

## Dazai "I have no such tastes in men" Osamu

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/54521701) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/54521701>.

Rating: [Mature](#)

Archive Warning: [No Archive Warnings Apply](#)

Category: [M/M](#)

Fandom: [文豪ストレイドッグス | Bungou Stray Dogs](#)

Relationships: [Dazai Osamu/Nakajima Atsushi \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Armed Detective Agency Ensemble & Nakajima Atsushi \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Armed Detective Agency Ensemble & Dazai Osamu \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#)

Characters: [Dazai Osamu \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Nakajima Atsushi \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Yosano Akiko \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Edogawa Ranpo \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [Kunikida Doppo \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#)

Additional Tags: [Slow Burn](#), [Attempt at Humor](#), [Canon-Typical Behavior](#), [Developing Friendships](#), [Angst](#), [Fluff](#), [Hurt/Comfort](#), [Minor Injuries](#), [blood loss shenanigans](#), [Rain](#), [Cherry Blossoms](#), [Fireworks](#), [Background Case](#), [Light Novel: 55 Minutes \(Bungou Stray Dogs\) Spoilers](#), [POV Alternating](#), [Slow To Update](#), [Team as Family](#), [Wholesome](#), [Denial of Feelings](#), [Crushes](#), [Feelings Realization](#), [Jealousy](#), [Miscommunication](#), [Character Study](#), [Wet Dream](#), [I Don't Even Know](#), [everyone is bad at feelings](#), [Touch-Starved](#), [Sassy Nakajima Atsushi \(Bungou Stray Dogs\)](#), [sometimes anyway](#), [Eventual Smut](#), [forbidden love but they're just forbidding themselves the entire story](#)

Language: English

Stats: Published: 2024-03-17 Updated: 2024-10-14 Words: 48,567 Chapters: 13/?

# Dazai "I have no such tastes in men" Osamu

by [ParFucku](#)

## Summary

"Hey Atsushi-kun," Dazai was now looking at him with a playful grin. "Want to see my impression of an overthinking cat?"

Atsushi has strong feelings toward Dazai that he brushes off as gratitude. Dazai thinks Atsushi is somewhat intriguing, and nothing more.

Atsushi believes he can never reach Dazai. Dazai believes he can never be reached. All as they delve deep into a mysterious missing persons case.

Oh, and god forbid either of them like men.

## Notes

Are you there, god? It's me, FIOOOOOOONAAAAA~~~

I need to kind of fact check this because I'm shit at canon. Feel free to point out loopholes or grammar mistakes, it's already 4am.

Also apparently I have like 50 messages in my inbox holy shit. I'll answer all of them just... tomorrow, yis

# You look so crystal through the mist

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

---

Dazai lay on his futon, flipping through his complete guide to suicide in boredom and changing positions every now and then. Despite his current activity, he preferred the lighting of the room to be dim, as he already knew every word to this masterpiece of a book.

The brunet reached for his glass of whiskey and took a sip, eyes never leaving the page. He fought a shiver against the breeze that seeped in through the open crack in the window, glaring at the source of cold before realizing he actually had to get up and close it. His feet dragged across the creaking ground, and Dazai sighed in relief once the sounds of traffic- previously presumed as background noise- also disappeared with the window closing.

A set of unsteady knocks finally rose from his door, making his head turn curiously.

The last few days at work could be best described as serene, one would see it as a rare occasion. A time in which Ranpo whistled around the office, comfortably snacked behind his desk or when feeling a bit more social, accompanied Yosano on her shopping, quite willingly so. Or that he'd allow Kenji to show him around his farm or meet his favorite cows, taking a trip to the countryside. In which the Tanizaki's were allowed to focus more on their student lives, and the distressed crinkles in Kunikida's forehead unravelled, his typing less aggressive on the keyboard, and his voice coming out as a halfhearted gruff instead of yelling.

(Dazai made sure to step on his nerves anyway once in a while)

Opening the door, the sight of an unsteady figure awaited him, blood already pooling beneath his feet, dripping from his slashed clothes and the tips of his fingers. "Atsushi-kun?" Ah yes, the one detective who was actually on a job today, an operation led by the Special Division. "I thought you'd be back hours ago." He voiced, eyebrows high on his forehead in surprise.

"Dazai-san," Unruly albino hair gently flowing with the nightly breeze, Atsushi's smile was asymmetrical in an odd way, genuine despite his obvious exhaustion, and he appeared to struggle with focusing his vision.

Dazai inspected his appearance, finding it impressive how the boy was still standing straight, considering Atsushi'd probably returned to the dorms on foot. He had a habit of refraining from spending his money on anything other than food, which was a bit funny, at first.

"Should you visit me this late at night?" Atsushi's excitement dimmed, making him shake his head with a smile. "I mean you need medical treatment right now. Is it that bad that you mistook my door for Yosano-sensei's?" Dazai grinned and crossed his arms, leaning his shoulder on the doorframe.

"No, I'm at the right door." Atsushi pouted, offended at his teasing. "You're mean Dazai-san, you're so mean. If you don't want anyone to visit you, you shouldn't have a *door*." He pointed his index accusingly, his war with balance rather prominent as his voice rose suddenly.

Dazai's lips parted wordlessly for five beats. "Atsushi-kun, are you... drunk?"

"No, it's just blood loss." He flashed him his unsteady smile, legs threatening to give in. He *was* heavily soaked in blood, most of it his own no doubt.

"I smell alcohol." Dazai leaned down to catch a whiff of his reek, displeased at the sharp mingle of iron and alcohol.

"Don... don't worry, I didn't drink any of it." Atsushi swayed forward, words slightly slurred.

"Ah, so why are you covered in... an inflammable liquid this late?" Dazai raised an eyebrow, rebalancing him by the shoulders.

"I'm too tired to answer all these *questions*, Dazai-*saaan*." Atsushi dragged on in a childish grumble that would sit more naturally on someone like Dazai, it was strangely amusing. At this point, it was clear that the boy had no intentions of leaving to his own private quarters nor seeking medical attention, so Dazai shook his head and helped him inside.

"Shouldn't Kyouka-chan be with you? I remember you leaving together."

"She gets here tomorrow. Apparently something came up." For someone who neglected his physical wellness with such an ease, Atsushi's head lolled forward too often, as if drifting in and out of consciousness. And with this new acquired information, it would be unfair to leave Atsushi on his own.

Making a mental note to investigate about Kyouka's issue later, Dazai hummed and guided him to the bathroom. "Alright Atsushi-kun, let's get you cleaned up a bit."

"I thought you didn't appreciate visitors." Atsushi grumbled with annoyance, making him chuckle with mirth. This felt more like their usual interactions, a more present retort from the young detective. "Just kick this cat out like a stray, won't you?" He made wild random gestures with his arms, no trace of humor in his tone.

"Hey don't be like that, tiger boy." Dazai pushed him lightly to sit on the edge of the tub. "Man, it must be bad if it has you calling yourself out like that." He mused as he pulled the long ignored first aid kit and put it on the sink, lending an absent ear to Atsushi complaining about Ango- on a more cheerful day, Dazai would've added to the shit talking for the hell of it, but he just hummed along. "What are your injuries?" The boy went silent. "Atsushi-kun."

"It's just a scratch." He sounded so small, afraid he was doing something wrong, a manner more pronounced in his injured state.

"Oh yeah?" Dazai turned to him with challenging raised eyebrows. "Take your clothes off and let me see."

"B-but Dazai-san." Chided the younger, pale cheeks turning pink. "You haven't even taken me to dinner yet."

Dazai's brows rose higher, and Atsushi blinked repeatedly, a sheepish smile on his face. Then, gave his subordinate a tilted incredulous look. "Oh, you think you can distract me with one of my own tricks?"

"Um, worth a shot?"

Dazai huffed, lips curled up and bandaged hands going to open the buttons of Atsushi's torn no-longer-so white dress shirt, one by one. "I'm not leaving you to bleed like this, kid." He tried to peel the clothing off of him, only to purse his lips when Atsushi quietly hissed in response. It was most likely stuck to the dried blood on the open wounds. Making a change of plans, he turned on the shower faucet instead, adjusting the temperature. "It would be very irresponsible of me not to take care of the stray cat I picked up, right?" He joked back, briefly looking back from where he was bent over the tub, expecting to see Atsushi angry and pouting again. "Especially when he comes back after a fight all scratched up."

But Atsushi's eyes shimmered with abrupt tears ready to slip out, his smile tired and sweet. "Mhm."

"Get over here, you crybaby." Dazai sighed with a grin and coaxed him to step under the shower. When Atsushi yelped and stepped back abruptly out of the blue, remembering something.

"Wait, I almost forgot." Dazai gave him a tilted look. "Your gift will get ruined." He groaned, scrambling out a small black box from his pocket and securing it above the sink before stepping under the water.

"What? For me?" Dazai flashed him an expression of pleasant surprise, waiting for the water to soak through the fabric and for Atsushi's flinch to subdue. "How thoughtful of you."

"It's the whole reason I came here." Atsushi deadpanned. "I really am out of it."

Dazai gave a closed mouthed chuckle, finally able to take the shirt off with ease, slipping it off the tiger's shoulders. Next went his suspenders and tie, and finally his pants, leaving the drowsy one in his boxers only. The dark color of those pants didn't reveal any presence of blood, but the gaping hole in its thigh told him enough. "I see your healing ability's finally kicking in. You look more coherent, and the bleeding's nearly stopped."

"Oh yeah, it gets slow whenever the tiger has too many injuries to heal at a time." Atsushi blinked sluggishly, as if just noticing new things about his surroundings. "I shouldn't be surprised that she gets tired too."

"The tiger doesn't summon strength from thin air." Dazai calmly explained, running a mild soap over his arms. "Your ability still stems from your body, which if grows exhausted enough, just won't bother with spending the extra energy." He cut himself up to catch Atsushi by the armpits when he slipped. "You should sit down. I'll fill the tub."

"The water bill though." Atsushi slurred in disapproval but complied reluctantly.

"My water bill will be just fine." Dazai snorted, gathering Atsushi's clothes and pondering if he should just throw them away before deciding to leave that to Atsushi and soaking them in bleach. Then he threw them in the washing machine while a half awake Atsushi sprawled in the bathtub, contently basking in the warmth the hot water presented him. "Alright-" When he turned back towards the boy, Atsushi was lazily looking at him already, slumped in place. He had one arm propped up on the side edge of the tub, and his head resting near it, facing the brunet man. Damp silver hair stuck to his forehead and glistened with little droplets, the shine of it looking blurry to Dazai's eyes through the warm steam. Atsushi smiled and so did his sunset-kissed skies, an action sincere however faint. Somehow, he always found something to smile about.

Dazai did too, but most of his were fake and meaningless. There was something intriguing, dare he say inspiring about sincere emotions like the Weretiger's.

"You said you got me a gift." Dazai muttered once he realized he'd gone silent and staring for too long. "Is there a special occasion I didn't know about?" He lightened his tone, helping him out to dab his wounds dry. There were three major wounds in total, two of them stretching across his chest and one on his left shoulder.

"It's your birthday, silly." Atsushi rolled his eyes and giggled, barely reacting when chlorhexidine touched the open skin.

"Sure it is." Dazai agreed with him in an almost patronizing way.

"Wha- it's already past midnight, isn't it?" Atsushi squirmed at the feeling of bandages pressing at sensitive skin, a defensiveness evident in his tone. "It's June nineteenth."

"Atsushi-kun," Dazai snorted at the new roll he ripped for his shoulder. "My birthday isn't-"

"Yes it is."

"How do you-" He sighed.

"I looked into your government files." Atsushi said it so casually that the taller didn't even process it for a moment.

When he did, he almost sank the nearest sharp object into something stabbable. You know, old habits. "You huh?" His voice came out a bit louder this time.

"Are you upset?" The boy's head hung low, casting a shadow of shame on his face. "I- I just wanted to cheer you up a bit."

Maybe Atsushi had hit his head somewhere on the way there, Dazai mulled over the boy's behavior, holding the bandages and the injured arm uncertainly, staring at him like Atsushi was contagious or had grown a second head. But eventually gave in with a sigh, resuming the treatment. "You sure know how to spoil a guy, don't you?"

The faint ring of sarcasm seemed to bolster Atsushi, as he straightened from his slouch. He happily offered his newly crimson smeared face for Dazai to dab. "I already know everyone else's birthdays." The other hummed him on. "But no one in the agency knew yours, and Ranpo-san said the one on your ID is fake. I thought Dazai-san must really not want anyone to know."

Dazai contemplated giving a truthful answer, resisting the urge to smack the boy in the head, but he probably had a concussion already. "I've never cared much for the real date, I suppose. As long as it didn't bring about any legal issues, I couldn't care less when I was born." He shrugged.

"That's such an underwhelming reaction." Atsushi pouted and he grinned. "I care about when you were born."

Dazai paused in the next wrap, Atsushi's soft words echoing in the quiet room, morphing the air almost intimately.

Undisturbed by his silence, the tiger added. "Wait, you really didn't know your real birthday?"

"No, I didn't know." Dazai arched a brunet eyebrow.

"Well, I did." The younger laughed, making the other roll his eyes.

"What a stalker, yeesh." Despite his calm exterior, he was assessing the situation. Atsushi seemed pretty relaxed around him, even with his possible head trauma- yes, he definitely needed to be properly examined.

"I only looked up your birthday, nothing else." As if reading his mind, Atsushi gently reassured, and honesty was splayed out in his stare.

Dazai did a double check. "Wait, you had my entire biography in front of you, a family tree of three generations, a long detailed list of all my past crimes, my ties to the Mafia, *everything* and you only peaked at my *birthday*?" He made sure to spell it all out and put a comical amount of emphasis.

"Yes!" Chirped the tiger, then turned sheepish, head sinking between his shoulders. "Of course I wasn't gonna look. If you wanted me to know something, you'd tell me." He shrugged then winced, forgetful of his freshly bandaged injuries.

"Are you stupid or something?" Chuckled the former mafioso.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. Open the box."

Atsushi was certainly an interesting person, if not slightly stupid and naive. He had a naturally kind heart, laid out for the world to break, only for him to pick up the pieces and move forward time and time again. Something akin to hope- no, stronger than hope, flickered deep inside his chest, a fierce flame that fascinated Dazai from the very beginning by the riverbank at their first meeting. His stubborn, insane, almost maniacal will to live.

He'd been whispered to since birth that he didn't deserve to live, had come to believe it in the roots of his mind even. Yet here he was, carrying his own shatters proudly and gluetaping every broken soul he came across.

It was ridiculous, Atsushi's forgiving kindness. A foolishness that was going to be the end of him one day. But it was the same thing Dazai admired about him. It brought back old familiar memories of another friend who refused to act accordingly to his intelligence, it awakened bittersweet memories from their slumber, after Dazai tried to lock them away for so long.

Dazai didn't move after spotting a single flash drive in the box.

Memories of the rare times people were able to trick him, outsmart him, or catch him off guard swam by his mind. A ghost of a faint smile surrounded by messy red hair, telling him the best lie he could ever be told.

*It's foolish to die without going there.*

Back in the present, he didn't ask what the gift was, but Atsushi answered anyway.

"Whatever's in that flash drive is wiped off all official databases." Atsushi failed miserably trying to conceal his pride. "If there's any information of Dazai Osamu or more specifically a certain *era* of him, file name *Demon Prodigy* out there, it's no more than rumors." Dazai held back a physical reaction at his old name rolling off Atsushi's tongue, and at how the boy grinned almost mischievously.

"I know your past was already partially cleared but with enough clearance it still wasn't unreachable. I thought if I'm going to this deep secret place for the mission, I might as well be helpful. I obviously needed Ango-san's help with that part and how to implant a false and unsuspecting story, but yeah. I figured what a coincidence, your birthday is quite near. So..."

"Happy birthday, Dazai-san!"

For some reason, Dazai wanted Atsushi to stay. Maybe have hot chocolate with him and then sleep here, because firstly, he shouldn't be left alone with those injuries and second, Atsushi's dorm room would be colder with one less person there- with Kyouka being absent. It was a thought with no start nor an end, no logic and no sense.

So he ignored it.

And so now that Atsushi was gone, he lazily sprawled on his couch, examining the box. A birthday gift, huh?

Something small and metallic fell from it, landing on his face and making him curse.



Picking it back up, it revealed to be a little lapel pin.

Shaped like a black cat.

Nakajima Atsushi was an interesting person, he thought once more.

---

## Chapter End Notes

Hmm, thoughts?

'It's foolish to die without going there' and the black cat are references to The Day I Picked Up Dazai :D

# I've got my mind on you

## Chapter Notes

Some parts of this chapter might be confusing but man idc.

Enjoy:3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

"Oi Atsushi, do you know what broke Dazai?"

Atsushi fully stepped into the office and closed the door behind him carefully, not for any noises to arise. He figured they were being stealthy today from how Kunikida, along with Ranpo and Kyouka stood near the wall with a mix of disturbed, amused and deadpan expressions, in that order. Atsushi followed their eyes to none other than his colleague and mentor, sitting behind his respective desk like any normal day.

The tiger double checked his hearing, blinking hard. "Uh, who did what?"

"Dazai showed up at work today, on *time*." Kunikida supplied seriously, adjusting his glasses as if to address a major threat to the city. It explained why Atsushi found Dazai's apartment empty earlier. He'd assumed the nullifier was in deep sleep or simply ignored his knocks, and either way he took a hint. He owed the man an apology, or a thank you... maybe both?

His memory from last night was a little hazy at the start, but he did know it happened- much to his heart attack when he first saw solid proof of bandages on his body. Something that didn't go unnoticed by the other members.

"I fear he- why do you look like that?" Kunikida's incredulous ashy green eyes tore at him instead. "What's with the bandages?"

"It's for my injuries." Atsushi reassured, rubbing the back of his neck. "I was-"

"You look just like that degenerate."

"I do?" The tiger was about to deny that before halting, becoming more self aware of the patterns of it, peaking from under his sleeves to the palm of his hand and wrapping around his neck too. "Um yeah. This is Dazai-san's work." To the eyebrows that rose he rushed and added. "I was going to talk to him when I got back yesterday, and Dazai-san was nice enough to help me patch up. Even though it was quite late when I intruded." He shrugged, hugging his arm.

"Interesting." Ranpo-san looked almost taken back for a moment as if stumbling upon a new discovery, then his eyes slipped back close without a care.

"He's very kind to me." Atsushi smiled and agreed, used to the older's manners.

"So you were the last person to talk to him?" His blond colleague was still eyeing him from above his glasses, eyes crossed.

The boy glanced back to Dazai, still not sensing anything out of the ordinary. "I think so. You're worried for him just because he came to work early?" He voiced his confusion, eyebrow arched.

"Ever since he arrived in the office, Dazai-san has been quietly working behind his desk." Kyouka offered calmly while the other spluttered with disbelief on how he wasn't worried at all.

"Oh, that's... shit, that's bad." Atsushi winced a little, listening to her explain the severity of the situation.

"I haven't heard him crack one suicide joke all day." Yosano's sudden voice almost made Atsushi jump and turn to her previously unknown presence. "Or try to ruin Kunikida-kun's day." She rested a hand over her hip, eyeing the brunet man with passive interest.

Yosano appeared to be worried as well, it seemed. It warmed Atsushi's chest that deep down, their colleagues really cared about each other's well beings where it mattered.

When Atsushi moved his glance to the doctor again, her canine shone through her grin. "If you do think he's ill in any physical way... make sure to send him my way."

... Never mind. "I'm afraid your ability won't work on Dazai-san, Sensei. Even if he was sick." Atsushi put it as delicately as possible, reminding her. Hearing his teammates' observations, he was now worried. "Has anyone tried asking him if he's okay?"

"He says he's fine." This time Atsushi did startle, Tanizaki popping out from behind him. If everyone was gathered here, wasn't it a little too obvious for Dazai not to notice? They probably looked like they were holding a secret cult meeting. "Was he like this yesterday?"

"No, I- I didn't feel anything out of... place." Atsushi mumbled with a troubled furrow to his brow, contemplative. "Maybe *I* should try?"

"Yes-" "Definitely-" "That's why we were waiting for you, dumbass." "Don't forget to write yesterday's report, brat." The nods came almost comically in sync before the small crowd

dispersed, leaving a deadpan Atsushi on his own. Oh, how he could just feel the love and care.

Atsushi may have offered to check up on Dazai, but that was a task easier said than done, not to mention Atsushi felt awkward about striking up a conversation with his mentor today. At least he didn't, until remembering how he had blabbered out a bunch of nonsense while delirious from his blood loss. Wasn't it *just* the tiger's luck that he could embarrass himself in such away without the aid of alcohol, merely by existing?

Dazai didn't seem to share his lack of enthusiasm in this department. "Morning, Atsushi-kun." He sang.

"Good morning, Dazai-san." Atsushi coughed out the weirdness out of his skin and sat down without initiating any eye contact. He pulled out the papers in front of him out of habit, going to do his mission's report. As he worked, he and Dazai spent the time in silence, a fact that gradually bothered the albino more and more. It took a while, but Atsushi finally gave in and glanced over in Dazai's direction, chewing on his lip.

Dark brown locks hugged the man's face like gentle waves, one resting delicately over his nose, a small jagged bump to it clear in side view. Young light crept in through the curtains, giving the man's pale features a rich gaussian blur. He held a hand over the left side of his chest, over his dark vest, touching it thoughtlessly with slim fingers. His reddish brown eyes were fixed on the computer screen, holding an almost bored exterior, but no one could ever be sure with this man.

Atsushi couldn't help but grow restless as he tried to formulate a reasoning for this behavior. His teammates said he'd been like this all morning but what was 'this' exactly? His mentor didn't seem at all distant and far away- the troubled state Atsushi was most likely to find him in on a rainy day in a random bar or- Atsushi noticed- after meeting Ango-san. Dazai was just quiet.

It never stopped being frustrating, how much Atsushi wanted to reach out to him, to be of help or comfort, even though he didn't know how, or what even pained the nullifier in the first place. Considering how obviously Dazai kept people at arm's length, this was a stupid thought with no means to an end, and no matter how much he strained and kicked and swam through pitch black, Atsushi knew his fingertips would never as much as graze the edge of the man's floating bandages, never unless Dazai wanted him to.

And he never did. Was he drowning in that depth? Did he feel at home hugged by the darkness? Atsushi wouldn't know.

And once, maybe once at some point, Atsushi wanted to find Dazai and touch his skin and find it warm, take his pulse, see his chest rise and fall and make sure he was still there. From this distance, it almost looked like he was steadily floating elsewhere, eyes open yet unblinking. It was eerie to the eye, so unsettling...

If he were to think about it, Dazai wasn't even there sitting next to him right now. Could Atsushi... *miss* someone he'd never even met?

How ridiculously had his inner dialogue progressed, and so quick. Atsushi needed to keep himself grounded in reality.

*Dazai-san saves me all the time*, Atsushi thought firmly to the argument in his head that frowned upon his way of thinking. *He saved my life at the very beginning and continues to keep me from drowning every time I fall. Is it wrong of me to want to do the same? I don't wish to cross lines that aren't meant to be crossed of course. My gratitude for Dazai-san run deeper than such intrusions, but...*

"Hey Atsushi-kun," Atsushi startled briefly upon being forced out of his train of thought. Dazai was now looking at him with a playful grin. "Want to see my impression of an overthinking cat?"

Brows furrowed in confusion, the Weretiger was unsure of where this was going. "I don't think cats are capable of doing that?"

"Of course they are. Watch." Dazai brushed him off as he picked up the coffee mug on the desk, curious two-toned eyes following as he held it behind his head and scrunched his face up in a admittedly good impersonation of his subordinate's determined thinking face. The steam emitted from the hot coffee looked like it was rising from the top of Dazai's head.

"You mean- *oh*, come on!" Atsushi tried his best to glare, yet couldn't hold back an embarrassed chuckle. "I'm not a cat. That was *mean*." He almost face planted on the dossiers when he realized he fell in his trap, twice, if the sudden twinkle in his mentor's eyes was a sign of anything. So he looked back at his papers. "I was just thinking Dazai-san's awfully quiet today." He grumbled.

Dazai stretched in his seat and pulled out a faux innocent look. "And Atsushi-kun was awfully talkative yesterday, but did you hear me complain?"

Atsushi pursed his lips in a straight line, feeling his cheeks heat up. "I thought I could get away with it for five minutes, Dazai-san." Dazai laughed, making him give in and reluctantly face him.

Whatever Dazai was about to say next was fortunately forgotten, as his eyes lingered on Atsushi's bandage wrapped limbs, and peaking from his collarbone. "You're supposed to change those every few hours, you know." He pointed out, eyebrow raised and sipping from his hot beverage.

"Oh, my injuries have pretty much healed." Atsushi chuckled, rubbing one arm. "And Dazai-san, I never did thank you for taking care of me last night." He nodded in appreciation with a slight bow, a smile playing on his lips. It felt relieving to finally acknowledge that. "I am in debt to your kindness."

Dazai's chuckle echoed in the office again and his shoulders rumbled, maybe it sounded slightly more hearty, or maybe that was what Atsushi would've preferred to hear. "Don't mention it. It's not like you left me a choice anyway now, wouldn't you say?" He nudged his subordinate.

"Oh um, I do apologize for disturbing you." Atsushi winced a bit at the memory. "I-I'm just trying to express my gratitude, but you're totally right and I should've gone to Yosano-sensei's to get treated. I was just-" Before his anxiety spiked more and he went into overexplanation mode, he was cut off by Dazai lightly hitting his hands with a paper, making Atsushi realize he was cracking his knuckles, a nervous tic of his.

"I said don't mention it." Soothed the elder with a less teasing smirk, like he was trying to go easier on him. He looked amused at Atsushi's cut off rant.

Even now, Dazai didn't let him get any closer than he had to. The boy could feel the walls between them.

*You're welcome*, Dazai's mysterious eyes still silently spoke to him, crinkled slightly.

Atsushi gave a weak smile.

Dazai rolled his eyes and picked up his pen- wait, wasn't that Atsushi's? When did he get that? "Atsushi-kun, you really need to stop crying at every less than near-inconvenience."

Atsushi wiped his face with his sleeves. "Sorry, I'm working on it."

"So," Dazai changed the topic before he could stress over it, drawling comically. "Is the cake ready?"

Atsushi blinked hard. Once, twice, thrice before he finally *remembered*. "Holy sh-" Dazai snorted. "*Naomi-chan!*"

"Say it louder next time, Atsushi-kun." Dazai tried to balance the pen on his nose, an image contrasting the one before when Atsushi just arrived at work, appearing more like himself. So his problem had resolved? "So the Port Mafia could hear you too." Atsushi clamped a hand on his mouth and looked around, frantic. "Relax, she won't be here in an hour." He giggled, the pen fell. "For the *birthday* surprise, right?"

"Yeah." Atsushi croaked. "I- I um, right. The cake-"

"Oh no, Ranpo-san's taking care of that." Dazai's smile became lopsided. "I just wanted to get a reaction out of you, since you clearly forgot."

"I didn't forget!" Atsushi crossed his arms. "I- I just, didn't get enough sleep last night."

"Atsushi-kun, I heard you pass out before you even made it back to your room and had to move you myself."

"Huh, I was wondering how I made it." Atsushi mumbled under his breath.

"I wonder why no one gave you the cake task." Dazai scrunched up his nose in concentration, the pen stabilizing on the tip of his nose. It was kind of impressive. "You're close to that redhead waitress, aren't you?"

Atsushi sobered a little at the attention. "Lucy-chan? I think so, yeah. We've become good friends lately." Atsushi watched unimpressed as Dazai snatched another one of his pens, putting it on his face. "So I'm guessing we're gathering in the café downstairs." He thought aloud as his mentor stood up, not bothering to pick up the pens that rolled under the desk.

"Yep, see you there after you're done with my paperwork!" The man chirped. "You're in my debt, right?"

Atsushi eyed him incredulously. "There's still *left*?"

"Oh yeah, I never did any of it."

"But-"

"I've been looking at a blank screen the whole time, Atsushi-kun. Good luck!" And just like that he disappeared, leaving Atsushi to stare after the doorframe.

Just... what was the point of that either?

Also, Naomi-chan's birthday wasn't in June.

...

Wait, what?

---

## Chapter End Notes

Do talk to me, I like hearing your opinions:3

And please help me pick out a summary, I beg you 🙏

Edit: I changed it, I hope it's ok

# And with your eyes, you're suffocating me

## Chapter Notes

Not much, enjoy :3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

*"I just wanted to get a reaction out of you, since you clearly forgot..."*

Atsushi's eye twitched as he continued to stir the practically fully dissolved honey in his tea, refusing to look up. He lent an absent ear to his teammates chatting with each other.

*"... It's your birthday, silly."*

*"Sure it is."*

*"It's already past midnight, isn't it? It's June nineteenth!"*

No, no it wasn't.

After Dazai left, Atsushi had looked at the calendar he never owned- Dazai most likely had planted it there- and simply found out they were in March, the twenty sixth to be precise. Like he already wasn't mortified about his way of delivery, but that they were still weeks away from Dazai's actual birthday.

Yosano's loud declaration of victory stirred his attention away from his thoughts. Atsushi weakly smiled at how she slammed her who-knows-the-count shot glass on the table in a flipped manner, chest puffed out and the beginnings of a flush adorning her smug features. "And the winner is-"

"Ah, not so fast, Sensei." The more recently-recruited agent had yet to figure out how his colleagues had managed to get the manager of the café to join on their drinking contest. All he knew was that only two remained- Ranpo had verbally given up halfway, saying it wasn't worth the headache and Kunikida- his surprising participation in the first place result of a certain senior- was sipping on some coffee instead, the way his face pulled betraying his thoughts of how he wanted to be at his work, following his schedule.



He glanced at the dark haired birthday girl, glad to find her laughing with her brother over something he couldn't hear. "I hope the preparations were to your liking, Naomi-chan." He offered softly. She smiled back, about to respond but cut off by the older brunet's singsong.

"Yeah, because *Atsushi-kun*-"

"I *didn't* forget!" He blurted before the other could finish.

"I was gonna say you did the hard work." Atsushi gave a halfhearted glare to that innocent blinking.

"I didn't do much." He grumbled at the end. "But I didn't forget Naomi-chan's birthday. I just got the dates mixed up a bit yesterday- which is *fair*, because my priority back then was to make it through the day." He exclaimed, hands raised in a defensive manner.

"Wait, what is going on?" Naomi switched between them with a mix of bemusement and humor.

"Well, I'd say you barely got the second part done either..." Atsushi heard Dazai mutter, which had his face heating up in embarrassment and him sipping clumsily from his cup, meanwhile Dazai assessed his bandaged arms and neck with a thoughtful, dare Atsushi say disapproving expression. Had he been a disappointment because of his excessive injuries? He thought he'd done well... "Didn't you say you've healed, Atsushi-kun?"

Atsushi sobered at the question, feeling a bit sheepish at the reminder. "Oh, y-yeah. The wounds had disappeared by the morning. Why do you ask?" He tilted his head, resting his elbows on the table.

"Right, I forgot to ask you about that." Tanizaki's concern joined the conversation. "I checked out all the routes and the number of guards around each entrance before your mission, how did you end up like *that*?" He looked him up and down with disbelief.

Atsushi chuckled. "I uh, took a detour."

"Why didn't you take them off?"

Priorities forgotten, Atsushi blinked back at Dazai. "Take what off?"

"The bandages, if you don't need them any more." The brunet clarified, his index finger on his chin.

Atsushi's lips parted for a response he didn't have ready, becoming self conscious of the way he was playing with the edge of the fabric wrapped around his palm. "I forgot." He lied and- kids, Atsushi was not, a convincing liar. He knew that since he'd said it loud enough for everyone to stop in their flow and throw him a look.

And no, Atsushi hadn't forgotten about it. He spent at least fifteen minutes in the bathroom studying the pattern of which Dazai had bandaged him... with his own hands, his own supply, in his own home, and finding a strange comfort in the thought that the man had cared enough to do that for him. A pathetic mentality no doubt, considering he was bleeding out on

his doorstep and in a way Dazai *had* tried to send him away, but he indulged himself those fifteen minutes.

Atsushi noted with alarm that Dazai was now looking at him with lopsided smile, knowing and sly. "Did you now?"

The last thing he needed was to become a victim of his mentor's amusement. "I- I *did*, I forgot they were even there." The younger choked on his stammer, then waved it off.

It was clearly making things worse, as Naomi clasped her hands together and cooed. "That's so adorable."

"*Naomi-chan*." Atsushi held up his empty plate and asked for another piece of cake, eager to change the subject. Dazai gave him his own untouched slice, seemingly letting him off the hook. "I assume the schedule for today is cleared out-" He bit on his lip when Kunikida's sharp eyes turned to him. "Or... not."

"Don't think you'll get to slack off, just because of this." The blond's brows furrowed behind his glasses, interlaced hands covering the lower half of his face. "Ms. Hayashi will be checking in today, probably asking how the search is going." He sighed.

Atsushi's eyes widened briefly before falling on the fluffy edible sponge, poking at the chocolate filling. "Nothing came out so far, I assume."

"Is it a new case?" Naomi turned to the taller of the two.

"A missing young girl by the age of seven, called Aika Hayashi." Atsushi supplied, straightening his back. "Her mother reported her early this morning."

The dark haired girl frowned in concern. "Wouldn't the police be more suitable for these range of jobs?"

"Ms. Hayashi suspects the involvement of a supernatural ability." Kunikida adjusted his glasses, the ever present crinkled on his forehead bold under this angle of light. "Last night at around eight forty, the woman hears a long intense screaming from the basement. She barely recognizes it as her daughter's and describes it as- 'almost demonic, so for a moment I thought I was hearing things'..." Atsushi had already read the report multiple times, but still listened carefully, lightly startling when Yosano's face met the table with a bang, passed out. His eyes dragged toward his bandaged colleague who was already distracted, smiling at the waitress.

Atsushi shook his head with an amused sigh.

"By the time she got there, she saw no traces of conflict, nor any signs of her daughter. Even though there was no other opening that led to the surface." Kunikida's shoulders relaxed slightly, back to his comfort zone. "Her neighbors helped her search the streets with no luck throughout the night, and she showed up at the agency requesting assist at exactly seven a.m."

Tanizaki tapped the table in thought. "Do you think it could be teleportation, Kunikida-san?"

"Maybe, that's not the only possibility." Kunikida huffed faintly. "But there's a chance we can narrow down our suspects efficiently if the ability user is registered in the files."

Something about this case nagged at Atsushi's brain. For the longest time, he'd stared at the young girl's picture. A nervous look behind her blue eyes kept bleeding from the print of her face; and it pleaded him. He wasn't sure what for, but he wanted to save her. And he was going to succeed, it was his duty.

Dazai cooed in the background, now holding the waitress' hand gingerly. "Your dark hair reminds me of the allure of a midnight sky." Kunikida took a deep calming breath- that was probably of little to no use- cut off in the middle of his speech. "Would you be so kind as to let me hang myself with it-?"

"You- *stop* fucking around for once, *you stupid oaf!*" Yep.

Atsushi fought off the humor threatening to curl his mouth- he wasn't interested in becoming the center of attention now- flinching for the hit to land on Dazai, but it never did. Dazai laughed and more words flew out to aggravate his partner further, and Kunikida just verbally fumed while spewing insults at him.

Even the Weretiger noticed how Kunikida-san had become more wary of the former mafia member after finding about his previous occupation, keeping a certain physical distance with the man. It was still shocking to believe sometimes, but at the same time that piece of the puzzle fit right in place. It explained some things about Dazai's behavior yet brought up even more questions.

"May I please have another cup?" Atsushi softly held up his empty one to the waitress who had a neutral smile on her face, sheepish.

"Of course." While she leaned down to take it, she added with the same amical expression. "Please make sure Dazai-san pays his tab by the end of month."

An awkward chuckle was all he could muster. "I think that's god's work, miss." As he awaited his second fill of tea, Kunikida resorted to aggressively writing in his notebook and Dazai was back to eyeing the poor woman, eyes dancing with thoughts only few could decipher as death fantasies and not simple sane attraction.

Atsushi stared at him in a deadpan manner until something was jabbed down in front of him with a clank, making him startle and look up, relaxing only slightly when he saw a flash of red woven hair surrounding an annoyed face. "Lucy-chan." He smiled, hands curling around the steaming cup. "Thank you very much."

Lucy blinked a couple of times, irritation forgotten before she frowned again, turning around quickly. For a moment, it looked like the strawberry tint of her hair bled into her cheeks. "It's- this is my job, idiot."

"Still, my job is to thank you for it, is it not?" He tilted his head, eyes crinkling kindly. Lucy quickly waved it off and rushed away, leaving him blinking in brief confusion, although he was more or less familiar with her strange manners. Twisting back in place, he was taken back by the sight of Dazai gazing at him, eyes hooded and chin supported by his palm, fingers curling in front of his smile. "What?"

"You should ask her out." Dazai rolled his eyes halfheartedly at Atsushi's scandalized look. "Have you seen the way she looks at you?"

The silver's nose scrunched up, reluctant to accept that as a fact. "She's barely moved on from hating my guts. Besides, even if she has feelings for me, I can't return them." He winced.

"That's great!"

"Eh?!"

"That means I can handpick a girl for you myself." Dazai nodded with triumph.

Atsushi flushed with embarrassment. "What do you mean, *handpick*? What are you, shopping for *groceries*?!"

"Too late, already signed you up on two dating apps-"

"Dazai-san, *don't*-"

"Ah reminds me, if I am going to give you an advice before we start, I would say women highly dislike when you forget their birthdays." Atsushi spluttered for a minute at the unexpected joke. "From experience, just so you know."

The younger snatched a cheeky Dazai's phone. "I do not *forget* people's birthdays." The other began to speak. "I remembered yours too, I knew the date! Please stop teasing me." He whined and slumped back into his seat.

"Aw, don't be like that, Atsushi-kun. I'm only joking because I liked your gifts!" The silver haired raised his chin, confused at the man's smile. "My favorite one was that you finally called yourself a cat."

Embarrassment forgotten, Atsushi straightened, annoyed. "I'm *not a*-"

"Nuh-uh. No take backs now."

"Come on." The younger mumbled, eyes following Dazai's hand, which fiddled with the left side of his vest. "But you're welcome. I'm glad you liked them." He added more quietly after a moment, slightly sheepish but more happy with his reaction. "Um, thank you for playing along with it? Even if I was too early, and again I imposed-" He rambled on.

"*Atsushi*." Kunikida's warning brought him back. "I expect you to make a list of all the registered teleportation users around Yokohama."

Atsushi opened his mouth, automatically going to agree, but paused upon remembering the girl's face. What was so familiar about her?

"Kunikida-san, do you think... you can arrange for me an interview with Ms. Hayashi?"

Kunikida wore a confused face and Dazai showed a faint smile to the ceiling.

In a far corner of the city, a young boy's screech startled a few crows into taking off.

---

## Chapter End Notes

A plot like this is out of my comfort zone ngl XD I'm trying to keep it canon. Thoughts?

And if you ever think I wrote something too dumb to be real, it's from personal experience. A few weeks ago I said to my friend: Oh so the new year is near. It'll be (9 years ago) right? It took me 3 more tries to get it right

# Suicide, in your arms

## Chapter Notes

So much gay and idiocy, and also plot.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

A heavy creak cut through the air as the last unchecked door on the floor was pushed open, hesitation given away by the dragged out noise.

The boy passed saliva with difficulty, breathing in forced bravado into his lungs, and pushing it to his movements. The rustling behind the door stopped, as if noticing his presence.

Atsushi raised a tiger's claw, kicking the door in one go.

There was a face smiling at him just behind it, so he jumped back and cursed, unprepared. "AAh-! D- *Dazai-san*? what the hell!"

"Ooh, I'm a big scary child abducting ghost." The brunet sang and shook his hands, brows furrowed. "I'm here to get you, only if you're below ten though."

"Kidnap isn't funny *Dazai-san*, and the third victim was an old lady anyway." Atsushi chided and pushed him away by the shoulder. "How did you even get to this room? I thought we were walking towards opposite ends?"

*Dazai* casually nodded back to the room. "Oh, the rooms are all connected together."

The Weretiger appeared dumbfounded for a moment, then slipped past the other to see for himself. "But I didn't see anything."

"Don't trust any wallpaper just because you touched it and it didn't dent, *Atsushi-kun*." He guided lazily and made himself comfortable on a dusted chair as *Atsushi* frowned in concentration, fingers dragging across the wall. "How would one truly know if a surface is hollow on the inside?"

Atsushi's gloved fingers halted in their search, then curled into fists and knocked on a few random guesses, crossing them off when hearing a stifled deep echo, and perking up when the released sound took a more clear airy one. Using the curled off edge on the bottom, he peeled off the thick gray layer, the only part of the place that- he could see now- hadn't gathered dust and was new, and so facing a rather large cavity in the wall, he squinted.

He could see the edges were still sharp and newly drilled, yet to be abraded with time. "Okay... what's the point of this? There must have been a motive." He muttered. "This is an old abandoned building, but none of the neighbors mentioned it being known as like a haunted house, most of them didn't even know it was here. People have no reason to come here... at least willingly. So what's the point in making a maze like this?" He turned to his mentor almost desperately for an input, but Dazai seemed to be done being helpful, eyes closed peacefully and resting his head on his laced hands.

Atsushi exhaled and walked out of the room, heading for the stairs. He heard another pair of footsteps join him after a long delay.

In less than two hours after their break in the coffee shop, two more victims were reported. A nine year old boy and a woman in her seventies. This time, a demand for ransom came anonymously to their respective families.

While Kunikida had been reluctant to authorize him to interview Aika's family at first, he agreed when the situation deteriorated, sending Dazai to accompany him. While the bandaged man often caused more problems than solved them on a regular basis, Atsushi was glad for the company.

A few pieces of information was revealed from their conversation with the woman, like how Ms. Hayashi wasn't the victim's biological mother and had adopted her from an orphanage. According to her, Aika had always been quiet and reserved, if not overly shy. She had made close friends with the neighbor's son during her three-month stay with her new guardian, and they played and spent most of their time together in a nearby park.

The boy, Asahi, was the case's second victim. Atsushi had yet to make a relation between the two of them and the third missing person, who lived about halfway across the city. But all of them disappeared the same way, with a loud agonized shout. After hours of asking around and knocking on doors, they were led to this building, where from people described a loud wailing that fit Asahi's description. Now what on earth was the boy doing here today?

Atsushi's blood boiled at the thought of these weak and vulnerable people suffering like this.

"Oi Atsushi-kun- go easy on my knees, slow down a bit, eh?" Dazai was bending over his knees a bit, sluggish in climbing the stairs. "I'm just an old man." He grumbled.

"You're twenty two." Atsushi deadpanned but stopped so they would catch up. "You'll live."

"You're too cruel." Dazai sighed some more as they stepped onto the top floor side by side. "Why can't I go home again? It's way past office hours."

"Please accompany me for a little while longer, Dazai-san." The younger offered in the nicest way he could gather. "I'll treat you to dinner on our way back if you help." He innocently added, knowing Dazai would take any opportunity to mooch off of him.

Dazai pretended to be thoughtful for a moment. "Hmm... what are you buying?"

"Crab." Atsushi easily responded. Crab was to Dazai what Chazuke was to Atsushi.

"Deal."

Atsushi grinned and walked around the area, detecting a strong chemical stench nearby. He was wandering almost aimlessly when Dazai called, stealing his glance. "Erm, Atsushi-kun..."

The tall one, back to Atsushi and facing the wall, was grabbing his chest, shoulders slouched in, Atsushi's heart dropped. There was red on the hand clasping his chest.

"Dazai-san-" Alarmed, Atsushi leapt to examine him, confused when the odor grew stronger around Dazai, and internally groaned when Dazai turned out to be feigning injury.

Dazai nodded toward the wall in amusement, revealing a few brushes of red paint dragged across it, and a small bucket of it on the floor. It had the appearance of the brand paint made for children, with a colorful goofy label. It didn't quite fit the theme.

"What..?" Atsushi focused on it, kneeling down to observe more closely. The strokes of paint looked recent, the smell was strong. But why would anyone... could this belong to the boy...?

Dazai's hands abruptly fell on his shoulders, harsh grip making him jolt. "*Ghost*."

"A-AAHH *PLEASE* take this seriously, Dazai-san!" He yelped.

"Atsushi-kun takes things too seriously, I'm *bored*." He dramatically dragged out. "Let's head back. Soon enough, Kunikida-kun is going to hand out patrol schedules and we won't have a choice but to work overnight." He sighed with longing, already grieving his loss of free time. Atsushi hesitated between his guilt and tiredness. "You already worked so hard today." Like the devil on his shoulder, Dazai added, brows raised in expectation. "You know you're going to be drooling over your papers again, right?"

"That was one time." Atsushi mumbled, then relented. "But I guess I would be more help if I came back well rested. I did almost shoot that raccoon earlier."

Dazai burst out laughing at that. "Yeah, you need to unwind a little. And I know just the place for that." He nudged a deadpan Atsushi with an elbow.

"Let me guess, a restaurant?"

"Bingo."



That was how they ended up walking the streets of Yokohama, a warm rain gently washing over the sidewalk and dripping off the freshly bloomed cherry blossoms, decorated with light strings. Atsushi gazed at them with awe, he couldn't remember if he'd ever seen cherry blossoms up close. Some of the rose petals flew to the ground, the faintest scent of them bleeding into petrichor that rose from the ground.

"Is it like this every year?" Breathing in the smell that was worthy of the title heavenly, Atsushi whispered in a manner softer than he intended, turning to Dazai.

There were a few petals tangled in the mess of Dazai's brown hair, kind of looking like a bird's nest, a pretty and decorated kind. The elegant features of his face were bathed in a golden glow, eyes casually hooded, reflecting the twinkle of light strings surrounding them. "Yeah, the cherry blossoms last a couple of weeks." He informed.

"Why aren't more people staring at them?" Atsushi looked around in confusion, seeing most were conversing with each other, or just keeping their eyes ahead. Meanwhile, Atsushi almost tripped countless times because he barely looked down.

"Maybe they're used to it."

"But this is literally the most beautiful thing I've ever seen?" Voice laced with incredulity, Atsushi pointed around them. "Look at that one, he's looking at his *phone*."

"Not all people share your sense of appreciation for beauty, Atsushi-kun." Amusement crept into his tone.

"What about you, Dazai-san? Do you appreciate beauty?" Atsushi almost regretted asking, had a feeling he was getting too close again, curious for a closer peak into the brunet's mind, which meant an inevitable pushaway awaited him.

Dazai's lashes fluttered at him a few times, silent for an itchy long time. His eyes moved away from Atsushi and the platinum haired one released a trapped breath. "I suppose it's an aesthetic sight." He mused after studying the pink nature mingled with the rain. "I see the appeal."

The realization dawned on Atsushi that Dazai had barely raised his head before. "But you're not impressed." He guessed.

The corner of the man's lips curved up. "Do you find my reaction underwhelming?" He threw his mentee a sly look, making him look away.

"Um, a little." He released a short awkward chuckle. "I find so many things worthy of attention, of looking at."

"Would you appreciate a withering flower? Look at a thunderstruck tree that's zapped into black charcoal? What about a failed sewer line that pours into a river and pollutes it?"

Atsushi squirmed under the weight of the man's passive intrigue. "Yes."

"May I ask why?" They stepped into the mutually chosen restaurant.

"I..." As they sat behind a table, Atsushi struggled with his response. He hadn't expected to get this far in the conversation. A hint of excitement build up in his stomach at the thought, he didn't want it to end now. "There's... something about imperfections-" He chewed on his lip. "They encourage me to... embrace the fact that I'm... *human*." He stammered out his sentence, flustering slightly afterwards. "I'm just rambling from the top of my head, never mind."

He thought he heard Dazai mumble, but when he looked up, Dazai was already asking for the menu. As they waited for their orders, Atsushi finally took notice of his damp clothes, and tried to dry off his dripping hair by making the least mess possible. "Aw, my cat got wet."

He eyed Dazai with a dry pout. "I'm fine."

Dazai stilled in his movements and bit the inside of his cheek. "Oh not *you*, Weretiger." He snickered and Atsushi wanted to bang his head on the table. "My other cat." Atsushi's bafflement remained as Dazai reached down into the opening of his vest, taking out a familiar looking black cat pin and dabbing it with a napkin as Atsushi watched, frozen. "It shouldn't stay moist for long, since it's metal."

"I... think it's fine, it's steel." Atsushi croaked faintly. He sank his grip onto his knees when it began to tremble. "So you, you wore it." An invisible force struggled to yank the air from his lungs.

"It didn't pop out as much on black." Seemingly oblivious to the heat creeping up to Atsushi's ears, Dazai tried to demonstrate his point by showing how the gift looked on his dark vest. "See? Anyhow, all this detective work has me starving." His head lolled to the side, groaning impatiently.

Atsushi tried to nod away from the topic, but in all truthfulness it had left him shaken, throat tightening. But he'd promised Dazai-san he wouldn't cry over nothing, so he blinked away the new tears. "What did you think about today's case? I'm having a hard time with it." He followed the new topic instead.

"It's no ordinary ransom, I reckon." Dazai leaned back on his chair, shrugging with little care. "But at least we know what they want, and that they have to keep the victims safe if they want to be paid."

"Yeah... yeah, you're right." Atsushi looked down in thought. Dazai always knew what to say to ease his anxiety. The only problem was that more often than not, the man found his struggles entertaining.

The place became emptier and quieter as they ate, and so the gentle knock of raindrops on the window became more clear, making for a serene moment. Well, except for some off cue suicide comments from his mentor.

By the time they walked to the door, the rain had intensified. "I don't enough have money left for taxi." Atsushi suddenly remembered with horror, head snapping to the taller. He wasn't sure why he hoped Dazai did, but the brunet raised an eyebrow at him as if to say *Really?*

*Me?*, and pulled out his empty pockets for proof. "I guess we're walking. The dorms aren't that far ahead, but it's pouring." Atsushi sighed and rubbed his forearms at the slight chill.

"Give me a moment." Dazai grinned playfully and began loosely shrugging his coat off, and suddenly Atsushi felt a bit dizzy. For a moment, all he could think about was when earlier Dazai spoon-fed him a piece of his crab to test the flavor- since Atsushi chose a different meal and they were arguing about which one was better. Atsushi respected his colleagues, but when it came to food, he would not back down.

After letting him taste it, Dazai had resumed using the same spoon to eat in a casual manner, and it was awfully distracting, considering it was an insignificant detail. Atsushi must be very tired. He definitely needed the rest before returning to work. "Dazai-san, what the hell are you doing?" He took the sight in with disbelief, shaking off an unwanted kind of warmth.

Dazai had made it so the neck of his sand coat was pulled over his head, make shifting into a small awning in front of him, making him look like a goblin of some kind in the process. He looked so stupid with his arms hanging up. "Dazai-" Atsushi pinched the bridge of his nose with two fingers.

"Get under here." Dazai said in a serious tone.

Atsushi stared at him for a minute, then listened to the downpour. "... Okay." With a dumb look on his face, the shorter one fit himself under the small roof, back touching Dazai's chest. "How is this going to-"

"Whee-!" Dazai broke into a sprint out of the blue, forcing him to keep up and run in front of him. Atsushi ended up stepping on the other's shoes so many times, and Dazai crashed into him once so they tripped into a puddle. The idea was supposed to be to run so they would spend less time in the rain, but it had the opposite outcome. Somewhere in the middle, they were just shouting as they clumsily stumbled forward and Atsushi would've been so *mortified* if there were more pedestrians to give them judgmental looks. But right now he didn't think about that, laughter crept into his panicked cries because the roof Dazai had made was less soaked than the both of them, and they looked absolutely ridiculous. "S- es- sto- stop-!" He wheezed as they slowed down into a halt and accepted their fate. "Your idea didn't work, Dazai-san." A trail of hearty laughter escaped his throat and he turned his head back to the taller man panting behind him faintly.

Under the shadow of Dazai's coat, individual droplets of water shone in sharp lines, trailing from the dark hair stuck to his forehead down to his chin. His lowered eyes were taking in elsewhere. "I'm afraid not."

"How is your cat doing?" Atsushi rolled his eyes halfheartedly, streaked with sarcasm.

The brunet finally turned to him and he subconsciously leaned back an inch, aware of their proximity under the dim space. "I don't know, how are you doing?" Dazai flashed him a teasing grin, bumping shoulders.

Atsushi's shoulders bunched up in defense and annoyance, but the feeling clashed with a familiar tenderness that stung his eyes. So he stood there, torn between the two, staring at

Dazai with a mix of both, and hoping his tears mixed in with the water and could slip down unnoticed.

Dark lashes fluttered back at him as the two stood side by side, previous issue of getting wet long forgotten. Reddish eyes swept his face and neck briefly where- the boy remembered- bandages were still wrapped. After getting teased by Naomi in the café, he'd wanted to take them off from the sheer embarrassment, but hadn't had the time.

"Why are you so easy to embarrass?"

Atsushi, alarmed by the patronizing squint, pulled back as if he were electrocuted. "I- I'm not."

He cursed when Dazai pinched his cheek. "But your face is all *reed*~" He sang.

"Because I've been running!" Atsushi glared and guarded his cheek from further abuse.

"To answer your question, my cat is looking pretty pathetic about now."

"Eh?!"

"He's all cold and wet in the rain." Dazai grinned and fixed his coat back to normal.

Atsushi looked at him with incredulity. "So are you."

"Don't I look good though?" The taller posed on cue and brushed back the dripping brown hair from his forehead, pleased with himself already.

"People like you shouldn't be good looking." Atsushi deadpanned and shook his head. "It's like a mouse trap for unsuspecting women."

"That's a flattering way to compliment someone."

"It's not a compliment."

"I'm still flattered!"

They walked the rest of the way with ease since it had stopped raining. No more words were exchanged until they climbed up the stairs to their apartments.

Atsushi sighed with a smile, taking out his keys as he stopped in front of his room.

"Goodnight, Dazai-san." He chewed on his bottom lip with furrowed brows, fumbling with his keys. "And thank you for coming with me today." He felt the need to add, slightly sheepish.

"You're welcome for making you buy me dinner." Dazai's cheeky remark got cut off, and his steps stopped in their echo with a deafening tension.

Not noticing the sudden rigidness right away, Atsushi raised an eyebrow and grumbled absently to himself, putting the key in. "Well, you're good company when your mouth is

occupied... so..." Atsushi's hands froze on the door. There was something or someone behind it, and it was not Kyouka.

His tiger senses caught a weak whiff of smoke, and he froze up. In less than a second, he was tackled away from the entrance, where the door got blasted off from the impact of a sharp explosion.

"I hate night shifts, damn you." Atsushi's ears barely registered when Dazai swore under his breath, then helped them both stand up. "Don't breathe in the smoke, it's probably lethal. And see if you can chase them, I'll get Kunikida and the others." He ordered, taking a more professional manner. Nodding dutifully, Atsushi narrowed his eyes and transformed his limbs.

Maybe he wasn't very fond of skipping sleep to chase after rude bombing intruders either. He hoped it didn't make him a bad person, he sighed and leapt after the black figure.

---

## Chapter End Notes

Thoughts? <3

I may kick up the rating

Amazing art of this chapter by Venelona on tumblr!!:

[https://www.tumblr.com/venelona/748498555564605440/my-hand-slipped?  
source=share](https://www.tumblr.com/venelona/748498555564605440/my-hand-slipped?source=share)

# I've got my eye on you

## Chapter Notes

PLOT SPOILERS FOR 55 MINUTES!!! I'll add it to the tags

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

By the time Atsushi dragged himself back home, his already moist clothes were stuck to his skin with heavy sweat, resulting in a grumpy mood. He panted his way up the metal stairs, where two of his senior colleagues were present. "I'm sorry, they got away." He sighed and leaned against the rail.

"It's fine." Kunikida grunted and went to adjust his glasses, and realized he wasn't wearing them. He looked like he'd jumped straight out of bed with nothing but his trusted notebook and gun. Atsushi felt bad for the darkness under his eyes. "Did you catch anything about their appearance?"

"No, but I saw them use their ability."

"Teleportation?"

"Not quite." Atsushi frowned, shaking his head. "They can move through objects and walls, that's how I lost them. If they could teleport, they would've done it before." The duo exchanged a meaningful glance. "So, are we pursuing the investigation tonight, or...?" He asked, hoping deeply that the latter-that-went-unsaid was the case.

And it appeared he was bad at hiding his exhaustion from the look of pity coming from Kunikida. "The coast is clear for now, it seems. Tanizaki will be on guard tonight." Atsushi slumped not so subtly in relief. "But I'm afraid your room isn't inhabitable for the time being, Atsushi."

"What?" Atsushi furrowed his brows. "I don't mind the damage, I- I just want to lie down for a bit."

"Kunikida-kun thinks you may be the newest target of our mystery kidnapper." Dazai swiftly spoke, making Atsushi jump, presence forgotten. "You see, it wasn't a regular bomb planted in your room, but knockout gas. The blow was only to slow down your reaction time."

Atsushi, eyes wide, tried to process the information. "*What?*"

"Even if we could decontaminate your room tonight, it's best to not leave you alone by yourself." Kunikida crossed his arms. "The last thing we need is either having to pay your ransom or pay Ranpo-san to find your location while you get to sleep like a baby in some container." His ashy green glare made him kick the ground with a cough. "*Again.*" Hinting at the last time the Weretiger had been kidnapped for the price on his head. "I don't even know which of those options is worse." He added almost inaudibly to himself.

"Atsushi-kun is just a bit dramatic at times." Dazai hummed, piping in. "Have you seen his damsel in distress face? If it didn't cause us so much trouble, one would call it cute."

"I- I don't have a damsel in distress face!?"

"Yes, I've seen it." The tall blond released a heavy sigh, twitching hand looking like it missed adjusting his glasses on his face. The duo ignored a defensive and flustered Atsushi overall. "And if you think you're going on my good side simply by making the brat look bad, *don't* think I forgot the trail of complaints that follow wherever you go!"

"Blasphemies. You know better than to believe such rumors, Kunikida-kun" Dazai held a dramatic hand to his chest, positively scandalized.

Kunikida was beginning to get that look of murder in his eyes. Too bad Atsushi was distracted by Dazai's fingers lingering on his vest, just above where the cat pin should be underneath. Wait, what were they talking about again? "I swear on your life Dazai, I will bind you to a boulder and hurl you into the river, so this time you'll *finally* achieve your wettest dream and *die.*"

"I will patiently wait until you're strong enough to throw both me and the boulder. Maybe drinking some milk would help?" Dazai flashed an innocent smile.

"... That's it-"

"Wait," Atsushi chose the wrong time to speak up his bafflement, puzzled by the entire ordeal. "Why would they kidnap me? The agency's broke."

A moment of silence passed as Atsushi processed his words, face heating up. At the same time Dazai broke out wheezing and Kunikida massaged his temples, muttering under his breath. "I- I mean-"

"Don't bother. Let us worry about that tomorrow." Kunikida sighed. "For now, you can stay with me until the matter resolves."

"I understand." Atsushi nodded in gratitude. "I'll bring some of my things in tomorrow?" He rubbed his neck.

"Yes, now the rules." Kunikida straightened with a glint in his eye the way he did every time he recited a new constitution for arranging the files in the cabinet. "The day begins from three forty five in the morning-" *No it doesn't*, Atsushi wanted to blurt out in panic.

"I can stay with Dazai-san." Instead he quickly announced before realizing he forgot to ask Dazai, who looked at him amused. "Um, I mean... can I? Is it possible?"

"Ah, my rules are no blood in the apartment." The brunet shrugged easily.

Atsushi passed saliva with surprised eyes. He didn't expect to get a positive response when he asked, at least without some begging. That embarrassing night aside, he'd never gotten this close to his mentor...

Why were his thoughts being so weird lately? This wasn't a big deal. Dazai was just doing him a favor by saving him days of living with Kunikida's ideals.

He shook it off. "I can do that... I think."

"You choose *Dazai* for combat support?" Kunikida sounded more incredulous by his choices than offended.

"Well... no." Atsushi scratched his head. "Uhh, but Dazai-san has great hearing and reflexes when it comes to danger. Like that one night when he was asleep and I crashed and fell through the roof, like right on his futon." Kunikida stared dumbfounded and Dazai quietly facepalmed. "In less than two seconds I was falling, Dazai-san had a gun loaded and pointed at my head." Atsushi was pretty sure he was doing a terrible job pleading his case, but he might be enjoying the lost face Kunikida was making, just a little.

"Is... *is there a context for all that?*"

"I was fighting a strength ability user. It was like a one man ambush of a sort, a while back." The silver bit on a smile at the memory, nodding. "I got thrown with a lot of force, and I happened to land on uh... yeah."

"So that's why there was a big fucking hole in his ceiling for two months." Kunikida sighed, remembering the occasion. "And did you say gun?"

"Yes."

"Atsushi-kun-" Dazai groaned.

"How-?"

"That was really fast." Atsushi turned to Dazai, blinking curiously. "Do you keep a gun under your pillow, Dazai-san?"

The boy had to blink twice at the embarrassed red creeping into the man's cheeks, avoidant eyes and irritated pouting. "Well, I- y-you're not supposed to just say that." Atsushi watching his rare fluster with a smile of intrigue. He could see Kunikida smirking too from the corner of his eye. "Atsushi-kun, you're the one who broke my ceiling, why am I being cornered?" He finally huffed.

"That took two months to fix." Atsushi held up an educating index. "Tell me we're not broke."



"I never said we're not." Kunikida gritted, then pushed Atsushi roughly toward Dazai who blinked and let him trip and fall. "It's like looking at a carbon copy. You can have this second waste of bandages." Atsushi was glad his burning face was planted to the ground, because the last one was personal. The urge to rip the cursed fabric from his arms right then...

"Good job Atsushi-kun." As the blond stomped away grumbling to his room, Dazai chuckled, watching his subordinate bring himself up to a standing position, dusting his pants. "You just got promoted to the title 'complete waste of bandages!'"

"It's a promotion?" Atsushi groaned as they walked the familiar path to Dazai's room. "Also, are you sure it's okay for me to stay?" He stressed, cracking his knuckles. "I can always find someone else."

The taller hummed, pushing his door open. "If you wish. I believe the Tanizakis are still awake."

Atsushi blanched and stepped inside after a moment of awkward hesitation, trailing behind Dazai's flowing coat. As long as he kept his head down politely and walked behind his superior, it would be fine, right?

Evidently not, as Atsushi didn't realize he'd straight up followed Dazai into the bathroom until the man eventually turned and raised an eyebrow at him, coat shrugged off and now resting on his arm. "Something you need?" He hummed out a chuckle.

"Huh? Oh-" Atsushi blinked and stumbled backward, out of the door. "Sorry, sorry! I- I didn't notice. I'll let you um-" He closed the door to give the man privacy.

"You're often shameless when you're exhausted, Atsushi-kun." An echo of Dazai's theatrical sigh muffled from behind the bathroom door.

Atsushi wasn't sure how to react to that hum, nor if he could at all, lacking energy to defend himself. His brunet coworker just liked to taunt people and work them up. And he was probably trying to tease him for the night Atsushi visited. *I'm not shameless*, he thought to himself, leaning against the wall and slumping down. *But I am tired. I wouldn't mind a shower to clean this mess...*

The silver haired boy closed his eyes and listened to the soft rustling sounds that could be heard from the bathroom, a music oddly comforting to his ears, a white noise tuning out the other thoughts in his head. He felt gradually calmer until the sound of water running rose along with the man's absent humming. And Atsushi realized he just carefully listened to his mentor get undressed.

Shaking his head, he stood up and moved to the couch, raising his head after Dazai approached him afterwards with a pillow and blanket, explaining to him his situation on the couch.

He'd done nothing wrong, yet something nagged at him. It wasn't like he *imagined* Dazai taking off his- okay, he needed to rest his mind.

"Oi Atsushi-kun, you're not injured this time, are you?" He was met with a confused head shake in denial. "You're awfully zoned out."

"I'm just tired." Atsushi accepted the pillow smiling, and putting it on one side with a absent word of gratitude.

"Make sure to get some sleep then." Was looking up at Dazai's easygoing expression a mistake? His now-slightly darker shade of hair was still wet, dripping onto his fresh dry clothes- that scented awfully of a soothing detergent, a sweet fragile aroma. Atsushi couldn't help but be reminded of that breed of poisonous plants that used their scent to lure in insects and trap them.

As disrespectful as that seemed to voice aloud, there was no way Atsushi could believe Dazai washed his own clothes. Maybe he'd given the task to Akutagawa, it seemed more likely.

"Dazai-san-" He frowned when Dazai started to leave, clutching the blankets in his grip. "Do you... think I'm somehow connected to the case?" He quietly inquired.

The man turned back at him, speaking with delay. "You said our suspect can move through walls." He mused instead.

"I can see where you're going with that." The younger sighed, teeth gritted and he announced bluntly. "But that man... he's dead, Dazai-san. I was there."

"Barely any proof in our world, wouldn't you say?" Atsushi was reluctant to agree, that logic emboldened all the (false?) hope he carried within himself for the thieves' survival, his- dare he call- friends, and it brought back the same old questions to the surface.

"Even so," Atsushi argued. "Kidnap and ransom doesn't fit his style. Boss had principles, he had an ideal, he took pride in being a great thief or whatever." He shook his heads and rambled off, annoyance and affection creeping into his tone. "He cared more about the achievement aspect of his burglaries- not to mention all of them failed anyway because he was just so reckless." He chuckled before remembering he had an amused audience.

"Boss?" Dazai raised an eyebrow.

Atsushi blinked, feeling like a deer caught in headlights. "Erm, I mean not-boss, he's still a criminal and stuff, of course."

"Of course." Dazai released a chuckle, arms crossed. "It's interesting seeing you get this worked up defending someone other than the agency." He arched a teasing brow higher.

*Jealous?* Was on the tip of Atsushi's tongue, but he bit on it, shaking it off.

"Atsushi-kun, you chased the man. Did he look like your friend?"

The albino sunk into silence for a moment. "Ah, no... he was noticeably shorter, almost my height. Bo- the thief is very tall, at least Kunikida-san's height." Dazai hummed. "And come to think of it, our suspect wasn't limited to walls less thick than two inches. At one point, he jumped straight into the asphalt and back out." He muttered.

"Let me guess, looking significantly more sluggish from then on." The brunet guessed.

"It tells us *nothing*." Atsushi groaned and ran a hand down his face.

Dazai laughed at his dilemma, in that infuriating carefree way. Atsushi wanted to ask how he did that. "But I can tell you, this isn't the work of one ability user, most likely a whole gang. That guy didn't have the brain to organize a clean scheme like this."

"Why?" Atsushi frowned.

"He dropped some clues behind in your apartment." Dazai winked and golden-purple eyes widened. "Kunikida already confiscated a pistol."

"Ranpo-san can read entire locations off that." Atsushi murmured, relieved, yelping when Dazai ruffled his hair roughly.

"There you go now, yare yare. You're waking up early tomorrow."

"Don't you mean... *we*?"

"You're waking up early tomorrow." He cracked a smile.

"... Right."

"Sleep well, Atsushi-kun!"

Atsushi hung his head low and fiddled with his hands, cracks of his knuckles gradually rising in the empty room like nervous crackles of fire, the sound of Dazai's steps fading away making him restless; almost like the room was becoming colder. "Yeah..."

Until there was silence, an abrupt halt. "Is Atsushi-kun afraid?"

The sly ring of it made Atsushi shiver under the dim golden light, no explanation leaving his lips this time.

"Scaredy-cat." The boy startled when a tall figure was suddenly by the couch, pushing his shoulders down onto the fluffy pillow and ignoring Atsushi's rigid form. The younger passed saliva audibly, letting himself be tucked in- he couldn't tell if the act was part of his mentor's theatrics.

Wide sunset eyes studies the way Dazai's shoulders shifted while tucking the younger underneath the blanket, the way dark strands of hair moved when Dazai leaned over him, a gold light cast upon the top of his head. His bolo tie had a deep shine within it, catching his eyes briefly.

Catching Atsushi's gaze, Dazai paused in his tracks and stared back, their proximity sobering. They now shared the air to breathe and the thought fascinated the Weretiger.

Red eyes travelled to Atsushi's throat, flashing something like recognition before hardening. What about the worn out bandages bothered his mentor so much? Did they make him look

funny? Ugly? Did they make him smell or-?

"Take them off." The simple order froze him. Dazai wore a poker face, his words an unreadable monotone, maybe a pitch deeper in tone.

"W-what?" He breathed out.

"You're starting to rot from them, Atsushi-kun." Dazai finally leaned away and joked, his easy smile back on.

Atsushi dumbly stared for a moment, then nodded, muttering about having to take a shower tomorrow.

"I will be in my room if you need me. Try not to think too hard..."

Atsushi felt the warmth leaving him again. He didn't turn around, only reciprocated with a wish for pleasant dreams.

"Don't worry kid," The quietest utter echoed. "I have my eye on you."

This time Atsushi did sit up and turn his head, sharply so, but Dazai was already gone.

Then... there was no storm brewing within him any longer. There was peace. If Dazai was calm, everything was fine.

Atsushi slowly lay back down, mourning the neat way Dazai had draped the covers on him before he ruined it. Feeling heavy and tired, but unburdened, half conscious with one certainty lingering on his mind.

Dazai Osamu was far away, wherever his distant eyes gazed, he was a mystery, and he was dangerous...

But if Dazai-san had his back, Atsushi could go up against the world.

So sweet I might vomit. When can I add the fucking pain>:3

The last part was inspired by Open my eyes to everything, I wanna catch up so badd.  
Anyway, thoughts? How are we liking the pace?

# Untouchable, burning brighter than the sun

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

---

All his life, Atsushi hated being caged.

Whether it was a physical one, a complicated situation, or just a negative or unwanted feeling, he dreaded it. It felt like suffocation, metal bars all around him, keeping him restrained and tame. Atsushi didn't want to be tamed, he wanted to be free. He needed a friend, not a master. Because he was a human... thing, and had... rights...?

Cautious, calculated air sneaked in and out of his nose, meant to calm his uncomfortable heartbeat.

Atsushi focused on the papers in front of him, trying to brush off the headmaster's voice, he who gave him an unwelcome visit last night in his dreams. Even as he sat in the comfortable chaos of the office, the mix of Kunikida talking on the phone, the sound of the printer being used and fluent tapping on the keyboard surrounding him, he couldn't help but still hear the echo of his own screaming and nothing else.

He bit down hard on his lip and forced some coffee down his throat, picking up the pen he didn't recall ever putting down. He just wished the dreams didn't relapse when he wasn't in the safe corners of his own room. God, what if he'd made any sounds during the night or cried too loud? Did Dazai notice? Because Atsushi could tell the man was awake for the majority of the night. He could hear him rustle and breathe from the other room.

And for some reason, earlier this morning, Dazai didn't seem to care about the shaky claw marks on his couch. The apology he didn't spill lingered heavily on the Weretiger's tongue, even now.

Speaking of Dazai, no one had heard of him in a while. Where was his lazy mentor at the most hectic work hours of the week? With a woman? Like it wasn't enough that he flirted with half of the suspects and some of the victims' families. Not that Atsushi wasn't used to his peculiarities, and not that it was his business, but the silver found that these little habits of the nullifier went on his nerves more than usual as of late.

This entire case was frustrating. Not to say they had to work without leads, but guilt hung over him like a dark cloud. Even the thought that all of this could be connected to him in any way, that people were getting hurt because he existed...

And so Atsushi let his mind wander wherever it pleased, too distracted to monitor over it. "Yosano-sensei?" He finally took notice of she who waited by the printer, hand on hip. "Do you need any help with those?"

"I already called you once, Atsushi." The raven-haired woman arched an eyebrow. "What are you thinking about so deeply?"

Sheepish, he immediately got up to carefully help Yosano put the papers in a box, then follow the doctor to her office. "Sorry, it's no one- it's nothing." He quickly corrected his slip, but Yosano was already chuckling.

"Dazai will be back eventually, wherever he's gone."

That coaxed out a wince from Atsushi. He wasn't *that* obvious. "Work is... surprisingly dull and quiet without him." He admitted, putting the box where she gestured, nodding politely at Ranpo who casually snacked on the infirmary bed.

"Dull? That I can agree with." She shook her head. "But quiet? Is it really that surprising?"

"Well, yeah." Atsushi rubbed his neck. "Dazai-san can wreak havoc without uttering a word, so he's actually not that talkative. Yet I can feel the absence of our conversations."

"You can go a day without doing what Dazai's says like a puppy." Ranpo drawled, dangling his legs.

Atsushi blinked, shoulders bunching up in defense. "I respect Dazai-san as my senior colleague and mentor. What's wrong with that?" He waved it off, turning to exit the door. "I don't listen to him like a *puppy*."

"Is this not counting the time he made you wear a maid dress?"

Atsushi visibly flinched, Yosano just stilled with a deadpan expression, processing the new yet unnecessary information. Somewhere outside, someone choked on their morning beverage.

Atsushi turned his glare back carefully, pointing his index at a smug Ranpo. "We do *not* talk about that, Ranpo-san."

"Why not?" The infuriating detective shrugged. "Sounds like some really educational mentor-mentee bonding right there."

"Oh, and Kyouka-chan told me what happened last night." Fortunately, Yosano changed the topic, and both his older teammates turned to him with some sort of... intrigue? "*So*... did you spend the night with Dazai?"

"I," Atsushi blinked, not seeing where this was going. "Yes...?"

A victorious grin overtook her face, and she turned to Ranpo who shook his head. "He said it."

"That's not what he meant." The dark-haired man crossed his arms.

"Pay up, Ranpo-san."

"Nuh-uh."

The youngest of them switched between the duo, baffled the more he listened to the bickering. "Huh? What are you talking about? Is this another one of your bets?" He deadpanned.

"Atsushi." Ranpo dryly got his attention, one eyebrow raised and pointing his lollipop at the boy. "What she means is, did you *spend the night* with Dazai?" He spelled out with quotation marks and a juvenile grin. And when it finally clicked, Yosano stifled a laugh at the look on his face.

Atsushi was utterly flabbergasted, a scarlet flush overtaking his face as his mind struggled to process the insinuation of such a crude act, with the suicidal maniac of all people, squirming at the random twist in his stomach. He was sure he'd never been so mortified his entire life than this moment, spluttering in front of his amused coworkers.

He attempted to string a coherent sentence together, but found his voice caught in his throat. "No, *no!* Spend the night with Dazai-san- what on earth are you implying?!" His voice rose until it cracked, and the keyboard noises outside stopped. Oh, too loud. "I- I slept on the couch." He insisted with panic when Yosano appeared unconvinced. "I- I swear! Why are even talking about- we're professional colleagues." He shook his crimson flushed face. "That is absolutely-"

"Atsushi-kun, I really need to win this bet. You know what to do next time." The doctor stared him down deadpan, then broke character and into a burst of laughter.

Ah yes. Atsushi *loved* his coworkers.

---

Quiet steps stifled on the grass, trailing past graves of different ages and history, blank eyes casting them a fleeting glance in their wake. Sun glared brightly down upon earth, giving life to the green nature of the cemetery.



Dazai hummed as he leaned back on a specific tombstone, closing his eyes and tilting up his chin to the leaves hanging above, which slowly rustled with the breeze.

"It's been a while, Odasaku."

He spoke after a long time, as awkward silence never had any meaning with the mafioso. There was only a comfortable feeling, a calming presence, often which went well with the low tunes playing at bar Lupin. There hadn't been any obligation to fill the air with unnecessary words.

That was how now Dazai could sit there side by side with the grave and reach peace, watch the way branches bent over to the will of the wind, or take in the faint trace of salt in the air. Strange, he usually didn't care much to notice these details. He closed his eyes, letting his mind roam.

And somehow it landed on his subordinate, again.

Crinkles disturbed the bridge of his nose.

"He reminds me of you at times." Left his lips, a sigh following. Though, he was in no place to complain. Not when he too would often show up bleeding all over Odasaku's doorstep. The man treated him with little to no complaint or question every time. He wouldn't mind giving Atsushi the same treatment, but there was something about the Weretiger that...

His hand stopped playing with the cat pin once he grew aware of the action.

... That just irritated him ten times the average person.

He could almost feel the weight of Oda's quiet but judgmental arched brow, he mused as he dusted himself to take a small walk, ignoring his thoughts. He found that to be the solution more often lately, his mind has become rather disorganized and erratic.

Anyway, where was he? Ah, the cemetery. His old friend wasn't the only reason he visited the place- his eyes traced over familiar names, carved into stone. There was a figure of ten resting underground, he made sure to walk past them every time.

Made sure to remember what he'd done, and the lives he'd taken.

He couldn't remember whose idea this was the first time- maybe Ranpo, if he recalled correctly. Back when the unfamiliar light of justice burnt through his skin like a vampire and he went numb, he'd return to these cursed soils for inspiration, and walk. He kept an eye on some of the dead's families- at first to see them grieve and cry for their loved ones, so that he could sense a pang in his chest as well, just to check if he were even capable of feeling. Nowadays though, he'd just monitor over them to make sure they didn't run into trouble.

And he did that neither because he was kind, or harbored any guilt for his past doings.

Maybe he'd just grown a tad bit attached.

He knelt in front of a particularly small and insignificant gravestone.

"Hello, Sonoko." He greeted.

*"Can you h-help me find my mommy?" The mafioso stopped at the tug on his coat, cold eyes settling on the tearful young girl, seemingly unaware of the flying bullets in the air.*

*"She's probably dead, don't bother." The demon prodigy shook her off, hardening at her persistence. "Let go of me before I shoot you, child."*

*"I- I can't see her." She cried out and Dazai stilled, noticing the dullness in her eyes. "I can't see. M-mommy- she said she'll find me."*

*She's blind.*

*"I heard you helping that crying baby." He tensed at her pleading. "You must be a good per-"*

*Suddenly reddish black spikes tore through her chest, and Dazai snapped back into reality at the gushing blood. "Akutagawa! She was more useless than you!"*

*The younger subordinate turned to his growl with passive confusion and frustration. "You said kill everything that breathes."*

Dazai delicately placed the white rose on the tombstone. He knew better than to fault Akutagawa for her death.

"Would it be rude to hope you're with her now?" He softly murmured. "I hope you've found your mother."

An hour later, he smiled once the cool breeze of the agency office kissed his cheek, the contrasting warm aura of it welcoming to people like him.

Oh, how Dazai didn't belong there.

But oh, how they welcomed him anyway.

*"Yosano-sensei, I will pay you twice the price of your bet to pretend this conversation never happened!"* Atsushi's scandalized cry was what welcomed him the warmest. Surrounding him like predators- he found were the infamous Yosano-sensei and Ranpo-san, a smirk on each of their faces.

"What are we talking about?" Dazai peaked into the infirmary, hands cheekily buried in his coat pockets.

Silver hair whipped to him, poor boy nearly jumping out of his skin. "D-Dazai-san!"

At the sudden appearance, Dazai studied with amusement how embarrassed sunset color eyes froze on him, wide like a deer caught in headlights, a funny thought considering he was supposed to be a tiger. The boy's face was flushed a bright shade of red, subtly squirming under Dazai's gaze.

Seeing this, the memory of that odd night flashed through Dazai's mind, wandering to Atsushi laying in the bath with a carefree posture and an earnest smile. The warm steam had condensed on his skin and left it glistening, and it seemed to have accentuated the rosy flush of his cheeks.

Dazai dismissed the image, but his gaze threatened to glance at the boy's throat anyway. The white wrap of bandages distracted him every time it caught his eye, reminding him of that moment. But Atsushi had finally thrown away the worn out cloth before his shower earlier, there was nothing wrapped around his neck now that he looked.

The world must have stood still because it felt like long had passed before Atsushi broke eye contact and turned away, revealing more of the flush on his neck. "It's nothing, Dazai-san."

"Do you have pictures of that maid dress, Dazai?" Yosano gave a jagged grin.

Atsushi shot her an almost betrayed glare, and Dazai raised both eyebrows, realization dawning on him. "Oh, you were talking about *that*. I'm afraid not, Sensei."

Taking immense joy in how Atsushi grew even more flustered, he leaned into Atsushi's personal space. "If it helps, you absolutely killed it in that dress, with flair." He dramatically praised and everyone nodded seriously to that, for no reason.

Atsushi choked on his half-genuine cough, avoiding his friends' eyes. "Why the *fuck* would that help?"

The corners of Dazai's mouth twitched up. "Careful or you might explode, tomato-kun." He nudged Atsushi's shoulder, steering them back towards their desks after a warning look from their blond colleague. "Now what does Kunikida-kun think of you slacking off at this busy hour?"

"Me slacking off?" Atsushi wore an incredulous expression. "I was cornered. Where were *you* all morning? You weren't answering Kunikida-san's calls. I thought you could be kidnapped again."

Dazai rolled his eyes lightly, leaning back in his chair. "Atsushi-kun stresses too much, I was at the cemetery." The truth came out easily, which was a change.

The silver's brows furrowed instead of relaxing and accepting the answer. "Oh, it's just that you have a scent on you."

"A scent?"

"Yeah, it's a sweet smelling perfume." In a cat-like gesture, Atsushi craned his neck to the side. It matched well with the tinge of curiosity in his two-colored eyes. "Did you meet someone there?"

Surprise flickered in the brunet's eyes. "Ranpo-san would be proud." He released a string of chuckles. "I actually just met the lovely new waitress in the café downstairs!" He clapped his hands together once. "The lady is divine. Her grace and elegance could make the most stoic statues weep with envy."

"How poetic." Atsushi murmured, eyeing him strangely. He appeared as he might add something else, but quietly retreated to the papers in front of him.

Sensing his mental withdrawal from the conversation, Dazai arched an eyebrow, deciding to change the subject. "How's the case progressing?"

His mood lifted quickly, taking a professional demeanor. "Oh, it's been busy. More calls, more victims, less relations." He counted. "Now it's just a pattern of going for rich families and demanding ransom, and not everyone has that much faith in the agency."

"I see."

"I've been asked to do paperwork for now, since I might be a potential target." Atsushi uncomfortably rubbed the back of his neck, still stomaching that information. "I really want to help more."

From the corner of his naturally hooded eyes, Dazai watched the boy, visibly catching his self critical monolog flash on his expression. "Why don't you take over the office calls?"

"Huh?"

"If you answer the calls, Kunikida-kun would have more time on his plate to do hands-on investigations. He appears stuck behind his desk for the majority of the day." He casually offered, like he was explaining the simplest of issues. "If you can't work outside, see what else you can do indoors."

Atsushi blinked dumbly for a minute, then lit up. "You're right!"

"Of course I am." He stretched his hands above his head, startled when Atsushi jumped out of his seat, chirping out a hurried *thank you, Dazai-san* before bringing a jolt out of Kunikida next. It made him chuckle. It was fun to see people struggle, but surprisingly it was just as fun to see Atsushi lit up like a Christmas tree upon finding out such simple solutions.

"Oh by the way, Dazai-san," The bandaged man in question turned at the call, humming. "What are we having for dinner later?" Came out the question. "I'm asking since-"

"You eat dinner?" Dazai voiced his confusion, and the boy regarded him with disbelief.

"... I'll pick some groceries on the way back."

The brunet's eyes expanded. "You *cook* your own dinner?"

"Dazai-san, how do you even live-"

"*You can cook?*"

"... Sort of?"

---

"Atsushi." Kunikida glared him down, appearing somehow more intimidating in his pajamas.

The boy rocked back and forth on his feet with anxiety, and Dazai whistled innocently behind him to complete the look.

"After this, I seriously think you're better off staying with me."

"Uh, it was me that um, started the fire."

Kunikida was taken back by his mumble, disbelieving, suddenly cautious and worried for the future of his own kitchen.

"If it helps, I was the one to accidentally pour alcohol on it instead of water." Dazai chimed in.

"Dazai-san, you have selective helpfulness." Atsushi frowned at Dazai's -actually- offended face. "And I can clearly see you're not trying to *help* right now."

"Mean."

"How could you two be so *reckless*?"

Atsushi fumbled with his hands at the exhausted reprimanding. "Um, at least we put it out." Atsushi stammered, meeting Kunikida's eye feeling like a nerve wrecking task, on top of bone shattering. "Eventually."

There was a tense silence where Atsushi braced for an outburst, but the blond's sigh stood out in the quiet of the night. "How bad is the damage?"

Atsushi and Dazai traded looks. "A few cupboards were burnt." The taller of the two smiled, not nearly as devastated as he should be, considering it was his apartment that still smelled

and was painted of black smoke.

"It's better than a hole in the roof." Atsushi weakly added, earning Kunikida's glare. "C-costs less." Dazai hummed and nodded in confirmation.

"We had it under control, Kunikida-kun." Slinging an arm over a trembling Atsushi, Dazai seemed thrilled with the turn of events if anything. He was an odd man. "There was no need for you to interfere."

"I could see the smoke from the window!"

"And now it's gone, thanks to us, and the innovation of fire distinguishers!"

A slight shiver went down the tiger's spine, he flashed his responsible superior a nervous apologetic smile, his heart skipping a beat as Dazai's shoulder pressed flush to his own.

It was interesting- he noticed- that whenever Dazai was touching a part of him, all of his negative spiraling thoughts disappeared and left him feeling woozy and puzzled, just like it did with his ability.

Did that mean there was something more to the tiger that he wasn't aware of? Or was it Dazai's ability? The mysteries were never-ending, it seemed. With that thought in mind, he timidly leaned into the nullifier's touch, and thankfully Dazai was too busy bantering with his partner to notice.

---

## Chapter End Notes

Happy late dazatsu day...?

I forgot to mention, Sonoko is the name of the author Dazai Osamu's first daughter, a part of the family he ended up abandoning for his double suicide with some woman

# And I want it all (I want it all from you)

## Chapter Notes

A quicker update this time:3 Thanks for all your support by the way!! I love reading your comments:D

Have some idiots

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

"I'm trying to enjoy my meal..."

Dazai hummed him on, reveling with amusement over the sight of Atsushi struggling to bite into the burnt chicken leg, even with the strong support of the feline structure of his teeth. His canines tried to rip apart a masticable part in frustration while he held the offending food with both hands. "I can see that."

"Bleh! I'd have better luck chewing on the wall." Giving up with a sigh, Atsushi threw it on the plate.

Dazai tilted his head with intrigue. "I would pay to see that."

"The meat's completely charred."

"But the inside is raw." The brunet held up a cut out piece to demonstrate. "This is actually impressive on another level, Atsushi-kun."

Head sinking into his palms in embarrassment, Atsushi released a groan. "I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have gotten distracted. I think I should pay for the damage for your kitchen too." He added while peeking from between fingers, shame evident in his eyes.

"Oh you definitely should." Easily nodded the other, spiking Atsushi's disbelief. He was going to pay anyway, but a little *consolation* wouldn't hurt. "I don't know if you've noticed, but the agency, Kunikida-kun and- mostly- *you* cover almost all my living expenses. My rent, my food- remember I made you buy me a new coat?" Of course he didn't resist a little grin of mischief once Atsushi's jaw dropped.

That was... shocking, yet somehow not surprising at all. The nullifier's own income probably went to alcohol and his suicide attempts. Now that he thought of it, he really had spend a lot of money on his him lately...

Dazai might as well move in with Atsushi at this point.

His thoughts gave a sudden pause at that, that idea gave him an unexplainable surge of excitement. Well, it *did* mean he could keep an eye on the man regarding his health and constant risky life style, but if the thought of having this chaotic force of a creature as his roommate made him happy, then Atsushi was clearly going insane.

"My point is- it's not like it's all coming out of my pocket, so don't feel bad." Across the sofa, Dazai joked when he stayed silent.

Oh. "Oh." He intelligently replied, parted lips unable to retort. The knowingness hidden under Dazai's dark eyelashes spread a warmth through his chest, tugging up the corner of his mouth. "Heh, I guess you're kind of right, Dazai-san."

"There we go, finally, you don't look like you're being taken hostage."

"Huh?"

"Atsushi-kun is so tense. I thought you'd warm up the second day." Leaning back against the cushions, the older one flicked his bandaged wrist, giving a theatric sigh. "As your host, I am obligated to ensure you feel comfortable in my dorm you see." What the hell. Was this seriously Dazai?

Was he pulling his leg? "I am comfortable!" In denial, the albino rapidly shook his hands, feeling clumsy at the assumption. "I promise, you're a great host. I just..." Against his intentions, he hugged his arm and shrunk into himself, trailing off.

"Go on."

His shoulders sunk with a guilty sigh. "I just can't help but feel bad about imposing on you."

When sun-kissed amethysts looked up, they were met with absolute incredulity. The look Dazai shot him was enough to make him feel stupid already. "*W-what?!*"

"Atsushi-kun, all you do is pay for my things, make me food, sit in your spot on the couch all day with your tail between your legs, and you think you're *imposing?*"

At a loss for words, Atsushi looked down from the taller's chiding red eyes, a bashful red creeping into his cheeks. "I- I just thought-" His forceful tone wavered.

"Clearly not, or you wouldn't have gotten to such a ridiculous conclusion." Huffed the other, unaffected by his stuttering. Atsushi's grip tightened on his knees, pressing his lips tightly together. "Oh, don't turn that smile upside down now, you were doing so *well.*"

The tiger was cut off before he could comment further, freezing in place when slender fingers grazed his sides.



His next exhale was trapped within his chest, expression shifting to one of surprise as Dazai touched him, not daring to move a muscle. Something funny tingled in his stomach- much to his dread. "Dazai-san...?" Dared leave his mouth as he slowly looked up, met with an expression of mischief. It sent a shiver down his spine, his heart racing with a shadow of anticipation. "What are you-"

Then Dazai started tickling him.

Atsushi immediately jolted, a breathless giggle ripped from his throat, the repetition of the other's name fading into gibberish. "S- whah-!" He gasped quietly, growing too weak to push the wiggling fingers away. "The- the hell are you- ha! *Aha! Haha-*"

"There we go, Atsushi-kun." Dazai sang with mirth and ignored his resistance. "Let go."

"Y-ya- *YOU LET GO- HAHA.*"

"Some laughter is good for you!"

"I'll smile, I'll laugh! Fuck!" Pleaded and cried out the poor tiger with panic, stomach starting to ache. His high pitched squeals grew louder and he kicked his body in bursts of joy and discomfort. "*Please! Dazai-san-*" The one in question grinned wider, making no move to stop the torture.

"*You rascal!*" Atsushi's hand grabbed onto the closest thing and smacked his attacker with it- thankfully, it was just a pillow.

"Wait...! *ngh- s-stop, Dazai-*" Atsushi clamped a hand over his whines, and Dazai paused in his movements. A subtle hitch of his breath reached to a panicking Atsushi's ears.

Once he blinked the prickling tears away, his vision came into focus to see Dazai hovering above him, a subtly entertained look to his neutral expression. Faltering underneath the attention, Atsushi's hands busied themselves with the end of his tie, mouth forming a small circle and ample two-colored eyes fluttering up in awe, ignoring the surge of warmth rushing over to his cheeks.

At their proximity, Atsushi couldn't help but be reminded of his first night on this couch. Without thinking, he cooed out in a rush of boldness. "Can I ask to be tucked in again?" The immediately hit with an desire for the ground to open up and swallow him.

His absurd request broke the spell, pleasant surprise widening Dazai's eyes before he burst out with a loud snicker and moved away. Atsushi slowly sat up without meeting the other's eyes, his juvenile actions catching up to him and fueling his shame even worse. "This is exactly what I mean." His tone was faint, knees drawn back into his chest. Dazai looked at him in confusion. "This isn't the type of behavior I should have, it's disrespectful, and..."

"Dramatic, aren't we?" Dazai arched a brow. "Despite how entertaining it is to see you squirm Atsushi-kun, it's not disrespectful to want to be *tucked* into bed."

"That's not what I meant."

The man rolled his eyes at his inner conflict, then paused. "Don't tell me," Atsushi looked up at his disbelieving smile, as if he'd just discovered something wonderful. "Atsushi-kun, do you feel bad for dropping my *honorifics*?"

The tiger turned a bright red and looked away. "No, that's not it! I just, w-well-" The words fell out in one breath. "*I only did it once and besides I didn't really mean it! I'm sorry-*"

"This amount of remorse would only make sense if you called me by my given name or something."

"Don't encourage me!" Atsushi spluttered. "A-and I even *hit* you earlier. How are you letting me get away with things-?"

"All I see is the real *Atsushi* coming out to play." Giving him a stroke, Dazai winked and twirled a silver lock of Atsushi's longer bang around his finger.

They exchanged another breath.

And then Atsushi forgot how to breathe overall, the unhumiliating tone falling smoothly from his mentor's lips.

Something softened in the deep and confusing trench of Dazai's eyes, so insignificant that the boy was doubtful it even happened. "I see that he's letting his guard down around us and becoming less nervous."

Atsushi's eyes expanded as the little speech went on, warmth washing over him.

Dazai stood up with a graceful sweep of his coat, a small smile playing at his lips. "That he feels so safe and comfortable here that he doesn't flinch anymore when he cries." Atsushi was bemused until the tall one leaned down to wipe a previously unknown tear with his thumb that was waiting to be acknowledged, shimmering in the corner of misted sunset eyes. "Instead of expecting a harsh punishment for it."

"I'm so lucky to have met you all." Atsushi found the strength to whisper. "You give me so much."

A chuckle was his reaction. "Oh, you mean basic human rights?" Encouraging the bead of hope Atsushi tried to keep alive in his soul, Dazai did again as always, when the younger one needed him most.

"Everyone says that." He sighed. "It doesn't feel like I deserve it though."

Dazai raised an eyebrow, straightening. "Maybe everyone is onto something then."

"You don't think I'm... disrespectful then...?" Atsushi chewed on his bottom lip. "This isn't how I should treat you as my senpai-"

"How often do you see *me* fulfilling my duties as your senpai?"

Eyes wide, Atsushi blinked dumbfounded.

"Atsushi-kun is really taking these roles seriously, huh?" Dazai threw his head back in a less taunting laugh, some fondness creeping into it.

Self conscious, he flushed. "W-well, shouldn't we?"

"I think we're less formal than what would fit those terms." He hummed, eyes closing absently.

"Are we friends?" Atsushi's shoulders bunched up, perking up with hope and awe, only to draw back once Dazai's eyes shot open, sharp. "I mean never mind, I-"

"Yes Atsushi-kun." The calm one cut him off. "We're friends."

Dazai was looking beyond these walls and not at him, so Atsushi felt it was appropriate for him to look away as well. Definitely not because he was hiding a stupid grin and the way his knees bounced childishly.

"Huh, I haven't had friends in a while."

"What? All of the agency are our friends." The vague phrasing puzzled him, so Atsushi reminded. "Even Nakahara-san-"

"*Nakahara-san*?" Head snapping to him, Dazai's eyes narrowed. "Have you met that slug?"

"H-huh? No, not me, I just heard the stories." He stammered.

"Ah... I suppose you're right, Atsushi-kun." With a nonchalant nod, the taller parroted sans emotion. His smile didn't sit right with Atsushi. "Anyway, you know where to find me."

The gears in Atsushi's head turned as he watched the man step away after waving him good night. He wanted to spend more time with Dazai, exchanging those earlier words had given him courage.

His eyes darted around the room for an excuse, catching the open box by the TV and a console he hadn't noticed before. "Do you want to play videogames?" He quickly suggested, nervous hands sinking into the couch cushion

Dazai carried such a heavy air around him that Atsushi doubted anything would convince him to stay, but at the mention of games the man brightened immediately, turning back on his heel. "Videogames?" He blinked with interest. "Do you know how to play?"

"Erm..."

"Eh, I'll teach you." Before he knew it, Dazai had jumped on the couch, knocking him off it in the process. "Oh, you're about to get *destroyed* Atsushi-kun." He taunted with a toothy grin, grabbing the controllers.

Atsushi laughed off his momentary shock and got off the ground, eager to learn. "Sure." Destroyed? He wasn't intimidated. Every moment spent with Dazai put a long-abandoned piece of him back together.

But he wasn't going to say any of that. This was still Dazai-san after all.

Atsushi ended up getting more invested in the competition than he realized, and it was much to Dazai's further entertainment. Hours passed within minutes, they tried out some of the brunet's favorite games. Good thing Atsushi had bought some extra snacks, or he doubted they could snack on the coal-black leftover chicken. At some point, Dazai suggested boiling it again, the idea discarded immediately. Neither of them were going near the stove tonight.

Eyes narrowed in focus, Atsushi leaned forward, tapping aggressively on all the buttons. He'd already given up figuring out the function of each one for every game. "Almost..." He grumbled through his teeth as the two sat on the floor now, having scooted closer to the screen.

"You can't beat my score, tiger boy." Dazai sang to annoy him, looking way too relaxed for his taste.

"I... *can... dammit!*" He shouted at the blood red title shown on the screen, nearly hurling the controller to the wall, but he'd done enough damage for one night. He sighed and leaned back on his hands instead. "Man, this is hard."

Dazai copied his posture with a little chuckle, accidentally placing his hand on the albino's before he quickly readjusted it. "You're not getting any further than that without learning the moves."

Atsushi felt his heart skip at the brush of their fingers, a nervous chuckle escaping him. His skin tingled and he was hit with an urge to excuse himself to the bathroom, but he just rustled and shook it off. What was wrong with him tonight? He was about to make a reply when he turned his head and noticed the phone in Dazai's hand. "Is something wrong?" Dazai blinked at him before showing him the display. It was the dating app. "Oh, not that again." He frowned, a bit embarrassed. "I told you, I don't want-"

"Oh, how do you know it's not for myself, hm?" The man crossed his arms, eyebrow arched pointedly.

After a moment of spluttering, Atsushi reached out to snatch the phone and the other just let him. "B-because of that smile on your face!"

"Come on, give it a try." Dazai laughed, showing him a list. "It appears to match you up with quite a few ladies in Yokohama."

Brows furrowed in confusion, Atsushi scrolled hesitantly. "Dazai-san, as much as I appreciate you trying to help, I would rather find this girl in person and get to know her. Some day, if I want to...date." He stammered out his explanation. "People actually meet like this? They let a computer find *love* for them?"

"It only sounds depressing when you say it." Dazai took back the phone and sighed, earning a glare. "That's why you will let me handle it. This website doesn't find your *true love*, Atsushi-kun. Only a nice match that you can get to know later, and go on dates to find out if you're

actually compatible or not. You might even end up finding a new friend." He offered further and Atsushi tilted his head in intrigue. "Now, tell me what's your type?"

"My type?" Atsushi turned red as a tomato.

The smirk on Dazai's face told him the bastard was enjoying this. "You can tell me." He sang, leaning his chin on his hand.

"I want her to be nice and kind, and patient." Atsushi rubbed his neck awkwardly. "Other stuff like looks doesn't matter much, right?"

"Well, you must have some sort of preference." Dazai shrugged. "You can't truly know if she's nice until after the meeting."

Well, he had a point. Atsushi couldn't believe he was playing along with this, he thought as he racked his brain. "Erm, I like..." He stumbled for words. "Tall women?" His face burned with heat as he put it to words. "And I think I like it when they're confident." He mumbled.

Dazai grinned, a predatory gleam in his eye. "I got you, Atsushi-kun."

Atsushi was definitely going to regret this.

---

Soft grass lay quiet underneath him, brushing against his ankles, the nightly breeze caressing his hair. He looked up in a haze, at the scattered diamonds winking on an obsidian canvas that appeared to go on for infinity.

"It's all very beautiful." A familiar voice murmured next to him.

He couldn't respond, but he turned to the comforting face, the richness of his dark fanning lashes and the perfect raggedness to his nose, every curve and delicateness of his face moonlit and bathed in a dreamy light. Behind him in the distance can be seen a colorful festival.

"Yet you're staring at me." The man sat comfortably, the end of his yukata tucked neatly, almost gracefully under him. "*Atsushi...*"

The Weretiger's name fell from his lips like sin, breathy and sly in all the wrong ways.

It sent a shiver down his spine, pooling somewhere in his guts. The lack of honorifics attached to it felt almost intimate, forbidden. The man's dazzling smile beckoned him like a siren's whisper, giving him a sense of peace and sincerity, drawing him in and making him crave all sorts of twisted things.

And those deep colored eyes were on him, he finally had the man's attention. His heart beat quickly and shivers of excitement shook his spine, like hot licks of fire devouring his melted, mortified insides. He needed more.

He wanted all of Dazai's attention, all of it. And the man knew this, a knowing mirth hidden in his gaze.

*Undress me with your eyes.*

---

A gasp was ripped from his chest, as he startled upright on his chair. His heartbeat hammered uncomfortably and he trembled in shock, as if he'd just taken the worst fall in history.

*What the...*

"Did he keep you up last night, brat?" Kunikida's growl gave him another jump, still struggling to process the situation. "Since when do you fall asleep at work?"

"We were playing videogames, Kunikida-kun. You may call it part of Atsushi-kun's vital training." Announcing his presence next to him, Dazai responded for him. Kunikida opened his mouth sharply. "Videogames serve as covert tool within the Port Mafia to strengthen the bond and synchronization between members." He seriously added, making Kunikida's eyes widen and take out his notebook of ideals. "It's a very effective way to educate newbies on the importance of teamwork."

"Really?" Kunikida mumbled in intrigue under his breath, carefully taking note.

"Take Mario Kart as a bright example."

"Mario Kart? For... teamwork? Isn't that a racing game?"

"Oh yes, yes. Write it down..."

Eyes on his papers, Atsushi sat there, the shock having yet to wear off. The rush of blood echoed in his ears as he was torn between brushing off his recent dream and questioning it.

The presence of Dazai himself was making it much more difficult to handle, as he couldn't meet anyone's eyes.

What was worse was the dull ache between his-

"I lied." Dazai chirped next to him. Kunikida's eye twitched, the pen between his fingers cracking in half. Both of them oblivious to his what just happened.

Atsushi lowered a dossier in reach into his lap in a discreet attempt, swallowing back his heartbeat along with shaken guilt.

He barely noticed when he slipped away to the bathroom unnoticed, splashing water on his face, hoping to wash away.

He took a deep breath, finally facing his reflection in the mirror, his slightly unruly locks of pale hair, a pair of golden-purple eyes that shone with grave determination, if not appalment. Cold drops of water trailed down to drop from his chin, helping him calm down. Dreams like this hadn't appeared for him for the longest time.

He'd been so stressed about the mysterious case lately, it was affecting him strangely. The scene of the dream was still fresh on his mind, the ghost of a touch between their hands, the too-familiar whisper of his name-

Shaking it off a shudder, he washed his face for the third time.

Maybe Dazai was right, that he needed more rest alongside work. What would his colleagues think of what he'd just conjured up- what would Dazai think? He'd be disgusted for sure, he pressed his lips together and slapped his cheeks quietly.

His bond with Dazai-san was stronger than such insignificant intrusions. He respected his mentor more than to let something like some *exhaustion* ruin it. He just needed to organize his mind better, which apparently couldn't handle the civility and attention he'd gotten recently like a normal person.

Above all, Dazai was a man, he reminded himself with annoyance. A man who pulled a face at the mere mention of embracing another man.

He walked back into the office a few minutes later, shaking off the last of his nerves and feeling better. Kunikida seemed to have calmed down as well, good enough. "Kunikida-san, is it okay if I leave early today?" He cut straight to the point.

Ashy gaze switching from the papers to him, Kunikida raised an eyebrow behind his glasses. "Dazai already told me, it's fine."

"He... told you?" He froze. "Told you what?"

"Your date, at five." Oh.

Oh. "The date." Atsushi breathed out with brief surprise. "Yes, yes! Of course, I have a date today." A breathless laugh escaped him. Kunikida probably thought he'd lost his mind,

judging by his face. "Thank you, Kunikida-san." He sighed in relief and walked back to his desk.

Atsushi had almost forgotten that they scrolled through the app last night and scheduled a date with a someone he seemed to enjoy talking to.

"Excited?" Dazai asked him with a grin, watching him walk back to the desks.

"Oh yeah, I definitely have to meet her." Atsushi nodded, taking another deep breath.

"You weren't this enthusiastic last night." The man arched a brow at him.

Atsushi shot him a glare. "What, you complaining?"

"Not at all." Dazai held up both hands in surrender, a little amused hum escaping him.

---

## Chapter End Notes

Let the dreams begin hehe



# With my feelings on fire (guess I'm a bad liar)

## Chapter Notes

We got a long one ladies and gentlemen

Edit: I can't believe I forgot to put Venelona's art here again JESUS. Not even in the proper chapter but please check it out, this is exactly how the scene happened:

<https://www.tumblr.com/venelona/748498555564605440/my-hand-slipped?source=share>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

"Alright, Dazai. What's the catch?"

A suspicious question rose from the dull shuffle of papers. Dazai had had his eyes peacefully closed, basking in the remaining trapped warmth in the room. He merely hummed in response to the vague accusation.

"Atsushi going on a date? Since when?" Brown eyes finally fluttered open. "What's that about?"

"Ask himself that, Kunikida-kun." A small audible yawn stretched his throat. "Why are you glaring at me?"

"Since you were obviously the one who organized it." Annoyance stained the glassed man's tone. "Which means you're plotting something."

Resisting a smirk, Dazai chuckled at the caution and distrust his partner displayed. He wasn't the detective agency's successor for nothing. "Now now, tone down with the accusations. I just thought Atsushi-kun needed a little kick, it'll be good for him to get out more and be social. We don't want him to end up like you at an older age."

"That's not my problem with- wait, I'm not... we're the same age, you bastard!"

"I'm not plotting anything, you know." Dazai folded his arms under his head easily. "Like I said, it'll be good for him." He paused. "Has he gone already?" He faced Kunikida's direction, only to catch the sight of Atsushi himself passed out next to him.

"I think he's dozed off behind his desk again." The man shook his head and sighed. "The least you could do is let him have a decent amount of sleep at night."

"Alright." Bemoaned the other, sitting up. "Wake up, Atsushi-kun." He lightly tapped the boy's back, watching his back rise and fall evenly, his silver eyebrows and long lashes scrunched up deeply and a trail of drool pooling on the papers. He smiled at the sight, eyes crinkling.

Seeing the way the tense boy was curled he shrugged off his sand trench coat without a reason, draping it over Atsushi's sunken shoulders, straightening the fabric. It was a bit extra chilly today, he supposed, brushing some of Atsushi's hair out of his eyes before he paused, his domestic actions catching up to him. He retracted his hand, eyes darting around the room self consciously- Ranpo was watching him with a neutral gaze- before leaning away in his seat. Oblivious to his surroundings, a sleeping Atsushi purred a small noise in contentment, snuggling deeper under the coat.

When had he grown so soft for the tiger? He absently mused with an eye-roll.

As if feeling the heaviness of a stare on him, Atsushi stirred groggily, slowly raising his head.

"Welcome back to the land of the living." Dazai casually announced. "Isn't it disappointing?"

"What... time is it?"

"Four ehh, thirtyish?" He watched the purple-golden eyes expand in alarm. "Don't worry, you'll still make it there on time." He gave a contemplative pause. "If you run in your Weretiger form... preferably on all fours."

"Holy shit." Atsushi almost tripped after jumping off his seat, making Dazai bite on his smile. "Wait, wait- oh god, I'm going on a *date*." He gripped his hair in frantic panic, the weight of the situation dawning on him. "What do I even do? What if mess this up really bad-? Am I good enough for her?!" He spiraled.

"There it is." Tanizaki voiced from over the room in relief, like he'd been holding his breath. "I was starting to get concerned over how well Atsushi-kun was handling it."

"So you're really going." Kunikida interrupted, stare unimpressed as Atsushi paced around. "But you don't seem particularly interested. Are you sure Dazai's not putting you up to this?" He crossed his arms.

"He did not." Before Dazai made a sarcastic remark, Atsushi frowned at Kunikida, slightly bemused. "He's not scheming his every move Kunikida-san, and even if he is- his plans always work out in the agency's favor, don't they? We trust him- *I* trust him." Dazai remained quiet, and ashy eyes blinked at him from behind glasses, surprised. "I trust his judgment, that's why I'm going. And I am interested, just a bit nervous..."

Atsushi proceeded to gently remind Kunikida to take breaks as well and offered to make some chamomile tea before he left. Dazai barely registered any of it, pondering over Atsushi's firm tone as he said he trusted him. Those naïve words shouldn't have come across as a surprise at all, Atsushi wasn't shy to express his loyalty and gratitude for the agency time and time again, Dazai included.

But an hour later, his feet carried him to the cemetery once more.

"Hey Odasaku. Did you miss me since yesterday?" He murmured, almost bored. "I know I don't visit often, you know I hate pain." He shuffled his feet. "But I didn't come here to be bitter, my apologies." He released a string of chuckles.

"Someone... trusts me." Rolled off his tongue delicately, as if he were tasting it around. "It feels..."

Leaves rustled in a close distance, water crashed into land, traffic happened somewhere outside.

"I thought you should know that." He felt rather dumb rambling on to a grave. "You would treat it as a milestone of a sort now, huh?"

Oda never had to speak to talk to him to convey a reply. Dazai could remember the faint softening in his eye, followed by a bored hum.

"I guess I should've figured after the deal with Shibusawa-kun." He mused absently. He'd blatantly betrayed the agency for his plan to work, even braced himself with the right words and excuses for once he met back up with his coworkers, to convince them to let him stay as part of the agency. There he'd discovered how much being surrounded with such just people helped him blend in, how much he wanted to stay.

What he hadn't expected was the sweetness and relief in Atsushi's expression when he saw his mentor. When Dazai tried to explain the reason behind his treacherous actions, the tiger didn't waste a breath before stating he knew Dazai did it to save the city, and that he was a person of virtue.

People have trusted him in the past, usually because they needed something that Dazai could provide, because of how valuable Dazai could be as a strategist or with a gun-  
therefore, *having* to trust him in order to obtain their goals.

He'd had the Armed Detective Agency and the Port Mafia put him in charge of their plans and attacks at times but even then, they took the chances of betrayal into account. He figured Ranpo had contingencies prepared for the possibility when he first arrived, he knew the paranoia had driven Mori to a point of thinking over Dazai's elimination, because he thought the Demon Prodigy cared enough to steal his place.

Trust, what a pretentious construct.

And Dazai was used to it, being treated as a modern day monster, beneficial yet a gamble to shake hands with. He preferred it that way. Trust was a short-time deal in his world, and it

was easily affordable.

Then there was Atsushi with the halo around his head, standing odd in the middle of Dazai's calculated, cold world, talking about trusting him and his judgment. Dazai felt almost bad about all the dark things about him Atsushi hadn't seen to easily say that. His trust was blind to put it simply. And the less he knew the better, but that didn't sound as appealing as it should've.

He frowned and turned around, feeling his phone buzz with Kunikida's notifications.

---

"You'll have to look up from your plate eventually." A small chuckle rose from across the table, sounding melodious accompanied by a low tune playing in the restaurant. "I'm not that bad looking, Atsushi-san. Am I?"

Feeling like a deer caught in headlights, Atsushi straightened subtly, passing saliva with difficulty. "Not at all, quite the opposite actually." He admitted nervously.

Her smile wasn't arrogant, but knowing and pleased to hear the affirmation from his mouth. "Maybe the food is just exquisite then? You can't seem to tear your eyes from it."

"I- I apologize if I came across as rude." The silver hung his head in a poor imitation of a bow, brows furrowed deeply and wincing. "That's not my intention, I promise."

"I'm only teasing you." The woman rested her chin on the palm of her hand, watching him with vague amusement. "I feel like I've seen you somewhere before, it itches my brain."

"Maybe you've seen me on the news or the papers?" Atsushi rubbed his neck sheepishly when she raised an elegant eyebrow. "I'm Nakajima Atsushi, a member of the Armed Detective Agency." He politely introduced.

Recognition glinted in her chocolate eyes. "*The Weretiger*, I remember now. You're the brave hero of Yokohama, aren't you?"

"I'm just doing my job, I wouldn't call it that." The boy flustered at the gushing.

"I wonder," She leaned forward, catching him off guard. "Does the beast *emerge* at night?" Whispered the brunette in a suggestive manner Atsushi had grown to hear a lot, working

alongside Dazai and all.

"*Sakura-san*." Therefore the scandalized glare came to him as naturally as breathing, then he caught himself as she sat back reveling in his reaction. "I mean my ability is called the *beast beneath the moonlight*, but-" He spluttered as she gasped at that.

"Is it really?!"

"Not in the way you're thinking, I'm sure!"

Even her laugh was strong and fierce, Atsushi smiled weakly. "You can call me Sakura-kun if you'd prefer."

"I'm good with the former." He declined with a short nod. "But you can call me Atsushi-kun."

"I've been waiting for you to say it, *Atsushi-kun*." Sakura winked, stirring her drink.

His date had a very... bold streak in her personality. Just as he'd told Dazai when they were scrolling through the profiles, she held herself confidently and her chin high from the moment she walked through the door, not shy about exaggerating her height even more with a pair of black high heels that matched the dress. If she hadn't seen his picture before and picked him out from the crowd, the sight of that intense cattish smirk would've been enough for Atsushi to run away, too intimidated.

Atsushi tried his best to keep up with her energy, answer her questions about his job and interests as modestly as he could, throwing in his own questions to keep the conversation going. He appeared to be mostly successful as well. At least he hadn't messed up yet.

At one point she excused herself to the bathrooms and he finally slouched over, breathing out trapped air. He took out his phone after shaking the nerves out of his hands, smiling faintly at Dazai's contact name on the screen. A simple greeting and asking how the date was going.

Well, it said *are you still alive?* But the sentiment was the same. He replied positively, waiting.

*-Is she the same nice girl you had in mind, Atsushi-kun?*

*-She's... intense.*

He struggled to put it to words the best he could.

*You probably look like this, poor thing.* Attached to it an image of a tiny kitten who took the shape of a round ball, black eyes covered partially by its fur, looking like it was recoiling in fear.

Atsushi's eyes twitched, typing aggressively. *Will you please stop comparing me to\_*

"What are you smiling about, Atsushi-kun?"

The boy almost hurled his phone, startled to see Sakura standing at the table again. "N-no, it's just Dazai-san." He chuckled nervously, before remembering she wouldn't recognize him. "He's the one that signed me up on the app, uh..." He supplied and she tilted her head in intrigue. "I forgot to ask about your occupation." He rushed to change the subject. "If you don't mind."

"Not at all." Sakura didn't appear to mind in the slightest, a thrilled gleam in her eyes as she dropped the final cherry on top of her personality. "I work part-time at a grocery store to pay my rent, but I'm a psychology student."

---

Dazai arched an eyebrow at the keyboard-smash like reply he'd gotten from Atsushi before he went offline, pocketing his phone with a narrowed look to his eyes.

A certain distance away, two detectives of the agency were on duty, investigating the same warehouse again. It was their biggest piece of clue yet, and way too convenient. The red paint in the top floor and the discreetly connected rooms, it all seemed too random, maybe to throw them off their tracks, but Kunikida thought they should check it out nonetheless, which he shrugged positively to.

What they found this time was more art supplies, all of them crushed and violated, broken brushes that looked rather expensive, it belonged to the same owner as the paint, Asahi, the second nine year-old victim, and Aika's best friend, the information flashed before his eyes in a web-like structure. Maybe he'd thrown a tantrum after Aika had gone missing and ran away, only to be cornered by the gang, or the ability user specifically.

It explained at least what he was doing at such a far stranded spot. But Asahi wouldn't have ruined his paint brushes like that, not when- despite the recent damage- they looked so well-cared for. The bristles looked unused and neat, but the wooden handles were worn out, stains of blue, red and green left on them over time.

Ranpo could deduce much more than this, Dazai frowned, tapping his chin with pursed lips. The first two abductions were obviously personal, Aika's small family wasn't what one would call wealthy. She wasn't stolen for money.

And where did the gang fit into this? The one involved with the ransoms. Where did Atsushi come in?

A pair of footsteps stopped behind him. Dazai moodily turned his head. "Let's leave the rest of this mess to the police, shall we?"

"You were trying to distract him from the case." Kunikida murmured at the end, realization unraveling his expression. Dazai frowned, confused. "You set up a date for Atsushi to get him away from the crime scene." The blond reiterated, tapping his forehead with knuckles. "I-well-"

An amused smile adorned Dazai's face, watching the man switch continuously between an apologetic look and a scowl. "It's fine Kunikida, hopefully he's enjoying himself." He climbed down the stairs, his partner following suit. That didn't sound as enthusiastic as it was in his head.

Kunikida shot him a dirty look. "Are you being sour because you're on a job and he's having fun?"

"Eh? Do I look that petty to you?" Dazai asked, offended.

"Yes?"

"Kunikida-kun, please."

"I'm not here to analyze your every move, but we work together, your mood impacts my work as well." Kunikida drew back, holding his hands up in defense and annoyance. "You seem on edge today."

Dazai snapped before he could bite on his tongue. "Oh, *do I*?" He made sure to bite on it afterward, collecting himself with a sigh.

"Yes, you do. And it's childish." The blond chastised. "Get over it, you have to focus on the case."

"If you want my take, you just went too long without barking at some tree, Kunikida-kun." Dazai threw his eyebrows upward, already bored with explaining the concept. "I don't care what Atsushi-kun does."

"Are you even hearing yourself?" The taller countered. "You *set* this up."

"So you keep reminding me." The brunet rolled his eyes, hands deep in his pockets.

He could hear the gears turning in Kunikida's brain. "You don't want Atsushi to be on this date." It was an observation, not an accusation.

"There's nothing wrong with him going out, it's rather endearing to watch." Dazai flicked his wrist coolly, walking side by side to Kunikida's car. "The issue is safety here, which I'm sure Atsushi-kun can handle by himself."

"They're going to use protection." Kunikida supplied with no trace of humor in his serious tone, nodding. "I gave him the precautions before he left."

"The problem is that since he's-" Cutting himself off, Dazai blinked and double checked his hearing. "You what?"

"He'll be fine."

"This is the first date." Dazai looked at him in disbelief. "And this is Atsushi-kun we're talking about. They're not going to-"

"What if they did?" Kunikida sighed like it was no big deal.

"*What if-*" The nullifier took a deep breath, struck with an urge to clench his fists. "I *meant-* because of his delicate role in the case. We can hope there's nothing shady about Sakura-san." He clarified at the look of puzzlement he received. "Atsushi-kun's date."

"Maybe you're wishing you took her out instead?" Kunikida replied sarcastically.

"Most certainly not." The bandaged man scrunched up his nose. "My intuition is very reliable, Kunikida-kun. It hasn't failed me yet."

"Well, what about her?"

"She recommended this restaurant despite living halfway across the city." Dazai stretched one last time before they sat in the car. "Which isn't exactly the best or most popular place to travel such a distance for. That's interesting."

"What's more *interesting* is how you know her address."

"Shush Kunikida-kun, I'm trying to think." Dazai waved him off. "Eyes on the road."

"My eyes are on the road." Kunikida calmly said, a particular sharp turn sending Dazai headfirst to the window glass, murmuring *ow*. "Where are we headed now?"

As Dazai rubbed his head and latched on his seatbelt, he vaguely recalled the first text message he received from Atsushi earlier. Something about a misunderstanding about the meeting place.

He stilled in his movements. "Turn back, we're going to the restaurant."

"Why?"

"With the amount of effort put into this plan, Atsushi-kun may be the main thing they're after." He calculated, taking out his phone. Sensing the danger, Kunikida scowled and turned the stirring wheel.

All appeared to be normal when they walked through the door. The duo walked past the tables and their chatter, searching for their younger recruit. "You never told me what's going on." Kunikida demanded.

Lips pursed, Dazai's eyes didn't stop scanning, attempting to connect all the dots at the same time, and that Atsushi was nowhere he was supposed to be, sitting in one of the booths with



his stupid smile and recognizable voice. He didn't break his focus by responding to Kunikida.

"Is that them?" The man pointed and Dazai followed the gesture, landing on an exasperated Atsushi standing by the table and the woman sitting behind it laughing, her back to the duo, long brunette hair flowing down her shoulders and covering a tight, black dress.

"I assume." Dazai arched a brow, humming.

Unaware of their presence yet, Atsushi dove to catch one of the forks that fell to the ground, yelping quietly. Using that to her advantage, she reached up a hand and smacked his backside.

Kunikida watched the exchange with a growing distaste. "I don't approve of this."

"No, I'm excited to meet her." Dazai's stare darkened momentarily from his lashes and he grinned. He took even steps toward them, and Atsushi noticed him with a delay, recognition expanding his eyes.

"Dazai-san." After blinking a few times to double check, the boy exclaimed, baffled as he switched between him and Kunikida. "What are you doing here?"

Dazai wore a welcoming smile, hands in his pockets. "Business, Atsushi-kun. Sorry if we're interrupting something."

"Right now?" Was Atsushi disappointed to end his date? Well, it meant Dazai had succeeded in getting his mind off work at least.

"Are these your coworkers from the agency?" The girl spoke curiously, getting up and turning to face them.

"Oh, let me introduce you." Atsushi chuckled nervously, startled to hear her speak. He gestured between the three. "That's Kunikida-san, Kunikida-san, this is Sakura-san." He introduced, lighting up once he pointed at Dazai. "And this is my friend, Dazai-san." He gushed with a brilliant grin, like he'd been waiting ages to say that.

Dazai's charming smile froze on his face at the matching smirk ahead of him, challenging brown eyes hugged by chocolate hair, cocky and knowing.

*It was like looking into a mirror.*

Without sugarcoating anything, Dazai wasn't particularly fond of himself, he hated himself. And she was a bad replica of that, he could tell by a single look. Dazai shook off his distaste by shaking her hand and exchanging pleasantries, keeping a warm friendly exterior. "Pleased to meet you."

It was also odd, because other than the resemblance in their auras and looks, Dazai had no reason to dislike her. Hit with an unreasonable urge to punch her in the face and wipe off that smug smile, Dazai hesitated in following his own intuition.

"I could say the same for you, officers." 'Sakura' craned her neck sweetly, lacing her free hand with Atsushi's while maintaining eye contact with the brunet man. From afar, an outsider would assume their looks at each other were truly amical. "I'm honored to meet you, now I get to express my gratitude for you for protecting our city every day."

Kunikida looked almost confused in the middle. Dazai released her shaking hand and stepped back, eyeing Atsushi who cleared his throat, and briefly their intertwined hands. "We're detectives, not officers." He informed in a nonchalant manner. "Speaking of which, you don't mind if we steal Atsushi-kun away, right?" He touched the boy on the shoulder, pulling him closer to himself.

"Duty calls, officer." Looking only slightly annoyed, she did a salute and winked at Atsushi, about to leave. "Call me later, Atsushi-kun."

"Wait." Dazai released Atsushi, blinking hard as if remember the original purpose of coming here, his state of vigilance rather weak today. "This place is about to be ambushed." Kunikida cursed and Atsushi took a fighting stance, alarmed. "Kunikida-kun, inform the managers to evacuate the people as discreetly as possible, we're under surveillance."

After he was gone, he looked back at the couple, taking in how set Sakura's jaw was, traces of fear in her eyes. She was an ordinary citizen, he pursed his lips. "Atsushi-kun, what did you tell me about the location of your date getting mixed up?"

Atsushi readily took out his phone, dutiful. "Sakura-san told me to meet up here, but she received a different message, apparently."

Sakura frowned. "You said Café Uzumaki was closer to where you work, and I said it's near my university too."

"I swear you gave me this location..."

"Would you both please show me those messages?" Dazai calmly inquired, met with no resistance. As expected, the conversations on the two phones were different. Since the chats were on the dating app, it wasn't that difficult for someone to mess with it. "Sakura-san?"

"Yes?" She muttered, accepting back her phone.

"It's rather dangerous for you to stay now." A polite smile stretched his lips, as a loud bang echoed in the air. As she cursed and went to take shelter, he turned to Atsushi, who was looking at the anonymous figure standing in the middle of the room. "Familiar?"

"It's the same person I chased that night." Atsushi confirmed, quiet. "But Dazai-san, I don't think..." Dazai's eyes followed his gaze, seeing that the man wore black, face covered with a distinct mask.

Clenched hands by his side, he was radiating a red glow Dazai knew by heart after years of fighting alongside his ex partner in the Port Mafia. To wipe any doubt that might arise, the ground the assaulter stood on glowed as well, crumbles of dust and debris floating up, defying gravity itself.

"... *That was his ability last time...?!*"

"A copycat, huh?" Dazai mused, cracking a smirk. "He can replicate other existing abilities."

"Like he copied boss' ability to move through walls." Atsushi's hard thinking clicked, tone rising. "But enhanced, without the conditions."

"And now Nakahara Chuuya's *Tainted Sorrow*." The older of the two raised an eyebrow. "But he doesn't have to touch the object to manipulate its gravity." He observed as the ability user flicked his wrist and one of the tables hovered off the ground, flying at Kunikida. He wondered what the user had to do to obtain these abilities...

"We should help." Atsushi yelled at that, his hands morphing into claws as he jumped to catch the object in time.

Blinking at the conflict before him, Dazai shrugged and reached for an abandoned cup of soda.

Which Kunikida rudely shot with his gun when he went to drink it, the contents splashing over his face. "Are you absolutely kidding me?! Get over here and help, you bastard!"

"I was going to drink that." He grunted and wiped his face, sprawling on a seat. "Just keep him occupied until he passes out of exhaustion. The ability drains him quickly." He bemoaned like a child forced to answer questions.

The user visibly jolted at how easily Dazai had figured him out, giving Atsushi an opening to land a harsh tiger's punch on his head with a reckless lunge, resulting in his opponent's stagger. Dazai picked up another cup of whatever the hell it contained, sipping on it. Taking this chance to start writing on his notebook, Kunikida retreated behind with a concentrated look. "Duck, Atsushi."

"Huh?" The Weretiger turned back in confusion, a second later he was swatted off by a flying table like a pestering fly.

"Oof." Dazai winced on his behalf before grabbing the drink and approaching the intruder, splashing the contents on him and throwing him off guard again. "Oi, manipulate this." He took cover as Kunikida took charge of the battle, loading his own gun. "That one always pissed Chuuya off." He reminisced, chuckling. "... I think we're going to be here for a while."

---

"Feel like cooking tonight?" Dazai stretched the moment they walked into their dorm, turning on the lights. In an unenthusiastic reply, Atsushi crashed into the couch, groaning loudly. "I had one rule Atsushi-kun, no blood in the room." He chided with no bite, shaking his head and opening the fridge. "Dear god."

"Can we order some pizza this time?" Atsushi muffled from across the room, his body numb and paralyzed with pain. Also, he didn't feel like putting out another fire, Kunikida would probably kill them this time without hesitation.

"You're paying." Dazai sank into the cushion next to his head, looking up a number, and the boy turned so he faced the ceiling, the fluff of brown hair in his line of vision.

The copycat had gotten away at the end, much to Atsushi's frustration. But Dazai had been on point about how much using an amplified version of someone else's ability weakened them, their escape was clumsy and barely successful.

"It's too late to be thinking that hard, Atsushi-kun."

Atsushi startled out of his thoughts, chuckling as he forced his shoulders to relax. "That's true, I'm completely spent, both mentally and physically."

"Good thing you were on a date for the most of it, huh?"

"That was more stressful than working, Dazai-san." The albino grumbled, running hands down his face. "I'm actually kind of glad to be back home." A faint but sincere smile shone through his tired and dirty face, catching Dazai's slightly surprised eyes above. "It's nice and quiet. She was very pretty and funny, but here I don't have to worry about what to say or how to act-" He cut himself off before he rambled, cheeks dusting pink. "Y-you know, this is comfortable."

"Oh." Was all Dazai showed, maybe a slightly content chuckle. "Home you say?"

Atsushi bit on a squeak, searching for words. "Well, i-it's not like *you* pay for the stuff. Didn't you say?" Amusement twinkled in Dazai's gaze, fueling his embarrassment, so Atsushi slipped out his phone and held it up facing him, biting on his lip.

Arms folding behind his head, Dazai tilted his head back and dropped it, fortunately for him. "What is it?"

"Ah, I'm just texting Sakura-san." The man above paused, slowly sitting straight.

"Oh yeah?" He hummed with amusement.

Atsushi hummed back, trying to seem nonchalant and not like he was nervous, typing on the screen. "I want to make sure if she finally got home safe-" He was cut off as a bandaged hand came into view, slowly pushing the phone away until it was on his chest and not the center of attention anymore. "I- h-huh...?" He dared look up to see Dazai's smiling figure looking

down on him, the same casual look to him as always. He always looked good, whether he emerged from a shower, a battle or a sandstorm.

Not letting go of the hand that was previous holding the now-forgotten phone, Dazai's thumb subtly drew circles on the back of it, making Atsushi's breath hitch. "You're hurt, my dear friend." His touch trailed the cuts and bruises appearing across Atsushi's arms, sending a shiver throughout his body. "What do you say we patch you up?" He muttered, hooded eyes flickering over the injuries briefly.

Atsushi's throat dried, heart beating in his throat, unwanted feelings creeping into his cheeks, surfacing when he'd just managed to fend them off.

The neglected phone slipped off the couch and quietly on the floor.

"Yes." Atsushi breathed out.

---

## Chapter End Notes

I am very tired so I might edit some parts, feel free to point out my spelling mistakes and stuff. Will respond to the comments later<3

I rewrote 'jealous' Dazai so many times because none of the behavior types and dialogues felt right, it all added up to this. So Dazai mistakes his jealousy for intuition, because he's always been able to trust his intuition about people and situations.

And as always, tell me what you think^-^

# Wish that I'm not in love with you (So I can let you go)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dazai tended to Atsushi's injuries with a gentleness he didn't remember last time. Slender hands brushed against pale skin and lingered, whereas they used to keep the contact to minimum. Now they patiently examined the tiger's arms and torso, before tracing the sensitive surroundings of that final gash, bent in an ugly curve around Atsushi's waist.

The boy in question flinched at the damp cloth that dabbed his injury, trying not to react strongly. Rolling up the hem of his shirt, he leaned back where he was using the edge of the bathtub for support, unsure of how he could be the least burden as Dazai casually cleaned and wrapped those ugly lacerations, with an almost clinical focus. Maybe he shouldn't breathe? Perhaps that was an inconvenience on Dazai's delicate work.

He ended up stretching back as he awkwardly pushed down the hem of his pants as much as possible- modesty-wise- offering more access, since the tear bordered his hip bone.

Cut off by the sound of more bandages being ripped out, Atsushi hadn't even begun to speak. Dazai tore them with his teeth like he'd done this a hundred times and Atsushi's eyes followed the shredding.

Old habits, he guessed. He imagined Dazai had had to multitask at times while tending to urgently bleeding soldiers back in his mafia days. Being sanitary hadn't been the highest priority. Oddly enough, it just gave Atsushi a sense of security.

Well, he couldn't just stand there. "Thank-"

"Don't mention it."

The reply was quick, expecting and bland.

Atsushi bit his lip, displeased at the subtle command behind it. He tried to put together calculated words. "You're acting kind of strange today." He resumed chewing on his lip when Dazai raised his chin and therefore, attention. His front bangs gave a small bounce with the action.

"Strange?" If anything, Dazai looked as confused as him. "In what sense?"

Taking the coward's way out, Atsushi looked away like he were studying the interior of the bathroom. "Never mind." He lamely cleared his throat.

“Come on.” The other rolled his eyes. “That was a cheap move.”

“I just- I don’t understand- I’m not sure how to explain.” The boy defended, growing flustered. “Or if I’m even allowed to pry.”

“You sure can try.” Dazai laughed at his expression. “That’s how friends are, Atsushi-kun.” That word brought a shy smile to Atsushi’s face.

“What do friends do together, usually?” He craned his neck.

Dazai gave a long hum. “Drink?”

“Seriously? Alcohol?” Atsushi blurted before remembering an absent remark from his mentor about having few friends in the past.

Dazai just flicked his wrist, ignoring him. “And it’s easy to explain. Just say what you noticed that is bothering you and why. For example, I noticed Atsushi-kun has been quiet and wary today, so I think he’s head-deep in his own ass again where his thoughts are.”

Atsushi suppressed his annoyance, and embarrassment. “W-well, I noticed Dazai-san is being particularly erm, caring, so I think of it as a calm before the storm. I wonder what kind of trouble he will get me into soon.” He raised an eyebrow.

“Hey, I have no ulterior motives.” Dazai had the audacity to look offended. “You’ve been hanging around Kunikida-kun too much. And besides-” The corner of his lips stretched into a playful smirk, ringing alarm bells in the younger’s head. His experienced hands worked the bandages swiftly around Atsushi’s waist. “You and I both know you don’t mind showing these off to everyone.” His tone rose and fell in a melody, low.

“Um, what?” A nervous chuckle escaped him. His heart jumped like a sparrow restless to fly away. “Haha, what do you mean?” Almost slapping his forehead at the dumb reply.

"Do you find the bandages to be a *dashing* fashion item?" Dazai's eye had a twinkle in it, undeterred by his stammering. Atsushi swallowed, alarms ringing in his head.

Atsushi clenched his right hand into a fist, feeling the fabric wrapped around his palm. “It's not that, I'm a bit sentimental is all." It was too late to go back now, Dazai's gaze slowly traveled up to meet Atsushi’s strained one. “Y-you already know that.”

"Oh, I'm aware."

"Even if I pretend it means more than it actually does, it's nice to look at them and remember you did them for me." Atsushi completed in a shameful whisper, looking away. A strange loneliness towered over him lately, coaxing him into a bolder state. “I think it even helps me with my nightmares.”

"I... I see." He missed the subtle way Dazai startled before recomposing himself. "*Pretend...* you like to make yourself sound pathetic, don't you?"

"Isn't that what I am?" Atsushi murmured. "The pathetic stray cat?" He attempted to joke but it came out as a grimace.

"You're still my pathetic stray cat." Dazai sang cheerfully and ruffled the silver hair.

Atsushi's breath caught in his throat, those words making his heart skip a beat. Dazai didn't look disgusted with Atsushi for his little confession, nor like he was about to mock the boy.

He cursed his untimely heart. "And you're a dumbass on top of all that."

The urge to melt into the hand on his hair was...

"Anywhere else you're injured?"

The boy hesitated, all of a sudden finding the pattern of the floor tiles fascinating.

Atsushi tried not to entertain the thought at all, but being under Dazai's attentive care was dangerous for him. Every time Dazai as much as looked his way wearing that cattish smile, it stirred up his emotions like a wild tornado, uncaring of what it destroyed in its path. When they stood too close in a cramped train and Atsushi found himself face to chest with the other, so close he could smell the cologne on him, his mind went blank, unable to think of anything else.

Atsushi tried and tried not to think too much about it. He told himself it'll pass.

If he tried hard enough, he could ignore the sickness he felt whenever Dazai flirted with the waitress downstairs, or not think about how nice the bandaged hand felt on his when they accidentally brushed. He really did. It was exhaustion, he told himself, that he was just confused and frustrated over work.

But could he get over it if Dazai kept talking to him, teasing him, *playing* with him like this? What was this sorcery?

"Is something wrong? You look pale."

He met the nullifier's brown eyes, watched something in them unravel, like a sudden discovery.

"I'm okay, Dazai-san." Atsushi found himself whispering to match the aura, but he was in fact not okay. He wished... he wished, selfishly. "Just... a little tired."

Up against Dazai he was nothing but an open book. So of course he'd sense something off with his subordinate, of course he'd notice.

"Ah, I see..."

As for the poor tiger, his insides were burning, clearly restless at the vulnerability that was sure to simmer in his eyes- but he *couldn't* look away for the life of him, if only to hide and keep his secrets.



Dazai couldn't read minds, right?

The man sighed in his familiar theatrics. "I guess you've been working too hard lately. You should relax more."

Seeping through the cracked window was the gentle chirp of crickets, the streets rather peaceful this late at night.

"I'm just doing my job, Dazai-san, but thank you for looking out for me." He chewed his lower lip, vaguely aware of how close they were standing.

"Of course." Dazai whispered back coolly, hands in his pockets as his back took a small bend forward to match their heights. "What are friends for?"

Atsushi tilted his head up, feeling his cheeks heat up. "I... could get used to this- 'basic human rights'."

Dazai's mouth twitched up in a rare way, it wasn't his usual teasing or charming smirk. This type of smile reached the rest of his face and made his eyes soften. It was Atsushi's favorite smile- he thought, lingering on the other's lips. Like watching a guarded rose bud bloom, just as tender, wonderful and natural...

"How rude, Atsushi-kun. My eyes are up here." Dazai arched an amused brow and joked, startling him back to reality.

"N-no, I was just-!"

"I'm joking. You can stare all you want, I won't judge!"

In his clumsiness, the albino attempted to lean away, forgetting he was sitting on the edge of the bathtub, so he almost fell back into it with a yelp before Dazai caught him swiftly, arm snaking around his waist.

"Careful." Dazai laughed and Atsushi felt his ears redden, wide distracted eyes fell on those deceptive lips yet again. "Oh, you're so cute."

Oh.

*Oh.*

If Atsushi thought he was gone before, now he stopped functioning entirely, all the air punched out of his poor guts. And there might as well be a loading sign above Dazai's head as he processed what he'd just said, his smile dumb and comical.

"I mean," Dazai backed up with an awkward chuckle. "That's not what I was going to say."

"I get that, it's okay." Atsushi croaked, nodded and sat straight. "I called Kunikida-san mom this one time." It was enough to break the strange tension, as they both shared a snort.

“Dear god-” Dazai shook his head, looking considerably less uneasy and about to comment when a knock on the front door interrupted their conversation. He perked up. “Ooh, that must be the delivery guy. I’ll be right back.”

“N-no, you go ahead. I’ll clean up and catch up.” Radiating with nervous energy, he watched Dazai leave the bathroom, struggling to regulate his breathing as he got to work. He put all of his confusion aside, he could think about it later, or never. There was nothing to ponder over, it seemed like they cleared up the misunderstanding very well just now.

And Atsushi was mature enough not to think about that comment further, he reassured himself as he threw away the bloodied cotton wools and put away the supplies, lips pressed until thin and pout determined, though he didn’t seem aware of it.

Dinner was spent in relative silence with both parties chewing on their slices of pizza. Atsushi dared steal a glance, shoulders drawn in, and noticed Dazai had a slightly pensive look to him.

It took quite a few minutes to build up courage. “Are you okay?” He asked softly, quietly.

Dazai blinked, as if remembering he existed. “Ah, of course.” He nodded slightly, looking a little displeased. At what, Atsushi couldn’t tell. “Anyway Atsushi-kun, Kunikida-kun and I were talking earlier.”

“What about?” Atsushi craned his neck in intrigue.

“Your accommodation of course. I think the agency agrees you’re capable enough to defend yourself, so you can move back into your room again.” He flicked his wrist to brush it off. “Last time we were caught off guard by the attack, but I hear new manners of security are being installed.”

He was pleasantly surprised at first. “Oh wow, that’s amazing.” The tiger took a moment to register all that, a sort of a dread pooling in his guts. Had he crossed a line without realizing it? Maybe that’s why Dazai looked disturbed, maybe that was why he’s getting kicked out-

“You’re not getting kicked out you dramatic cat!” Dazai scrunched up his nose in annoyance.

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You do realize you were thinking aloud.”

Atsushi squirmed at the raised eyebrow. “Oh.”

“Here.” Something compact was handed into his grip. “Look into this whenever you can.” Atsushi raised his fist to realize he was holding a USB flashdrive. At first he thought it concerned their current case, so he accepted with a nod, with at a closer inspection, he froze. “Then report back to me, tell me your thoughts.” Dazai monotoned.

“Dazai-san.” Atsushi looked up in utter bafflement, and a little panic. “Th-his is...”

“I’m well aware.” Dazai calmly watched the gears in his head turn.

“I-it's the one I gave you, these are...” *These are your government files!* Atsushi ran a confused hand through his hair, looking back at the other. “Why would you give this to me?”

Dazai slowly stood up, dusting himself. He spent a moment in silence, looking at a mold in the wall.

“Do you trust me, Atsushi-kun?” The smooth question rose.

Atsushi didn't skip a beat raising his chin with certainty. “Yes.”

“Do you honestly think...” Atsushi stiffened when Dazai looked at him, suppressing a cold shiver. He hadn't noticed when the temperature in the room dropped. “I'm a good person?”

“Well, yes.” Atsushi truthfully responded, although he was unsure of where the conversation was taking them.

The bandaged man took a deep breath through the mouth. Something left his mouth like “*Ah, what a fool.*” but Atsushi couldn't hear him properly. “I want you to take whatever you see fit from this drive, then report back to me.”

“What do you mean, *report back?*” Atsushi's tone rose slightly, the nerves eating at him.

Dazai turned his head to face him, an expression full of nothing, hooded eyes reflective like a black depthless pond. “Decide whether or not I'm still worth respecting.” Atsushi watched with wide eyes, shocked at the sudden revelation of tone. “Maybe you changed your mind.”

“I- I...” Something in the darkness of Dazai's eyes pierced through him, so he clutched the flash drive tighter. “I will.” He whispered curtly. “I promise.”

This was more than just a request. It was Dazai's trust he was holding in the hands of his foolish self.

“But before I go,” Atsushi spoke up after a moment of deep thinking. “Can we play one last match?” He hopefully looked up.

Dazai blinked twice, as if to check his hearing. “You're that desperate to get your ass kicked?”

“Hey, I'm going to win eventually.” Atsushi did his best glare, trying to lighten the mood.

“Very well then.” Dazai rolled his eyes halfheartedly and went to set up the console. Atsushi beamed when he received his controller, and soon things went back to how they were before, much to his mind's ease.

Atsushi took great comfort in the familiarity of their banter and deep down, he hoped Dazai did too. Because when he woke up on the couch early next morning with a disheveled Dazai sprawled over him, limiting his oxygen supply, he found that this was the single most refreshing nap of his life.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry guys I was gonna write a longer chapter but irl has been stressful, this is all:'D

# I want your love until it all runs out

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

---

Dazai blinked the grogginess out of his vision, double checking the sight of a certain silver-haired subordinate drooling over his shirt.

"Eh?" His first thought was to shove him off, but he just leaned back on propped elbows. He easily recalled the past night, which they lost track of the hours playing games and apparently and eventually fell asleep. So much for his promise to Kunikida about not depriving Atsushi of sleep, he snorted.

So much for sending Atsushi back to his room, he watched the boy's shoulders rise and fall peacefully, stirring when he felt his makeshift pillow move. Atsushi then subconsciously nuzzled closer and Dazai thought he was getting too comfortable, in a deadpan.

Atsushi released a yelp when he was rolled off to the ground, startling awake. "Hah? W-what's the emergency?!"

Dazai couldn't help but puff out a sassy breath. "This time, it's *your* fault if you're late to work. I was all for sticking to an early bedtime."

Atsushi blinked dumbly, having yet to wake up fully. His hair stuck out in odd angles. "But... today's a saturday."

"That just means you're not going to the office, Atsushi-kun. I'm sure Kunikida-kun has plans for us." Dazai stretched and made his way to the kitchen, setting water to boil.

He heard a sigh. "That's true. I understand, with the havoc going around lately."

"No rest for the wicked indeed." The older of the two chuckled, turning his head at the clumsy rustling. "Leaving?"

"Yes! I've already overstayed my welcome." Atsushi laughed nervously as he grabbed all the personal belongings in sight, drawing out an eye-roll from the other. "I was supposed to go last night after the match, but I guess we were both a little tired."

*One of us maybe a little more.*

"Here." Dazai handed him the nearly forgotten toothbrush on the isle, then resting his forearms on it, watching Atsushi mumble under his breath with amusement. "All done?"

"I think so." The tiger nodded a bit sheepishly, chewing his lip. "My wounds are gone, but I still need a shower."

"Take one then, you still have plenty before you get called." Dazai shrugged, catching the movement of the silver playing absently with the bandages around his palm. Holding back a smile, his glance jumped back to the face and he innocently put his chin on his knuckles.

"If you ever needed to change those, you can just come to me- don't be shy." Using the whistling kettle as an excuse, Dazai turned around to hide his immediate grimace, he cursed himself silently. He didn't need to look at Atsushi to know he was bright red.

He was messing with the boy too much.

"Nope! No, *thank you*." Atsushi stammered lightly, loud as he stomped away. Dazai almost released his breath in relief, but there was a pause. "Oh and um, Dazai-san?"

"Yes?" He calmly voiced.

"Should I call Sakura-san back?"

"... Why are you asking *me*?"

"I-" Atsushi was quickly cut off.

"It's your choice. Do you like her?" He reached for the cabinets for the teabags.

"Well..." The boy trailed off timidly.

"You do, splendid then. Go for it." Dazai pushed it shut after retrieving the object.

"I- I don't know." Atsushi was cracking his knuckles again, an indication of his anxiety.

"Maybe you can help me-"

"Look," Patience growing thin, Dazai moved until he could see that tornado-struck albino hair. "I set you up with that girl because you were really invested about this case." He admitted in rare honesty, hands resting on his hips. Atsushi's eyes widened, his little prepared speech forgotten. "I thought it might raise your spirits, not give you new things to stress about." ... *Or be distracted with*. "Heck if I know what works for you." He blew off in a melodramatic way, turning completely on his heel, wishing Atsushi would take his leave soon.

"I... I'm grateful for that." Atsushi sounded vaguely distracted. "You did end up helping me, Sakura-san is pleasant to be around. At this point, I'm kind of... more..."

The ex mafioso continued preparing his tea, every flick of his wrist and his movements mindless. Unfortunately, the tips of fingers were arctic, hiding tremors of cold, and he couldn't will away the suffocating snake around his throat as he usually would.

All held back by the world's most pathetic mask, the ugliest smile, the fakest emotions.

The tiger finally spoke, sounding small. "Are you okay?"

There was a sharp clink, the teaspoon that slipped from those carefully cloaked fingers into the cup. Dazai's frozen stare was on the sight.

"Dazai-san," Atsushi whispered, lacking confidence but still determined. "I thought it about it all night, and... if you're going through something, I understand. Say the word, and I'll put the flashdrive you gave me back on the table, no questions asked. Otherwise I'll take it home and read it, like you asked."

Nakajima Atsushi against the rest of the world, in a way, was the tale of a fierce snowstorm trying to fight an entire volcanic eruption. He would eventually run out, dissipate, get reduced to nothing in the way of saving others.

But, a bandaged hand hovered over Dazai's chest, tracing the little black cat he hid underneath his vest. But while it lasted, he liked how each snowflake felt on his skin. It was as if the blizzard warmed his cold breath.

That didn't mean he wanted to watch it end someday.

"You know- for someone who doesn't want to burden me with his existence, you sure are still standing here." He muttered. Expecting Atsushi to retort in his little moment of courage, he waited for several seconds.

Only to be greeted with the low click of the door closing. When he turned around, the room was empty.

"Atsushi-kun..." Dazai sighed quietly. There was no sign of the flashdrive in sight.

Good, he told himself, back to his morning beverage, following something of a routine before he headed out. Hopefully the Weretiger would lay off after this, for his own good.

On a separate note, he felt strangely refreshed. He usually wasn't able to fall asleep in his own dorm, kept up by his thoughts or a vigilance carved into his system over time. The only place that he found allowed him some proper shut-eye was the agency, where he didn't feel the need to remain alert, and the comfortable background noise was the perfect lullaby.

Hooded eyes fell on the couch once more as he tucked his bolo tie in place and shrugged on his coat, allowing himself to think a minute longer about the issue before heading out.

He spent the day corresponding with Ango, hanging around in the agency's go-to café, evading the waitress' passive aggressive attempts to get him to pay his tab, and- in his free time- countering it with another proposal.

"But belladonna-" He took her hand and gasped. "You would be so graceful with your fingers strangling my neck."

Used to his mannerism, she merely smiled at him. "Your friends would be quite upset with me if you're dead, Dazai-san."

"I'm *sure* they would celebrate my wish finally coming true." He leaned back in his seat.

She put a cup of tea in front of him, giving him a polite bow. "Then I hope all of Dazai-san's wishes come true."

"That's very kind of you." Dazai smiled.

"Speaking of, where are your coworkers?" She craned her neck.

"On duty. I'm actually waiting for a call to join them." He lied. He had no idea where the others were. All he knew was Atsushi had begged the president to let him interview the victims' families again. Where everyone was focused on the possible next victims and physical clues, the boy clung to humane and emotional logics. How very Atsushi of him, he hummed a heartfelt chuckle, tapping out a rhythm and thinking about their earlier interaction.

As a strategist, this was a terrible move on his part. After all, Atsushi was such an enthusiastic pawn in his possession, to plant purposeful seeds of doubt in his mind would be beyond foolish.

That sad little orphan boy had- without realizing it- driven Dazai up the wall he spent his entire life behind, made him question himself.

Against his pessimistic mentality, Osamu would find himself admiring a quiet breezy day, the drum of individual raindrops on a roof, or a small plant growing through thick concrete, its determination to survive reminding him absently of his subordinate- who lingered on his mind at the most questionable times.

The nullifier would go as far as saying his judgment was messed with! It felt like his actions weren't his own, the most prominent example being the previous night, when he offered to help Atsushi with his injuries. He didn't know what came over him to even suggest that, he shook his head with that thought. This was starting to become a problem, and it needed to stop. Maybe some distance would do.

He slowly brought the cup to his lips and sipped, only to wince and pull a face. "Hot!"

"Be careful." Startled the waitress. "You'll burn yourself if you're this distracted."

"I just remembered I already had tea at home." Setting it down, Dazai fanned his mouth. He blinked with the realization. "Dear, I *am* distracted."

The woman retrieved a dry cloth to clean with, hiding a giggle. "I wonder why."



---

He rustled through the dossiers on his desk, which appeared to glare back at him after so many hours of research and looking through.

"Come on, I gotta be missing something." Frustrated, Atsushi muttered, his voice echoing in the empty office. He was the only one staying behind after work hours, which was rare. Usually Kunikida stayed too and they both quietly worked together. It brought the Weretiger a great deal of peace.

Nothing made sense and even though he'd already browsed the suspect list several times, he had a nag the answer was far more simple than he could think of, and it was driving him insane.

"Ah, there you are Atsushi-kun."

"Dazai-san." Surprised by the familiar voice, the boy straightened from his crouch. "What are you doing here?"

"That's a rude way to greet your senpai." The man took graceful steps toward him, very similar to a cat's, and his sand coat flew behind him swiftly. "Why I'm here to take you back."

"Just a few more hours." Atsushi groaned, his forehead falling onto the mess in front of him. "I promise I'm close to figuring something out."

"Mhm, and how's your progress been so far?" The younger winced.

"Point taken, but no need to be snarky."

"Just an observation." Chuckling under his breath, Dazai walked up behind him. "If you want to stay, I guess I'll stay too."

Atsushi's expression softened. "That's kind of you, but don't you rather sleep? It's pretty late."

"Oh nonsense, I prefer your company." Atsushi could feel his cheeks warming up, smiling down fondly at the written profile of some serial killer.

"So do I, Dazai-san." He delicately tucked the longer bang of his hair behind his ear before mentally slapping himself, back to work. His attention didn't last long when he felt Dazai lean over to glance at the files. The taller one's chest stuck to his shoulder and the space between them became practically non-existent. Atsushi's heart raced as if he'd just run a marathon, he just hoped that the other's hearing wasn't so acute that he could hear him. He swallowed with difficulty.

"You know, you really do work too much." There was no need for Dazai to sound louder than a whisper, and it tickled Atsushi's ear in a pleasant way.

"Shouldn't I?" Some uncertainty crawled into Atsushi's tone, his exhaustion crashing into him when Dazai began slowly rubbing his shoulders, taking away the tension in them. "I mean it's..." A yawn cut him off. "My job..."

"You deserve this the little bit of rest..." The- quote unquote- senpai was the literal devil on his shoulder, coaxing him little by little as he slipped into a firm knee-weakening back massage that hit all the right spots, washing away his protests.

Atsushi's eyes slipped closed, his face was on fire, but he couldn't deny how good it felt. He liked it when Dazai-san took care of him, he liked it very much. "I guess... maybe this once. But I still need to finish-" Interrupted by the tut coming from behind him, Atsushi shut up effectively.

"You're not going anywhere." The man chuckled slyly, kneading where his shoulders met the neck, drawing out a groan of relief. "I have business with you..."

And he didn't want to. Atsushi relaxed under those skilled hands, letting them render him pliable until he melted into a pool on his desk. He let out an embarrassing sound when the man pushed his body more over the desk, until he was bent over.

He felt so good, even before he felt Dazai's lips brush against the back of his neck. He gasped, and timidly basked in the feeling of Dazai taking over all his senses...

...

Wait, that's not how it happened.

Letting a strangled noise, Atsushi threw off his blanket immediately after waking up, cursing loudly as he headed straight to the shower, turning the water to ice cold.

Only when he was shivering wildly from the temperature drop, naked in the tub did he let himself even acknowledge what he just experienced.

"What would they think if they found out? E-everyone from the agency, *Dazai-san*-!" He hysterically buried his face into his hands, rocking back and forth. "Oh god, what the hell was that? What's wr-wrong with me?" His teeth chattered from the cold, and even though his situation was gone, he refused to turn on the hot water. "*What's wrong with me?!*"

He grabbed his phone at the first thought, trying not to get it wet, and sent a paragraph long text before putting it back on the edge of the sink. "Okay... okay."

"It wasn't that bad though, was it? It was nothing." Turning off the faucet, he laughed aloud, ignoring that he sounded like a maniac. "Dazai-san saved me, I will not repay him with such disrespect." He paced in the room, talking to himself, firmly so. "And he doesn't like men- n- not that it's relevant, obviously this is some kind of a fever dream. Gosh, I better have a fever." He cursed. "A-and we work together. And he's *Dazai-san!* It's self-explanatory!" He pointed accusingly at the mirror. "You- you freak!"

For a moment, all that echoed off the tiles was his own panting and a confused, frankly sad person looking back at him, shoulders sagging before he calmed down.

"Dazai-san would hate me for this." He sighed and winced, running a hand down his face. "It's fine, it's fine. I'm just... tired." He rubbed his upper arm awkwardly. "He's not going to know." He added the last part quietly, but that made it worse, it made it sound real.

It was hard to fall asleep after that, he tossed and turned for a while. The disturbing part was how it caught him off guard, because that was a distorted version of an actual memory. It had happened a few nights ago where Atsushi was overworking and Kunikida had sent Dazai to retrieve him. The dream was more or less accurate, with the man walking in, even saying he wanted to keep Atsushi company, just minus the... innuendos, to put it delicately. And the massage. All Dazai had done was annoy him for a while before napping on the couch while he worked.

He barely noticed when he finally drifted off again.

---

## Chapter End Notes

Guys we reached 400 kudos, that's wild. Thank you for reading my silly story :>

You know, I might not eat 3 meals a day but I will drink at least 3 cups of tea. I drink it when I wake up, I drink it at noon, and we drink it together whenever there's a family gathering or I'm visiting a friend, there's just a lot of tea involved in my life. I almost forgot it's not normal for Dazai to order tea when he just drank it

Be honest, did you think the dream scene was really happening at first?:3

# When your heart floods with loneliness and begins to waste away...

## Chapter Notes

Team bonding, momkida and trauma 🥰🙏

Also guys title this time is from Namae O Yobu Yo, please notice pleasepleaseplease

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

The gloved hand rose to knock.

Then fell back into place. Atsushi swore under his breath, running his fingers through unruly strands of silver hair, which stuck out from all angles. The collar to his dress shirt was a bit crumpled, and under his caramel-drizzled ametrine eyes was noticeably dark from a very long week.

He bit on his chapped lips, chewing as he rocked on his feet nervously, contemplating whether to rip the band-aid off and open the door, or just turn around and go straight back to his apartment, taking the coward's way out for once. Atsushi had never skipped work before, but after these past days, well, it was safe to say his usual enthusiasm to return to the office was far gone.

Even if he found the guts to go inside, his next debate would be whether to find Dazai's favorite book and make use of a random page.

"Come on, you made it through the whole week." He mumbled, missing a pair of footsteps approaching. "Just another day..."

"How long have you been standing there?" A feminine voice deadpanned, making him stiffen.

He'd been spotted, he realized in dread. Escape was no longer an option, unless he counted the slight breeze that was flowing in the corridors, which told him about an open window nearby, perfect for a jump...

His shoulders slumped in defeat, pushing the office door open for her. "Good morning Yosano-sensei."

The doctor's huff of amusement echoed from her lips. "So you finally realized?"

"Realized... what?" Atsushi's brows furrowed, eyeing the floor, hesitant to trail behind her. He squinted at the interior of the room, crouching behind the doorframe. Eyes sharp for any signs of a familiar brown fluff of hair, he crawled behind the chairs, making about halfway to his desk. This had become his careful routine lately to avoid a certain suicidal enthusiast, and strangely enough, he very rarely bumped into him. Maybe lady luck took pity on him for once.

"Oi Atsushi, quit crawling around." Ranpo was the one to sigh out his annoyance. "Go get me some candy, I'm hungry."

Caught in his not so subtle act of hiding, the tiger suppressed a grimace, awkwardly standing up, pulling at his sleeves. "Of course." He simply opened the small drawer in his desk and picked up the pre-bought snacks he'd hid there for such occasions, marching them up to where Ranpo laid his feet on top of the table, eyeing Atsushi with a raised eyebrow. "There you go, Ranpo-san." He showed a warm smile.

"But I don't want the green ones." His senior crossed his arms, pouting.

"I just wrapped them in green so no one would want to eat them." Atsushi bowed lightly. *Otherwise you would've taken care of the stash already.*

Ranpo looked taken rarely by surprise, blinking between the items and Atsushi before accepting them with a quiet thanks.

Satisfied with the response, Atsushi nodded and settled behind his desk, stifling a yawn before pulling close the pile of dossiers on his desk, remnants of the day prior, and began flipping through them. More time in the office meant he could redirect all his attention on one aspect of the case, research. And so far it had been rewarding.

Mindlessly rubbing his eyes, he frowned at the profile he'd managed to create, not for the suspect but for the first victim of their case, the little girl named Aika. Atsushi's thoughts drifted to what Dazai had mentioned, about how Atsushi was-

His eye gave a subtle twitch, discarding the thought. No, he wasn't going to dwell on that now. Focus was needed on the task at hand, he quickly pushed aside any thoughts of Dazai.

The knowledge that she'd come from an orphanage explained a lot about the haunted look in her icy eyes, and how it resonated so strongly with Atsushi when he first saw them. He understood her pain to the flesh and bone, at least partly.

Punishments, isolation and the constant bullying from other kids, being singled out and alone for so long. The staff members were more often than not careless or cruel, the nights were too long and too restless, even the moon shone dimmer from behind those dusty windows. And stars were practically non-existent, not unless you found a way to reach the open sky.

If there was something Atsushi had no regrets about, it would be those times where he felt bold enough to sneak out to his hidden spot on the rooftop, away from prying eyes. As a kid, he loved watching the black canvas above for hours as the soft breeze caressed his face, mesmerized by each twinkling diamond painted across it, adorning the moon.

He was getting ahead of himself again, Atsushi reminded himself, gently pushing that thought away as well. Taking one last glance at Aika's portrait, he moved on to the explanation underneath, tracking the words with his finger.

"Atsushi-kun," Tanizaki's soft tone hesitated, making the boy in question look up. "Have you eh, been taking enough breaks?"

Atsushi blinked for a moment, prominent dark circles surrounding his eyes. "Of course, why would you ask?"

"For some reason, I find that hard to believe."

"Brat, you've been overworking yourself." Kunikida joined in. He looked less interested in beating around the bush than the ginger, judging from the firm glare he had directed at Atsushi. The tiger opened his mouth to object. "These reports are the sloppiest work I've ever seen... We need to have a talk."

Atsushi froze and his heart dropped a little. Those were the words, those terrible, nightmare-inducing words. Coming from his superior, it sounded more like a threat than anything.

*What did I do...?* Was the only thing that echoed in his mind. Kunikida stood over him now, arms crossed and his tone stern. "A talk? You want to... have a t-talk?" He tried to hide his nervousness, only failing miserably.

"Relax, I just want to know the hell's wrong with you." Resting his hands on the edge of the desk, Kunikida muttered, even and grounding. "It's not like you to half-ass your job."

"I promise to fix my mistakes." The albino hung his head low. "Just give me another chance, I-I'll be useful." He rushed out.

"What?" Kunikida eyed him incredulously. "Atsushi, you're a fine employee, usually. The issue here is I just watched you doodle black cats all over your papers for thirty minutes." Atsushi jolted slightly, retracting his hand.

"I didn't mean to slack off, Kunikida-san." Atsushi squared his shoulders, feet tapping the floor nervously. "I might be... having a little trouble sleeping, that's it. I didn't realize it would affect me like this, I apologize."

Kunikida raised a guessing eyebrow. "It has something to do with Dazai, doesn't it?"

*Cool lips pressing onto the back of his neck, spidery fingers pushing him over the desk.*

"What- n-no!" His mouth dried, cogs in his brain getting stuck for a moment. "What does he have to do with- uh-" He shoved down his internal panic. "What made you think something like that?"

Kunikida leaned back with a sigh, pinching the bridge of his nose. "It's just a random guess, like you said." Atsushi dared release the air trapped in his chest. "And oh, I don't know, maybe the way you've been completely *avoiding him like the plague?*" As he said this, his mock clueless expression morphed into something *pissed*.

Atsushi blanched and in the other side of the room, Ranpo's muffled snort was heard. "Avoiding? I- I'm not avoiding anyone." If his chuckle sounded slightly breathless or hysterical, no one commented. His eyes searched for an escape. "M-maybe we should stop to consider that not everything is about Dazai-san."

Atsushi could barely think of any words, dumbly rambling on. He hadn't quite prepared himself for a confrontation. So he just cleared his throat like the slick tiger he was. "I just happened to have a couple of rough nights, no big deal." He waved it off as unimportant. "Thinking about your typical unrelated things, and unrelated breakdowns." He nodded seriously, wanting to slap himself in the forehead. Abort, *abort*. That was terrible, for god's sake.

Fortunately, the man was accustomed to his pitiful way of talking. "What did he do?" Kunikida growled with a hint of threat.

Now he was confused. "Huh? Nothing, I swear!"

A slender finger pointed his way. "The weirdest part isn't that you're avoiding that suicidal maniac. Trust me, that part I understand." Somehow Atsushi doubted that, but appreciated the gesture nonetheless. "It's that he's avoiding you *back*."

Lips pursed, the tiger kept his neutral eyes on the written words in front of him, even though it felt like he'd been punched in the gut. Kunikida was right, he just hadn't wanted to acknowledge it. Atsushi should be happy about that, after all he was the one who wanted to avoid Dazai. This just made his work easier.

"Kunikida-san, you remember Aika Hayashi, right?" He quietly began, changing the subject, lacking the previous energy.

With an irritated sigh, Kunikida accepted the dossier Atsushi offered him, briefly skimming it. "Did something new come up? Another ransom? You've been in contact with the mother, yes?"

"Yes, and that's the thing, the kidnappers have made no move to reach out to Ms. Hayashi. No ransom, no demands, no threat. I don't think Aika's disappearance was on a whim, or for money." He explained, struggling not to show how heavy his eyelids felt. He straightened in his seat, determined. "Sir, I want permission to investigate the girl instead, I believe there may be a direct connection between her and the case."

"That's not your brightest idea, kid." Kunikida's frown was passive, lips pursed in doubt.

"I thought you'd say that, so I already prepared something in that file." Atsushi pointed delicately at the item Kunikida held. "Did you know she's originally from an orphanage?"

"An orphanage?"

"I did some research to find it, and it was suspiciously difficult to get my hands on any information." Atsushi heard the crack of his fingers before he realized he was doing it. "But I finally got it, and now it makes... much more sense." He forced a chuckle.

"... She's from *your* orphanage, Atsushi?" The declaration was loud, and it grabbed the attention of the others.

Atsushi took a deep breath, nodding as he chewed on his lip. The new topic sent strange chills up his spine, but he shook it off, summoning courage into his lungs.

"No wonder you're so protective over this whole thing." Kunikida mumbled so quietly that he almost missed it, then louder. "Do you think you might have seen her before?"

The boy rested a thoughtful knuckle under his chin. "She's just seven years old, so I doubt it. Especially since the last few years, I was barely allowed out of my cage. So I couldn't have seen her." He muttered more to himself. He didn't notice when the room grew deafeningly silent. "But if she was the first victim... and I was also one of the targets... I wonder if there's a..." He looked up hopefully at the blond, the cautious horror on his face sending waves of discomfort through him. "Kunikida-san?"

"Your what?"

"What?"

"You weren't allowed out of your *what*?"

The boy flinched at the high disbelieving tone, his ability to respond ripped away from his throat at once. His mouth opened uselessly, and his hand trembled as he grabbed the end of his tie to occupy itself. He screwed up again.

How many times could he screw up before people realized the truth? That he wasn't worth keeping around? That he was useless, just like the orphanage staff knew.

Or worse, what if Dazai found out how disgusting Atsushi really was, scrunched up his nose at him, shot Atsushi a look of disgust and avoided his touch like the plague.

Surely he wouldn't offer Atsushi that sweet smile again, the one Atsushi hadn't seen him show anyone else but him. He wouldn't spend time with him or make dumb jokes that made Atsushi laugh, wouldn't tuck him in or call him his cat.

Atsushi didn't want to lose his friends. He just.. didn't know what to do...

A touch landed on his head, making him flinch for an impact that never landed. A cautious look up at Kunikida's soft understanding frown made him realize he was getting his hair ruffled. His teary eyes widened, a few drops falling to the ground.

It felt nice and warmed the crown of his head in a pleasant way. Atsushi used to be much more wary of touching others, but he trusted the agency enough to make an exception.



However, he didn't know he would *crave* the warmth.

Yes, this was nice. It just wasn't... him.

Was it selfish of him to miss the way Dazai used to ruffle his hair? If he were to burst into tears right then, would he be an ungrateful brat?

"I'll help you look into the orphanage thing." Kunikida said calmly when he withdrew his touch.

"You don't have to-" Atsushi's throat felt raw.

"You don't have to do this on your own." The man chided lightly. "And if you need to visit that wretched place, you can take Tanizaki or Kenji with you. Do *not* go to that orphanage alone." He emphasized by pointing.

"I wouldn't be in danger, Kunikida-san." Atsushi rubbed his neck, laughter weak but genuine and touched. "I'm not taking shit from them anymore." He muttered with more certainty.

"It's not about danger. It's about you trying to handle all sorts of pressure by yourself." Kunikida poked his forehead and Atsushi blinked. "Both personal and work related. You can't do that."

"I can't?"

"You can't! We're wrapping up early today so we can enjoy the summer festival tonight as a team. Any objections?" Since when did Kunikida try and stop other people from working, Atsushi wondered with an invisible smile.

The boy held up his hands protectively and the other huffed and shook his head. After that, Atsushi felt notably less sick while working. He wasn't sure if Kyouka coming in later with extra crepes for him was a coincidence, but he beamed and worded his gratitude all the same.

*You don't deserve them.* Something whispered to him. It was true, he didn't. But they chose every day to be around him.

*And last time I checked, I'm all but selfish.*

Why couldn't he embrace it?

"You two are such cowards."

Atsushi sighed, crouching lower on his desk. His coworker had headed out at some point. An hour had passed already? "There's more of that candy in my desk, Ranpo-san. Just take it."

"I don't want it."

"Yes, you do."

"Well, it's still not going to buy my silence." Ranpo did a little high-pitched evil laugh, opening said drawer. Atsushi grumbled under his breath. "You haven't even read his story yet, did you?"

"I'll get to it."

The black-haired man arched a pointed eyebrow. "If you're going down this road, you have to know."

*What road...*

Atsushi wanted to pull out his hair. The way everyone around him acted, it felt like Atsushi was the only one confused. Like they knew something he didn't. "It doesn't feel right." He admitted. "It feels like I'm snooping through something I shouldn't."

"Even though it was Dazai who asked you to do it?" Ranpo leaned his chin on his palm, bored and judgmental as always. "It just sounds to me like you're afraid he's right." Atsushi's eyes snapped to him. "That your opinion of him will change after knowing his past." He fluttered his lashes innocently. "That'd be kind of awkward, huh?"

"No!" Atsushi stood up suddenly, voice rising in defense. "That'll never happen! No matter what's in that thing, what matters to me is that Dazai-san is here with us now, and he's helping people! As long as that's the case, I'm proud to fight by his side-!" Before abruptly his flame of justice deflated, realizing Ranpo was purposefully taunting him.

Judging by that smug look anyway. "I heard you loud and clear." His face burning, Atsushi sat back down, sinking lower and hoping to melt. "But Dazai doesn't know that." The senior shrugged. "He doesn't even consider himself part of the organization."

Atsushi looked down, troubled by the new information. He'd never thought about it like that. "You're right, Ranpo-san." He slowly reached into his pocket as Ranpo ranted on about being amazing, pulling out the flashdrive that's been weighing heavy on him these few days. He might as well stop stalling. Ignoring wasn't going to fix anything. "I'll tell Dazai-san what I think about him." He took a deep breath. "Maybe tonight before the fireworks? I think I'll be able to finish looking through this by then." He looked at the man in hope for approval.

Ranpo tapped his chin, pretending to think it over. "*Wow*, that's romantic as hell."

He turned white. "O-okay, maybe not."

"No, it's perfect." Ranpo snickered as he jumped off Atsushi's desk to walk away. "Good luck!"

Much more determined than when he walked into this office, Atsushi inserted the flashdrive into the laptop, chewing on his lips. No more hiding.

Kenji announced his arrival cheerfully. "Thank you for helping me find my cow, Dazai-san!"

"Ah, of course, Kenji-kun."

The tiger slammed the device shut and slipped under his desk with a squeak. Distantly, Ranpo facepalmed.

---

"Since when is Atsushi-kun a workoholic?"

Atsushi blinked at his now empty hand, the device snatched from him. "Hey." He protested in a whiny tone, looking up. "I-it was urgent-"

"Kunikida-san is a bad influence on you." Tanizaki raised an eyebrow.

Ignoring him graciously, Kunikida glanced at the mini tablet, and adjusted his glasses, which shone back the light coming from its display. "I'll handle it."

Atsushi brought his hand to his chest as a nervous habit, worry tainting his features. "Are you sure? I don't want you to miss out on anything tonight."

"Atsushi, this is the longest I've gone without writing something down or making a work call." Was it Atsushi or did Kunikida look relieved to hold that device? "Trust me, I don't mind. Now excuse me for a moment." Then he walked away mumbling under his breath, fishing out his personal phone.

Atsushi and Tanizaki blinked after his trail. "I think he actually needed that." Atsushi stared at him pace around, concerned.

"He still lasted two hours with us." The ginger grinned. "It's progress. Did you get those fireworks?"

"Yes, I did! Just got distracted." Atsushi held up a plastic bag, beaming. "I didn't mean to keep you guys waiting."

"Don't worry about it. The others are right ahead if you- *Atsushi-kun!*" Tanizaki's voice rose with panic when an excited Atsushi started to run his way across the cool and moist grass, letting the night breeze flow through his hair and kiss his cheeks. "*Y-your yukata's coming off!*"

Not quite hearing him, Atsushi waved at Kenji when he caught blond hair in his sight, the other clapped in delight upon seeing him. His belt had come loose, so the clothing slid off his

shoulder. "Hey, I'm back! Sorry I took a while!" He chuckled breathlessly when came to a halt and doubled over to catch his breath, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Atsushi-kun, there you are." Yosano looked comfortable wrapped in the light weight of her own pink floral yukata, and Dazai stood gracefully with her, wrapped in red over the securely wrapped bandages. It looked like they were in the middle of a conversation.

Peeking from behind them, Ranpo gave Atsushi a shit-eating grin. Like he was waiting for Atsushi to mess up.

Fighting off an embarrassed flush, he straightened and bowed sheepishly to them. "Yosano-sensei, Dazai-san."

"Did you fight a tornado on your way here?" Atsushi was surprised when the brunet stepped forward to help him adjust the yukata, chuckling. His touch was quick and professional, and it reminded Atsushi of how it used to be. Distant smiles, coming from an unreachable mystery. "There we go. Let's not keep the yatai waiting now."

Before Atsushi could thank him, he was already gone, walking off side by side with the raven-haired doctor.

Was it him, or did his mentor always look this... unsettling?

Atsushi rubbed his wrist, unsure if he should trail right after them. He felt brushed off and unwelcome. Normally he'd leave it and respect the man's privacy, but now he had a mission. He had his words ready on the tip of his tongue, he was ready to report them to Dazai. He had so much to say.

So he drew in much air as possible and clenched his hands, starting to walk behind with Kyouka, Kenji and Ranpo. The midnight-haired man seemed disinterested in much but snacks from that point onwards, something Atsushi understood, stomach grumbling on cue.

The fresh street food melted in his mouth, the savory spices dancing mild on his tongue. And it warmed his heart to see his coworkers also enjoy themselves, chatting and messing around. All around was the joy of playful children, the liveliness of the summer festival. Atsushi took in the way sparklers lit up everyone's darkened faces, especially Kyouka, whose eyes gleamed with wonder and awe while dragging one around. Was this her first time seeing fireworks up close?

It was probably her first time getting to enjoy them, he corrected his thoughts.

At one point they were buzzing with hearty laughter and Atsushi caught Dazai's eye, but the man simply looked away to someone else. "Ooh, Kunikida-kun, look how sparkly the river looks under the lights!"

"If you drown yourself Dazai, I'll make sure no one intervenes." Even Kunikida looked in a better mood, snorting to himself and letting his partner maneuver him away.

Atsushi's smile turned stiff, but remained genuine. Well, as least he was having fun, Atsushi hugged his arm and thought.

Someone walked up next to him, keeping him company. "Here, take this."

"What is that?" Atsushi turned to Yosano, confused.

"Alcohol." She deadpanned. "You're going to need it."

"I'll be fine. It... shouldn't be personal. " Atsushi nervously laughed, making his words sound like a question. "I'll be able to talk to him at some point, if Dazai-san doesn't completely hate my guts, or unless he can read my mind or something." He joked, and the humor on his face died with a thought.

What if Dazai already saw through him? Now that he mentioned it, Dazai started talking to him less since Atsushi had that dream...

"Whatever you're thinking of-" Yosano began to sigh. "*Don't-*"

Oh Atsushi did. He *did* so hard.

The doctor side eyed his dejected profile, then shrugged. And downed the alcoholic shot herself.

---

## Chapter End Notes

The fireworks should've already been a red flag for you guys ngl.

Also I need to say something real quick. I started this fic knowing I'm not in a place to be consistent with the updates and that's why I even put it in the tag for you guys. I'm sorry if I disappear from time to time, or the chapters come out rushed. I hope you understand:D 🙏 I'm not a great writer either, but I promise to try my best, cause this story means a lot to me. In a way, it's helping me process some things too:3

That aside, what we think?

# I'll call out a name (your name)

## Chapter Summary

Just as you once called out mine:)

## Chapter Notes

Alt title for this chapter: "In your deepest pain, in your weakest hour, in your darkest night, you are lovely"

This is a long ride ladies and gents

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

"Atsushi-san." The tiger hummed softly to the younger girl, lidded stare elsewhere around the edge near the river. He absently felt the breeze push around the low of his yukata and ruffle the longer strands of his hair. The sound of festive merriment and the lively crowd were far away, only a murmur of it reaching his ears. "Are you enjoying the festival so far?" Her hushed tone was like a quiet lullaby.

"Of course, are you?"

Kyouka remained silent for a beat. "You're lying." Atsushi turned to face her but said nothing, under his eyes merely crinkling with apology. "Something is bothering you." She added, monotone. Her eyes dragged to where he'd been staring, taking in Dazai who stood alone by the river, his back facing them. "Do you want to go from here?"

"No, I want to do something first, Kyouka-chan. But you should go." Atsushi rubbed the nape of his neck. "I'll catch up with you guys." He tried his best for a reassuring smile.

Almost dull, her doe eyes stared Atsushi down for a moment, maybe contemplating whether or not to believe him. Then she nodded and walked away. Her steps grew distant, stifled across the grass.

And now they were alone.

Atsushi stared at the man's back. Even the simple sight hushed the anxiety bristling within him. It didn't make much sense, nothing about his thoughts or feelings or dreams made any sense. There was an unfamiliar cluster taking space, weighing in his chest, and he wasn't sure when it appeared first. All he knew was that everything felt better when he had his chaotic mentor on his side. And that seeing Dazai in a quiet mood made his chest weigh even heavier.

"I assume no one's ever taught you it's rude to stare."

Atsushi felt his cheeks heat up, maintaining his composure for the most part. He felt awkward coming up with an excuse. So instead he shuffled forward until he stood next to the taller one, hands locked behind his back politely.

Like the illuminated midnight sky during the tiger's darkest times, he needed Dazai Osamu. Even if the man didn't need him, he couldn't help but gravitate back to him, couldn't help but stare into the unknown abyss and marvel at whatever was behind it. Atsushi peered at Dazai's bleak side profile, trailing up the carefully pursed lips, over the slightly jagged nose and towards those hooded eyes.

Crimson eyes oozed darkness, the uncaring eyes of a killer. It was something Atsushi couldn't unsee or excuse.

There were pages and pages of documentation in that drive, all of the dates and details of the undeniable crimes, names of the victims and the *Demon Prodigy's* allies, a history dripping with bloodshed. If Atsushi wasn't as affiliated and familiar with violence all his life, he wouldn't have been able to finish through all of that.

And yet.

In the black depths of the nullifier's gaze, Atsushi was awed to see stars. The little twinkles stood out to him, whereas another person may have brushed them off.

Feeling the pair of sunset eyes on him, Dazai's his entire face came to view, glowing in pale moonlight. Brown hair fluttered in the breeze, brushing against his cheeks and over his eyes. He looked calm and not much else, individual eyelashes fanning down at the younger.

*I wish you could see yourself through my eyes.*

"Dazai-san..." He whispered, clutching the metal drive tighter. *Words, words were so difficult and puzzling...* "Please forgive me for this. Even if you already hate me, I..."

Interrupted, the first bursts of color exploded in the sky, crackling and shimmering, lighting up their figures. Atsushi's heart raced so fast he felt the need to clutch it. He reached out to take Dazai's bandaged hands and secured the flashdrive in the hold of its rightful owner. Eyeing their joined hands, Dazai looked confused, opening his mouth.

Gathering all his courage, Atsushi reached up on tiptoes and pressed his lips against the taller's cheek, squeezing his eyes shut in a concentrated frown, just in sync with another set of fireworks going off. He didn't open his eyes, yet felt the light-show dance behind his eyelids. Dazai didn't move a muscle, sucking in a slow breath. His cheek felt cool and soft to the touch.

After what felt like an eternity too short, Atsushi leaned away and stepped back. He took in the rare dumbfounded look on the brunet, took in the sparkles blooming up above, raining down in a cozy surreal manner. He missed how red eyes flickered briefly to his lips.

"You are..." Atsushi pulled in all the summer air he could hold, letting admiration paint a smile on his lips. He dared his voice to go higher than an unsure mumble. "My inspiration to do good and be better every day. I want to thank you for sharing your story with me." He straightened to bow low. "It's amazing how far you've come and how different you used to be. Seeing all you've been through-"

"I'm glad you're with the agency now, so I had the chance of meeting you. I think the bright attire suits you better anyway." He slowly rose from his bow. His eyes were kindled under the lights with kindness and warmth, gleaming in deep understanding. The corner of his cheeks dimpled slightly from the held-back smile, every uneven piece of milky hair swaying of its own accord. "I keep thinking if... you could grow into the light and help people, so can I."

The brunet shuffled a single step closer, eyes searching his face. "And this is your final, honest judgment?" The dark within his irises stormed and shifted. "You saw everything Atsushi-kun, you know all the crimes I've committed during my time in the Port Mafia."

The boy's stubborn stare gleamed with determination. "I accept all of you, the good, the bad and the gray in between."

For an unmistakable moment, Dazai looked much more human than before, studying Atsushi like he was trying to solve a riddle, frustrated and unable to comprehend it, it was almost endearing, upsetting at the same time. If anything, hadn't he made the other more troubled?

"And if you ever feel like the good you do doesn't make up for it, if it burdens you, just..." Atsushi softened, shifting his weight around. "Look back on the lives you save, not just the ones you once took." *Look back at me.*

"Is that so?" Dazai murmured softly.

"A good friend of mine once told me not to pity myself." Atsushi smiled, small and almost nostalgic. "It's worked out pretty well for me so far."

It took him a moment to process the weight of the words leaving his mouth, and he held his breath. There are such unspoken exchanges shared between lives, which neither acknowledges or addresses afterwards, it remains an uncertain cloud in the past, hushed in mutual understanding, but cherished in the mind. Atsushi sometimes doubted if he just had a vivid dream of it, and now he was afraid he had burst that bubble, or pushed it too far.



Until he realized Dazai was laughing, the silent vibration of his shoulders built up until hearty noises slipped out of his mouth. Atsushi watched it unfold with wide eyes. "How long have you been waiting to pull that on me, you dork?"

His heart leapt at the pleasant melody. "I- I didn't mean to, it just slipped out." The tension in his shoulders oozed out until he was chuckling along with the man.

"I don't believe you." The other teased, nudging his shoulder.

"I'm not lying, Dazai-san." Atsushi let out a soft embarrassed laugh as they shifted into a more comfortable atmosphere, side by side, watching the fireworks take shape in the sky, flashing vibrant hues.

The moment of peace was soon broken. "When I go, I hope I go out just as beautifully."

Atsushi double-checked his hearing, and turned to the man with a startled expression. "I'd really prefer if you didn't go at all." Fading into a nervous chuckle.

Empty red eyes gazed into upward distance, a ghost of a smile playing at his lips. He said nothing.

Atsushi stared at him with a growing concern, then hung his head, watching colors dance on the river surface. "Please don't say stuff like that, even as a joke." His shoulders sagged.

But Dazai wasn't standing next to him. The nullifier's mind was far away, locked up behind all those walls and mazes. Atsushi wasn't sure why he had hoped deep inside that maybe, just for one moment... No, it sounded ridiculous even in his head. He'd just overestimated himself. He was unwelcome and insignificant.

Even after reading through his entire background, it was stupid to admit he knew nothing about what went on in Dazai's brilliant mind. What was his obsession with suicide about? Was he faking all of his smiles and laughs? How was he so scarily good at it?

He was too hopeless to stop. "You don't have to go." He mumbled. "There must be something that could change your mind."

The crackle of fireworks was all the reply he got, and the noise was too much to handle, overwhelming his senses. Maybe the lack of sleep didn't help, but the light show was loud and bright, too beautiful to look away from, but it still hurt. But no, the mere headache etched to his temples wasn't going to stop him from watching.

So he held his chin up and gazed at the sky, tears prickling the corner of his eyes. He nearly jumped out of his skin when something touched his hand. The sight greeting him next made him forget how to breathe.

Atsushi looked up at Dazai, then down at their hands, now entwined, and switched back and forth between them quickly, eyes wide.

Surely this was a figment of his imagination and not actually happening? Maybe he just fell asleep at work earlier and was still dreaming, because Dazai-san couldn't possibly be *holding*

*his hand.*

Dazai didn't even face him, casual about the sudden gesture. "Does this help dull your hearing?" Atsushi stared. "I don't imagine the enhanced senses of the tiger are things you can control."

The nullifier's fingers were surprisingly warm, laced perfectly with his, making him feel safe and kind of warm and fuzzy inside, like a weighed blanket in a thunderstorm, keeping him safe from the burning cold. He would've said it felt like home, if he knew what home was supposed to feel like.

He forced his mouth shut not to blurt anything embarrassing, tilting his head back. He was surprised to discover the environment didn't overstimulate him any longer, sounds were much softer and pleasant to his ear, and the fireworks were just perfect.

"Your ability..." He whispered with wonder, pieces clicking together. Maybe that was why their nap together on the couch had felt so heavenly. As long as they touched, Dazai canceled out his ability, which included his sensitivity to external stimuli. Dazai gave his hand a squeeze. "It's working. Woah..." He breathed out with a hint of excitement, getting lost gazing at the sky. Maybe not every good thing in life required suffering for.

The life Nakajima Atsushi led was an exciting one, to put it lightly. He had to put his life on the line every now and then and take dangerous risks, he'd made some unintentional enemies along the way. He dealt with them on top of the eccentric people in his workplace. Not that he was complaining, he was one of them, and they made chaos feel like home.

While he didn't mind the adventures, times like this were nice too, where he could just stop and appreciate the moment.

"Cats."

Atsushi hadn't expected Dazai to sound so thoughtful when he spoke again. He rechecked his hearing. "W-what?"

"I like cats, Atsushi-kun." It took the tiger a minute to recall what question he was answering.

"Cats?" Echoing oddly, Atsushi searched for the proper words, mindful of their connected hands, how much he wanted to keep it. "That's what's keeping you alive? You like cats that much, Dazai-san?"

"Well, I'm alive now, am I not?" The brunet hummed, shrugging one shoulder.

"Yeah, you are..." Atsushi put some thought as well in his pause. "I just want to say, I'm really glad you're as bad at killing yourself as you are." He clung to their little connection there, clasping the other's hand firmly, but not too tight to be irritating. "I'm glad the *something* is there."

"Hey, that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me." Dazai cooed and bumped their shoulders.

An embarrassed chuckle escaped him, looking down. "I'll say it again."

"You're so corny, Atsushi-kun." He teased.

"I meant every word I said."

"I know." Less taunting and quieter, kindly if he dared put a name on it.

At the very least, Atsushi's chest felt lighter.

"Anyway, we've gone missing for a while now, it's getting late. We should go find the others." Dazai stretched halfway.

"I think I want to stay here for a bit longer." Atsushi found himself excusing, looking away. "I can find you guys later, oh and I got my phone with me now." He supplied, patting the outline of the phone through his clothes. After the manipulation of the messages the night of his date with Sakura, Kunikida had suggested to entrust the device to Katai for possible ways to trace the intruder.

"Well I don't blame you for that, this view is rather easy on the eyes." The bandaged brunet remarked, casting an appreciative glance at their surroundings.

"I didn't expect you to care about such things." Atsushi noted in intrigued surprise.

A simple amused shrug was his reply. "Well, this is definitely worth admiring."

"Huh." Softly wondered the Weretiger. "That's funny, because if I remember correctly, the cherry blossoms were too plain for you last time." He bit on his smile, eyeing for reactions.

"I never said such a thing." He uttered with a sassy huff, then turned to the other, lips curled in a careless imitation of a smile. "Well if you stay, I'm staying too." The boy blinked at him, caught off guard. "Hey, I don't have the worst company with me." Under Dazai's warm gaze, his eyes crinkled, he squeezed their hands slightly. "Don't you agree?"

*Oh nonsense, I prefer your company~*

Feeling his face become hot, Atsushi quickly retracted from Dazai's hand like it scorched him, flustered beyond words. "A-absolutely, but I- m-maybe it *is* getting too late. I'm sure everyone is *dying* to know where we are-" Startled briefly by his loud exclamation, Dazai arched an eyebrow, following him with an amused look.

Why should he be reminded of that dream of all things?! Why did Dazai say it like that in that tone?!

"Atsushi-kun," Dazai regarded him with a weird look, holding back humor. "How exactly do you move in that yukata that it won't even stay on?"

Atsushi squeaked and pulled the lapels back together clumsily, face heating up. "I-I'm trying!" Followed by the brunet's giggles which he whined in complain to. Deep down though, the familiar banter filled him with warmth. He missed this.

He couldn't help feeling like something was left unresolved here, something he couldn't pinpoint. Seeing Dazai joking around and talking to him again was all he needed to relax, but hadn't it come too easily? He hadn't expected the brief way Dazai just accepted the words he spent an hour practicing to himself under his breath, afraid that he was being too much, too nosy.

*This is your final, honest judgment?*

What else had Dazai expected of him? Was... was Ranpo right? Was it possible that Dazai had expected him to be so horrified to never look the former mafioso in the eye again? Maybe it was his plan from the beginning.

"Overthinking cat." Dazai muttered next to him, ruffling his hair.

The freeze only lasted a moment. Then Atsushi leaned into the touch, until his back met the taller's chest and his head lolled back onto his shoulder. He missed the way Dazai tensed before recomposing. Melting into the contact, the longing tears in his eyes snapped finally, slipping down.

The man patted him, action awkward- which was fair, even Atsushi was weirded out by his clinginess- with a hummed chuckle. "Well you're awfully relaxed for someone who knows far too much about me."

Atsushi would never admit but Dazai was indeed capable of being dangerous, even intimidating at times. "Are there snipers trained on me now, or something?" Inwardly, he felt a surge of pride at the knowledge he was trusted with, if wasn't slightly aware of what the hand in his hair was capable of.

"Oh, there's no need for that. I'm the big bad mafia executive." Dazai sang in a fake husky voice. Warm air caressed Atsushi's ear. "*I can hurt you.*" Atsushi froze up. The brunet took his shiver in a wrong way and drew back. "I- I'm just joking." He reassured, smile strained as Atsushi found heavy interest in where the river met the sky.

He rathered not let Dazai get a glimpse of whatever face he was making, and it was completely irrelevant. It would be wonderful if the keen nullifier didn't pick on his short-of-breath state, since it was *besides the point*. And the shiver shaking up his spine, his heart and his entire core had *nothing* to do with how *damn attractive that chuckle was-*

*What?! Huh? Who said that?*

"Yep, yes, I know." Atsushi coughed, straightening his back, pretending like the low purr wasn't ringing in his mind on repeat like a spell. "Don't worry, I... uh," Eyes sharp as someone with his previous profession would have had to possess, Dazai smiled a questioning grin at him then.

"There you idiots are! The hell are you doing?!"

Kunikida, his very tall, very pissed savior.

"Oh, I was being irresistible as always-" Air was practically knocked out of his lungs when a casual Dazai slung an arm around his neck, despite his wish to get away. At the same time he wished to be touched more, so where did that leave him?! "And Atsushi-kun here was *falling* for it-" He chirped slyly. The albino in question nearly tripped over his feet. "We almost jumped into the river together before you rudely interrupted, Kunikida-kun." Kunikida shot Dazai a dirty look.

"Yeaah, he charmed me with his mermaid fish songs and tried to drag me down the water." Atsushi grumbled and looked away, letting Dazai hold him close in that playful manner.

"Excuse me, that's a siren. I am no fish." Dazai provided in a patronizing tone, taking offense. "And that's not even an insult, mind you. Sirens are incredibly hot and seductive." He smiled and flicked his wrist theatrically.

Before he could stop his stupid mouth, Atsushi smiled, lighting up. "Hey, so it *does* suit you." He was too busy cursing himself inwardly to notice the brunet opened his mouth and nothing came out.

"If you're done with this..." Kunikida switched between them. "Whatever this is, let's leave."

---

A soft set of knocks tapped on the fragile bubble of his slumber.

Rustling cozily under the covers, he sank deeper into the cocoon as if to escape the inevitable of getting up, drowsy sunset eyes fluttering open to meet a familiar ceiling. His brows furrowed as he blinked himself back awake, nuzzling his cheek against the cool surface of his pillow.

Walking back to the dorms with his coworkers was the last thing Atsushi recalled from before, some of them leaving for the bar or something. Faintly, he was aware of the gentle tap of raindrops outside, heavy clouds gave the dark sky a greyish touch through the window, giving the night a tranquil tone, a trance to easily fall into.

The person outside the door persisted, knocking louder, reminding him he needed to leave the warmth. Doing so reluctantly, Atsushi pushed aside the covers and tiptoed on the wooden floor, having memorized the creaks and avoided them. It was a habit he'd picked up so to not wake his younger roommate up, and he kept it up even when she wasn't here. He flipped the nearest switch, a dim golden hue illuminating the room.

With a reasonable amount of wariness, the silver-haired detective set the door ajar, ever so slightly. In the dark, there wasn't much to see but a tall silhouette.

"*You.*" He didn't have time to register much else when he was pushed forcefully, causing him to stumble backwards with a startled yelp.

Breath knocked out of his lungs, Atsushi fought for balance, his mind racing in alarm, struggling for a grasp on what was happening.

"You with your- stupid hair- your- your idiot smile..." The silhouette reeled inside, hissing like he was spitting out venom, speaking like... "Your awful, thoughtful *gifts.*"

Dazai?

Atsushi's head snapped up just in time to confirm the thought, eyes wide at the sight of the disheveled brunet closing shut and locking his door from the inside, the click loud and alarming. Then, Dazai turned to glare at Atsushi with those sharp reds, some strands of hair falling in his clouded eyes.

"*I have business with you.*"

Atsushi gaped, fully and wide, like a fish. He was fully convinced that he never woke up, that his depraved deluded brain was dreaming something else to embarrass him, just like it had nights ago.

*I have business with you*, and this time the victim of his sick fantasies would start kissing him senseless, or strip him down to nothing and *shove his fingers in him on the futon*, or something equally lewd and insane. Was that the routine now?

But Atsushi pinched his thigh harshly through the fabric and he never woke up, multiple times. Dazai closed the distance with his death glare and Atsushi shuffled back, spluttering to form a sentence and this felt too real.

"D-Dazai-san, what's going on-?" He made a noise in the back of his throat, heart slamming in his ribcage. "What are you- um-" He couldn't help but feel his face heat up. "What kind of... business do you have with me?" He should be more *scared* when a former mafia executive locks them in a room, but no. Priorities.

The other swayed forward and Atsushi, alarmed, moved to steady him. But Dazai crashed into him without restraint- a hug? Not quite, he clung to the silver, his sudden body weight throwing Atsushi off balance. The tiger's hands hung midair, awkward and unsure of what to do.

"*I hate you so much it hurts.*" Dazai muffled to his shoulder, and something inside Atsushi cracked. So his fears weren't without reason. The hurt mingled with the massive amount of confusion this entire interaction had created inside him. "There's a fucking *cat.*"

His throat hurt to speak. "I... I understand. I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable with my-" Was all he faintly uttered, before the full sentence caught up to him. "... There's a what?"

"The first thing I see when I open the door, there's a *cat* in my room." The brunet pulled back just enough for Atsushi to see the lost incredulity on his face, the flush on his cheeks and his near black irises, and to catch the stench of alcohol on his breath. He was drunk. He'd been at the bar with Yosano and Kunikida, he was reminded.

Understanding widened ombre eyes, mouth forming a small *oh*. "I- I'm guessing you didn't like the gift." He slowly said, eyes averting and his mind rushing on full speed. "B-but it's okay if you don't want it. If you hate the cat, you can give him back to me and I'll-" He rambled, shutting up promptly when Dazai buried his face back in his shoulder.

"I want to keep him."

Atsushi held his breath and held him tighter.

"I like him. He's cute 'n clingy, like Atsushi-kun." He hushed, like a secret. He turned so his cheek rested on his shoulder, his warm breath gave Atsushi's neck goosebumps. "But don't tell Atsushi-kun I said that."

Atsushi covered his cheeks with a hand, willing away the red roses blooming in them. "L-let's sit you down first. You don't look well." Mumbling, he guided the inebriated one to the couch carefully, slipping next to him. "Do you need anything, like a glass of water?" He eyed a woozy Dazai with growing concern. "Are you going to be alright, Dazai-san?"

"Of course. 'M drunk, not on, on death's door... *unfortunately*." The nullifier carelessly waved off, his voice kind of off and funny. "Wouldn't be so lucky." His head fell back on the couch with a soft thud.

"Give me a second." Atsushi made his way to the kitchen and picked up a clean glass, then held it under the water faucet to fill it up. He could still feel his heart drumming from the unusual wake-up call, having yet to calm down.

Normally, he was accustomed to his mentor's eccentrics but for the most part, Dazai was a reserved, calculating individual. He never made a move without planning it beforehand, he made his strategies look effortless and the execution graceful. It was one of the many things Atsushi admired about him.

Being so suddenly hugged from behind almost made him drop the glass. "D-Dazai-san." A high pitched laugh escaped the nervous wreck that was him. He didn't dare turn to look at Dazai. "You move very uh, quietly."

Without a care in the world, the drunken one nested his chin on the other's shoulder with a sleepy content hum. His warm chest pressed flush to Atsushi back, and arms tightened their hold around the smaller frame. Atsushi's legs nearly gave in under the gentle treatment. As always, he couldn't help but melt into the nullifying touch.

"Hey." Another hum was his reply. Atsushi held up the glass. "Can you drink this for me please?" Seeing the man down it with thirst, he went to fill the glass a second time. Throughout this, Dazai insisted on staying glued to him, and Atsushi found he didn't mind. The man was warm, soft and secure like a blanket, it was making him drowsy.

"Sushi-kun?"

"Yes?" Atsushi suppressed a yawn.

"Sleep with me?" The request was worded in an innocent mumble. At the strangled noise escaping the tiger, Dazai giggled, hot air tickling his bared neck. "Not like that, you silly sushi. I sleep better when you're around."

"Su-re." Surprised, Atsushi's voice wavered as he tried to sound casual. "You can take the futon, Dazai-san."

"But where will you go?" Dazai frowned as Atsushi helped his unsteady form towards the mess of covers in the middle of the room. He didn't wait for a response before gasping theatrically. "I wouldn't make you sleep on the floor." Filled with disbelief, he let Atsushi carefully set him down.

"I'm used to it, I don't mind. I used to sleep on the ground all the time." He showed a reassuring smile.

"You don't have to do it anymore." Dazai said with a blank face.

Atsushi averted his eyes, about to rise when he felt a tug on his sleeve.

"Stay with me."

Atsushi froze. The mumbled words sounded tired, almost defeated. It squeezed Atsushi's heart painfully to see his dear friend like this. The desire to help and reassure him nagged at Atsushi, just like Dazai always did for him. To try and take the burden off his shoulders. How would it be fair if he didn't return the favor when Dazai was always there for him?

Wordlessly, he stood up, only to switch the lights off and shuffle back towards the futon, slipping under the covers next to Dazai and rearranging the sheets over them both. He didn't glimpse at the childish way the brunet lit up upon spotting the tiger next to him, a grin splitting his face. Atsushi busied himself with the tedious task, afraid that looking at Dazai's raw, unmasked joy would be too much for him to handle.

What had he gotten himself into?

While Dazai burrowed deeper under the covers, making himself comfortable, Atsushi remained seated, hands gathered awkwardly in front of him. He felt a curious gaze pinning him, the silence stretching for minutes, enough that he thought the drunken brunet might have already passed out.

Until a lazy mumur voiced through the quiet tapping of rain on his window.

"Sushi-kun?"

"Yes?" Atsushi matched with a quiet tone, pulled out of his thoughts. For unknown reasons, his heart did a jump at that nickname. "Something wrong?"



"You look upset." That surprised the albino, looking at Dazai's thoughtful squint. The curves of his dark hair splayed out across the pillow, the flush adorning his face less prominent in a low bluish light, almost unnoticeable.

"It's nothing." He assured with a faint smile.

His weak acting skills fooled no one, Dazai rolled onto his stomach, propping his head on crossed arms. He could lean his cheek against the younger's knee if he wanted to. "Y'know, earlier at the festival, when we were alone..." He began with a frown of concentration, like he might lose his string of thought if he didn't focus. "You said it's okay if I hate you. Why did you say that?"

Something inside Atsushi wanted to snap, and he was tired enough to let it. "Because I'm easy to hate! Because..." He deflated just as quickly, hugging his arm. "Why wouldn't you?"

Seeing Atsushi upset, Dazai crawled closer, looking up with a pout on his face. "Don't be like that. You're not easy to hate at all."

"Well, you confirmed it just now." Atsushi swallowed down the tightness around his throat, trying to pry the bitterness off his tone. "That you dislike me so much that it *hurts*."

"But I don't." Merely puzzled, Dazai's lidded stare sought to make him understand. "Atsushi-kun is one of my *favorite* people on earth." He mumbled.

Atsushi stared, shocked as oblivious, mindless Dazai nestled his head in Atsushi's lap, declaring it his new pillow, nuzzling contently just as a cat would. The poor tiger continued staring.

It felt like the more he tried to deny his mentor's charm, the more it shoved itself in his face. Dazai was attractive, and knew it very well himself, often using those charming attributes to get what he wanted. Sometimes a single winning smile was enough to make women fall for him, or his silver tongue that played the most cunning men like puppets, making them dance to their dooms... what a random thought to spiral down on.

"For the one with heightened instincts, you're not very subtle, you know."

A nervous feeling pooled in his stomach. "What do you mean?"

"You avoided me for days, Atsushi-kun." Whined the nullifier. "Do you know how hard I had to pretend I didn't care? I was bored out of my mind."

Atsushi bit on his lip, cheeks coloring. "I- I wasn't... it's just the case is very difficult, so I was busier than a regular day." He tried his best for a nonchalant demeanor.

"On a regular day, friends don't try to dive out the window of a four-story building when they see you." Sarcasm dripped from Dazai's eye-roll. "So yeah, I had a *hunch* that you started reading those files."

Oh.

Oh no. Very wrong conclusions were made here.

"Just sayin', for someone who acts so casual, you sure took your sweet time. You don't have to pretend to be okay with my past." Uncertainty colored his face, a rare sight for the aversive reds. "You weren't afraid of me, were you? You didn't... feel like you had no other choice, right?" Mutter weak and alarming the tiger, the man curled into himself slightly. "Atsushi-kun?"

The tiger felt his throat close up, softening. "Of- of course not, I-" *That was different.*

But what could he even say?

Atsushi had nearly forgotten how badly he handled the dream thing the first few days. Jumping out of the window was perhaps... a touch too dramatic.

"That... was different." He rushed when he noticed he'd gone silent, a quick awkward laugh escaping him. "I promise, it's not what you have in mind. You've done nothing to make me afraid of you." He whispered, feeling oddly protective towards the last man who needed his protection. With little hesitance, he stroked the curly brown hair, pushing the strands out of his face. "You're kinder than you give yourself credit for, Dazai-san."

"You're so nice." The drowsy one whined, reaching to hug Atsushi's middle. Atsushi noticed that Dazai-san was especially... affectionate when he was drunk, cheeks heating up. "So human... you know, if you let your job consume you, *you will break.*" He muffled darkly, a stark contrast to the clingy manner he huddled up to the younger man.

Atsushi stiffened at the abrupt change in tone. "What if I'm careful?" He muttered, chewing his lip. "Saving people is the only thing that keeps me from breaking." He hung his head low, shoulders sagging. "It's the only way I can prove I deserve to live."

The way Dazai stopped in his tracks so suddenly, he almost panicked about sharing too much, but before he knew, he was dragged underneath the sheets and wrapped in a long set of arms and the faint scent of whisky. "Oh, c'mere, Sushi-kun."

Atsushi blinked back the tears off his wide eyes, trapping the breath inside his lungs. The careful way he was cradled was making him tremble, with his head tucked perfectly under Dazai's chin and breathing in the remainders of his cologne mixed in with alcohol, the blend was intoxicating in an entirely different way.

"Only you can decide if you deserve to live." Dazai mumbled to his hair. "In the meantime, until you learn that... I'll decide it for you."

Atsushi gazed at the bandages around Dazai's collarbone that peeked from behind his crumpled shirt, his breathing shaky and his eyes stinging, overwhelmed. All he could think of to express himself was to cling to the front of the black vest, the man's trusty coat being absent. "That helps." He choked out. "Thank you Dazai-san."

"Shhh, don't start crying now." He was hushed with some annoyance. "Just be a good kitty-" He gave the silver unsteady head pats and cooed, mortifying his insides. "It's too late for that

stuff."

Atsushi wanted to bang his head on a wall. He wasn't a *good kitty*, for god's sake- He was a *tiger* and a grown man. He bit on his defense, settling on an incoherent grumble as Dazai drew him closer.

"Also," The sleepy voice muffled in his hair, wondering absently. "Did you just kiss me back there?"

"Uh, no." Going rigid, Atsushi got even redder, if that was possible.

"M'kay." Easy as that, he drifted off, leaving Atsushi with his warmth and his own thoughts.

He wondered about the man breathing evenly next to him. All this while, Atsushi had built a distant immune image of his mentor and put it between the two of them, and now... he was doubting its accuracy.

Slowly not to awaken him, Atsushi scooted closer to the source of warmth and basked in the way the hold around him tightened, feeling giddy at the thought that he was practically cuddling with Dazai.

He wondered briefly if friends usually acted like this with each other. Was it... natural for him to feel so strongly for the brunet? Enough to need to clutch his heart, just to not go insane?

Atsushi never knew how cold and dull his nights were before, didn't know how agitated he'd been until he finally relaxed in those bandaged arms.

The clouds outside his window seemed to understand. He let the rain, now pouring, lull him to sleep.

Atsushi found himself alone when he opened his eyes to morning light. So naturally, he wondered if the bizarre events from last night were but a dream. But the soothing scent of freshly-made tea caressed his nose. There was a cup of it on a tray, waiting for him by his futon with a short note attached. It simply said: thank you for everything .

Atsushi smiled as he sipped from the cup, appreciating Dazai's loose handwriting, feeling warm inside, and it had little to do with the tea. But another realization had him choking on the beverage the next moment.

*Thank you for everything...?*

Downing the rest of the drink in one go, Atsushi threw off the sheets and made for the door, sprinting out of the apartment. "Dazai-san! Are you there?" Urgently, he slammed on the nullifier's door.

"*I'm coming, coming!*" Atsushi released an exhale in relief, shoulders falling to hear the muffled huff. "Maybe I should've been less ominous on the wording." His voice grew clear and close.

"I thought I had to thwart a suicide attempt." Atsushi mumbled, looking up as Dazai opened the door, looking like headache in human form. Under his eyes were dark with bags. Oh, and there was a small reddish kitten tangled in his hair, kneading the curls. He always thought Dazai's hair looked like a nest, but this was new.

The sight was... absolutely precious.

Atsushi pressed his lips into a thin line and coughed into his fist, wide eyes taking in the scene presented before him.

Dazai stared him down in a deadpan, as if challenging him to make a comment. The kitten stumbled forward, also curious about the new presence. "My life has become filled with cats, thanks to you."

"He likes you." Atsushi covered his smile. "So uh, are you thinking of naming him soon?"

Dazai carefully removed the cat from his messy hair, scratching behind its tiny ears, over the near-crimson hair. He looked so content with the creature in his hand. "Yeah, I already did." He gave a brilliant smile, raising the kitten in the air. "Atsushi-kun, say hello to Odasaku the cat!"

---

## Chapter End Notes

Wasn't the pain worth it yall

I made some art for this chapter

<https://www.tumblr.com/thisisparnianagain/760000980049903616/i-had-to-draw-a-little-something-for-this-chapter?source=share>

# I'll just hold my breath (want you to feel the silence)

## Chapter Notes

This is like the longest chapter yet, enjoy the ride. We have some plot, some silly, some gay, and I have a little treat at the end this time haha.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

---

This morning, Atsushi felt refreshed. He couldn't tell if it was the tea Dazai brewed him, the fact that they slept next to each other and his ability was rendered mute the entire night, or that he got to walk in the aftermath of the rain with Dazai by his side and a soft little cat that fit perfectly in his palms, but the air in his chest was lighter than ever.

"Don't you want to hold him?" Atsushi offered after a quiet while, feeling the need to make conversation. Neither of them had acknowledged the night prior and he felt like giggling just thinking about it. The reminder of Dazai's drunken theatrics was enough to fix a permanent smile on his face. "He's yours after all."

"But he's so small, I fear he might break any moment I touch him." Dazai sighed out, eyes drawn to the creature. For his part, Dazai was nonchalant enough that Atsushi was starting to believe he didn't remember anything at all.

"Hey, Odasaku is tougher than that." Atsushi protested, watching Dazai startle for a moment, which was confusing. "He's from the streets, you know."

"Is he now?" Dazai raised an eyebrow, his coat flowing behind him. "Where did you find this small fellow?"

"Well," Atsushi rubbed the back of his neck. "After you, Yosano-sensei and Kunikida-san headed to the bar, I was bored so I went for a walk." Dazai blinked curiously at him. "I found this poor cat by the streets, she was probably hit by a car." He explained with melancholy. "And her kitten didn't realize his mother was dead, so he was just playing around and trying to feed on her. I was heartbroken."

"Ah, how sadly you have lived, Odasaku." Dazai caressed the top of the cat in Atsushi's hold with a finger. "So you decided to take him with you."

"I couldn't just leave him there all alone and hungry." Atsushi mumbled sadly, noticing they had arrived at the office building.

"So basically, you're making a habit of picking up orphans." Dazai smiled as they stepped into the elevator together, eyes glinting with a secret delight only he knew.

"Good morning everyone." Atsushi announced their presence when they stepped into the office, smiling at the heads turning towards them. A familiar scent of warm papers fresh out of the printer surrounded his senses, welcoming him back.

"Good morning Atsushi-san." Kenji matched his enthusiasm, waving happily. "Did you finally get some sleep? You look well."

"Thank you, I did." Atsushi smiled, brushing back a longer lock of his hair a bit sheepishly, stepping forward until he stood in the middle of the room, bringing attention to the restless ball of fur in his arms.

"Is that a little cat?" The younger blond blinked twice.

"Oh! Uh, yes. We were hoping he could stay here for a few hours." He grew slightly nervous in explaining himself. The cat was snatched from his hold before he could continue. Atsushi blinked dumbly at the now empty space in his hands.

"It's so cute." Naomi lightly patted little Odasaku's head, cooing. "Look at the little ears and the *paws*."

"The president will be delighted to hear this." Ranpo waved off the tiger's worries. "This won't be the first cat we've taken in."

Atsushi huffed, but a smile played at his face. The joke was starting to grow on him, not that he would let the others know. He noticed he spiraled down complicated thoughts the most when he was alone. Whenever his friends were there, they made sure he didn't do or think anything stupid. It was a comforting thought.

"Atsushi-kun got him for me." Dazai chimed in, pleased. "Isn't he so small and pathetic? It's adorable."

"He really is!" Naomi cooed, her hand hovering over the cat. "He's wobbling all over."

"Dazai-san chose to name him *Odasaku*." Atsushi smiled at how the red furred creature looked around at everyone with black orbs, all lost and confused. Ranpo's eyebrows traveled high in surprise as he eyed Dazai, who gave him a warning look. "I wonder if he needs to be checked out." Oblivious to the exchange, Atsushi pursed his lips in concern.

"Don't worry, he's just very little. He should learn to walk properly soon enough." Kenji informed them.

"Still," Atsushi hummed in thought. "I'll get him to a vet after work."

"I thought this was Dazai-san's cat, not yours. You worry about it more than he does." Tanizaki chuckled, arms crossed. "You two should adopt him together."

"What a wonderful idea." Dazai sang, clapping his hands together.

*Dazai-san sure is energetic today*, Atsushi let an awkward chuckle, rubbing the nape of his neck. When Dazai suggested bringing his new companion to work, Atsushi didn't expect everyone to just accept and go along with it.

They soon helped makeshift a soft place for Odasaku with a couch pillow, next to Dazai's and his desk. Kenji was happy to educate them on how to take care of and feed the little one properly, especially since the kitten looked barely a month old.

Atsushi found himself looking forward to it, listening carefully. The other grew easily distracted with the cat that pawed his way into his lap. Soon enough, Odasaku was well-fed and asleep in his spot and Kunikida had reached his limit, scolding them to get back to work.

It felt weird to go through the most recent notes on Atsushi's research from yesterday. He didn't recall his handwriting being this shaky, and so much of what he had jotted down were practically nonsense. It was no surprise Kunikida insisted he took a break after reviewing his reports. But at least he could make up for it now with a fresh mind.

Leaning back in his seat, Atsushi's curious eyes drifted to up and left, where he observed a bored Dazai stacking erasers on top of each other. He was fairly certain that his and Kunikida's were among the pile.

The faintest hints of a smile graced the brunet's lips, which clashed oddly with the dark circles under his eyes. Yet he seemed unbothered, humming a quiet tune to himself. In fact, he looked more unburdened than Atsushi had even seen him.

The erasers lost balance once one too many was added, scattering across the desk with a muffled thud. Tawny red eyes flicked up to catch Atsushi staring, catching him off guard.

In a clear attempt at murder, Dazai sent over a swift wink and he choked on air, quickly redirecting his attention to the dossiers. "Hey Atsushi-kun?"

"Yes?" Atsushi grumbled reluctantly without looking at him.

"May I have a word?"

The pause before that was sobering. Atsushi straightened his back, blinking. "Of course, is everything okay?"

Dazai nodded seriously, reaching for a small plastic bag, handing it over to him. "I doubt you've eaten anything this morning."

"A sandwich? Thank you." Atsushi discovered with delight, which faded into suspicion soon. "Did you... do something, Dazai-san?"

"What's with that look?" The man mumbled, the embodiment of innocence. "Do you not trust me to fix you a healthy sandwich?"

"Only an insane person would trust you with their food." His words were empty and his huff halfhearted, as Atsushi took a big hungry bite from the bread, failing to concentrate on Dazai's words.

Was it embarrassing that Atsushi kept getting distracted with the thought of those bandaged arms hugging him like the previous night? He felt like if he were wrapped in them forever, he would never get tired. It wasn't his fault this time. It was Dazai's, for fueling his stupider ideas with his-

"Atsushi-kun, are you listening?" Dazai snapped his fingers once in front of him, impatient.

Sunset eyes blinked back to life, he smiled with reassurance. "Of course I am." *He was not.*

"I think it doesn't hurt to clear up... possible misunderstandings from last night." Dazai repeated his previous words, posture straightening.

Atsushi's mouth pulled into a small 'o', the realization kicking into place. "You don't have anything to worry about, I understand you didn't mean any of it." He nodded, smile sheepish. "My lips are sealed."

Crimson eyes remained on him, scrutinizing. "Ah well, I don't think you understood quite right." The albino pulled a confused face, and the other flicked his wrist. "I did mean it." Lips into a thin line and eyebrows up high, Dazai gave an awkward impression, as awkward as he could look.

"Sorry?" Suddenly, Atsushi couldn't breathe. "In what way?"

Dazai shifted in his seat and his guarded shoulders sank. When he looked up again, he was giving Atsushi *that* look, soft unlike anything the tiger had ever felt in his life, and it lasted only a heartbeat. "I think you deserve to know, you're truly one of my favorite human beings, Atsushi-kun." He then leaned forward, resting his chin on the back of his hand. "You're very interesting."

Atsushi tried to speak, but all that escaped was all the breath in his lungs, stolen away at once. "You're one of my favorite people too- I mean, you probably know that already." He didn't know what prompted him to add that last part, followed by an oddly forced laughter.

"It's nice to hear you say it though." Hummed the taller cheekily.

"Cocky." Atsushi mumbled, a smile threatening to curl his lips. He hid it by biting down on his sandwich. "You're far too kind to me."

"I wouldn't say that." The other replied flatly, unimpressed at his phrasing. "Maybe you just haven't known true kindness."

"But no, you really are." Atsushi sighed. "It gives me a strange feeling- like I have a place in this world. I- I suppose that's just the effect you have on people." A chuckle escaped him as



he rubbed his neck, feeling silly for his little rant.

"If so, I've never been told that." The mumble was loud enough to be heard, the brunet tilted his head questioningly. "Usually the feedback is that I'm extremely annoying."

"You can be." Atsushi shrugged, blunt. "But I see that more as a talent. You irritate people at will."

"So flattering." Dazai gave a short laugh and it was difficult to look away from it, yet even harder to stare at. "I can't help but think if you spent so much energy on work instead, you would've cracked every case in Yokohama by now."

"Would I now?" Atsushi huffed lightly, unable to see where this was headed. "That's highly unrealistic at best."

"Oh you would, trust me." Dazai gave an entertained hum, opening his familiar book of guide to suicide. "That is, if you stopped wasting all that energy trying to unravel me."

Atsushi gave a start, a dumb smile fixed on his face as he processed those words. He should've expected it from someone as quick-witted and sharp as Dazai. But that smile was disorienting nonetheless. Like it wanted to speak out: *how endearing*, threatened as one would be against a kitten's claws. "Does that mean I'm close?" He wondered quietly.

He expected an ominous reply, an outburst even. Not to be smacked in the head with Dazai's book.

"Ow! Sorry, I'm sorry!" Atsushi covered his head clumsily with a breathless laugh. "Message received- I'll get back to work."

"That's more like it." Dazai hit him once more.

"What will *you* do?" Atsushi huffed.

"Catch up on some beauty rest, of course." Dazai waved him off with a sassy huff.

*Does he really need it?* In a smart move, Atsushi kept his mouth shut, attempting to focus on the papers in front of him for the tenth time. "Can you give me my pen back?"

"I didn't touch it. Look in front of you."

"Oh, there it is."

"Your lack of trust wounds me yet again, Atsushi-kun." The brunet flipped a page.

Atsushi threw him a look, unimpressed. "Maybe returning my eraser would help."

"No." He contently replied.

---

Quite some time had passed when Atsushi noticed the files held out to him, interrupting his mindless writing. "Oh, thank you. Is this from Kunikida-san?"

"Working hard to get those eye-bags back, are we?" The raven-haired doctor remarked. "It is, but don't tell him I actually gave these to you." She warned. "I'm trying to get under his skin."

"I won't tell, don't worry." Atsushi chuckled nervously. He wondered if their blond coworker had found her stash of wine in the office. He flipped through the files. "This is going to take a while, huh? Kunikida-san sure is keeping us busy."

"Leave them for now, everyone is gathered in the conference room." Yosano gave a small nod in the direction, and he followed without a word. "These ransoms are becoming a real problem. With the fear looming over the city, the enemy has a practical advantage: public panic, which is nothing short of actual power. So of course it puts a strain on the agency."

Atsushi hung his head thoughtfully, taking his seat around the table, greeting back a few dismissive hellos.

"In the course of two weeks," Kunikida announced gravely. "We have received 19 reports of missing people from all over Yokohama. The victims don't appear to be connected in any way or share a similar background. They come from various age groups and genders."

"Aren't all these people from especially wealthy families?" Tanizaki went through the reports on the shared table with furrowed brows.

"Most of them, yes." Dazai confirmed, leaning back in his chair, arms crossed.

"We managed to identify the group behind this." The blond provided, pushing back his glasses. Atsushi perked up in surprise. "Dazai, Atsushi and I have had encounters with one of their members twice now. He has the power to learn others' abilities through combat with the user. It's not the most discreet power, so it didn't take long to single him out. They manipulated the messages on Atsushi's phone once, so they had to have a tech-specialist with them."

Atsushi took the profiles he was handed, met with an attached image of the familiar looking mask with lines of gold and black.

"A while back, this group caused trouble in Kawasaki, leaving trails in different towns around the area, but they were caught eventually. It started with petty theft, and quickly

escalated to armed robbery and hostage taking."

"The ability to learn abilities." Atsushi mumbled. "He must be quite formidable with all his experience then."

"One would think so, but no." Bluntly stated the older. "Somehow he's incompetent enough to have less than... what, five abilities, Ranpo-san?" He turned to the bored detective, who gave a confirming grunt. "Ranpo-san figured their jobs before were too sloppy for a stunt like this, and they most likely have another ability user in their group this time. Do you have any more of your wise input for us?" Kunikida muttered, eyeing him with respect.

"It's too obvious, I lost interest." The dark-haired man spoke with reluctance, turning his face away. "Solve it on your own."

"If he's so incompetent, then how the hell does he have Nakahara Chuuya's ability?" Atsushi ran a hand through his hair, confused. "Isn't he the strongest ability user in Yokohama?"

"Good question." Kunikida frowned, gaze landing on Dazai. The nullifier raised an eyebrow, realizing everyone else had also turned towards him "Is it possible for you to contact the port mafia executive?" Kunikida thoughtfully asked.

"I hope not." Dazai waved off the idea casually. "He wants to kill me anyway."

"Don't we all." Kunikida's smile was threatening.

Atsushi felt the need to interfere. "Um-! What's this guy's name again?"

"Ugh, some fancy word." Kunikida pulled up his nose, raising up his papers. "Apparently he goes by *Aletheia*." *Kunikida-san doesn't have much respect for this guy*, Atsushi thought. "Did you get anything from your interviews, Atsushi? Any observations about the victims?"

The interviews, of course. Atsushi straightened under the scrutiny, stammering at the beginning. *All those pictures look so lonely*, but he couldn't exactly say that. "I noticed a number of the victims come from orphanages, especially the kids." A frown tainted his forehead with crinkles. "And if not, they have... odd families." He put it delicately.

Kunikida sat down, arms crossed. "Explain."

"You remember the second victim, Asahi Kai." Even though he went through the list several times, the first and second cases drew his attention the most. They felt like important pieces of the puzzle. "He was last spotted in an abandoned building far away from his house. We found a fresh can of paint and other art supplies there, that we assume belonged to him." He muttered. "The brushes were snapped in half, and I remember Dazai-san commented the boy wouldn't have done this."

"You're saying the family did it." Dazai gave a hum.

"They weren't very fond of their son's painting hobbies." The albino raised an eyebrow. "Whenever I asked, they just brushed it off."

"I see where you're going with this." Kunikida grunted in acknowledgement.

"I think it's safe to assume Asahi ran away after a scolding and the kidnappers found him next."

"Thank you, Atsushi." The man sighed. "And I'm glad to see you in better shape."

"There's actually some information we've been withholding from you because of that." As if on cue, Tanizaki uttered carefully, eyeing his reaction.

Atsushi stiffened, unable to suppress his reaction in time. "What sort of information?" He said with equal caution.

"You know how the victims disappear?" Kunikida adjusted his glasses. "It's always with a scream that's described as inhuman and demonic."

"Yes...?"

"A mother hears such a shout from her daughter's room last night, and when she gets there," The tall one stood up. Atsushi trapped the air in his chest. "She sees her daughter on the floor, shaking and scared, physically unharmed."

Sunset eyes widened impossibly. "Wait, so-"

"The woman then asked us to take her under our protection until things settled down." Kunikida continued. "We tried talking to her, but she doesn't respond to a single word." He sighed. "We were hoping she'd open up to you."

"I'll try my best, sir." Atsushi perked up.

"You better, brat." Kunikida huffed as he swished past him, out the door. Just after he was gone, the others either slumped down or stood up to leave as well, one after the other.

"Kidnapping, kidnapping," The doctor showed her bottom lip in a bored pout. "Not enough people get injured these days."

"I'm... sure they will, soon." Atsushi made an attempt to comfort her.

"And *you*-" Yosano shoved an accusing finger at Dazai. "You're going to pay... *for all those drinks*."

"Whatever do you mean, Yosano-sensei?" The brunet hummed back, drumming his fingers on the table. The action caught Atsushi's eye. "We all paid our share, I remember so."

"Listen bastard, I'm not Atsushi-kun, I won't put up with your cute little quirks." The raven-haired woman gave an eerie smile, and the one on Dazai's face grew nervous. "And just because you have nullification, it doesn't mean you won't need my ability when you're close enough to death."

"The chances of getting resuscitated by Yosano-sensei are low, but never zero." The man shuddered.

"Know your place." Yosano leaned her chin on her palm with her scary smile.

Dazai held up his hands in surrender. "Next time's on me...?" He faintly tested his limits.

"Atta boy."

Atsushi snorted watching this interaction. "I got to see Dazai-san humbled in my lifetime. Nature is beautiful."

"You're supposed to be on *my* side." Dazai huffed put him in a headlock, messing up his hair roughly.

"He-hey!" He laughed and pushed him away. "I'm on the side of justice."

"How do we even get along, then?" Joked the brunet once more before leaving the conference room as well. "I'll see you downstairs, Atsushi-kun."

Atsushi smiled and waved him goodbye, only to turn back and see the doctor regarding him strangely. "What?"

"Did you get to the office today with that guy?" She mused. "He disappeared on us last night."

Atsushi sat up straight. "Oh um... yes. We bumped into each other."

Her lips curled into a knowing smile. Sometimes, Atsushi deeply wished his coworkers weren't actual skilled detectives. "I see."

"There's nothing to see." Atsushi grew defensive, eyes slipping down onto the table, pretending to go through the papers and using it as an excuse to hide his face. "We need to keep the topics professional and work related." He lamely added.

He could feel her judging straight into his soul, without even peaking. "Maybe you're right." She hummed.

"But uh-" Atsushi cleared his throat, mumbling. The silence didn't feel right and he was growing antsy. "We're on good terms."

"That's good. And I won't pry any more than that." The doctor waved off any concerns with smooth gestures. "I was just curious since before Dazai left the bar, he was talking about you."

"... You shouldn't make up things like that, Yosano-sensei." Soft and uncertain, Atsushi squirmed. "Dazai-san... he's a complex person..."

They both fell silent for moments. "You look ready to explode." The tiger released his breath.

"Maybe but..." Crossing his arms, the unsure man insisted. "I- I shouldn't say anything."

"If you say so." Just like that, Yosano rustled to get up.

Atsushi tensed up.

"I'm one of his favorite people!" He breathed out with relief as soon as he stopped holding back his excitement. "Dazai-san said so. No one's ever said anything like that to me." He then shut up upon realizing how obnoxiously loud he was.

She tilted her head over a humorous gaze. "You two hang out a lot. Anyone could see you're, great, *great* friends."

"I guess we are." He just needed reminders sometimes... "Sensei, why did it sound like it physically hurt you when you called us friends?" Atsushi then blinked, taking notice.

Yosano pursed her lips into a thin line. "No reason." Being met with a look of disbelief. "Oh excuse me for trying to be supportive." Atsushi's stare was dry. "What? Look, you must have done *something*." She rolled her eyes.

"Where do you even get these ideas?" Atsushi waved her ridiculous accusation off. "No."

"Of course, and you just happen to smell like Dazai's favorite cologne today." Innocently, Yosano pointed out.

The unfortunate man blanched. "There's an explanation for that." The last thing Atsushi needed was a misunderstanding like this.

"I know there is."

"Technically, we did sleep together- only in the *literal*- I mean, *of course* only in the literal term-!" After some spluttering, he gave up, slapping his forehead. His face had gone entirely red which of course, was a source of entertainment for the female doctor.

"Oh great heavens, you were laying next to each other the entire night?" She teased. "Have you no shame?"

"*UGH*- a-all of this is your fault from the beginning!" Atsushi groaned miserably, running both hands down his face. The truth of that statement dawned on him slowly, and he gaped. "I remember now, it all started after that."

Yosano arched a perfect eyebrow. "I'm not following."

"You planted it in my head- *you and Ranpo-san*." Atsushi gasped as he pointed fingers, the dots connecting in his head. "When you were teasing me about... you know, doing t-that with Dazai-san." Struggling with his composure, he crossed his arms, voice accusatory and strained to keep the stutter out. "That's when I started having weird dreams-" Immediately Atsushi clamped his mouth, realized his mistake.

Genuinely taken back for the first time during their conversation, Yosano's eyebrows shot up high. "*Woah*. Atsushi, let's keep things professional now." Atsushi sank down to the floor and hid his face in his hands, earning a look of pity. "You're not handling this well, are you?"

"My thoughts are being weird, Yosano-sensei." Muffled the younger one with fear. "I can't seem to think straight. And my heartbeat wants to tear out of my chest, it's making me nauseous." He curled into himself as he spoke. "Sometimes, I feel like someone set my insides on fire."

Yosano interrupted him, looking almost bored. "That's a dramatic way to say you have a crush on the suicidal idiot."

"I- I don't have a-! *What?!*" Atsushi expressed, voice cracking. He looked up to see the doctor dusting herself off, and he trailed after her with a look of disbelief. He replayed her words in his head. "Why would you say that?!" Atsushi's voice pitched up with disbelief. "I don't have a- a *crush* on Dazai-san, absolutely not." He shook his head in denial.

"Alright, I believe you." Yosano gave him a look and backed off, nodding. "I must be mistaken."

"You're right." Atsushi paused. "I mean you're right that you're wrong. What I feel about him is pure platonic friendship." Atsushi spread his arms out with absolute confidence. "He's very important to me, of course. Dazai-san was the one who brought me here, and I'll be forever grateful to him." The defensive tension in his shoulders deflated. "He's wise- incredibly clever, funny and- ridiculous sometimes if I'm honest." He huffed. "Being around Dazai-san makes me happy, but that's it."

"I bet the entire agency makes you happy." Yosano remarked.

"Of course." He sighed, shoulders slumping. "All of them."

"So you feel the exact same about Dazai-kun as you do about Kunikida-kun?"

Atsushi faltered, hesitant. "I- I- Kunikida-san is a different case." It just didn't feel the same...

"Then your feelings for Dazai-kun must be like Ranpo-san, or Kyouka-chan, or me." Yosano glanced at him as they walked out into the corridor of the floor below.

"More or less." He stuttered in defense. "I mean what's the difference between these feelings?"

"You want more." Yosano shrugged simply, shutting him up. "That's the difference."

Once they walked past the open door, the rich aroma of coffee caressed his senses, welcoming him back. A warm breeze brushed past his skin, and Atsushi breathed it in.

The café was more crowded than usual, so Atsushi dodged past people with prompted apologies, ending up tripping over at some point, but he was caught by the shoulders before he swayed and fell. Atsushi looked up to familiar brown eyes full of mirth.

"I guess no one can resist falling for me. How troublesome."

Panicking immediately at the accusation, Atsushi swatted Dazai's hand off with a loud claim, his voice giving an embarrassing crack. "No way man!"

Dazai tilted his head, smile baffled, giving him an odd look. "It was just a joke."

"I knew that." Atsushi's eyes darted from side to side. He could feel Yosano facepalming behind him.

"First day back at work and you're already showing clear signs of insanity." That sure didn't seem to deter Dazai from getting all close and friendly with him, their shoulders pressing together, a bandaged arm slung over Atsushi's neck. "Classic Atsushi-kun." The brunet gestured to a confused Kunikida sitting behind the cafe table. "You take after your mother."

It took Atsushi a moment to realize what he was referring to, giving Dazai a light embarrassed shove, not trying to actually push him away. "T-that's so not fair." He'd only blurted out that he *once* called Kunikida mom, and by *accident*!

"It was your mistake for telling me." Dazai said in a sing-song voice at his fluster as they settled in their seats, across from one another.

"How would you like it if I told everyone what you said before that?" Eyes looking out the window, Atsushi grumbled. The memory played back in his mind, the nullifier's careless laugh echoing off the bathroom walls as he said Atsushi was cute. He opened his mouth to change the subject.

"Now, now, we all make mistakes." Dazai only stuck out his tongue before his attention strayed to the bar.

Atsushi smiled, finding a subtle gloved grip on the fabric of his dark pants. "Haha, yeah."

The waitress soon came over to take their orders, and he rolled his eyes at Dazai's familiar antics kicking into gear. Strangely enough, the new recruit seemed to like it, her focus entirely on him and her pale cheeks rosy from his subtle advances. The other staff must not have warned her about the bandaged suicidal.

Not very professional if you asked him. And definitely not something Atsushi wanted to watch on his coffee break.

He idly wondered if the brunet had, in his previous drunken state, mistaken *Atsushi* too for a fair maiden. It wouldn't be that surprising, he remembered the playful haze in his eyes when Dazai purred, *sleep with me*. He'll say that to the waitress too, he figured, and maybe this time, the offer would be genuine.

Atsushi hid his wince by holding his cup to his face.

Whenever Atsushi caught himself obsessing over these thoughts, of Dazai with other women, he always ended up feeling small, stupid and naive, not to mention like an absolute creep.



Shaking it off, he shifted his attention towards Tanizaki's story, giving polite nods and sipping from his tea, but the sickness was already creeping in. He should stop thinking about that, he'd been catching himself being so absurd lately.

He had no business thinking about how many women Dazai has been with. That was for Dazai to worry about and- Atsushi couldn't care less anyway, he told himself.

Yet the way the bandaged hand traced her soft skin *got under his*, lazy fingers chasing the faint veins on the back of her hand. Atsushi's heightened senses were more of a curse than a blessing in this instance, allowing him- no, forcing him to take notice of how her breath hitched and her heartrate picked up, and the subtlest hum coming from Dazai's throat- it was so inaudible and so little that Atsushi knew he was the only one able to catch it, not even her.

"My fair lady," Dazai began with his signature dramatic pause, and Atsushi closed his eyes, taking a calming breath to untangle whatever squeezed his throat so tight. All he knew was that he felt much more content when it was just the two of them. "Your ephemeral beauty has captivated me from the moment I laid my eyes upon you..." When was that, *yesterday?*

"Would you do me the honor-" Taking her hand in his, Dazai flashed her an excited smile, eyes taking a sparkle and- *oh boy, here it comes.* "... of committing a *double suicide* with me?"

"I... uh-" Taken back, the waitress smiled nervously, eyes darting around. Atsushi shook his head and took a sip. "I- I have costumers to serve at the moment, so you'll have to excuse me now." With that she hurried off to tend to her job, the brunet happily waving her goodbye.

Atsushi's grip tightened on his thigh, the tips of his fingers digging into the fabric. He watched Dazai's lidded eyes follow the outline of her figure with interest. In the darkest corner of his mind, a voice whispered- would Dazai look at Atsushi that way if he were a woman with curves? Like a potential lover?

Atsushi felt his jaw go numb when he went to drink his warm beverage- that suddenly burned all the way down his throat- losing all feeling including in the gloved hand that held his cup. For an instant his mind died down, deafening yet silent.

It wasn't just the raw *insecurity* in that thought that threw him off, but the next thought, which was: would he mind? Did Atsushi want his mentor to look at him the way those women were looked at?

*You want more.*

Atsushi didn't want more, at least Yosano was mistaken there.

Atsushi wanted *everything*.

*Atsushi wanted to be that waitress. He wanted to be every woman Dazai had ever desired, everyone he would ever want to touch.*

His hands trembled as he struggled to put his cup down, coughing into his fist to hide the expression of horror blooming on his face. Because if this feeling was what he thought it was...

"Brat?" Atsushi's head shifted up, and thankfully a judgmental Kunikida had his eyes elsewhere to catch whatever was on his face. "It seems like someone's here for you." Someone was here... looking for Atsushi?

"What?" Atsushi mumbled, still shaken, following his stare to a tall girl who appeared to be talking to the waitress, and he froze.

"Isn't that your girlfriend?" The blond raised a sassed eyebrow at him.

"Uh, I- I-" It was difficult to concentrate on giving an answer when he wanted to disappear under their attention, under *his* attention. The brunette finally spotted him behind one of the tables, making her way over, and she did not look pleased in the slightest. "I'm not sure why she's here..." He muttered honestly at the end.

"So you went on that second date after all." Dazai's teasing voice made him jump out of his skin. "You never said anything, Atsushi-kun."

Atsushi swallowed back his inner panic, shoving the unwelcome thoughts in the back of his mind. A familiar sarcastic voice spoke before he could deny it, making him wince. "So you're alive."

"Hello, Sakura-san." Atsushi stood up, alarmed. "Is something wrong? Are you okay?" His eyebrows furrowed with concern. "I'm sorry, I don't think I ever asked you after the attack."

The woman appeared startled for a moment. "I'm fine, and no one's in danger-but *you*, Atsushi-kun." She rested a hand on one hip and pointed. "Are *you* okay?"

"Me?" Atsushi squeaked out.

"You just sent me that last text and disappeared, I thought you could be *dead*-" Sakura flicked her wrist, flashing her manicured hand. "-*possibly* by your own hand." The more she spoke, the more confusion mingled with alarm, and a look at his colleagues told him they might have thought the same thing he did.

"I- I don't think I have sent a text like that." The tiger slowly voiced his thoughts, cautious, given that the conversations between them had been tampered with before.

"It was the day after the night we met at the restaurant." She reminded him, eyes narrowed. "At some ungodly hour in the morning. I tried to contact you for more than a goddamn week, but you wouldn't answer."

"I didn't have my phone with me for the most of that time." Atsushi muttered back, troubled. "I had it checked out in case it was bugged. Sakura-san, maybe you should also-!" The woman's response was to shove her phone in his face.

Rubbing his hurt nose, Atsushi took ahold of the phone and held it further away, focusing on the screen. "Read this carefully, tiger boy." She whispered, deadpan. "And tell me if it looks familiar to you."

"Well, not reall-" Atsushi began to protest, but abruptly his eyes widened at something and he shut up, face growing bright red like a tomato.

Sakura let him read through the paragraph-long text, studying her nails. "You were saying?"

"I sent this to you?" Atsushi croaked out, looking like he regretted waking up this morning.

"I mean I dunno, could be the invisible surveillance ninjas prowling around these days." She raised both eyebrows. "Darling, no one can fake this miserable cry of help I am seeing on my phone here."

"Sounds like Atsushi-kun." Dazai muttered.

It took Atsushi's all to ignore him, eye twitching, running a hand through his platinum hair. "I- *oh*, my sincerest apologies." He bowed down, face still burning. "This was absolutely wrong and improper of me, I'm sorry."

Meanwhile his teammates regarded him with a vary of expressions, from scandalized to confused and delighted- last one being Yosano, eyeing the drama.

"Who said I mind?" Sakura simply looked at him with evil amusement.

"Well, now I'm curious what he said." Dazai maintained a lighthearted demeanor, switching between them with uncertainty.

"*No!*" At his voice, Atsushi jolted back straight and stepped back, holding Sakura's arm for support. "It's- really just what she said, nothing interesting." He hissed, eyes looking for an escape.

"And yes Dazai-kun-" Sakura flashed the detective a sly smile, pushing brown hair behind her ear.

Dazai matched with a lazy smile of his own, chin in hand. "Ah, I don't remember asking to be addressed that way, dear girl."

"We did go on more dates." She listed it off so casually that a distracted Atsushi just nodded to it. "But I know how the job can be stressful, so I'm careful not to distract our poor Atsushi-kun too much."

"Accute hearing. I'm impressed." Dazai's praise landed flat.

"Thank you." Although, Sakura didn't appear to lose her enthusiasm. Atsushi blinked, like he just realized what he agreed to, opening his mouth in protest. "Anyway, I'll borrow Atsushi-kun for a minute, if you don't mind. It looks like my coffee is ready too."

"A minute seems reasonable." Dazai rolled his eyes.

"Sakura-san, didn't Atsushi mention you're a student?" Kunikida spoke up, hesitant. "Having coffee this late shouldn't be good for your sleeping schedule..."

"Seven p.m is any good student's caffeine hour, Kunikida-san." With a set of finger-guns and a wink, she went to get her order to go.

"I do not approve of this woman." Kunikida huffed and repeated, arms crossed.

"Maybe you're being too strict, Kunikida-san." Tanizaki gave a nervous chuckle. "She's not entirely wrong there..." Receiving a look of disbelief, leading to an argument between the two.

Atsushi still stood next to the table, trying to gather his composure.

"Tell your girlfriend to learn some manners." Sarcasm dripped from Dazai's words.

"I get the feeling you don't like her." Atsushi tried to snort and carry on the conversation like a normal day. "Just remember, you handpicked her for me, so you are the last person who can complain." His chuckle felt forced and strained, but he could at least carry on with this pretending if he kept his eyes on the ground.

"*Fine...*" Atsushi heard more than saw his clothes rustle. As Dazai walked past him from behind, he leaned forward to speak to Atsushi more discreetly. Just as his coat sleeve brushed his back, the taller hushed with hidden mirth. "But I am curious about the two of you." Atsushi felt like his feet were glued to the ground, and the useless muscle in his chest beat faster. Atsushi had made a mistake hanging his head so low that it exposed his neck, since he could feel the hotness of Dazai's breath to his core. "Why don't you tell me sometimes?" Atsushi stiffened, feeling goosebumps rise over the back of his neck.

Heat gathered somewhere low in his stomach, and it felt a little too tight in his pants. He would try to convince himself that he was just frustrated and on-edge today. That the handsome, unhinged person breathing down his neck had nothing to do with how his body reacted, quick as a switch being turned on.

But he'd just be lying.

"I'm sure you'll find better things to entertain you, I mean that." Atsushi smiled through gritted teeth, avoiding facing the man behind him.

"No need to be modest." Dazai grinned and backed away a few inches, giving him space to breathe. "I've said this before- I find you very interesting, Atsushi-kun."

Atsushi closed his eyes and prayed for the ground to open up and swallow him whole, because he couldn't take any more of this without breaking in every single sense of the word. Someone needed to take him away from Dazai's morbid clutches, because god knew if he were left to his own devices in this state, Atsushi would let himself be dissected into pieces, just to satisfy Dazai's curiosity.

"Have fun on your date now! Bye!" Atsushi's eyes snapped open at the sudden change of tone, noticing Sakura was back and ready to drag Atsushi away by the arm.

"I didn't know Dazai-san had a sister." The faint words coming from Kenji reached Atsushi right before he set foot out the door. As if actively trying to make it worse, Sakura turned her head briefly, her brown bangs bouncing around her face, and flashed him a cheeky smirk, knowing and horrifyingly familiar. All her facial features, her way with words, her confidence, her sense of humor, it all clicked together, like pouring a bucket of ice over him.

Atsushi couldn't unsee the image of Dazai off her face anymore.

Only after they crossed the threshold, Atsushi clasped a hand over his neck where he still felt Dazai's lively breath, feeling overheated.

"Stop eye-fucking in public, you're supposed to be *my* date." Sakura pouted, annoyed.

Atsushi flinched, not bothering to correct her accusations. "Sakura-kun..." He began, looking positively ashamed. "I- I-"

"So you finally stopped with the formalities." Sakura smiled and her eyes crinkled in the process. Her smile looked disturbingly similar to another cocky brunet he knew.

"I'm so sorry." Atsushi whispered, hanging his head low. "I didn't know about this when we first went out. I swear if I had, I would never-"

"You're so apologetic." Her melodious laughter cut his panic off. "There's no need for that."

Atsushi was left bemused.

"Listen, Atsushi-kun-" Sakura stopped in his tracks, sighing with a smile. "Two hours wasn't enough time for me to have gotten so attached to you, so don't worry your pretty little head. I figured there was a thing with you and that Dazai guy the moment you introduced us. Like the way you-" She broke out laughing again at the horror on his face.

"I was that obvious?!" Atsushi shook his troubled head. "Wait, so... why did you come to the agency?"

"I was worried!"

"Oh." Atsushi ran an embarrassed hand down his face. "... Thank you. I- I'm alright."

"Yeah- you're welcome." Hands on her waist, she sighed again. "Perhaps now you'd like to explain that text you sent me? It's an incoherent mess of apologies and spelling mistakes and something along the lines of *Dazai-san can never know I think about his hands so much.*"

"That's *not* what I-"

"You're right, it was much worse." Sakura smirked and it shut him up. Atsushi still managed a glare through his blush. "So? Explain."

Shoulders slumping down, Atsushi sighed and tangled a frustrated grip in his hair. "I- I think I need a little time to process all of this, because it feels like the world is spinning around and it's just- thank you for your concern, but if it's alright with you, I'd rather go home right now and maybe-" He looked down apologetically.

"Tell me or I'm sending the texts to your coworkers."

"*Alright, alright-!*" Atsushi yelled and lunged to take her phone away. "Jesus girl, I'll talk."

"And maybe you can walk me home meanwhile?" She chirped.

Atsushi pursed his lips into a thin line, but complied and followed after her trail. "So uh, that night, I had... a dream." His shoulders bunched up in defense.

"We all have dreams." Sakura sounded almost bored. "What was the dream about?"

"I can't say that." Atsushi showed interest in the passing cars in the street. "It's not very appropriate." He winced. "It revolved around one of my cowo-"

"Oh my god, about *Dazai-san*?" She whispered with delight, slapping his back and drawing out a pained grunt. "Why wouldn't you give me the details?" Sounding rather disappointed. Atsushi stared at her like she'd grown a second head. She offered an amused grin that dimpled her cheeks, and took a long sip of her coffee, steaming in the cold air. "Lighten up a little."

"Lighten up?" Atsushi echoed. He was already on fucking fire, but maybe that didn't count. "Sakura-kun, can I ask you a question?"

"Yes?"

"Why didn't you just leave the restaurant the moment you noticed my..." He trailed off awkwardly.

"Infatuation with Da-"

"Yes, that." Atsushi interrupted with a forceful smile.

"I just wanted to keep in touch with you." She shrugged, admitting. "You seem like a good person."

Atsushi's defense faltered, caught off guard. "You too." He softly reciprocated, and they shared a smile.

Sakura nodded sweetly. "And good friends let you pick apart and study your psychosis for your thesis defense."

"Hm?" Atsushi turned to her briefly, blinking. "Did you say something?"

"No." She patted his arm affectionately. "Don't worry about it."

"Okay?" He eyed the movement suspiciously.

Her chocolate eyes gleamed with humor, her brown bangs moving over her cheeks with the wind. "Anyway this is my stop." They exchanged goodbyes and so the detective was on his way.

The walk back to the dorms was quiet alone, but it proved to be good to let off some steam. As much as he appreciated Sakura's overwhelming energy and blackmailing skills, he only let himself fully relax once he was secure in his room, locking the door for good measure. Even though some people- ehem, Dazai-san- just picked his lock if Atsushi took too long to answer or if he was impatient enough.

Dazai-san...

The thought of his name made Atsushi groan aloud. He was in big trouble. When he thought about it, his defenses against Yosano seemed really stupid now, but could he be blamed? A huge part of him believed he had done something wrong, that he should be ashamed of himself.

He didn't know what it was like for other people but for Atsushi, a crush was a foreign concept. Love or any sort of intimate act... it was reserved only for other people. Good people, who deserved it. Not monsters like him who shouldn't have anything good... or so he'd been taught.

If he had this realization a year ago- even a few months ago- the fear, the sheer guilt would've torn him apart. But...

Atsushi softened, imagining what everyone's reactions would be if they discovered how he felt. Kunikida would yell at him for hours for having poor taste, and would demand that he saw a therapist immediately. Yosano would proudly boast about how she was right all along. The others would be maybe slightly supportive even. He couldn't imagine them being hostile, lashing out or abandoning him, since the possibility haunted him in the past. And Dazai... Atsushi couldn't predict how he would react to his feelings.

"He'll make fun of me for sure." Atsushi grumbled. "If it's the Dazai-san I know." *The Dazai-san you fell for*, a voice taunted. "Shut it." He mumbled, a hand going to cover his mortified face from no one in particular.

He tried to occupy himself with mundane tasks around the room- keyword being tried- but memories of their interactions crept into his head, the image of the brunet's content eyes as the sunset bleached his hair gold and mirrored off the river.

Whenever his smile was directed at Atsushi, he stopped being a ghost. It had the sheer power to bring the uncertain boy into existence, to make him feel like he mattered, even if the entire world told him he didn't.

More memories resurfaced, one after the other; of their walk under the cherry blossoms, their late-night gaming sessions and the fatigue he felt the next morning, their life-threatening

attempts at cooking, their common coffee breaks together at work, filling him with affection and longing.

Dazai winking at him every time he was up to something catastrophic, his silky voice when he sang Atsushi's unhonorable name- maybe that was when he first started losing it a little.

Shaking his head, Atsushi gave up on sleep. In an attempt to distract himself, he decided to make some tea. As he waited for the water to boil, he stared the kettle down like all faults lay within it, leaning against the counter.

When he reached for a clean cup, déjà vu froze him in place. Atsushi could almost feel a particularly suicidal human blanket against his back, making sleepy sounds and stupid innuendos.

He tried to shake it off, but the memory was so vivid. He could almost feel his alcoholic breath on his neck. Had Dazai always been that fucking tall?

Forget all of that, had they always been so tactile together? Why was he so suddenly aware of it now?

The small stream of water tremored while pouring into the steaming teapot; long arms with elegant dips and curves haunted Atsushi's tense form. He could vividly think up Dazai behind him, leaning his weight on him, waiting for him to brew the tea with tousled hair and half-closed eyes, complaining about how tired he was in that whiny tone.

It made him realize how badly he *longed* to be touched. This longing had built up throughout their recent interactions; every single thread with no end, every teasing touch or whisper, only for him to be left high and dry. He was forged to endure pain, but Atsushi wasn't taught to endure tortures like this.

*You're so... interesting...* He stiffened when made-up Dazai's brushed his smile against his ear.

Atsushi closed his eyes, trying to put these thoughts aside, but his face... his smile, and those eyes...

But there was no one else here, no one would know-

Suddenly the room was too hot. It wasn't that he'd never had fantasies before, just that they fucking usually weren't about his male coworkers.

The more he tried to ignore it, the worse it got. He shook his head, trying shake it off, but the thought of being with *Dazai-san* in a not-so-innocent way flustered his judgment and had him feeling... more than a little aroused, which was getting quite hard to ignore.

*Cool lips pressing onto the back of his neck, spidery fingers pushing him over the des k.*

"Stupid dream." Atsushi grumbled, gripping the edge of the counter. "That stupid cursed dream." The image persisted, morphed into filthy promises that sleepy blanket Dazai whispered to his ear while his hands wandered.



Next thing he knew, he surrendered to the soft support of the couch, pulling his tie loose. Atsushi cursed more under his breath, pants heavy in the empty room. Maybe he would be more content if Dazai were here to *see* the utter wreck he'd made out of Atsushi, the thought spiking up *something* in the low of his stomach. His body shivered at the memory of Dazai's more dark and intent looks and his clothed thighs rustled together, chasing an intoxicating ache.

Atsushi pressed down the heel of his palm to the front of his pants, a broken whimper ripped from his throat. His lips mouthed Dazai's name, but didn't dare go higher than a breath.

His mind replaced his own hands with other ones; with long slender fingers, wrapped to the palm with bandages. He imagined them slowly undoing his buttons, getting his belt out of the way, creeping under his shirt. Or slipping below the waistline of his pants, *taking care of him*.

The air hot against his sticky skin, he kept his mortified eyes squeezed shut, he hid them with his forearm and pretended it helped. He imagined the man's weight bearing down on him, their bodies against each other, their limbs entangled. He continued to cover his heated face, stroking himself with sloppy urgency. Any shaming or disapproving thoughts only fueled his fleeting desire.

*You're so interesting Atsushi-kun*, he imagined Dazai looking down on him with a devious smile.

He sank into the cushions in response to the urge to be buried underground, in too deep now to take anything back.

*Then do something with me.*

His desperate moan small and stifled when he bit into his hand, Atsushi palmed himself harder and a final time, arching off the couch with one last whimper, reaching his high.

He lay there panting, catching his breath and one by one as his mind started to clear, judgment returning to his senses, the implications of what he'd just done dawned on him, wave after wave of embarrassment and horror crashed into him.

With a dry throat, he reached slowly for his phone, which buzzed with a new notification and opened it.

It was a very bad, very close up and low quality picture of Dazai's cat under camera flashlight, its entire face covered in milk and its eyes closed. Under that, Dazai had attached a text.

*Odasaku says hi.*

Nothing happened for a moment.

Then Atsushi tried to suffocate himself with a pillow.

---

## Chapter End Notes

There we go, let go of that pent up energy Atsushi.

I'm open to critique guys. How are we liking the pace? Specifically with the development of Atsushi's feelings, all the way from chapter 1

Oh and who wanted to see my girl Sakura? She wants to be sushi's therapist so bad. If you don't remember when Atsushi sent that text, it was the end of chapter 10.

Yo happy 570 kudos that's INSANE!! Let's dance 🥳❤️

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!