

lavender dreams

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by [Shinkirou](#)

Summary

Overhauling one's life completely is never easy, but it gets easier when you realize you don't have to do it alone.

(Spoilers for the Fifteen novel.)

The first few nights in the mafia are... Rough, to say the least.

With his recent betrayal stinging so freshly - well, Dazai calls it a betrayal, anyway; Chuuya tends to think of it more as retribution for his own failures as a leader, the price he paid for making the Sheep come to be too reliant on him and then leaving them floundering while he'd gone off on his own to deal with ghosts of his past - it's nearly every night that he wakes up from a nightmare, ability pulsing uneasily under his skin like it's going to break free. He knows it won't, it's never come out without him letting it, but still, it's an unpleasant sensation, and coupled with the memories of the darkness and pain from his nightmares, it's one he'd very much like to scrub from his skin entirely.

He refuses to tell Dazai about it, obviously, even when they do see each other, passing by one another in the hall or working together on small missions here and there under the guise of working on their partnership. The partnership that neither one of them wanted, Dazai having thrown his tantrum about wanting Chuuya to be his dog the minute they'd seen each other that first time, and Chuuya finding Dazai an annoying, spoiled brat who's let the praise of his intelligence go to his head and is most definitely a sociopath.

Of course, refusing to tell Dazai about it *does* make it a bit harder to deal with... No, actually, it probably doesn't; as much as the feeling of *No Longer Human* quelling Arahabaki would help, at the same time, Dazai would probably just try to withhold it, or make Chuuya do something in return when Chuuya inevitably grabbed him, because there's no way Dazai can outmaneuver Chuuya in physical terms. In any case, *No Longer Human* isn't an option no matter how much it might help, because Dazai's an asshole, and, well... It's not easy to trust anyone else, but this whole not-sleeping thing is really beginning to take its toll.

He's not sure whether it's a blessing or a curse, when Kouyou notes the dark circles under his eyes. She doesn't say much, initially - he can tell she's still a bit uncertain of how to deal with him, even if she does her best not to show it, too close to him in age to really be a parental figure but still too unfamiliar with one another to be much like siblings, no matter the fact that Chuuya calls her 'ane-san' - but he can tell that she's worried, regardless, and that's... A strange feeling.

Does she just want something in return, too? He doesn't really think so, because she hasn't requested anything of him thus far besides the occasional menial chore or the like, and he feels like she's pretty self-sufficient in general, but... After the Sheep, and knowing how the mafia is at its core, where everything is for the sake of the mafia, yes, but that doesn't mean there's no internal conflict...

But, well, when she invites him for tea the next night, shortly before he was going to head to bed, he can't bring himself to say no. He's not really the most fond of tea, to be perfectly honest, but he feels like it might help soothe his frazzled nerves, just a bit. She probably thinks the same.

Knocking politely on her door - he knows she's expecting him, but it's still good manners - he waits until he hears her voice call him in, then steps inside and toes off his shoes. He's been here before, in her room in the brothel she owns, even though he doesn't stay here

himself, so it isn't like it's anything new, but it's always interesting to see. It's staunchly traditional, with the folding screens and their delicate patterns, the light of the lanterns in the courtyard, the sliding screen doors open to allow the delicate evening breeze in. The garden is immaculate as always, bonsai neatly pruned, flowers flourishing, their delicate scent carried on the wind, the soft sound of the chimes as they clink against one another in the breeze.

It's calming, really. If one forgot about the fact that the rest of this place is a brothel, and they didn't know Kouyou's status as an Executive in the Port Mafia, one would be most likely to think of her as a geisha or something. Her daily wear certainly suits that image as well; Chuuya wonders if perhaps that would have been her plan, had she not come to the mafia. He doesn't know how she got here, but he won't ask. That sort of thing is very personal, after all.

Stepping carefully on the tatami, Chuuya moves to sit in the main area, across a small table from where Kouyou is kneeling as well. She'd told him the first time that he doesn't need to kneel as she does, but he assumes the same position regardless; he's a martial artist, he knows how to balance his weight so his legs don't go numb.

She smiles at him, and it doesn't seem forced, so Chuuya makes himself smile back. He's *fairly* certain her intent this evening was to help him relax, maybe offer to let him talk about whatever's bothering him, but he could be wrong, it could be about work, so... "Good evening, ane-san. To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Still insistent on calling me that, hm?" But she doesn't sound upset, just wistfully amused, and she leans forward smoothly to pour them both a cup of tea from the pot she'd had set between them. It smells... Florally; lavender, maybe? Maybe jasmine? Chuuya doesn't know much about flowers, but he's heard that sort of thing is supposed to be calming and aid in sleep, so he supposes that if he *is* here just because she's worried about him, that wouldn't be surprising.

"I merely wished to... Check up on you. I realize that you may be suspicious of me still, and I certainly would not blame you for it; this is a new situation that you have been rather abruptly pushed into, especially considering your previous affiliation, but... You seem to have less energy than usual, and I worry about you."

Well, she *is* the one taking care of him, after all; if his health slips, it may reflect poorly on her image and get her in trouble with the boss. Chuuya doesn't want to cause trouble for her. "Ah, yeah, sorry... I've been uh, having nightmares I guess. They're stupid and childish, I know—"

"They are not," she interjects smoothly, tone firm even as the words themselves are comforting. "I do not know your whole situation, nor am I aware of all the details of what happened to bring you here - and please do not misunderstand, I am not asking for you to explain everything, though I am here to listen if you *do* wish to tell me - but nightmares are something that can be alarming and difficult to deal with no matter how old one is."

He wonders if maybe she has them, too. What kind of life did she leave behind for this? But, again, he knows better than to ask. Instead, he looks down at the cup in front of him, watching the steam curl into the air. "... I guess," he says instead, noncommittal, not because he doesn't agree with her, but because it's still embarrassing to talk about, even so. "...

Anyway, they're just like... Flashbacks, I guess, of what happened, and how I was such a crappy leader... All the things I'd done wrong, and the pain I'd caused without meaning to, that kind of thing." And his ability, too, but he hasn't really talked about that with her at all. She probably knows anyway, Mori almost certainly would have told her, but it's just something Chuuya doesn't really want to talk about with anyone else. It's bad enough that Dazai knows, although he doesn't think Kouyou would look at him half as calculatingly as Dazai does even if she was aware. Assuming she isn't already.

Her hand, warm from holding her own tea cup, rests on his, and Chuuya tries not to act as startled by the gesture as he is, his ability immediately flaring up on his own cup so that he doesn't spill it everywhere as his hand jerks under hers. She doesn't loosen her grip despite that, apparently aware of the fact that Chuuya doesn't actually *object* to the contact, it had just surprised him, and her expression softens in a way he doesn't think he's ever seen anyone direct at him. At least not that he can remember.

Suddenly, he feels like perhaps he was underestimating how much he needed to get that off his chest. He doesn't feel all better all at once or anything, but having her show support, even if it's just manipulative, even if it's only because she *has* to be nice to him in order to maintain her status in the Port Mafia, it's still touching in a way he hadn't expected.

"I may not know the whole situation, Chuuya-kun, but even from just knowing you a few days, I am quite certain you were a good leader." He shakes his head to that, because he has to, really; if he were a good leader, he wouldn't have gotten stabbed in the back, right? But Kouyou only presses on, tone soft but words sincere, "I know you may not be able to believe that, and perhaps you never will, but I can already see the characteristics of a great leader in you. I am certain that you will be able to flourish here, and I look forward to witnessing that growth for myself. For now, however, let us focus on helping you get the rest you so desperately need; please, try the tea."

For a moment, there's a flash of paranoia that perhaps she'd drugged it, but she releases his hand and takes a graceful sip herself; even if she hadn't, he pushes the thought aside. She isn't the sort of person to do that with drugs, he doesn't think. The incense she's burning and the flavour of the tea are almost certainly calculated for that purpose, yes, but not drugs, and he doesn't mind the warm scents. It's comforting. He still cannot bring himself to believe that perhaps he really was a decent leader who was only being used, though, because he will crumble if he allows himself to think that way.

Kouyou changes the subject, mercifully, as Chuuya drains his cup politely. If he were being perfectly honest, it tastes a bit too much like flowers smell, and he doesn't really like it, but it *is* still calming in its own way, and the soft lilt of Kouyou's voice, the atmosphere of her room, all of it is quite relaxing. He's pretty sure he hasn't even been there an hour yet, and he already feels like perhaps he should be going back to his own apartment now, lest he fall asleep here instead.

She seems aware of how deep the exhaustion has sunk into him, though, and she offers him another kind smile. "Come, Chuuya-kun, you can use my guest bedroom." He wants to protest, because he can get home just fine, he's coherent and he's sure once he stands up he'll feel more awake, but her hand reaches for his again, and he allows himself to relish in the

warmth of it, even though his own hands are certainly warmed by now as well. “If you do not *wish* to stay, you certainly do not have to, but perhaps being here will help you remain relaxed... And if not, then I will help with the nightmares, and I promise I will not judge or grow annoyed with you at all, or any other such thing.”

He wants to insist that he’s not a child again, that he can handle himself, but... He believes her, and he knows she’s sincere, and it’s so *warm* here, so inviting and soft and dreamy, and so he only nods slowly. “... I guess one night wouldn’t be the worst.”

They prepare for bed in companionable silence, and despite his protests, she presses a soft kiss to his forehead and tucks him in, chuckling behind her sleeve as the gesture makes his cheeks flush with embarrassment. She doesn’t even say anything about his grumbled complaints, turning off the light as she leaves him be, but leaving a hall light on; he doesn’t even bother telling her he doesn’t need it. He knows she won’t turn it off anyway, would probably only say that it’s for herself, even if he knows that’s not true.

Chuuya closes his eyes, listening to the quiet sounds of the night, smelling the calming incense, body warm and relaxed in a way it hasn’t been for a long time.

For the first time in nearly two weeks, Chuuya manages to sleep a full night through. When he wakes to the rays of sunlight peeking through the blinds and the sounds of Kouyou milling about a few rooms away, he smiles to himself. She was right; he’ll be okay. He has proof of it, now.

“Ane-san, let me help with breakfast—!”

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