

Between Heaven and Earth

[Kaoru x Die] AU

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Kapitel 10: Chapter Ten

DRAMA! I'm so not comfortable writing something like this. -.- Tell me your opinion plz. I hope you'll still enjoy.

Awake for some time already, Die had been looking at Kaoru, who was still fast asleep, cuddled up close and keeping one of his arms protectively wrapped around Die's waist. Same one couldn't help but smile all the time, a soft smile, tiny and dreamy. Was it really possible to admire and adore one guy so much that it felt like your heart wanted to burst? Die didn't quite know about other humans but he was sure that in his case it was about to happen. He could just keep staring at Kaoru forever as it appeared and somehow the redhead just couldn't get enough of his fragrance, which seemed so natural thanks to where they were. Everything here smelled so Kao.

Blinking with his eyelids, Kaoru didn't need too long to adjust his eyes to the brightness of daylight. He was used to waking up in less time. But when he saw Die's dreamy gaze, he couldn't help but smile lazily. Words seemed too hard to form still and so he just tightened his embrace and looked into the brown eyes of his lover.

"You look very beautiful when you sleep," Die just voiced out what he had been thinking, honest to the core. Being asleep Kaoru had looked peaceful and relaxed without the tiniest of a frown on his face.

"Thank you." Kaoru smiled, just happy for once in his life, finally. Like in reflex he cast a quick glance at the clock beside the bed and realized that it was way after the usual time when he would get up before he went to work. But today it didn't matter. Why was it his the company when he couldn't decide that he was as well allowed to spend some more time in bed with his lover? That's why Kaoru simply closed his eyes again, safe and comfortable within Dies proximity, and most of all content with the latest happenings.

Some minutes of complete silence passed between them before it was Die who silently spoke up again. "Kao?"

"Mh?" Opening one eye, Kaoru glanced back at him.

"Do you remember what you've told me about falling in love? That I'll realize it when it happens," Die more or less drawled and didn't even wait for a possible response, almost too deep in his thoughts. "That I'd become tingly when I look at the person I fell for and that I might suddenly blush when I talk to them. Or the butterflies in my stomach and that just thinking of that person would make me smile and be happy." He could remember each of Kaoru's words as if he had just told him mere seconds ago. "You know, I think that it's already happened and you are this one person." A bright smile crept upon his features in the end but not because of his words but because he just felt the way he had described when he was looking at Kaoru.

It had been what Kaoru had wanted to hear, a confession of love, and it made him more than just happy but he couldn't, even if he wanted to, utter that he felt the same way. There he was, this tough guy who didn't bat an eyelash whatever he said, but in a situation like this he was insecure. Although he was certain about his feelings for Die, he wasn't ready to tell the other man that he loved him. He could think them and his heart told him that he didn't lie, but voicing them out would make him feel vulnerable in some sort of way. But then he also felt bad for not responding with the words he was supposed to say. So instead of words he cast a smile at the other man, inched closer and kissed him in the most loving way he had ever kissed somebody else. Slowly exploring Die's mouth with his tongue, Kaoru put his hand gently on his cheek and tilted his head, so he could deepen it. But there was no haste in it, not the tiniest urge, just plain tenderness. He did feel like Die. Kaoru's heart beat hard and fast against his chest, he felt tingly from all the butterflies in his stomach and he was so ridiculously happy, that instantly a smile spread on his lips as he pulled away and gazed into the other man's chocolate-colored eyes. When Kaoru looked into those eyes, he saw affection in them and he just hoped that Die could see the same within Kaoru's.

A soft sigh escaped the redhead's mouth. Was it possible that a human being could become addicted to another one's kisses or that someone in general? The question senselessly plagued his mind as he was completely filled with the wish for another kiss. Wrapping his arms around the smaller man, he pulled him close and joined their lips again, moving his gently against Kaoru's. Everything about this man seemed addictive and in this very moment Die couldn't even tell if a place like Heaven existed, the remembrance erased by Kaoru's presence.

When they broke apart, Kaoru nuzzled his nose against Die's neck, so content with the other guy that he was actually frightened. How could he ever even try to make the red-haired man go? Not for anything in the world he wanted Die to leave and that was what he needed to tell him, desperately even. "Stay," he said with his voice hardly above a whisper. "Stay with me. I mean here in my home."

So far Die hadn't even dared to waste a thought about it, a little bit afraid that he would still have to move out and away from Kaoru. After all he didn't know that the lawyer's reasons had been an excuse. Therefore the redhead still believed that he was in need to manage his life on his own. But he happily accepted his lover's request and

nodded with a moronic smile on his lips. "I'd love to!"

Looking up, there was also a smile on Kaoru's lips and he pecked the other man's lips, not able to kiss properly when he couldn't stop smiling like an idiot. "Oh, and if you're still interested in a job, I know someone who's in need of a paralegal, that could do occasional secretary work as well."

Raising his brows, Die's forehead slightly wrinkled as he pondered about whom the other man was talking about. Die hadn't thought about his occupational future either but he knew that he needed a job in order to earn money. So quite any offer was fine with him, although it came in handy that he had experience in working as a paralegal. "And who's that?"

Cocking his head to the side, Kaoru wondered for a moment if Die really didn't get it or if he was just trying to kid him. But knowing the redhead, he indeed had no clue. "Well, I do need someone since I've been idiot enough to fire my assistant."

"You?" For a moment Die's eyes widened as the whole situation appeared to him like one big but lucky coincident. But then he became slowly suspicious until finally the penny dropped. "You want me back? I'm not fired then?"

"Yes, I mean, that is you still want the job?" He had no doubt about the other man wanting the job but it amused him to tease and ask Die again, who was looking just too cute when he appeared clueless and dumb. Only that Kaoru knew now that the guy he had fallen for wasn't stupid at all.

"Yeah, of course I want it. I love the job." Enthusiastically he nodded his head and smiled, tightening the arms that held the smaller man until suddenly a thought crossed Die's mind. "Then, don't we have to work already?"

"Are you in a hurry to leave my bed?" Kaoru countered in mocked hurt but Die's eyes grew wide and he vehemently shook his head. That alone made Kaoru almost burst with small chuckles. "You are really one of a kind." With having said that, he leant down and captured Die's lips in a slow kiss, which steadily deepened the longer it took. The hands that run up and down his back sent pleasant and warm shivers along his skin and once he pressed his groin against Die's, Kaoru was almost certain that he wouldn't stop by in his office before midday. Some things had to be taken care of beforehand.

He had just moved his lips from Die's mouth along his jaw to his neck, teasing the sensitive skin there with his lips and teeth, when the doorbell that was suddenly ringing interrupted him. His first instinct was to ignore it but when the bell was rung a second time, Kaoru looked up and sighed. "I'll just go and take a look who's disturbing breakfast, okay? Just don't run away. I'm not finished with you."

If the smirk on Kaoru's features hadn't been that gorgeous, Die would've probably been worried. He didn't get the thing about breakfast and he sure as hell would never run away, there was no doubt about it. But he perfectly obeyed and smiled with a short nod. Quickly the smaller man pulled some underwear out of his closet as well as

a robe in which he slid, before he tightened its belt around his waist and walked down the stairs to see who was looking for him. Taking a glimpse through the spy-hole, he wasn't exactly thrilled about the fact that it was Toshiya who stood in front of the door but Kaoru couldn't pretend not to be here anyway. So he just ran his hand through his hair and opened the door no more than a few inches. "Hey," he greeted him with a motion of his head and tried to be casual. "What's up?"

"Hey," Toshiya answered quite calmly, not being his usual hyper self. "I just wanted to check how you're doing since... you know." He didn't say that he meant the thing about Die moving out and being fired because he supposed that Kaoru knew pretty well what he was referring to. At the same time Toshiya mustered his friend including his attire in curiosity. It was unlike the lawyer to sleep in long or skip work on a usual day in the middle of the week, unless there was another guy involved but even that was hardly believable because nobody had ever been more important than Kaoru's work.

"Fine," Kaoru replied rather curtly because he was almost sure that Toshiya wanted to check on Die, not Kaoru. He could also add one and one and it was more likely that his friend worried about the redhead than him, since he wouldn't even be at home under normal circumstances.

"Great, umm... Where's Die? I need to ask him something." There was this unpleasant awkwardness between the two of them and Toshiya couldn't help but still be a little pissed. When he had heard that Kaoru had basically thrown Die out as well as fired him, Toshiya couldn't understand it. They had had this talk the afternoon before and it had actually appeared as if Kaoru would honestly care for the red-haired guy. But obviously that had been a lie. Helplessly Die had explained his situation to Toshiya who couldn't help but offer his apartment, partly because he still had a soft spot for Die. And truth be told he hadn't expected Kaoru to be at home at all at this time of the day, only Die, obviously, since he had no working place to go to. Now for the first time in many years Toshiya didn't know what to say to his best friend, just tried to take a glimpse inside the house because he wasn't even invited in.

Upstairs the redhead had heard Toshiya's voice and although Kaoru had told him to wait, he got up and peered around the doorframe. To Die it seemed a good moment to tell Toshiya that he won't move out of here and in with him. So he marched out with a smile and waved his hand once his eyes met Toshiya's.

For a moment the tall dark-haired man froze when he saw Die coming out of Kaoru's bedroom. He didn't even need to think about it. The whole scene was enough to make him realize what had happened. With spiteful eyes he looked at his supposed to be best friend. "I see," he merely hissed. "You needed to get him out of your life before you could screw him."

It would've been a matter of fact if things hadn't changed but now that Kaoru could admit it to himself, he easily grew annoyed by his friend's wrong assumptions that were also confusing on top of it. "Nothing you see," he answered resolutely, but much too calmly for the temper of his friend, who would like to punch him already for only just his cool exterior. "I just—"

"You just what, Kaoru?" Toshiya cut him off, shaking his head. "Lead him on? Who gave me the long speech about Die needing anything but this? Or is it only when I would've hit on him? Kaoru can do whatever he wants, right? You just do whatever you feel like." Slowly Toshiya was starting to rage, at first only inwardly but the more he spoke his mind, the more aggravated he became.

From the moment the smaller man had been cut off he was already pissed and whatever his assumed to be friend said made it worse. Crossing his arms, Kaoru just gazed back at Toshiya with a cold stare and waited for him to end his speech. He couldn't stand people who threw a fit about something when they didn't even know the whole circumstances. "Shut up and calm down," he firmly voiced out. "Then I might explain it to you."

"Might?" The way the other man spoke to him angered Toshiya even more but it also hurt. "Who do you think you are? But guess what, I don't want an explanation. Not from you. Everything you say are just lies anyway and I..." Because there was no response from Kaoru, neither defense or some yelling, Toshiya grew more and more just frustrated and most of all disappointed. "I don't know you anymore and I don't think I want a friend like you."

If there was anybody who knew about how much of a fucked up man Kaoru was, then it was indeed Kaoru himself. He knew of his lies, his mistakes and that he was probably incapable of doing those things right that included friends and people he liked. But he wanted to and if Toshiya had lost his trust in Kaoru, then he couldn't blame him. Yet it hurt when Toshiya said that he could as well do without him, not in need of their friendship. Because he of all people should know what kind of a complicated person his friend was. Toshiya just couldn't read him anymore and it wasn't Kaoru's fault, but alone Toshiya's who had lost track of their friendship when he had first laid his eyes on Die. Hadn't it been Kaoru who had tried to get rid of the redhead for the sake of his friendship with the other man? And in right this moment Kaoru couldn't care less about explaining anything to his 'former' friend, since he had done that for way too long already as it seemed.

"If you say so," he merely muttered under his breath and clenched one of his fists, when speaking such words hurt Kaoru as well. He would like to shout at Toshiya that he had fallen in love with Die but Kaoru couldn't, too proud to justify himself and moreover simply not able to say something like this. He hadn't even made it to tell Die and although he would certainly admit it to Toshiya under different circumstances, right now Kaoru couldn't.

From upstairs the former angel watched with worried eyes. What was going on between his two friends, he didn't really grasp. Toshi was pissed at Kao. But why? What had Kaoru done wrong? He had made Die happy but obviously that hadn't been the right thing to make Toshiya happy as well. Hence most of all Die felt guilty and he wanted to apologize to his friends, both if necessary. Yet whenever he opened his mouth to speak, another one already did.

Fixing his eyes on Die, Toshiya wanted to tell him that Kaoru would just drop him now

that he had had his fun with him, but Toshiya couldn't. He wasn't able to say that because as much as he was pissed at his friend, he hadn't the guts to make Die sad right now. Apart from that the tall black-haired guy couldn't help but be a little disappointed at Die though. Why did he have to be so dumb and let himself be fooled? So Toshi tore his eyes off the redhead and focused them on Kaoru again. "You better not treat him like the rest of the world," he firmly stated. "Or else—"

"Or else? What?" Scoffing, Kaoru was on the verge to lose his patience. He could take a lot of things but not Toshiya threaten him as if he were his mother. "Wrap it up and mind your own business."

"Fine, I will!" The other man yelled and turned on his heels. "Have a nice life, asshole." Marching off he didn't even look back but climbed in his car and sped off. What did he do so wrong that Kaoru let him on? It's not like Toshiya would really mind if he wanted to get into the redhead's pants. That's what he had assumed in the first place after all but it had been Kaoru who had denied it, obviously lying. The problem was just that Toshiya had said many things in his fit of rage but had not addressed the essential facts, that he felt betrayed and treat like a piece of scum.

Running a hand through his hair, Kaoru had shut the door and headed back upstairs where Die was still standing like frozen to the spot. Unhappily he watched the smaller man pass him by, who looked just as unhappy as Toshiya was probably feeling too. Sighing, Die raised his shoulders and dropped them again in a defeated gesture. "Maybe I should talk to Toshi. I could apologize."

Slowly Kaoru shook his head and sat down on the bed. "No, there's no need for you to apologize. You've done nothing wrong."

"But it feels like it." Dropping his gaze, Die inched closer and sat down next to the other guy. "I don't understand it. You don't want me outta your life, do you? And Toshi... Maybe he just doesn't know that I'm in love with you. If I explained that to him—"

"No, Die. That's not the point," Kaoru cut him off with a calm but sincere voice as he shook his head once again. "He knows it and it's not your fault that he's mad. I'm the one to blame because I haven't made up my mind fast enough. Don't worry," he said and looked into the redhead's eyes, patting his knee with his hand. "Once Toshiya has calmed down, I will talk to him. He won't be mad forever."

As much as he wanted to stop worrying, Die couldn't in the instant. "But he said he didn't want you to be his friend anymore and I really don't want—"

"Humans say many things they don't mean, Die." Once again Kaoru spoke before the other man had finished his sentence. "He was just angry and so was I. Just give him a little time." Truth be told, Kaoru was quite sure that Toshiya could hardly handle the fact that Die had chosen to spend the night with Kaoru instead of the other man. It was unlikely that he was just pissed at Kaoru's general behavior. So once Toshi had come to terms with Die being in love with Kaoru, then the lawyer would apologize for lying and explain the matter of why he hadn't made up his mind earlier. Toshiya just

wasn't a person who won't forgive.

Sighing again hardly audibly, Die gave in. He couldn't do anything else anyway and he trusted Kaoru since he knew Toshiya for way longer. "I like him. He's a friend. But he's your friend too, has been for years and I'd rather stay away than bring trouble into your friendship. Even though I'm in love with you; or just because of it."

"I know," the other man lowly said with a weak smile and reached out his hand to pull Die into a hug. The whole situation was one big mess now. If only Kaoru had given Die a chance in the first place, back then when he had met him, instead of denying the own feelings. Now Kaoru just hoped that Toshiya really hadn't fallen in love with Die as well and would soon just realize that his friend had no intention of dropping the red-haired man. After all he was the only guy Kaoru had ever met who was honest to the core, indeed rather staying away than to hurt anyone's feelings. "Just don't worry. Everything will be alright in time and there's no way I'm gonna let you go again." He gently put his hand on Die's cheek and smiled a little bit more encouragingly at him. "Now, are you ready for another working day?"

Nodding, Die smiled as well. He would believe in anything the other man said and since he seemed very certain about his best friend being alright again, Die felt a lot better.

"Seriously," Kaoru added and couldn't suppress a lop-sided smirk. As much as he cared for Die but there was something he had missed to ask so far and he surely would've already complained if he were Die. "Not aching anywhere?"

"Aching?" Scratching his neck Die blushed a little, not even really knowing why, but his mind filled with memories when he thought of the only ache he did feel, even if it was nothing major. "Uh, not seriously. I mean... well, it doesn't hurt or so." There was an unknown heat rising up to his cheeks and he cast his eyes off Kaoru's inquiring gaze for a moment, not able to hold it. It was weird because it made him happy that Kaoru cared but then Die also got a little embarrassed, just because he couldn't think of anything else but what had happened last night – and where, body-wise.

"I see," Kaoru grinned and dropped a kiss on Die's lips. "Naturally there's some soreness but it'll pass. Until then I don't want you to suffer." With having said that he patted Die's knee again and got up, pulling Die along. His plans included a hot shower for the two of them and after that Kaoru would tend to his lover's cute butt with some salve, before they'd head to work. His employees would probably already think that their boss had died since Kaoru never failed to come to the office in time.

That day Kaoru greeted each of the people back who provided him with their 'good morning'- formalities. A tiny smirk accompanied him all day long and it was obvious that he was in good spirits, even although he worried a little about Toshiya. His thoughts often drifted back to his friend but Kaoru was sure that this problem could be solved as well. As if nothing had ever happened Die attended to his former position while the lawyer was quickly busied and surrounded with work. Only after midday Die dared to sneak a peek into his lover's office again. Instantly Kaoru smiled when there was a red-haired guy poking his head inside the room. "Come in," he

motioned and ignored his remaining work. "I'm not really in the mood to work today but I guess it has to be done."

"What're you working on?" With a bright smile and a curious expression Die finally entered and made his way over to the other man and around the desk, only to sit on it.

That the redhead was indeed interested in the lawyer's work, had always made Kaoru proud and somewhat happy but right now he would prefer not to talk about work much. He put a hand on one of Die's thighs and slightly grinned up to him. "Just some minor problem. But there's still some case ahead," he said with a small frown that he quickly forced off again. "We should go out for dinner tonight."

"That'd be great. I can still invite you since you didn't want me to yesterday." Die shifted his butt on the desk, so he sat directly in front of Kaoru, who instantly ran both his palms up slender thighs.

"Sounds like an offer I can't possibly refuse." Smiling mischievously Kaoru got up and wrapped his arms around the other man's waist, bringing them closer until they could feel each other's breaths on their skin. "So we're going to have a date then?"

"Yes," Die replied with another broad smile and slid his hands up to Kaoru's shoulders before he was rewarded with a gentle kiss, although Kaoru kept it teasingly short, making Die grumble lowly in disappointment. In the process it only made the smaller man chuckle since his lover pretty much looked like a puppy that begged for some stroking. He was just about to lean forward and capture Die's lips once more when the sound of someone entering disturbed Kaoru and he raised his head to glare at the intruder.

"Don't let yourself be interrupted by me, Mr. Niikura," a middle-aged, not too slim man spoke up and gracefully helped himself to grab a seat in front of the desk. Two other men accompanied him, both dressed in black and wearing sunglasses.

But Kaoru recognized this man within a second and quickly detached from the redhead, pulling him rather harshly off the desk as well. "Mr. Nagatomi," he addressed the man and bowed in fake respect. "I'm sorry for my lack of manners."

Lowly Nagatomi chuckled and obviously roamed his gaze across Die. "Don't be," he waved Kaoru's apology off and faced him again. "I didn't see your secretary but couldn't wait either. You know my patience and there's something I need your abilities for."

Nagatomi never needed any help, always needed the abilities of a lawyer and it never meant any good. Facing the redhead, Kaoru clearly stated his order. "Die, get out."

At first the red-haired man was a little shocked at the tone of his lover's voice, his eyebrows curiously rose and he was about to ask why, but then he knew that Kaoru always had his reasons for doing something. That's why Die didn't complain but just nodded.

"He can stay. I don't mind," Nagatomi said and his thin lips curled into a small smile. Hardly there were people who Die really couldn't stand but this Nagatomi guy had something that wasn't only unpleasant but dangerous as well, even if he wanted to appear friendly.

"But I mind." Looking straight at the redhead, Kaoru didn't even bat an eyelash when he ordered his assistant to leave. But he wanted to keep Die out of danger and therefore any knowledge he missed, made his life a tad bit safer. "Get out."

Nodding curtly Die complied and left, shutting the door after him. He couldn't help the bad feeling he had. There had been moments when Kaoru had been serious, when he had even hurt Die, when he had been sarcastic and mean in the beginning, but there had always been a soul behind those deep mocha eyes. Now Kaoru had just appeared as if the other guy had robbed him off any emotion. Any emotion but the slight fear that Die wasn't completely sure he had really sensed. To him Kaoru had been fearless thus far and he could hardly imagine that something intimidated him – or someone for that matter. But this Nagatomi guy was another kind.

Sighing deeply, Die sat down and patiently waited. From outside there seemed to be nothing suspicious enough for him to worry about. After only a short amount of time the door opened again and Kaoru guided Nagatomi out, with the other two guys following them. The expression on their faces was unreadable but Die could tell that the lawyer didn't feel too comfortable around these men, even if he appeared calm and settled. Nagatomi on the other hand was quite the same as before, friendly on the outside but he always seemed to be somewhat false, at least if someone asked the former angel about his opinion.

"Niikura," Nagatomi addressed Kaoru who looked back at him with an unfaltering gaze. "I'm very sorry for bothering you. Best wishes for the future and," he cast a look at Die, "have a nice evening." With that he just turned and walked out of the office.

Like in trance Kaoru didn't even dare to blink with an eye. He would sigh in relief if only he could be sure that the business relationship between Nagatomi and him would really be settled from now on.

"Kao?" The redhead inched closer and put a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Are you alright? What did he want?"

"He wanted me to defend him," Kaoru replied almost absent-mindedly. "But I refused."

"Oh." On one hand Die was glad since this would mean that this unpleasant Nagatomi person wouldn't show up again any time soon, but on the other hand he didn't get why Kaoru had turned someone down who had been his client for long. The redhead could remember that the lawyer had once admitted that he didn't like him much and one better not messed around with him, which worried Die the most. "Why does he want your defense? What's the trouble?"

"He killed someone," Kaoru answered in a monotonous voice and finally tilted his head to face Die, who couldn't hide his small gasp. "It's not the first time I guess but it's the first time he openly admitted it to me and still wanted me to defend him." He bowed his head and wiped his palm across his forehead, where a thin layer of cold sweat had built. "The worst thing is that I've always known, even back then when he didn't admit it." At that time Kaoru had been too afraid to back out of the deal, although he had already an idea that all his defense was for something that was one huge lie. But ever since his conversation with Die about why Kaoru had wanted to become a lawyer in the first place, he wanted to make it better, make it right and be a person he could actually be proud to be. "I don't want to defend him again."

Acting on instinct Die wrapped his arms around the other man and pulled him close into an embrace. He couldn't judge about Kaoru's motives when formerly he had defended Nagatomi, but Die knew that the lawyer had made the right decision this time and he was filled with an unknown pride for him. Only for a few seconds Kaoru rested within the taller man's arms until he pulled away and forced a small smile on his lips. "Hey, I need some fresh air and a smoke. Outside. Would you wait for me here? I'll get us some coffee from the shop across the street, ok?"

At first Die wanted to protest, would rather like to accompany his friend, but he respected any of Kaoru's wishes and simply nodded. If Kaoru wanted him to wait here, Die would certainly do so.

With a grateful smile Kaoru turned before he headed straight outside. He needed to come to terms with his decision, sure that it had been the right one, but afraid that it would change his whole life, most of all his career. If Nagatomi didn't take it as lightly as he had done, he'd make sure that the lawyer would lose some of his clients. But Kaoru would be able to cope. He would have to. Lighting a cigarette outside of the building, he deeply inhaled the smoke before he blew it out again. Whatever happened from now on, he would handle the situation. He owed it to his father, to himself and even to Die.

Once the redhead had watched the lawyer walk off, he sighed and headed inside Kaoru's office. Nothing had changed here and somehow he felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. It certainly wasn't a bad thing that Kaoru had got rid of that Nagatomi guy, right? From the huge windows on the wall behind Kaoru's desk, he could see his lover crossing the street. Obviously everything was okay. Until suddenly a black car with shaded windows stopped right next to the man down there.

When the black limousine halted right next to Kaoru, he knew that it meant trouble and it made his guts twist a little. The passenger's door quickly opened and one of Nagatomi's men got out of the car and opened the backdoor. "Get inside, Niikura." He instantly recognized the voice and although he hesitated for a second, Kaoru knew better and did as he was told. Once inside the car he found himself seated right opposite Nagatomi, while another of his men was sitting next to Kaoru. "Let me give you a ride."

Inwardly Kaoru froze when the car took off.

Frowning Die watched his friend climb inside the car that pulled back on the road and drove off. With no clue about who had more or less snatched the lawyer off the street, Die simply stared after the car. He couldn't tell why Kaoru had climbed inside the car, had no idea who it was inside the black limousine, but one thing Die knew. That it left him worried to no end.

There was silence inside the car for some minutes. Nagatomi drank from a glass which was filled with some brownish liquid as his eyes roamed across the lawyer who kept silent for his own good. Only after a while Nagatomi chuckled a little and spoke up. "You really have some guts, Niikura. Turning me down like this."

Keeping quiet Kaoru just looked at the other man, not knowing what to say. He had told his reasons already and now he could only wait until Nagatomi would get to the point, even if it was surely an unpleasant one.

"I've always kinda liked you, even if you are just a filthy faggot. But the amount of money I paid to you has probably made your head a little too big, don't you agree, Kaoru?" He stretched the name purposefully, demonstrating that he was far more superior to such a spoiled lawyer.

"There are even better lawyers around than me," Kaoru lowly spoke up, trying it with another approach than back there in his office. "You could hire anyone you want and they'll surely do their job well in defending you."

Chuckling lowly, Nagatomi took another sip from his drink before he went on. "I know that, Niikura. But the thing is," he drawled for a moment and pierced Kaoru with his cold, dark eyes from out of his chubby face, "that I've trusted you with my problems and maybe this sounds corny but..." He took a deep breath and pushed it out through his teeth. "You know too much."

Mechanically Kaoru shook his head. "I've kept my mouth shut before. Why would I change that?"

"Because you seem to change your mind a lot lately." Deadly serious Nagatomi put his glass down and glared at the lawyer. "Besides I don't like any risks. So it's your choice in the end. Defend me or leave it."

Bowing his head Kaoru stared at his hands in his lap. They were sweaty and cold. He knew what Nagatomi was trying to tell him and he should have guessed it. With a bitter chuckle he looked up again and took a staggered breath, fearing the answer to the question he was about to ask. "Leave it and get killed as well?"

There was nothing but a motion of Nagatomi's expression that told Kaoru more than words could have done. With no other choice but to give in, Kaoru slowly nodded. "Fine, I'll do the job."

"I knew you're a smart boy, Kaoru. Your father would've been proud of you," Nagatomi dryly laughed and purposefully pushed the other man's buttons. He knew all about Kaoru Niikura, even the content of his dreams and only that way a man like

Nagatomi could be sure that he wasn't led into a trap. Suddenly the car stopped and the man next to Kaoru climbed outside, leaving the door open. They were anywhere but not near his office. "Make sure that he'll stay true to his words," Nagatomi said to his fellow and faced the lawyer with a stern expression. "Get out."

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Meanwhile Die couldn't take it any longer. Even if only minutes must have passed with Kaoru being away, Die was sure that something bad must have happened. Inside of him there were all these feelings he couldn't cope with, most of all worry. Usually he always trusted the other man, knew whatever he did was fine and would be alright, but right now Die knew nothing anymore. Something told him that his friend needed his help. But alone Die could hardly do anything. He panicked.

Suddenly he had an idea and with trembling fingers he reached for Kaoru's cell phone, calling the only person he knew could help. "Toshiya? It's me, Die. I need your help," he urgently babbled once the other man had answered the phone.

"Die? What—" It took Toshiya a moment before he actually grasped who was calling him. He couldn't help it though that Die's urgent request and the tone of his voice made his friend think of all kinds of things that might've happened to him. "What happened? Are you alright?"

"Yes, I'm okay. It's about Kaoru." Nervously the redhead fingered a button on his shirt while he was speaking. He heard the annoyed sigh from the other man once Die had mentioned the name of his friend but he ignored it. Although Die cared, there were other things occupying his mind right now. "He's gone. He said he only wanted to have a smoke and get us coffee from across the street but then there was this car that stopped and took Kao away. I don't know but I've a really bad feeling now, Toshi. As if something bad has happened and I don't know who else to call."

Listening to all the excited mess of words that spilled from out of Die, Toshiya frowned. Of course the other man could always call him and ask for help but still Die's whole explanation was a tad bit too confusing. Somehow Toshiya would expect Kaoru to do something like this and make Die worry his head off but even for Die there was a little too much fear quivering in his voice as he spoke. "Who took Kaoru away and when?"

"Half an hour ago? I'm not sure," Die quickly answered and once again watched the streets down below for any sign of the lawyer. "This guy with the name Nagatomi had been here and Kaoru had told him that he wouldn't defend him. He seemed pretty worried to me and then he just wanted to go outside but now someone took him with them. I don't know who but I would just feel better if we could look for Kao maybe. Can we?" Die hesitated for a second, somehow knowing that he asked a lot from the other man. "Could you drive me please? I'm scared that something's happened to him and..." His voice drifted off into a whisper when there was no reply from Toshiya. "Toshi?"

Heaving one huge sigh, the other man took a deep breath and cursed himself for not

being able to decline the redhead's request. There was something in his voice that spoke of so much affection towards Kaoru that Toshiya felt utterly sad and he mentally just begged his long-term friend not to fuck it up this time. Besides that when Die had mentioned the name Nagatomi, it sent also cold shivers down Toshiya's spine. Everybody had heard stories about that guy and only Kaoru himself knew why he had defended the bastard before. "Okay, I'll be there in five minutes. Wait outside the building."

"Thanks." Die sighed in relief and ended the call. Although he had not a single evidence for Kaoru being in trouble and Die's assumptions were nothing but vague, he trusted his feelings and he was unspeakably grateful for Toshi's help. Quickly he grabbed his jacket and scampered out of the building, passing by other employees but not really seeing them. If only Die would now be able to fly, then he could easily find his lover and friend.

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Once Kaoru had climbed out of the car, Nagatomi slowly followed, not wanting to miss the show. The lawyer had a good guess what was waiting for him now and instead of hoping that it wouldn't happen at all, he just prayed for it to be over soon. He kept his gaze fixed on the ground, missing the small nod and the smirk that Nagatomi sent out to his man. Only when Kaoru felt the hard fist landing in his stomach, he knew that their show had begun. "Look Kaoru, this is for your own good," Nagatomi mused. "Take it as a reminder to keep your word."

Pain seeped through his body as Kaoru held his arms across his stomach, coughing from the impact with that the guy had hit him. There was no time to recover though when Kaoru was much too easily grabbed by his collar, so that Nagatomi's bully could place another blow square across Kaoru's jaw. Groaning out in pain he fell backwards against the car and slid down. When he touched his aching face with his fingers, he could feel blood leaking from his nose. He felt dizzy but he managed to focus his eyes on Nagatomi who was smiling and took a long drag from a cigarette. "You can't take much, Niikura. I'm disappointed."

Dragging his bones slowly back up, Kaoru just raised his chin and waited for the next hit he would certainly receive. In all the years he had taken much more than just a few beats of fists and he would survive this, no matter what kind of insults Nagatomi threw at him. Kaoru was just relieved that this hadn't happened when Die had been still around.

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They had already driven around for what seemed like forever, although it could've taken them only minutes. But the many streets they had driven along made time appear longer. Yet Kaoru was nowhere to be seen and it was obvious in Die's expression that he was frustrated and despaired. "It's pretty much senseless," Toshiya sighed, his heart going out to Die, but he still knew that their chances to find Kaoru were little to non-existing. "This city is too huge."

Taking a staggered breath Die faced his friend, not knowing what to say. Even with wings it would've been hard to spot Kaoru but the redhead still didn't want to give up. "I know," he said, his voice so small that he sounded like a young boy. "Let's just drive around some more. Please."

Nodding Toshiya agreed, not able to turn the other man down. Seeing the look in Die's eyes literally broke his heart. "Do you really think Kaoru's worth it?" he lowly questioned since he hadn't forgotten about the fight in the morning. "I've told you about him, not because I don't like him but because I like you as well, Die. Do you honestly think that he loves you?"

Nearly offended Die's gaze suddenly narrowed when he looked at Toshiya and there was a small pout building on his lips when he was about to protest. Of course Kaoru loved him back! There were no doubts within the red-haired man because he could simply feel it. But as soon as he opened his mouth to explain the matter to Toshiya, he suddenly spotted Kaoru. "Stop the car, Toshi! There's Kao! Hurry up! Stop the car!"

A little startled Toshiya quickly hit the brakes and pulled the car over to the sideway but what he saw made him swallow hard. Acting on instinct Die opened the car's door and wanted to climb out when he saw his lover being beaten up. But Toshiya held the redhead back. "No, Die. Don't go there. Nagatomi won't hesitate to kill you if you interfere."

"But—" Shaking his head he yanked his arm free and got out of the car. He would rather risk his life than sit here and watch the man he had fallen for in pain. In anger as well as sorrow he ran to Kaoru and pushed the man away who was about to beat him again.

"Leave him alone!" Die yelled and blocked the bully's way.

The man he had pushed looked pretty much pissed and about to bash the impudent redhead but Nagatomi's amused chuckle stopped him. "Oh look what we've got here. Another queer." The older man laughed and received a glare from Die. "Trying to protect your lover-boy? That's too sweet."

"Die," Kaoru rasped and fastened his blurred gaze on his red-haired friend. "Get away."

"Yeah Die," Nagatomi repeated and stretched the name purposefully into a sneer. "Run for your life before it's too late."

"I won't run anywhere without him!" he shot back and ignored Kaoru's demand. Usually Die obeyed but this time he simply couldn't stand back and do as his friend said as long as he was in danger.

"Are you sure?" Nagatomi lowly asked and already reached his hand inside his jacket.

"Leave him out of this," Kaoru cut in and looked the old man straight in the eye as he simply tried to remain standing on his two feet. "He doesn't know any better."

"You shut up!" His voice raised slightly but firm, Nagatomi pulled a gun out of his jacket and pointed it straight at Kaoru. "You're a lucky bastard that I still need you." With that he unceremoniously directed the barrel at Die and pulled the trigger. Two loud shots rung in the redhead's ears but he didn't feel the pain when the bullets pierced his chest.

Eyes wide, Toshiya stared at the scene only meters away from the car he was still sitting in. Like in trance he shook his head, tears brimming in his eyes. His hand fumbled for the glove-box and pulled out a gun he had bought years ago for own safety but never used before, since he had never felt the urge to and had never needed it. But in this very moment he instinctively loaded it and quickly left the car.

The second Kaoru's eyes met Die's the world had stopped, even if just for the two of them. There was nothing but the redhead's typical helpless expression when he didn't know what was happening, while his eyes slowly lost their glimmer of curiousness and his legs gave way. That's when Kaoru snapped. Even as beaten up and injured he already was, he felt like having the strength of a dozen men when he jumped at Nagatomi, reaching almost blindly for the gun and trying to hit some blows on the old man. Too dazzled to react, Nagatomi suddenly found himself back on the ground, receiving some hard blows into his face. But he still managed to keep the gun thanks to his man suddenly grabbing Kaoru and pulling him off his boss.

"Bastard," Nagatomi mumbled and slowly heaved his old body up and on his feet, pointing his gun at Kaoru. "You shouldn't have done that."

The sound of another two shots filled the air and Kaoru's eyes widened when not he felt any pain but saw Nagatomi slump down on the ground in a pool of own blood. Shooting his gaze to where the bullets must've come from, he stared into the horror-written face of Toshiya. The tall dark-haired man was breathing heavily and held his gun with shaking hands. He hadn't thought, only done. Mindless.

With force Kaoru yanked his worn body out of the bully's grip who stared at the dead body of his boss in shock. Ignoring everything else around him, Kaoru only tumbled forward and slid down on the ground where Die was lying and taking shallow breathes, the pain now clearly overpowering. Only when he spotted Kaoru bending down to him, the redhead smiled slightly as best as he managed and got pulled into Kaoru's arms.

Toshiya luckily didn't miss Nagatomi's man reaching for his gun but was quicker. "I wouldn't do this. Get inside the car and piss off," he voiced out almost choking but he didn't care. "Move!" He yelled and the man quickly did, realizing that there was nobody left risking his life for.

"Hey, I could save you." Die whispered in a weak voice that cracked in between words. At least in human form he had been able to protect someone, although he knew deep within his mind that there had been less danger for his friend than for Die. He tried to remain smiling but it was hard, tiny but painful coughs breaking through his throat. He reached out his fingers with all the strength his could afford and touched Kaoru's

cheek, needing to feel his warm skin underneath the cold tips. "I'm cold... and scared."

With a huge lump in his throat Kaoru swallowed hard and forced a crooked smile on his features. "Yeah, you saved me," he replied in a mere whisper and felt hot tears leaving his eyes. There was Die's blood covering the surface underneath them. Too much of it. But the redhead wasn't supposed to die. Not he who had this heart of gold. If Kaoru could swap places with him, he would not hesitate to do it. "You're going to be alright, Die. Don't worry." The words were in vain and even although Kaoru knew that, he wanted to believe them. "Everything will be alright."

Numbly Toshiya watched the two of them like frozen. It felt like surreal but subconsciously he knew that this was horrible reality.

"It hurts," Die said hardly audible, nearly just mouthing the words. He knew he was dying. His eyelids felt too heavy, his body cold and numb, but his heart still wanted to keep beating with all its might, only just to say his last words. "Kao, I... I love you. Don't forget me..."

"I won't, Die. I won't forget you," Kaoru vowed in vain when he felt Die's body becoming heavier until it was limp and those beautiful chocolate-colored eyes shut. In tears Kaoru pulled the lifeless body of his lover even closer, hugged him tightly and prayed that this was just a nightmare from which he would awake soon. "I love you, too. Don't leave me, Die. I need you. Please..."

But it was too late, even for this confession to be heard.

-End of chapter ten-