

In the Eye of the Beholder

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In the Eye of the Beholder

by [allonsydoctor10](#)

Summary

On the run from an arranged marriage, Hizashi Yamada finds himself stuck in a storm. He comes upon a seemingly abandoned castle and decides to shelter there. Inside he finds enchanted servants and a man cursed to take the form of a beast. As Hizashi and the beast (named Shouta) become closer, Hizashi becomes determined to break the curse and save Shouta. But is it too late to save him?

Notes

Hello all! This is my first new multi-chapter fanfiction in a looong time, like....since high school. I was brainstorming the idea of an EraserMic Beauty and the Beast AU for a while, and I figured why not jump into writing again? I hope you all enjoy!

The Village

Chapter Notes

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

The small village bustled with afternoon activity beneath a sky of gray clouds as Hizashi Yamada walked through, his horse trailing behind him on her lead. This was the fifth or sixth such village he had passed through in the last few weeks, but he wasn't sure, they all blended together at this point. Hizashi reached up to fidget with his hood once again, making sure it was pulled down over his face, he couldn't afford someone seeing his face. With his emerald green eyes, small pointed moustache, and golden hair, he was very easy to pick from a crowd, something he wanted to avoid.

Hizashi made his way through the village, searching for an inn where he could rest for a short time. Eventually he came upon one, a small wooden building with the sounds of music and raucous laughter emanating from the inside. He tied his horse at the post with several others, a trough with murky water before her.

"Sorry Violet, we'll have to find you something to eat, but this is what we have for now." Hizashi stroked her grey coat along her shoulder. The horse snorted and lowered her head to drink, used to these types of pickings by now.

Hizashi pushed open the door to the inn, immediately hit by the smell of cheap ale and cooking meat. His stomach rumbled as he approached a table in the corner of the room, as far from the other patrons as he could get.

Soon an older woman in a brown dress and an apron approached the table. "What can I get ya', hun?" she said with a smile.

"A mug of ale and whatever it is you have cooking, it smells delightful," Hizashi replied from under his hood. "And do you, by chance have any fresh hay for my horse?"

"We sure do, hun," she said, "I'll have one of my boys run it out for you."

"Thank you, kindly. She's the gray mare with a white mane."

A short time later he sat back in his chair, his belly full with warm food and somewhat decent ale. Hizashi took the time to try and relax, something he hadn't done in weeks, but jumped slightly and instinctively tugged his hood lower when he heard his name nearby.

"You hear about that Lord Yamada that went missin' a few weeks ago? I heard there's a hefty reward for anyone who can tell Lord Overhaul where he is!" a man at another table said.

"Ha! Like that would ever happen 'round here!" his companion replied. "That Lord Yamada is probably lounging in some castle somewhere. We ain't gonna see a high-born lord in these parts."

“That Lord Overhaul has been scouring the countryside, last I heard. S’posed to be marrying that Yamada Lord.”

“Eh, if it’s not gonna put food on my table, then it’s got nothin’ to do with me. Let those lords play their marriage and money games.” The second man spat on the floor.

“Oi! You dirty up my floor, you’re gonna be cleaning it up!” the barmaid called to them.

The men grunted and lapsed into silence.

Hizashi’s heart pounded in his chest, and he struggled to keep his breathing even. Now Overhaul had a bounty on his head; it would be much harder to stay hidden at this point. Hizashi took a deep breath. *No, I’ve been careful. No one has seen my face, I haven’t stayed anywhere for too long, no one is going to have any leads for him to go on.*

Hizashi dug into his coin purse, placing several silver pieces on the table before calmly heading out the door. A glance up at the sky told him rain was incoming, but his nerves were on end, he couldn’t stay here. He untied Violet from the post as she finished chewing the last of her hay and threw his leg over her side, he would find somewhere along the road to stay, even if it meant camping out in the woods, which he had done on numerous occasions at this point.

Hizashi snapped Violet’s reins, and he rode into the fading afternoon light.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading chapter 1! This one is a bit short, but the next chapter is longer. Comments and kudos are appreciated! I will also post the second chapter today, but after that I’m thinking a weekly update.

The Storm

Chapter Summary

Hizashi makes his way along the road when he is caught up in a storm more severe than he expected.

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi pulled his cloak tighter around his shoulders as he rode along the road, barely a small dirt path, that was quickly turning to mud. He was starting to regret his decision to carry on as the rain began to intensify. A sudden flash of light illuminated the sky and shortly after thunder grumbled from the distance. Hizashi's heart sank, even though this storm meant it would be harder for anyone to follow him, Hizashi knew it spelled danger if he was stuck out in it too.

Hizashi glanced around through the thickening curtain of rain, realizing he had no idea where he was. How long had the trees been so close on either side? Was this still the main road? Did he take a wrong turn? Should he turn back?

Hizashi tugged the reins of his horse, "Woah."

Violet came to a stop with a snort.

"Alright girl, I think we need to turn back. It'll be dangerous to keep—"

Hizashi was cut off by low growls sounding behind him. His head snapped around to find several lithe shapes slipping from the shadows between the trees, gray fur raised and strong legs ready to pounce. Hizashi's heart jumped into his throat. Wolves.

Before he could react, Violet let out a piercing shriek, rearing up on her back legs. Hizashi threw his arms around her neck, trying desperately to cling to her. The horse sped forward, with Hizashi clinging on for dear life. He heard the barks and growls of the wolves close behind as they gave chase.

His heart hammered in his chest, "Go! Go!" he shouted frantically.

The wolves were gaining on them, and soon he could hear their panting breath and the snap of their teeth as they lunged forward to bite, just barely missing the horse. The trees blurred around them as they raced through the woods, twisting and turning with the wolves right on their tail.

Suddenly the trees parted to reveal a tall iron gate, across a large clearing. Hizashi's horse banked to the side, trying to avoid a collision with the structure. The horse's hooves scrambled in the mud, finding no traction in the muck, and the animal fell heavily to the ground. Hizashi was thrown from his mount, rolling over and over through the mud until he came to a stop just before the gates.

He scrambled to his feet, sparing a glance back at the horse, who had just gotten to her feet and was once again rearing and stomping her hooves to the ground, trying desperately to keep the wolves at bay. The wolves circled the clearing, avoiding the stomping hooves, searching for an opening.

Hizashi turned to the gate. The metal looked old and rusted, covered in vines circling up the bars. He took a couple steps back, bracing himself, and threw his body against the gate. The rusted lock gave way from the force and he crashed to the ground, the gates swinging open before him.

Hizashi got to his feet, struggling as he slipped around in the mud, turning and pushing one side of the gate closed. As soon as he grabbed the other side, he let out a shrill whistle. His horse turned and seeing the opening for escape, sped toward the open gates. The wolves pounced immediately, just barely missing the large animal and falling to the soaked ground with a splash. Hizashi grabbed the gate and as soon as his horse was through, he pushed them shut and held them steady, putting his full weight behind the gates as two of the wolves crashed into them. Hizashi held fast at the impact, worried his feet may slip in the mud, and as soon as the wolves fell back he grabbed a chain hanging loose from the bars and looped it tightly through where the gates joined. The two wolves jumped and scraped their claws against the gates, but the chain held as the gates shuddered. The wolves dropped to all fours, pacing around with low growls.

Hizashi panted as he backed away from the gates, making sure the wolves didn't try to ram them again; but they just stared silently and eventually slid away into the darkness. Hizashi let out a heavy sigh of relief, heart still hammering in his chest. He turned to see his horse, pacing agitatedly around the overgrown grass and old stone walkways of a large courtyard. Hizashi looked up to see a large castle looming before him with two tall towers on either side reaching to the clouded night sky. The stone walls were slick with the pounding rain, and gargoyles leered down from the high walls. Hizashi's eyes followed the walls downward to a tall wooden door, carved with ornate designs that were faded with age. The building looked cold and dark, as if abandoned for some time, but Hizashi knew it would provide ample shelter from the worsening storm.

He took several steps toward his horse, "Woah girl, it's ok," he said softly as he reached for her reins. She glanced his way as he took them and settled slightly her eyes still stretched wide and ears circling to detect any hint of danger. Hizashi glanced around the courtyard, his eyes landing on a small wooden structure nestled to the side of the castle, a stable from the looks of it. He led his horse toward the stable, tugging the door open with some effort. Hizashi was greeted with the smell of stale hay; it must have been unused for some time, but it was at least some shelter for his horse. He stepped inside and led Violet into one of the two stalls, swinging the door shut after his horse had settled herself inside. The horse shook her

strong neck, spraying water in every direction; she walked slowly around the stall, snorting as she sniffed at the dusty floor, now dampening with rainwater dripping from her coat.

Hizashi glanced down at himself; his travelling cloak and the rest of his clothing were soaked through and slathered in mud. Hizashi folded his arms with a squelch and shivered, hopefully he could get out of these clothes soon, maybe there were some inside the castle.

“I’ll be back to check on you soon, Violet,” He assured his horse, as he exited the stable into the night.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I hope you're all enjoying the story so far. I'm planning to probably do weekly updates, maybe more often depending how quickly I get through the story; I'm on chapter 6 right now.

Also Hizashi's horse is named after my kitty cat, Violet! <3

Comments and kudos are appreciated! Let me know how I'm doing! :)

The Beast

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi jogged through the rain toward the large wooden door marking the entrance to the castle. He gripped the handle and pushed with his shoulder against the door; it opened with a loud creak. Hizashi took a deep breath before stepping inside and pushing the door closed behind him. The hollow sound echoed throughout the hall.

Hizashi glanced around the gloom of entrance hall, his eyes adjusting slowly to the darkness, and although the worst of the wind and rain was blocked out, he still felt a shiver run through his body at the chill. Maybe there was a fireplace here somewhere.

“Hello?” He called out; although the place seemed abandoned, he didn’t want to take any chances that he was barging in uninvited. “There’s a terrible storm outside and I happened to come upon your castle. Might I seek shelter here?”

Hizashi held his breath as he awaited a response, only to be greeted with silence.

“Well, I guess that’s a yes...”

Hizashi froze mid-step as he heard faint murmurs from deeper within the room.

“----muri, maybe we shouldn---”

“Stop---worrying, Tosh----, ----needs a pl----stay.”

“Hello?” Hizashi called louder. “Are you able to help me?”

“Nem---”

“Of course, we can help! I’ll get you a fire going!” called a feminine voice, much clearer than before.

“Nemuri, I don’t think he’ll be happy ab--” came the second voice.

“Didn’t you hear him? He’s just come in from the cold and rain! It won’t hurt to get him warmed up at least!” the first voice replied, Nemuri?

“I don’t mean to intrude...” Hizashi said nervously, glancing around for the owners of the voices.

To his right Hizashi saw a flame flicker to life, illuminating a small fireplace and an armchair in front of it. He walked over and sat, holding his hands out to the fire, relishing in the warmth.

“Thank you, er...Nemuri?”

“It’s my pleasure!” Nemuri’s voice replied.

Clunk...clunk...clunk. Hizashi glanced downward toward the sound, nearly jumping out of his skin. At his feet stood a candelabra that had definitely not been there a moment ago, golden and curved along the base with two prongs separating from the base about halfway up, each with a burning candle at the tip. Beneath the middle candle was a woman’s face smiling up at him.

“Pleased to meet you,” The candelabra spoke with Nemuri’s voice, her golden lips moving to form the words. “What might I call you, handsome?” She winked.

“I...I...ah,” Hizashi stammered, blinking rapidly. “Er...Hizashi. I must have hit my head or something, you can’t be real...”

“Well, I am,” The candelabra, Nemuri, folded the two appendages on either side of her base as if placing them on her hips.

“I can assure you, sir, you are not mad in the slightest!” came the second voice he had heard before. Hizashi glanced up to see a wooden clock, just taller than Nemuri the candelabra, making its way forward, moving its four wooden legs as if they were feet. Behind a glass cabinet swung a crooked pendulum; the face of the clock was...a literal face, with the hands of the clock extending out from the nose, mouth extended downward in a grimace and two sunken green eyes. Two wooden structures extended upward from the top of the clock, almost resembling rabbit ears. “Seeing as Nemuri has seen fit to show herself to you, I shall introduce myself; I am Toshinori,” the clock said.

“Good to...meet you,” Hizashi said quietly. “Er...might I ask how it is I’ve come to converse with a clock and a candelabra in a seemingly abandoned castle in the middle of the woods?”

“Well, that’s a bit of a long—” Toshinori was cut off by a low growl emanating from behind them.

Hizashi leapt to his feet, turning quickly toward the source of the noise; had the wolves gotten inside somehow?

The fire cast a dim, flickering light on a tall figure several feet away. The creature before him stood on two strong legs and clawed feet, covered by loose tattered pants and...fur? Hizashi gazed up the figure’s body, taking in the coarse, shaggy black fur covering a broad torso and thick long arms ending in clawed hands. The creature wore a long cloak over its broad shoulders, reaching down past its knees. Long, unkempt black hair framed a furred face and two sharp red eyes glared back at him.

Hizashi took a small step back, his heart racing as he glanced toward the exit, but the beast was standing in his way, he’d never make it if he was attacked.

The beast’s lips parted to reveal pointed canines and it spoke in a low gruff voice. “Who are you and what are you doing in my castle?”

“I’m...Hizashi,” Hizashi replied, trying to suppress the trembling from his voice. “I was traveling along the main road when I got caught up in the storm. Wolves chased me through the woods until I found this place. I really didn’t mean to intrude.”

The beast looked him up and down and his glare softened slightly. “Seems very illogical to be travelling in such a storm,” he grunted.

Hizashi didn’t quite know how to respond to this, but before he could say anything Nemuri piped up. “Well, he’s here now and he needs a place to stay. You won’t be throwing him back out to the wolves will you, Master?”

The beast seemed to contemplate this for a moment, “You can stay for now, but once the storm clears you can be on your way; I’m not fond of guests. Go where you like, but the west wing is off limits.” He stared until Hizashi nodded his understanding, then turned and padded toward the stairs, his cape trailing behind him.

“Wait!” Hizashi called, surprising himself, “What is your name?”

The beast paused and his long, pointed ears twitched; the silence stretched for a few beats. “Shouta,” he said without turning and made his way up the stone stairs, his claws clicking on the hard surface, until he was out of sight.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I've been having a lot of fun writing this! I'm currently working on chapter 10, so there's plenty more to come!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr at [allonsydoctor10](#)

Tea

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi

Shouta's heart fluttered in his chest as he made his way up the stairs and through the dim, cold corridors. The man's face, breathtaking even streaked with drying mud, refused to leave the forefront of Shouta's thoughts; his long golden hair, small moustache above his soft lips pulled down in a frown, and beautiful emerald eyes holding Shouta's gaze despite the initial shock of his beastly appearance. Was he not afraid? Shouta shook his head to clear his thoughts, of course the man was afraid of him, everyone else was.

Back in his room he padded through the doorway onto the balcony overlooking the courtyard; the rain had slowed now but had kept a steady pace. Shouta watched the rain trickle down from the overhang above the balcony, his thoughts drifting away once again.

Shouta dragged himself down the stone steps of the castle, rain pounding the ground around him, but he scarcely noticed the water soaking through his torn clothes and newly grown fur. He had to find him, had to make sure he was safe.

Shouta groaned as another spasm shook his body, and he curled in on himself, digging his claws in to his arms as he rode out the wave of pain. As he lifted his head, he glimpsed a shape retreating through the gate and into the woods at the far end of the courtyard.

He was gone...driven away by fear of what Shouta had become. Shouta felt warm tears roll down his face, mixing with the rain. A roar tore itself through his chest and echoed his despair through the night.

Shouta jumped, his thoughts suddenly back to the present. He bared his teeth and with a growl turned back inside; it didn't matter if he was afraid or not, Hizashi would be gone soon enough, just like those who came before him.

"Well then, let's get you settled in your room," Nemuri hopped to Hizashi's side, her flames fizzling with what Hizashi could only assume was excitement. "Toshi, tell the kitchen to fix our guest some tea!"

Toshinori's clock hands whirled at her instruction, "All right, but you heard the Master, he's only staying until the storm passes!"

"Mmm-hmm," Nemuri didn't sound convinced. "Follow me, Hizashi, you don't mind if I call you that?"

"No," Hizashi replied, still glancing toward the stairs where Shouta had disappeared.

“Your room will be in the East Wing,” Nemuri was already hopping up the stairs and Hizashi had to jog to catch up.

“So, what happened here...to all of you?” Hizashi asked hesitantly.

“That’s a bit of a long story, we can wait until you’re dressed and settled in your room.”

Hizashi glanced down at his clothes; right, he was still slathered in mud.

A short way down the hall, Nemuri led him into a small room containing a bed and a wardrobe. A window across from the doorway looked over the castle courtyard.

“There should be some of Shouta’s old clothes in the wardrobe here; I think they will fit you well. I’ll give you a moment; your tea should be here soon.” Nemuri hopped through the doorway and Hizashi closed it softly behind her.

He opened the wardrobe and rifled through the clothing, settling on a plain white shirt and black pants. Just as he was buttoning the shirt, he heard a knock at the door.

Hizashi opened the door to find Nemuri smiling up at him, followed by Toshinori and a seemingly self-propelled cart. Atop the cart sat a teapot and cup; Hizashi did a double take as he realized that these items had faces as well.

“Good evening dear,” said the teapot in the voice of an elderly woman. She was a white porcelain with small eyes framed in markings that looked like rectangular glasses. Age lines spread from the corners of her eyes and around her mouth, all looking as though it was painted onto the surface. The spout of the teapot emerged where the woman’s nose would have been. “You can call me Chiyo, and this little one here is Eri.”

Chiyo the tea pot motioned with her spout to the small teacup in front of her, white with wide red eyes and a small frown. A small horn sprouted above her right eye, and she had a small handle where her nose would be.

“Don’t be shy little one, say hello to Mr. Hizashi.” Chiyo said gently.

“Hello,” Eri’s greeting was all but a whisper.

“Hello, little one,” Hizashi said, crouching to eye level with the shy little teacup and giving her a reassuring smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Eri smiled softly and hopped closer to Chiyo.

Chiyo leaned her spout forward over Eri, pouring steaming tea into the little teacup. “There you are, dear, drink up!”

Hizashi paused, “Are you sure?”

“Don’t worry, a lot of the household items around here are enchanted servants,” Toshinori said. “None of us mind too much.”

Hizashi reached out and took Eri's handle, bringing the little teacup to his mouth to take a sip of the tea. The tea warmed him from the inside, and he sighed contentedly.

Eri giggled as he lowered her to his palm, "Your moustache tickles."

Hizashi chuckled, "Thank you for the tea, Eri."

Eri hopped from his hand to the cart, "You're welcome, Mr. Hizashi."

"We also brought you some warm water and towels to wash away some of the mud," Toshinori said.

"So, you said all of you are enchanted? Shouta too?" Hizashi asked as he leaned over the water basin behind Chiyo and Eri to scrub the worst of the dried mud from his hair, face, and arms.

"Yes, there was a spell cast on all of us in the castle," Chiyo replied.

"But why? What happened?" Hizashi asked as he towed his hair dry. He couldn't wrap his head around how such a kind and welcoming group could have gotten themselves cursed, especially a young girl like Eri.

Nemuri sighed, "It's a bit of a long story, you might want to sit down."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter. Stay tuned for some backstory next week :D

The Curse

Chapter Summary

Shouta's servants reveal how they came to be cursed.

Chapter Notes

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

“Shouta didn’t always look like a beast, and we weren’t always enchanted objects either.” Nemuri began. “We were all human; Shouta was the Lord of this castle and we were his servants, although he never really treated us as such. Shouta has never really been one for formalities.”

“What happened, then?” Hizashi asked.

“Shouta’s parents, the Lord and Lady Aizawa, died in an accident 5 years ago. He was devastated but he hides his emotions away, and all that pain and loneliness just continued to build. He wouldn’t talk to any of us about it, even me, and we grew up together as close as siblings,” Nemuri continued.

“About a year later a man came to the castle, a smooth-talker and handsome too, he declared he was a Lord from lands far away and he had heard of Shouta’s tragedy; he claimed he was here to help. Normally Shouta would turn such a thing down, but it had been so long since he had had any contact from beyond the castle walls, he allowed the man to stay at the castle.” Nemuri continued.

“For a while everything was going well, the man treated Shouta well and even started to bring him out of his shell. He was kind, caring, and personable; eventually he proposed to Shouta and Shouta accepted. What Shouta didn’t know is soon after his engagement, the man’s attitude toward his servant’s turned sour. He had never treated us like anything more than the help, but he began to show his true nature to us, treating the lot of us like dirt when Shouta wasn’t around; we were only the servants after all.” Nemuri frowned at this.

“The Master’s fiancé was a terrible man; he knew Master Shouta would never allow him to mistreat us, so he threatened to harm us should any of us say a word of his behavior to Master Shouta.” Toshinori grumbled. “This went on for a few months, and none of us quite knew what to do. We came to realize that all this man wanted was Shouta’s status and his riches, but he never showed that side of himself to Shouta.”

“This was the first time Shouta had ever had a suitor; he thought he was in love with this man, but I think he just wanted someone he could be close to.” Nemuri said softly.

“Then, one night a little over 2 years ago, much like tonight, an old woman came to the castle seeking shelter from a heavy storm.” Chiyo said, “When one of us answered the door, Shouta’s fiancé told us to send her away; she had nothing of value for him, so there was no reason for him to allow her into the castle. Shouta came in just as he was about to slam the door in the woman’s face.”

“Before anyone could say a thing the woman began to glow, ‘Your heart is cold, devoid of kindness and compassion.’ She said to the man, ‘I shall place upon you a curse, that you may show from the outside your true nature.’ The enchantress, as we all knew her now, aimed her curse for Shouta’s fiancé, but Shouta shoved him out of the way before it hit him. Shouta ended up being the one to receive the curse in his fiancé’s stead.”

“And so, it affected you all too?” Hizahi asked, glancing at each of the enchanted servants in front of him.

They all nodded. “And Shouta’s fiancé?” Hizashi asked.

“He’s gone.” Came a voice from the doorway.

They all jumped and turned to see Shouta, his ears bent back and a frown tugging his lips downward.

“He ran away. I was a fool; allowed a man I barely knew to mistreat my servants under my nose. I thought he loved me, but he took one look at me and ran.” Shouta growled.

“The curse,” Hizashi said, “Can it be broken?”

Shouta looked away, “It may as well be permanent; that’s all I will say on the matter. I came to...invite you to dinner.”

Hizashi burned with more questions, but he could tell the conversation was closed. “Of course, thank you for the invitation.”

Shouta hummed in response and disappeared with a flick of his tail, his cloak billowing behind him.

“Well, I think that went swimmingly,” Nemuri said, “Looks like we have a dinner to prepare everyone. You get comfortable here, Hizashi, we’ll be along to get you when we’re finished.”

Hizashi nodded as the enchanted servants filed out of the room, “Thank you.”

He stared at the empty doorway for a while, mulling over this new information.

Sorry this update is a tad late!

I hope you enjoyed this chapter nonetheless. I've slowed down a bit on writing due to work and such, but I'm still several chapters ahead of this one so there is definitely more to come!

Dinner

Chapter Notes

I don't think I expressly said this before, but I've included PoVs for both Hizashi and Shouta in this story.

***** = A PoV change

+++++ = A time lapse

I hope you enjoy this week's chapter!

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

“So, why did you decide to invite him to dinner?” Nemuri asked knowingly. They had retreated to Shouta’s quarters while Toshinori oversaw dinner preparations.

“Being a good host,” Shouta grumbled from his perch on the bed, fiddling with the frayed end of his cloak, refusing to look up at her. He had hoped to avoid this conversation, but he knew Nemuri wouldn’t allow it.

Nemuri hummed, unconvinced, “Are you sure it’s not because you find him attractive?”

Shouta turned to glare at Nemuri.

“Just saying,” Nemuri shrugged her slender metal shoulders. “He is quite a beauty.”

“And look what happened the last time I fell for a handsome man,” Shouta growled as he stared down at his clawed hands. “I not only got myself into this mess, but I dragged you all down with me.”

Nemuri sighed, “I know it’s hard to open yourself up to another, especially after what happened. You’ve built up so many walls around your heart; but not all men are like...him.”

Shouta was quiet, and Nemuri continued. “I think you should at least try to get to know him, he seems like a kind person; maybe he could help.”

Shouta sighed, “I’ll try,”, but even he wasn’t entirely convinced by his statement.

“That’s all I ask, Shouta,” Nemuri turned and hopped out of the room, her flames casting a dim light on the walls of the corridor that soon faded.

Some time later Toshinori came to collect Hizashi, announcing that dinner was ready. He was led down the stairs and through another corridor to the dining room. Shouta was already there sitting at the head of the table. Hizashi took a seat at the other end of the table.

Shouta cleared his throat, "Thank you for coming," he said in a gruff voice.

Hizashi smiled, "Well, thank you for allowing me to stay the night."

"What brought you out this way in the middle of a storm? It's not very easy to find this castle." Shouta said.

Hizashi winced. He was fairly certain that Shouta didn't know who he was, or that Overhaul was looking for him, but he didn't want to take that risk.

Shouta studied him carefully for a moment, but before he could reply Nemuri hopped out of the kitchen. "Dinner is served!"

They ate in silence for a while, not quite sure what to say.

"You can stay for as long as you need," Shouta said abruptly, just as he was finishing off the food on his plate. "I feel like there is something you're not telling me, but it's none of my business. If you need a place to stay for a while, this can be it."

Hizashi froze, his fork halfway to his mouth, "Really? That's so kind of you. Thank you."

Shouta nodded in response and stood, "Sleep well. This was...nice."

Shouta turned and left the room, leaving Hizashi to stare after him. He placed his fork on his plate and stood. "Thank you all for dinner, it was lovely."

"You're very welcome!" Nemuri replied, "It's good to have a guest staying at the castle again; and it's good to see Shouta coming out of his shell a bit."

Hizashi glanced back at the door where Shouta had disappeared. "I want to help him break the curse." He said suddenly.

The pendulum in Toshinori's glass cabinet swung back and forth, making a clatter against his wooden sides, "You...you would do that? You don't even know us!" he asked, shocked.

"It's the right thing to do," Hizashi said. "None of this was his fault; he shouldn't have to suffer like this, and neither should any of you."

Nemuri and Toshinori glanced at each other before turning back to Hizashi. "It's great that you want to help us, Hizashi, but I think it will be more difficult than you realize." Nemuri said.

"There must be some way to break it, isn't that how curses and enchantments work?" Hizashi asked.

Nemuri sighed, "Yes, it is, but this particular curse..."

“Nemuri...” Toshinori warned.

“There’s no harm in telling him, Toshi, he wants to help” Nemuri turned back to Hizashi.

“Shouta’s curse can only be broken if he learns to love another and be loved in return. And there’s a deadline as well; the enchantress gave him 3 years to break the curse, or we would all remain this way forever.”

“That’s...that’s not fair to Shouta!” Hizashi exclaimed, “This wasn’t even his curse to begin with!”

Nemuri sighed, “I know, but the terms of the curse still apply, it just went to the wrong person. Once the enchantress cast the spell, there was no taking it back.”

Hizashi clenched his teeth; unless they could find someone for Shouta to love...

“You said it’s been almost 3 years since Shouta was cursed, how long is left?” Hizashi asked.

“5 months,” Nemuri replied.

Hizashi’s heart sank for a moment, but he clenched his fists together, determination surging through him. “I’m sure we can find another way.”

Before Nemuri or Toshinori could reply, Hizashi spun on his heel and marched out the door, back to his room to think things over.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I've been writing a loooott recently so I've decided to post TWO chapters this week :D

The Visitor

Chapter Notes

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

The next morning, Hizashi emerged from the castle entrance, greeted by a clear, sunny sky and a light chilly wind. Some of the servants had drawn him a, desperately needed, bath this morning, so Hizashi felt more refreshed than he had in weeks. He turned and headed for the stable to the side of the castle, greeting his horse, Violet as he entered.

“Good morning, girl,” Hizashi said as he unlatched her stall, “Let’s get you some fresh air.”

Hizashi led Violet out into the courtyard before dropping her lead and allowing her to graze and explore the area. He headed back inside the stable and set to work mucking out her stall. His father had always told him that this sort of labor was a servant’s work, not fit for a Lord of his standing, but Hizashi never listened as he found the task to be a chance to clear his head and take refuge from his daily life. He found some not-too-stale hay and spread it out on the floor of her stall. He grabbed a bucket and headed outside where he found a water pump, luckily still functional, and filled the bucket with water for the horse’s stall. Hizashi filled the feeding trough with some more hay, it wasn’t very fresh, but it also wasn’t mildewed; he would have to venture back to town at some point to find some fresh hay.

As he worked Hizashi felt his thoughts drifting to Shouta, as they had the previous night; he had lay in bed staring at the ceiling, trying to think of ways to help end Shouta’s curse. So far Hizashi was drawing a blank; it wasn’t like he could just find someone for Shouta to love and live happily ever after, life didn’t work that way. Hizashi had finally determined that the least he could do was to get to know Shouta and keep him company; maybe they could work together to find another way to break the curse.

Hizashi emerged from the stable and made his way over to Violet, who was grazing contentedly near the entrance gates. He patted her side softly to let her know he was there, and she twitched her ear in response. As he was stroking his horse, he heard a quiet rustle from nearby, outside the fence. He glanced up and caught sight of purple hair, the owner of which had quickly moved out of sight when he looked up.

“You can come out,” Hizashi called, “No sense in hiding.”

The moments stretched out, and Hizashi thought the person may not come out at all, when a young boy peered his head around from the wall next to the gate. The boy looked to be around 15 years old, was tall and scrawny with a mess of purple hair on top of his head. He stared back at Hizashi with purple eyes, with dark circles underneath. His clothing looked well-worn, frayed and tattered along the edges; he was probably a child from the village up the road.

“Who are you?” The boy asked.

“I could ask the same,” Hizashi replied, “you *are* the one sneaking around, not me.”

The boy frowned and shrugged, "I come up here sometimes," he said, "I've heard there's someone who lives in this castle, but most people say it's abandoned. I've seen movement in the windows sometimes, was that you?"

"No, I'm new here," Hizashi smiled, "My name is Hizashi, what is yours?"

"Hitoshi," the boy replied, "Can I come look around inside?"

A spark of excitement lit the boy's eyes and Hizashi paused, it really wasn't his place to invite the boy inside, but....

"Well, you can come in the courtyard, but not inside the castle." Hizashi said, giving in to the boy's pleading eyes. "The master of this castle may not want you inside, so I can't let you in there."

Hitoshi's eyes lit up and he emerged fully from behind the wall, waiting for Hizashi to remove the chain and open the gate for him. The boy stepped inside the courtyard and glanced around. "It's a bit of a dump here." He remarked.

Hizashi chuckled, "Yeah a bit,"

Hitoshi walked over to Violet, the horse eyeing him from the side as she continued to graze.

"Is this your horse?" Hitoshi asked.

"This is Violet, she can be a bit touchy, but you can pet her if she lets you, just be careful."

Hitoshi held out his hand and slowly took a step toward the horse, who had lifted her head to stare at the boy as he approached. Violet gave Hitoshi's hand a sniff and paused before pressing her nose into the boy's hand and allowing him to stroke her muzzle.

Hitoshi's lips twitched upwards in a small smile as he stroked the horse.

"So, you said you come here often?" Hizashi asked, "Don't you know there are wolves in the woods?"

"They only come out at night, so as long as I'm only here during the day, it's fine." Hitoshi replied. "Do your parents ever get worried about you?"

Hitoshi froze for a moment before replying, "No, they're pretty busy during the day, so they don't mind me going out. It keeps me out of their hair."

Hizashi stared at the boy for a moment before deciding to drop the questions. He couldn't really blame the kid for not telling everything to a stranger. "Have you ridden a horse before?" he asked.

Hitoshi looked at Hizashi, his eyes wide, "Can I?" He motioned to Violet.

Hizashi smiled, "Here, I'll give you a leg up."

Hizashi held out his hands to help lift Hitoshi onto Violet's back, the horse snorted as Hitoshi settled himself on her back and took the reins. Hizashi took hold of one side of the reins and led Violet around the courtyard, her hooves clacking hollowly on the stone pathways. He glanced up at the boy, seeing excitement light his eyes as he held tightly to the reins.

They carried on for a while before Hizashi glanced up at the sky, the sun's position telling him it was well past midday.

"You should probably head home now, Hitoshi," he said.

Hitoshi looked disappointed and Hizashi added, "It'll be dark before you know it and I don't want you in the woods when the wolves come out."

"Alright," Hitoshi sighed and scratched the back of his head awkwardly, "Can I come back again?"

"I'll have to talk to the master of the castle, but I don't see why not." Hizashi said, not wanting to disappoint the kid; he was sure he could convince Shouta to allow the boy to visit again.

They settled Violet back in her stall and Hitoshi followed Hizashi to the gate.

"Now go straight home," Hizashi said, "Be careful in the woods; I don't want you getting hurt!"

"Yeah, yeah," Hitoshi replied, "I've done this plenty of times. See you again soon!"

Hizashi waved as the boy made his way along the road, a feeling of warmth in his chest as he watched the boy until he was out of sight.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Of course I had to include Hitoshi in this story, I love him so much lol.

Opening Up

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone, sorry for the delay in posting. I've been having a lot of stuff going on in life right now and the fic just kinda fell to the back of my mind. I've gotten most of it written, but I go back through before I post to do some cleaning up and continuity checking and I just didn't feel in the mood for it.

I hope you all enjoy this chapter!

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

As Hizashi re-entered the castle he heard squeaking wheels approaching and turned to see Chiyo and Eri on their cart.

“I see you’ve met that boy who likes to sneak around the grounds,” Chiyo said, “We’ve seen him around for several months, but none of us have approached him.”

“His name is Hitoshi,” Hizashi replied, “He was just curious; I was thinking of asking Shouta if he could come inside next time. I don’t think he’d be any trouble; he seems like a good kid.”

“Well it would be good to have someone younger around to keep little Eri some company,” Chiyo said.

Hizashi crouched down in front of the cart, “Would you like to do some exploring with me, Eri?”

Eri’s porcelain eyes seemed to light up and she glanced at Chiyo for approval; Chiyo nodded and Eri hopped onto Hizashi’s outstretched hand.

Hizashi and Eri made their way through the corridors of the castle, Hizashi taking in the sights of the lined-up suits of armor, the statues, and the paintings that decorated the various areas. As he walked, Hizashi noticed several enchanted objects: feather dusters floating and dusting on their own, brooms sweeping the floors, and so on.

“Are these enchanted objects all people too, Eri?”

“No, they’re magic, and they do things on their own. Only me, Grandma Chiyo, Auntie Nemuri, and Uncle Toshi are people.”

“Ah, I was wondering how the castle stayed in somewhat decent condition,” Hizashi said. After a pause he asked, “What do you do for fun, Eri?”

“Grandma Chiyo tells me stories,” Eri said quietly, “I like to look at the sky outside and go around the castle, Uncle Toshi doesn’t let me go too far though. Sometimes Master Shouta will read stories from his books to me.”

Hizashi was quiet as a feeling of sadness washed over him. Eri should be a normal little girl, playing and having a fun childhood. Instead she had been stuck as a teacup, all because of something that wasn’t her fault. Hizashi felt more determined than ever to find a way to break the curse as he and the little teacup strolled through the corridors.

Shouta scratched under his chin as he made his way to the main hall; he remembered seeing Hizashi outside from his balcony and figured he should be back inside by now. He caught sight of the man approaching Chiyo’s rolling cart, where he held out his hand to allow Eri to hop onto the cart.

“Thank you for accompanying me, Eri,” he heard the man say with a smile.

Shouta felt his heart flutter at the sound of Hizashi’s voice, as pleasant and melodious. He found himself studying the man, his shining golden hair spilled down his back, some of it tied back to keep it out of his face. His slender but strong build beneath the simple clothing he wore and his soft hands tickling Eri as he gave them his farewells. Hizashi turned to see Shouta and his emerald green eyes lit up as he grinned. His smile was radiant and Shouta had to force himself to stop staring as Hizashi approached. What was he doing? He barely knew this man!

“Good day, Shouta,” Hizashi said happily, “I was hoping we could spend some time getting to know each other today. Then at least we wouldn’t be total strangers sharing the same roof.”

It took a moment for Shouta to find his voice, “Sure, what do you want to do?”

“Well, we could take a walk in the courtyard,” Hizashi suggested, “It would do you some good to get some fresh air.”

“Ok,” Shouta followed Hizashi out the main entrance into the chilly autumn afternoon. The courtyard was littered in orange and red leaves and the chill in the air signaled that it would soon be winter.

Shouta fluffed out his fur against the cold. “So, where do you come from?” he asked Hizashi after a few minutes of walking.

Hizashi was looking up at the sky as he replied, “It’s a bit far from here, where I’m from. I’ve been travelling a while.”

“I’ve always lived here,” Shouta said.

Hizashi glanced at him from the side, “You’re a Lord though, right? Have you travelled to any other castles or palaces?”

“I’ve visited some,” Shouta replied, “I didn’t really see much point though; I don’t like the fanfare and socializing with the elite. People never act themselves and I’d prefer to avoid them anyway.”

Hizashi hummed, “Yeah, I feel the same.”

“You seem to know more of what I’m talking about than a commoner would.”

Hizashi’s cheeks reddened slightly, “Well, I…my father is a Lord; Lord Yamada, I’m not sure if you’ve heard of my family.”

“Hm, vaguely; my parents always dealt with those sorts of things before they died.” Shouta trailed off.

“I’m sorry, Shouta,” Hizashi said softly.

Shouta continued before he could process his words, “They were on the road, travelling to another castle for an event, when they were attacked by bandits; they were killed, along with Eri’s parents, who always travelled with them as their attendants.”

“That’s terrible!” Hizashi stopped and turned to Shouta, his eyes wide, “Eri’s only a child! And you...”

Shouta grunted and looked away, unsure why he had shared so much; what was it about Hizashi that made him feel he could tell the man anything? He shook himself and quickly changed the subject.

“So how is it that you ended up here? Why did you leave home?” Shouta asked.

“My father arranged a marriage between myself and another Lord prevalent in politics,” Hizashi said after a brief hesitation. “He has a lot of connections in the Royal Court and in exchange for a share in my father’s wealth, he offered my father access to his connections.”

Shouta waited as Hizashi fell silent, he had a feeling the man was not finished speaking.

Hizashi sighed, “I don’t know much about him but from the time I did meet him, he was cold and indifferent, he only cared about what I could give him and nothing more. I refuse to be a pawn in their games, so I left and I’m not going back. If I’m going to marry someone, it will be for love, because I have chosen to spend my life with them.”

Shouta hummed. He couldn’t blame Hizashi for that, being used for someone else’s gain had been what landed Shouta here in the first place.

“Thank you, Shouta,” Hizashi said quietly. “I didn’t want to say anything. I haven’t been able to trust anyone for weeks; he’s looking for me and he’s got ears everywhere, but I feel like I can trust you. I know it’s silly, I just met you...”

Shouta felt his cheeks grow warm under his fur; his voice had left him, all he could do was nod in response, and he caught a small smile from Hizashi from the corner of his eye.

“I almost forgot! I met a boy earlier today,” Hizashi said suddenly, his eyes lighting with excitement. “I met a boy earlier today, he was curious about the castle, so I let him into the courtyard, and we talked a while. He seems like a good kid; do you think he could meet you all tomorrow?”

Shouta froze, anxiety replacing the warmth he had felt moments ago, “I don’t think that’s the best idea; most people would run at the sight of me, and if he tells the villagers about me...”

Hizashi turned to look at Shouta, his green eyes holding his gaze, “I think he’ll accept you as you are. Forgive me if I’m speaking out of place, but if you let people in and allow them to get to know you, they would understand that you’re more than what they see.”

Shouta stared at him, shocked; this man barely knew him and yet Shouta felt he could trust his word without question. “Ok, if you really think...”

Hizashi beamed, “You won’t regret it, I promise!”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, I hope you all enjoyed. I'm hoping to post another chapter next week, but if life-things get in the way I may not. I promise I will be continuing to post chapters, though. I'm excited for this WIP and I'm determined to see it through to the end.

I appreciate all the kudos and comments I've gotten from you guys so far! It makes me feel good that I picked up on writing again. :)

Hitoshi

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry for the delay in posting, life has been crazy as of late. I'm hoping to get back to regular posting soon!

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

Hizashi led Hitoshi to the front door of the castle, “Just remember the residents here have avoided people for a while and you might be surprised when you see them, but I promise you they are the most kind people you will ever meet.”

“I know, you said that already. Can we go in now?” Hitoshi was trying to hide it with a disinterested expression, but Hizashi could tell he was buzzing with excitement.

Hizashi grinned as he swung open the front doors. All the enchanted servants were waiting for Hitoshi’s arrival, but the boy’s gaze brushed right over them. “Where are they?” he asked.

“We’re all right here, dear,” Chiyo said from her cart.

“It’s good to meet you, I’m Nemuri!” the candlestick was already hopping toward them.

Hitoshi glanced over at the sound of their voices and nearly jumped a foot in the air. He composed himself quickly and said, “I’m not going crazy, right?”

Hizashi chuckled, “I said the same,”

Hitoshi took a step forward and crouched down to shake Nemuri’s outstretched candle arm, being careful to avoid the flame burning at the tip. “Er...hello, I’m Hitoshi.”

Nemuri smiled, “I can’t believe our luck, not one but two guests now!”

Hitoshi was briefly introduced to the other three servants, ending with Eri who was sticking close to Chiyo as she mumbled a greeting.

“Shouta, come and meet our guest!” Nemuri called up the stairs.

Hizashi could hear the clicking of Shouta’s claws on the stone steps as he made his way down slowly. He saw Hitoshi’s eyes widen as Shouta came into view and approached them from the staircase. Hitoshi stayed rooted to the spot, seemingly unable to take his eyes off the creature in front of him.

Shouta glanced at Hizashi uncertainly, “Welcome to my castle, Hitoshi, my name is Shouta.”

Hitoshi seemed to find his voice quickly, “Are you part wolf?”

Shouta stared at the boy for a moment, seeming unsure how to respond, “No.”

Nemuri spoke up, “We all used to be human, but we were cursed by an enchantress.”

Hitoshi paused to consider before launching into a long line of questioning that even Hizashi struggled to keep up with, “Can I feel your fur? How long have you looked like that? Can you howl like a wolf?”

As quickly as Hitoshi asked his questions, Shouta answered briefly and to the point, “No. About 2 and a half years. Maybe, but I’d prefer not to.”

Hizashi eventually cut Hitoshi off, “How about we go out to the courtyard? You and Eri could take a ride on Violet!”

Hitoshi looked back at Hizashi, realizing he had let his air of nonchalance slip in the midst of his questioning, “Sure, that sounds cool.”

Hizashi held out his hand for Eri to hop on and led them outside with Shouta trailing behind. The rest of the enchanted servants stayed behind, saying they had some duties to attend to, but Hizashi had the feeling they wanted to give them some time alone.

Hizashi helped Hitoshi climb up onto Violet’s back and gave him Eri to hold in one hand as he led the horse around the courtyard. Shouta hung back so as not to frighten the horse, but Violet paid him no mind, seeming to realize Shouta was not a threat.

After a while Hitoshi and Eri devised a game of catch, where Hitoshi would throw a ball of moss (the only thing they could find that was soft enough not to chip Eri’s porcelain body) for Eri to catch. Hizashi and Shouta watched on as the two children laughed and shouted together.

“This is...nice,” Shouta mumbled. “It’s been so long since I saw Eri this happy.”

“It’s got to be hard for her,” Hizashi replied. After a few moments he added, “I want to help her, all of you.”

Shouta stared at him with his intense red gaze before glancing away, “That’s not possible,” he growled.

Hizashi winced, it was almost as if he could feel the walls around Shouta’s heart he had chipped away so far spring back up at his suggestion, “Maybe...maybe there’s another way to break the curse. Nemuri told me about it, but I don’t want you all to live like this. It’s not fair.”

A growl rumbled in Shouta’s throat and he lashed his tail, “Life isn’t fair, Hizashi; that’s something I’ve learned the hard way.”

Hizashi wanted to argue, but Shouta’s tone told him the conversation was over. The two of them watched in silence as Hitoshi and Eri laughed, carefree and happy for at least a few hours.

Chapter End Notes

This one is a little short, I'm planning on posting another chapter within the next couple days! I hope you all are enjoying so far. :)

The Library

Chapter Notes

Hello all! Welcome to the latest chapter of my Erasermic Beauty and the Beast AU. Life has been crazy the past few weeks, and has started to slow to a more normal pace now. I'm hoping to start posting on a weekly basis again! Enjoy this week's chapter!

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

In the two weeks since Hizashi arrived at the castle the mood seemed to improve immensely. The candles and chandeliers were lit to dispel the gloom and darkness that had settled over the castle. Toshinori and Nemuri oversaw the enchanted cleaning supplies as they went about their chores with a renewed vigor, and as a result the dust and dirt coating many of the surfaces was cleared away. Chiyo kept the enchanted kitchen going, preparing delightful meals for Hizashi and Shouta morning, afternoon, and evening.

Soon after his arrival at the castle, Hizashi had discovered that Shouta had subsisted on the bare minimum in terms of food during his time as a beast, so he had taken a trip down to the nearby village to restock on food and get some fresh hay for Violet. He had seen several posters with his likeness plastered around the village, offering a reward for anyone who could give Overhaul or Lord Yamada information on his whereabouts. Hizashi kept his hood low over his brow as he quickly gathered what he needed and headed back to the castle without incident.

Hitoshi and Eri were almost inseparable and were often found exploring the corridors or playing the occasional prank on an unamused Toshinori. Hitoshi had even slept over on several occasions, insisting to Hizashi and Shouta that his parents were perfectly fine with him doing so.

One afternoon Hizashi was wandering the castle lost in thought, he was trying to think of some way Shouta's curse might be broken. He didn't care what Shouta said, he knew there had to be some way if only they could find it. He glanced around and realized he had no idea where in the castle he had ended up, or how to find his way back to somewhere he knew.

He turned back the way he came, hoping to find some recognizable landmark, the castle was just so big that he could be anywhere now. As he retraced his steps, he came upon a door that was slightly ajar, curiosity prickled at Hizashi and he softly pushed the door open and peeked his head inside.

A chandelier lit the center of a large room with several tables with chairs set around the middle of the room. The tall walls were lined with shelves containing hundreds upon hundreds of books. Hizashi smiled as he walked inside, gazing around at the shelves; this was

perfect! If he couldn't think of a way to break Shouta's curse on his own, maybe a book from the library could help.

"Hizashi, why have you brought me here?" Shouta asked as he followed Hizashi into the library. It had been a while since Shouta had set foot into the library since he kept a stockpile of his and Eri's favorites in his room.

Hizashi turned to face him with a smile, and Shouta was immediately suspicious, "Well, I thought we could spend some time here finding some books to read."

Shouta raised an eyebrow, "And the real reason?"

"That is the reason," Hizashi said with a pout, "I just had specific subject matter in mind, but I don't know my way around, so I need your help."

"And the subject matter you're interested in?" Shouta asked, a sinking feeling in this chest.

"You know, enchantments, witches, that sort of thing," Hizashi had crossed his arms behind his back and was giving Shouta an embarrassed smile.

Shouta sighed, "Hizashi..."

"I know what you said, Shouta, but I want to help." Hizashi said quickly, a determined light sparking in his eyes. "Please, let me help. If not for yourself, then maybe for Eri and the others."

Shouta winced, that was a low blow. He was silent for a moment as he mulled it over. He knew there was no way he would be able to break this curse in the span of a few short months, he had given up on the idea long ago, but...

"Shouta," Hizashi said softly, "I know it's hard; you've spent so long building up your walls because you're afraid of getting hurt again, but I swear to you that I only want to help you and the others. Please, Shouta." He reached out a hand to rest on Shouta's shoulder, his eyes pleading.

Shouta's chest felt warm and it was as though Hizashi's gaze was melting away some of the barriers around his heart. Shouta sighed, "For Eri, and for the others," he finally replied.

Hizashi beamed and gently hooked his arm through Shouta's, leading him further into the room.

"How is the library organized?" Hizashi asked as he began to run his hand along the spines of the books on a nearby shelf.

"Mostly by subject," Shouta replied, "those are mostly history. These over here are the sciences, and there are myths and folktales over there." He gestured to each shelf as he spoke.

“Hmm, well there can be some truths based in myth and old tales, so there may be something there. I’ll look over those if you want to look at the sciences.” Hizashi was already perusing the books on his chosen subject, plucking them from the shelves as he went.

Several hours later, the pair were both pouring over the pile of books they had chosen from the shelves. They studied in silence, occasionally speaking up to share something of interest in one volume or another. The silence was broken by the creaking of the door and the two looked up to see Hitoshi poking his head through the opening.

“What are you doing?” He asked as he entered the room, Eri cupped in his hands.

“We’re doing some research,” Shouta said, not going into any further detail, he didn’t want to get Eri’s hopes up in case their efforts were fruitless.

“Sounds boring,” Hitoshi said with an exaggerated yawn, which made Eri giggle. “Do you have any fun books here?”

Shouta snorted and rose from the chair, stretching the stiffness from his limbs. He led Hitoshi to a shelf containing some storybooks, many of which contained illustrations. “Eri likes a lot of these types of stories. I’m sure you could find something here.”

“I want one about animals!” Eri said, hopping up and down in Hitoshi’s hands.

“Ok, what about one with cats? I like cats,” Hitoshi said as he browsed the titles.

Shouta felt a small smile touch his lips as he left the two to choose a book and returned to his table with Hizashi, who was also smiling fondly. Soon they were joined by Hitoshi and Eri, who had settled on a story; Hitoshi opened the book and began to read aloud to Eri, who nestled into the crook of his arm and giggled when Hitoshi made up funny voices for the characters.

Eventually, the room became dark and quiet, Shouta had lit several candles to illuminate their table and his eyes strained in the flickering light. He sighed and closed his current book, glancing over to Hitoshi, who had laid his head on the table with Eri huddled close to his cheek. Their soft, even breathing told Shouta that they had dozed off at some point.

“I think we should get them to bed,” he whispered to Hizashi, turning his gaze to the man only to find that he too had rested his head upon the open pages of his book and was snoring softly.

Shouta stared at Hizashi, taking in his soft yellow hair spilled out over the edge of the book, his face was soft as he snoozed, his lips parted slightly. Shouta’s lips perked up in a smile as he quietly rose from his seat. First, he lifted Hitoshi gently in his arms and scooped up Eri from the table, placing her on Hitoshi’s chest as he held the boy with one arm. He padded out of the room and through the corridors until he arrived at Hitoshi’s room and laid him on the bed, pulling the covers over the boy and placing Eri on the pillow next to his. The two continued to sleep peacefully, so Shouta padded out and slowly closed the door.

When Shouta arrived back at the library, Hizashi was still where he had left him, peacefully unaware. Shouta lifted him in the same manner as he had Hitoshi, the man's weight no issue for Shouta's beastly strength. He carried Hizashi to his room and tucked him in as well, taking a moment to glance over Hizashi's peaceful expression once more before exiting the room, pulling the door closed quietly behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Soft fluff is soft <3 :D

Hope you all enjoyed this chapter! Things are gonna get ramped up a bit next chapter! I'm planning to start posting on Fridays again, starting with this coming Friday.

The Truth

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Now getting back to weekly posting! Enjoy this week's chapter! :)

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

Several days had passed since Shouta and Hizashi had begun their library research, so far with nothing to show for it. Hizashi could tell Shouta was getting frustrated when the man would tap his claws on the table and twitch the fur along his shoulders in irritation as they read through countless volumes.

Hizashi decided to travel to the village with Hitoshi that day, in search of a book shop that might have fresh reading material. First, they gathered some supplies needed for the castle, and once again Hizashi saw several flyers posted asking for information of his whereabouts. He had told Hitoshi about his status as a Lord and his engagement one day during the boy's stay in the castle, so Hitoshi knew not to draw attention and they both kept their hoods up as they went about their errands.

Finally, when they had finished in the late afternoon Hitoshi, well versed in the village's layout, led Hizashi to the book shop.

Hizashi browsed the shelves of the shop, Hitoshi close at his side. As he perused, Hizashi noticed the boy glancing around nervously tugging on his hood as if to check it had not slipped to reveal his purple hair or his face, but before he could ask why he heard heavy stomping from behind the two.

"You! You get out of my shop, boy! Trying to pick this man's pocket?" Hizashi whirled to find who he assumed was the shopkeeper approaching them, his face red with anger and his eyes fixed on Hitoshi.

"No! I'm not—" Hitoshi protested, but he was cut off by the shopkeeper.

"Don't you lie to me, boy! Now for the last time get—"

"Is there a problem here?" Hizashi stepped between the shopkeeper and Hitoshi, a hard edge to his voice.

"Problem?! This street urchin is always causing trouble around here! Stealing and picking pockets every chance he gets!" the shopkeeper replied, still glaring at Hitoshi.

"He is with me," Hizashi said, "If you have a problem with him, then you have a problem with me."

The shopkeep finally turned his glare from Hitoshi to Hizashi, locking eyes with him under his hood and pausing before he spoke, “You’re new around here, eh? Well you can both beat it. Don’t come to my shop again!”

Hizashi placed his hand on Hitoshi’s back and led the boy out of the shop. They made their way quickly to where Violet was hitched with her cart on the edge of town.

As they made their way back to the castle, the two were quiet for a long time. The sky was turning orange as the sun began to set, and Hizashi snapped the reins to make Violet move a bit faster toward the castle.

“Hitoshi, you’re not in trouble,” Hizashi began after a while. “Could you tell me what that man meant when he was talking about you stealing from people?”

Hizashi raised his eyebrows, but in a way, he wasn’t surprised by this revelation. He waited for Hitoshi to continue.

“My parents got sick a few years ago and they didn’t make it. I’ve been living on the street since then, stealing what I could to eat and keep myself alive.” Hitoshi said quietly. “I’m sorry I lied, it’s just...everyone pushes me away when they find out I’m some street kid and I didn’t want it to happen again.”

“It’s ok, Hitoshi,” Hizashi said, placing a hand on Hitoshi’s shoulder and giving it a squeeze, “I think Shouta would agree when I say we love having you at the castle. Eri loves to play with you and you’ve helped bring everyone so much joy.”

Hitoshi was quiet for a moment, “Thank you.”

Hizashi was about to reply when he saw a flash of grey from the corner of his eye; Violet let out a shriek as a wolf leapt for her shoulder, digging its claws in before she reared and shook it off. Hizashi’s heart sank as he glanced around to either side and noted many lithe shapes running alongside the cart, their eyes wild and hungry. It wasn’t dark yet, but the pack must have been starving in the cold winter months, bringing them out earlier to hunt.

Hizashi cursed and snapped the reins, urging Violet to go faster, a dangerous maneuver, but they had to get back to the castle quickly. “Hold on tight, we’re almost to the castle!” He shouted to Hitoshi as they barreled through the woods at alarming speed, the cart shuddering with every bump in the path. Hizashi could see the towers of the castle clearly before them, if they could just last a few more minutes...

He heard a thud from behind and turned just in time to see a wolf had jumped into the back of the cart. The creature growled and lunged, jaws wide, toward Hizashi’s throat. Hizashi barely had time to shift himself out of the wolf’s direct path before it was on him. The wolf’s heavy body rammed into him and sent them both flying from the cart, crashing to the ground.

“Hizashi!” he heard Hitoshi’s scream already fading as Violet sped toward the castle.

Hizashi scrambled to his feet as the pack closed in on him, a glint of victory in their eyes as they began to corner Hizashi against a tree. He glanced down, his heart racing and grabbed a

thick branch from the ground nearby, holding it at the ready to defend himself. Hizashi glanced around as the wolves circled him, offering no path of escape. Hizashi clenched his jaw, at least Hitoshi had made it out alive; hopefully Violet would carry the boy to safety at the castle.

Shouta stared sullenly over the courtyard as he awaited Hizashi and Hitoshi's return from the village. Since they had left earlier that afternoon Shouta had been restless, wandering the halls and frequently glancing out the windows to see if they had returned; it was just so quiet without them. The sun was beginning to set and Shouta was just about to venture from the castle to look for the pair when he spotted Hizashi's horse approaching the gate.

Shouta's ears pricked up and his anxiety eased immediately. Why was it that he was so excited at the thought of Hizashi being back? Shouta lashed his tail and banished the thought, he was just used to having company after so long by himself.

When the horse reached the gate, she reared and kicked the gates in with her powerful hooves, letting out a stressed neigh. Shouta looked closer at the cart to find only Hitoshi in the seat behind the horse. Where was Hizashi?

Shouta felt the cold hands of fear creeping up his spine as he turned from the balcony and sprinted down the stairs in a rare use of all four limbs. If anything, his beastly form granted him extra speed and power as he burst through the castle doors to find the horse-drawn cart approaching the castle.

Hitoshi's eyes were wide with fear, but at a glance the boy looked unharmed. Catching sight of Shouta, the boy shouted breathlessly, "Hizashi! Wolves in the woods--"

Shouta didn't pause to hear any more, and ran as fast as his four paws could carry him. His heart was pounding as he followed the cart tracks down the narrow path through the woods. His heightened senses straining to catch sight, smell, or sound of Hizashi.

A faint scent on the air made his heart skip. *Blood*. Shouta grit his teeth and pushed himself to move faster, hoping that he wasn't too late.

Chapter End Notes

Will Shouta save Hizashi in time? Tune in next week!

Thank you all so much for reading my fic! For all the kudos and comments! It really means a lot :)

Rescue

Chapter Notes

TW: Blood/Violence

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

Hizashi swung his branch at another wolf as it leapt in to snap at him; the creature growled and backed away. His eyes darted from wolf to wolf, trying to predict their movements; the pack circled around him now, leaving no route for escape.

Shit... Hizashi's thoughts turned to Shouta, wishing he could get himself out of this mess and back to the castle. Who would help him break the curse if Hizashi was gone?

Another wolf launched itself his way on Hizashi's left, he turned to swing the branch at the animal and was caught off guard by a second wolf leaping to his right. The wolf's claws scraped down his arm and Hizashi screamed as pain flared, but he managed to stumble back to avoid the wolf's gaping jaws. Hizashi landed hard with his back against the tree he had been cornered against. He looked up to see the pack closing fast, seeing their chance to strike. Hizashi closed his eyes, waiting for the wolves' teeth to sink into his throat.

I'm sorry, Shouta.

A sudden roar shuddered the air around him, Hizashi opened his eyes and the wolves swung their heads around as a large dark shape barreled through the pack. The wolves were thrown left and right as the newcomer swung powerful arms to knock them away, claws ripping through their fur and teeth snapping their way. Hizashi scrambled to his feet and stared in shock as Shouta, his dark fur standing on end, snarled at the wolves as they circled the pair. Suddenly two wolves leapt at Shouta, one landing on his shoulder and sinking its teeth deep into his flesh and the other clawing his chest. He let out a pained roar as he ripped the wolf from his shoulder and swung it at the second wolf, sending them scrambling away. The pack seemed to realize they were outmatched at this point, as they turned tail and retreated into the darkness of the woods.

Hizashi ran forward and reached for Shouta's arm, "Shouta, you—"

He was cut off as Shouta turned on him with a snarl, his red eyes crazed, breath panting, and teeth bared. For a moment Shouta looked every bit the beast he was cursed to become, but Hizashi did not back down, instead reaching his hand to cup Shouta's face gently.

"It's okay, it's Hizashi," he said in a soothing voice, "the danger is gone."

The anger and fear in Shouta's gaze faded as he gazed into Hizashi's eyes, his lips lowered and his voice came rough and breathless, "Hizashi..." He reached his clawed hand to brush

Hizashi's, "Safe." He grunted.

Hizashi smiled, relieved as the man came back to himself, but quickly glanced over Shouta's chest and his arm, both dripping with blood, "Shit, Shouta, you're hurt. We need to go back to the castle, quickly."

Shouta grunted and stumbled forward a few steps before he began to teeter to one side. Hizashi quickly grabbed Shouta's arm and leaned himself into the man's side to support him as they struggled toward the castle. Hizashi trembled as he felt himself supporting more and more of Shouta's weight with each step, he could feel Shouta's shuddering breaths as they continued. Shouta was on the verge of collapse and Hizashi had to get him back to the castle as soon as possible. His arm burned as Shouta's rough fur scraped against the scratch left by the wolf, but Hizashi did his best to ignore it, Shouta needed attention more urgently than him.

They reached the courtyard shortly and were greeted by the worried gasps of Hitoshi, Nemuri, and Toshinori, who had seemingly been on their way to search for the pair. Hizashi was all but carrying Shouta now and Hitoshi quickly slipped under his other arm and helped Hizashi drag the man inside. Nemuri led them up a short flight of stairs and to Shouta's room in the west wing. Toshinori had rushed off to gather supplies to treat Shouta's wounds and arrived with Chiyo on her rolling cart shortly after they hauled Shouta into the bed.

Chiyo had boiled some water and they had fetched clean towels, bandaging, and a bottle of alcohol. Hizashi quickly parted the fur and assessed the damage to Shouta's chest, relieved when he found that although the scratches were long, they were shallow, and the bleeding had already slowed to a trickle. The bite wound on Shouta's shoulder was much more concerning, the four puncture wounds had slowed bleeding, but they were much deeper.

"I'm going to need to clean this before I bandage it," Hizashi said aloud, "Hitoshi, get the alcohol bottle, the water, and something for Shouta to bite down on. This is going to hurt."

Hitoshi quietly complied and soon Hizashi stood over Shouta's arm with a towel soaked with water in hand. "Shouta, I'm going to clean this wound out with water, but we'll need to apply some alcohol. I'm worried it'll get infected. It's going to hurt, but I'll be as gentle as I can."

At first Hizashi thought he wouldn't respond, but Shouta let out a muffled groan (Hitoshi had rolled up a small cloth and placed it between Shouta's teeth) and his eyelids fluttered, just on the verge of consciousness. Hizashi took a deep breath and covered the bite wound with the soaked towel, squeezing the water out to flush away the blood. Shouta groaned again but didn't move as Hizashi continued to flush away the blood. Hizashi sighed as he poured a moderate amount of alcohol on a second towel.

"Okay, this will sting," Hizashi told Shouta as he wrung the towel over the wounds. As soon as the alcohol dripped into the wounds Shouta stiffened and he let out a muffled scream, his jaw clenched around the cloth in his mouth. Hizashi and Hitoshi leaned their weight onto either side of him in case he tried to jump up. As soon as Shouta relaxed some, Hitoshi removed the cloth so Shouta could breathe, his breaths coming in short gasps as the pain began to fade. Hizashi quickly rinsed the wounds again with water and began to pack them with clean cloth, finally wrapping cloth bandages around Shouta's arm, shoulder, and around

his chest to secure them, Hitoshi assisting with lifting Shouta when necessary. Hizashi did the same with the wounds on Shouta's chest, making sure they were thoroughly flushed before applying the bandaging.

Hizashi sighed and wiped the sweat from his brow as he looked Shouta over; the man had relaxed considerably now and was breathing deeply and evenly in sleep. The bandaging showed no signs of blood spotting, so Hizashi was sure the bleeding had been successfully stopped.

"We need to clean your arm," Hizashi was snapped out of his thoughts by Hitoshi's statement. He looked down at his right arm, realizing he had forgotten the claw marks extending from just above his elbow to his wrist on the side of his arm.

He nodded and sat at the edge of the bed as Hitoshi copied Hizashi's actions when treating Shouta's wounds. Hizashi winced as the alcohol burned his wounds but didn't flinch away.

"I'm glad you're okay," Hitoshi said quietly as he was wrapping a bandage around Hizashi's arm, not meeting the man's gaze. "I was worried, I thought..."

"Me too..." Hizashi said. "Shouta, he saved me."

"I was so worried you were dead..."

Hizashi looked Hitoshi in the eyes and gave him a reassuring smile, "We're all okay, that's what matters."

"Hitoshi," Nemuri's voice came from nearby and Hizashi started. All the enchanted servants had remained quiet until now, helping with Shouta's wounds without a word; Hizashi had almost forgotten they were there. "We'll get you cleaned up and settled in your room. I'm sure you're tired."

Hitoshi nodded and followed Toshinori and Chiyo through the door; Nemuri hung behind for a moment, "We'll bring you fresh clothes shortly, Hizashi."

Hizashi glanced down at his clothes, they were covered in dirt and blood and shredded in some places, "That would be great, and thank you for taking care of Hitoshi."

Nemuri smiled before hopping away, leaving the door ajar.

Hizashi stood and pulled an armchair up to the bed, sitting and watching Shouta's soft, even breathing. He felt exhaustion wash over him as he reached out and took Shouta's furred hand in his own and leaned forward on the bed, rubbing circles on Shouta's hand with his thumb.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for tuning in to this week's chapter! Hope you enjoyed! :)

Healing

Chapter Notes

Welcome back, readers! I hope you enjoy this week's chapter! :)

As a reminder ***** signifies a change in PoV and ++++++ signifies a significant time jump (I don't think I've used the time jump one yet lol)

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

Shouta felt himself float into consciousness slowly, his thoughts felt sluggish and his body ached. He groaned softly as he tried to force his eyelids to work, but all he could manage was a light fluttering for a while until he was able to crack them open slightly. It was dark around him, only a small amount of flickering orange light to illuminate the room. He realized slowly that he was back in his quarters as the dim shapes became familiar outlines of his furnishings.

He moved his head over with great effort, causing a burning pain to light up his right arm and his chest making him wince and his vision blur. As the pain dulled to an ache, he blinked his eyes several times until he could see more clearly and found Hizashi fast asleep in an armchair with his upper body draped over the bed. His hand clutched Shouta's tightly even as he slept; Shouta found himself returning the pressure of Hizashi's grip, his smooth hand soft in Shouta's rough furred paw.

Hizashi's hair seemed to glow even in the dim candlelight and Shouta couldn't bring himself to look away. As Shouta looked on, Hizashi's eyelids twitched and he began to stir, lifting his head to meet Shouta's eyes.

"Shou..." Hizashi said breathlessly, a mix of worry and relief in his expression, "How are you feeling?"

"M'okay, just hurts." Shouta mumbled, "'Zashi...glad you're safe."

Hizashi smiled and rose from the chair, wincing and reaching to clutch his right arm, which Shouta realized was covered in a bandage.

Shouta's chest felt tight and his jaw clenched at the sight, Hizashi had been hurt, he hadn't gotten there in time to protect him from the wolves' claws.

Hizashi seemed to notice his pained expression and quickly removed his hand from his arm, "I'm alright, Shou," he said reassuringly, "We're both alright."

"You're hurt..." Shouta said gruffly, a strange feeling washed over him, a fierce protectiveness that made his fur bristle.

“Shouta,” Hizashi said firmly, snapping Shouta from his brief daze. “I need to check your wounds; it may hurt but I’ll need to change the dressings several times a day.” He said more softly.

Hizashi crossed to the other side of the bed and set about carefully unwrapping the bandaging that wound around his chest and his arm. Shouta gritted his teeth as the fabric tugged at the wounds but held still as Hizashi worked.

Hizashi inspected the wounds closely before he spoke, “These bite wounds are the worst and we’ll need to keep them clean to prevent infection, but they should heal up well. I’m going to fetch the others so we can clean them and rebandage them.”

Shouta grunted and watched as Hizashi exited the room, staring for a long while after he left.

Hizashi had returned to Shouta after finding everyone and gathering more bandaging supplies. After rinsing the wounds with clean water, Hitoshi helped him once again to rebandage Shouta.

“I’m glad you’re alright, Shouta,” Nemuri said from her perch on the bedside table. “You were like Hizashi’s knight in shining armor, saving him from those wolves.” Nemuri snuck a knowing look Hizashi’s way and he felt his cheeks grow warm.

“Wasn’t that heroic,” Shouta grumbled. Hizashi smiled.

“Well I’m grateful, nonetheless,” Hizashi said as he finished tying the last bandage into place. “Now you’re going to have to rest while these wounds heal, which means letting us help care for you.” Hizashi let a hard edge enter his tone, leaving Shouta no room to argue; knowing him he would be up and about if they let him, shrugging off any offer of assistance.

Shouta hummed in reluctant agreement, voicing no argument, to Hizashi’s relief.

“We’ll go get some lunch prepared for you all,” Chiyo said.

After Hizashi and Hitoshi finished cleaning up, Hizashi cleared his throat, “There’s something that Hitoshi and I need to speak to you about, Shouta.” On the way back to Shouta’s room Hizashi had told the enchanted servants about Hitoshi being an orphan, and had told Hitoshi they would need to explain this to Shouta as well. The boy was far from excited about this prospect, but had agreed that Shouta needed to know.

Hitoshi froze for a moment before sighing, at a nod from Hizashi he turned to Shouta, “I’ve been lying about still having my parents around,” the boy said. “I didn’t want you or Hizashi to send me away if you knew I was some street urchin.”

“He told me on the way back from the village yesterday, but then we were attacked, so obviously it didn’t come up until now,” Hizashi said.

Hizashi watched as Shouta nodded, “Well, since you don’t have a home in the village, then it would only be logical that you live here.”

Hitoshi looked stunned at his quick decision, “I...are you sure?”

Shouta nodded, “All of us would love to have you around here, especially Eri.”

Hizashi felt as though he should be surprised that Shouta had arrived at this conclusion so quickly, but after his time at the castle he had come to see how selfless and kind Shouta could be.

“Did I hear right?!” came Nemuri’s excited voice from the doorway, “Hitoshi will be living here with us?”

Shouta nodded.

“Yay! Big Brother Hitoshi is gonna live with us!” Eri exclaimed from Chiyo’s cart as they wheeled inside.

Hitoshi was trembling slightly, “Thank you...” his voice thick, as if he was holding back tears.

Hizashi smiled and wrapped an arm around the boy, and this time Hitoshi did not hesitate to lean into his embrace.

“Welcome to your new home, Hitoshi,” Toshinori said.

“This calls for a celebration!” Nemuri exclaimed. “Once you two are healed up from your injuries, we’re throwing a ball in honor of the newest member of our family!”

Shouta groaned, “You’ll use any excuse to have a party,” he grumbled.

“I think it would be fun,” Hizashi said, chuckling as Shouta rolled his eyes.

+++++

Later that night, Hizashi was flipping through a book he had brought from the library to Shouta’s room, so he could stay close in case he was needed while also continuing his research on enchantments. Hitoshi and Eri had gone to bed several hours ago and he had retired to Shouta’s bedside. Shouta had been mostly quiet while Hizashi flipped through the pages, once again finding nothing of use.

Hizashi sighed as he snapped the book closed, “I think it’s time I go to bed. Do you need anything before I go?”

Shouta’s red eyes flicked his way, holding his gaze intensely. “Stay,” Shouta said simply.

“Stay...here?” Hizashi asked, slightly breathless at Shouta’s gaze.

“After what happened, I don’t want you too far away. I know it sounds strange but I feel anxious at the thought of you not being here with me.” Shouta murmured, “Will you...stay here with me? At least for tonight?”

Hizashi was dumbstruck, “Sure I will, Shouta,” he found himself saying, his cheeks warm.

“There’s only one bed, but there’s room to share. It would be more comfortable than the chair.” Shouta mumbled, sounding embarrassed.

“I don’t mind sharing, Shou,” Hizashi said, his smile evident in his voice.

Hizashi pulled up the covers next to Shouta, who had scooted over to make room for him. He lay down and pulled the covers over himself, immediately feeling Shouta’s warmth surrounding him as he rolled to his right side to face Shouta. The wounds on his arm burned in protest but Hizashi ignored it, instead running his eyes over Shouta’s form in the candlelight.

Shouta was laying on his back, his eyes turned back to the ceiling, and Hizashi could swear his cheeks were tinged red under his fur, but maybe it was just the warmth of the blanket.

“Comfortable?” Shouta asked awkwardly, not meeting Hizashi’s gaze, despite his pleading stare just moments before.

“Yes, nice and warm,” Hizashi replied as he turned himself to blow out the only candle left lit in the room behind him. “Good night, Shou.”

“Good night, ‘Zashi,” Shouta said in the darkness.

Hizashi smiled softly at the nickname, making himself comfortable on his side of the bed. Even though they weren’t touching, Hizashi relished Shouta’s warmth from next to him, and as he dozed off he thought he may never want to leave it.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I've been working more on the fic this week, and just finished Chapter 18 the other night! I'm thinking there will probably be around 21 chapters by the time I finish, depending how I split things up. I'm writing the endgame now, which I'm very excited to share with you!

All of the kudos and comments so far are very much appreciated! It makes my heart happy that people enjoy something I'm writing. Stay tuned for more next week, the ball is coming up! :D

Preparations

Chapter Notes

I've made a lot of progress with the ending chapters of the fic, so I've decided to post TWO chapters this week! :D

The castle was bustling even more over the next week as the enchanted servants and various magic materials readied the castle for the upcoming celebration. Shouta grumbled at all the noise, but Hizashi could tell he was secretly looking forward to it. The pair's wounds were healing nicely, and Hizashi had begun to allow Shouta to roam the castle again.

Toshinori had visited Hizashi's room one day and announced he would be taking Hizashi's measurements to fit him for a suit worthy of the occasion, just a few days away.

"You and Master Shouta must look your best!" the clock-man had stated as Hizashi was measured head to toe by an enchanted measuring tape.

"Is there an enchanted object for anything here?" Hizashi asked, watching the measuring tape zoom around him.

"The enchantress left an enchantment on the entire castle, so that it could be maintained. I assume she meant it as a sort of apology for Master Shouta receiving a curse that was not intended for him." Toshinori replied.

As the measurements were finished, Toshinori gave Hizashi a small bow. "I will ensure you look your best for the celebration. Now I must go take measurements for young Master Hitoshi."

"Have fun with that," Hizashi chuckled; he could imagine clearly the string of complaints Toshinori would receive from the boy.

Toshinori boomed a laugh, "I have served the Aizawa family since Master Shouta's youth and I can assure you I've grown accustomed to his complaints over the years. Young Master Hitoshi reminds me a great deal of Master Shouta at the same age."

Hizashi thought for a moment, "I guess I could see that."

Toshinori took his leave and Hizashi made his way to Shouta's room in the west wing; he had been spending most of his time there while Shouta recovered and had grown accustomed to sharing a space with him.

Shouta looked up as Hizashi entered, "Toshinori finish your measurements?"

“Yes, Hitoshi is next so I’m assuming he will be giving Toshinori just as much grief as you likely gave him,” he teased.

Shouta gave Hizashi a mischievous grin, his pointed teeth flashing.

Hizashi chuckled and made his way over to the bed where Shouta was resting; although his wounds were healing, Hizashi still wanted him to rest since Shouta’s injuries were more severe than his own.

“Let me check,” Hizashi began to unwind the light bandaging to reveal the bite and scratch wounds. The fur parted around the wounds, a long set of claw marks over Shouta’s chest and several punctures on his left shoulder; they had all scabbed over and the redness and swelling had died down some but they were still tender to the touch. “I think we can start leaving the bandages off to allow the wounds to air out.”

Shouta hummed in response and after a brief pause, he said, “Thank you, Hizashi, for taking care of me. I’m glad you came here to the castle...I enjoy your company.”

Hizashi’s heart fluttered, “You’re welcome, Shouta. I’m glad I found this place too.”

Shouta waited nervously in the hall outside the grand ballroom, tugging at the neck of his frilled shirt. Toshinori had dressed him in a red undershirt with frills at the neck, his buttoned coat and pants were a dark gray with red embroidery forming intricate patterns through the fabric. Shouta could appreciate the craftsmanship, but after so long not wearing any sort of formal clothing he found it stifling. The material tugged uncomfortably at his healing wounds and rubbed at his fur.

Hitoshi stood nearby in his own specially tailored outfit, a similar style to Shouta’s but with purple instead of red. The boy’s hair had been combed back and Shouta could tell from his fidgeting that he longed to ruffle it back into a mess again. Shouta couldn’t blame him, he had also received the same treatment, but the fur covering his body had taken a lot longer to wash, trim, and style.

The enchanted servants had gathered slightly behind them, minus Toshinori who was preparing Hizashi for the big night. Nemuri, Eri, and Chiyo had freshly polished their metal and porcelain bodies and Eri sported a small bow hooked to her back.

“Is it time to go in yet?” Eri asked, bouncing up and down in excitement.

“Patience, dear, Hizashi will arrive soon and then we can start the ball,” Chiyo assured her.

Down the hall Shouta heard the clomping sound of Toshinori’s wooden feet accompanied by quieter footfalls that could only be Hizashi.

Shouta turned to look and his jaw almost dropped. If he thought Hizashi was stunning before, he was absolutely radiant now. The blonde was dressed head to toe in a soft green coat and pants, a compliment to his emerald eyes, as well as a white undershirt frilled like Shouta’s;

gold embroidery was stitched through the green fabric in a twisting and turning pattern. The top layer of Hizashi's golden yellow hair was pulled back into an elegant braid, while the bottom layer spilled over his shoulders like smooth silk. Hizashi's eyes caught Shouta's gaze and his cheeks reddened as he seemed to take in Shouta's cleaned-up fur and elegant state of dress.

"Hizashi, you look amazing," Shouta said breathlessly as the blonde reached his side.

"I could say the same to you, Shouta. Who knew you could clean up so nicely," Hizashi teased.

Shouta opened his mouth to retort playfully when Hitoshi interrupted, "Can we go inside now?"

Shouta's face grew warm and he held out a hand to Hizashi, "May I?"

Hizashi smiled and took Shouta's furred hand in his own; the two led the way into the ballroom.

The Ball

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi held Shouta's hand softly in his as they made their way to the middle of the grand ballroom. The space was huge with white walls ringed with columns that almost seemed to shine in the light from the golden chandelier hanging above. Their footsteps echoed dully on the polished wooden floors. The ceiling was slightly curved with a complicated pattern of flowers of all shapes and colors swirled over the surface.

"Wow, this ballroom is beautiful," Hizashi said as he stared around the room.

Shouta hummed, "Not really, compared to—" he stopped suddenly, clearing his throat awkwardly.

"Compared to...?" Hizashi prodded, they had turned to face each other now in the middle of the floor.

"To, er, you..." Shouta mumbled, refusing to meet Hizashi's gaze.

Hizashi paused before chuckling softly, reaching out to cup Shouta's chin and pull his face so they were eye to eye. "That's sweet of you to say, Shou. I think you look quite dashing yourself."

Shouta smiled as music began to echo through the room from the piano near the entrance, a soft slow number.

"Have you ever danced at a ball before?" Hizashi asked.

Shouta shook his head, "Never really went to them."

"I'll lead then, just follow my steps," Hizashi wrapped an arm around Shouta's waist and held his other arm outward with their hands clasped. Once Shouta had mimicked his position, Hizashi began to move slowly, his footfalls in time with the music. "One, two, three...one, two, three..."

Shouta followed hesitantly at first, but Hizashi kept the pace slow for him and soon they had gotten into a rhythm and were spinning slowly around the floor.

"You're getting it," Hizashi said and he saw Shouta smile in response.

Suddenly Shouta grasped Hizashi on either side of his waist and lifted him gently as they twirled before placing him back down, "How about that?" he said with a smug grin.

"Not bad," Hizashi laughed, still reeling from the spin.

As their dance went on Hizashi talked Shouta through several different moves, which he picked up fairly easily. As the song finished the two spun to a stop and Shouta bent to lower Hizashi into a small dip before lifting him back up again. The two were breathing heavier but both smiled widely before turning to the group of enchanted servants, Eri, and Hitoshi, who were gathered around the piano.

“I want to dance too, Hitoshi!” Eri exclaimed from her place in his cupped hands.

“All right,” Hitoshi was trying to put on an air of indifference but the small smirk on his face betrayed him.

“You all too!” Hizashi said to Nemuri, Toshinori, and Chiyo. “We’re all celebrating Hitoshi’s new home.”

Soon Hitoshi was holding Eri out at an arm’s length spun quickly in place, making the little teacup squeal with laughter. Eventually Hitoshi slowed and was swaying and occasionally twirling in time with the music, laughing along with Eri.

Toshinori and Chiyo mostly swayed softly to the music, but Nemuri hopped and twirled around them more energetically. Shouta and Hizashi continued their dance, with Shouta leading a bit more this time.

“Don’t you think I should have a turn with Hizashi?” Nemuri hopped up to the pair.

Shouta snorted and released his grasp, handing Hizashi off to the enthused candlestick.

Hizashi grinned and held out his hand to Nemuri, “May I have this dance?”

“You can have whatever you like,” Nemuri replied playfully, eliciting another snort and an eye roll from Shouta which Hizashi caught from the corner of his eye.

Hizashi lifted Nemuri’s metal body into his arms, grasping her in the crook of one elbow and holding one of her candle arms in the other hand. They spun and danced together to the music, laughing as they went.

Shouta and Hizashi both took turns dancing with Hitoshi and Eri, just a simple routine, which had them all smiling at one another as Hitoshi playfully made up his own dance moves.

Eventually Hitoshi and Eri slowed, yawning as they watched Hizashi and Shouta move through one final dance. As they finished, they heard the enchanted servants begin to guide children out of the ballroom. The duo called out farewells to the group, and Nemuri turned to wink at them before the main doors closed with a thud.

Hizashi and Shouta made their way toward the balcony, and a glance out the door showed that thick gray clouds had gathered. The two walked onto the balcony, and leaned against the railing as the cold night air brushed past them, bringing with it a small flurry of snowflakes.

Hizashi held a hand out to catch a few of the snowflakes, which melted immediately against his skin, “The first snowfall of the winter. I wonder if it will stick.”

Shouta hummed, “I don’t remember the last time I’ve enjoyed myself so much,” he said softly after a few moments, staring out over the courtyard.

“I couldn’t say either,” Hizashi agreed, honestly, he had never had that much fun at a ball, most of them being too stiff and proper.

“Hizashi,” Shouta turned to look at him as he spoke, and Hizashi returned his gaze. “I’ve come to realize that I really care deeply for you. The castle has been so much brighter and happier since you came here, and I’ve realized that I don’t want that to end...” he paused and cleared his throat. “Will you...stay here with me...with us?”

Hizashi felt a wide grin spread across his face and as Shouta spoke, “Of course, Shou. I couldn’t imagine my life now without you or Hitoshi and Eri, or the others. Of course, I’ll stay.”

Shouta grinned back, his pointed teeth glinting in the night. “Why don’t we head back to my quarters for the night? I need to change out of these clothes, they’re tugging at my fur.”

Hizashi nodded and glanced back out across the courtyard of his new home, before he caught sight of something that made his heart drop to his feet.

“You go ahead, Shou, I’ll catch up,” he found himself saying, “I just want a bit of air.”

Shouta grunted, “I’ll be waiting, just don’t stay too long or you’ll catch a cold.” Hizashi heard him pad away.

Hizashi’s grip tightened on the balcony railing as he stared at the entry gate, where a figure had emerged from the shadows. A man in a finely styled purple and black outfit, wearing a curved plague mask over the lower half of his face, stared up at him through the building wall of snowfall with piercing yellow eyes.

Hizashi’s blood ran colder than the night air; Overhaul had found him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed my self indulgent fluffy ballroom fun chapter lol. Fluff ending in angsttt ;,D Ok bye! Seeya next week!

Overhaul

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi glanced back at the castle as he strode through the courtyard, ensuring no one had seen him sneaking out or decided to follow. He saw no one at the windows or on the path behind him, so he faced forward trying to put on an air of confidence, he didn't want Overhaul to sense any fear or hesitation from him.

As he passed through the main gates a figure emerged from the shadows to Hizashi's right. Lord Overhaul was tall, dressed in the finery of his title all colored a deep purple. Over his purple attire he wore a dark cloak lined with brown fur, and his hands were covered with white gloves. Over the lower half of his face he wore a long, hooked plague mask, Hizashi had never seen the man without it. The man seemed not to notice the cold at all and Hizashi had to suppress a shiver as the snow began to fall more heavily around them.

"So, this is where you've been hiding," Overhaul drawled, his voice echoing hollowly through his mask.

Hizashi turned on the man, fixing him with a determined glare, "I'm not coming back with you. The engagement is off; you and my father can make your deal some other way."

"Straight to the point," Overhaul seemed unconcerned. "I was unaware of any cancellation to our arrangement. Only that you slipped away in the dead of night without a word, what was your poor distraught fiancé supposed to think?"

Hizashi gritted his teeth, "You don't care about me; I'm only a means to an end. The only thing you're worried about is the wealth and power you'll lose out on if I don't marry you."

Overhaul shrugged and turned his head toward the castle, "Who would have known there was a castle out here in the woods? I've heard all sorts of monsters lurk the halls and stalk the surrounding woods, preying on those who lose their way."

"How did you find me, then, if it's so well hidden." Hizashi asked.

Overhaul flicked his gaze to Hizashi, his yellow eyes sharp, "I got a tip from one of the villagers, a bookkeeper. He said there was a suspicious man who fit your description associating with a local street urchin who often snuck out here to the woods."

Hizashi cursed himself, the shopkeep must have glimpsed his face under his hood when he was confronting him about Hitoshi. "You need to leave, *now*," his voice was hard.

"What sort of fiancé would I be if I left my betrothed in a horrid place such as this? The beast who resides here may decide to tear you to pieces. It should be dealt with before it harms you or any one of the villagers nearby." Overhaul stared into Hizashi's eyes as he spoke.

Hizashi's heart skipped and he clenched his fists, "No! He's not a beast, and he wouldn't harm anyone!"

"Oh, but he's already harmed you, and he's taken a child from the village," Overhaul motioned his head toward Hizashi's hand, where a small part of his wound from the wolf attack peeked out from under his sleeve.

"No, that wasn't...he didn't—" Hizashi stammered, struggling to regain his composure.

"As I said, it should be dealt with bef—"

Hizashi lunged forward, gripping Overhaul's furred cloak, "Don't you dare harm him!"

Hizashi saw a glint of metal from the corner of his eye, and he felt the tip of something sharp press into the skin on his neck.

"Step away," came a new voice.

Hizashi slowly released his grip, taking a few steps back, the point of the dagger stayed pressed against his throat. He glanced to his left to find another man had joined them, wearing a hooded pale cloak that draped over his head. The hood was high enough that Hizashi could make out his features, shrap gray eyes and thin lips set in a frown with a white fringe resting over his forehead; he recognized the man as Kurono, Overhaul's attendant. Hizashi had only ever seen the man once, but he knew he was never far from Overhaul's side. He had been so caught up in Overhaul's presence that he had forgotten about the man.

"This is how things are going to go," Overhaul adjusted his cloak and dusted himself off with his gloved hands as he spoke, "You have until tomorrow at midnight to bid farewell to your beastly friend. At which time you will meet me in the village and come back to your father's estate, where we will be married as agreed. If you choose to stay here, I will have no choice but to involve the villagers. I'm sure they would be eager to rid themselves of the beast that threatens their families."

Hizashi's heart sunk to his stomach at Overhaul's words. From the man's reputation and the finality of his words, he wouldn't hesitate to kill Shouta if he didn't have his way. Nothing would stand in the way of Overhaul's ambitions.

"Fine..." Hizashi growled, "I will come back with you and marry you as agreed, but you must promise no harm will come to anyone in that castle if I agree to this."

"You have my word," Overhaul said, his yellow eyes boring into Hizashi's.

Kurono removed the dagger from Hizashi's throat and moved to stand beside his master. The two turned and made their way down the snow-frosted path, where Hizashi noticed two horses were tied to a low hanging tree branch.

As they mounted their horses and began to depart Overhaul called over his shoulder, "I will see you tomorrow, my betrothed."

Hizashi watched helplessly as the two rode away into the darkness.

Hizashi made his way quietly through the castle halls as he headed to his now shared quarters with Shouta. His head spun and his heart ached after his confrontation with Overhaul; just as he had begun to make a life for himself here and it was all dashed in an instant. Hitoshi, Eri, all of the castle's servants, and Shouta...he couldn't risk their safety because of his stupid mistakes.

Hizashi poked his head through the door of Shouta's room to find that the man had discarded his ball attire in a neat pile on the armchair and had settled into bed. The man lay curled under the blanket on his side of the bed, his soft, even breathing told Hizashi that he had fallen asleep waiting for him to return.

He tip-toed into the room, quietly undressing himself of his attire and changing into loose fitted pants and shirt before making his way to the bed. He carefully lifted the sheet on his end of the bed and slid underneath, careful not to jostle Shouta too much.

““Zashi?”

Hizashi winced quietly, he had been hoping to avoid any conversation with Shouta tonight.

“Was waitin’ for you,” Shouta mumbled sleepily, “Must’ve fallen ‘sleep, sorry.”

Hizashi scooted closer to Shouta, feeling his warmth spread over him, “It’s okay, Shou. Go back to sleep.” He tried to keep the tremble of emotion out of his voice.

“M’kay,” Shouta murmured. Soon Hizashi heard his soft breathing once again and he sighed with relief.

Hizashi lay awake for a while, relishing in Shouta's warmth as he stared at the ceiling. How was he supposed to keep his promise to Shouta now? This would break the man's heart, possibly shatter any chance of him breaking his curse. Hizashi gritted his teeth as anger washed over him, if he just had some more time he was sure they could find a way to break it, but Overhaul's threat was clear. At this point Hizashi could only see two choices: leave with Overhaul and keep everyone safe, or refuse and watch all those he loved killed by a mob of angry villagers.

Hizashi had no choice, he couldn't risk Shouta's or anyone else's safety. He had to leave with Overhaul.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading! Hope you enjoyed this week's chapter! Be ready for more fun times next week :,)

Last Day

Chapter Notes

Hello all! I have some exciting news! I finished writing out the last chapter of the fic! There are 22 total chapters and I am planning on writing an epilogue as well. I hope you enjoy this chapter! :)

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

Shouta frowned as he stared at Hizashi over his breakfast, the blonde had been uncharacteristically quiet all morning and was currently staring at his barely touched plate of food.

“Hizashi, are you okay?” Shouta asked.

Hizashi jumped as if Shouta had broken him away from a deep thought and flicked his eyes to meet Shouta’s, “Y-yes, I’m fine. I just didn’t sleep very well last night.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” Shouta rubbed the back of his neck.

“No, no,” Hizashi said, “It’s okay.”

Shouta nodded, his worries only growing. Before he could say more Hitoshi made his way into the dining hall, yawning and rubbing his eyes with one hand and holding an equally tired looking Eri in the other.

“Mornin’” Hitoshi mumbled as he sat next to Shouta.

“Good morning, Hitoshi,” Hizashi said, his joyful tone sounded almost forced, but the boy didn’t seem to notice.

“I hope you enjoyed the ball last night, Hitoshi!” Nemuri’s voice floated across the room as she entered with Chiyo on her cart, which held Hitoshi’s breakfast.

“Mhm,” Hitoshi mumbled, still blinking sleep from his eyes as he began to eat.

“I had lots of fun,” Eri piped up.

“Well that’s good, dear,” Chiyo said. “It’s been a long time since any of us had such a wonderful time.”

Shouta smiled softly, it was true, he hadn’t been this happy in years and it was all thanks to Hizashi. He glanced at the man again to find he had gone back to gazing at nothing, as if his thoughts were miles away.

Shouta stood, “How about we head outside for some fresh air?”

It took Hizashi a moment to turn his attention to Shouta, “Okay, fresh air sounds nice.”

Once Hitoshi had finished his food, the four made their way to the main entrance. Upon opening the doors a cold wind rushed in, and they found that snow had covered the courtyard and the woods beyond in a soft blanket of white.

“Snow!” Eri squealed.

“Oh yes,” Hizashi said, “It did start to flurry after you kids went to bed last night, it must have picked up.”

“Well, we’re not going out without bundling up first, then,” Shouta remarked.

A short while later they made their way outside, Hitoshi and Hizashi bundled up in scarves and thick coats, while Shouta had donned a thicker cloak and fluffed out his fur against the chill.

An impact against the back of his head made Shouta jolt, cold snow sent a shiver down his spine as it dropped through the fur on the back of his neck. He turned to find Hizashi holding another snowball at the ready, a mischievous grin on his face. Shouta gave Hizashi his own grin, showing his sharp teeth as he stooped down to grab a large mound of snow.

Hizashi’s eyes widened and he yelped as he ran across the courtyard, just narrowly avoiding the mound of snow Shouta tossed his way. Soon they had all devolved into a full blown snowball fight, screams and laughter filled the courtyard as snow flew in every direction.

Once the snowball fight had died down, Shouta and Hizashi sat on the entrance stairs catching their breath as they smiled and watched Hitoshi piling up snow to form a crude snow person. Eri giggled as she hopped up the mound and settled on top to watch Hitoshi place pebbles in the form of a face near the top of the mound.

Shouta felt Hizashi shiver as a gust of wind brought a burst of cold air and he moved closer to the man, draping the side of his cloak over him to share his warmth. Immediately he felt Hizashi stop shivering and relax slightly into his side.

“Thanks,” Hizashi said as he nestled closer.

The two sat like this for a while, watching the two children run and play through the snow until the sun was high above them, shining dully behind the snow-filled clouds.

“We should take them in to warm up,” Hizashi said as he shrugged off Shouta’s cloak and stood.

Shouta nodded and called, “It’s time to go inside you two!”

Hitoshi glanced their way before he turned and scooped Eri from the snowy ground and made his way toward the pair of men.

“Let’s warm up by the fire with some tea,” Hizashi suggested.

Soon they were huddled together in the sitting room around the fireplace, sipping tea as they warmed up. Shouta glanced over to Hizashi at his left and met his green gaze, the man gave him a small smile and leaned his head to rest on Shouta’s shoulder, his golden hair falling to create a curtain obscuring his face. On the floor in front of him Hitoshi let out a yawn and stretched before leaning back and settling his head on Shouta’s lap. Shouta smiled and ruffled the boy’s hair as he watched his breathing become more rhythmic and slow, indicating the boy had fallen asleep. His heart warmed and he rested his head on top of Hizashi’s, feeling content to stay in this moment for the rest of his life.

Hitoshi yawned as he opened the door to the bathroom down the hall from his quarters and stooped to pick up Eri from the floor, where he had left her with a candle to illuminate the darkness of the hallway. Typically if he had to relieve himself in the middle of the night Eri would insist on coming with him so she would not be alone, which he didn’t mind too much since he knew Eri could be nervous and scared easily.

“Back to bed,” he mumbled to Eri as they made their way back to his room.

Just as the pair had reached the door, Hitoshi stopped as he heard the faint sound of footsteps on the stairs nearby. His room was located in a hallway that branched off from the main stairway, so he could hear the servants moving up and down the stairs at night on occasion. However, this time it was the sound of human footsteps that drew his attention.

He held a finger to his lips as a sign for Eri to keep quiet and tip-toed quietly to the end of the hallway. He glanced around the corner and was relieved to see it was just Hizashi making his way down the stairs to the main hall. He was about to call out to the man when he realized he was dressed warmly in a coat and had a small sack slung over his shoulder, obviously dressed for travel in the cold night. Where was he going?

“Keep quiet, Eri,” Hitoshi whispered as he watched Hizashi open the entry doors and slip outside before shutting them with a soft thud. “I want to see what he’s up to.”

“Ok, Hitoshi,” the little teacup whispered.

Hitoshi quickly made his way to his room and threw on his heavy coat and shoes before making his way down the stairs and out the door.

Hizashi had already made his way across the courtyard to the main gates. Hitoshi jogged through the snow and hid behind one of the statues that decorated the yard as Hizashi glanced back, narrowly avoiding the man’s gaze. The boy peeked out from behind the statue and watched as Hizashi opened the gates and slipped through.

Hitoshi cradled Eri close to his chest as he jogged across the rest of the courtyard, coming to a stop behind the walls that held the gates before peeking through and seeing Hizashi standing a short distance away. The man was staring out into the woods without moving, as if waiting for something to appear.

“You’re late,” Hitoshi heard a low voice from the line of trees and saw the approaching light of a lantern. He watched as Hizashi glanced over to a man who emerged from the shadows. The man was dressed in a thick cloak with the hood pulled over his head, Hitoshi could make out a fringe of silver hair that hung over the man’s obscured face. The man held a set of reins in his hand, and at the other end was a black horse, its hooves crunching in the snow as it stepped forward with the man.

“Where’s Overhaul?” Hizashi asked the man, a hard edge to his voice.

Overhaul? Hitoshi paused for a moment, knowing he had heard that name, before realization hit him; Overhaul was the man Hizashi had told him about, who was looking for him and had plastered all the posters in town with a reward for Hizashi’s return. But Hizashi had told him that he had left to get away from Overhaul, so why was he meeting with him in the middle of the night?

“He’s waiting for us in the village,” the other man said. “Come now, we mustn’t keep him waiting.”

Hitoshi saw Hizashi stiffen and his hand clench into a fist, “Fine,” he muttered before glancing back at the castle. Hitoshi ducked back behind his hiding spot before he was spotted. “You guarantee their safety if I come willingly?”

“You have Overhaul’s word,” Hitoshi heard the man reply.

Hitoshi slowly peeked around the corner again and saw the man had mounted the back of the horse, holding out a hand to help Hizashi on behind him. Hitoshi’s heart sank as the man spurred on the horse, picking up speed until the horse galloped away into the darkness, carrying Hizashi with it.

Hitoshi stared in shock long after the two men had disappeared. Hizashi was leaving them? He was going back to Overhaul? It didn’t make any sense to him, if he had run away from the man in the first place why would he go back? Unless...

“Why is Hizashi leaving, Hitoshi?” Eri’s small voice broke him from his line of thought. Hitoshi glanced down at the little teacup to see that the features of her porcelain face were scrunched up as if she would begin to cry at any moment.

“I’m not sure, Eri,” Hitoshi said, “But I do know he would have a good reason. He asked that man if we would be safe if he left; I think they’re threatening us to make him go.”

“What will we do?” Eri’s voice trembled.

Hitoshi paused in thought, the two men would be a good distance away from them by now, so they had no chance to catch up on foot. He glanced back toward the castle, wondering if he should go find Shouta, but there wasn’t time for that. They had to catch up to Hizashi and convince him to stay before Overhaul took him somewhere out of reach.

Hitoshi’s eyes slid from the castle to the stable nestled to the side. “I have an idea.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you all enjoyed!

Now that the majority of the work is done on this fic, I've broken ground on a new fic I've been brainstorming! This one is an EraserMic AU inspired by The Greatest Showman, where Hizashi is a circus ringleader and Shouta is his business partner. In short summary of what I've planned out so far, society isn't very accepting of people with less than desirable quirks (mutation, potentially destructive or dangerous, etc) and have discriminated against such people. Hizashi decides he wants to do something about it and starts a quirk show/circus where people who have been outcast by society at large can come to show off their quirks and to have a place they can call home. I'm still working out plot details, but I've started a bit of the writing and I'm very excited. I will post updates at the end of these chapters and on my tumblr as I continue to work on it! :D

<http://allonsydoctor10.tumblr.com/>

See ya next week! Look forward to things really ramping up from here >:D

The Deal

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi held tight to Kurono's waist as they rode the man's horse through the darkness of the woods. Kurono held a lantern in one hand to light the way, but it barely penetrated the darkness surrounding them. After a while they emerged from the woods onto the main road and made their way at a steady pace toward the nearby village.

As they travelled Hizashi's stomach roiled with anxiety and guilt, he wanted to protect Shouta and the others but what if he had gone about it the wrong way? He wondered how Shouta would react to the letter he had left for him before he slipped away. Hizashi knew it was a cowardly move on his part to not tell Shouta face to face of his decision, but he knew if they had that conversation he would not be able to hold on to his resolve. If he stayed, Shouta and everyone in the castle would be in very real danger, and he just couldn't risk it. All he could do was hope that Shouta could move on from this, and maybe find a way to break the curse without Hizashi there to help. His only solace was that Hitoshi and Eri would be there for him, and would give him a reason to carry on.

Hizashi gritted his teeth to hold back a wave of tears threatening to spill over.

"Almost there," Kurono said suddenly, breaking Hizashi out of his thoughts. He could see the lantern lights of the village drawing nearer, but it seemed there were more lanterns lit than would be normal for this time of night. Hizashi felt a wave of apprehension as they continued on.

Hitoshi grunted as he hauled Violet's large saddle over her back, just as Hizashi had shown him when they would come to the stables to care for the horse together. He fumbled as he tried to quickly fasten the straps underneath the horse; Violet huffed and pawed the ground with a hoof, but held still as the boy worked. Luckily Hizashi had been teaching the boy to properly outfit and ride a horse, so Violet was used to his handling by now. Finally Hitoshi had fastened the saddle securely, so he nestled Eri safely in the hood of his cloak and hauled himself onto Violet's back.

"C'mon girl, we need to save Hizashi," Hitoshi said as he pulled the reins to steer the horse toward the exit of the stable. He gave the horse a firm nudge in the side with his foot and Violet began to take off through the night with a loud whinny.

"Go, Violet, go!" Eri shouted from Hitoshi's hood.

"Hyah!" Hitoshi snapped the reins to encourage Violet to pick up some speed as they entered the woods beyond the castle. Darkness descended upon them as soon as they passed the line of trees, but Hitoshi kept the horse going at a steady pace. He couldn't see much in front of

them, so the pace was slower than he would have liked, but they wouldn't be any use to Hizashi if they got lost in the woods or got themselves injured.

"We're coming, Hizashi," Hitoshi murmured.

Shouta woke with a start, sitting up he looked around groggily until his eyes settled on the empty space in the bed beside him. Hizashi had gone to bed with him, so where was he?

"Hizashi?" he called out, with no response. Shouta concluded the man must have had to relieve himself, until he placed a hand on the other side of the bed to find it was cold. How long had Hizashi been gone?

Shouta scratched the back of his head and lifted himself off the bed, pausing to light the candle on his bedside table. He turned and in the dim light noticed a folded piece of paper resting on Hizashi's pillow. Ice seemed to flow through his veins as he reached out and grasped the paper, opening it to read:

Dearest Shouta,

I am writing this with a heavy heart, as I cannot stay here in the castle with you and the others. The past I sought to escape has caught up to me and I find it impossible to keep away from home any longer. I know I should have told you this face to face, as you deserve nothing less, however I could not lose my resolve in making this decision.

I must beg of you not to let my absence take away any hope of breaking your curse. You have an entire family in Hitoshi, Eri, and all of your servants, all of whom love and care for you with all of their hearts.

Please know that I care for you very much and would have stayed if I could, but the safety of you and all of the castle residents are much more important than my feelings.

I am not sure that I will ever see you again. You will be in my heart always, and I am so sorry I didn't keep my promise to you.

Yours always,

Hizashi

Shouta felt a numbness spread through his entire body as he read through the letter, absorbing less and less of its meaning as he neared the end. Hizashi had left. Hizashi was gone. These thoughts felt wrong in his mind as they repeated over and over until it was all he could seem to think.

Hizashi had left.

Hizashi was gone.

Shouta sunk to his knees, dropping the letter and bringing his paws to his head in an effort to stop the words from whirling around in his head. Hizashi had left him and he was once again alone. Over the past weeks Shouta had begun to feel hope that Hizashi might be the one to break his curse, that maybe these feelings stirring in his heart for the man were those of love. In an instant all of that had been snatched away; for if Hizashi, the only man who had felt he was worth saving, couldn't bear to stay with him then who would ever love a terrifying, hideous beast?

Shouta's ears twitched as he heard a loud bang outside, coming from the courtyard. He got to his feet, somehow breaking from his daze long enough to investigate the source of the noise. As he made his way to the window, he heard the muted crunch of snow under footfalls and a loud neigh breaking the silence of the night. He watched from the balcony window as a horse raced through the courtyard, a figure riding on its back. This must have been Hizashi riding away on Violet, meaning Shouta had just missed him.

Shouta stumbled back into the room, his throat tight as he felt warm tears well in his eyes and trail through the fur on his face. He felt the strength leave his body as he fell to his knees, his hands gripping his knees painfully as he wept in silence.

Hizashi's eyes widened as Kurono led his horse to the middle of the village, the lights Hizashi had seen from the distance were all concentrated here, where almost the entire population of the village was gathered with lanterns and torches in hand. At the center of the crowd stood Overhaul, his masked face and intense yellow eyes aglow in the firelight.

"What is the meaning--" Hizashi's question was cut off as Overhaul spoke.

"Kurono, you have returned with my fiance. I pray he is safe and unharmed?" his voice rose over the murmurs and whispers of the villagers.

"Yes, my lord," Kurono replied, leading the horse through the parting crowd until they stood in front of Overhaul.

As soon as the horse had come to a halt, Hizashi slid off its back with a grunt, dropping his bag of possessions, and fixed Overhaul with a glare. He could see what the man was trying to do here.

"I was never in any danger!" Hizashi shouted loud enough for the villagers to hear.

"I see the beast has used some sort of magic to hypnotise you, my love," Overhaul stepped forward and placed a gloved hand upon his shoulder, which Hizashi immediately shrugged off. The murmurs of the crowd grew concerned at his statement.

"No, there is no hypnotism and no magic," Hizashi shouted, his stomach clenching with fear.

“You have been through a lot these past weeks, my love, I understand you must be confused.” Overhaul drawled.

“No! I--” Hizashi was cut off once again as Overhaul turned to the crowd.

“Now you all see the reason I have gathered you here tonight! This beast living in the castle in the woods kidnapped my fiancée, and we are fortunate he was mostly unharmed. However, now that we have taken its prey, the beast may turn its attention to the village. Your families and your children are in danger!” Overhaul’s words rang out through the crowd.

“Stop! Shouta isn’t a beast, he--” Hizashi tried to interrupt.

Overhaul grabbed Hizashi’s arm before the man could react, tearing away his sleeve and holding his arm up for the crowd to see. The arm marred by the healing wounds from the wolves. “The beast has already hurt this man,” Overhaul boomed, “Soon it will come here to hunt you all!”

The crowd erupted at this, shouts of anger and screams of terror rang out.

“We must protect the children!”

“That beast is a danger to us all!”

Hizashi’s heart sank, there was no turning this crowd away now, “No! This wasn’t from--”

“All of the women and children must hide away in your homes with the doors barred! Any able bodied man must grab a weapon and we will deal with this beast once and for all!” Overhaul shouted above the clamor.

“NO!” Hizashi lunged forward, intent on tackling Overhaul to the ground. Before he made contact he was grabbed from behind, his arms pinned securely behind his back.

“You’re not going to save your beast now,” Kuroko growled in Hizashi’s ear as he hauled the man away, kicking and screaming.

“Let go of me!” Hizashi shouted, trying to kick out at the man as he was dragged away. None of the villagers paid him any mind, too concerned with their own families and convinced Hizashi was under some sort of spell from the beast.

Overhaul stepped from the crowd as they went about gathering any weapon they could find, and the lord made his way to where Hizashi struggled.

“We had a deal!” Hizashi growled.

“Yes, so we did,” Overhaul said. “However, I need to ensure you don’t go running off back to your beast before we are wed. The world is better off without a beast stalking the defenseless villagers anyway.”

“You know he means no harm!” Hizashi pulled against Kuroko, but the man held fast.

“Do I?” Overhaul drawled. “I’ll be back for you by sunrise. In the meantime Kurono will keep you company.”

Kurono resumed dragging Hizashi away as Overhaul turned back to the crowd of men, their torches and pitchforks ready in hand. “Tonight, we kill the beast!”

Overhaul’s announcement was met with a wave of cheers that drowned out Hizashi’s scream of protest.

Kurono stopped at a nearby building, the doors of the cellar already open and waiting, and shoved Hizashi down the short flight of stairs. Hizashi tumbled and hit the stone floor with a grunt, the wind knocked from his lungs. As Hizashi struggled to take a breath the doors to the cellar slammed shut and he heard a thunk as a large piece of wood was presumably lowered into place to bar the doors.

Hizashi scrambled to his feet and dashed up the stairs, throwing his weight into ramming the slanted doors with his shoulder, but the wood held.

“Stop this!” Hizashi yelled as he pounded the doors with his fists. “Let me out!”

There was no response as he continued to ram himself into the doors, each attempt as fruitless as the last.

Hizashi had made a mistake, he should have never taken Overhaul at his word, and now Shouta, Hitoshi, Eri, and everyone else were going to pay the price.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you all enjoyed this week's chapter!

I feel bad ripping Shouta's heart to pieces, and now Overhaul is marching his way. Will our heroes Eri and Hitoshi rescue Hizashi? Or will Overhaul intercept them?

Stay tuned for more next week and find out! :D

Kill the Beast

Chapter Notes

Here is the next chapter! Sorry for the delay in posting! Enjoy! :)

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

Hitoshi's progress through the woods was a lot slower going than he had planned, he realized he should have grabbed a lantern or a torch to light the way but had overlooked it in his rush. Their journey through the woods seemed to take at least twice as long as it normally would because he continually had to slow the horse to make sure they stayed on the narrow path, of course the cover of snow didn't help either. Finally they emerged from the line of trees at the other side of the woods and made their way onto the main road. Without the cover of trees the visibility was better, but still not enough to go as fast as Hitoshi wanted.

Almost immediately when they began down the road toward the village, Hitoshi saw a mass of light not far up the road. He realized with a gasp that the source of the firelight was a mob of people carrying lanterns and torches, their angry shouts becoming clearer as Hitoshi made his way toward them.

"What's going on Hitoshi?" Eri asked from his hood.

"There's a group of villagers coming up the road," Hitoshi said as he directed Violet to the side and off the road. He led the horse into the woods once more, but behind a thick group of trees off the path. Hopefully the mob hadn't seen him approaching.

"The castle is this way, through the woods," shouted a man. Hitoshi peeked around one of the trees to get a better look. A man in a purple cloak with a furred hood was leading the group, he had short hair and was wearing a curved beak-like mask over the lower half of his face.

Hitoshi moved back behind the trees, keeping himself and Violet still and hoping they wouldn't be spotted. The boy had a sneaking suspicion that the man in the lead was Overhaul, and he didn't want to be caught by the likes of him. They waited until the mob had marched past and into the woods before emerging back onto the main road. Hitoshi snapped the reins to spur Violet on toward the village, it would be hard and dangerous to maneuver through the snow in the dark, but they were running out of time. The mob was headed straight for the castle and Hitoshi still had to find Hizashi so they could go help Shouta.

Soon they had reached the village, which was well lit for this time of night, however the streets were empty as if everyone who had remained behind was hiding away in their homes. Hitoshi brought Violet to a stop and slid off into the snow with a crunch.

He turned and tied the reins to a nearby post, "Wait here, Violet."

Hitoshi and Eri made their way through the streets until they came upon the main square. Muffled shouts came from somewhere nearby, and Hitoshi glanced around until he saw the man who had taken Hizashi leaning against a house across the square.

“Open the damn door, Kurono!” came another shout, followed by a thud. That was Hizashi’s voice!

Hitoshi glanced down and saw Kurono seemed to be standing guard over the barred cellar door of the house. “That’s where they’ve locked up Hizashi.” Hitoshi whispered to Eri.

“We have to get him out of there. I have an idea and I’ll need your help with it, Eri.” he continued in a whisper.

“Ok, tell me what to do!” Eri whispered back, her voice trembled slightly but she sounded determined to help save Hizashi.

Hitoshi smiled as he explained his plan; hopefully they would have Hizashi out quickly.

Hizashi’s breaths came in short pants as he stumbled back down the stairs. His shoulder and hands throbbed from his continued attempts to bust down the door. He steadied himself with a few more breaths and braced himself to ram the door again.

Hizashi paused when he heard a high voice call out from outside, “Mommy! Mommy, where are you?” Was that Eri’s voice?

“Please help, I can’t find my mommy!” Hizashi was sure it was Eri’s voice, but what was she doing out here?

Hizashi heard Kurono just outside the door sigh in annoyance, “Damn kids.” The snow outside crunched under his feet, sounding like he was headed in the direction of Eri’s shout. “You need to get home, little girl, before you get yourself hurt.”

Hizashi gritted his teeth at the threatening undertone to the man’s voice.

“Mister, please help me!” Eri’s voice sounded further away now, and Hizashi heard Kurono’s footsteps move further away as he followed the girl’s voice.

Hizashi started as the door shuddered slightly, a muffled curse sounding on the other side. He heard a dull thud that was muffled by the snow, and soon after the doors swung open with a creak to reveal a purple-haired teenager peeking into the cellar.

“Hitoshi!” Hizashi exclaimed quietly, hoping that Kurono was far enough away that he couldn’t hear the boy’s efforts to open the doors.

“Come on, we need to go!” Hitoshi said as Hizashi vaulted up the stairs.

“Where did Kurono go?” Hizashi glanced around.

“He’s around the corner of the house,” Hitoshi replied quietly.

Hizashi nodded and quickly made his way to where the boy had motioned, and turned the corner to find Kurono at the other side of the house, glancing around for the little girl who had called out.

Hizashi jogged his way as Eri called out again, “Mommy!”

“Well if you would come out, you damn brat,” Kurono growled.

Hizashi picked up speed, and too late Kurono turned to find the man bearing down upon him. Hizashi leaped and tackled Kurono to the ground, the other man’s head hitting the snow-covered stone walkway with a dull crack. Hizashi lifted himself up to see Kurono’s head roll limply to the side, a quick glance revealed that the man was still breathing, just unconscious.

Hitoshi ran up behind Hizashi and helped him drag the man to the cellar, where they placed him inside and barred the doors.

“Did I do good? Did I?” Hizashi heard Eri’s voice behind him.

He turned to see the little teacup hop toward them through the snow.

Hizashi scooped her up and held her close, also pulling Hitoshi into an embrace. “You both did amazing! You were so brave!”

“We don’t have time,” Hitoshi pulled away from Hizashi. “By the time we got out of the forest, Overhaul was leading a mob up to the castle! Violet can get us there, but we have to hurry!”

Hizashi nodded. “We’ll talk on the way, but you’re right. We need to save Shouta and the others.”

“Shouta!”

Shouta ignored the call as he sat curled on the floor, staring blankly at the paper laying at his feet. He had no idea how long he had been there, maybe minutes or hours.

“Shouta!” This time the shout was followed by a rapid banging on the door, “Open the door, Shouta!”

Shouta huffed and dragged himself to his feet, slowly making his way to the door as more rapid banging sounded from the other side. He opened it to find Nemuri, her candle flames sparking as she raised one of her arms to bang on the door again.

“Shouta, there’s something wrong!” Nemuri said urgently, “There’s a mob of people approaching the gates; they’re all carrying weapons and we can’t find Eri or Hitoshi anywhere! We need you and Hizashi to help!”

“Hizashi’s gone,” Shouta grunted.

“Gone?!” Nemuri exclaimed. “How can he be...Do you think it's related to Eri and Hitoshi's disappearance?”

“Eri and...” It took a moment for Shouta to register the rest of their conversation. His eyes widened as the fog clouding his brain cleared and realization struck, “They could be in danger!”

“That’s what I’ve--”

“I’ll search for them,” Shouta interrupted, “You, Toshinori, and Chiyo do your best to barricade the doors. Prepare for the mob in case they break in; I’m sure the enchanted objects will help as well.”

Nemuri nodded and hopped quickly away. “Everyone, barricade the doors!”

Shouta made his way quickly through the halls to Hitoshi and Eri’s shared room. He cursed himself for sulking when his family was in real danger. He wasn’t sure why the villagers had decided to attack now, but he had to protect his family whether Hizashi was here or not.

Shouta closed his eyes and took a deep breath, narrowing down the scents in the room to Hitoshi’s and following it out the door and down the hall to the bathroom. A quick look inside showed the boy was not there, so he turned and followed the trail back down the hall. Instead of turning into the bedroom, his scent trail continued down the hall to the staircase. Why had he come this way?

As he made his way down the staircase the bustling sounds of the servants and enchanted items became clearer, but Shouta tuned them out so he could focus on Hitoshi’s scent. With a jolt he realized the boy’s scent had intertwined with another familiar scent, Hizashi’s. Had the boy left with Hizashi? The man’s letter had made it clear that Hitoshi and Eri would remain at the castle. Had Hitoshi tailed Hizashi on his way out of the castle? In that case...

Shouta’s heart beat faster as he picked up the pace, following the trail until he drew up short at the main doors of the castle.

“Hitoshi went outside...” Shouta said, unsure if anyone else had heard him.

“Outside?!” Toshinori yelled, his pendulum banging the inside of his wooden frame in his panic. “Do you think the villagers have him?!”

“I don’t know,” Shouta growled. “We need to remove the barricade.”

“Shouta, if we move the barricade they’ll overwhelm us,” Nemuri said.

“We need to distract them. At least enough for me to slip out and follow Hitoshi’s scent. His and Eri’s safety are our top priority,” Shouta said firmly.

Before anyone could reply the shouts of the mob drew ever closer, Shouta gauged that they had crossed the gates into the courtyard by now.

“Stay still and pretend you’re normal household objects, and once they get inside use a surprise attack to your advantage. Use any of the enchanted objects at your disposal to keep them occupied. Try not to hurt anyone; I’m not sure what got them riled up, but I don’t want to give them any reason to harm us.” Shouta said.

A loud thud sounded on the other side of the main doors and the shouts of the mob rang out in the night.

“Kill the beast! Kill the beast!”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this week's chapter! Things are really heating up. Here's to hoping Hizashi, Eri, and Hitoshi make it back in time! Please let me know what y'all think in the comments :)

Revelations

Chapter Notes

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

Shouta crouched in his hiding place behind a column close to the entrance. At the sound of the banging on the doors all of them had scattered, following Shouta's hastily formed plan. Shouta wasn't sure what would happen once he got past the mob and found the kids, but he couldn't focus on anything else until he knew they were safe.

With a final bang the doors flew open and the entrance hall was lit up by the numerous torches carried by the angry villagers.

"Come out, beast!"

"You'll not threaten our village!"

Shouta remained still and silent, waiting for the signal from his servants before making his move. Soon the mob had made it a fair distance inside the entrance hall, as he heard their footsteps draw further from the entrance.

Dong. Dong. Dong.

The hollow sound of Toshinori's clock bell echoed throughout the hall, followed shortly by sounds of confusion from the villagers as the enchanted objects of the castle rained down upon them. Shouta glanced to the side as he silently rushed for the open doors. The enchanted dust cloths, brooms, mops, and any other object that could move had rushed at the villagers. The objects threw themselves onto people's faces, tripped unsuspecting villagers, and generally caused as much chaos as possible. No one noticed as Shouta slipped through the doors and into the snowy courtyard.

Shouta picked up Hitoshi's scent almost immediately, although it was fainter than inside due to the smells of the mob of villagers. A more faded scent headed toward the stables and a fresher scent mixed with that of Violet the horse's led away to the gates. Had Hitoshi been the one to ride Violet away earlier?

Shouta made to follow the trail, but came up short when a glint of silver shot toward his face. He pulled back to avoid the object, but he felt a flare of pain under his right eye as the sharp object sliced into his cheek.

"The infamous beast emerges from its lair," a low voice sounded from a few feet away.
"Think you can sneak away from your hunters?"

Shouta grit his teeth and dived behind a statue nearby, hoping to take some cover from any further attack; he felt the blood from his wound drip down his face but he ignored it. "I've done nothing to harm any of the villagers," he said loud enough for the stranger to hear.

“Try telling them that,” the stranger chuckled hollowly. “They’re in such a state right now, they don’t care what you have or haven’t done.”

“What do you want?” Shouta gathered that this man had likely incited the riot, since he had calmly held back to confront Shouta. Something was pestering him at the back of his brain the more he spoke to the man, his voice struck a chord, but where...

“Just insurance,” the man continued, “I don’t want my fiance thinking he can run back to you as soon as my back is turned.”

Shouta’s heart dropped, “You’re Overhaul. What have you done with Hizashi?”

“He’s safe and sound, right where he needs to be,” Overhaul sounded bored. “Now come along, you won’t ruin my plans this time, Lord Aizawa.”

Shouta felt as if a puzzle piece clicked inside his head, a voice he had known so long ago, so much different to this one. The voice he remembered was more soft and caring, but Shouta had learned the hard way that it was all a lie, a disguise for the man who hunted him now.

“Kai?” the name slipped from Shouta’s mouth, a name he hadn’t said for years. He cautiously peeked his head around the statue, trying to catch a glimpse of the man, only to find him looming over his hiding place, a knife glinting in his hand.

“Hello, dearest Shouta. It’s been quite a while.” Overhaul’s voice was devoid of all emotion as he lashed out with his weapon. Shouta jumped back, doing all he could to keep his footing in the snow. How had he moved so quietly?

“You’re looking a bit worse for wear, love,” Overhaul said as he strode confidently toward Shouta. Kai Chisaki, his former fiance, looked much different to how Shouta remembered, his yellow eyes stared coldly and a curved plague mask covered the lower half of his face.

Shouta growled as he found his footing, backing away from the man he had once thought he loved. “Whose fault is that?”

“I didn’t ask for your heroics,” Overhaul shrugged.

“This was your curse to bear,” Shouta snarled, “I saved you because I thought you loved me, because I loved you! But you just scurried off into the dark like a rat!”

Overhaul let out a hard laugh, “It’s not my fault you have poor judgement. Fooling you was too easy, but that enchantress ruined it all.”

Overhaul pounced forward much quicker than Shouta had expected, he found himself barely able to dodge Overhaul’s knife as the man’s reflexes seemed on par with Shouta’s own enhanced ones. Shouta focused on Overhaul’s movements, finally Shouta saw his chance. Overhaul lunged once again, his knife aimed for Shouta’s chest; Shouta ducked to the side, taking advantage of the man’s momentum he shoved himself into Overhaul, sending the man flying a few feet away. Shouta heard the knife plop into the snow and saw Overhaul’s plague mask come loose from the impact of his fall.

“You used me, and now you’re trying to use Hizashi for your own gain,” Shouta snarled as he stalked toward the man.

Overhaul rose to his feet, his back to Shouta, his mask fell to the snow as he stood. “Neither of you will get in my way,” he growled.

Shouta came to a halt as Overhaul turned to face him, the lower half of his face revealed. Overhaul’s teeth bared with overgrown canines, much like Shouta’s own, and he let out a deep animalistic growl.

“The curse,” Shouta breathed.

Overhaul snorted, “You took the brunt of it, but I suffered some of the effects.” He slowly peeled away his gloves to reveal the tips of his fingernails were pointed into claws. “Once you’re dead, maybe the curse will dispel. It’s worth a try.”

Shouta braced himself as Overhaul threw himself his way, his heightened reflexes now made sense if he had suffered some of the curse’s effects. They tumbled through the snow, growling and snarling as they each struggled to gain the upper hand. They broke away as Shouta gave the man a powerful shove with both legs, sending him tumbling only to land in a crouch.

Before the two could launch into another fight, a voice rang out from the gates, “Shouta!”

“Hizashi?” Shouta turned to see the man astride his horse with Hitoshi gripping the man tightly as they barrelled through the snow toward them.

“Look out!”

Shouta quickly turned his attention back to Overhaul, too late realizing the man had taken advantage of his brief lapse in attention. Overhaul was practically on top of him, and before Shouta could react he felt a stab of pain flare in his abdomen. Everything seemed to slow around him, he looked down to see Overhaul’s bloodied hand buried up to his palm in Shouta’s side, his pointed claws acting as a knife to pierce the skin and muscle.

“Too late,” Shouta felt Overhaul’s breath as he whispered into his ear.

Shouta felt the man tug his clawed hand free, and he felt a flood of warm blood drench the fur on his side as his knees gave out and he crumpled to the snow.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this week's chapter! This was a hard one for me to write and feel like I was satisfied with the final product. I still have some more editing work to do on the next chapter, but I'm still planning to post next week.

Thanks for reading! Please let me know what you guys think in the comments! We're hurtling full speed toward the end now, so don't miss out on the next chapter :D

Also! Update on my other WIP (my erasermic/greatest showman inspired AU): I have started working on writing and have completed 2 and a half chapters. I'm excited to start sharing this one with you all, but it may be a little while before I start posting so I can work out some more plot points. :)

To Be Loved

Chapter Notes

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

Hizashi watched in horror as Overhaul darted toward Shouta, his fingers extended and pointed together, and stabbed the man in the side as easily as if he was cutting through butter. Overhaul leaned forward as if to whisper something to Shouta, before jerking his hand out of the puncture wound. Shouta immediately sank to the ground, grasping his torso tightly and letting out a low moan.

Hizashi tugged Violet's reins as they drew up beside Shouta only seconds later, the horse rearing at the sudden stop, bringing her hooves down hard and causing Overhaul to scramble back to avoid the impact. Hizashi and Hitoshi slid quickly from the horse's back, rushing to Shouta's side. The man was doubled over in pain and Hizashi could see blood dripping through his fingers, staining the snow a deep crimson.

"Shouta, look at me!" Hizashi said, trying to fight back his panic. He quickly removed his cloak and pressed it firmly over Shouta's wound, moving his hands away to apply pressure.

"Zashi?" Shouta's voice was strained as he looked up at Hizashi, his eyes unfocused.

"Shouta, I'm so sorry!" Tears rolled freely down Hizashi's cheeks now. "I shouldn't have left you! Overhaul said he would have you killed if I didn't...if I..."

Shouta brought a hand up to brush Hizashi's cheek, "S'okay..."

"No, it's not okay!" Hizashi sobbed. "I should have stayed here with you to face whatever danger came. I was so stupid, and now..." He trailed off, unsure what to say.

"How touching," Overhaul's drawl made Hizashi jerk his head up to face the man, only to gasp in surprise. The plague mask that normally hid most of his face from view was gone, revealing pointed canine teeth; and his missing gloves revealed fingers ending in pointed claws, his right hand was covered in blood.

"You're cursed too..."

"Yes," Overhaul replied, "And now that Lord Aizawa is as good as dead, it should reverse."

"Shouta?" Hizashi murmured.

"My ex-fiancé," Shouta growled through gritted teeth.

Hizashi felt white hot anger rise in his chest, "Shouta took your curse! How could you—"

Hizashi was cut off by shouts from the castle, "Shouta! We can't hold them off any longer!"

Hizashi saw Nemuri, Toshinori, and Chiyo making their way toward them, followed by the mob of villagers shouting in anger behind them.

“There’s the beast!”

“Lord Overhaul wounded it! Let’s finish it off!”

The servants came to a stop, their faces dropping as they took in the scene before them. They quickly turned to face the mob, forming a small barrier between the crowd and their master.

“Not one step closer!” Nemuri shouted, the flames on her candles sparking and swelling in size.

Hizashi gritted his teeth, “I won’t let any of you harm him!” He shouted. “This man is no beast, he took a curse for a man he thought cared for him! That man.!” He pointed at Overhaul, who had no time to cover his face or his hands. The villagers looked to him and gasped at his appearance, erupting into unsettled murmurs.

“Lord Overhaul is a beast too?”

“How can this be?”

As the villagers muttered amongst themselves, Hizashi turned his attention back to Shouta. The man was taking ragged breaths through gritted teeth, but he was growing weaker by the second, slumping further into the snow as he lost the strength to hold himself up.

“What can we do?” Hitoshi’s voice sounded next to Hizashi, thick with emotion. The boy had placed his hands over Hizashi’s to assist in holding pressure, but the cloak was already stained red with blood.

“Shouta, I need you to know,” Hizashi whispered to the man, hoping he was still lucid enough to understand. “It shouldn’t have taken all of this for me to realize, but I love you. I love you with all my heart, and I wanted to keep you safe, but because of me—“

“Stop,” Shouta’s voice was weak, barely a murmur. “Zashi, love you too. Didn’t believe I could love anyone again, but m’glad I can see you before...”

Suddenly a warm golden light enveloped the pair, seeming to emanate from Shouta himself. Hizashi and Hitoshi watched in shocked amazement as the fur covering Shouta’s body receded, remaining thicker on his arms and bare chest and revealing the pale skin underneath. Shouta’s pointed teeth and claws drew back to a more normal size and his ears became rounded. A small cut that Hizashi noticed on Shouta’s cheek seemed to knit itself together, soon leaving a pink line where a wound was just moments ago. As the golden light faded Shouta was left in his true human form, his eyes opened wide and he sat up with a seemingly new found strength. Hizashi pulled the cloak away to reveal a raw, freshly healed wound on Shouta’s torso.

“Shouta, the curse...” Hizashi was breathless.

Before Shouta could reply another light shone from nearby, enveloping all of Shouta's servants as everyone watched in awe. Hitoshi quickly reached into the hood of his cloak and placed a glowing Eri on the ground. Soon the little teacup had grown and transformed into a human form, as had Nemuri, Toshinori, and Chiyo. The light cleared and in the places of the enchanted servants stood their human counterparts. Eri took the form of a young girl with gray shoulder length hair, a soft rounded face, and wide red eyes. Nemuri a tall woman with wild, long black hair; Toshinori a tall lean man with a sharp thin face and unkempt yellow hair; and Chiyo a short elderly woman with gray hair pulled up in a sharp bun.

"We broke the curse..." Shouta murmured.

"To love and be loved in return," Hizashi smiled and threw his arms around the newly transformed man. His skin was warm and smooth under Hizashi's touch, and his short stubble scratched at Hizashi's cheek as Shouta returned the embrace.

A frustrated growl distracted them enough to separate from their embrace. Everyone turned their attention to Overhaul, who despite the broken curse still retained his sharp claws and pointed canine teeth. "The curse is broken, so why—"

"This curse was originally for you," Nemuri strode toward the man as she spoke in a firm tone. "Seeing as your cold heart seems incapable of feeling any form of love, you're probably stuck with this curse for the rest of your miserable life."

"How dare you—" Overhaul was cut off as Nemuri turned to address the villagers.

"I hope you all realize how you have been tricked and manipulated tonight! This man made you all believe we were an enemy, but the evidence is right in front of you!" she shouted.

"Lord Shouta Aizawa is a wonderful man with a kind heart, and he would never harm any one of you." Toshinori announced to the crowd.

The villagers muttered amongst themselves for a moment before voices of agreement began to rise from the group. The mob began to close in on Overhaul, who began to back away.

"You're the one who's a beast!"

"We should kill you where you stand!"

Hizashi and Shouta stood and Shouta walked forward, his bare feet crunching in the snow.

"No," Shouta said simply, his eyes fixed on the crowd. "Killing him would make us no better than him. He can live out the rest of his life as an outcast. However, if he shows his face around here again..." he let his words hang in the air, their meaning clear.

The villagers muttered in discontent, but they halted their advance at Shouta's declaration. Overhaul glared at Shouta, glancing back toward the angry villagers the man seemed to realize he had been given no other choice. With a low growl the man whipped around on his heel and strode from the courtyard, quickly disappearing into the wilderness.

“And stay out!” Hitoshi jeered after the man, earning a giggle from Eri, who quickly hugged the boy around the waist.

The villagers whispered and murmured amongst themselves as they approached Hizashi and Shouta. One of the men stepped forward and scratched the back of his head awkwardly. “We’re all deeply sorry for what happened tonight. We truly believed Overhaul and his threats and stories of a beast living here that wanted to hurt our families”

The crowd echoed their agreement, several voices joining in on the apologies.

Shouta glanced at Hizashi before facing the crowd. “I want you all to know I would never dream of hurting any of your families. I just want to live here in peace with my own family.” He gestured to Hizashi and the rest, making Hizashi feel a bubble of warmth rise in his chest.

“Please, go back to your homes and we can put this all behind us.” Hizashi told the crowd.

The villagers filed away, their torches raised to light the way through the darkness of the woods as they made their way back to the village.

Hizashi turned back to Shouta, studying his face and finding the very same red eyes staring back at him, filled with warmth and love.

“I love you, Shou” Hizashi tilted his head up toward the man as Shouta tilted his head downward.

“I love you, ‘Zashi,” Shouta murmured before pulling Hizashi into a light embrace and pressing his lips softly to Hizashi’s. Their kiss was soft and gentle, lasting a few moments before they pulled away, each smiling softly at the other.

“It’s about time,” Nemuri’s teasing voice sounded from nearby. “You two are thicker than the castle walls.”

Hizashi turned in Shouta’s embrace to see all of them watching the two with knowing smirks on their faces, even Hitoshi.

“Okay, okay, we get it.” Shouta rolled his eyes.

Eri ran up to the two, wrapping her small arms as far around the pair as she could. “We’re all back to normal!”

Hizashi smiled as Shouta lifted the little girl into his arms and gave her a peck on the cheek. “Yes, we are.”

“Let’s go inside before we catch cold, dears,” Chiyo said.

They all followed the woman back to the castle, smiling more widely than any of them had in a long time. Shouta shifted Eri’s weight into one arm and carried her along, reaching out to grasp Hizashi’s hand in his own. Hizashi didn’t think he could smile any harder if he tried. He could finally start his new life with a new loving family who he loved and in turn loved

him. Hizashi put an arm around Hitoshi next to him and leaned his head on Shouta's shoulder as they entered the castle, ready to spend the rest of their lives together as a family.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed the conclusion of the story! I've really enjoyed writing this and sharing it with you all! Please let me know what you think in the comments! I just wanted to thank everyone who has read, commented, and/or left kudos, as it feels so nice that people have enjoyed something I wrote!

EDIT: I had originally planned an Epilogue for this story but it's been about 2 years since I finished it and I haven't really written anything that I feel is really good enough to post and I don't want to write something just for the sake of making an Epilogue that doesn't end up being any good.

I appreciate everyone who has read this fic and I hope to get back into writing sometime in the future and bring some new stories to the table and/or revisit some of my past works!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!