

## Fieldwork

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/2276763) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/2276763>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Mature</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">F/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Magic Knight Rayearth</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Clef/Ryuuzaki Umi</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Clef (Magic Knight Rayearth)</a> , <a href="#">Ryuuzaki Umi</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Spy!AU</a> , <a href="#">technically a man from U.N.C.L.E. fusion</a> , <a href="#">only not enough to add the fandom</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 8 of <a href="#">Unsubtle Espionage</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">fan_flashworks</a>
Stats:	Published: 2014-09-08 Updated: 2020-03-15 Words: 8,174 Chapters: 3/?

# Fieldwork

by [down](#)

## Summary

Clef's phone wakes him up. That's never good - especially not when it's Umi calling. (Not that he won't go help her out of whatever hot water she's landed in this time...)

## Notes

SPY AU because. Milieva sent me burn notice. And I could. And this isn't at all a man from U.N.C.L.E. modern-day fusion nope~

Originally written for fan-flashworks challenge 'hot water' - and will probably be added to in bits and pieces as time goes on, but there aren't any cliffhangers or anything? (Set as teen because it's a spy au, there's going to be some mild violence. Probably about the same level as you'd find in the Man from U.N.C.L.E., in fact...)

# Chapter 1

The shrill ring of his phone shattered Clef's sleep. He jolted awake, but didn't switch the light on as he reached for the bedside table; he had no need to, as the thin curtains on his windows only diluted the eternal blazing of the pachinko parlour opposite and the electric-blue light of the sign on the love-hotel just down the road. Tokyo was impossible to shut out or repress, so he let it work for him – especially when something was wrong.

And something had to be, for that phone to ring in the middle of the night. Something had to be very wrong indeed. That being so, it was best if whoever was watching his apartment tonight didn't realise he was up. Or so said too many years of fieldwork.

(The assumption that there was always someone watching his apartment... well. That just came with the field he worked in.)

Clef had two phones – neither a landline. Wires were painfully easy to hack. Mobile signals weren't particularly secure either, in the end, but at least you needed more than a pair of pliers and some wire to break into them. The first was his work phone. A month ago, it would still have been on, even at – close to one in the morning. Then he made the sleepy mistake of letting an email or two send read-receipts back to his boss without thinking about the timestamps on them, and now she was monitoring his phone and his computer to make sure he actually slept. He had pointed out this didn't actually stop him having bouts of insomnia, it just meant he was less useful while he was *having* them, but Emeraude seemed convinced that the temptation of just getting on with a little more work – just one or two emails – was a slippery slope into him forgetting to try to sleep again, and so he was better off just watching the tv or reading a book like the rest of them.

The other phone would have been his personal phone, if he had any life outside the agency. As he didn't, it was wholly there so he could be contacted in emergencies, and there were perhaps ten people who knew the number for it. The few times it had rung in the past year had been Emeraude, calling him in because something had kicked off and they needed him at HQ.

This time, it wasn't.

“Hello?”

“Clef, hi, hope I didn't wake you! I've got a favour I need to ask.”

“...Umi.” He flopped back onto his pillow, and was very glad he'd lit no tell-tale lights; there was no way this call wasn't going to end in trouble. And inconvenience. And quite possibly his being persuaded to hack another agency when he really really knew better. “Blast it, Umi, what are you-“

The sounds in the background of the phonecall started to filter in: laughter, music, glasses clinking – or possibly bottles. None of which would sound out of place, had he not known that Umi was currently taking painkillers which did *not* mix well with alcohol, and her two

best friends, the only people who could have persuaded her to a pub at this time of night while she couldn't drink anything, were something over a thousand miles north on assignment.

"What are you *doing*?" He asked, and was rolling out of bed already, looking for the clothes he'd abandoned on a chair far too recently. "You aren't cleared for fieldwork, Umi, what are you up to?!"

Normally there would have been some form of protest at this point. Instead, Umi just spoke, voice flat. "There's a problem at work. Needs a plumber. Or our friends aren't going to be able to come back home on schedule. I... want to sort it out tonight, before the situation gets worse."

Clef paused with his trousers half-way on, part of him wanting to protest that leaky plumbing was barely even code – most of him screeching to a halt at the thought of a leak at work. If someone was leaking information connected with the mission Hikaru and Fuu were on...

He reached under the bed, to where his gun and shoulder-holster were taped to the frame.

"I need you to come meet me. ...Will you?"

"I don't do fieldwork!" He snapped, reflexively, though worryingly he was more irritated at the doubt in her voice. The protest won a startled laugh from Umi, one which almost cancelled out that hesitation when she asked if he would trust her – on the basis of a single phonecall and absolutely no information – to be her backup. Because of course he would. He yelled at her even more frequently than he lost his temper with most of the field agents, but he'd been in far too many scrapes with her to not trust her, and her instincts.

She was the bluntest, most honest agent he knew... which was probably why she got into more trouble than most of the others put together.

Umi hung up as soon as she'd given him a location, and he was out of his door and headed for the fire escape moments later, with only one phone, a few essentials – and the gun hidden under his oversized jacket. He had the feeling it might be needed.

oOo

There was only so much Clef could do in a rush to blend into the crowds. Tonight he'd defaulted to a jacket with a hood he could pull up over the paleness of his hair; the erratic cloud-bursts of the rainy season gave it justification. It rained the whole time he was getting far enough from his place to risk catching a taxi – it was too late for the trains to be running, and the address Umi had given him was too far to walk in less than an hour and a half. If he left her alone that long, she'd have given in to boredom mixed with impatience and started without him.

Whatever it was they were actually *doing*.

He asked to go to an address a little way from the one Umi had given him, slurring his words slightly, leaving the taxi driver sure that he was a tourist with unreliable Japanese who had

gone into a club to meet up with some friends. The last few blocks, he walked, carefully scanning the area for anything and anyone who looked out of place. There was nothing immediately obvious – but the back of his neck started to itch as he got close.

He slipped into an empty alleyway behind the pub Umi had called him from, and announced it again – he felt it needed emphasis. “I don’t do fieldwork. I am retired from the field!”

“That’s a subtle way of announcing yourself to strangers.” Umi smirked at him as she detached herself from the shadows.

“If there was anyone else back here, you wouldn’t have let me get this far.” He glared at her. “I want to make it clear, I am here *under protest*, and whatever chaos now occurs, it is not my fault.”

“Oh, come on. You’d be bored to tears if you never got out of the office, I’m doing you a favour! You should be thanking me for adding some variety into your life.”

“You shouldn’t even be out here!” He glared at her a moment more, but couldn’t hold the expression, not when Umi’s smirk had faded into something serious. “You’re certain, though? There’s a leak at HQ?”

Umi nodded. “Oh, I’m sure. We’ve got a mole. I think there’s only one, probably, but given who it is I’m not *certain* he’s working alone, and he’s trying to find out where Hikaru and Fuu have gone – he’s sending reports up to Sapporo. So *They* know they’ve got people trying to infiltrate the organisation up there, but they don’t know *where* yet – if we can’t stop him-“

“Who, Umi?”

She hesitated, again. “Are you... Clef, are you certain you want to know? You could just help me with this, and then stay out of it – if there’s an investigation at work and you get dragged into it you know they’ll have to revoke access to HQ while it’s going on. I can find stuff to do outside, but you-“

“I am apparently so incapable of entertaining myself that you called me out here tonight in order for me to enjoy myself.” He asked her, voice dry. “I’m certain, Umi. If it’s someone higher in the organisation, you may need me to help put your case forward. And if it wasn’t someone like that – you would have rung Emeraude first. But if you aren’t sure you can reach her without the message being intercepted... I’m certain. I want to know.”

Nodding, Umi bit her lip, then sighed. “It’s Innouva.”

Clef’s mind stopped again for a long moment, and then started working overtime. Innouva wasn’t quite upper-management, but he was very, *very* close to it for a field agent who had only transferred across to the Tokyo branch a year ago. A high-flyer, he’d thought – a *very* high-flyer, he realised now. Something of a trapeze artist, in fact.

“He’s been passing on information through a computer setup in one of the offices two roads along. I can’t work out how to get at the system from outside, and the security system on the building is too good for me to break without it being noticeable. If you could do that – if you

could get us in, and into the computers, we could send our friends in Sapporo some nice misinformation about Hikaru and Fuu. Say they're looking at the Russian shipping links in Otaru, or something, turn their attention away. And then – we could set him up. Catch him looking for Hikaru and Fuu's mission; maybe even find out if he has any other contacts in the organisation or if he's a lone wolf."

"All we need to do is get into an office, and then into a computer?"

"Yes!"

"...That's far too easy." Clef pulled a face. "You always land in hot water, not lukewarm. Where's the catch?"

"There isn't one!" She pouted at him. "It's simple! It's just – a really good security system?"

oOo

'Really good' was something of an understatement. Half an hour later, Clef was kneeling on a narrow ledge seven stories up, soaked through with the rain which kept pausing just long enough for him to hope it had stopped before drenching him again, attempting to break through the only part of the alarm system which wasn't impossibly well protected. Umi was sheltering under a decorative plinth at the end of the ledge, and he was concentrating hard on not looking down. "How did you even find out about this!?" He demanded, fingers tangled in a mass of wires, all precisely the same. "How, and why, did you have to find out about this *tonight*? You're not cleared for fieldwork! Let alone balcony work!"

It was probably the third time he'd said as much in the last ten minutes – the rain wasn't doing his mood any favours – and this time Umi growled instead of ignoring him. "I'm fine, I'm not going to melt! I'm not even planning on getting into any fights, and I can hardly do anything about the rain – it's going to be raining for *months*. At least it's not too hot yet."

The last half of that was too true to protest, so Clef circled back to the first part, which was a blatant lie. "You have three fractured ribs, Umi! That is not fine! If you've been running about the place doing surveillance on the rest of us just for practise again–"

"I was training!" Umi protested, pulling a face at him. "You're the only person who objected."

"I'm the only person who *caught you*."

"I wasn't prying into your private life, or anything." She slumped back against the stone – just as the heavens opened once more, and Clef started swearing under his breath again, cycling through languages. "Not that you, you know, actually *have* a private life. Anyway, I just – people keep sending me out of the office. Apparently I'm getting in the way, or something. I've been spending a lot of time in the coffee shop downstairs, and, well. Innouva was just *there* too often for someone who wasn't on assignment – and for someone supposedly organised enough not to forget his stuff and have to come back to HQ three times on the same day. I got suspicious. But I didn't try following him until I was *certain* there was something up. Not Innouva – he knows what he's doing, it would have been too easy to get

caught.” She grinned. “Though I was planning on telling him that I was bored and practising my technique if he caught me. You have to admit, having been caught at it once before makes it a much better coverstory.”

“...I admit nothing.” Clef muttered. The main entrances to HQ, at least for agents, were through the dressing rooms of a whole row of clothing shops in central Tokyo – you walked in, admired something and took it to the changing rooms (if there were witnesses – you could just walk through, if not) and used the hidden doors to get through to reception. The whole row was actually owned and run by a dummy company that had been in place for years; they got a decent discount in any of them, and if clothes were ruined on a mission you could go pick your replacement instead of filling out reimbursement forms. It was one of the worst-kept secrets in the game, these days, as it was easy to spot when people started going shopping at the same place every week even if you weren’t in espionage. But it was tradition. HQ had been running that way since the 60s, and security was good enough no one had made it through reception in decades despite everyone knowing the entrance.

There was one coffee shop at the centre of the row, which did very well out of its large regular clientele. From there, you could see most of the road... but you would have to be there a long time before you spotted something so slight as a co-worker coming back to the office more than usual.

Clef turned his attention to the wires again. “Well, as you’ve so kindly decided to entertain me this evening, and have so much extra time, I guess I’ll have to find you some work to do once we get back and get this sorted out. You don’t need your ribs to do data-entry for me, after all. There’s even a spare desk in my office – if you get in my way, you’ll have to bring a cup of tea back for me, that should be long enough for me to not murder you. No lazing about in coffee shops on company time, you hear me?”

“You-“ Umi blinked at his offer, and he wasn’t certain, for a moment, whether she was going to take it as a threat instead. He watched her reflection in the window between them – until she smiled. The small, sweet smile he glimpsed on occasion, and didn’t know what to do with. “Thank you, Clef. I’ll find some way to repay you. ...For tonight, too.”

“You could always take me out someplace which *is* actually fun, sometime.”

He said it, realised what he’d said, and froze. Umi’s head shot up, and Clef couldn’t even go back to his work with the wires because his hands were shaking.

“I... like things other than work.” Umi stopped, and he watched her reflection bite its lip. “You realise if you ask me to take you somewhere – interesting. It might not be anything to do with – um, work?”

Clef bit his lip, nodded, glanced at her, and then the two of them stared at each other as the rain faded back to the occasional drip.

A moment, and then a scooter whined along the road below them, and they both drew back against the building. “After we’re done here.” Clef told her, voice a little stronger. “We save Hikaru and Fuu’s mission, we catch Innouva, and then – we can talk?”

“Yes.” Umi grinned at him then, sharply. “Well, better hurry up then. If you don’t impress me now, I might decide we should go clubbing.”

“...You would, too.” He laughed, quietly, and turned back to his work.

oOo

Two hours later, they were three miles away, dripping wet, and both out of ammunition. Umi was clutching at her ribs and Clef had a new bandage about one leg.

Their disinformation plan had worked well enough, and then things had gone rather... chaotic. But Innouva wasn’t going to be passing any more information to anyone, and there were several fewer criminals loose in Tokyo than there had been at the beginning of the night. If things went very well, the branch in Sapporo should believe that Innouva was caught because he was desperate to get that last urgent message out to them, which made it more likely they would believe it – at the very least, they didn’t know how Hikaru and Fuu were planning to get inside.

“That went well!” Umi said, brightly, as they waited for their lift back to HQ, and Emeraude, who was waiting for their explanation.

Clef looked at her, then stared at the sky. “I *hate* fieldwork.” He told the stars, invisible beyond the lights of Tokyo.

Umi laughed – and then she stood up, stepped closer to where he leant against a wall, and kissed him softly on the cheek. “Thank you. For jumping into the hot water with me.”

“...You’re welcome.” He said, and glanced about. Ferio was talking to the police, not far away, and had clearly seen the gesture, raising an eyebrow at Clef when their eyes met. Clef flushed – then glared back at Ferio, before turning to Umi again.

She was looking away, biting her lip again, leant nonchalantly against the wall by his side in a way which let her press her hand to her ribs without making it too obvious. “Hey.” He said, quietly, and her head shot up in a way which was anything but casual. He watched her a moment more, still not quite certain...

But Umi was watching him just as intently, and that had to be an answer of some kind.

Clef leant in, and kissed her on the lips just as gently as she had his cheek. Only when he might have pulled away again, she leant further into the touch, and he ended up shifting closer instead. There was... a lot of potential, in that kiss.

Still, Umi was in pain, he wasn’t much better, they had work to get back to; he broke away, with a fair amount of regret. “...You’d best be thinking of somewhere *exceptional* for us to go,” he told her, unable to stop the silly-feeling grin spreading across his face. “That was quite some entertainment, tonight. You’ll have to work hard to impress me after all that.”

“Oh, really?” Umi asked, grinning back at him.



He nodded – and then held up a finger. “Just one rule. There shouldn’t be any guns involved in our next date. Okay?”

Umi snickered, and buried her face against his shoulder, leaning into him. The warmth was very welcome; he wrapped his arm about her shoulders, and settled in to ignore Ferio until their lift arrived and he absolutely had to move.

oOo

# Firearms

## Chapter Summary

Shocking no one, Umi and Clef's first date doesn't go entirely to plan.

## Chapter Notes

The first third of this chapter was posted a while back on tumblr. (2014, in fact.) The second part has taken a little time to write.

And the rating is now for other things as well as not-too-explicit violence...

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

oOo

Clef hissed, ducking behind the upturned table as one of the guys on the other side of the room got a new clip in his gun and started shooting again. Umi slid down behind him a moment later, wiping sauce from her hands with the fallen tablecloth. “I think I knocked one of them out with your plate, at least?” She told him, wincing when he glared at her.

“I *distinctly* remember having one condition for this date – only one! *No guns.*”

“This is *not* my fault!” It was more of a wail than her usual snap, but *honestly*. Couldn’t Umi go anywhere without trouble finding her? “I didn’t expect to be recognised by the yakuza while I was having dinner!”

“We are *being shot at*,” he hissed back at her – and, okay, he was mostly angry because it had been a very *nice* meal, before the shooting started. The food was good, and Umi was wearing a shimmering blue dress which showed off rather a lot of collarbone, and an even larger amount of leg. He was actually letting himself appreciate that for once, instead of forcibly ignoring her appearance.

At least, he had been.

“I know!” Umi snapped. “You could try *helping* me with that at some point, you realise?”

Sighing, he pulled up one trouser leg so he could get to his ankle holster, and his pistol. He’d shooed the last of the civilians out while Umi turned the remnants of their meal into an arsenal, it was as safe as it could be to return fire.

Umi's eyes narrowed as she saw the gun. "You said-"

"I'm not *actually* enough of a twit to come out with you unarmed." The table was still doing pretty well as cover; turned out they were metal under the fancy tablecloths. Cheap furnishing had its uses. "I admit, I didn't think you'd actually be unprepared either-" He looked up from checking it was loaded, and swallowed hard. Umi had pulled her dress up almost all the way to her hip, so she could get at the holster strapped to her thigh.

That was... a lot of skin.

Umi blushed, and then a round ricocheted off the very rim of the table, and they both flinched back to business. "You cover me, I'll work round to the stairs – then we should be able to pin them down between us." Umi ordered, all serious now, and Clef nodded. "My extra ammo is in my bag, I should be able to grab it on the way. How are you set up? Someone will have rung the police, and I set off the alarm in these shoes so someone should be on their way from HQ as well. Can you hold out for quarter of an hour?"

"If you can throw my jacket back to me as you go, yes."

"Right. Ready, then?" Umi crouched, peering about the side of the table, and Clef grabbed her arm – just for a moment – and pulled her back. "What?" She demanded, confused.

"Just – in case we don't get the chance later." Clef muttered, leaning in, absolutely certain he was being ridiculous. "When we get stuck doing *paperwork* all night-" Umi's eyes widened for a moment, as she caught on, then she closed the gap between them in a rush, before he could, kissing him hard and fast.

"Ready?" she asked, again, grinning at him.

Clef tried his best to resist grinning back, but Umi was glorious under pressure, and that smirk was addictive. "Go on. I've got your back." Then he was up and returning fire, distracting their opponents as Umi dashed across the room.

oOo

"Why is this so familiar?" Umi asked, head tilted back so she could stare at the sky as they both leant against the wall outside the restaurant.

In front of them, Hikaru and Fuu were helping the Police get their arrestees in order, while a handful of officers interviewed the customers who had stuck about long enough to act as witnesses. Normally gang violence wasn't in their remit, but the yakuza members had certainly opened fire on Umi deliberately after they recognised her.

(Hikaru and Fuu had arrived *suspiciously* quickly, as well. But then that was the problem, working in this business; your friends tended to be good at spying on you when they thought you might need a hand. ...Or when they were being nosy.)

Clef snorted, looking down at the makeshift bandage about her arm – her dress had survived in better shape than his outfit, but they were both a little ragged about the edges.

“Troublemaker,” he said, but there wasn’t much of an accusation in it.

Instead of rising to the bait, Umi sighed. “I... really wanted tonight to go well.” She glanced up at him, slumped low enough her head was at his shoulder, instead of level with his own, “Sorry, Clef. Guess you can’t take me anywhere.”

...Paperwork could damn well wait for a night, Clef decided, pushing himself up. “Dating you is never going to be boring, at least.” He waited, and smiled as her head shot up. “Umi, if I was going to be frightened off by the way you attract havoc, I never would have agreed to tonight.”

“You still want to...?”

“Yes.” He cupped her face in his hands, running his thumbs over her cheekbones – one liberally splashed with some kind of sauce, probably from when she started using their plates like Frisbees. “Very much so.”

He kissed her slowly, this time, taking care with each movement as she leant into him.

“Come back with me,” he murmured, pulling away.

Umi blinked, watching his lips for a moment before she focused. “What, to HQ?”

“No. To my apartment. I have a first aid kit – and a decent alarm system. We should fix your arm up.” He let himself grin at the bewildered expression on her face. “I think I even have some ice-cream – we didn’t get to finish our meal, after all.

She stared at him. “But, the reports-“

“Can wait, for once. I’m sure Fuu will find some way to excuse us.”

Slowly, Umi smiled. “That seems fair payment for them coming to snoop on our date. Okay. Let’s get out of here.”

They slipped away down a side-alley, and no one saw in time to do anything about it.

oOo

His place was quiet, and dark; Clef turned on the lamp on the hallway table, rather than the overhead one, mostly out of habit. Umi left her shoes in the genkan and wandered along the corridor on bare feet behind him, following his example.

He did *have* slippers, he just – couldn’t normally be bothered to find them. The guest pair were right there, though. Umi shrugged, when she caught him watching. “You didn’t look like you’d mind.” She said, with a twitch of her lips. “...Slippers are a nightmare to run in on wooden floors, I don’t like them that much.”

“I’d ask how those heels of yours are any better, but I’ve seen you sprint in them.” Clef glanced back at the shoes, pausing. “...Did you leave the tracker on?”

Umi snorted. “What, and tell all of HQ definitively that I’ve come back to your place? No. They’re one-time use anyway; I dug them out when we were waiting at the restaurant. Before we decided not to wait any more, that is. I’ll have to get them refitted tomorrow.”

She was looking about as she spoke. There wasn’t much to Clef’s apartment; the corridor turned into a narrow kitchenette, if you went straight on, with one door on the left before the cupboards started. That door led to the main room, which was bedroom at one end, study-stroke-living room at the other. A door in the corner of the bedroom half led into the bathroom, tucked away beyond the end of the kitchen. That was it. It was all he needed - he wasn’t in all that much, and even his book collection was three-quarters digital these days.

Clef padded across to the floor-lamp by the window, and it gave enough warm yellow light to see by. “The first aid kit is under the bed,” he said, nodding to it. “If you grab that, I’ll grab a cloth from the bathroom?”

“Sure.” Umi said, though she was still looking about – studying his shelves, by the look of it. He grinned, and went to find a clean washcloth and damp it down.

When he came back out of the bathroom, Umi was sat on his bed, long legs folded up on the grey sheets. He – hadn’t expected the sight to make him pause, swallowing hard, before he made himself walk over. “Hey.” He said, pulling her attention away from the slightly-oversized first aid box.

“Why d’you keep this under the bed, not in the bathroom?” Umi asked, curiously. “Also, are you preparing for the apocalypse? You’ve got more in this than Fuu takes on missions, that’s some serious first aid you’re planning.”

“I did mention that I quit fieldwork because I couldn’t take the paranoia, right?” Clef grinned when she laughed at him. “Anyway, I figure if anyone was to come in and shoot me in my sleep, I’d want my supplies where I could get to them. Hence, gun, first aid, emergency phone.”

Umi raised an eyebrow. “...Yes, I can see you’re really paranoid, telling me where your weapons are kept.”

“Only one of them.” Clef countered, then frowned. “Although there might be a knife or two under there as well, I can’t find a couple of them, keep meaning to check that – here, move over a little, let me...” He sat on the corner of the bed by the arm with the worst cut on it, and started to wipe away the dried blood. “Besides, if you’re thinking of-“

He stopped, abruptly, darting a look up at Umi – whose expression he couldn’t read at all, for once.

“If I’m thinking of staying the night?” She asked, quietly, and he shrugged.

“It would make sense for you to know where things are?”

“Clef...” She shook her head, then leant forward, catching his lips with her smile and kissing him slowly; he swayed forward when she drew back, blinking. “If I stay the night, those are

*not* the supplies I want to have to find.”

Flushing, he pulled a face at her. “That – bedside drawer not obvious enough for you?”

She laughed, and threw a roll of bandage at him. “Come on, mister. Finish patching me up – you promised me ice-cream.”

“Give me the antiseptic, then, and the scissors.” He got to work, cutting a section of the bandage off to use the antiseptic with; it was a clean wound, and pretty shallow, or he’d have needed better light. But it didn’t take long before it was thoroughly disinfected, a dressing taped over it, and then he moved on to checking her other arm, and the graze on her calf.

She insisted on doing the same for him, though all he had were scratches – still, he had enough of those that she insisted he take his shirt off.

When her hands ran over his shoulders, he shivered, closing his eyes. “You wanted ice-cream.” He murmured, as her breath ghosted across his neck.

“Mm. I’m trying to decide how badly I still want it.” There was a laugh in her words, and then her lips pressed to the nape of his neck – before she was up and walking away, back towards the kitchen.

Clef did *not* whimper. But he might have muttered something vaguely impolite – and he didn’t bother finding another top as he followed her.

Umi sat herself on the counter in the kitchen, watching as he pulled out bowls, and spoons, and then opened the freezer – and pulled out seven different kinds of ice-cream, trying not to laugh as her eyes grew wide.

“That’s – quite a choice.” She stared at the cartons. “...How much ice-cream do you *eat*?”

“Technically, those two are sorbet? But- I get sore throats in summer. Plus, there’s protein, calcium, energy-“

“...Sugar, you mean?”

He grinned. “It’s a whole meal in one! Except without many vitamins. I like ice-cream, okay? Now, which do you want – the dark chocolate is pretty bitter, and there’s green tea, too. The lemon sorbet’s pretty sharp, as well. All the others are sweeter, I know you’re not the biggest fan of that.”

“I make an exception for ice-cream, if I have to.” Umi told him, and she was smiling, now. Not the broad smile she normally met the world with, but a small, shy thing. “But... could I have some of the chocolate *and* the lemon?”

“Certainly.”

He mixed chocolate with a plain cream flavour one in his own bowl, and when he handed hers to her, Umi thanked him with a kiss which drew him in against the counter, her legs wrapping about his hips and her dress crumpled up between them.

They were both a little short of breath, when that ended.

“The ice-cream will melt,” he pointed out, staring at her lips and trying not to lean back in.

“I’m reconsidering my priorities again,” Umi told him, deathly serious, but she let him go. “Though I guess all that quick energy could be useful.”

“After half a meal and a gunfight?” He was flushing as he retorted. Umi just grinned at him, and slipped off the countertop... which put her right back in his space.

“Exactly. I wouldn’t want either of us to fall asleep too soon.”

Clef managed to step back and led her back into the main room; he had no sofa, just one very comfortable computer chair that doubled as his armchair, which she curled happily in. He never had guests, so it hadn’t been an issue. If Emeraude wanted to make him be sociable, she dragged him to her place, or out.

Technically, they could probably both curl into the chair, but that just seemed a bad idea. Getting ice-cream stains out of it would be a pain. So he sat on the end of his bed, and then tried to eat as fast as he could before it melted or got tipped all over the bed anyway, as Umi was apparently going to make little soft happy noises the *entire time she was eating*.

Which was more than a little distracting.

He knew she was doing it deliberately, but that didn’t help at all, because now they were both quiet it was starting to sink in that Umi was *here*, in his apartment, and...

Under the excitement there was a fair amount of panic starting to rise up, again. He hadn’t done anything like this for an age, what if he was useless, or-

“That’s enough, you’re starting to think too much.” Umi set her own bowl down on the floor and unfolded from the chair. The lights flickering through thin curtains highlighted the length of bare leg as she crossed the space between them, dress still rucked up high enough he could see the holster strapped to the top of her thigh, though she had set her gun on the bedside table while he was bandaging her arm earlier. She took the bowl from his slack grasp and bent to set it on the floor, then her hands were on his shoulders as she settled herself across his legs.

Clef’s breath caught. Umi got one hand in his hair and pulled, and he tilted his head back obediently at the pressure and moaned as she licked her way into his mouth, lips chilled from the dessert.

“You may outrank me when we’re at work,” Umi murmured, “but when we’re not? I’m in charge now.”

“Yes,” Clef gasped, eyes falling closed as he leaned up, and she kept just out of his reach, her fingers twisting slightly in his hair. “*Please*, Umi-”

“Please what?” she said, and she sounded *amused*.

“Please to anything. To *everything*.”

Umi drew in a sharp breath, and then she was kissing him again, hard and fast, and leaning into her was the only way he could stay upright. His sense of balance went completely offline, along with most of his ability to reason. He ran his hands up the bare length of her thighs, under the short skirt of her dress, onto her hips. She rocked against him harder, and then pulled away. Clef dropped back onto his elbows on the bed, watching as she grabbed the bottom of her dress and lifted it up over her head in one swift movement that left her in her underwear and that thigh holster which was crushed against his leg; she undid that, too, leaving her in nothing but black lace.

The contrast of the stark darkness against the warm tone of her skin was striking; Clef reached up, lay a hand on her side, over her ribs, where his thumb could reach up and brush over the edge of it.

“You can thank Fuu and Hikaru for the view,” Umi told him, flushing slightly. “They told me I should have actual matching underwear. Normally I just have whatever cheap cotton stuff I see first.”

“It looks good on you,” he said, voice husky. “But so would anything. You don’t need to dress up for me.”

She wriggled a little. “Well, maybe I wanted to be fancy for once.”

Clef pushed himself back up, sliding his hands about her back, aching to touch all that bare skin. He leaned in to press his lips to the edge where lace finished and bare skin began, traced the line of it across her chest. She shuddered, and arched into him, and he carried on going; pressed kisses to her collarbone, to the elegant line of her neck. “You’re always fancy,” he told her, not paying attention to what he said, needing to say *something* before he started coming out with incriminating nonsense like ‘I love you’. It was too soon for that kind of thing. They might have known each other for more than a year, but they’d been dating - three hours?

Umi laughed slightly, and leaned down to kiss him, which at least stopped him being able to come out with anything else until she pulled away again. “Move up the bed,” she told him, shifting to one side so he actually could. “Otherwise I’m going to fall off backwards and have to explain the concussion at work tomorrow.”

“That would be an interesting conversation,” he murmured, obliging her, and as soon as he was fully on the mattress she went for his trousers, only to hesitate with her fingers on the fastening.

“...Is this alright?”

“Umi, if this wasn’t alright, I wouldn’t have offered you ice-cream.”

She pulled a face at him. “You are allowed to change your mind, you know. So, is this still what you want?”



Reaching up, Clef cupped her face with one hand, running his thumb over her cheekbone. “Umi... I wouldn’t have gone out with you if I wasn’t certain my mind isn’t going to change about this. It’s not... new.” Her breath caught as she looked down at him, and leaned into his touch. “As long as this is still what you want, we’re good. ...And if you would like to do something, it’s probably going to be easier without the trousers in the way?”

Slowly, she grinned, and then she was kissing him hard, one hand in her hair and the other fumbling his trousers open and helping him push them off - and his underwear somehow managed to go too. He barely noticed, too busy trying to remember how to unhook a bra while his brain wasn’t processing very much beyond Umi straddling him again, bare skin to bare skin.

“Okay. Bedside table, you said?” She pulled away to open it, getting rid of her bra as she went. “How much junk do you have in here, anyway?” Umi muttered, rummaging in the drawer, and huffing as she pulled another ammo box out of it. “...I said that I *didn’t* want that kind of supply! Where-“

“Plenty of ways we could entertain ourselves if you can’t find anything,” he said, amused. “Or you could just let me look-“

“No need!” Umi said, pulling back triumphantly and smirking at him – an expression with a lot of teeth in it. “And, no. I want to see you lose control beneath me. Unless you’d rather I pick another plan?”

He swallowed, hard, tilting his head up to meet her as she crawled back across the bed to kiss him again. “...No, that’s – fine. Just. Keep talking like that, and it won’t take long.”

“*Good.*”

oOo

It didn’t take long at all. But that just meant he could focus on Umi properly until he was ready for another go.

oOo

“So,” Umi said, later, when both of them were cleaned up and breathing almost evenly again. “You like being told what to do, when you’re - uh, In bed?”

Clef pressed his forehead to the curve of her shoulder. “I like... not having to be in control, I guess. I feel like I have to be in control of everything I can the rest of the time, so... it’s a luxury?” He didn’t bring up how much he had to trust the other person in order to let go. Umi trusted him to back her up in the field, if she needed him; there wasn’t a shortage of it on either side of this equation.

Pulling the covers up a little higher, Umi hummed contemplatively. “Pinning you down was a good place to start, then? ...How about tying you up? I admit I like the idea of you being in my power, but we probably need, I don’t know, a safe-word or something? I haven’t really done this kind of thing before, but-”

“Shh,” Clef told her, glad she couldn’t see how badly he’d flushed at the thought of Umi tying him up. “It’s sleep time. Talk later.”

“I just - I wasn’t really expecting you to react that strongly when I told you I was in charge.”

“Neither was I?” Clef offered, with half a laugh. “I don’t normally - It’s not usually that strong a reaction, unless I’m actually planning on, uh, letting go.”

“...It was good, though, right?” Umi asked, actually sounding a little nervous. “And you’re alright?”

Clef leaned in closer, wrapping his arm over her chest. “It was very good,” he told her. “But if you want a proper debriefing, we can do that tomorrow morning when we’re awake.” She hit him on the shoulder. “Or I can think of some better things to do before we have to head to work...”

“I’ll set an alarm,” she told him, and he fell asleep still grinning.

oOo

They did get saluted by Ferio when they walked into work together the next day, but there was enough paperwork left over from the night before that no one had too much time to poke at them, and by lunchtime it was business as usual.

Well. Business *almost* as usual, Clef thought, as he ate with Umi’s leg pressed to his below the table. If this was a new normal, he was all for it.

oOo

## Chapter End Notes

I'm leaving this as open because I think there are one or two more bits of this which go in a nice linear early-dating order, but just as a head's up, I'm going to be posting a bit of these from further down the line as a new work in a week or so. (It's already written, I just need to persuade myself to remove a few more italics...) It'll be in the series, but not as a chapter to this fic.

# Rest and Relaxation

## Chapter Summary

Some of the benefits of a relationship are a little less obvious until they happen.

Originally for fan-flashworks 'light' and 'fast-forward'.

Clef hissed and thumped his head back on the pillow in frustration, then hissed again as pain stabbed down through his head. Daylight filtered in through the thin curtains hanging over the windows, and an advert kept blaring away on the television. No matter how hard he hit the buttons on the remote control, nothing happened - the light on the bottom of the television never flickered, and it certainly didn't start fast-forwarding through the damnable adverts he'd already seen *a hundred times*. It wouldn't even turn off.

Throwing the remote across the room didn't solve anything. It didn't break anything, either - he flung it into the curtains and it caught in the fabric well before it reached the glass beyond, sliding down to the floor. But it didn't make him feel better, it didn't turn the television off, and now it was out of reach.

His phone wasn't. He picked it up and dialled with his eyes shut, waiting with fizzing impatience until Emeraude's voice came on the line.

"Clef?"

"If you sent someone to pick me up, I could at least be in the office and get some work done. It would make me feel better-"

"No. You're resting, doctor's orders," she said, and promptly hung up on him.

Clef pulled the phone away from his ear far enough to glare at it, and then dialled again.

"If someone could just bring me my laptop *here*-"

"No!" She hung up again.

Hissing obscenities in several languages, Clef swallowed down the impulse to throw his phone after the remote control. And then he rang Emeraude's office line, instead of her mobile.

"We have caller ID, you remember? Go away," Emeraude greeted him this time.

"I can't go anywhere!" Clef snapped. "I can't even turn the tv off and I am going to start breaking things if I don't get something to do soon-"

"Then go to sleep! Clef, you have three broken bones and very nearly fractured your skull to add to the total, I'm not letting you work!"

"But-"

"No!"

The problem with your oldest friend also being your boss was, he reflected darkly, that she wasn't afraid to use her powers for 'his own good'. "I've slept as much as I can."

"Then read a book."

"There's not a single book here I want to read," Clef snapped back, ignoring the inconvenient fact that he didn't want to read any of his small library because focusing on the words kept giving him a headache. Head injuries were the worst. So were broken feet.

"Catch up on your tv, then. Do some internet shopping, surf the internet for cat pictures, I'm sure you can find something to do."

"I was trying to catch up on this bloody series I made the fool mistake of recording, but there are adverts every ten seconds, and I can't even fast-forward them, and now the remote is the other side of the room and I can't get to it and I haven't had a home computer for three months I can't get on the internet." He'd meant to get around to replacing the last one, he really had, only things had been hectic and - well. He was at work almost all his waking hours. The only smartphone he had was a work one. The only computers he had were work ones. Emeraude had confiscated both before having him driven home from the hospital.

It had been years since he'd been injured, and he was, if possible, even worse at it now than he had been.

Emeraude sighed heavily down the line. "Did you try changing the batteries?" she asked.

"...Batteries?"

"In the remote control."

He blinked, stared across the room, then glared at the bedside table - which had several spare batteries in it, but also the fairly strong painkillers he'd been prescribed on top of it. Clef decided that he was absolutely blaming them for all of this.

"...I'll take that as a no," Emeraude said, and he could just see her trying not to laugh at him. "I'll send Ferio or someone around with batteries and some colouring books, okay? Just rest until they get there."

"Fine," he muttered, feeling like a sulky kid. Probably because he was acting like one, but he hurt and everything was irritating and he didn't want to buy a cordless vacuum cleaner no matter how many times the advert played. "By colouring books you mean a laptop, right?"

Emeraude hung up on him again with a laugh, and he subsided back into his pillows.

He must have drifted off again, despite the feeling he'd slept enough for three years, because the next thing he knew there was a rattle of keys in the lock and a knock on the door, followed by a cheerful greeting. Not Ferio's, though, and he pushed himself up in bed in time to see Umi walk into the room, several bags hanging from her arms. "Hey," she said, wandering over to kiss him on the forehead. "I hear you're about to set the television on fire."

"You're in Russia," Clef said, staring up at her. "I mean- what? You're-"

"The director called me back yesterday," Umi said, her voice soft and one hand running gently over the bandage about his head, then down to turn his chin so she could inspect the small cuts down the side of his face. "Didn't know when I'd manage to get back, so we didn't think it was worth telling you until I was here - I landed an hour ago and got a message that you were about to set the television on fire and also you needed batteries? I also grabbed my laptop and some books, snacks, a couple of dvds- I leave you for one week and you get yourself all dinged up-"

Clef wrapped his arms about her waist and buried his face against her shoulder, shaking slightly. Umi went silent, and then wrapped her arms about him, wriggling her way onto the bed.

"Hey," she said, softly.

"Thank you," he murmured, the tension shuddering out of him. He still felt like hell warmed up, but the world didn't see quite so terrible as it had an hour ago.

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