball drop.

With the clock ticking, Akaashi is the first one to strike out, feigning clumsiness that’s not really there. He steps away, situating himself right under the apple tree. Because he needs to drink in this moment.

He’s not a goddamn oracle, so he doesn’t have a damn clue what tomorrow would bring.

But what he does know, is that Bokuto’s honeybird eyes are blazing like the sun and each of Kuroo’s freckles look like a miracle kissed into place.
And for him, that’s enough.

It’s perfect.

He has a feeling he will remember this moment for a very long time. Maybe even forever.

No phone cameras needed to commemorate.

Akaashi definitely has a feeling.
Welcome to Fukurodani Academy

Chapter Summary

Akaashi Keiji is accepted as a boarding student at Fukurodani and his roommate is the ever so loud Bokuto Koutarou. (I suck at summaries, sry)

Chapter Notes

It was something of a personal goal to finish chapter 40 before 2018 and what do you know, I did it and it's only the 28th?? HEY HEY HEY! I honestly cannot believe this is me writing a 2nd chapter in a row without any angst?? What softie have I become, I cannot recognize myself. Anyway. It's good to have soft and fluff around the holidays and I hope everyone is enjoying themselves and this update too~

When Kageyama asks to be driven home, Iwaizumi takes one look at Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi and fixes a smile that could be considered somewhat polite. Definitely not genuine.

“Akaashi? A word?”

“How about loquacious, Iwaizumi-san?”

Cute.

But that’s not the point.

“I already have a word in mind, Akaashi.”

Iwaizumi pulls him to the side and Akaashi doesn’t say shit, but smiles, saccharine-sweet, because he knows Iwaizumi just put fresh sheets. This is why.

Iwaizumi wasn’t born last night.

“Look, Akaashi, I know what the three of you have in mind and that’s fine by me. But I’m not leaving, until you give me your word you’re… prepared. Because I’m not letting you have unprotected sex in my house.” Iwaizumi shakes his head, staring. “That’s just not happening.”

He can’t help smiling further, because Iwaizumi is such a mom friend. Even when he doesn’t want to care, he still does.

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san. Of course.”

“You have protection?”

“I don’t.” He admits. “But I’m pretty sure, Bokuto-san or Kuroo-san do.”

“Sorry, Akaashi, but pretty sure isn’t good enough for me. Just ask. I don’t mind waiting.”
Discreetly, he goes between Bokuto and Kuroo, whispering a question in the middle. Kuroo shakes his head, but Bokuto nods in confirmation. He winks at Iwaizumi.

“So,” Iwaizumi says, “I’ll drive Kageyama home and I’ll be back in half an hour.”

“How about you have tea at Kageyama-kun’s house?” He offers. “And you come back in an hour and a half?”

Iwaizumi sighs loudly. Internally, he sighs even louder.

Akaashi is really pushing his luck here and it’s annoying, but, screw it. What else is friendship for?

“Hopefully, by the time I’m back, you—” He points at Bokuto and Kuroo, “will be on your merry way back to Tokyo.”


“Take care, Kageyama.” Kuroo smirks.


Before they even hear the front door closing, Kuroo’s lips latch themselves onto Akaashi’s, fingers unbuckling his belt, zip flying open. Bokuto is working on his biggest weakness, kissing at his neck, and Akaashi closes his eyes, relishing the moment and the feeling.

It’s perfect, the way his back lands against the bed, perfect, the way Bokuto and Kuroo take their time taking each other’s shirts off, in-between kisses. There’s hands everywhere, groping and touching and appreciating.

It’s easy from there. They play a play, the mattress as their stage and their performance is perfection. There are no rehearsed lines, but one thing that’s always there is the hungry eyes, the starved lips. It’s the same goddamn addictive combination as every other goddamn time.

A condom wrapper is being torn open by teeth, the sound of a bottle being squirted, and Akaashi automatically spreads his legs. While Kuroo pushes into him, Bokuto kisses Akaashi’s chest, sucking at a nipple, painfully sweet.

It’s not fucking, not really, the pace is slower than that and they could go at it for hours if they wanted to, but time is not a luxury they can afford.

Akaashi’s been able to feel every pore of his body for the past twenty minutes they’ve had thorough missionary sex. And despite Bokuto touching him just the way he loves it, Akaashi can’t let go. He clutches the tip of himself while his legs shake with the pain of holding.

Having to piss and wanting to fuck are excruciating coupled together.

“Angel Eyes, you need a bathroom break?”

“Yes, Kuroo-san.” He grits, tummy biting with orange juice and water and coffee. Too much of each. “I really have to.”

He genuinely can’t hold it in any longer and with the hottest little cherrypop sigh, Akaashi removes himself from the bed and dashes towards the bathroom faster than his feet have ever carried him.
Hands clean and bladder completely emptied, he returns just in time to see Kuroo on his knees, his kisser, all fat from constantly biting and licking at it, wrapped around Bokuto’s dick.

Bokuto’s fingers have sunk themselves into Kuroo’s hair, messing it up further, as he fucks into Kuroo’s mouth and Akaashi finds himself rooted on the spot, unable to move. His brain is exploding with nothing and everything at the same time.

This is, hands down, the hottest thing he’s ever had the pleasure to witness with his own two eyes. He’s always had 20/20 vision, but he needs more eyes. Not to see better, but more. *More.* From every angle.

He considers joining Kuroo.

And then he considers something else.

“I want to try it again. Let’s just try, okay?” Akaashi says. It sounds like *please*.

His toes curl excitedly, like they do when Bokuto and Kuroo do that thing with both tongues.

Kuroo nods, smirking. Bokuto is also in the mood, because he is already putting on a banana flavored condom.

They’re always on board with anything Akaashi ever suggests.

“Let’s try it.”

When it comes to challenges, Akaashi’s got more dedication than a budding flower pushing up through cold concrete.

His hands grip the headboard as he lowers himself onto Bokuto and his teeth catch at his bottom lip in full concentration. Bokuto is always so fucking massive. Kuroo joins in and Akaashi gives out a moan loud enough for Iwaizumi’s neighbors to hear.

Tightly sandwiched in between, Akaashi looks like if you touched him, your fingers would come away with a fever. He’s gloryholed open, creamy and agape, face kissing the pillows, ass up like a heart shape.

Bokuto and Kuroo are both moving, from below and from behind, and everything becomes a blur. A disgustingly hot and sweaty and sticky mess of a blur.

He’s never felt more beautiful.

Akaashi jerks, like something caught on a hook and he doesn’t know if his mind is rendered completely blank or if he actually blacks out. Maybe both.

He finally understands what it means to have your brains fucked out.

He doesn’t have any left, not one.

Third time really is a charm.
“I think you should make yourselves scarce before Iwaizumi-san comes back.”

“Keiji, we’re staying, until we can explain to Iwa. We’re not letting you take the whole blame.”

“Iwaizumi-san’s gonna kill all three of us.” He snickers.

“Not you, Angel Eyes. He likes you a little too much to kill you.”

“I really don’t think he would like me very much after this, Kuroo-san.”

“You know what?” Bokuto, grinning, places his hands on his hips. “If you’re gonna jump in the shit—”

“You might as well jump with both legs.” Kuroo and Akaashi finish in unison.

They laugh, silly, breathlessly silly.

“Maybe Iwa would consider it a little funny.” Bokuto says. “I mean, it kind of is.”

Akaashi thinks it’s hilarious, which immediately tells him Iwaizumi wouldn’t.

He’s absolutely right.

Iwaizumi is already sporting a scowl, after seeing the Lamborghini still present. Then he sees the state of his room and if there was a competition for the world’s least funny thing to ever see, Iwaizumi looks like this would be it.

Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi trip over themselves giving the exact same answer.

“So the bed just... collapsed onto itself and broke.” Iwaizumi echoes, crossing his hands.

Kuroo purses his lips and nods. “It’s unfortunate, but these things happen.”

“Uh huh. Of course they do.”

“You’re not mad, Iwa, are you?” Bokuto asks.

“No, Bokuto, I’m not.” Iwaizumi says and in all honesty, he isn’t.

He’s had Oikawa, Matsun, Makki and himself jumping on that bed and it was completely fine. Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi fuck and it breaks?

He’s impressed, is what he is.

“My parents bought this bed just after I was born.” Iwaizumi says. “I’ve never had a problem with it, and then you three use it for less than 2 hours and it breaks. What does that tell you?”

“That beds don’t live as long as people?” Akaashi offers.

“Akaashi, I know you like it rough - you’ve told me more times than I could count or wished to know - but Jesus goddamn Christ, just how rough do you go?”

His mouth twitches. “As long as I don’t die, I’m good with it.”

“O Holy Father. What are you guys, animals?!”

“Bro, that sounds like the beginning of a joke!” Bokuto says.

“Ohh! I see what you mean, bro. Like two owls and a cat walk into a bar.”

Iwaizumi snorts. Sounds like the kind of joke Akaashi would make, because it’s terrible.

“I’ve got one.” Akaashi says. “How about this - two owls and a cat walk into a bar and sustain mild concussions.”

This is the lamest joke he’s ever heard and of course Bokuto and Kuroo would think it funny.

And yet, Iwaizumi finds himself chuckling. It’s Akaashi’s quick-wit, the way he sticks his tongue out and bites it, after delivering the puncher and Bokuto and Kuroo doubling over.

This is so stupid.

But sometimes it can’t be helped. Laughter really is infectious.

Iwaizumi heads downstairs with Bokuto, Kuroo and Akaashi, but directly heads to the back, as they kiss and say whatever goodbyes they have to say to each other. He’s throwing the rubbish and picking up empty plates and silverware, thinking that Oikawa wasn’t wrong after all, in all those times in the past, whenever he would talk about their Rat Pack, and especially Bokuto and Kuroo.

Akaashi, too, was definitely onto something when he said Iwaizumi needs to give them a chance to get to know them.

Thing is, he never had an opinion on Bokuto and Kuroo, as he didn’t know them enough to judge.

No. That’s not true.

He might’ve jumped the judgmental gun, because he always did consider them somewhat immature and even stupid at times, but they aren’t. Well. They are, but so are Matsun and Makki, and so was Oikawa and Akaashi and himself. Everyone is stupid and immature at times.

But that’s not a bad thing. In a way, it’s knowing how to have fun.

He used to mind Bokuto’s loudness, but he can definitely understand where it stems from, the constant attention craving, the need to be praised.

It’s something Bokuto never had in his household growing up.

Iwaizumi wonders if he would’ve ended up just as loud and boisterous if he was born and raised under Bokuto’s circumstances. And that, then, raises the question what type of home Kuroo grew up in, to be the way he is.

That’s a little judgey again.

Because while personalities are products of enculturation, they’re only teenagers and still developing. The seeds and roots are already there, planted, but who knows what kind of people they would end up leafing and blooming into when they’re in their mid 20s, their early 30s?

Point is, his prejudice was wrong. He can admit to that. Bokuto and Kuroo are sweet, among the many other things they are, and he can see his opinion shifting. Not yet, but in the future, yes. He’s more than willing to put in a solid effort to get to know them better, even if it is only for
Akaashi’s sake.

Because he never did for Oikawa and maybe that was a mistake.

But he stops that train of thought. He doesn’t allow his mind to start wandering off into it’s shadowy depths, where he keeps all regrets and mistakes, the could have, would have, should haves. Past can’t be changed, only accepted.

He’s still working on that. That’ll be a work in progress for a long time, he knows.

Baby steps.

If Akaashi asked him, point-blank, if he prefers Bokuto or Kuroo, Iwaizumi would reply honestly. No bullshit rule.

Akaashi never would. Akaashi’s not in the habit of asking questions he already has the answer to.

Because it’s obvious as Hell and at the same time ironic as Hell.

The obvious part is Bokuto; he has that certain energy that draws you in and uplifts you. You can see it in the way he plays volleyball and his spirit translates off the court as well.

Kuroo, as a Middle Blocker, is used to being defensive, but, of course, the volleyball position has nothing to do with it, because Iwaizumi is a Wing Spiker and he feels the exact same way. That’s where the irony comes in; they can relate to each other as they are equally adamant in putting their guards down.

Akaashi must’ve explained that Iwaizumi doesn’t like texting, because Bokuto calls to say they’re safely back at Fukurodani.

Christopher Nolan is common ground - they both agree he is a genius - so when Iwaizumi flicks through the TV channels and catches Memento, they leave it on, even though neither of them are paying full attention to the movie. Seen it too many times, each one just as great, but still background noise, as he plays mahjong, Akaashi drawing something with his tablet.

Bokuto calls again, much later, just to hear Akaashi’s midnight voice. Iwaizumi automatically hands his phone over and goes to brush his teeth.

Lights switched off and bed wrecked, they are both lying on the mattressed floor - which Iwaizumi made sure to disinfect with all the cleaning products he found in the bathroom, along with new non-DNA soiled sheets and pillow cases - when he can’t help but voice out a thought. A question, really.

“Do you agree with Kuroo?”

“I agree with Kuroo-san on many things.” He can feel Akaashi flipping over on his side to face him. “Which one in particular are you talking about?”

“Me being a hypocrite.”

“I think everyone's a bit of a hypocrite.”

“You think I’m wrong, the way I am with Tobio?”

“Hm.” Akaashi considers for a moment. “I find it sweet that you try to shield him away from things.”
...But?"

“There’s no but. Although—”

Iwaizumi snorts. “Although is just a fancy but.”

“Fine. Fancy but, I think too much of everything isn’t good. Ignorance, most definitely, isn’t bliss.”

Despite the dark, he can feel Akaashi grinning from ear to ear.

“I’ll probably regret asking, but what’s the joke?”

“It’s you, Iwaizumi-san.”

“I’m a joke now.” Iwaizumi echoes flatly. “Thanks, Akaashi.”

“No. I mean it’s the way you are, Iwaizumi-san, how you react whenever you’re being teased. Why else do you think Bokuto-san, Kuroo-san, Matsukawa-san, Hanamaki-san and myself take such great pleasure in teasing you, why we’re always doing it?”

“Because you’re all annoying and love getting on my nerves?”

“That is one part of it, yes.” He laughs. “But it’s mostly the way you’re reacting. The way you’re trying to taboo all things related to sex, as if sex is bad and wrong.”

Iwaizumi rolls his eyes. “It’s always about sex, isn’t it?”

“No, it isn’t. But you’re so conservative that—”

“I’m not conservative!”

“Yes, you are.” He laughs again. “And now you’re getting all defensive about it.”

“Well, sorry I missed the memo where everyone got cool casually talking about sex.” Iwaizumi says, face growing hot.

“Are you blushing right now, Iwaizumi-san?”

“No.”

“Sounds like you are.”

Akaashi can tell. Just like he could tell Akaashi was smiling without seeing it.

When you know someone, like really know them, of course you can always tell.

“It’s cute. You used to do it a lot around Oikawa-san.”

That’s true. Tooru did have the ability to make him turn scarlet red in 0.3 seconds. Even less.

He feels his lips relaxing into a fond smile.

And then Akaashi says, “My dad insisted on giving me the sex talk after he met Bokuto-san.” and Iwaizumi groans.

Oh no.
He feels second-hand embarrassment just hearing about it. Imagining it is out of the question. He suddenly feels grateful that neither of his parents sat down with him, delving into the topic. He would rather die.

“I know my dad was well meaning, of course, making sure I don’t do anything unsafe and stupid, but I swear, Iwaizumi-san, it was the worst. I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me whole.” Akaashi laughs away at the memory of it. “Parents sure know how to be the most embarrassing at times.”

“Ugh. Tell me about it.” Iwaizumi rolls his eyes. “Mrs Kageyama and Ma were gossipping about us. Us, Akaashi. Jesus. What is that, ffs.”

“It’s a good thing they didn’t meet my dad, Iwaizumi-san, because if your moms got together with him, the embarrassment level would be destructive.”

“God no, they should never meet. Tobio’s mom actually has a total crush on your dad. She’s always gushing he looks so good on his book covers.”


“Dead serious. She’s such a huge fan, Tooru and her would have endless discussions about your dad’s books, like, all the time. I’m quite surprised she didn’t ask me to get her an autograph or something.”

“Aw, now I kind of want them to meet. Dad always gets so happy to meet his fans.”

Iwaizumi tries to picture it in his head - all the dad jokes Mr Akaashi would keep cracking and Mrs Kageyama and Ma giggling like school girls, completely charmed. God, that’d be the worst. Better think about something else.

“Tic tac toe.”

“Tic tac toe, Iwaizumi-san?”

“I told you it was an inside joke. Tooru would always text xoxo and I felt stupid using those, since they reminded me of tic tac toe, just like you said earlier. So I always texted him back with tic tac toe instead.”

Silence.

But no sleep.

Not yet anyway.

“I still can’t believe Tooru told Kuroo, Bokuto and Sawamura about us.”

“They were friends. Oikawa-san shared with them just like you shared with me.”

“That’s not the same.”

“It’s exactly the same.”

“No, it isn’t.”

“Hm.”
When Akaashi goes quiet for a moment, he can practically hear Akaashi’s brain reeling, trying to figure out and understand him, when even he himself doesn’t understand why he feels it’s different.

It just is.

And so he does.

But Akaashi starts, full explanation mode, that it must be the numbers, because Oikawa told 3 people whereas he only told Akaashi, which is understandable, considering the fact they are both reticent - that’s another us thing, Iwaizumi-san - and Oikawa never was.

Boy King Akaashi and his math-whiz brain, always with the goddamn numbers, forever using logic to try and decipher things.

Iwaizumi laughs softly. While teacher would be a fitting career choice for Akaashi, he can most definitely see a future where it’d be Divisional Inspector, Akaashi Keiji.

“So, I can believe he told them, Iwaizumi-san. What I can’t believe is that you have never used an emoji in your life.”

He laughs again.

Akaashi is such a robot, it’s endearing.

-

Iwaizumi never thought he’d witness a miracle, but there it is, pre-caffeinated and smiling big. Akaashi is zero bitchiness, doesn’t make a single remark on Iwaizumi being in his underwear, sitting at his favourite kitchen counter.

That’s at least 3 Guinness world records broken right there.

“No food, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Last time I made breakfast,” Iwaizumi says, “now it’s your turn.”

“But I’m your guest.”

“Ha! If you can fuck in my bed, princess, you can cook in my kitchen.”

Akaashi bursts in laughter. That was good. That was really good.

Iwaizumi is getting better and better at talking like this with him.

Breakfast prep, and entire thing altogether, takes less than 5 minutes and he says, “How was that word in French, Iwaizumi-san? Right. Voilà!”

His voilà! is burned toast and an open jar of honey. There’s not even butter at the table.

“Wow!” Iwaizumi perks up bright and sarcastic, his eyes wide as he claps. “Clearly, I was wrong to assume Bokuto is the cook in your relationship. You ever considered going for world class masterchef or something?”
He makes himself not smile, which admittedly is hard to do, when Iwaizumi’s sarcasm is pure
gold hilarious.

But his poker-face is better.

“Educate yourself, Iwaizumi-san. In some countries, this is considered a continental breakfast.”

“Continental breakfast has cold cuts and butter and jam and juice. So you educate yourself,
Akaashi.”

“I’m well educated, thank you.”

“I am too.”

“Then be grateful for the breakfast.”

“Ha!” Iwaizumi snorts. “This isn’t breakfast, this is clearly a joke.”

“No, Iwaizumi-san, you’re a joke.”

“You’re a joke, Akaashi.”

“No. You are.”

“Ha! At least I’m a funny joke.”

Facade breaks and he can’t help but laugh.

Then Iwaizumi says, “I want some warm food – and, no, by that I don’t mean warm toast – but
actual, cooked food. Like eggs. I could eat some eggs.” and Akaashi isn’t laughing anymore.

“Um. How would you like your eggs?”

The question is out of his mouth before he can stop it and it’s a total mistake to ask such a thing.
Because eggs can be cooked in many different ways, each one delicious, but just as equally
impossible for his non-existent skills.

And he just gave Iwaizumi all the freedom in the world to pick.

Great.

Nice going, genius.

Fortunately, Iwaizumi doesn’t.

“Surprise me, Akaashi.”

Well. He does that. The surprise factor is definitely there.

More of a shock, really.

He pulls out a pan, cracks an egg directly into it and bits of shell go in. He adds a second one and
the same thing happens.

Cooking channels, obviously, lie, because when chefs crack eggs on the side of the pan, the shells
never go in. And the food never just sticks, unmoving and burning.
Such filthy liars.

“Akaashi, what the Hell are you doing? Where’s the butter? Or at least oil?” Iwaizumi stares, uncomprehending and unblinking. “Why would you do that?!”

You’ve got quick-wit, Akaashi. Fucking use it.

Now would be the perfect time.

“You wanted a surprise, Iwaizumi-san. So,” He jazz-hands, “surprise!”

Iwaizumi shakes his head, mutters something about shitty sense of humor under his breath and gets back to the newspaper spread across the table.

The ruse totally worked and that feels like a small victory. But he doesn’t get to celebrate, because he still has nothing and Iwaizumi wants something.

Hm.

Maybe he can feign an injury to wiggle out of it, say his hand is hurting from the stitches. But then Iwaizumi would start fretting and worrying and Akaashi doesn’t wanna do that.

He would never have this problem if he was as obvious and loud about his feelings and moods like Bokuto. He could just throw himself on the floor and say, “Iwaizumi-san, I’m having an existential crisis” and Iwaizumi would believe him and totally forget about breakfast. Maybe even offer to make it himself, because Iwaizumi is kind like that.

It’s fine.

He just needs to think.

Think, think, think.

What’s the easiest way to make eggs?

“God, if you can’t be bothered to cook,” Iwaizumi says, “just boil some eggs and be done with it.”

...Exactly how is boiling eggs not considered cooking, by Iwaizumi, when it is?

It is cooking.

He borrows Iwaizumi’s phone and searches the net for answers. But just because he has them, doesn’t help him out of his predicament in filling Iwaizumi’s empty and awaiting plate.

Iwaizumi is asking too damn much of a person who can’t cook for shit.

Iwaizumi wouldn’t be asking him in the first place, had Iwaizumi known he can’t cook for shit.

He should tell the truth. Plenty of people are helpless in the kitchen, it’s not some bigshit deal.

Worst thing that would happen, Iwaizumi would tease the shit out of him, just like he did when he found out he can’t ride a bike and swim.

But he’s always first to tease Iwaizumi anyway, it’d be unfair not to give Iwaizumi more reasons to tease back.

It’ll be a bit of fun, really. Lots of it, actually. He can practically see the birth of tons new inside jokes and those are the best.
So just admit the fucking truth already!

“Iwaizumi-san, I can’t cook. At all. I don’t know the first thing about cooking.”

Iwaizumi’s head looks up from the morning news, amused smile already set in place. “I know.”

“How?” He blinks.

Did Iwaizumi not buy the whole surprise! pan wreck?

No. That can’t be it.

“My favourite subject is History. Be it Ancient, Contemporary, Social, Political, World.”

Iwaizumi is dragging with a grin and he knows Iwaizumi is going somewhere with this.

Where that is, he is yet to see.

“I’m curious about all things history related and my phone counts too.” Iwaizumi barks a laugh. “Should’ve used an incognito tab, but I’m so very glad you didn’t.”

“Eh.” He shrugs. “I told you I can’t cook anyway, so.”

“Not knowing how to cook is one thing, but you— you actually googled how to boil an egg.” Iwaizumi wheezes.” Jesus Christ.”

“Iwaizumi-san, this is exactly why they’re not called easy boiled eggs. Because it is hard for some people. Laying eggs would probably be easier than boiling them. Rocket science, too.”

Iwaizumi’s in paroxysms of laughter. Completely unable to speak, he just keeps slapping his hand against the table.

Perfect little Akaashi can’t ride a bike, can’t swim and, most definitely, cannot cook. He doesn’t even have the most basic of grasps about cooking, which baffles Iwaizumi. How could it not, when Akaashi is such a food lover? When he’s dating Bokuto, who is a whizz in the kitchen? When he is the most well-read 17 year old Iwaizumi’s ever had the pleasure of knowing? He’s so smart, and sharp and brainy and yet he can’t boil a goddamn egg.

Iwaizumi is afraid to stop laughing, because then he would cry.

This is fucking tragic.

“So you haven’t cooked anything, ever.”

It’s not really a question.

“Never had to in my life. People have always done it for me.”

“Spoken like a true high-maintenance princess.”

“I’m not high maintenance.”

“Ha! Why else do you think I stared nicknaming you princess in the first place?”

He blinks. “I always thought you were teasing me for being pretty like a princess. You’ve said it before, Iwaizumi-san, “you’re such a pretty princess, Akaashi”.”
Iwaizumi’s lips spread and reveal his sharky grin. “Oh, you are the prettiest princess, Akaashi, nobody’s denying that.”

As it isn’t exactly the thank you kind of compliment, he fiddles with his fingers, wordless and thinking.

Okay, so he is not the most easy-going of people. And it’s true that he has certain standards and criteria he expects others to meet, but he’d rather call it being… passionate, he supposes. Passionate is better.

High-maintenance just sounds so—

“I didn’t mean it in a bad way, you know.” Iwaizumi says. “It’s a good trait to have.”

“Hm.”

“I’m serious. You’re demanding and that makes everyone strive to do better, because nobody wants to disappoint you.”

The reason that makes Akaashi smile, is because everything Iwaizumi says, Iwaizumi means 100%.

“Tooru was, hands down, the most demanding and high-maintenance person to walk planet Earth. But I loved maintaining him, I guess, would be the right word for it. And spoiling him.” Iwaizumi says fondly. “Obviously Bokuto and Kuroo feel the same way about you.”

“You spoil Kageyama-kun and me too.” He says. “You spoil us both.”

“Well, of course, Akaashi, it’s only natural to spoil the people you—” Iwaizumi halts, searching for a word. Love doesn’t seem right for it; not when Akaashi and Kageyama don’t quite fit in the same friend category as everyone else. Saying it would be too… intimate. And so he doesn’t. “Care about the most.”

Akaashi nods slowly.

Then.

“Teach me how to cook, Iwaizumi-san.”

“What.”

“I’d like for you to teach me how to cook.”

“Why don’t you ask one of your boyfriends? Bokuto’s brilliant and Kuroo is very good too, from what you’ve told me. I’m sure they’d be more than happy to.”

That’s all true. Kuroo learned how to cook, since his mom is shit at it and he had to, in order to avoid the terrible food she prepares. And of course they would gladly show him and help him, if he were to ask. Bokuto’d been over the moon when he found out Akaashi couldn’t swim or ride a bike, promising to teach him over the summer.

“Because I’m asking you.”

“Why me?”

Akaashi sighs, like it pains him to give an answer so obvious. “Because I know I can always rely on Bokuto-san and Kuroo-san to cook for me. I’ll always take the easy way out and let them spoil
me, instead of learning.”

“You’ve never prepared any food in your life and you expect—”

“Bokuto-san asked me to cook a salad, once.”

“You don’t *cook* a salad, Akaashi, you *make* it.”

“It’s still considered cooking by my standards.”

“That’s because you *have* no cooking standards.” Iwaizumi says. “And did you? *Cook* the salad?”

“...No. Bokuto-san asked me to stop, because, apparently, I was butchering the vegetables.”

“Sorry, Akaashi.” Iwaizumi shakes his head. “I can’t teach you how to cook in the span of a week, when you can’t even make a salad or boil an egg.”

“Nobody ever taught me or showed me how to do *anything*.” He says. “And I don’t expect you to teach me how to prepare dinner for the queen of England, Iwaizumi-san, I’m just asking for basics here.”

Slowly, Iwaizumi walks towards him, narrowing his eyes, as though trying to gauge exactly how much of a time-waster he is. What Iwaizumi doesn’t know is, he used to play staring matches with Kuroo, and Akaashi always won. So he gazes back, perfectly matching Iwaizumi’s grave, this-is-no-laughing-matter expression.

“Come on, Iwaizumi-san, as the best and most reliable senpai that you are, you should help me out here.”

Akaashi, mastermind manipulator at buttering people up to get what he wants, is excellent. But Akaashi is *so* barking up the wrong tree, because it wasn’t him, but Tooru that always said, “Flattery will get you everywhere,” and laugh softly.

Unmoved by the sweet talk, Iwaizumi continues staring.

Okay, no bullshit rule - he is a little moved. Just a little. He won’t admit it, but he quite likes the idea of Akaashi going back to Tokyo and shocking every friend he’s got that he can cook. And when they ask, Akaashi would say *Iwaizumi-san taught me*.

But at the same time Akaashi’s kitchen abilities are less than at ground zero. So Iwaizumi finds himself on the fence - he enjoys cooking quite a lot, but he doesn’t have the patience of a saint.

“Please? Please, Iwaizumi-san.”

Soft pink lips pushed into a pretty little pout, especially when attached to the prettiest of faces, will always be Iwaizumi’s kryptonite, his chink in the armour, his Achilles heel.

It’s a problem. That pout is extremely problematic and a pain and Iwaizumi never stood a chance.

He is a weak, weak man.

“Of course I’ll teach you the basics, Akaashi. You can count on me.”
Still keen on having eggs, as well as insisting they are the simplest thing for cooking lesson #1, Iwaizumi makes two perfect cheesy mushroom omelettes, all puffy and soft and slightly runny in the middle, while explaining every step of the way.

Akaashi feels like he’s in a video game walkthrough and he’s an excellent gamer - if he may say so himself and he may; the only person that’s ever beaten him being Kenma.

Cooking, as it turns out, is as easy as pie. Even easier.

He borrows Iwaizumi’s phone, once again, to snap a photo of their breakfast, sending and then texting.

Monday, 08 April 2016; 10:12 am
You have created a group with Bokuto and Kuroo.
Messages to this chat and calls are now secured with end-to-end encryption. Tap for more info.

You: Look! I made breakfast :) 

Okay, so he didn’t technically make them, but he kept listening to Iwaizumi and passing whichever ingredient and spice he was asked to hand over.

In a way, it’s almost like he cooked them himself. Kind of.

Akaashi’s about to start eating when he sees “Kuroo is typing...” and waits.

Kuroo: Omg after kou’s bbq yesterday, are u rly trying to impress with basic eggs? *laughing emoji* *laughing emoji*.

Then an instant reply from Bokuto, too.

Bokuto: Congrats, iwa, they look *thumbs up* *sunglasses emoji* make sure u show that @ ur parents and I promise next time we come to miyagi, imma give u a gold *star emoji* *flexing emoji* 

Akaashi rolls his eyes at himself. Totally forgot to mention it’s him texting.

You: It’s Keiji.

Bokuto: Omg u made those??? *crying emoji* i would’ve expected them to fall apart if u cooked, but they don’t have a single tear in them!! i’m so proud of u, keiji *yellow heart emoji*

Kuroo: Holy shit *angel emoji* *eyes emoji* i’m proud 2 *pink heart emoji* btw why is iwa makin u cook when ur his guest? Kinda rude lol.

You: Thanks *red heart emoji* And I said the same thing, Kuroo-san, but apparently, if I can fuck in his bed, I can cook in his kitchen *laughing emoji*

Bokuto: Lmao.

Bokuto: G2g, volleyball!!

Kuroo: Omg lol. So bitter.

You: Btw, bed’s still not here, but like I promised I’ll take a vid of Iwaizumi-san’s face and send you *peace emoji*

Kuroo: *laughing emoji* *laughing emoji*

You: Do you have any plans before Bokuto-san is done with practice?

Kuroo: Ya. Too lazy to leave ur room and ur bed, so I’m rewatching Breaking Bad. Will order
pizza later. Wbu?

You: Nice *heart eyes emoji* Going to buy a new phone with Iwaizumi-san.

Kuroo: Did u already choose one?

You: Not yet *sighing emoji* You know I’m an indecisive piece of shit, Kuroo-san.

Kuroo: Ur perfect *kissing emoji*

Screen-locked, he hands Iwaizumi his phone back with another thank you, and scarfs down his food, while Iwaizumi eats slower than a freakin’ snail crawls.

There is a comfortable silence between them, until the front door rings.

Iwaizumi has a healthy dose of suspicion, when Akaashi offers to go.

“Thought you weren’t my maid.”

“I’m not.” Akaashi shrugs. “I’m just a whole lot more dressed than you.”

“I have jeans on.”

“You’re still topless.”

Iwaizumi snorts. “So?”

“So I’m getting the door.”

As he expected, it’s the delivery guys from Amazon Prime and Akaashi welcomes them in like family, leading the way to Iwaizumi’s bedroom.

New bed assembled and his laptop camera in place, ready to record, he calls out for Iwaizumi to come and see, barely able to contain his laughter.

Iwaizumi stares at his brand new racecar bed with his old-man turtle face of dissatisfaction.

“Look, Iwaizumi-san, they left you a card.” He points, about to piss himself.

“Thank you for letting us use your bed, Iwa, and sorry for breaking it. Hope you enjoy the new one. Lots of love, Bokuto and Kuroo” Iwaizumi reads out loud, then glances at Akaashi. “How nice of your boyfriends.”

This is the same kind of prank Mattsun and Makki would pull. This is the kind of prank Mattsun and Makki would appreciate.

Iwaizumi sighs.

Fuck Bokuto and Kuroo.

He hates them.

He absolutely hates them.

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“Next time I have to buy a gift for a girl, I’m consulting with you.” Iwaizumi says. They’re at
Starbucks, sipping mugs of coffee to replenish their hours of lost energy from visiting mall after mall, looking at phones. It’s as exhausting and unproductive as Akaashi knew it would be. He’s too torn, can’t decide on one. Especially when he knows he’ll get a better deal in Tokyo. “I don’t even know your manager, but I’m sure she’ll love it. Shupisha is too cute.”

Akaashi’d wanted to buy something, anything, really, just so their shopping trip wouldn’t be completely futile. It’s not - he ends up getting himself a t-shirt with the words dog setter spread across the front, which he thinks is hilarious - shockingly, Iwaizumi does too - and Pusheen the cat patterned pjs for Yukie. Her birthday’s in 3 days and even though she’d only asked him for shippy Supernatural fanart, he’d wanted to buy her something as well. Yukie puts so much work into everything she does for them and she’s not just volleyball squad, but Fukurodani treasure. And as one, she deserves to be treasured, so.

“Shupisha, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Yeah. It’s the cat from Facebook, right? Shupisha.”

“It’s Pusheen.” His mouth twitches.

“Well, whatever.” Iwaizumi shrugs. “It’ll always be Shupisha to me.”

No doubt it would be, to someone who is so impossibly bad with names.

Akaashi tries not to think of the whole phoneless week ahead, but of course that’s exactly what he does, especially when Iwaizumi is texting away and chuckling softly.

He struggles to relax his rigid back into the armchair, as he picks at his iced blueberry muffin, giving himself a pep talk. First of all, everyone knows constant technology use is uncomfortable for the eyes, despite all the night-mode options they have. Not staring at a screen would be a nice change, healthy even. It’ll be great. He won’t have to look at emails and messages and receive calls and that would save him so much time. He could offer Iwaizumi to do something outdoorsy, like going for a hike in the mountains, because giving up electronic devices, in a way, brings him closer to nature.

Oh God. The trouble with giving yourself a pep talk is, deep down you know it’s all bullshit.

Sighing, Akaashi crams the muffin into his mouth and chews miserably as he follows Iwaizumi into the parking lot. He’s really starting to feel under the weather and he must look it too. So when Iwaizumi offers to share his phone until he goes back to Fukurodani, Akaashi accepts in a heartbeat.

It’s even more convenient than buying a new phone - Iwaizumi has Bokuto and Kuroo as contacts already and it takes little to no effort to text them and explain he’ll be using this number for the time being and if they could please spread the word; if anyone wants to reach him, this is it.

Like cherry blossoms in a milk bath, Akaashi drifts and lazes, pruney fingertips dancing over the lukewarm surface, water rippling.

Taking a bath is the best.
He doesn’t take as long as he would normally, because it’s time for cooking lesson #2. Wet hair, still long and uncut, he changes into a tshirt and shorts. Through the half-open doorway of Iwaizumi’s bedroom, he hears music he instantly loves, but can’t really pin down. It sounds electronic and great and he never knew Iwaizumi would listen to this sort of thing.

Akaashi walks towards the tune and finds Iwaizumi dancing in the kitchen with his eyes closed, partnered with a wooden spoon. Chopped piles are everywhere on the counter. He takes a moment to watch, silent, and smile.

“What’s this?”

“What?” Iwaizumi isn’t surprised or anything.

“Sorry. I like the music.”

“You shouldn’t be sorry to like this music, Akaashi, it’s good music. Daft Punk, Touch.”

“Oh, yeah.” He should’ve known, the Daft Punk-y sound is unmistakable. “Is it from Random Access Memories?”

“You’ve heard it before?” Iwaizumi turns it up and keeps dancing.

“No, never listened to the entire album.”

“You will now.” Iwaizumi grins at him over his shoulder and goes back to chopping. “Touch is the perfect song for you, if you listen to the lyrics.” Chop chop chop. “You know they’re French?”

“I thought they’re American.”

“Not American,” Iwaizumi says, with a shake of his head. He steps to the stove and stirs and licks the spoon, something tomato.

Song stops, next one begins, and Akaashi definitely knows Get Lucky. Although he isn’t feeling the music as much as Iwaizumi and dancing, he can’t stop his shoulders from swaying with the rhythm. The sound is just too catchy.

“What are you making?”

“Swedish meatball pasta. Ma loves Western cuisine.”

“You want me to help, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Only way to learn how to cook is by trying, Akaashi. So yeah, you’re definitely going to help me prepare dinner.”

“You have to explain to me exactly what I have to do.”

“Obviously, I won’t let someone as clueless as you roam freely in the kitchen without any supervision. I hope you agree aprons are useless, but here, take this.” Iwaizumi goes to the door and fiddles at the knob for a sec before dropping it into his hand, a loose worm, lazy snake, wide-open lasso ready to rodeo something. Sports hairbands, Iwaizumi keeps them there, every doorknob in the house. All colors, all Nike, all Oikawa’s.

Akaashi knows, he remembers, Oikawa left some at Bokuto and his room at Fukurodani. They’re still there, yellow, pink and green, on the inside of their bathroom.
This one’s blue.

“Put your hair up, Akaashi. The secret ingredient is not your hair.”

“Then how do you make Swedish meatball pasta?”

Iwaizumi smiles. Wild hair pushed up, out of his face, Akaashi looks lovely. “Minced meat, egg noodles, oil, milk, cashews, salt, pepper, parmesan, paprika I need to find, parsley, grated root vegetables, which you can grate. The sauce I did already, that’s bubbling. Sound good?”

“Yes, Iwaizumi-san. Sounds great.”

Iwaizumi hands him the grater. “Be careful not to grate your fingers.”

“I’ll try.”

“Please do.”

The Swedish meatball pasta they make receives compliments from Iwaizumi’s parents and Akaashi can tell it’s not because they are glad to come home to a cooked meal, but because it turns out all kinds of delicious. Much later, he tells Bokuto and Kuroo the recipe over the phone and Bokuto says it sounds great and maybe they could make it once he’s back in Tokyo and he politely asks one of the RCs - Bokuto means Rob and not Jared - for the kitchen keys.

There’s dumb TV coming from the living room, which means Iwaizumi’s mom and dad are still up, but Iwaizumi and Akaashi neither see nor hear it, sharing a joint on the roof. Iwaizumi insists on playing Daft Punk over his phone, just so Akaashi would hear their entire latest album.

In all honesty, Iwaizumi thought he'd lost it, the feeling. But cooking with Akaashi like he is his brother, kind of, simmering and warm and scented like pepper and sweetness and smoke, dancing next to him makes Iwaizumi feel it. Daft Punk giving him the feeling, giving everyone the feeling that afternoon in the kitchen. Akaashi letting his hair down with his hair up, in a sports headband from the kitchen doorknob and his tshirt riding up as he stretches and yawns, his shorts loose and low, the small of his back Iwaizumi’s been watching all day.

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Akaashi wakes abruptly to see Iwaizumi’s phone flashing with a new text. Mind still asleep, fumbling fingers unlocking the screen, he doesn’t stop to think over the fact this isn’t actually his phone.

Dear Guest,
Summer breaks, half price.
Please visit www.lavistahakodatebay.jp for details

Kind Regards,
The Hakodate Bay Team

He sags back on the bed, leaden with annoyance someone put Iwaizumi on the mailing list. Why would they do that, Akaashi wonders. Are they trying to play with Iwaizumi’s little to non existent patience?
Scrolling through Iwaizumi’s inbox and checking for messages for himself, Akaashi never gave it a thought, just how personal the whole thing would be.

There’s everything and everyone in here. His GP, classmates, parents, spam… It’s like a mainline into the universe of Iwaizumi. He can see where Iwaizumi buys his shirts - Marks & Spencer. He can see Iwaizumi’s latest dentist appointment. He can see that Iwaizumi has a reply back from the University of Hokkaido, Chiba and Tokyo. Not even a single one from Tohoku. Iwaizumi, clearly, does not plan on staying in Miyagi after graduating.

As Akaashi scrolls down, he starts to feel slightly uncomfortable. He’s never had so much access to someone else’s phone before. Not his parents, not even Bokuto and Kuroo. There are some things you just don’t share. Bokuto and Kuroo have seen and touched and kissed every inch of his body, including the parts he doesn’t like, but he would never, ever let them near his phone.

Iwaizumi’s text messages are randomly mixed with his, which feels weird too. He scrolls down a message, for him, from Bokuto and Kuroo, then two for Iwaizumi, then another four for him, from Sarukui, Yukie, Konoha and Komi, respectively. All side by side; all touching one another. He’s never shared an inbox with anyone in his life. He never expected it would feel so… intimate. It’s as if Iwaizumi and him are suddenly sharing an underwear drawer or something.

Anyway. No big deal. It’s not for long.

Akaashi heads down and makes coffee, pouring himself a bowl of cereal. Then, as he munches, he slowly goes through Iwaizumi’s phone.

He’s not going to spy on Iwaizumi. Obviously not. But he sees his name mentioned and his fingers automatically press open and he catches more than a glimpse of text.

**You:** [attached photo] Check out my new bed.
**Mattsun:** Vroom vroom!
**Makki:** Why the change?
**You:** Old one got broken.
**Makki:** U ever heard of a thing called too rough sex?
**You:** You have no idea how funny this is to me.
**Mattsun:** Sure you didn't rupture anything? Akaashi?
**You:** He’s fine. Bokuto and Kuroo came to see him yesterday, so even if he has internal bleeding, he’s happy.
**Mattsun:** Lol they came to your house.
**Makki:** What did the 4 of you do???
**You:** Tobio was here too. We had a bbq. It was really nice actually.
**Makki:** And you didn’t invite us?!
**You:** Sorry. Maybe next time.
**Mattsun:** Maybe Akaashi only wanted cool Tokyo folk and pouted and stomped his foot until Hajime gave in, bc he can’t resist a pout from a pretty face.
**You:** Bullshit. Yahaba pouts all the time and I say no.
**Mattsun:** Ur saying Shigeru isn’t pretty enough for you?
**You:** I didn’t say that. Yahaba is pretty.
**Makki:** So why didn’t u invite us to a bbq @ ur house when u were there?
**Mattsun:** U know he won’t let it go, so just answer him.
**You:** Because it was private.
**Makki:** Omg since when do u have secrets from us? Best friends don’t need privacy.
**You:** I’d love some privacy, which you two never give me.
**Mattsun:** Maybe Bokuto and Kuroo are his new best friends now. What next, ur moving to Tokyo?
**You:** Yes.
**Makki:** WTF?
**Mattsun:** Wtf confirmed.
**You:** You both know I won’t stay here for uni. Tokyo’s my 1st choice.
**Makki:** Ohhh. Thought u meant like right now.
**Mattsun:** Yeah, if that was the case, we were gonna host an intervention. Shit, Hajime. Just how much do u love that kid?
**You:** I don’t need your interventions. Nobody needs intervention from you two.
**Makki:** We’ll forgive u for not inviting us @ ur bbq if the 4 of us have dinner together.
**Mattsun:** Tell Akaashi we’re gonna have a roast and he’s main dish lol.
**Makki:** U mean Hajime’s ~beau.
**Mattsun:** U get me like no other *red heart emoji*
**You:** How about the three of us for dinner?
**Makki:** Why? Does ur beau not like us?
**You:** Stop that. Akaashi likes you just fine.
**Mattsun:** Then what’s the problem?
**You:** There isn’t one. I just don’t know when he’d be free, since he mentioned he’s going out with Yahaba and the other first years. 2nd Gen Rat Pack.
**Makki:** Omg 2nd gen rat pack. They’re doing it too.
**You:** It’s sweet.
**Mattsun:** Anything he does, u find sweet. Ur so *heart eyes emoji*
**You:** No.
**Makki:** This is a long shot, but worth the try - when ur beau goes back @ Tokyo, you should join Issei and I for a hot threesome, so we can break our bed too.
**Mattsun:** *thumbs up emoji*
**You:** You’re both idiots.
**Makki:** That wasn’t a definite no tho ;)
**You:** Definite no, though.
**Makki:** Omg so harsh.

He ought to stop reading. This is a conversation between Matsukawa, Hanamaki and Iwaizumi. It's none of his business, even if he can see his name in previous text bubbles. But his fingers won’t obey him. It’s an overwhelming compulsion. He has to have one quick look.

It’s the same thing over and over, Matsukawa and Hanamaki teasing Iwaizumi about him and Akaashi can’t understand them at all. If it’s just a joke, talk about beating a dead horse. And if it isn’t, they need to stop being so dense. Honestly.

While he gets the main idea - they’re happy to see Iwaizumi smiling and joking and laughing again and Akaashi is too - how, as Iwaizumi’s best friends, can they not see he’s not in any place for romance right now? Iwaizumi is emotionally and romantically unavailable and will be for a long, long time.

You don’t just get over 15 years worth of knowing and loving a soulmate, because they’re not there anymore.

Akaashi downs his coffee and glances at the texts again.
Okay, that’s it. He’s just gonna put Iwaizumi’s phone away and—

He knows nobody with the email address "clemencelefevre@gmail.com" or the name for that matter. And it’s obviously, obviously meant for Iwaizumi as the title of it is "Hajime, can you decide if you want to fuck me or fuck WITH me?!" There’s an attachment and he starts to wonder what’s in it.


His fingers hesitate. It would be wrong to read it. Very, very wrong. This is a private something between this Clemence Lefevre and Iwaizumi, which is why he shouldn’t look at it.

But on the other hand Iwaizumi’s already opened it and probably won’t mind if Akaashi looked. After all you don’t just offer to share your phone with someone without considering the possibility that someone might get bored and curious. And it’s not like Akaashi is *indiscreet*. He won’t mention this to anyone; no one will ever even know he’s seen it...

His fingers seem to have a life of their own. Already he is clicking on the attachment. It takes him a moment to focus on the text, eyes assaulted by capital letters everywhere.

"Hajime

*You still haven’t answered me.*

*Are you intending to AT ALL? Or do you think this is NOT IMPORTANT?!????*

*Jesus.*

*It’s only THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN OUR LIVES. And I don’t understand how you can go on about your day so calmly… It makes me want to weep. You need to make some time for me, because we need to talk so, so badly. And I know some of this is my fault, but until we start untying the knots TOGETHER, how will we know who is pulling which string? HOW, TELL ME??*

*The thing is, Hajime, sometimes I don’t even know if you have a string. It’s that bad. I DON’T KNOW IF YOU HAVE A STRING.*

*I can see you shaking your head in denial, because you are Mr Denial, but it is. IT’S THAT BAD, OKAY??*

*If you were a human being with even a shred of emotion and decency, you’d be crying by now. I know I am. And that’s another thing - I have an exam at 8 o’clock in the morning, which you have now FUCKED UP as I can’t concentrate on revising. If I fail this trimester, it’s going to be ON YOU.*

*So, be proud of yourself, Hajime.*

*Clem.*

Akaashi’s eyes are like saucers. He’s never seen anything like it in his entire life.

He reads it again— and suddenly finds himself snickering. He knows he shouldn’t. It’s not funny. Clemence is obviously really upset.

Whoever that is, they have piqued Akaashi’s curious nature and he wonders if they were just having a rough day or they’re always this intense? He can’t resist typing Clem in the search
engine and an endless string of emails pops up.

A trudging pair of feet make the stairs creak and Akaashi closes all phone apps, locking the screen and leaving it in front of him at the table, neat and pristine.

No more snooping, he hastily promises himself. And no more Clemence searches.

Iwaizumi enters with his “Hey, you.” and he is only wearing boxers, of course.

“Hi.”

Iwaizumi doesn’t sit at the kitchen counter like Akaashi expects him to, but pulls up a chair, turns it around and sits. And then he stares.

“What’s with the staring?” He asks, while on the inside, he’s asking Who is Clemence?

“I told you something yesterday.” Iwaizumi says. “Did you forget?”

“You said “Pay attention to what I teach you today, because tomorrow you will be cooking on your own”.

“So, have you decided what you’re making for breakfast, Masterchef Akaashi?”

“Not yet.” He feels a tiny smidge of guilt. He’s given it no thought at all. Instead, he’s been sipping cup after cup of coffee, reading other people’s emails and laughing at them. Priorities, Akaashi. “I’m thinking - fried eggs. How about it, Iwaizumi-san?”

“Good choice.” Iwaizumi places his hands under his armpits, thumbs sticking out. He is watching and observing Akaashi’s every move with hawk-like eyes. And just like a hawk, he sinks his nails into the side of Akaashi’s arm. “Again, Akaashi. You’re forgetting the butter or the oil again.”

“Right.” He manages a little laugh. “Yes, I knew that. Two fried eggs coming right up.”

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