

## Cloudy Minds and Muddy Shoes

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# Cloudy Minds and Muddy Shoes

by [Victrosa](#)

## Summary

Reki didn't like parties. He didn't like them at all. So he wasn't really sure why he even went.

“Yeah, I brought the stuff.”

“You'll definitely get in with that! Go, go!”

Reki's eyes darted to the side to see one bleach blonde girl pouring some powder in a cup. She was going to drug this innocent person who was probably incredibly lost. He had to think fast.

He was a foreigner, but he looked Japanese. Reki weighed the odds and landed on a Japanese name. “Uhm...” he said softly. What was a common Japanese name he could probably get away with? Oh! “Haruto!” Reki called. A lot of eyes flashed his way. Including the ones he was hoping for.

That's why he went to the party.

//OR//

Reki finds a drunk Langa at a party and saves him.

## Notes

I made a Spotify playlist for this story! It's mostly songs I listened to while I wrote but also songs I think the boys would listen to (I see Reki being a huge ONCE). Give it a listen if you want!

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/28zanCA3istVyiw3aoeetD?si=5a172b3da1e146f5>

## notes and hints

### Chapter Notes

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

Reki didn't like parties. He didn't like them at all. But when he mentioned it to some friends they insisted he went because he "doesn't get out enough" and he's "starting to become a hobbit".

Looking around the house, he could already tell he wouldn't like it - let alone have a good time. The music was just a *little* too loud, the conversations even louder, and the smell of weed was wafting through the entire place. Through the thick crowd, Reki thankfully spotted the drink table.

It was already littered with the Red Solo Cups and sticky. Only minding a little bit, Reki took his own cup and began pouring himself something of whatever.

"Oh my gosh, yes! I saw him!"

"Where?" "

"Last I saw, on the couch in the back room. He's been taking drinks from literally anyone so I say you have a pretty good shot."

"Shot at what?" A third voice chimed in.

"Little miss Yui over here wants to get with that cute foreigner. He always looks lost so he should be easy."

Reki was frozen. He had no idea who they were even talking about but it didn't seem to be a good way of... getting... with someone.

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Despite trying to forget and have a good night, he just couldn't get his mind off of that one boy that group of girls were talking about. *The back room*.... Reki hadn't left the living room the whole time seeing as he didn't know anyone here. College hasn't been the best towards him.

He swallowed the last of his drink and went searching. Somehow the crowd had gotten much bigger which made it kind of hard to get around. While passing he heard some more comments about the foreigner.

He finally made it through what seemed like the most populated area. While he caught his breath, Reki scanned the unknown part of the house and his eyes landed on an archway that lead to another room. It was worth a shot.

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That shot was correct. When he stepped inside this new room he was immediately surrounded by an abundance of girls, all looking at a boy sitting on the couch looking like he

wasn't here at all.

His cheeks were flushed, his eyes and body still, and girls clinging onto him. His face was stone cold.

"Yeah, I brought the stuff."

"You'll definitely get in with that! Go, go!"

Reki's eyes darted to the side to see one bleach blonde girl pouring some powder in a cup. She was going to drug this innocent person who was probably incredibly lost. He had to think fast.

He was a foreigner, but he looked Japanese. Reki weighed the odds and landed on a random, but common, Japanese name. "Uhm..." he said softly. "Haruto!" Reki called. A lot of eyes flashed his way. Including the ones he was hoping for. Tint weight lifted.

Reki pushed his way through the people leading to the couch. "Your uhm... your girlfriend was looking for you! Lemme take you to her!" Reki was admittedly a little proud of his improv skills at the moment.

"I don't haaave-" the stranger took long pauses between his words and leaned forward ever so slightly.

"Yes you do, silly! Come on,"

Even though he was a little hesitant, Reki reached down and picked up the blue haired boy, slumped his arm over his own shoulders, and used his body for support.

As they were on their way out, the blue haired boy spoke up again. "Wait. Where's my girlfriend?" The question made Reki want to break out in laughter. But he knew what kind of headspace this boy was in right now.

"Sorry, bro, I don't know if you really have one. But I'm taking you back to my place."

"No, I don' wanna do th't righ-now..."

"Oh my god, no!" Reki paused walking for a moment. "I just... I don't know where you live and at least at my place I know you're gonna be safe."

They didn't talk much after that.

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Getting someone who's drunk into an apartment by yourself is a feat. Thankfully, the said-drunk-person held onto Reki the entire time. Once the door was lock behind them it felt as if the looming anxiety was dissipating.

"Okay, I'm going to get you a clean pair of clothes. Do you need the bathroom?"

The boy eagerly nodded. Reki gulped.

"Alright. Do you think you can at least stand on your own? You can use the wall for support."

Another nod. Amazing.

Reki lead the boy to his bathroom, helped him stabilize himself, before leaving to find a spare set of pajamas. Once in his room he felt like he could finally breathe. Man, other people are *heavy*. Reki scavenged through his dresser before he eventually found a pair of red plaid pants and a grey shirt.

The boy was standing in the hallway when Reki left his bedroom. “Oh! You startled me,” Reki chuckled. “Here. You can change in the bathroom and just leave your current clothes in there.”

A smaller nod. He wasn’t a big talker, which is fine. He took small steps back into the bathroom and changed his clothes. Reki waited for him to be done so he could lead him back into the living room.

“Sleepy...” The blue haired boy said softly. Reki could only smile.

Reki took the boy’s wrist but followed his pace. He wasn’t going to rush someone under the influence.

If he had a spare bedroom he would’ve offered that but alas, all he had was a couch. “It’s not much, I apologize.” But it didn’t seem to be an issue for the stranger. He immediately sat on the couch, arranged his pillows, then laid down. “No!” Reki knelt down. “On your side, don’t lay on your back.” Reki instructed.

The boy did as told and rolled to his side. And with a blink of an eye, he was out.

Reki sighed softly and stood back up. He went over to his small kitchen to get a glass of water for him for the morning. He sat it down on the coffee table before making his way to the bathroom. He picked up the boy’s clothes and then opened his medicine cabinet to get his bottle of Ibuprofen.

Reki walked back out to the living room and sat the bottle next to the glass. Reki placed the clothes on his kitchen table to remind himself to wash them in the morning.

And with that, Reki was off to bed.

Not without making sure the boy was still sleeping on his side.

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Reki only had two cups last night so he didn’t expect a huge hangover, or even one at all, and yet here he was. It wasn’t strong but only a small headache. The redhead groaned as he rolled onto his other side to face out from his bed. The morning orange light was peeking through his blinds making a pretty pattern on the floor. He looked around his room looking for anything with water in it seeing as he didn’t have much energy right now. On top of his dresser was an old water bottle. It was better than nothing, he thought.

Reki slowly got up. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed and just sat there and looked at his wall while he waited for some more motivation to fully stand up. It was then when he

heard his phone buzzing on the nightstand. Reki reached over to pick it up and saw who was calling.

“Miya, what do you want?”

“Okay wow, someone’s a morning person.”

“*Miya*,” Reki stressed. “I have a headache. What do you want?”

“Well... I wanted to ask how the party was.”

Reki thought for a moment. It wasn’t that it was necessarily bad, it just wasn’t fun. Then Reki remembered the person sleeping in his living room.

“I...” He began. “It wasn’t awful? I didn’t really talk to anyone and then I took someone back here so he wouldn’t get—“

“OOO!” Miya shouted — Reki pulled the phone away from his ear while Miya finished.

“You took someone home! Oh my god, I have to tell Joe and Cherry. Oh my god!”

“It’s not like that!” Reki protested. “All these girls were throwing themselves at him, giving him drink after drink, and one of them was going to roofie him, so I took him back here so he wouldn’t get hurt.”

The other side was silent. He had to check his screen to make sure Miya didn’t hang up. The silence was a little anxiety inducing. All he heard was a soft chuckle coming from the younger boy. Reki knew that other people didn’t see him as serious or too helpful, so he braced for jokes. But he was wrong... Kind of.

“So you *can* be a good guy!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, nothing...” Miya strayed off. “I’ll leave you to go shower and eat. Are you still coming to Joe’s later?”

“Mhm! I’ll see ya!” Reki smiled, knowing Miya couldn’t see it but it was the thought that counts.

After taking a deep breath the red head rolled his head from side to side. He gathered the clothes from the previous day before going into the main part of his apartment. The blue haired boy was still sleeping, which while it was a good thing, meant that Reki had to be really quiet in his doings. First he threw the clothes in the washer, then thought about what to make for breakfast. Not wanting to be a bad host, Reki had to think of something simple and universally liked so that his guest, of sorts, wouldn’t feel more uncomfortable than he already would be. He landed on pancakes. If Japanese kids liked them surely a foreigner should like them too. It was basic and easy to fake a face if you didn’t like them.

When he walked back into his main room he saw a sleepy, disheveled blue haired man rubbing his eyes. “Don’t be startled,” Reki said softly. Granted, anyone would be startled to wake up in a stranger’s house. The blue haired boy jumped regardless of Reki’s words and moved himself back on the couch slightly. Reki took notice of this and planted himself where he stood.

“Hi! You—“

“Did we... uh...” The stranger cut him off and wore a concerned expression.

It took Reki a few seconds to piece together what he had meant. But once he did his face felt hot. “NO! Ohmygodno! At-at the party last night a lot of girls were handing you drinks and you got *really* drunk and uh...” Reki contemplated telling him what really happened, or lying. It was always better for people to know the truth, right? “And I overheard some girls talking about to drug you... I wasn’t going to let that happen so I lied about you having a girlfriend who was looking for you and then I took you here since I don’t know where you live, let alone who you are, and here we are!”

Reki had a bad habit of rambling. He chewed on the inside of his lower lip and looked at the other boy while he awaited a response. It was nerve-racking. What was only a few moments felt like hours. Thankfully after what Reki had said, the boy on his couch's nerves seemed to calm down slightly. c

“Uhm. Well firstly, thank you. Secondly...” he took a breath. “Where are my clothes?”  
“Oh! They’re in the wash right now! You changed without by yourself so no worries there.”  
Reki gave an airy chuckle. “Hah... I’m more of a tea drinker but I do have coffee. Would you like either? If you haven’t already make sure you take two of those. It’ll lessen the headache.”

Reki stood to enter the kitchen as the boy took the pill bottle. “I would love a coffee with sugar and cream. Thank you.”

Once Reki returned, he wanted more conversation. He wasn’t sure what to do in this situation. But for some reason he was drawn to this person. Ha handed the boy his mug and watched as he melted into it. “Last night... I called you Haruto. I have terrible luck when it comes to...most things... so I’m gonna go on a limb and say that’s *not* your name.”  
“No, my name is Langa.”

Langa.

“I’m Reki.”  
“Reki.”

The way *Langa* said his name sounded like candy. It was almost like he was unsure of the syllables but still enjoyed saying then.

“So, Langa, why were you at that party?”  
Langa looked into the mug. “I don’t have friends. I went because I thought it would be a good opportunity to meet people but I guess... not...”

Reki was honestly at a loss for words. This boy he’s only known for really only about ten minutes was being so honest with him. That’s never happened before...

“I’ve noticed that your pronunciation is a little off. Where are you from?” Shit. That probably wasn’t the move.

“Oh! I’m from Canada. My mom was born here so I’ve always known a little Japanese but my first language is English!” He seemed to beam talking about his home.

“Why’d you come here for college instead of just staying in Canada if you don’t mind me asking.”

“My mom wanted me to at least see Japan in my life,” he gave a light chuckle. “I am also a fashion major and she told me that this school had a really good fashion department, and she was right! And uhm...”

Reki watched as Langa deflated a little bit. He wasn't going to ask why since it wasn't his business. It did pang his heart slightly to see someone who was just so excited about something be suddenly so wary.

“That's it, really,” Langa seemed to bounce back.

Reki couldn't help but study Langa's face. The way he talked was like he wasn't sure about what he was saying but he knew what he meant. It also seemed like he was shy but given the circumstances, of being in a strangers house hungover, it makes sense. Reki liked that Langa looked so happy when talking about Canada which made him wonder if there was really another reason why he came to school here. It probably would've been easier to just stay in Canada, right?

“So Reki,” Langa started, cutting Reki's thought off. “What's uh... your major?”  
“I'm a construction and architecture major! I also have a job at a repair shop called Dope Sketch to help with some tuition costs and also something to fall back on in case I'm not as good at building as I thought.” Reki answered.

It was honestly a little rare that someone gave interest in what he did. Sure, his friend group knew what he did and asked sometimes how it was going. Although it was mostly Joe just acting like a dad. But they mostly kept up questions about Miya and his skateboarding career. It's not like anything exciting really happened in a construction major, anyways.

-

The two boys carried on in conversation well past the bottom of their mugs. It shocked Reki how easily conversation came to them and how much they were willing to share right off the bat. Sure, Langa brought his phone out a few times to look up a word or two.

“If you want... I could help you with Japanese. I don't know how great of a teacher I'll be but I was helping my little sisters with their Japanese,” Reki offered.

Langa's eyes had stars in them. “REALLY?” He was practically jumping in his seat. It was a little amusing to see him so energetic after being pretty subdued throughout the morning.

Reki couldn't help but laugh. “I mean, yeah! I can imagine it would be pretty tiring always having to pull out your phone or just give up on a thought when you don't know or remember the Japanese word. Plus, it'll benefit both of us!”

Langa tilted his head to the side. “How? You're not a teaching major?”

“Well you seem like you want to improve your Japanese and I... Want to see if I retained my teaching skills from my sisters!”

Langa seemed to not fully believe Reki's benefit from the deal but he didn't say else about it. He pulled his phone out again and opened the contacts app.



“Could I have your phone number? That way it’ll be easier to schedule lessons around both of our class schedules.”

Reki nodded and took Langa’s phone from him. After he finished he handed it back to Langa. Just as he did so, Langa’s stomach rumbled.

“Ah... I should probably get back to my apartment.” Langa paused for a few seconds. “... Can I have my clothes?”

Reki’s face turned hot. “Oh my god of course! I’m so sorry I didn’t even think of that. It’s been literal hours since you woke up, you probably wanted to leave almost right away. I’m so sorry!...” Reki continued all the way to the washer/dryer. Once Langa had them back in his possession Reki pointed him to the bathroom. Before long Reki was alone in his apartment.

He took a deep sigh. Reki held his face in shame. He almost said that the main reason he suggested helping Langa was because maybe they could become friends. That’s pathetic...

...isn’t it?

## Chapter End Notes

Alrighty, hello again!

I originally got this idea from a fanart I saw of drunk Langa. I started it...so many months ago... and just kept updating here and there. But, I gave myself the deadline of finishing the first chapter by my birthday. And the day this is published, Jan 3, is my birthday! I finished the chapter last night and did all of the final touches and editing then too.

However, I have things planned for way later down the line so please give me some time in updates as I do have to fill a huge gap. Also I am a senior in high school while also participating in theater and speech and debate so updates might not happen at a speed I am happy with.

Despite all of that I hope you stick around. I have big plans for this fic and I just hope I have the stamina in order to do so.

# strokes and palpitations

## Chapter Summary

Lessons begin...

## Chapter Notes

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

One week.

Tomorrow marks exactly one week since Langa and Reki met. Also since Reki stupidly offered to teach Langa Japanese. He didn't know how to teach! He even said it himself, the most he did was help his *toddler* sisters. Teaching an adult is so much more different and probably harder.

Despite his insecurities, Reki spent days thinking of how he could teach Langa. Since he already knew a lot of Japanese and just needed help with grammar and more complex words, Reki figured he could buy an English to Japanese dictionary. That way Langa could look up the word he's looking for in English and Reki would be able to help him with it in Japanese! Finding an English to Japanese dictionary was a lot easier said than done, however. So he ended up having to order one online.

But now, Reki was hunched over a textbook with his MacBook fan being the only sound keeping him sane. "Don't hurt yourself, killer," Joe joked. Reki responded with an annoyed, but thankful, "Mmn."

Joe set another mug onto the counter for him. It occurred to Reki last night that he had been neglecting his own work trying to think of how he would *teach* someone else—and he wasn't even sure if it was happening!

"Kid, I've never seen you this stressed."

"Because I'm stupid," Reki slipped.

His eyes widened a bit and looked up. He saw Joe's slight frown and crossed arms.

"We talked about this..."

Last year Reki went through a major depression lapse. While he would still hang out with the gang, he wasn't being as sneaky as he thought. They could tell he wasn't eating enough. He let his grades slip through his hands. While the others aren't as perspective, Kaoru noticed his dark circles only getting darker by the day.

The members of their group sat Reki down one day after to talk to him. It took a lot to pry what was wrong out of the boy. It was mostly because the other employees of Joe's restaurant were still buzzing around and Reki was embarrassed.

"No, no, not like that!" Reki waved his hands. "I offered to help that one boy I told you about with his Japanese and it's been taking up my entire brain!"

Joe just laughed and continued on with what he was doing. "With what you've told me, he knows a lot already. I wouldn't worry about it."

"I know! But he's also never told me when he's free, he hasn't even texted me a hello... So why am I so focused on this?"

"Because that's who you are. You put others before you. All the time. I've seen it."

Reki sighed and looked back to his computer screen. He was going back and watching old class videos to see if he missed anything important for the assignment. It's not even like his assignments are hard, maybe it's just that he's...

*Snap!* Joe's fingers clicked in front of Reki's face. Without saying anything, he gestured his eyes down to Reki's phone where it showed a single text from a certain blue-haired boy.

It was a simple "Hi." Reki didn't expect much because when they were in his living room he didn't talk much.

The redhead typed out, "Hey!" But contemplated actually sending it. Does the exclamation mark make it seem like Reki was waiting at will's end for Langa to text? Would not having it make Langa think Reki changed his mind and didn't want to help him anymore? Would not having it make Reki seem cooler than he actually is? Like he doesn't need to be excited for people to text him because he's just so used to it. No, he thought, no one would ever believe that even if they were paid.

He pressed the send button. Exclamation point and all. Reki stared at his phone waiting for the "... " that would, hopefully, come. He could hear his older friend chuckle lightly but he didn't care. Maybe it was embarrassing to admit but this could be a chance to have someone his own age who actually... liked him. Sure, it might be too early to assume, seeing as they met because Langa was drunk. But Reki was a hopeful one. He's been burned so many times that you would think he would learn his lesson.

That "... " kept popping up and disappearing. Reki was glued to his screen.

"Sorry I haven't been messaging you."

Reki smiled as he typed.

"Oh no! You're totally fine dude!"

"Oh, okay. I am free on Fridays for the lessons."

"Only if you are"

Reki thought for a moment. His class schedule didn't conflict with that but he usually used Fridays to catch up on work or get a head start, whichever was needed.

“Oh!” Reki said aloud, not meaning to. He mouthed a quick sorry to Joe and the other worker behind the counter.

Reki realized that he could still use Fridays for what he usually does but just bring his work wherever he and Langa end up. He could use the space in between Langa doing stuff. It’s perfect!

Reki let Langa know that Fridays worked great. The boy set his phone back on the countertop and got back to his own work. He could worry later.

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Thursday night proved to be way more stressful than Reki had hoped. For starters, he had misplaced the notes pages he had made *for Langa*. He had spent hours tearing apart his bag, checking in every textbook, turning his apartment upside down only to end up empty handed. Joe said that he didn’t have them, neither did Kaoru, Miya, or Hitomi.

Reki was now sitting on his couch staring at nothing. He had caught up on his own class notes and started on the outline due next week... but the one time he promised to help someone with something—pretty important might he add—he can’t even fulfill it.

Kaoru had taught him a technique last year that has proven to work on many occasions. Take a deep breath in and hold it, tell yourself that you did the best you could have, and exhale. Repeat it as many times as it takes. Unfortunately for him, it takes more tries than it should.

Reki lazily turned to look at the time displayed on the small screen on his microwave. 23:19. If he wanted to be taken at least somewhat seriously tomorrow he should sleep.

Easier said than done.

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On Friday morning the redhead woke up bright early at 10:45. The two were meeting up at 1. If he stays in bed for 15 minutes, that gives him an hour and a half to get ready and then another 30 minutes to get to a cafe that was only 8 minutes away. Reki smiled to himself as he aimlessly began his day.

The cafe was busy as usual. He’s been there so much that the workers know his order, a large, iced unsweetened green tea with honey drizzled on the side of the cup.

“Alrighty, Reki, that’ll be 500 ye-“

“Oh, actually can I also get a large, hot coffee with the regular amount of cream and one extra sugar?”

The barista nodded and tried to hide their smile but Reki caught it. It was nice to see someone else happy he had someone to be with. Even if it was for a small, strictly platonic (if even) event. When Langa spent the morning with him and Reki had made coffee, he noticed that Langa made a face of reacting to the bitterness of coffee. Probably a sweets guy.

“It’s 950 Yen,” the barista updated.

Reki tapped his card before moving to the end of the counter. He looked around the space for any room that would fit two people comfortably along with having notebooks and computers. Just when Reki was about ready to suggest they move somewhere else, the group at the couch and table cleaned their area. Reki would’ve sprinted if he could. Instead, he calmly made his way to that fading red couch and set his bag there.

When he went back up to the counter to wait for the drinks, he noticed a familiar blue haired boy walk in. He had that confused expression that seemed like it was tattooed on. Permanent. He looked around, moving his hand to his back pocket for his phone, until making eye contact with Reki. Despite being about 2 meters away, it seemed like that bright blue was the only visible thing. Langa’s mouth transitioned into a hardly noticeable smile.

Reki pointed to the couch which he had saved. It took Langa a second but he eventually understood where Reki was pointing but also what he meant by it. The boy sat his bag on the floor and sat on the opposite side of where Reki had put his.

“So here’s what I was thinking,” Reki started while setting both cups on the table in front of them. “Since it seems like you have a pretty decent grasp on Japanese already, we could do separate school work and I can help you with anything you might be confused about! I’m not the best at English so I might not be able to translate anything...”

Langa nodded enthusiastically. “I like that.”

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As time progressed, Reki would sneak glances at the other boy. And god was his handwriting atrocious. Reki could only somewhat make out what he was saying because of his younger sisters having similar handwriting when they were first learning how to write.

“You’re staring at me.” Langa said, bluntly. “Am I doing something wrong?”

Reki thought of the best way to say that how this boy was writing was looking like a completely made up language. He was honestly at a loss for words. Low throat sounds were the only thing coming from his mouth. After a deep breath, Reki was able to express the issue.

“You’ve got the stroke order all wrong. You’re starting in a weird spot which completely messes up the rest of the character, which in turn, is making one much bigger or smaller than the other.”

Langa was giving him the same blank expression just with slightly parted lips this time. Reki sighed and reached into his bag for a notebook. “I’ll make you a guide. It might be helpful to watch as I do it but you don’t have to!” He flashed a smile that slowly faded as he wrote down the alphabet. He made each character fairly big so he could draw small arrows and numbers with each line so Langa would have a better idea on how to draw each letter. When he was younger, his mom got a book that was similar to what he’s making for Langa.

Reki finished the stroke of the last character and expected Langa to be watching the pencil marks, obviously. But instead when Reki looked beside him he found the other boy staring at him.

“What?”

“...You’re a very good teacher,”

Reki couldn’t help but laugh. “Well you aren’t going to learn if you keep looking at me!” He covered his smile with his hand.

Langa’s eyes widened slightly simultaneously with the growing red on his cheeks. “Show-show me again!” He insisted.

Reki only laughed more but complied. He made sure Langa was watching *the paper* this time as he went slowly through the stroke order of each character.

Feeling like he was going to have a stroke of his own.

Langa was almost sitting on top of Reki, watching as close as humanly possible. Their shoulders had no space between, knees the same. Reki could hear the faint humming Langa was making—the loudest thing despite the crowd all around them.

After Reki was finished going through the strokes he tore the pages out from the notebook. He rummaged through the bottom of his bag to find a paperclip so Langa wouldn’t misplace one of the pages and then be lost. Langa began to rewrite his school work. Still as close as before.

And those damn eyes. Langa would always stare at Reki when he finished a sentence or two or when Reki would ‘grade’ his work. Langa’s eyes could kill him. The ocean didn’t even compare.

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After a while, the pair agreed they’ve taken up space in the shop long enough. They witnessed a shift change, two different couples sitting at the table in the corner, countless amounts of people using the bar tables lining the windows, and who can even say how many other customers. Even the sky was a different shade than when they started.

Both boys contributed to cleaning up their area. As they would gather their respective items from the table their fingers would constantly graze each other. Reki offered to take care of the trash so he wouldn’t physically combust. Call it overreacting, which he knew it was, but it’s been a while since he’s had contact from someone that his mother or Joe. Or Miya hitting his arm. And *fuck* was Langa attractive. Reki noticed it the morning after the party but he was more focused on making sure Langa wouldn’t have a panic attack after waking up on a stranger’s couch than on his looks. In only a few days, all of which being apart and only texting, Langa seemed to warm up to Reki. During the morning, he was rightfully nervous and a little closed off but today... Today he was practically *sitting* on Reki.

Reki took a deep breath when he got to the trash. He placed his mug and small plate in the dish bin and turned back to Langa who was sorting which paper was who's. He bit down on the inside of his bottom lip and sighed.

"I'm uhm... This way," Langa said once they stepped outside.

"I'm that way. And hey, great work today," Reki smiled. "When you paid attention."

Before Reki turned away, he swore he saw the outline of a smile on Langa's lips. As he walked he gripped the strap of his bag tight and took one more deep breath. This was the stupidest decision he's ever made.

## Chapter End Notes

wow... okay

I realize it's been what, 5 months? If anyone (I doubt it) was actually keeping up with this, I'm so sorry. Senior year lived up to the rumors.

I have planned this entire fic. I have the chapter titles and everything (bonus points if anyone actually noticed that I put a chapter limit on this). I'm really excited for this fic. And despite preparing for college and working, I will be trying everything in my power to write a good fic.

Love ya.

# trails and tribulations

## Chapter Summary

physical activity never made anyone sad or question anything! right?

## Chapter Notes

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

Langa's eyes kept flickering between the work in front of him and Reki sitting next to him. That boy has not sat still the entire time they've been together. Whether it be his leg bouncing, fingers cracking, clicking a pen... In the few short weeks Langa has never seen Reki like this.

"Are you-"

"Do you wanna like... go out?"

Langa almost choked on his spit. Maybe that has a different connotation in Japan?

"The only places I've been have been my house, with you, or my studio. Langa, I'm *dying*," Reki drew out dying. He leaned his body against Langa's arm, nearly knocking his pencil right out of his hand. His head rolled back ever so slightly so that Langa was just in -blurry-view.

Langa wasn't sure how to respond. He didn't have the money for a trip, he barely had enough to keep getting coffee every day. He would probably have to up his commission prices...

"I was thinking we could go somewhere!" Reki shot up, jumping to the side so he could now see Langa clearly. "In town there's a cute-NICE, takoyaki vendor and then we could maybe go on a hike? In town you can also hear more conversational Japanese and slang and shit instead of homework."

And he flashed his signature sunshine smile and Langa swore that he saw actual sparkles in Reki's eyes. Sighing, he agreed. Like Reki said, it was a good chance to hear more Japanese. Plus Langa could get to know Reki a bit more. If it was even possible, Reki's smile only grew. He excitedly turned back to his computer and closed the window he was currently using. So much for construction math. Reki opened up his calendar and split screened it with the weather app.

"How's this Sunday?"

"Works for me," Langa answered almost immediately. He had no plans. Ever.

Except for studying with Reki.



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He had a first aid kit, as many plastic water bottles he could carry in the store, a map (just in case), a portable charger, and an extra pair of sweats. Reki was sure he would forget something since he was the type of person to do that, but he was excited! Usually he would go on these hikes alone to clear his head. Always too much going on up there... Reki looked at the time. Langa would be there in half an hour. Reki walked over to his pantry and stared at his limited selection. Despite getting food beforehand, he knew Langa. That boy could eat a whale if he was given the chance and *still* be hungry. He stuffed pretzels and Cheez-It's inside whatever empty space there was left in his bag. As Reki eyed over everything, his friend knocked on the door.

"It's open!"

Reki met Langa's gaze when he turned around. Despite being in his apartment many times, Langa always looked around the main room as if it was his first time. He usually wears sweaters or long sleeved shirts although today he was switching it up! Langa was sporting a white v-neck and a brownish plaid flannel (still with his jeans though). He also was wearing a beanie for the first time. Reki couldn't help it, but he almost laughed.

"What?"

"Nothing, nothing..."

"What?!" Langa swung his bag off his shoulder and took a defensive step towards his friend.

With a smile still on his lips Reki pointed to Langa's head. It didn't look bad by any means, it was just different. Langa's hair is long enough to be braided slightly. Reki's sisters would have a field day with his hair. They used to force Reki to sit for hours at a time so they could 'practice' their skills. He did like the whale spout they would give him sometimes, though.

"I don't want my ears getting cold," Langa stated.

He slightly pulled down on the hat so it covered just the tip of his ears. Reki chuckled, picked up his own bag, and met Langa by the door. Langa followed suit and they left the apartment.

The walk to the train station was uneventful. Autumn in Japan was gorgeous, however. Since most of the trees and bushes lined the walkways, you were constantly surrounded by the beautiful colors. Langa didn't smile much, at least that Reki saw anyways, but he *swore* that he saw the slightest smile the whole walk.

And today was definitely Langa's first time in a bullet train station. "You get used to it," Reki assured him. Reki suggested this time since he knew the train wouldn't be too populated yet. The blue haired boy was staring very intently at the map that showed this company's particular destinations. The two stood next to each other, only a couple inches between them. Reki pointed to a light blue dot a ways away from the 'You Are Here!' mark.

"The town is really small but it has a really nice atmosphere. And then there's a back path that leads to the park where we're gonna go hiking," he explained.

Langa only nodded, but followed Reki's finger as it moved along the map. He heard the train approach and was seemingly more eager to get on than his friend was. Thankfully Langa already knew the Japanese train culture, as awkward as it can be sometimes. The two boys looked at the respective phone while once in a while showing the other a meme or two.

Once they came to a halt, Reki was the first one to stand. He took Langa's hand and led them out of the train car. They stayed connected until they reached the bottom of the stairs. There, Reki took a deep inhale through his nose which ended in a smile.

Langa was staring at Reki.

"I've only been here a few times, but every time feels like the first," he explained. "It's a good escape."

Langa only replied in a light hum. "C'mon, the takoyaki is this way." Reki quickly changed the subject.

The walk there was quiet on Langa's end. Reki knew how to fill the atmosphere after being friends with the other for a few months. He wasn't much of a talker, which is fine! Reki always had a lot on his mind and no one really liked listening for long periods of time. But with Langa... it was different. He could talk for hours and while it would seem like Langa wasn't listening or zoning out, he remembered the little details.

Reki once spent half an hour ranting about a car he was working on at work that was causing him trouble. Langa asked Reki how it was coming along the following days until the client came to pick it up. He remembered his sisters' names, he remembered what he got for his birthday when he was 13, he remembered how Reki first got into mechanics. This territory was unknown to Reki but he was excited to keep exploring it.

"Ah, here we are!"

The stall was cute (or "nice" as Reki had corrected himself days prior). It has a cartoon depiction of an octopus with a headband on. Some ingredients lined the back counter. It was like the pictures Langa used to see when he was researching Japan.

Reki ordered for the two of them. Which, Langa was very thankful for. Despite the lessons, Langa was still nervous about others conversing with him. Reki knew Langa's limits and knew when he was getting frustrated. Others, especially public workers, would probably get annoyed by him taking too long to remember the word. If only he had asked his mom to speak more Japanese at home, life would be so much easier! Langa only liked talking to Reki.

The boys found a small table down the road from the stand. Reki was talking up a storm telling Langa about the hiking trail. He kept mentioning how he would 'save the good parts for the actual thing' but then would continue on like he hadn't said anything. It amazed Langa. The redhead mentioned on an off comment before that he wasn't allowed, his words, to talk much at home growing up. He supposed this was Reki's way of making up for lost words. All of the thoughts never said.

“Are you finished?” Reki asked, although knowing the answer looking at Langa’s empty dish.

He finished it so quickly that it made Reki give himself a mental high five for bringing more snacks. Langa nodded. Smiling, Reki gathered both dishes and threw them out at a trash can a few meters away. He turned in the direction where the park entrance was but didn’t feel Langa next to him. “Are you coming?” He called, with a chuckle hidden.

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The walk to the park entrance wasn’t long. Langa was expecting to have to pay in order to enter the park, but people (mostly families) were walking right in and going their merry ways. But even the entrance was pretty. There was a fairly even mix of light and dark orange, brown, yellow, and red. There were many different pairs of birds chasing one another, similar to some of the children that were around. He looked to the side of him where his companion was to say something but stopped himself when he saw the look on Reki’s face.

From what he had said before Langa was convinced that Reki had been here many times. But his friend looked as in awe as he was. His eyes were big and his smile even bigger. “It’s this way, c’mon,” Reki announced and started walking away from Langa. He thought it was odd seeing as there were multiple groups of people heading in the opposite way. But he had trust in his friend. Complete, and total trust.

The hike was mostly silent, just the two of them taking in the view. Langa stopped a few times to read some signs along the path to which Reki stopped and read alongside him. Keeping with the silent treatment, Langa would point to a word he didn’t recognize and Reki would explain it, the best he could, in a soft tone. There would be many times where both of them would stop and take a picture of the sky through the trees or a single leaf.

“Can you...” Langa started. He looked embarrassed but continued anyway after a breath. “Can you take a picture of me so I can send it to my mom?”

Reki couldn’t help but smile at that. “Yeah, of course, man!” Langa handed Reki his phone and walked about 2 feet away. He was just standing there, expecting Reki to take the photo any time now.

“No, no, no,” Reki chuckled. “You gotta do *something*! Make it *interesting*!”

With those instructions, Langa held up a very stiff peace sign but he also put on a wide smile. Reki bit the inside of his bottom lip as he matched his friend’s. Once the photo was snapped, Langa waddled over to look at it. He seemed content with it and shared it with his mom. Frankly, Reki was a bit jealous about the fact that Langa’s mom, maybe parents, would care about something like this. He knew his mom loved him, but... She was way too busy to really pay attention to something as small as a hike. She has three girls to keep up with, not to mention cleaning a house and cooking. Despite all of that, Reki was still happy to be able to share this experience with someone else.

Langa was pretty quiet about why he was in Japan. It’s not a study abroad program because usually more than one person goes to a destination. Langa came alone. He mentioned his

mom grew up here and wanted Langa to experience it for himself but wouldn't his mom accompany him then? They've only known each other for a few months so it still didn't seem like Reki had the right to ask. Hell, Langa didn't even know the whole story of Reki's family. It was too embarrassing.

The rest of the walk was just as nice as the beginning. Reki led the way because he's been on this path countless times. "Okay, just up here is where we'll stop. It's the best view in the entire park." He explained.

And he was not kidding. When the pair came to a halt Langa looked around. If he didn't know any better, he would've said you could see all of Japan from here. There was the backside of the mountain of course, he could see a playground many, many miles from where they are, and could see a lot of small children running around. He could practically hear the stressed parents from here. The breeze was just a *touch* colder up here, too. His gaze went over to Reki, naturally.

He had an almost unreadable expression. He looked sad, but happy. Unsure, but content. His eyes met with Langa's as well. That was when he had his familiar look. "See, I told you it was worth it." Langa could only nod. If only this spot had less trees and more snow it would look like the spot his dad purposed to his mom all those years ago. His father would tell the story every time his family would visit that specific resort. No matter how much Langa heard it, he always loved it. If only he could hear it one more time...

"It's so pretty here." Langa said, still looking out.

"I came up here a lot last year. Good for clearing the head," Reki responded. "Last year... sucked..."

Langa cocked his head to the side. Reki never talked about things that happened before they met. Except talking about his mom and sisters. Reki made his way over to a nearby bench to which Langa also followed.

"I wish you knew more English. I could help you more that way."

"Ah!" Reki exclaimed. "*Excuse me!* I know *plenty* English for your information!"

Langa blinked with his blank expression. Clearing his throat, he thought of something to say in English to 'test' his friend.

*"I usually hate exercise but it's beautiful here. Thank you for inviting me Reki, I had a lot of fun today."*

"Wow you talk much faster in English... Wait!" Reki got excited. "*Fun!* I know that one!"

Langa covered his mouth but his eyes gave it away. He was smiling. No, he was laughing. "Yeah, yeah, but you need to have more of an *uh* sound in the middle." He used two fingers to mimic expanding his mouth from top to bottom for the sound.

Reki waved violently to dismiss it. "I know more English in terms of my job. Foreigners have car problems too, y'know," He had a slight pout. "Like... like... *breaks, tires, crankshaft!*"  
*"Oh my god, you're practically fluent."*

Reki's pout went away and formed into a flat smile. He had no idea what Langa had said but it made him feel happy and somewhat accomplished that Langa's mood was different. He seemed relaxed and genuinely happy. Although a part of him did wish that he knew more English. Maybe then, Langa would be able to adapt to living in a new country easier.

"I am sorry that I don't know more..." Reki brought his knees into his chest. "You would probably be more comfortable here if I did."

"You didn't need to know English though. My move here was pretty abrupt so I didn't have time to learn more Japanese," Langa gave a dry laugh. "But you've been a big help."

Reki rested the side of his head on his knees so he could look at Langa better. "Yeah?" A nod. "I'm glad."

At least he could do one thing right.

The boys stayed in the spot for a while. They talked for a while about school, Reki's job, anything else that would arise from previous topics. Langa finished the snacks Reki brought in about 10 minutes. It didn't take long until they broke out their hoodies.

To make a follow up for his mom, the pair took a timer picture of them in said hoodies with the phone propped up on Reki's bag on the seat of the bench. Once Reki did his little awkward run to the position, Langa put his arm around his shoulders and pulled Reki closer to himself. Before the timer went off Reki's eyes just barely widened as he felt a quick rush of adrenaline. Once the picture took, Langa's touch lingered a few seconds too long and the wave came once more.

Huh.

## Chapter End Notes

I can't tell if I like this chapter or not lol

I am a college student now wowie. I have a friend who reads this and will bug me for updates so they'll definitely come faster oops

Hope you liked it! Next chapter is a lot of angst

# breaks and engines

## Chapter Summary

Langa finds Reki in a new spot.

Reki overshares.

Warmth.

## Chapter Notes

I'm not sure how I feel about this chapter, honestly.

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

Oka looked up from the computer screen to see a light blue haired boy on the other side of the counter. He looked a little confused. Oh.

“Hi, I’m I-”

“He’s in the back. Come behind the counter, it’ll be easier this way.”

Oka rolled back his chair to open the door behind him. The boy did a small bow before he disappeared too.

Once Langa was back there he paused. That door must be thick because it was loud back there. Sounds of cranks in different directions, nails falling, and conversations. But despite all of his looking around he couldn’t find the flashy red. He heard the door open again and saw a brunette head poke in.

“Down a little bit and to the left. He’s not... working today.”

Langa held up a thumbs-up and followed the directions. Once there he looked at a fairly nice car with a set of legs peeking from underneath. He slid his bag off his shoulder and bent over to look under the car. There was the red. Said ‘red’ slid out from under the car with a slight grunt.

“Jesus, Langa! You scared me,” Reki exclaimed. “You shouldn’t be here, how'd you find me?”

“You told me this is usually where you go when you’re not feeling good. You weren’t answering my texts all day so I just figured...”

He looks uncomfortable. Reki wiped his hands off and tossed the rag next to him. His eyes never meeting Langa's.

"You're smart."

He didn't sound like himself. Langa swallowed and exhaled. Even when hiking and all those conversations, he's never seen or heard his friend like this. His eyes scanned the area and found a stool. He pulled it over to where Reki was sat so he didn't have to move.

"Do you skateboard?" Langa asked, after seeing what his friend was sitting on. He hoped that a distraction could maybe lighten the mood.

"Since middle school. I build them, too," Now Reki was facing Langa. "This is actually my board from high school."

He tapped the board behind him. Langa looked down and saw the frayed edges of the grip tape. The sides of the board had a lot of scratches and marks, some deeper than others. Reki skooched off of the board to flip it over. He revealed the, once, bright yellow backing with a kind of gear-like cat design with smaller things surrounding. It was full of bold colors which fit the redhead perfectly.

Reki thumbed over the deeper dings on the sides. "Oka's been nice enough to let me have this space here to work on my boards. It makes me a few extra bucks here and there." He said with a dry laugh.

There was an awkward silence between the two. Well, as silent as an auto shop can be. Reki was pressing his lips together and staring into the abyss but Langa was looking at him. He was so used to the light and bubbly friend who could talk a mile a minute about anything he was interested in that day. But this Reki... was sad. He was distancing himself.

Something Langa was really used to.

"My sister once wanted to learn how to skate," Reki started up. "It was when she was still in middle school. She's always been really small so I was worried that she would just go *flying!*" Reki had a light smile. "She was actually really good. My mom had a heart attack just about every time she even had a foot on a board. I got hurt a lot and she wanted Koyomi to be safer than I was."

Langa could listen to Reki talk about his family for hours. He often thinks that the fact that both of them are family-orientated is one of the reasons they get along so well. Reki always got this soft, almost unnoticeable smile when he talked about his family but Langa could see it. It was the same smile he spotted on his dad whenever his mom was talking, or cooking, or shopping, or well... Pretty much doing anything. His mom almost always caught him which sparked a quick kiss and then right back to whatever was before. Maybe one day he'll find someone that looks at him that way.

Lost in thought, Langa had failed to notice that Reki's smile had fallen. His breathing now hitched every other breath. This definitely wasn't just any bad day. "Reki, what happened today?"

He saw the reddening tip of his nose.

“You know those days where just everything goes wrong?”

“*Oh my God, do I,*” Langa said softly, in English. When Reki gave him a confused look he switched. “I do. What happened?” His tone was much more firm.

After a deep breath, “You know that one project I’ve been working on for weeks? I turned it in yesterday and my professor called me after class and... Word for word she said, ‘This is not what you should have turned in. I know you’re better than this work. This is just... Not good, Reki.’”

Reki sharply exhaled. “She’s giving me an extension but I just... I am *all* out of ideas, Langa! I don’t know what to do.”

After swallowing, Reki sighed and started chewing on the tip of his thumb. He was staring at nothing as he thought over the conversation again. Not only did she explicitly say that his hard work was bad, but she had the nerve to say that he was no longer the top of the class for good reason. Usually Reki didn’t let things like this affect him but her specific words were just so familiar. Unlucky for him, Langa knew that wasn’t all that was bothering him.

“I was in one of the common spaces in the Student Union and I overheard a conversation... Usually when I hear gossip-y conversations I try to tune it out because it’s not my business but I heard your name so I mean... They were uhm... Upset because you spend all your time with... me...” Reki turned away now like he was embarrassed.

“Go on.” Langa said, visually angry.

“I don’t know... One of the guys was all like *‘I asked him to hang out this weekend to some sorority party and he said he was going to be with fucking Kyan again’*. And uhm... It just reminded me of high school.”

Langa clenched his jaw. He doesn’t like to get angry after witnessing how anger can affect people around him. But seeing Reki like this made him at a loss for words. Those people don’t even know Reki – Hell, they barely know Langa. Langa knows the guy Reki was imitating and he’s a dick. He thinks he’s the best designer in the whole department because he received the *card* for the internship at a brand. But Langa has had to peer review his work before and it’s not that good.

“Oh and my dad called me—”

Reki covered his mouth with hand like he hadn’t meant to say that. It was truth time, apparently.

“Your dad?”

Reki never even mentioned his dad before. Langa had just assumed he didn’t have one, too. Despite his big effort to try and conceal it, this was a better time than any. It was hard trying to find a place to start.

“He uhm... He was mad at me. I don’t even know what about because I usually stop listening after the first like, two sentences out ‘is mouth. He’s... fuck... My dad isn’t a good person...” Reki stretched his neck in a circle before continuing. “He travels for whatever



work he does. He makes a lot of money but doesn't share it with the family unless it benefits him. Which is why I am at college! My mom had me when they were only dating so... I kind of forced them to get married. Add that to things I fuck up, I guesss... He would yell at me a lot, I've been kicked out of the house for the night on multiple occasions.

"In high school, though, I began fighting back and he would hit me. Well, he actually hit all of us but me being me, I told him that he wouldn't lay a finger on my mom or sisters which made it worse. My classmates got the idea that my bruises and stuff was from school fights and I was in a fucking gang so they all stopped hanging out with me because I was dangerous. He called today because he found out I wasn't actually in business like I told him I would..."

Reki was shaking. Langa hesitated to touch him.

"And he told me that no matter how much I try to do things I want I will always end up fucking everything up and I should just give up while I'm ahead."

He wanted to cry. But he hates crying in front of people. He wiped a tear from his cheek.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to just dump all of that on you. You didn't ask and I—"

"Reki." Langa's firm tone was back. "Stop apologizing to me. Reki, you could tell me you ran someone over in the street and I would still be on your side, they were probably in your way. I am so *sick* of you not realizing how incredible you are. You have so many ideas in that head of yours and I don't know how you don't just explode."

Reki let a few tears fall. It was that feeling again. That warm sensation in his chest mixed with the buzzing in his stomach. Oh my god.

He likes Langa. *He likes Langa*. He has for a while. When they hiked and he felt so comfortable telling him things that he hasn't even told Joe or Miya. That he hasn't even told his mother. Reki was a little embarrassed with how long it took him to realize.

"Man, that's the most I've heard you say at one time." He laughed out, his throat already a little hoarse.

"When I'm passionate I become smart." Langa retorted.

Reki wiped a few more tears away and lifted the bottom of his wife beater to dry his face more. Langa couldn't help but peek, just for a millisecond. After a deep breath Reki stood up. He's been on the floor much too long today. He picked up his board and examined it. Maybe he should take this one back to his apartment and use an actual creeper seat.

"Can you teach me?" Langa asked.

"You want to skate?" Reki covered his mouth once more but this time to, poorly, hide a laugh. "Yeah, sure, man."

Reki moved a few things on the opposite side of the room to make a clear space. He placed the board down and motioned for Langa to join him. "You have to get *on* the board you know?"

Langa gave him a face of ‘obviously’. He took one step on the board, it buckled under him, shooting towards the small filing cabinet, and Langa falling right on his ass. This time Reki didn’t even try to hide his laugh. He was hunched over and holding his stomach. He hasn’t seen bailing like that since he first got on a board. Langa couldn’t help but smile. He looked at Reki, his best friend, seemingly forgetting the heartbreaking stuff he had admitted all because he fell off of a skateboard.

“Okay, okay, okay,” Reki calmed down as he retrieved the board. “Here, stand up.”

He brought it back over to the start. He held his hands out for Langa to have more support as he stepped up. Reki explained how far to spread his legs, where to place his feet, and how to evenly distribute his weight. He couldn’t help but notice how tight Langa was holding onto his forearms, being able to feel every vein. Reki could only take deep breaths to keep him on task.

This was definitely going to be an issue.

.  
. .  
.

Maybe it was ready for it though.

## Chapter End Notes

I had planned for things about Reki's dad to come in the next chapter (which is practically all wrote oop) but I thought it fit with the tone of this chapter. Sorry it's a really sharp turn from the last chapter but hey, i like making my favorite characters sad

I'm really excited for chapter 5! I have a feeling it's going to be my favorite...

# flashes and clicks

## Chapter Summary

Reki is pulled into working on his day off.

Langa gets news.

The boys are conflicted.

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy :)

BIG shoutout to my new beta reader, and my friend, Lily! <3

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

Silence.

Complete silence. All you can see is the subtle bobbing of the duvet with the boy underneath.

A buzzing. It'll go away. Go back to sleep.

More buzzing.

More buzzing.

*More buzzing.*

Well he was awake now. Reki's eyes stayed in small slits, his vision fuzzy. More of that damn buzzing. He knows it's not an alarm—it's his day off. No classes, no work, just sleep.

He weakly moves his arm over to the nightstand where his phone lay. He winced at the sudden bright light but that was quickly overrode by the display of 'Langa☹' along with a highly unflattering photo of him.

After a throaty sigh, "...hello?"

He could hear a lot of chatter in the back. Was Langa at a restaurant or something? The music seemed way too loud to be a restaurant. "Reki!!" He yelled.

“Langa what do you want?”

“I need your help.”

God, he wanted to say no and hang up. But Reki knew he wouldn’t be able to forgive himself for a while, even though he knew Langa would say it’s fine and move on.

“I’m at my project day. Uhm, one of our models got food poisoning last night and decided to only tell us like an hour ago! All the other models are already paired up and.. We were wondering—“

“Absolutely not.”

It’s not like he didn’t want to help, he really did. But he was in no way, shape, or form a *model*. Models were pretty. People want to look at models.

“Reki. I need you.”

Well, shit.

“...Will you buy me lunch?” Reki asked, reluctantly.

“Well, lunch is provided but—!”

“Will you buy me lunch tomorrow?”

“Yes! Anywhere you want! I’ll send you the address and info!”

Either Langa had been lying about his Japanese level or he just learned a lot. His accent was coming in, too. Most of the time Langa really sounded like a Canadian speaking Japanese for a high school class. The only downfall was Reki had his Okinawan accent instead of the mainland accent, so in turn, Langa was picking up on that. It was kind of cute.

“Oh, and Reki? Thank you so much. You mean a lot to me.” And he hung up.

Reki was awake now. He could’ve ended it with just “Thank you so much”. He sighed and almost like that had sparked it, Langa sent the information of today.

Address... plain clothes... clean hair...

—

On his way there he thought about everything Langa had told him about this project. Each department of the fashion school is getting together to create a gallery for the midterm, which is where they actually put the gallery on in hopes to get internships from big designer companies. Langa only designs the clothes but he’s at the shoot to make sure everything lays right and looks right on the models. Although, Reki knows Langa only likes making clothes for female frames. He’s seen his work countless times. He’s insanely talented. But he was going to be dressed by a complete stranger who is having their first impression of him being —this.

No pressure!

Reki looked back and forth between his phone and the address on the building to make sure he was in the right place. The 5th floor.

He didn't even need to let the elevator doors open before he could hear the hustle from the studio. He tightened a fist and quickly released it as he walked through the propped open doors. As if his eyes were coded to, he immediately saw the frosty blue hair at a long table. He was sifting through papers with a slight pout and downturned eyebrows.

"Are you Reki?" A girl, probably a good seven inches shorter than himself, asked.

Langa's expression softened and turned into a small smile. He walked over to the two to help with introductions.

"Uhm, yeah," Reki chuckled. "It's uh.. Nice to meet you!"

"Likewise! I'm Makoto. Langa talks about you all the time," she giggled. "I'll be kind of acting like your manager, so you can also ask me any questions you have along the way since we know you're not in school to do this!"

Langa stood to the side of the two but closer to Reki. Whatever tension Reki had in his chest slowly vanished at his presence. "I can show you around?" Langa began. "Briefly because we have to get going soon." He chuckled lightly. The anxiety was obvious in a lot of the crew's mannerisms.

Just as he said, Langa took Reki around the studio. It was a large space rented out by the department for this group to use. In the center was a large white backdrop with many cords leading to monitors and lights. There were only two cameras sitting on tripods. Reki almost noticed the large set pieces that were shoved to the left, not like they were hard to see. One was a fake car hood and there were two just sort of... wood shapes, probably to help get angles and height differences. Rule of Thirds and all.

Langa also brought him over to meet the cosmetology students. And the other designers. And the stylists. It was amazing to see just how many people were needed to make something like this possible. He couldn't even imagine how many people would be needed on a larger scale.

Makoto did a slight jog over to them to tell them that they really needed to get a move on if they wanted to keep up with the schedule. Reki was admittedly a little upset that Langa had to leave but this was his day. His assignment. *Stop being selfish*. Reki took a deep breath and followed wherever he was told to go.

He's never had his makeup done before unless you count sitting through the many nights of his sisters putting makeup from the cheap, 1000 yen makeup kits all over his face. His makeup artist, Isao, was light with his application. His sisters were basically cutting into face with how hard they would press the little sponge brushes.

Once he was done with his makeup, Makoto took him over to the make-shift dressing rooms. There were two racks lined with clothes, one with his clothes and one with the female model's clothes. She was already doing her work to which Reki was paying close attention to. Of course, there were some poses she was doing that Reki thought he either couldn't pull off or knew he wouldn't look good doing so.

His head kept getting turned away from the female model but his eyes would stay. He felt a little uncomfortable because there were about 3 different people poking him or just eyeing

him up and down. He managed to catch a quick look at Langa.

Langa was standing at the table that had one of the big monitors on top. His eyes were squinted which means he's focussing hard. He has his arms crossed with his thumb resting on his lips and his index finger was aggressively tapping. Reki felt his chest tighten a little. This intense look was honestly very good-looking on Langa. But then Reki remembered that he should probably be focusing on how not to fuck up instead of the person who was counting on him *to not fuck up*.

There were a good handful of people all in a circle around Reki who was sitting on a stool. They were all reaching over him or poking him. Half of them were telling him how certain clothes move and what to highlight versus what was only there to accent. While the other half were telling him what not to do with his face so the makeup wouldn't crease. They were asking if there was anything he was uncomfortable showing, to which he answered there was a small scar on his side from a fall that happened in high school. All Reki could do was nod along so it seemed like he was understanding everything they were saying. Time moved the slowest he ever knew, but before he knew it, it was his time to start. As soon as he heard that, all of Reki's hairs were standing on end. He could see some of the other students' faces change until he landed on a familiar face.

Langa could practically feel Reki's anxiety. It was a long shot when he asked him but the fact that he even said yes was amazing. He gave Reki a small nod to try to ease his nerves. But in all honesty he had no idea if it would help at all.

The start was going to be rocky, everyone involved knew that. Reki was doing some awkward poses while the test shots were taken. But once the music was turned on he seemed to relax. Langa had the urge to help him but it was his classmate's time to observe and be the one who has a say in what happens. Even though the real thing was right in front of him, Langa couldn't help but stare at the monitor. Every photo was just... gorgeous. The way the light would hit his eyes, his skin looked so smooth, his hair lying *just* right on his head. There were these cute, very subtle, moments where Reki seemed to be thinking of poses he's on social media or magazines and attempt to replicate them.

"Hold!" Kou exclaimed. Her voice is strong. "Something is wrong!"

She stood completely still, hand on chin with a finger covering her mouth. Her eyes were staring daggers into the floor. This was all before pointing at Reki and calling him over with the curl of a finger forcefully. They both disappeared behind the privacy screen by wardrobe leaving the rest of the students worried. For all they knew Kou was just saving Reki the embarrassment and criticizing him where only he would hear. He was wearing her designs after all and she wanted just as good of a chance at a good grade and internships as everyone else. Meanwhile the screen was still on a photo of Reki looking to the side with slightly parted lips. Makoto quietly made her way to him and followed his eye line.

"I can have them send you the raw, by the way." She whispered.

"I don't need it, it's just..."

He couldn't explain it. He's always thought Reki was amazing since the morning after that party. But now, seeing him in a completely unfamiliar setting, and doing everything in his

power to please everyone when they know he isn't used to this... Something about it is so charming. Not to mention every single photo was getting a nod by the editors.

"It's just...? Langa, you've been starstruck at every picture that boy takes," She chuckled. "You don't need to be embarrassed, you know?" "About what?"

Makoto's smile dropped and her eyes widened. "Wow, they weren't kidding when they said you're oblivious... Langa. You *like* Reki."

From the tone Langa was very aware of what context she meant. Did he? He always wants to be by Reki even if they're not talking, and when they are talking Langa is more than happy to just let Reki speak because he loves the sound of his voice, he always tells Reki his news, he... He liked Reki. Was that liking someone?

"I've seen how he looks at you, too." Makoto said with a wink, just barely above Kou shouting another order. "Let's get a move on!"

The two of them emerged from behind the screen with a wardrobe change. He was now wearing clean black slacks and a dark purple button up with a geometric design in black. It looked like she had roughed up his hair a little bit too. Just as she had requested, they picked up exactly where they left off. After looking more at the photos Langa noticed something he hadn't before.

Reki wasn't smiling.

Langa knows he could get scolded for interfering but people need to see Reki's incredible smile. He made his way from behind the table to the side of the drape just close enough for Reki to see his actions and be looking at a 3/4 degree angle. He did catch the boy's attention as his eyes followed where he went. Langa crossed his hands in front of him and did a sweep up motion. Reki gave a confused look. Langa could tell he was trying to focus on some of the other things being shouted at him while trying to place what Langa meant. He took a deep breath.

"Smile! Show them your amazing smile, Reki!"

And that was the photo.

Reki looking just off the camera, hands on the shirt of the collar, and smiling. Such a perfect smile.

He hates when Makoto is right.

—

Lunch was nothing spectacular. Except now Langa couldn't seem to stay still when he was near Reki. Reki, on the other hand, was not very chatty and just sitting there. He was okay. Langa made sure of that. He was just conserving his energy. It felt like such a short time but

his shoot lasted a total of 3 hours and they still had duo shots they needed to do with multiple wardrobe changes.

Reki was ready for it to be over. He was exhausted and felt like he was on thin ice despite what everyone was telling him. He was so used to hearing the opposite from people that it was so ingrained in his head. Throughout the day, right up until they called “That’s a wrap!”, through the cleanup process, he just kept thinking, *don’t fuck up. Langa is counting on you. If you fuck up, you’ll lose him.*

The car ride back was quiet. The only things said were,

“Can I stay at yours tonight?”

“Of course, Reki,”

But after that it was that complete silence he started his day with. These thoughts were draining. He got so much praise but yet he couldn’t accept it. Makoto even told him herself that the other groups were upset they didn’t get Langa on their team. He’s just that good.

Too good for Reki.

They didn’t bother turning any lights on in Langa’s apartment. There was a dim light that hung over his small kitchen island that provided a good amount of vision for their tired eyes. Even though he had clothes here already, Reki couldn’t be bothered to change. He kicked his shoes off and plopped onto Langa’s couch before he could say anything. He shut his eyes to speed up the process.

“Reki,” Langa whispered. “You need to wash your face off from the makeup.”

“Mmm...” Reki hummed. “Can you do it...? I’m sleeping.”

Langa took a sharp breath in only to slowly release it. He quietly made his way into his bathroom where he had a small package of makeup wipes. When he returned he had assumed Reki was completely out of it but when he was done with half of his face Reki spoke up.

“Did I do a good job today?”

Langa smiled.

“The best.”

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Langa was standing in Reki’s living room while hearing a lot of drawers opening and shutting within seconds. He kept checking his phone. If they didn’t leave soon they would be late. Soon, Reki came flying down the hall and searched around. He stopped, turned to face



Langa, and gave him the biggest smile.

“How do I look?” He had his arms out at his side, hands spread.

Reki had a pair of black pants with faint burnt umber plaid marks, paired with a black sweater vest that had sunflowers on it accompanied with a white shirt underneath. He had a matching black bandana on. Reki also had a leather cuff on one wrist and a few layered necklaces. Meanwhile Langa was in an all black outfit. Black long sleeve shirt with black slacks.

“You look great,” Langa smiled. “But we really need to go.”

Reki nodded, grabbed his wallet and keys, and the boys were off.

—

The gala venue was already very busy. But most of them were just waiting for the doors to officially open. The students (plus Reki) were able to use a back door to the main area. The main event was a big open space that had makeshift walls. The walls were lined up like a museum and had prints in various sizes of each model in the different outfits.

Langa took Reki to what he called ‘his favorite spot in the exhibit’. When they arrived Reki was at a loss for words. In front of them was a huge canvas of the photo taken when Langa told him to smile. It looked hardly edited, you could see the small scar behind his eye from a work accident clearly. His eyes traveled around the picture before a small collection of green dots caught his attention. There were only 3.

“What do those mean?”

“Hm? Oh! We had some people basically preorder a print of the photo.”

People bought... him? He looked around at some of the other photos around his and some had 1 or none. People liked his picture. People liked him.

Reki received a few copies of this team’s magazine. 1 to keep for himself and 2 to send home. However, he couldn’t get himself to look at his own pictures. He looked at the girl’s and even in the duo shots he wouldn’t look at himself. Of course Langa’s mom had sent her compliments his way. Maybe his copies got lost in the mail...

“I think they’re opening the doors soon. C’mon, I want to introduce you to my professor.”

The atrium had smaller tables arranged in a semi-circle. There were stacks upon stacks of magazines for purchase as well as a box for donations, a place to give business cards, and of course refreshments. Small groups were forming all over the place mixed with students and professors, or different executives. But Reki’s eyes landed on a certain group that was speaking with an older gentleman that Langa was bringing him to.

As he expected, Langa’s professor was shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries with the younger male of their friends. Thanking him for taking time out of his busy schedule to come to something so out of his way, blah, blah, blah... Once that was over with, Reki had a very nice conversation with the professor about how nice it was for him to volunteer his time to

help people when he had no clue what he was doing. Maybe he was reading into it too much but never once did he say that Reki did a good job.

It was just small talk. Thankfully, the professor was pulled away by other students. Reki thanked his friends for coming when they really didn't need to. Before the conversation could continue, he felt his phone buzzing in his pocket. Expecting it was his mom he excitedly pulled out his phone only for that excitement to turn to anxiety. He quietly excused himself before slinking away to a private area of the venue.

"Why did he look so sad?" Langa asked, generally but Miya is the one who answered. "It was definitely his dad. After seeing that face so many times you just know."

Why would his dad be calling? Reki said his dad never calls unless he did something wrong which he didn't.

"I feel bad for him. He doesn't really take the help. The only time he did was when he was st-"

"Miya." Joe said in a dark tone. He shook his head. "That's not for you to announce."

Miya looked down and nodded. Langa was only half paying attention. His main focus was on the door Reki disappeared behind.

—

Reki's hands were shaking. He almost missed the answer button.

"He-"

"What the hell is this? Reki, what did you send to my house?"

Guess they weren't lost in the mail.

"Hello? When I speak to you I expect you to answer!"

*He didn't know how to answer.*

"I was.." His voice was already weak. "...helping out a friend. That's it."

"Then why are you subjecting me to it? Reki, no one wants to see this."

"I mean some people bought the print of it! All of the proceeds are going to help fund future projects. I thought.. I thought mom and Kiyomi would want to see it. The twins, too."

"They all laughed at it." His tone was as blank as ever.

It hit Reki right in the gut. He should've known better.

"I am really disappointed to call you my son, Reki. I try so hard to provide a good life for you and this is how you repay me? By embarrassing me? Reki, *this* is disgraceful." There was a faint sound of the magazine hitting the ground.

"I originally had no issue when you came out as 'bisexual'," a mocking tone, "but now that you're flaunting it for everyone to see is embarrassing. You should be ashamed of yourself. And stop associating yourself with this 'friend' you were helping out. If it's that one boy your

mom has talked about then I know exactly the kind of person he is. You don't deserve this, Reki. Until you fix your act, stop doing this shit, and learn to be a respectful son, and a respectful *person*, then I am not calling you my son. You are simply someone in my life. Have I made myself clear?"

After a deep but quiet breath, "Yes, sir."

"Good." Then a deafening silence.

Reki doesn't know when he sat down. At this point he couldn't even tell you which way was down. The air was feeling hot. How could he be so stupid? Of course his family wouldn't want to see something like this. He already disappointed his parents by not going into business. He lazily looked at where the main event was.

He should be in there supporting Langa.

He should be hyping up the people who actually deserve the attention.

He forced all of his friends to come and he's not even in there.

He should...

...be a better.. person.

But he can't move. The words of his father echoing through his mind as if he's hearing them for the first time all over again. His feet feel like lead and his head is empty. He can't remember when he started crying. Or when he stopped crying. He does know when his phone goes off. It's sparse at first but vibrates so often it begins to piss him off. He doesn't remember turning his phone off.

Since he didn't have his phone on, he couldn't tell how much time was passing. He could only assume it was late because he was watching groups of people leaving the event. Because most of the wall of the event ballroom was glass, he was able to see more secluded parts of the gallery. Using what little amount of energy he had left, Reki slipped through one of the back doors and made his way to the one photo he wanted to see most.

In the back small, makeshift hallways, displayed his photo. Hands on collar, smiling at the one person that makes him truthfully happy. His hair was naturally laying. Freckles on full display. Staring at it made it feel as if a small piece of dry paper was stuck in his throat. His leg started shaking. Reki was biting down hard on the inside of his bottom lip.

There were now rows of those circles.

"Reki?" The voice was soft. Very different from the one he heard most recently or even the one in his head.

He didn't need to turn around to know it was Langa. He heard a few footsteps toward him.

"Langa..." He took a shaky breath. "How do you do it?... How do you not let what people say to you bother you?"

Admittedly, the question took him off guard. But he could tell by the way Reki wasn't looking at him, he was loosely hugging himself and the barely noticeable quiver in his voice that something was wrong and that he needed an answer.

"Well when people tease you for having a dead dad, you kind of learn to stop caring about other things."

Time stood still. Guilt started rushing through Reki's veins. Reki stayed facing away from his friend. There was obviously a reason Langa never told him before and now he basically forced him to talk about it. His dad was right.

"Langa I am so.. I am so sorry. That was so inappropriate to ask and I'm sure you didn't want me to know and-"

"Reki."

The way Langa says his name is so soothing. He loves hearing him say it. When he hears his dad say it he can always hear the sense of disgust lingering in the back of his dad's voice but when Langa says it, he says it like he wants to. He could listen to Langa say his name on repeat for hours. He doesn't deserve to.

"You didn't force me to say anything. You asked a question and I answered." Langa moved so he was standing next to Reki. "You were gonna find out eventually."

The two stood in silence for a while. Eventually Reki uncrossed his arms. He doesn't know when Langa's arm found its way around his own.

"Joe wanted me to tell you he's sorry Kaoru couldn't make it. He also wanted me to tell you that he's making us a celebratory dinner."

The pair made their way outside.

Still linked at the arms.

## Chapter End Notes

Okay, okay, okay... I know making Reki model is very out of left field but when I was originally thinking of their majors I placed Langa first and I thought it would be really funny if he roped Reki into modeling. Maybe it was for his own self-indulgence, who knows.

It's crazy to me that this fic is almost over. This is the longest I've ever been keep up chapters and actually keeping my interest in my own stories. See you soon for the beginning of the end!

# it always rains at funerals i

## Chapter Summary

cloudy minds...

## Chapter Notes

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

Reki inhaled for a few seconds, held for the same amount of time, and exhaled slower. “Joe, how did you and Koaru get together?”

Joe was kind enough to let Reki hang around the restaurant before it opened. He always joked that he should be helping instead of just sitting at the bar on his phone and dropping the occasional one-liner to back up an employee. But Joe knew the youth had a lot more going on than to be worrying about a restaurant.

“Oh jeez, that’s a long one,” he chuckled. “Well we have actually known each other since kindergarten if you can believe it. He was *always* as stubborn as he is now and would constantly get in trouble in school. As a kid I thought it was just how he was, it happens to the best of us. But as we grew older and closer... My Cherry didn’t have the best home life. His parents would leave him alone for days or even weeks. And when they were home they would have constant fights to which he had no other choice but to let it out at school. It was the only place he was able to actually be seen.

“Excuse me if this is offensive but, I think that’s part of the reason you two get along so well when he’s in town. Anyways... He would spend a lot of time at my house which allowed me to see how he *really* is. And my god was he just amazing. Most of the time we would just sit in silence doing homework or watching a movie. I think I started falling for him in... late middle school? It surprisingly didn’t get in the way of our friendship mainly because we were always together, it was pretty easy to not get jealous or anything. Him being the little shit he is would tease me asking about crushes and all.”

Joe’s expression softened. His motions of drying cups slowed, too. “There was one night that I was getting ready for bed when Kaoru called. He hated calling. I answered in my joking fashion but he was crying. He said he had gotten into the biggest fight with his parents and his dad hit him. Without missing a beat I said ‘*Come over*’. The waiting was painful. When he was there I could tell that he didn’t want to talk about it, which was perfectly fine by me. He started crying all the sudden and began telling me all the horrible things his parents said to him. I cut him off before he could finish and told him all of the amazing things about him and then he just... lunged forward and kissed me. We’ve been together ever since.”

Reki blinked fast a few times. A soft “damn,” left his lips. You just had to look at Joe and Kaoru to know how in love they are. The most surprising thing to Reki was that Kaoru used to act out in school—he’s so ‘stick to the rules’ now. The story was so fitting for the couple.

“I can’t wait until I meet someone like that.” He said in response.

Joe slapped down the glass and towel and began laughing. It was the kind of laugh that’s basically silent and all you can see is the person shaking. Reki expressed a pout. He was being serious! The last person he ever expressed his feelings to shot him down quickly and made rumors about him.

“You can’t be serious right now, kid,” Joe managed to say. “You have Langa.”

“What’re you talking about?”

“You’re gonna give me an aneurysm—you’re around each other 24/7, he just sits and listens to you rant, he once asked me if I knew your burger order because he *had a feeling* you hadn’t eaten that day. What’s not clicking?”

The pout returned to Reki’s face. Of course he noticed when Langa did those things. Just seeing him in the mornings made Reki’s head feel light. He had always just assumed it just the way Langa was. He told him a story about a snowboarding team back in Canada and he would help other people in and out of their gear before he even started on his own. That’s the way he is so why would he treat Reki any different?

He did feel guilty about being around him all the time. Langa would probably be the most popular guy on campus if it weren’t for Reki. Girls always smile at him when they pass in the halls. He’s brought this up before too. But Langa then just goes on and on about how Reki was the only one nice enough to not let him get alcohol poisoning and drugged so he doesn’t want to be with anyone else.

It was astonishing to Reki that Langa would choose to listen to his rants. Most of the time he talks just to talk. Even Joe or Miya tune him out. Langa tells Reki constantly that he likes the sound of his voice and he could fall asleep to it. That’s kept Reki up a few times, ironically.

“What time were you guys meeting?”

“4:30, wh—FUCK! I’ll see you later!”

Reki bolted off of the barstool, grabbed his bag and umbrella, and ran out of the door before Joe could say bye.

It was starting to drizzle.

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Reki arrived at the library just as the rain began to pick up. The boys thought they’d spice up their study session by going to a new and “interesting” location. Reki set his umbrella in the holder by the front door. His eyes wandered around the insanely large room for that signature blue hair. He eventually spotted him tucked away in the corner on the couch by another set of doors.

“Hey!” Reki exclaimed as he plopped next to his friend.

“Hey,” Langa answered as plainly as ever. Further proof. “Oh, they were out of the green tea you like but I remembered you mentioning how you wanted to try their earl gray, so I hope that is okay.”

The feeling was back. That tingly feeling in his hands and feet to which he felt like he was floating. The butterflies that never paid rent in his stomach were doing a whole gymnastics routine at the moment. Reki bit the tip of his tongue and sat next to his friend.

It’s not that the silence was painful. Usually Reki likes when their study dates are quiet, it helps with focusing. What was painful was that he had a million and one things on his mind. Langa subconsciously getting closer to Reki, to which Reki would inch away for his own sanity. Eventually he just gave up because the pair was already almost on the other side of the couch.

“Can I ask you a question?” Langa asked out of the blue.

“Of course, bro!”

“Did... Did I do something wrong? Ever since the gallery you’ve been kind of... not *sensitive* but... You’ve been avoiding me even when we’re together,” he explained. “Like now.”

Reki took a deep inhale. He messed up and now he would have to find a quick excuse. He could probably just blame his dad... But is that too easy? Langa deserved to know how Reki felt but he wasn’t ready for the rejection.

Blaming it on his dad it is.

“I’m doing okay, man. My dad said some pretty awful stuff to me at the gallery and I think it’s just been sticking in my brain.” He exhaled.

“You never did tell me what he said...” Langa responded. His eyes widened before he quickly assured, “You don’t have to! I was just really worried about you.”

Reki chuckled. “I won’t get into details but he was just really upset I helped you with the photoshoot. At the time he said my mom and sisters laughed at the magazine but Koyomi actually texted me the next day and assured me that she hid the other copy I sent and that they really loved it. Nanaka said I looked pretty, even!”

Langa saw that shine in Reki’s eyes once more. At Joe’s restaurant afterwards he would try to dodge anything about the photoshoot. At the time it made Langa upset and a little angry since he thought it was just Reki’s anxiety speaking for him but when he thought more about it—of course it had something to do with his dad. But even now he doesn’t know what that has to do with making loads of space between them.

Reki was shocked at how well he could lie. Maybe Kaoru was just really good with seeing through people or Langa was just really bad. After the boys had been silent for a little *too* long, Reki turned back to his work with a small smile that lingered. Langa following suit. The blue haired boy kept side eyeing his friend. He seemed okay but he has a habit of pretending. From what he’s been told by Joe or even whatever Miya blurts out, Reki can tend to bottle it all up until it’s physically killing him.

“Are you okay now, though?” He asked.

“Yes, Langa.” Reki answered, not looking up.

“I’m always going to be by your side to make sure that’s always the case.”

Reki froze. Always. *Always*. He turned head to his friend, which caused said friend to look right back at him. There were no words spoken. The only thing that they could hear was the raging storm happening outside. Reki could see the steady rise and fall of Langa’s chest. Langa could see Reki was shaking. As if someone else was acting in place of him, Reki closed the space between the boys and kissed him.

He was kissing Langa Hasegawa.

*Oh my god.*

*He was kissing Langa Hasegawa.*

He was going to embrace the moment. That was until he felt a hand on his shoulder applying light pressure. He heard the walls crashing all around him, glass and concrete shattering from the weight. He hesitantly looked at the opposite’s face. Brows slightly furrowed and not saying a word. He wasn’t even looking at Reki.

Reki wasn’t successful in keeping his tears away until he was out of sight. “I’m sorry.” He said weakly. It was the only words he could repeat as he rushed in packing up his work and anything else he could scrounge up in time.

“Reki—” langa snapped out of his trance.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry—”

“Reki!”

He couldn’t hear him. Before Langa, or Reki, could do anything else, Reki was out the door.

No umbrella. No friend. No dignity.

No phone.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry it's a little short! I've had this chapter title since I was writing a BNHA chapter fic (I have since given it to the void) and I have always been looking for a chance to use it. I tried using it for a one-shot Renga fic which I gave up on half-way through.

!NO ONE DIES!

See you soon~~

Beginning of the end...





# it always rains at funerals ii

## Chapter Summary

...and muddy shoes

## Chapter Notes

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

Langa has never been kissed before. Well, not by anyone he liked. But now the person he cared about more than life itself was kissing him in the middle of a crowded, public library.

But something stopped it. After Langa had managed to pull himself back from Cloud 9, he saw Reki paler than himself and shaking so much he didn't know how he was able to move his body. "Reki—"

And he kept hearing those damn two words. *'I'm sorry'*. He said them too often for Langa's liking.

Before Langa could do anything else, Reki was out the door. He walked out without his umbrella, his jacket half on, all by himself. Stupid Langa! Why couldn't he say anything else that was Reki's name or at least reach out to hold his hand. After the general crowd of students had gone back to their own business Langa heard a faint vibration from where Reki was sitting before.

He left his phone.

So not only was Reki going to be soaking and probably catch a cold, he had no way to contact anyone if an emergency happened. At a speed he's never moved before, Langa gathered his own belongings, retrieved Reki's umbrella, and set off to find him.

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Joe was having a work-related argument with a cook when a recent hire came up to him. "Uhm, sir? This kid with blue hair says he knows you and he needs to ask you a question?"

He looked towards the direction of the front door and waved Langa over. The host sighed and went back to his post. Thankfully, the restaurant wasn't as busy as it usually was. Most people wanted to make it home before the storm while the ones that stayed wanted to wait it out. Most of them are now on their 4th glass of wine. But that also means that because it was more dead, the current diners would find any excuse to be nosy. They eyed Langa as he strode across the floor to the bar. It seemed like Joe was cursed to stay in this one spot forever.

“Kid, what’s wrong? Your face is all red,” Joe said, already pouring him a glass of water.

“Do you know where Reki could have gone?”

That sparked concern within Joe. “What do you mean?”

“We were studying together and it was going like it always does until I stupidly asked if he was okay because he’s been avoiding me and it was making me really worried. Well, he told me he was fine but he always says he’s fine even when he’s not so I said ‘Oh, I’ll always be by your side’ or whatever and then he just *kissed* me! I wanted him to but it seems like maybe he didn’t want to? He kept apologizing over and over and he just ran out in the storm with no umbrella and he left his phone.

I went to his apartment, his work, and a few places on campus and he wasn’t anywhere I looked. Do you know where he is?”

Joe’s eyes were wide. Not with concern anymore, with awe. “Jeez, I didn’t know you could talk that much, let alone so fast. He wasn’t at the shop?” Langa shook his head. “Shit...”

This silence was agonizing. Langa was fresh out of ideas and Joe wasn’t helping at all. He was trying but it seemed like the two brains couldn’t place the boy.

“Did you go to his workshop?” An unfamiliar voice asked.

“HIS WORKSHOP!” Joe exclaimed, startling the customers. “Kaoru, you’re a genius! Wait, how do you know he has a workshop?”

“...We chat.” He said flatly.

Reki never told Langa about a workshop.

“I made him give me weekly logs of his well being after the incident and it slowly became a better friendship.”

“Take me to the workshop.” Langa asked Joe.

“Sure! I can have Asha...” He trailed off in his own thoughts.

Langa was gripping the edge of the bar while his leg was shaking. Right now Reki was in an unknown location doing who-knows-what.

“I’ll take Langa.” Kaoru cut Joe off.

Langa noticed how similar he and Kaoru spoke. Reki talked so highly of him that Langa was under the impression that Kaoru would be the most eloquent man who used big words even Reki wouldn’t know. But he was as straightforward and blunt as Langa was. Yet somehow Kaoru was more sophisticated with it whereas Langa was just clueless.

He couldn’t hear the end of the conversation between the couple. His mind was fogged with the kiss, Reki, and his anxiety. Something Langa absolutely just could not shake was the look on Reki’s face as he slowly came to terms with what he did. *Reki’s eyes widened and his pupils shrunk. His shoulders dropped as if there were weights on both. The muttering of the two words he hates most coming from Reki’s mouth. How rapidly Reki was shaking to the point where it was hard for Reki to pick up things. Probably how he left his phone. All color in Reki’s skin leaving and he could blend in with a stark white wall. Before the door shut,*

*after Langa failed to stop him, he saw Reki wipe his cheek.* That was all Langa could think about.

It was still pouring outside. The roads were clear of other people but Kaoru was still driving like an old man, *'for our safety'*. Bullshit. Langa's leg was bouncing with anxiety and anticipation. The older male spared a few glances at the youth. He remembers the feeling.

After what felt like an eternity Kaoru stopped in front of what looked like a warehouse. There were three floors with massive lined windows which were all dark.

All except one.

Langa bit his breath. Now that he was here and was just *so* close, all his nerves stood still. He saw the hazy silhouette of his best friend making his rounds. Langa's hand was stuck on the door handle pulled toward him.

"Be kind to him." Kaoru asked. "Please."

The rain was still crashing down.

—

When Reki arrived at the building he felt a huge weight lifting from his shoulders. He didn't know how long he had been running for, and as he realized maybe halfway through, he would have no way of knowing.

The building was quite nice in the evenings. The only lights bleeding in through the huge windows were those of the street lamps outside. After a few steps he noticed that he was tracking mud on the untouched floors. Reki untied his sneakers and carried them as he walked up the stairs to the third level.

He swiped his ID. For the first time it didn't take at least three swipes for the reader to recognize it. Something can be good today. Reki set his shoes out in the hall. Once he was inside he grabbed a chair to prop the door open per habit.

Reki was usually alone in the workshop. He preferred it that way. Ever since he got his makeshift shop at his house he had gotten into the love of being alone in his work. No one can witness the mistakes, the process. Reki was lucky to have been granted the corner table which allowed him a center table, two walls of cabinets and counters, and an extra strip of outlets. One of the cubical type walls that separated each workspace was scattered with thank you notes from his classmates thanking him for the use of his space.

He allows his classmates to use his corner if they're working on a larger or group project. His only rule is to not use the materials he's purchased himself without asking beforehand. One time, this girl accidentally used some of his most expensive paints and wrote him an entire apology letter and gave him a gift card to the coffee place on campus.

Sometimes the kindness still knocks Reki off balance.

Walking into the room felt different this time, though. He threw his bag and jacket on the floor with the excess water scattering. He sat on the floor in the spot right between both walls of cabinets. He pulled his knees to his chest and stared at the floor.

---

Langa made his way into the building. He looked down and saw a few footprints that eventually stopped. The small thought brought a small smile to his lips. He saw the way they were headed though.

The light was on the third floor. How Reki climbed those stairs all the time baffled Langa. He was out of breath by the end of the first flight.

All of the lights were off in the building which gave a gray filter. He saw a bit of the yellow light peeking through into the hallway from behind the propped door. Reki.

Langa took notice of his shoes in the hall all covered in mud. Langa set the umbrella next to them. His hand gripped the handle and suddenly everything felt like slow motion. Nonetheless he pulled the door towards him to which he was granted the sight of Reki Kyan.

Reki turned around and saw the blue haired boy in the doorway walking straight for him. Langa's hands were balled into fists and lay at his sides. Reki pushed himself back into the corner. Shit.

"Langa, I-I'm sorry, you can be mad but just don't hit me he-here," He said, pushing himself as far as physics allowed. However, Langa didn't stop. He walked right up to Reki and left only two inches of space between them. Reki's eyes were squeezed shut in both anticipation and acceptance.

Langa huffed out and grabbed Reki's face, closing the space between them once again. Reki's eyes shot open as Langa brought Reki closer to him by sliding his hand from his cheek to his mid-back.

Once they both broke for a breath they rested their foreheads together. Langa had the biggest smile on his face and in contrast, Reki couldn't look at Langa.

"I'm—"

"If you say sorry one more time I will kiss you again until you stop."

That made Reki laugh. Through his shakiness he moved his hands to rest on Langa's arms. He pressed his lips into a line at the same time he pulled Langa into a hug.

And to think this happened because he offered to teach a boy.

We've made it!

I want to thank everyone who stuck with me since the beginning or started the minute before I posted this chapter. I honestly never believed in myself to be able to finish a chaptered story. Chapter 6+7 were originally going to be one chapter but after I forgot my plans for the OG ch6, it became split. The final two chapters were the first to ever be planned for this AU.

I also want to thank Lily who was my beta reader. She knows literally nothing of these boys let alone anything about anime.

My goal was to finish this by the end of the year and what better day to post than [almost] exactly 11 months since the first chapter. I'm almost 19, can you believe it?!

I have a plan to have a "sequel" to this. It's going to have a list of small canons in this universe, but also a small collection of canon events that don't really correlate to each other.

Thank you so, so much for reading 'cloudy minds and muddy shoes'! <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!