

Beautiful flower

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Beautiful flower

by [Tayani](#)

Summary

Starting high school was supposed to be a new beginning in Orihara Izaya's life. It was supposed to be the time he will finally start openly being himself. However, things do not go exactly as he has planned... With bullies and hateful glances around, Izaya's school life doesn't look peachy. And one gorgeous blond that keeps sending him mixed signals does not help with it. At all.

Notes

This story contains mentions of abuse and transgender-hate. Please keep that in mind while reading it.

Also, I want to be clear. This story contains transgender!Izaya. If this makes you uncomfortable, for whatever reason, please, do not read it.

Chapter 1

It was Heiwajima Shizuo's first day of high school, and he found it completely and utterly boring. Seated almost in the exact middle of the class, seeing Shinra's back in front of him - of all desks, I had to seat close to *that guy* - and waiting for his turn to say his name come... It was seriously boring. Not that the blond boy complained; he preferred boring to annoying. At least with boring, he wasn't tempted to demolish the classroom.

"My name is Orihara Izaya."

Shizuo looked up from his desk, gazing in the direction of the skinny boy seated by the window. He had short, raven hair, brownish-red eyes, delicate, almost feminine face and an air of anxiousness covered in overly confident attitude.

"Izaya's my preferred name, so please call me by it."

It took the teacher some time until he consulted his student's list and stared at Izaya's birth name. He then looked up at the young boy, still standing by his desk.

"Um... Orihara-san... It says here you're a-"

"I'm sorry, professor, but it's -kun."

The teacher blinked. Shizuo could see the boy clench his fists softly, and yet his face remained impassive, almost blank.

"It's Orihara-*kun*, professor." he clarified. "I will be grateful if you use that honorific."

The teacher looked at the name again and at the rest of the class; whispers started to spread, and Shizuo could see - he didn't know how, but he could - this guy's, Izaya's, expression harden behind his mask. Finally, the teacher sighed.

"Please, stay after class, Orihara... kun. I would like to talk to you."

"Yes, professor."

...

"Hey, have you heard? That one, Orihara..."

"I know! He's actually a..."

"What a freak! And to the teacher..."

"I talked with one guy... So in middle school, that Orihara..."

"Have you heard?"

"Have you seen?"

These and other whispers filled the school the next day. They could be heard whenever a certain raven made his appearance, or whenever he left what the whisperers considered a hearing distance. But Izaya's ears were sharp, and he heard more of these whispers than he could ever wish for.

The raven was currently walking the corridor, trying desperately for his emotionless mask not to slip. He promised himself he will no longer let people look at him through his birth sex. Starting high school with coming out was supposed to be the turning point in his life. It was supposed to be a change for the better, when he will be finally free to be who he is. He already had the money saved for transition; for now, testosterone and binders did the trick. All he had to do was stand up and say it. He expected the bullying. He didn't expect for the whole school to be against him.

Izaya clenched his fists, moving to the bathroom door. He needed a quiet place to let his mask slip for a minute or two, to be alone. Before he could enter, though, an arm appeared in front of his face, blocking the entrance. Izaya looked up at the bulky jock who stood there, along with three friends. They looked like they had combined muscle of a bull... And the shared intelligence of one.

"This bathroom's for men, freak."

Izaya didn't let any emotion show on his face.

"I'm sorry, but if that's the case, I'm not long enough in this school to show you to the right one." he answered in a sneer, and waited, in slight amusement, until the muscleheads digested his words and converted them into something a bit simpler-sounding.

But once they did, Izaya's hidden amusement was gone.

"What did you say, bitch?!"

The punch came as a surprise, and as such, Izaya couldn't evade it. His petite body hit the wall, but what hurt the most was the silence, or even small chuckles, from everyone in the hall. Oh, no. One person spoke up.

"Are you stupid, doing it here? Teacher's gonna come."

Izaya wanted to laugh. The muscleheads came closer to him, pulling him up by his collar.

"We'll finish later." they growled, and Izaya grimaced; first at the smell from the leader's mouth, second from the pain he felt from his broken lip. Then, finally, he was left alone.

The raven sighed and gathered his things, opting for going to the roof instead. He heard Raijin Academy had one that was open to students, but not many people went there, since it was a long way upstairs and during breaks nobody cared enough to run few stories up and then down for few minutes on the roof. It was alright with Izaya. He wasn't going to appear in the next class, anyway.

It took him some time to climb all the stairs, and finally, the raven arrived to the roof; a large, open space, bordered with a metal net, so that no student will fall, or try to jump. There were few benches, but they were all empty.

Except for one.

Izaya bit his lip when he saw another muscular - though not overly this time - male laying on one of the benches and staring at the clouds, a carton of strawberry milk by his side. The raven sighed, wondering if he should just leave. He wasn't in a mood for any more bullying. But really, where would he go?

"Uh... Sorry, do you mind if I join you?"

The blond head raised a bit, and honey-like eyes looked at him with a slight surprise. But Izaya didn't care for the emotions flickering in these eyes at the moment. He was too busy trying not to fall over, as his legs suddenly felt weak and his hands began to sweat. God... This guy was... gorgeous...

The blond stared at him in recognition, before laying back down in a 'oh, that's you' reaction. "There are like, three more benches besides the one I'm laying on. Why the hell are you asking my permission? The area's open for students, you know."

Izaya blinked, seriously grateful the blond looked away, because he felt a bit more blood than usual rush to his cheeks. "I, um... It's just... Nevermind." he mumbled, wanting to slap himself. Him, Orihara Izaya, not knowing what to say?!

The raven sat down on one of the free benches, taking out some tissues from his backpack. He needed to stop that lip from bleeding... and see if there's any damage apart from that. Suddenly, something bumped his knee. Bumped, not hit. He looked in surprise, and saw a very neat little package consisting of band-aids, bandages, disinfectant, painkillers... Even needle and special thread for stitches. He looked up in surprise, but the blond was laying just as he was a second before, looking into the sky.

"Thank you?" he murmured hesitantly.

"You're welcome. My brother packed it into my backpack, because I always get hurt, but it's not like I'm using it anyway. Just take whatever and give it back." came the response. Izaya nodded slowly, taking things he would need and standing up to hand the little first-aid kit back. He stood over the blond, grateful for the chance to look at him a bit more.

"I'm..."

"You're Orihara Izaya, right?" Izaya's heart skipped a beat when the blond guy opened one eye and reached his hand to take the package, and *used his name*. "We're in class together. I'm Heiwajima Shizuo."

"Nice to meet you."

"I don't like you."

Izaya's heart sunk. So... In the end... He was no different from the others, was he. The raven mustered a smirk on his face, laughing mockingly.

"Oh...? And we could have so much fun together~ Shizu-chan~" and he turned his back, skipping to the exit from the roof, followed by Shizuo's enraged *don't call me that*.

Orihara Izaya decided he didn't like this school. At all.

Chapter 2

"Hold her!"

It all happened too fast. Izaya was walking home, after what had to be the worst day of his school life so far, when some girly voice screeched these words behind him, and a second later, some strong, stronger than his hands grabbed him and threw him into an alleyway. Izaya cursed, trying to hit his opponent, but was punched in the stomach in response, and that rendered him breathless, in pain, and unable to fight. He cursed under his breath. Were they going to bully him on the streets, too?

The raven looked up, feeling someone grab his wrists, twisting his arms painfully behind his back. There were about five girls in front of him; normal, good-looking girls in Raijin uniforms. The leader; at least she looked like one, the tallest and standing closest to him; sneered at their victim. Izaya glared back at her, turning slightly back, only to see the three muscleheads from before, two of which were holding him down. Oh, shit...

"What the hell do you want?" he growled. The leader of the bullies laughed at that.

"Hey, look, little bitch barks!" the rest of the girls laughed as well. Izaya desperately tried to break free, but to no avail.

"What did you think you were doing, whore? With that little show of yours in the class, huh? Do you have some gay boy crush or something? Or maybe you wanted to date a girl?" they mocked, these and other words hitting Izaya's eardrums painfully. He knew they were wrong; but after such a day, in such a situation, these words still hurt him. A lot.

"What, quiet now, bitch? Nothing to bark back?" the leader laughed again, and the girls accompanied her like a choir. "Say girls, if our *friend* is so desperate to look good for her crush, we should help her, right?" they cackled again, and Izaya frowned. Up to this point, he kept quiet, deciding to simply wait for the bullies to grow bored. But... what did they...

"Hold her still."

Suddenly, his hair has been yanked painfully, and his head tilted up. He saw the girls taking out various cosmetics from their purses and started to trash desperately in the boys' grip, realising what they wanted to do.

"No... stop!"

"Shut up."

Another punch from one of the boys, this time in his side. They apparently were having a good time. Izaya flinched, and fought back tears. He will not give them the satisfaction.

The raven closed his eyes as he felt various, sticky substances being smeared all over his face. He kept trying to break free, but to no avail; finally, the girls were done, and Izaya

almost wanted to breathe out in relief when he felt a sharp tug on his chest, and heard the material of his shirt tearing. The raven looked down in panic, as one of the thugs ripped his shirt and tugged at his binders with a loud cackle and disgusting glint in his eyes.

"No... no! Stop!"

They only laughed harder. The thug finally pulled, and Izaya howled in pain and embarrassment as his binders were torn to shreds, revealing his breasts. They finally let him go, and the raven fell on the ground, desperately trying to cover himself with his hands.

"Nice titties for a tranny."

"If you're so desperate for gay, maybe you could have some fun with us sometime."

"Ew, you're disgusting."

Izaya didn't know whether the last line was directed at him or at the thug who just offered him sex; nor did he care. He only wanted to be left alone. And maybe die.

"Hey, let's go, or someone will come. We have no business here."

Steps, some kick along the way. Izaya didn't care anymore. He was past caring. Some girl threw something at him, and it landed just before his face.

A mirror.

Red eyes, filled with tears. He was grateful the bullies didn't see them. Apart from that...

They painted his lips red with lipstick. The same lipstick, it seemed, has been used to write an apparent "bitch" and "whore" respectively on his forehead and cheeks. His face were also covered in all kinds of pink goo, there was even some eyeliner smeared on his eyelids. He looked hideous.

The raven's shirt and jacket was torn. The binders laid in front of him in shreds. He could probably remodel his clothing to somehow cover his breasts, but that didn't change the fact his comfortable binders were destroyed, and he would have to go home in nothing but a ripped material wrapped around his chest.

Izaya curled more into himself and sobbed, laying on the cold ground. Enough. He had enough.

How long was he laying in this alleyway? He didn't know. It could have been ten minutes. Could have been few hours. What pulled him out of his trance were steps, this time coming closer. Were they coming back for more?

A gentle hand made contact with his shoulder, and Izaya recoiled, hitting whoever it was blindly with his hand, the other still covering his chest the best he could. He felt his nails drag over skin, and wet, hot blood staining his fingertips; but, whoever it was, did not budge.

"I'm not here to hurt you."

Izaya blinked, and teared up again. Oh god... This voice...

"Go away." he muttered, not raising his head. The one guy that, at least at first, was nice to him. The most gorgeous guy in the entire school. And he had to see him like this...

"No."

"What is your problem? Leave me the fuck alone!" he screamed, fighting back tears.

"I don't recall ever taking orders from anyone." Shizuo was still here. More; he sat down in front of Izaya, gently reaching his hand up again. The raven recoiled from the touch, but Shizuo's hand stopped even before he could make contact with his skin.

"...are you bleeding?"

"What do you care? Just go away. I thought you didn't like me." Izaya growled, still refusing to look up. Why, why, why couldn't the blond just *go away*?

"I don't." Shizuo sighed, leaning back a little; although he was obviously far from standing up and leaving. "...you never asked why." he murmured after a while.

"Enlighten me." the raven snapped.

"I don't like you, because you're just like me."

Izaya stared at the ground, before looking up in surprise, just a tiny bit.

"Are you a tran-"

"No!" This was possibly the first time he saw Shizuo blushing. It was adorable, if not counting the lightly bleeding, shallow scratch on his cheek. "I mean... No... It's just..." the blond sighed, rubbing the back of his neck. "You came there on the roof today, right? And... You were running away. What did they call you? A freak? I don't really care but... You had enough, right? And you just run away somewhere where there aren't many people to hurt you. You didn't make a stand, you didn't try to fight for yourself. You're a coward... And so am I."

"...you were running away, too?" Izaya found it somehow hard to believe. Why would handsome, muscular, perfect Shizuo be bullied?

"...yeah."

"...what were they calling you?"

Shizuo looked away, clenching his fists.

"A monster."

Izaya blinked, raising his head a bit more, if only to have a better look at the blond; but Shizuo obviously took advantage of it and caught his chin between his fingers, tilting it up.

The blond whistled.

"Oh fuck..."

The raven wanted to cry; although this time mostly from embarrassment. Thankfully, Shizuo only saw his face, not the rest of him...

"...don't look at me, please." he murmured in defeated tone. And once again, Shizuo did exactly the opposite.

True, the blond let his chin go, but only so that he could pull out the already-familiar package from his backpack. Izaya only rolled his eyes.

"...Shizu-chan, I'm not hurt."

"Shut up, and don't call me that." he growled, taking some gauze and pouring the disinfectant on it. "It has an alcohol in it, this... Ugh... The colours... It'll wipe them off."

Izaya stared at the blond, too in shock to even flinch when he started to gently wipe his face. The disinfectant's smell made his eyes tear up again, but this time he could simply blame it on the chemicals. Soon, the raven's face was clean once more, and he looked at Shizuo gratefully.

"...thanks, Shizu-chan."

"Don't mention it." Shizuo threw the now-sticky gauze away and turned to the raven once more. "...okay, what else did they do?"

"..."

"Come on, Izaya, you were sitting in that curled-up position for about fifteen minutes now. Don't tell me it's because it's comfortable that way."

Izaya turned scarlet and looked away.

"...they tore my clothes." he muttered. "...please turn away? So I can... Try to... cover myself?"

Shizuo's face heated up as well, and he stumbled back, obediently turning away. He even covered his eyes with his hands. Izaya almost chuckled at that, finding it adorable. Almost.

He looked around, to see if nobody else was there, and slowly stood up, examining the state of his clothes. Completely torn. There was no way he could walk the streets in something like that. But, well... Maybe he could at least cover his breasts. The raven slid his jacket off; with ripped sleeve and front, it was of no use, and the material was too stiff to use it as a binder; and took off the remains of his shirt, trying to somehow wrap it around himself. After five minutes of struggling, the raven sighed in defeat. He looked like a... Actually, he didn't want to think how he looked at the moment.

"...something the matter?"

Oh, right. Izaya almost forgot Shizuo was still here.

"It's just... The best I can do with these clothes is to cover my... chest. A bit. It's terrible." he sighed. The blond stood still for a second, before shrugging and, without turning back to look at Izaya, took his own shirt off, throwing it at the raven. Izaya stared, first at Shizuo, blushing at the sight of the blond's muscular back, then at the soft material in his hands.

"Use this."

"...but-"

"We had PE today, remember? No, actually, you weren't there. Just put it on, and I'll be wearing the T-shirt I had during gym."

Izaya blushed heavily, his eyes almost filling with tears again. Oh, get a grip, he thought. The raven quickly bound his breasts with the rest of his shirt and pulled Shizuo's one on; it was too big, but covered the make-believe binder nicely. And it smelled... of cigarettes, and sweets, and Shizu-chan...

"...why are you doing this?"

Shizuo risked a quick peek and, upon seeing Izaya was done changing, turned around and started to rummage through his bag, pulling out a blue, wrinkled T-shirt and pulling it on, to Izaya's well-hidden disappointment. It turned out Shizuo's half-naked body was just as gorgeous as the rest of him.

"Why am I doing what?" the blond stretched, starting to gather his things and putting them in his bag.

"Why are you helping me?"

Shizuo hummed, shrugging. He didn't say anything else. Izaya clenched his fists.

"Is it because you think I'm a... girl? You take pity on me?" he snapped. The blond only sighed exasperatedly.

"Are you a girl? Because, you know, all the while I was pretty sure I'm helping a guy."

"Then why did you help me?!"

"Because you were bullied." this time, Shizuo's tone turned angry as well. "Because I saw a curled up, miserable kitten in a gutter and decided to make it a bit less miserable. Is that a crime?"

"I'm not a kitten!"

"Well I'm not 'Shizu-chan' or whatever you decided to call me! And you're staying *kitten* until you can prove to me that you can fucking take care of yourself!"

They stood face to face, huffing angrily. How did they even end up fighting? Izaya didn't care, as he crossed his arms angrily, looking away.

"I can take care of myself." he muttered. Shizuo rolled his eyes.

"Yeah. I saw."

"What do you even care?!"

"I don't know. But I do. Got any problem with that?!"

Izaya's eyes widened. Shizuo, upon realising what he just said, blushed lightly and looked away. Izaya bit his lip.

"...I don't." he murmured.

"...good." The blond was still obviously embarrassed. "Ugh... If you're going home through there... Means we probably... live kinda along the same way from school, so... Wanna go together?"

For the uncountable time this day, Izaya found himself utterly surprised, and very much delighted at how adorable Shizuo actually was. He smiled softly, for the first time in a while.

"...yeah. I'd like that, Shizu-chan."

Chapter 3

Izaya went to school early the next day. One of the reasons for that was, well, he was always a morning person, waking up before anyone else in his house. He had to find time to make some breakfast for the twins, after all, since their parents were never there, and to make sure they had something to dress in and that their backpacks were packed and ready for school. He didn't need to walk them there, thankfully; the raven just woke his sisters up, told them to shower, eat and prepare for school and was on his way to his own. Kururi and Mairu could take care of themselves.

But the main reason for his early attendance was to prevent as much bullying as he could.

He was one of the first people in the whole school; the raven changed his shoes in peace and went to his classroom, happy to find his desk without anything scribbled on it. It wasn't like they would do something with him sitting there from now on, right?

Izaya sighed, and looked at himself. He had his spare binders on, and a black V-neck under Raijin's uniform's spare jacket. The raven spent quite some time picking his clothes in the morning. He almost... almost dressed in girl's uniform, if just to stop the bullying a little. But then... Then he understood that he will be doing just what the bullies had wanted. And well...

"Are you a girl? Because, you know, all the while I was pretty sure I'm helping a guy."

God damn you, Shizu-chan.

The raven unpacked, and started reading some book on psychology he picked up few days ago, but had no time to read before. It was interesting enough to pass some time; still not interesting enough to make him forget his surroundings. So when a girl; one of the girls that bullied him yesterday; came into the classroom and sat by her desk, Izaya noticed her, even if he ignored her completely.

The girl also didn't seem to be in the mood to bother him. The raven thought he felt her eyes on him, but he couldn't be sure; and neither he wanted to check. The silence continued, until, gradually, the classroom started to fill, and finally everyone was there. Shizuo came as the last one, just before the teacher, and Izaya smiled at him lightly, even if the blond seemed to ignore him.

Just as the lesson was about to start, their teacher stopped by one of the desks behind Izaya and looked at the girl standing there. Everyone turned around to look what was the matter; and soon, they saw. Izaya's eyes widened when he read scribbled words of "whore" and "bitch" and even worse, written on the very desk of the girl who bullied him earlier. But... It didn't make sense. There was nothing on this desk before, and she came just after him... Surely, nobody would be as bold as to write all over her desk while she was there, right?

Suddenly, something caught Izaya's eye. Under his own chair... There was a sharpie that most surely wasn't there before. And the girl wasn't looking appalled or sad about what was on her

desk. If anything... she was holding back a smirk. And looking at him.

Oh, you've got to be kidding me...

"Ishiwari-san... I have to ask, you did not write these things yourself, did you?"

The girl obviously faked an innocent, flustered expression. "No, teacher."

Liar.

"Alright... Did anyone see who did it?" The teacher sighed. Izaya clenched his fists.

"Actually... I saw, teacher... I was just too scared to stop them..." The girl continued talking quietly, flashing a victorious look at Izaya, who only gritted his teeth. No way... She wouldn't dare...

"It was-"

"I was the one who did it, teacher."

The quiet, even voice from the middle of the class surprised everyone, the girl who was just about to say Izaya's name most of all. But the hand raised up and that even voice did not belong to Izaya; it belonged to a certain tall blond, who was at the moment looking at the teacher with unreadable expression.

"...Heiwajima-kun, was it?"

"Yes, teacher."

"Why did you do it?"

"Because I don't like hitting girls, teacher."

Everyone stared at the tall blond, wondering if they heard him right. Izaya had his eyes wide open and confused. Shizuo just took the blame for him. Why... why did the blond keep saving him, day after day?

"...what on earth do you mean by that, Heiwajima?"

Shizuo flashed the teacher a perfectly innocent smile.

"I mean it that I was very, very tempted to hit Ishiwari-san, but I do not enjoy hitting girls, teacher." he explained calmly. "I have seen Ishiwari-san along with some other girls and boys bully one of the girls from another class; they took her money and lunch. Also, yesterday, I happened to come past a little kitten they have beaten up... And I happen to like cats a lot, teacher. I couldn't stop them myself, because they would think the girl they bullied ratted them out, and would have their revenge on her; so I simply wrote a piece of my mind on Ishiwari-san's desk. I realise I should not have done it, but that can't be helped now." Shizuo finished with yet another light smile, and Izaya couldn't help but feel awe. The blond didn't simply take the blame. He did that, as well as making the bullies pay. Shizuo... was amazing.

The teacher was less amused, though. "...alright, Heiwajima-kun. Still, as you have said, it was wrong of you to write such things on Ishiwari-san's desk, whether you had a good reason or not. I hope you realise that. You will stay after classes today and do your homework." Shizuo nodded quietly, leaning back on his chair and staring at the ceiling. The teacher turned to the girl, Ishiwari, who was by now completely red and angry, and not knowing what to do about her plan going bad. "Ishiwari-san. You and those friends of yours will come to the principal's office after classes, understood?"

"Yes, teacher."

"Good. Now, for today's topic..."

...

"...here."

They were on the roof; Shizuo was laying in the same position as yesterday, on the same bench, with another carton of strawberry milk by his side. Izaya just got on the roof, wondering just how quickly could the blond run for him to get there before him. The raven boy was nearing Shizuo slowly, reaching out a little package in his direction. The blond opened one eye, staring at him.

"...oh, it's you, kitten. What's that?"

"Don't call me that, Shizu-chan, and maybe I'll tell you."

"Stop calling me 'Shizu-chan' and maybe I'll think about it."

They looked at each other angrily for a few seconds, before Shizuo sighed and sat up, taking the package from Izaya's hand. It was his shirt; washed and folded neatly, with a little box beneath it that hid two donuts inside. The blond grinned.

"...thanks."

"It's a 'thank you' gift, so don't thank me for it."

"Geez, you just have to spoil the atmosphere. Come on. I'm sitting anyway, we can share a bench." Shizuo smiled lightly, patting the place beside himself. Izaya nodded and sat down, not allowing his body to blush.

"And... thanks for today."

The blond shrugged, humming something around half the donut he had miraculously fitted in his mouth. The raven almost laughed at that.

"Can I stay with you after classes? I saw your face during literature. I can give you a hand with homework."

"Oi. I'm not stupid."

"I'm not saying you're stupid, I'm saying you said Akutagawa Ryunosuke wrote *Genji monogatari*. Shizu-chan, that's way past stupid."

"I wasn't paying attention, okay?!"

"Shizu-chan."

"What?!"

"They were like... Centuries apart."

"Shut up."

...

Izaya ended up staying after classes with Shizuo. He didn't mind; he liked it, actually, because, well... Firstly, the blond was gorgeous, and it was adorable, seeing him frown and stutter about the topic that was simply incomprehensible for him. And secondly, the raven couldn't deny that staying after classes with Shizuo meant they would go home together, at least for the part of the way; and Izaya won't be bullied like he was yesterday.

"Alright, that's enough for today. Orihara-kun, thank you for staying and helping your classmate with his homework."

"No problem, teacher."

"Heiwajima-kun, I hope you learnt your lesson on this one. I don't want to see you scribbling on desks anymore, or there will be consequences. Are we clear?"

"Yes, teacher."

"Alright. You can go home."

Both of them stood up and packed, bowing politely to their teacher before walking out of the class, and then from school. Indeed, they walked home together, and even if Shizuo was silent at first, Izaya noticed that the taller blond adjusted his pace so that the raven had no troubles walking beside him; and that was enough for him. So when Shizuo broke the comfortable silence, Izaya was quite a bit surprised.

"Are you... okay? Your... clothes, I mean?" Izaya blinked, staring at the blond for a second before looking down at his chest. Oh, right. Torn binders.

"Nah. I had spare ones at home. Besides, I need them only for school... It's unhealthy to wear binders for a long time, you know? So I just ditch them at home." The raven grinned when he saw the tips of Shizuo's ears go red. "Awww... Why is Shizu-chan curious?"

"I-it's not like... I'm curious... or something..."

"Shizu-chan's adorable~"

"Shut up! Don't call me that!" The blond looked away, his cheeks now dusted pink as well. Izaya only grinned wider; Shizuo really was adorable.

"...does Shizu-chan want to touch?"

"..." The blond stared at him, and Izaya couldn't help himself but laugh at the face he pulled, which only earned him a light hit on the back of his head.

"What the hell?!"

"Well, Shizu-chan has been staring at my chest for few minutes now. Like you can't believe it's actually flat, like yours." Izaya shrugged with a smirk. It was all for the sake of teasing Shizuo in the end. "My, my~ Is Shizu-chan a pervert?"

"Shut the fuck up! You're the one getting weird ideas!"

"Okay, so is Shizu-chan gay?"

Izaya meant this question to fluster Shizuo even more, but it ended up calming him down a bit, to the raven's surprise. The blond looked thoughtful for a moment before shrugging, rubbing the back of his neck as he did so.

"Um, do you have a name for... when you don't really care... whether it's a guy or a girl or whatever, you just want someone you like?" Izaya blinked lightly.

"That would be pansexual, Shizu-chan."

"Okay. So I'm that. What about you?"

It was the raven's turn to look thoughtful. *I always considered myself asexual... But right now...* "I think I'm gay." he murmured. *For you* - he did not add.

"So... you like..."

"Oh for god's sake, Shizu-chan, that means I like men."

"...okay."

They were both quiet for a while more, processing the information they just gathered. Izaya felt slight butterflies in his stomach at the notion that, well... They could be together.

"You know, it's not like I want to be rude or something." For the second time this day, Izaya blinked in confusion at his blond companion. Shizuo wasn't looking at him at the moment, simply gazing ahead as they walked down the street. "It's just... I never met a trans-person before. So sometimes I get confused. I don't want to be rude, but sometimes I don't even realise what I'm saying might be rude to you, so you have to tell me, okay? And I won't do it again."

A slow smile crept on Izaya's face as the raven stared at Shizuo some more.

"Shizu-chan's so cute."

"Shut up!"

...

Shizuo ended up walking him home again, and Izaya seriously didn't know what to think of it anymore. He was so happy for every little thing the blond kept doing for him, and it felt so good to be able to look at Shizuo and spend time with him and feel accepted and... And protected, safe. Izaya had the feeling that nothing, not one bad thing is going to happen to him if Shizuo's there. And he loved it.

Maybe a bit too much. Because Orihara Izaya recognised these feelings very well. He understood his crush was not only deepening at rapid speed; it now presented the possibility of turning into something more, something deeper, and the raven was absolutely not prepared for it. He liked observing people's emotions. He liked watching and playing with other people. But experiencing such emotions was the one thing he lacked information about; and it scared him.

The logical thing to do would be to distance himself from Shizuo. To stop coming home together with him. To stop seeking him out on the roof. But Izaya knew he would probably not be able to keep that up for long; even more so if the bullies were to approach him again. So he was left with only one possible for now course of action.

He will make Heiwajima Shizuo his friend.

Chapter 4

"So... The girl dressed as a man to get closer to that idiot she's been in love with and totally acted gay on him..." Shizuo looked like he was in almost physical pain, his brow furrowed in concentration. Izaya tried very, very hard not to laugh. "...but the chick the idiot was in love with fell in love with that first girl who was dressed as a man... And then the girl's brother who was dead but wasn't turns up... And that second chick ends up with him... And the idiot ends up with the first girl... And they live happily ever after?"

Izaya clapped his hands in praise, although the effect was nullified by the fact that the raven-haired boy was laughing so hard he ended up falling from the bench to the concrete floor of the rooftop. Shizuo went very, very red.

"Oh, shut up! It's not my fault I couldn't exactly read this thing, okay? And the names are confusing. Not to mention, I needed to use dictionary to check half of these kanji! Why the hell did you even want me to read it?"

Izaya wiped off the tears that threatened to spill from his eyes because of all the laughter. "No, no, Shizu-chan, it was quite a good summary! It's just..." he giggled again, making Shizuo positively scowl at him.

"Don't call me that."

The raven rolled his eyes. It's been about two weeks now, since the school had started and they had met each other. Ever since their second day, Izaya did everything in his power to become friends with the blond, and almost equally as much *not to* become anything more than that. It went well. Most of the time.

Shizuo would walk him home. Every day. Even if Izaya forced himself to stay a bit after lessons, the blond would wait for him, and even if the raven didn't say anything to him for the whole trip, Shizuo would still accompany him until he could see to it that Izaya returned home safely.

It baffled the raven. It didn't make sense. It frustrated him a lot, but at the same time, he loved it. And that only frustrated him more.

Apart from that, they acted on perfectly friendly terms. Said hi to each other. Hanged out during breaks - not every break, mind you, Izaya had better things to do than spending time with Shizuo. He wouldn't be able to name one if you asked him, but reading in the library was at least interesting enough for him not to stand up and seek the blond out after all. So, yes. Perfectly good, friendly terms.

And during their seemingly endless and impossibly interesting conversations, so happened that Izaya recommended Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* to Shizuo. And the blond has treated it as a challenge.

"Shizu-chan's so cute."

"Shut up."

The blond sighed, leaning sideways until he was laying down on the bench. "Very funny. You know, the fact that you're so damn smart and I'm not doesn't mean you can make fun of me." he huffed. Izaya turned serious immediately.

"Shizu-chan..."

Silence. Oh, great, now he was sulking.

"Shizu-chan, I didn't mean to make fun of you."

"Mhm."

Izaya sighed.

"You're not stupid, Shizu-chan. The fact that you have read that book is admirable on it's own. And I don't consider myself smarter than you." That was a lie, obviously. "I'm sorry, okay?"

Shizuo sighed, but the corners of his lips twitched upwards, letting Izaya know he was far from being mad at him. "...then stop saying I'm cute. I hate that, okay?"

The raven rolled his eyes with a little smile himself. "I don't see what is your problem with being called cute, or adorable. You are. Learn to live with it." he shrugged. "Unless you think it'd suddenly turn you into a girl, if someone were to call you that. Believe me, I did my research on that stuff. It's not as easy as that."

"It's not about changing into a girl! It's just... I don't like being called *cute*, alright?"

"Why? Does it make you less manly if you are? See, that's what so fucked up about this world. Everyone is acting like... Like you have to behave a certain way to *deserve* your gender. What the actual hell? So who cares if you're cute, why does it matter?"

"It does matter. How the people see you."

"Oh, so the fact that you love sweets and drink milk by gallons makes you a trans by it's own right?"

Shizuo huffed, crossing his arms. "Well, great, mister oh-so-manly. You cry, you giggle, you like smelling flowers when you see them, you're gay and like books more than sports. You suck when it comes to throwing a punch and swoon at some fictional couple. So why the hell do you try so hard to be considered a man? You act girly all the time!"

Izaya gaped, his face quickly turning pale in anger. "Oh, *excuse me*. I was not aware that being a man requires being a dumb muscle-head that thinks with his dick!" he hissed, getting on his feet and catching his bag, ready to leave. Shizuo blinked and sat up, looking at the raven with eyes filled with guilt; he obviously recognized he had gone too far this time; but before he could as much as say something, Izaya already stormed off, slamming the door behind himself.

Sometimes, people could be such jerks.

The raven run, not even caring that he had classes to attend. Despite himself, he felt tears wanting to spill from his eyes, but he held them back. No crying. This was so unfair. Just one person who would *not* make a point of telling him he was doing a bad job being a man. Just one person who would actually understand. Just one *friend*. Was this a lot? Did he fucking do something to deserve this? Was it really Izaya's fault he had been born in a girl's body?! The raven run out from the school and started to walk fast down the sidewalks, gripping the strap of his bag so hard his knuckles went white. A nice guy, he thought bitterly. *My crush*. Like hell. He's just the same as the rest of them. Stupid, intolerant jerks...

"Well, look who it is..."

Izaya's eyes went immediately wide in alarm; but instead of feeling fear, most of all he felt annoyance. He was not a girl. He was not a *kitten* that needed to be saved. And he was going to prove it. Right now.

"Leave me alone."

Two thugs were standing in front of him, which convinced the raven that the third one was somewhere behind him. Izaya slowly slipped a hand in his pocket, fingers circling around the handle of the knife he started carrying with himself lately. He hoped he does remember how to use it. Now was the time to try and check.

He will let them take him to some backstreet, Izaya decided. They won't hit him in public, either. Then... First he will take down the one behind him. He will pull out the knife and stab him in the side, without turning around, and the two in front of him would be too dumbfounded to do anything about it. Then, he will kick the one he just stabbed off of the blade and use the energy to kick the one in front of him where it would hurt the most. He will swing his blade, slashing his forehead. Head cuts bled heavily, it will blind him and make him panic. The third one won't charge at him after that. All he will have to do would be to point his knife at him, and he'll leave. And possibly pee himself.

"Oh, so the bitch still barks."

Yes, perfect. They pissed off the wrong person. And he did want to get revenge for his clothes, and himself. The raven had to fight a smirk from spreading on his face.

"I believe he told you to leave him alone."

Izaya's eyes widened in surprise, before his face twisted in a scowl. What was *he* doing here?

"...Heiwajima?" one of the thugs looked confused for a second, taking a step back. No. No, no, no. He was *not* being saved again like some... Like some damsel in distress!

"Fuck off, *Heiwajima*." he drawled, feeling the blond stop behind him abruptly. Izaya turned around, clenching his fists, seething with anger. "What the hell are you doing here, anyway?"

Shizuo blinked, before narrowing his eyes. He was always short-tempered, easy to anger. And at the moment, Izaya was so pissed off he *wanted* to make the blond just as angry, just as annoyed. "...I lost a helpless, little kitten that gets into trouble the moment I let him wander off." he spat. Well, that made Izaya see red.

He didn't know how he did it. He didn't know anyone could move so fast, but he did, grabbing Shizuo's collar and yanking him down, only for the blond's cheek to meet his punch.

Punch, not slap. Slapping was for girls.

Izaya's hand ached; fuck, Shizuo's body was somehow *hard*, but the face the blond pulled at him was worth it, tenfold. And Izaya wasn't going to stop there.

"I."

A punch.

"Am not."

Another punch, this time to the blond's stomach; maybe because of the surprise, maybe because Izaya hit him with his unopened flickblade, which handle was metal, either way Shizuo grunted and bent slightly at the hit.

"Your fucking..."

Another hit; he hit the blond with the flickblade again, as it didn't hurt his hands and seemed to hurt Shizuo more.

"...kitten. I."

Another one. By now, there was a little space around them, people going out of their way; seemed like nobody called the police yet, maybe because Shizuo didn't try to defend himself. He was probably too shocked to do so.

"Do not..."

And another hit; some part of the handle must have been sharp, because the blond started bleeding from the small cut on his cheek.

"Need..."

Shizuo raised his hands, trying to at least protect his face.

"Protection!"

Finally, Izaya stopped, huffing and trembling with rage, Shizuo staring at him with wide eyes. He blinked, obviously at a loss of words; for a few seconds, nothing moved but the droplets of blood that trickled down his cheek.

And then one of the thugs punched Izaya on the back of his head and made the raven fall on the ground, his vision swimming.

If not for the ringing in his ears, the raven would start swearing. Still, his anger seemed to have subsided, as he took it all out on the blond. Right now, he only felt miserable. Once again, he ended up useless. Defeated. Shizuo was probably going to leave and let the thugs have his way with him. Izaya would do so if he was him. They will beat him up, maybe even do something worse. And if the blond decides to help him, what next? What was his little scene all about then? He was just pathetic. Shizuo was right. He was just a girl that tried to act big. In the world... It didn't matter if he felt himself a man. It didn't matter what Izaya was thinking, because he was born with boobs and a clit, and he was going to be judged by it, always.

He was weak.

"Stand up."

The raven blinked, looking up hazily at the blond that was reaching his hand out for him. Oh. So he didn't leave. But why was Shizuo here? Why weren't the thugs anywhere to be seen? Izaya blinked again, forcing his eyes to stay open. Something wasn't right. Something felt definitely out of place here.

And that thing, most possibly, was the street sign that Shizuo has been holding effortlessly in his other hand.

"...what were they calling you?"

Izaya's eyes widened, his sight regaining focus. They were, once again, almost alone on the sidewalk. People moved around them, not wanting to pass anywhere close, but not because they were witnessing some fight between high school boys.

This time, they were scared.

"A monster."

Shizuo was standing with an unreadable expression in the middle of the clear spot, holding the traffic sign as if it weighed nothing. Apart from him and Izaya, there were three bodies littering the pavement. Bodies of the thugs that picked on him.

The raven stared, widening his eyes even more. The one, impossible explanation of what has just happened left him speechless, which reaction seemed to cause Shizuo's hand to tremble and his jaw to clench.

Fear. Yes, at first, Izaya felt fear. It was just a blip, however, because then came understanding, then came realisation and exhilaration as the pieces finally clicked in place and he could see all the picture.

"I don't like you... because you're just like me."

Izaya wanted to laugh, madly, with relief. Shizuo was a monster. He was abnormal, he wasn't human, he was something twisted and strange and lonely, and he was *just like him*. He *could understand*. Suddenly all the little things, the fact that he was nice to him from the start, the protectiveness, even the fondness Shizuo had for him, it all made perfect sense.

"Don't be afraid of me."

His voice was so soft; just a whisper, really. It was soft, and trembling, and pleading, almost desperate. And Izaya knew why. He knew so painfully well. It was a voice of someone who did not want to be lonely anymore.

"I'm not." he said just as quietly.

Because with him, Shizuo felt human. With him, Shizuo could be a knight in the shining armor instead of a dragon. With him, Shizuo could be himself... Because they were the same, and Izaya would understand.

And because Izaya understood, he stood up and neared the blond. And without a moment's hesitation, the raven boy got on his tiptoes and joined their lips together in a sweet kiss, closing his eyes even though he would love to see Shizuo's reaction.

Shizuo will not hurt him. Shizuo won't push him away.

Hey, Shizu-chan... You and I are both monsters...

So let's be them together.

Chapter 5

Some weeks passed since that time on the street.

Izaya has been left alone ever since then; miraculously, all the people who bullied him up till now turned up to school looking rather pale one morning, and were at least polite towards the raven. The rest of the school remained as they were; talking behind his back, throwing him judgmental glances or simply ignoring all the situation altogether. Izaya didn't mind that.

Because during every break, and every day after school, he got to spend time with his personal monster.

They weren't together. It had to be made clear, since half the school - and, ever since the kiss, probably half the city, too - thought so. That kiss... that sweet kiss of understanding which Izaya gave the blond... and which, after few seconds, Shizuo didn't hesitate to return... was a symbol. It didn't mean they were going out now. In fact, the blond told him himself they were just friends.

Even if Izaya personally wouldn't mind them being more.

They spent their breaks on the roof, and their afternoons walking down Ikebukuro's streets, finding out the longest possible way home. They talked a lot; Shizuo told Izaya, after some coaxing, how his life looked up till now. How one day, over some little thing, he got angry at his brother and snapped, almost killing himself with exertion. How ever since then, every time something would annoy him, Shizuo would turn into something less than a human, into a wild beast.

"So, you're kinda like the Incredible Hulk, right?"

"Shut up."

Izaya, in return, told Shizuo about his own life. How he always felt out of place, how he came to despise the body that was changing in completely different ways than he felt it should, how he was watching the boys from neighbourhood with envy, because they were born in the right bodies, and he was not. How he came out to his parents, begging them to let him dress and act as felt natural for him, and how his father started to bully him at first, calling him his daughter and making him wear dresses and do his hair to look more like a girl. Until one day, Izaya's mother, who was up till now watching, stood up and said that either her husband accepts who Izaya was, or she will take him, and his little sisters, and leave him, because she refuses to watch how he bullies her child anymore.

It worked.

Ever since then, Izaya turned into a son; he could cut his hair, throw out all his dresses - though in fact, he and his mother decided to donate them instead - get some binders and testosterone, even ask his family to call him by different name and agree for a transition, though under the condition he would save money for it himself. It was still a bit of a fresh

change, since all of that happened just before high school, but the raven couldn't have been happier. As for his father, well... He still sometimes called him by his old name, and still sometimes frowned when Izaya used male pronouns. But all in all, he came around, too.

"And now, with my knight in shining armour to protect me, even the bullies at school subsided. Good knight, good knight." the last two words were said as Izaya reached his hand up and patted Shizuo's head like a dog's. The blond rolled his eyes.

"Shut up."

Now the only thing the raven thought of complaining about was the fact that said knight-turned-dragon was not, apparently, interested in taking their friendship to a bit higher level.

Okay, so Izaya was at an age when he liked the idea of being in a relationship. He wasn't that big a fan of physical contact, but still, he couldn't help but wish to receive kisses and gentle, intimate touches, to be looked at as if he was the most important person in the world (which he obviously was either way, but still) and to be praised and all of that lovey-dovey stuff.

What's more, he wanted all of that from the exact person who was at the moment sitting beside him and basking in the sun.

"Hey, Shizu-chan, did you like kissing me?"

Honey-like eyes opened sharply, and the blond regarded Izaya with a rather surprised expression on face.

"...what kind of a question is that?"

"A normal one. So, you liked it?"

A little blush made its way on Shizuo's cheeks.

"...I didn't hate it, I guess. Why?"

"Let's kiss."

"No."

"Eeeeh? Why?" Izaya made the best kicked-puppy-face he was capable of doing before breaking into a fit of giggles at the face Shizuo made. The blond made a move to say something, but the raven just rolled his eyes, still giggling. "...I know, I know. I'll shut up."

...

Izaya was confusing him to no ends.

Shizuo yawned, listening to the teacher with one ear, while his other one focused on little talks that were flowing around the classroom. His thoughts, however, were neither on the lesson, nor on these little pieces of gossip, but at the hunched over his desk raven before him.

Izaya really was a confusing creature.

To that moment, Shizuo had no idea what was it that drew him so close to the other. When they first met, it was just an instinct; he was bleeding, so he helped him out a bit. Nothing to it. Then, it was anger; because no matter where and who was their victim, the blond despised bullies all the same.

And then... Then it got tricky.

It wasn't just some strange kind of protectiveness that made Shizuo want to accompany Izaya on his way home every day. It wasn't just the fact the petite raven was amazingly intelligent and a great conversation partner that he enjoyed spending his breaks with him. It wasn't just because Shizuo has always been lonely and hated it that he kept seeking Izaya out, day after day.

And it wasn't just because he was beautiful that Shizuo couldn't stop thinking about that kiss.

The blond never thought himself capable of falling in love with someone just like that; or more accurately, he didn't think he could have ever wished someone would return his feelings so desperately. And that kiss... his first kiss, a kiss of acceptance, from someone he felt so much for...

It only made the blond crave Izaya more. And yet, he was the one who drew the line, who set the boundary of 'friendship' between them.

It wasn't just the case of Shizuo simply not wanting to be lonely again, not wanting to lose this friendship they had. But he was also terribly, terribly scared, that if he let Izaya come near... the petite raven, the one person beside Kasuka that didn't seem scared of him... would get hurt.

But why was Izaya provoking him? And was he, really? Maybe it was all in the blond's head after all?

Why was he getting so confused over this?!

"...and how about you?"

"Hm?"

"Did you like kissing me, Izaya?"

"...Shizu-chan is not being fair."

"...and what the hell is that supposed to mean."

"I didn't like kissing Shizu-chan."

Shizuo's heart sunk. He went quiet and looked away, filled with disappointment, not noticing the skip in Izaya's step as they were walking together down the streets, and a little, hopeful

smile curling his thin lips. And it wasn't until they were at the raven's home that Izaya turned to him and cupped his cheeks in his hands, making Shizuo's breath hitch in surprise.

"I didn't like kissing Shizu-chan. But i think I might have loved it..." He murmured, almost shyly. Hell, he actually sounded nervous. "...what about Shizu-chan?"

And for once in his life, Shizuo, after a moment's silence, said what he really meant. Or didn't say, actually. Instead, he cupped Izaya's cheeks gently right back and leaned in, joining their lips in a soft, clumsy kiss; complete with their noses bumping and their lips missing at first, and little giggle coming from Izaya's part, and a frustrated growl from Shizuo's before they actually made it work out.

"Go out with me, Izaya."

"...okay."

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