

# Welcome to the Zodiac host club!

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*If u love Ouran High school host club and Fruits Basket Then you will love this story its like ouran host club in certain ways.*

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## 1 - Drunk on a night like this

A beautiful Chinese silk wedding dress embroidered with beautiful satin-blue ribbon and cut of the most precise measurements to fit her frame perfectly. She looked magical almost like an angel with her hair in an up-do that would put the best models to shame. Crowning her head was a soft veil, now sticking to her wet hair and plastered to her slick shoulders. She should have felt like a princess today. It was too bad. Too bad it all went down the drain. Too bad she felt like the biggest moron on the planet. It was all just... too bad.

The thunder continued as she ran down the empty streets, ruining the expensive material of her dress as she sloshed through muddy puddles and stepped on the ends of her dress occasionally. She didn't even notice it. All she knew was her wedding day was the greatest mistake of her life. It was too soon! She'd given him everything without anything in return. Her exit wasn't even dramatic like the movies. Like when the girl would flatly refuse to marry the groom and run down the aisle, everyone gasping and causing chaos throughout the entire ceremony. Nope, she didn't even make it to the alter, she just ran away. From everything and everyone.

She should have known better, she should have seen through his lies and deceit. But now here she was running through an unfamiliar territory in a wedding dress in the pouring rain.

She would not -- no she could not -- believe her eyes when she found her lover with another. On their special day of all days. Her friends warned her but she wouldn't listen. She loved that man with all her heart, she'd given herself to him... how could he betray her? She felt so unworthy. Maybe that is why he was with another: she was just not good enough for him. For anyone at that matter.

The girl tripped, finally collapsing to the floor in a shriveled heap. It was painful, everything buried deep in her soul was ripping so slowly and painfully. Her heart ached and throbbed with such sorrow she did not know she was capable of feeling. Sobs racked through her body and she bowed down to the floor, her hands covering her face. Where was she to go in an unfamiliar place? What was she to do? She felt like a lost cat with no home. No one to turn to.

She looked up through hazy eyes and found herself before a bar. Slowly she brought herself to stand up wobbling on her now twisted ankle. After staring at it for a moment, she slowly made her way to the door and stepped inside the warm room. The bar reminded her of a saloon. Red drapes covered the windows and a piano player sat in the corner on a rather dusty wooden piano playing some ragtime. The whole ordeal seemed as if she were in a dream state.

"What will it be, lady?" The bartender asked nonchalantly, startling the girl out of her stupor. She wondered why he acted so indifferent as he continued to stare at his glass, cleaning it with what looked like a rather dirty towel. Was it everyday that he saw a girl soaking wet in a wedding dress step into his bar? Or did he simply not care?

"Ah... ahem..." she tried to find her voice while coughing. "Whatever is good I guess..." she responded lamely while trying to sit on the stool. The man dropped a shot of whiskey before her eyes and walked

away to tend to another customer.

"Here. It looks like you'll need this. It's on the house." The man didn't wait for her response as he asked the next customer what he'd like.

The brunette began plucking out the pins in her hair and threw her wedding veil off onto the bar counter. What a hassle that mass of white fluffiness was. The veil slipped off the counter and fell to the floor in a pile. She stared down at it thinking of everything she'd just run a way from moments ago. Then, she turned her attention to the dark colored liquid and picked up the small glass of liquor. She smelled it in disgust and wondered why she even thought about ordering any alcohol. But the pain in her chest reminded her of her sorrow. She needed to relax and just get away from all of this.

In one huge gulp the girl downed the liquor. It burned her throat with a warm sensation leaving a bitter taste in her mouth. She shook her head in dismay. Is this what she'd come down to? Drinking alone to drown her misery away? She didn't even like alcohol...

She narrowed her eyes. Who cared anyway? There was no one for her anymore, there's no one to tell her what to do. Suddenly she felt angry. She felt so stupid for believing into that man's lies, his talk, his superiority over her. And to think she ever loved someone like that.

She stared into her empty glass. That was not entirely true. Despite catching him in the act with another woman, she couldn't help but still love him... she shook her head and hit it lightly with her fist. That was insane! She couldn't love a man that would do that to her! He obviously didn't love her since she was so foolish and dumb.

"Sir!" The bartender turned around to stare at her and she suddenly felt nervous under his gaze. "I'd like... another one of... these things." She called out shaking the glass. With only one drink she was already feeling tipsy. Now she remembered why she didn't drink. She hated herself, she was unworthy of any kind of love. What did she do to make someone turn his back on her like that? Hours before they were about to be married? It was all her fault; everything. Her friends warned her but should wouldn't listen to them. Her fiance wouldn't even allow her to invite her few friends to the wedding. They all must hate her, she was an awful, awful person.

About an hour later and a few dollars poorer, the girl stumbled out of the bar. The bartender was nice enough to give her an umbrella as she hiccupped and leaned her shoulder against the wall to release some weight on her ankle. She shifted her wedding dress away as she fumbled with the umbrella. She got it open only to realize there was a gaping hole in it from it's wear and tear over it's lifetime. The girl frowned.

"Cheap man... can't even... give one of these..." she stared at the umbrella unable to even identify what it was. She never talked in such a manner either. Was she really that drunk? "These... these... oh what do you call it? Wetter keeper... under thinger..." She shook her head and started wandering around aimlessly hobbling on her sore ankle.

Now full of alcohol and sorrow, she was regretting drinking while being depressed. Now the hurt exploded and it was unbearable to take. All she could do was let her vision blur with tears as the night drew on. It was cold and the rain would only grow harder. She felt tears welt up in her dim blue eyes, the

drops of sadness tracing their way down her face and off her chin. She wanted to start her life with him... she wanted to have a home, a family, someone to come home to. She wanted to love him so much. The tears continued as she staggered across a street and onto a rather old cobblestoned one, all the while trying to keep her broken umbrella above her head. She had no idea where she was going but her feet urged her to keep walking.

She hiccupped and tried to lift the hem of her dress to try and keep herself on her feet. Slowly she let words tumble from her drunken mouth singing quietly and slowly while rocking side to side on her jello-like feet:

"A youth one day in a garden fair  
A rose found withered and dying,  
And all for love, ah!" She threw her hands high above her head, "love in vain  
This rose was sadly sighing..."

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Not far away a handsome young man held a paper lantern and an umbrella in the other hand as he walked along the walls of his home. He was making his way to the main gates eager to turn in for the night and get out of this miserable rain. The other guys knew he hated the rain but Shigure kicked him out to make sure all the gates around the property were locked.

"Ah ah, Kyo-chan!" The young man could still hear the older man's taunting voice, "It's your job to check the gates when it's raining, now go!"

"Jerks..." he muttered to himself as he reached for the brass handle of the main gate. The cool metal pulled and the creaking of the door echoed through the streets. He was about to go in when a voice caught his attention.

"Heart of my heart, I love you,"

He flinched, being startled by such a destitute voice in the middle of the road. Before his eyes was what looked like a spirit, her head swaying from side to side as if looking for something.

"Life would be naught without you;"

She kept on singing and stopped to look up, staring right at him now, sniffing and continuing to walk towards him. As she came closer he squinted to see it was not a ghost, but rather... a girl? He did not know whether to be afraid and run, or continue standing before this beauty listening to her gravely serenade him. She continued teetering closer but the young man's feet stayed glued to the floor. He wanted to move but something made him stay. She was so haunting.

"Light of my life, my darling,  
I love you, I love you."

What was the matter with this girl? As she came closer he smelled a strong whiff of alcohol. It didn't smell like cheap alcohol either and it was pungent. He ignored that for a moment as she suddenly stopped walking, about two yards away from him now swaying with tears and rain falling freely down her face. He was about to call her out when she made another weak snuffle and extended out a pale hand towards him.

"I can forget you never,  
From you I ne'er can sever.  
Say you'll be mine forever,  
I... love... yo--"

Suddenly the girl's eyes fell closed and the umbrella slowly tumbled out of her hand as she fell forward, her head tilting up towards the sky.

"H-hey, watch out!" The man cried dropping his own umbrella and lantern. The street was suddenly darkened as the light went out, but he caught the drunk girl, before she fell over flat on her face, with his upturned palms. He hefted her up and turned her over, careful that she would not touch his chest so he could turn her around and stare at her colorless face. Her skin was cold to the touch as well. Rainwater splashed over her face and eyelids and it soaked into his clothes as well.

"Hey! Hey wake up! Come on wake up." He shook her lightly as she only turned into his embrace and tried snuggling closer as the man only kept pushing her away, making his arms straight so she would not come any closer.

"Oh come on..." he moaned. He looked around, water dripping off the ends of his messy orange hair, hoping that maybe her friend or someone would be chasing after this drunk girl but the streets were only filled with the sounds of rain. He looked down at the girl out of arms reach in a peaceful slumber and couldn't help but notice how beautiful she was upclose. Her hair must look pretty when it was dry and those lips... he shook his head trying to back down a strange feeling within him. He watched her even breathing and sighed again. Oddly, the smell of alcohol lingered with a faint fruity aroma.

Noting that no one was about to come take this girl he sighed in defeat. He propped her back on his knee and carefully lifted her up under her armpits, dragging the drunk girl into the house gates. He had no choice but to bring her inside. He began walking into the gate and shut the door closed with one foot. What was he suppose to do with this girl? He couldn't leave her on the street in her drunk state of mind. Someone might do an indecent thing to a girl like her. He started for the main hall, aggravated that he was now soaking wet and couldn't run inside, afraid to jar the girl awake, as he pulled her to the house. Her attire was strange enough but he couldn't make out what dress she was wearing now that it was ripped and soiled.

He took his eyes off her and mentally apologized for soaking the floor as he entered the hall calling out for help. He bet they'd make him clean it up anyway. He knelt down with the girl's head resting in his lap. Suddenly he heard her moan and his attention snapped to her. Her eyebrows knitted together as her dry mouth moved.

"Don't... leave..."

"I better let Ayame take care of this..." he muttered as the girl's body fell limp. Under his arms he felt her shift and put a hand up to her chest. He grinned inward. "Don't worry, you'll be fine..." He didn't know why he was talking to her like that but somewhere deep inside, the girl felt something was about to turn her world back right-side-up. "I wonder where she came from..." He wondered aloud pushing stray hairs away from her face as lights went on and men gathered around the scene.

In a world full of complete strangers there would always be one she could depend upon. So her mother told her. What would happen to her now? She felt so broken up inside like she'd never be able to stand up again. But maybe there would be another to help her stand up again. One to heal her broken heart.

To be continued...

## 2 - Honda-Hime

"Wake up, young lady..."

The girl's eyes rolled behind her eyelids.

"Young laaady, wake uuuup..." The voice cooed gently.

Who was that? Were they talking to her? She shifted in the warm bed trying to shake off the noise.

"YOUNG LADY, WAKE UP!"

"AYAA!" The girl burst forward screaming to find a bizarre man with flowing silver hair and golden yellow eyes standing in front of her.

"Oh good! You're awake." He grinned while clapping his hands. The girl flipped her head side to side and around the room she was currently in. She touched her chest and quickly looked down to see she was wearing different clothes from the night before. She touched her hair and it was free of curls and that veil previously over her head.

"What? What is... where am I?" She panicked while scrambling out of the giant bed she'd been sleeping in. She looked down at her ankle to see it was iced and bandaged. Where was she? Wasn't she at her wed...?

The girl gasped and covered her mouth, the events of the former day hitting her like a ton of bricks. She wobbled and the man was instantly there to catch her.

"My dear, sweet, girl!" The man exclaimed seeing all the color drain from her face. "Sit down; it might be better for you." The older man slowly led her back to the bed where the brunette sunk down into the mattress. He stepped away from her and took in her appearance. The girl looked simply scared.

Suddenly he gave her a short bow while touching his chest with his right hand crossed over. "Let me help you recollect your memories. For starters my name is Ayame Sohma."

The aghast girl began bowing furiously. "Ah, I'm Tohru Honda! It is nice to meet you Ayame-san!" She sat up and felt the room spin.

The man clicked his tongue and held her by the shoulders. "Don't do that, it'll just give you a headache."

"I think I already have one." She admitted quietly.

The man laughed while placing both hands on his hips. "I know the remedy for that!" He trotted to the door and pushed in a small cart with a silver platter of assorted breakfast foods. There were danishes, bagels, cereal, omelet with cheese, pancakes, waffles, fruit, toast, baked salmon, and an assortment of



drinks. She looked back to the man holding a bottle of Advil. "And after you eat maybe two of these will help as well."

Tohru didn't know what to do. She started laughing, making Ayame give her a strange look. "Oh, this is one crazy dream!" She slid off the bed despite Ayame's requests for her to sit back down. "I mean, one moment I'm running out of my own wedding and the next thing I'm in some strange mansion-like room with a man with hair longer than my own, serving me a huge beautiful breakfast!" Tohru continued to laugh insanely and Ayame didn't know what to do and simply began chuckling with her.

Suddenly the girl slapped herself hard enough to make her fall over.

"Princess Honda!" Ayame yelled out running to her side.

"Ow... that hurt." Tohru muttered. She was hoping this was all a dream. But then again, in a dream she would never act this way.

Ayame's eyes narrowed as he picked her up over his shoulder and placed her back on the bedside. "You idiot girl, of course that would hurt! Don't hit yourself!" He reprimanded. Tohru held her cheek and suddenly felt very sad. Yesterday was not a dream. She really had run out of her wedding when she saw her lover with another woman. Tears welled up in her eyes realizing she'd only woken up into a nightmare.

Ayame's eyes widened. "I am sorry, I did not mean to yell at you like that but it was for your own good, Honda-hime! Please don't cry!"

She shook her head. "No, it's not that! I just..." Suddenly the door opened up and both Ayame and Tohru turned their attention to a white haired boy.

Tohru was stunned at how handsome this boy was. Actually Ayame was not bad looking either! Was this new boy related to Ayame? She turned away as the boy's eyes looked right back at own blue eyes.

"What is it, Hatsuharu-kun?" Ayame asked.

"Shigure asked me to check on you. He said something... about your womanizing," Haru spoke slowly, still eyeing the girl that looked away from him.

Ayame stood up in outrage while Tohru's eyes fell upon the platter of food. Her stomach reminded her she had not eaten in almost a day. "Well I never!" Ayame yelled. "As the king, I Ayame, would never seduce this poor girl! Look at her pathetic being! She looks homeless! Can't you see how distressed she is?"

"Oh this is delicious!" Both males turned to the girl chowing down on the omelet.

Haru leaned on the door frame. "She looks hungry."

"I haven't eaten since lunch time yesterday!" She smiled. Inside she was still crying and quite sad but she couldn't focus on the bad things in life... at least right now. She didn't know about these strangers, why she was here, or anything at the moment, but she would rather try to make them happy rather than

feel pity for her unfortunate situation. "Thank you, I am unworthy to even eat this food!"

Ayame snapped his head back to Haru already closing the door saying, "Distressed my @\$\$."

"No wait!" The door shut.

Tohru finished up eating and took the Advil that Ayame provided. She opened one eye as she drank her tea. Could she really trust this man? The white-haired boy said he was a womanizer... she was sitting on a bed with a thin silky pajama shirt on, who knew if he would try and take her. She glanced down at her shirt noticing how expensive the clothing must be. Actually, her eyes traced the comforter, the drapes, and the furniture: the entire room was quite lavish.

"Are you done?" Ayame asked after a moment.

She nodded her head mutely. "I'll clean it up."

"Nonsense!" The man got up waving around his hand. Tohru leaned away from the man. He really changed moods quickly. "A young lady guest will never carry a single dish around this abode! Do not lift one pinky, Princess Honda, for we have people do this kind of menial work!" The man clapped his hands and suddenly two butlers swept away the dishes and cart. Ayame folded his arms and grinned to Tohru. "Now we will have you change."

Tohru glanced down at her attire and back up to Ayame bushing furiously. The man blinked wondering what she was thinking about now.

"By the way... um... the clothes I was wearing... and these clothes..." Tohru spoke out in broken sentences. Ayame blinked and suddenly got her message.

"Princess! What a dreadful thought! Of course we will provide you with a different set of clothing! Those rags you had before have been cremated. An appalling mess those so called 'clothes' were." Ayame trailed off into a tangent about how the clothes one wears presented their inner soul. Tohru shook her head clutching her pajamas tightly. Ayame was not getting her point.

"No, I was wondering who dressed and cleaned me!" She burst out. The room filled with silence and Tohru felt her cheeks only redden further. "Ah, excuse me for bursting out like that, I--"

"Ah, have no fear; we had our female tailor to do that! No, no, no," Ayame said while taking her hand, "the men of this house would never do something so impure as to undress a beautiful flower like you."

Tohru blushed and took her hand back, feeling her engagement band on her finger. She looked down at it for the moment thinking back onto her past. She stared up at Ayame, he now, also looking down at her ring.

"Ah, so um, Ayame-san!" Tohru quickly said placing her hands under the comforter to hid her ring from his view. "If you've burned my clothes, what is it that I should wear?"

"I thought you would never ask! Mine-chan!" Ayame clapped his hands. Tohru wondered if his hands

were like those 'clap on clap off' lamps. Things just... happened instantly when he clapped.

As expected another person popped into the room. A female that looked to be around Ayame's age bustled in with a bundle of clothing and a pair of shoes. "Hello! My name is Mine Kuramae. I took the opportunity to take your measurements while you were passed out drunk, knowing that Ayame here had burned your clothes. I was not so sure how you'd like this style but it is so rare that we ever have a female guest actually stay here! The girls usually just come and go but oop here you are! And clothing-less! I was going for picnic meets bookworm but I don't know if you wear glasses so I thought, 'screw the glasses!' and...!"

"Mine-chan!" The woman stopped rambling and looked up to the silver haired man. "Please let Honda-hime change in peace."

"Of course!" Mine gave Tohru the clothes and left with a friendly wave.

Ayame patted Tohru's hand and left without another word. She stared down at her clothes. Passed out drunk?

Another gasp.

Suddenly her memory filled in a little more. She'd run out of her wedding and didn't know where she was. She remembered walking around and tripping. Then she'd found a bar where a man kept giving her shots as she downed them all the while crying. She'd stumbled around in the dark and...

That's it. That's all she'd remembered.

Then how was it that she'd come here? She let the questions rattle around in her brain as she dressed in a pair of fitting jeans and a flowery top with a pair of wedges on her feet. She'd never really cared for high shoes but thought it was nice of them to provide clothes for her. She barely even knew these people!

And furthermore, Ayame had referred to himself as a king! And he kept calling her 'Honda-hime'. Since when did she become a princess? 'Princess Honda', how strange that sounded! And Mine talked of girls coming and going but never staying the night. The place she landed at couldn't have been a brothel of any kind if the women never stayed. She looked herself in the mirror not really caring what she looked like for the moment just making sure she looked presentable. She ran her hands through her already pre-combed hair (what HAD they done to her while she was passed out?) and reached for the door knob when another thought hit her.

What was she supposed to do now? She couldn't go back to her fiance, not right now anyway. Her mother and father passed away when she was still a young teenager, there was no family to go to, and her friends... her friends would probably hate her for not believing them when they said he was a bad choice. She didn't know where to go now. Maybe she could find an inn and figure out what to do until she could face her problem. She went to the bedside where Ayame had placed her few belongings. Really she didn't have anything on her beside her clothes and money.

Money! She started down at the five dollar bill. So she really had gone drinking apparently. She rubbed

her head. Things just were not going her way. But she couldn't give up! Never! Tohru made a determined face while marching over to the door and opening it. Ayame was there as she expected. She decided she could trust Ayame.

"Tohru-hime, you look marvelous!"

"I thought it was going to be 'picnic meets bookworm'." She laughed nervously.

"Ah, well that plan failed since Minda-chan could not decide on a pattern and instead made a more... simple outfit."

'I'm glad!' Tohru sighed mentally.

Ayame begin walking away from her, his hair shifting side to side. "Ayame-san, wait!" She ran over to him and started walking along his rater long stride. "Um... Ayame-san, why it is that you call me, 'Honda-hime'? And what exactly was Mine-san talking about with girls coming and going? And where on earth am I? Apparently I was drunk and I apologize for having anyone see me in such a manner. Honestly I do not care for alcohol!"

"Slow down, Tohru-hime!" Ayame laughed as they came to a pair of double doors. They stopped before it and he turned to look down at the younger woman. "It would be hard to explain but maybe if you saw it, you'd better understand it."

"Eh?"

Suddenly Ayame pushed open the doors with both hands to see a huge refined ballroom with a group of handsome young men standing in the middle, now staring up at Ayame and Tohru. The room was just as lavish as the room she'd stayed in but this room was bright and breathtaking. She felt as if she'd fallen into a Victorian age! She blushed crimson when the entire group of men smiled toward her.

"Welcome to the Zodiac Host Club." They all chanted simultaneously. Tohru's eyes widened and she looked up at Ayame giving her a grin. She had to be dreaming. What on earth was happening to her! She raked her brain for a recap of what just happened to her within the past 24 hours: Ran out of her wedding, got drunk, woke up in a lavish room, got a personal tailor to make her fine clothing, and now she'd come to a mansion full of handsome looking men! This had to be a dream!

Ayame bent down to kiss Tohru's hand lightly bringing her back to her current situation. "Welcome to our Host Club," he looked up from an angle making Tohru blush further, "Tohru-hime."

### 3 - Welcome to the Zodiac Host Club!

"AYAA!" Tohru screamed, ripping her hand away from Ayame. "W-w-what is this place!" She yelped.

"A Host Club, my dear girl!" Ayame watched her with the same confused look. He sighed and shook his head side to side with his hands up in defeat. "The Zodiac Host Club: a group of men with different personalities, each entertaining women only to see their happiness and token of a smile. No love, no everlasting promises, just good times for the ladies out there by us Sohmas, gifted with amazing beauty.

"This is a haven for rich women, like yourself, to be entertained by men. We hold parties and all sorts of fun activities for a small charge of course." Ayame laughed while putting two fingers to his forehead. "You have formally met the king (AKA 'President') of this Host Club."

"K-king!" Tohru asked taking a step back from the posing Ayame. "You are the king?" She threw her hands up. "This... this is insane! I thank you for everything you've done but m-maybe I should leave now."

She spun around only to be face to face with that white-haired boy. "Leaving so soon?"

"Eh?"

Ayame put a hand on her shoulder and used his other hand to usher her towards the group of men. "Why don't you have a taste of what we offer?"

"I- I-" Tohru stuttered trying to get herself together. To say the least she was perplexed by these men. Entertain women? A 'taste' of what they had to offer? This was all just too much!

Ayame cleared his throat, "First there is..."

"I can't have sex with random men, I'm n-not like that!" She finally burst out. The entire room hushed, even the crickets didn't make a peep. Tohru mentally smacked herself. She really had to think before she spoke out so bluntly. Things were just flying out of her mouth these days. Suddenly they exploded with laughter.

Ayame flicked his hair over his shoulder. "Honda-hime, don't be so naive! This is a Host Club, not some alleyway whore house! We entertain women, not sleep with them! Flowers, chocolate, promises we don't intend to keep..." The king inspected his nails. "A real get-away from reality if I do say so myself!"

Tohru just couldn't believe her ears... nor could she believe her eyes!

Ayame got a shine in his eyes as Tohru's eyes only began to swirl. "So as I was saying, what say you have a taste for what we offer?" He pushed Tohru forward.

"Hiro, the Wild Child type?" A teenage boy with a smug face turned to her.

"Hatori, the Cool type?" A man looking to be around Ayame's age merely grunted and blinked his eyes.

"Momiji, the Lolita type?" A boy looking to be around the 'wild child's' age smiled up at her while pulling a lollipop out of his mouth.

"Yuki, the Prince type?" A boy around her age turned around and gave her a charming smile.

"Hatsuharu, the Wild Card type?" The boy from before with peculiar white and black hair stared at her with a devilish smirk.

"Shigure, the Joker type?" Another man about Ayame's age looked over a book with a certain gleam in his eyes.

"Ritsu, the Feminine type?" A shy woman-- er, man glanced up at her with his hands tightly clasped.

"Or," Ayame tilted her face slightly towards him, "someone more like me?"

Tohru's head was spinning now. All these men couldn't possibly want to entertain women for a living! Could they? She backed up while making incoherent noises.

"Please, I really should be going. Thank you for the offer but..."

"You don't want to play with us?" She turned to see the blonde 'lolita' teen look up at her with child like eyes.

"No, no it's just that I'm not into this kind of thing-- but I respect what you do, really I do! I should just be on my way, I do not wish to cause you any more trouble than I already have! I am so unworthy to have been so drunk that you were forced to take care of me!" She apologized while inching toward the door. "So if you will excuse me..."

The man around Ayame's age spoke out, nearly scaring Tohru from his rather deep voice. All she'd heard thus far were not nearly as low and baritone as this man's voice. "Let her leave, Ayame. We do not force women to stay." He said.

Ayame blew a raspberry at the other man. "But she's so cute, I want her to at least enjoy herself, Hatori."

"Let her leave."

Ayame let his shoulders sag with a rather depressed look to his face. "Okay okay, you may leave, Honda-hime."

She bowed politely. "I really appreciate everything you've done..."

"We'll appreciate it more when you pay up." Hiro instantly responded sounding non-to-friendly.

"Pay... up?" She'd completely forgot about expenses!

Ayame raised an eyebrow. "We do not serve our guests for free, how else would we be able to make parties and all that fun stuff? Not to mention food, electricity, and so on." The man waved a hand at her, laughing freely. "But it isn't anything you cannot handle is it, Honda-hime?"

Tohru felt a rock drop in her stomach. She hated to ask but knew it would happen sooner or later. She only hoped they took I.O.U.'s. "Erm... how much... do I owe... you...?"

"300 dollars."

Okay she hoped they took extended I.O.U.'s.

"AYAA! I don't have that much money! I'm not rich at all in fact!"

Ayame gave her a perplexed look. "300 isn't that bad. You should have at least 300 dollars somewhere."

"I do, but...!" No, she'd never ask HIM for that money. And she'd spent any money on her at all on drinking the night before! She didn't have her purse with her identification, her debt or credit cards, she was practically a no one right now! These men could kill her and throw her body into a lake and no one would know who she was! Tohru sighed at the mental image and put a hand to her pocket fishing out the money she had.

"Will you accept a five for now?"

Ayame took the bill from her and then stared back at Tohru, shock written all over his face. "...Honda-kun... you cannot be serious."

The 'hime' horrific was replaced in her name by 'kun'. Guess she wasn't a princess anymore.

She was in deep shoot.

"I'LL PAY IT ALL BACK, I PROMISE!" She screamed. "I've run away from my wedding and I'm not from this city, I have no where to go, I have no family, my friends might disown me, I was drunk, probably blew any money I had away and, and..." Tohru shook her head. "I will work to pay off my debt, just don't kill me and throw my body into a lake! I don't have any kind of identification with me at the moment!"

The feminine man put a hand to his mouth. "The girl's gone mad."

"Told you we should have thrown her back onto the streets." Hiro muttered.

Tohru suddenly sank to her knees on the floor dejectedly. To top it all off, now she had a \$295 debt over her head. This day could not get any worse. She suddenly felt her face flush and she tried to back down the tears.

She felt a warm hand on her shoulder and she looked up to see that 'prince type' boy rub her back soothingly. He gave her a slight smile before turning to look up at Ayame.

"Do not worry, we will not kill you and throw your corpse into a lake." He muttered to her as an afterthought. "Brother," he spoke out so the room could hear him, "we cannot throw this woman out onto the streets."

"But she has to pay her debt!" Ayame stated matter-of-factly. "How else will she if she doesn't go out there and get a job? Even if she's not from here she has to pay it back! We are not a charity mind you, Yuki."

Yuki thought a moment and turned back to Torhu, who stared out at the parquet flooring with a blank look. So that was what happened to her.

The other night when he saw her frail being, he immediately wondered where she was from. Not every girl came walking through that door in a soiled, white dress, which now he presumed to be a wedding dress since Tohru said she'd run out of her wedding. She'd been drunk and depressed and didn't remember a thing. He could not imagine throwing this girl out with nowhere to go and feeling unstable at the moment about everything around her.

"Why don't we... let her work here?"

Ayame immediately spit to that idea. "Really, Yuki, do you think it would be good business to have a woman living in our home? The customers will see her and they might not take well to that! And also, this is strictly a bachelor's pad, women are only here as guests, customers, and only temporary visitors! The atmosphere for a delicate woman, like Honda-kun here, is not appropriate. Despite how adorable Honda-kun is, she cannot..."

"Please," Yuki interrupted. Ayame looked down to his brother, now with an almost pleading look. "She has nowhere to go."

The room fell silent again and Ayame stared down at the top of Tohru's head. To his surprise she got down lower, placing her head almost to the floor in humility. "Please... Ayame-san..." she spoke obviously trying not to burst out in tears again.

It broke his heart.

"She stays!" He exclaimed happily, grabbing the girl and hugging her. "You may stay and work here!"

Yuki got off the floor. "He makes up his mind quickly..." he muttered.

"Easily moved is more like it." Shigure laughed off to the side.

Ayame suddenly got a glowing in his eyes. "On one condition, Tohru-kun! You must work as the Host Club slave!"

Everyone turned at that. "Slave!" They all repeated.

"You must be at our beck and call! When Hatori needs a new cup of tea, you get it! When there's a piece of lint on Haru's coat, you pull it off!" He exclaimed while pointing a finger at Tohru. "And then slowly we



will release you from your debt!"

Hatori narrowed his eyes on Ayame. "Don't you think that's a little extreme?"

"Actually..." everyone turned to Tohru who's face was covered by her bangs. Suddenly she lifted her head to reveal an earnest smile of delight. "That sounds like a lot of fun!"

"Whaaa?" Hiro asked.

Tohru giggled noting everyone's reaction. "I'd like to see... what exactly a Zodiac Host Club does."

"She can't be serious." Hatori muttered.

Momiji looked almost at the brink of tears. "Ayame said she'd be the slave! That doesn't sound like fun at all!"

Tohru continued to smile despite her anxious worries within her as the group chatted amongst themselves.

"Oh, you know what?" Tohru stepped toward Ayame and slipped off her engagement ring. She stared at the rock but shook her head and placed it in his palm. "I... I hope that maybe if I give you this it would help my debt to you... a little bit. I don't know how much it costs but I hope it will help..."

Ayame stared down at the ring she'd given him. "I could not..."

"No! I mean..." Tohru lowered her voice and tried to give him the nicest smile she could amalgamate. "No... I want you to have it... it is not important to me right now, and I am really embarrassed that I had no money and also that I'd shown up on your door step uninvited. Please keep it."

She walked away before Ayame could protest as the older man only glanced down at the ring. It was an expensive ring made by only one of the top jewelers around. It was more than enough to pay off her debt. Whatever happened to Tohru must have been rough. Enough to try and throw her engagement ring away to a silly host club. He stared at her back as she went around trying to introduce herself properly and he turned back to the studded ring. He put it in his pocket and walked away going unnoticed by the rest of the members.

Yuki smiled in Tohru's direction hoping that staying with the club in this house would get Tohru back on her feet. Silently he turned his attention to the second story where he saw the 'other' member of the club. Yuki nodded to the other boy as the shadow walked away. The zodiac cat was the 'special' member of their host club. He was only to participate in the activities once a week to keep business 'fresh' as Ayame would say. It was a rarity that he would actually even think about taking in a girl he did not know. But the activities of their special member would wait for another time. For now Yuki looked away and turned his attention to Tohru. He wondered what kind of life would come into this house now that there would be a female residing within its walls.

## 4 - The lady and the host

It had been a week since Tohru began 'working' for the Zodiac Host Club. To her amusement, the group was actually quite charming.

To begin with, she first learned of what exactly the host club did. Around lunch time, girls would pour into the room like a swarm of bees each searching out their favorite host or whomever they chose. Others that wanted to be 'daring', as Ayame stated, would pick out a fortune cookie from a basket and read what zodiac member they would be entertained by that day. All the boys had their own zodiac animal name and for some reason the girls loved the names. Usually they used them as pet names while the boys would playfully flirt with them.

Tohru wondered how and why girls would spend their money and time this way. Then again she could see how this abode would be the perfect get-away. It was relaxing and the way these boys acted, it would make any girl happy. They would entertain the girls each in their own special way.

Tohru set down a fresh tea tray and stepped back to observe her new employers.

Starting with the youngest, Hiro was the 'wild child' type and the sheep. He had an arrogant attitude and an upturned nose. But his rough attitude somehow sent the girls coming. Nevertheless, Hiro never spared a moment to criticise Tohru's work around the home.

Next in line was Momiji the rabbit. Tohru couldn't help but fall in love with the adorable boy. He was the 'lolita' type. Momiji looked to be about Hiro's age but in actuality he was much older! Momiji was about Hatsuharu's age in fact! Girls loved how Momiji seemed so playful and young spirited-- but his age was so well hidden!

Hatsuharu the cow was next. As the week went by and Tohru got to speak with him she realized why he was called the 'wile card' type. His moods were almost as bad as a girl around that time of the month! He had two sides to him, black and white, as the club described it. He was actually aloof and calm but once his black side kicked in it was as if hormones struck the man in an instant. She'd never seen it yet, but from what Yuki had told her, it was not a pretty sight. Some girls liked to take the chance with Haru and see which side of the handsome man she'd get.

Yuki was the 'prince' type and Tohru could see why. Yuki, the rat, was one of the most requested hosts in the club. His charm and good looks normally earned him the highest quota. Such peculiar violet-blue eyes made many drawn into him. Not to mention Yuki was a nice person and easy to get along with once you've met him. Without trying he could normally charm a girl with only a few words. He'd told Ayame he did not care for it, but Ayame insisted that he join the club. Remarkable was the only word Tohru could describe it. Tohru found herself chatting with Yuki after work hours since he seemed to always be making sure she was alright.

Ritsu was the 'feminie' type. Apparently when the monkey was younger he had an inferiority complex and found it easier to dress like a girl. Behind the man's shy nature he was a sweet person only asking

to be accepted. Normally the girls would want Ritsu because they liked to please the host than the other way around. They would compliment him on his wardrobe, looks, and want to cheer him up. She found this relationship the most different from the others but hey, she wasn't complaining.

Ayame, Shigure, and Hatori were all roughly the same age.

Ayame-- oh excuse me. KING Ayame was the president of the Zodiac Host Club. As Tohru continued to live there, she noticed that the snake was quite the excentric president. His ideas came from no where, his voice always loud, his comments harsh but true, and his flirtatious nature rivaling that of Shigure. Nevertheless, Ayame really tried his hardest to see that things ran smoothly... although Hatori had to balance Ayame's eccentricity with his own level-headed-ness.

Oh and did I mention? Ayame and Yuki were brothers! Although, the two were poles apart. Apparently the two would always bicker about one thing or another. Ironic how Ayame was the King and Yuki was the Prince! Tohru sometimes had to break them up to prevent any bloodshed-- mostly on Yuki's part. Yuki had some form of martial arts as did Hatsuharu. They grew up together. One thing Tohru knew was apart from Hatori, Yuki could sway Ayame's decisions. Hence the reason Ayame let her reside with the Sohmas in the first place.

Next was Shigure. Shigure was the 'joker' type the the zodiac dog. Girls that had a good sence of humor normally requested Shigure. That was if they could handle his constant flirting and slight perverted-ness. Normally they did. Shigure was almost always carefree but when it came to serious matters, Tohru always thought Shigure was the one with good judgement. Though when he playfully flirted with her, Yuki normally sent him flying.

Finally was Hatori the dragon. Tohru actually never really talked to the man as much as the rest and he had the least quota for the entire party. He was the 'cool' type. Normally the shy girls would come to him and he would always treat them with utter most respect. He was a man of few words but when he did speak, he meant every single word. She often wondered what would make Hatori even consider joining this club...

"TOHRU!"

She snapped out of her thoughts and jumped up straight. "Yes, Momiji-sama!" She'd grown accustomed to calling each member as 'lord' during work hours.

The blonde boy jumped up into her arms and twirled her around with his momentum. "Tohru, Tohru, can I have another lolly pop?"

Tohru laughed nervously, "I don't know, you have had thirteen already, Momiji-sama."

"Pleeeeeease?"

"How about if you wait till dinner? I'm making dinner today."

Momiji's eyes lit up. Before Tohru had come to their home they always ate out or take in. Unfortunately everyone was a terrible cook, except Hatori, and could not chew down any more charcoal rich foods.

Even though Hatori knew how to cook, he simply didn't do it claiming, 'learn to do it yourself'. Today was the first time he'd heard 'I'm making dinner today' in what seemed like eons.

"Really? You're making dinner? Did you ask Aya-chan?" Momiji asked excitedly.

"It's going to be a surprise." Tohru said putting a finger to her lip. "So don't spoil your appetite okay?" She reached down to the tray. "I cut up some melon slices. How about that?"

Momiji cheered and grabbed one while thanking Tohru. He ran off to his next customer and plopped in her lap asking her if she wanted to play a game. Tohru shook her head and picked up her tray to refill Shigure's tea cup.

"Shigure-sama, would you like more tea?"

Shigure stopped laughing with the girl clasping his arm. "Tohru-kun! Oh I'd love more tea. Laya-hime, would you like some as well? Which type would you like?"

The girl blushed. "I don't know... what type do you like, Shigure-sama?"

Shigure tipped her face upwards. "Anything as long as I get to taste it from your lips."

"Oh, Shigure-sama!"

Tohru merely smiled and sweatdropped. She still couldn't understand why these girls loved to be talked to this way. As of the day she began working for them, she'd referred to them as 'sama' in front of customers to show that she was merely another servant. Just as Ayame instructed. But come closing time around five in the afternoon, the group would eat their dinner together and the normal names she'd use were always welcome. Everything in the host club was staged she decided.

She refilled Shigure's cup with Jasmine tea and did the same to the girl's cup before walking away hearing the pair giggle.

Had that been her and Sats--

Tohru frowned to herself. No, she would not think about him. She would NOT think about him! Slowly she turned back around to see the girl laughing at something Shigure said before slapping him on the arm. Tohru blinked and averted her eyes, away looking at a Mahogany coffee table leg. One week since she'd seen him. One week... and he still haunted her dreams.

Sometimes when she thought about it, and she didn't really like the way these men treated the customers. Even though they were just having fun and the girls were PAYING for the entertainment, didn't the men feel... awkward? Throwing these words around like they didn't mean anything? Didn't they ever think about a real relationship, not that of simply making girls happy?

Her heart constricted as she continued her train of thoughts while straightening the couch cushions. Didn't the girls hate it? Being lied to like that? 'You're beautiful. Your eyes are like the shining moon. I'd live a happier life with just one kiss from you.' But maybe these girls were not serious either. Everything

going on around her was only pretend... just an escape from reality.

She turned to the window.

'I love you.'

Those words hurt the most. Those words she promised herself would never be thrown around so casually. That's what Hatori told her. She must have been looking really blue one day and Hatori asked her what was wrong. Leaving out the details she told him that someone she loved didn't love her back even though he said he loved her. Hatori didn't ask any questions although she did get his eyebrow to raise. He'd simply told her that love was a strong word. Once you've said it to another person, you had better keep your word.

That was it.

Those three words that every girl wanted to hear meant so much to her. And deep down she still loved him. She didn't know why. She didn't want to, but an aching feeling consumed her whenever she thought about that cheater. She'd kept her word... but he didn't keep his. She walked towards the window lifting her hand to touch the cool glass.

"Heart of my heart, I love you,  
Life would be naught without you;  
Light of my life, my darling,  
I love you, I love you."

She leaned her head on the window frame singing lightly and barely above a whisper. She only wished the words of the song would not be true for her and her ex-lover. She wished she could say those words to someone who would only love her too.

"I can forget you never,  
From you I ne'er can sever.  
Say you'll be mine forever,  
I love... you."

"Wow."

Tohru gasped and spun around to be face to face with Yuki. He smiled and cocked his head to the side.

"I'm sorry to startle you."

"No, no, I should have been paying more attention!" She bopped her head lightly. "Silly me!" She scrambled for her silver tray and began setting down plates with some kind of expensive dips and crackers.

"Honda-san."

"Please, Tohru is just fine!"

"Tohru...-san." Yuki shook his head. "Tohru-san, you have a nice voice." Tohru blushed and thanked him quietly. "You should sing more often."

"Ah, you really think so, Yuki-sama?"

"I do."

Tohru gave him a weak smile. "I'm sorry I just don't like to sing in front of other people."

"You know, that song you were singing..." Yuki started off. "It sounds so sad." Tohru stopped in her tracks at that. "I mean, one shouldn't have to be nothing without the person they love, right? I think a person can live without the one they love... but they simply choose not to."

Yuki turned his attention to the constant chattering in the main hall, putting his hands behind his back as he did so. Tohru continued to stare at the prince of the host club. "Even though at our host club a man tries to make women happy, it's completely different when he's trying to make one woman happy. There are certain things that a man would need to say and certain ways a man would need to act when he really likes a girl, enough to love her even." Yuki turned to Tohru with a smile.

"I'm not sure why you ran out of your wedding, Tohru-san, and I'm not sure why you put up with all this nonsense that us hosts put up for women everyday when you yourself were told empty flirtings and lies at one time with someone that you really did love. But I suppose that is the difference. A host club does not intertwine with the word 'love'. There are no strings attached, and no way that a young lady's heart would be shattered."

Tohru raised her eyes to meet Yuki's. His speech was almost as if he'd read her mind. And suddenly she didn't feel as bad anymore. He was right: a host was a host, and love was love. She'd never seen any of the guys do anything initiating any intimate and real deep feelings. And she didn't have to beat herself over the head every time she thought about her ex-lover. She could... no, she would live without him.

She licked her lips and released a sigh. "Thank you, Yuki-sama. It seems like you were reading my mind. I had quiet a few things on it and you've just lifted a weight off my shoulders."

Yuki turned away. "Anytime, Tohru-san. I must get back to my table." Secretly, Yuki knew something troubled Tohru from the first day she started working there. It was just when he caught a small displeasured-look in her eyes after seeing Shigure flirt with the guest did he think about talking to Tohru, in directly of course, about the Host Club's number one rule: A Host was a Host and Love was Love. He sighed inwardly. What it felt like to be in love...

Back at the window, Tohru smiled and looked up at the ceiling. Suddenly she felt happy that she'd landed at the Zodiac Host Club. She had not felt this happy in a long while. With planning the wedding, her friends bogging her down about the man she was about to marry, and then finally realizing what a fool she was for loving a man like that, at that moment Tohru just felt happy. She decided she would try her best not to think of him anymore. She was here and he was out there having promiscuous sex with another girl.

And for some reason, she didn't care.

## 5 - Slave no more!

It was the following day when a sudden thought hit Tohru and it began bothering her a great deal. Enough to make her lose some sleep and throw the idea around her head for a good hour anyway.

It started the night before as she lay staring at the ceiling. She was thinking how lucky she was to meet these people when it suddenly struck her. How did she get there? Who took her in? She wondered why no one volunteered to tell her who took her into their home. It felt strange, like something was missing. She might as well properly thank the person that took her in. She guessed it was Ayame since he was the first one to meet her the day she woke up. But then again, Ayame usually liked to say everything that happened to him if it would make him look good. But he never said anything of the incident.

So, the following day at breakfast, Tohru cleared her throat gaining the attention of the men. "Um..."

"What is it Tohru?" Ayame asked. He leaned back into his chair while crossing his legs in a royal manner. "It's alright, please tell me what is wrong so I can help the common people of my kingdom."

Hatori shifted his eyes above his orange juice glass in Ayame's direction. "You act as if you were really a king."

"Like Tohru would be a common girl. She does most of the work in this house..." Haru added.

"Ayame does have a way with exaggerating his position." Shigure laughed.

Tohru twisted her napkin around her finger. "Well..." Should she ask? They never questioned her drunk state and why she ran out of her wedding so why should she question how she got there? They might ask her about it if she asked them how she got there. But it was a fair trade if they did ask her a question in return right?

"I was wondering... how... um... who brought me... here...?" she asked out slowly trying to decide whether it was a good idea to ask or not. Oh well, the question was out there now!

The tableware stopped and everyone's eyes turned to each other, giving each other knowing glances. Tohru felt their uneasiness and instantly tried to cover it up.

"Acutally, I don't want to know! All that matters is that I'm here, and that's that! Ah, um, more coffee, Richan-san?" She motioned the coffee pot toward Ritsu.

"Tohru-kun." She froze at such an emotionless voice from Shigure. "Tohru-kun, the person who took you in... well, he is the special host of the Zodiac Host Club."

"Special? Oh, so then I was right! It was Ayame-san!" She smiled. Whew, she was relieved for some reason.



Ayame stared at her. "What was that?"

"I said that it must have been you because you're the special host of the club! You're the king!" Ayame blinked and put a hand to his ear as if he didn't hear her. "I said you're special because you're the king!"

"Ahhh! Did you hear that? Did you hear?" Ayame suddenly got up and did a little cinematic twirl with shojo flowers hanging everywhere around him. "She called me special!"

"Oh yes... you're special alright..." Yuki muttered darkly as his older brother stood laughing with his hands on his hips. "Idiot."

Shigure stifled a laugh while covering his mouth. "Um... no it is not Ayame although I think you boosted his ego quite a bit with that one word."

"Ayame-niisan is so confident!" Ritsu chimed in admiring the president, now singing a song about his greatness.

"You have heard that old folk tale of the zodiac right, Tohru-kun?" Shigure asked.

"Ah, yes... the one with the cat?"

"Yes, well you see, there is one member of the club that you have not met."

"I'm guessing he is the cat?"

"How did you know there was a cat in our club?" Momiji asked her.

"Well... there was one more empty table in the far corner with a piece of paper with an angry cat face." Tohru said. "I... didn't know what that was all about, I thought maybe it was just suppose to be an empty table."

Hatori's eyes traced their way to a grinning Momiji. "Momiji, you need to take the drawing down."

"Aww I was only having fun."

"He will come after you later if you don't."

Momiji pulled his hat over his eyes. "Waah, I don't want him to hit me again!"

Shigure turned to Tohru again. "At any rate, I think he is scheduled to make an apperance today."

Tohru clasped her hands. "Oh really? That's so exciting, I can't wait to meet him then!"

"Ah, I doubt you will." Haru said rocking back into his chair.

"Hua?"

Ayame decided to join the conversation again. "You see, the cat is our special attraction. He only makes an appearance once a week thus he is our special host-- besides me of course. He does not particularly like to be a host but decided to do it on his own free will. We think he enjoys it but he won't admit it." Ayame paused. "And because he is our special host he is normally swarmed with girls from the moment he steps into the room. He can fill Yuki's daily quota in about three hours with the wild amount of people wanting to speak with him. Odd really since he's so cranky and violent."

Haru laughed. "Violent huh? I could whip his @\$@ anyday."

Yuki turned to Tohru. "That is also a weekly thing when the cat comes. We have one match between either Haru, him, or me."

"A match? Like fighting?"

Yuki shrugged. "It's no big deal, it isn't like there's blood, just a friendly match between us."

Tohru thought a moment and put a finger to her mouth. "So... what is his name?"

"Kyo." Yuki responded. "He's just about our age, Honda-san."

"Kyo..." she repeated. "I must thank Kyo-kun then." She glanced back at Yuki. "And Tohru is fine, Yuki-kun." The other boy only smiled apologetically.

Haru got up from the table to take his plate to the kitchen. "Good luck with that."

Tohru smiled at Haru's back. "Ah, by the way, Hatsuharu-san, would you like me to dress that wound again?" Haru spun around and stared out at the other men at the table before turning to Tohru. "I wouldn't want it to get infected, the way you fell down the stairway the other day..."

Haru snuck another glance around the table making sure none of the other guys were looking at him. "That would be helpful... Tohru..." He turned back and went into the kitchen. Suddenly the men pounced Tohru for questions.

"He actually fell down the stairs?" Momiji asked.

"What a clumsy boy!" Shigure laughed.

"Ah, he was startled by someone on his cell phone I think, and forgot there was a step behind him. It was an honest mistake." She tried to defend while raising her hands. She turned to Hiro at the end of the table, trying to change the subject. "Oh and Hiro-san, I checked your summer math homework and it all looked perfectly fine! Maybe I'll help you with long division with fractions later though, that seemed to be the only visible problem."

Hiro suddenly colored and hid his face behind a cereal box while muttering a thank you.

"Richan-san, I've finished up stitching the open seam in that beautiful green kimono of yours."

"Tohru-kun! That is Mine-chan's job!" Ayame exclaimed. "And I had no idea that you were skilled with needle and thread!"

Tohru beamed. "Well, I didn't want to call Mine-san all the way over just for a small stitching. It really was no problem. I'd hate to be a bother to you, an unworthy girl like me."

Ayame blinked and rested his hands on his chin. "Tohru-kun, you are a very helpful girl."

"Oh... ah thank you..."

"I don't think this house has ever run so smoothly, not to mention everyone seems to draw their conversations to you at one point or another throughout the day."

Tohru blushed and turned to everyone around the table now trying to look away from the girl. She suddenly felt so special. No one had ever paid her so much attention like this before.

"So from this day forward..." Ayame put both hands on her shoulders getting right in her face. "You no longer are the Host Club slave! I shall fire all our help and have you as our only helper."

"What?" Tohru asked out loud.

"I guess it would make sense since you really do most of the work now and do it better than any of our other help ever had." Shigure told her.

Ayame slammed his hand down on the table. "I have announced your new title as the very first Host Club Housekeeper!" Ayame touched Tohru's face lightly while meeting her eyes with his own. "Does that suit you... dear housekeeper?"

"Get off her, you perverted man!" Yuki reprimanded while shoving his older brother off the poor girl. "You should be ashamed of yourself, sicko."

"He should be called King Perv." Hiro said.

"King Perv, King Perv, Ayame is King Perv!" Momiji chanted while laughing and running around the table to hug Tohru. "Don't worry! Momiji will protect you from King Perv!"

Ayame looked to Hatori for help but the other man simply continued to read the newspaper. "You got yourself into this one, King Perv."

"Gure-san! Ha-san is not on my side!" Ayame complained to Shigure.

"I should say he wasn't, King Perv."

Everyone burst in laughter at seeing that no one was on Ayame's side, the king finally being overthrown. Ayame gave up and excused himself to see the preparations for that day's customers.

After breakfast, Hatori helped Tohru with the dishes and the pair made it out into the grandous hall.

Ayame appeared with a package under his arm. Everyone else in the room seemed to also have one of these mysterious packages and he was walking straight towards her. "Here you are, Tohru."

"No, 'Tohru-kun' today, Ayame-san?"

He laughed. "Not anymore. You are no longer the slave! You are a housekeeper and as a housekeeper you must be called and dressed like a housekeeper! Every week we have a theme in mind and create costumes for everyone. Splendid idea don't you think? Not to mention with my genius ideas, I have created a womanly outfit for you as well. I never really considered you a slave in this home but you really couldn't be called a member without proving yourself worthy!"

"But I'm not worthy..."

"Of course you are. Now, my housekeeper, go dress in the outfit!" Ayame laughed while walking away to inspect Momiji's outfit. "Splendid, Momiji-chan!" Tohru stared down at the package and walked towards the bathroom noticing a package on that normally empty table as well. She grinned and put a little extra hop in her step. She felt so happy being bumped up in the ranks! But even with the title of slave she wouldn't have cared. She had not felt this much joy in such a long time. But the feeling of being unworthy of any man was still on her mind.

Tohru opened the bathroom door and smiled nonetheless. She would have to be sure to thank Kyo as soon as she saw him today. She had to thank him for giving her so much happiness.

To be continued...

## 6 - Amber eyes

Tohru hummed lightly while making her rounds around the grand hall. Apparently this weekly event was a big hit since she'd never seen so many girls bustle in this room before. Tohru was almost afraid she would not be able to close the doors!

Haru pulled at the fabric of his clothes. "This is quite plain in comparison to your other works, Aya-niisan..."

Ayame brushed off his own sleeves. "But I must say it brings back good memories, Ha-kun." The king turned to give Shigure an impish smile as the other man was straightening his tie. "Wouldn't you say, Gure-san?"

Shigure laughed. "Good memories for us, but I'm not so sure 'Tori-san would agree." Shigure watched as Tohru passed by. "And such a costume it is!"

Haru continued to pull his shirt. "I still say it's less flashy than Ayame's other works..."

"But it looks so cute on Tohru!" Ayame exclaimed as Shigure hummed 'high school girls, high school girls, all for me!'

"Perverts." Yuki muttered in the background.

Ayame had picked out a school theme this week apparently. Everyone was decked out in a stylish high school uniform of red and chocolate browns with a gold embroidered emblem on their breast pocket with the initials Z.H.C. on it. Tohru grinned thinking back onto her old high school days with her best friends, Uo and Hana...

Thinking on her friends she suddenly felt sad. She should have listened to them when they told her that her fiance was bad news. Now she wouldn't be surprised if they did not want to speak with her again. She missed them so much, but still was not ready to face them. If only they'd see her now, living with 7... no 8 (Including the Kyo she was anxious to meet) handsome men, and her being their housekeeper!

"Tooorhuuu!" Momiji called out to her jumping into her arms as always. "You look so cute today! It really suits you well compared to that black smock Aya-chan used to make you wear!" Her outfit was just like the other men except she was decked out in a plaid skirt of red and brown with a more feminine red coat and a fitting white-collared blouse underneath. And just like the other boys, she also had an emblem and red tie around her neck.

Tohru let Momiji down feeling her arms give in to his weight. Sometimes she still couldn't believe he was only two years younger than her! "Thank you very much, Momiji-sama."

The small boy grinned and pointed to the empty table. "Kyo should be here soon so maybe you can go wait over there before all the girls start to swoon him. It would be very hard to even get one word."

"Momiji-sama..." Tohru started off while licking her lips with a question on her mind. The pair watched a few girls pass by while admiring the host's costumes. "...Why is it that you all seem to know so much about Kyo-sama and yet I have never seen him at all?"

The younger boy thought a moment and smiled while stretching his arms up high in the air. "Well, Kyo is the special host, like we said, and he doesn't live in the main house with all of us, nope nope, he lives just outside the main house." He turned to the largest window in the entire room, the one that went all the way from the ceiling down to the floor taking up almost the entire middle of the wall. "Do you see that small house off to the right?"

"Ah... yes, I can see it."

"Well that's where he lives."

"Why does he live all alone like that?"

Momiji shrugged. "Kyo was always the one that liked to be alone. Maybe that's why Aya-chan labled him as the cat since technically the cat is not part of the zodiac." He turned away from the window. "But actually Kyo does visit the main house more than you think he does. He is just kinda like that, sneaky, now that you're here."

Tohru thought a moment. "So is it... like he is avoiding me?"

"I guess we'll find out today." Momiji laughed and hopped away almost reminding her of a rabbit.

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About one hour into the festivities, a bell was heard throughout the room making everyone turn to the bell ringer. Yuki put the bell down and smiled. "Welcome ladies to our weekly event. I hope that you are all enjoying yourselves and if there is anything we can do for you please let us know. I know you all have been waiting for him so without further adieu, I present the Zodiac cat."

Tohru had to cover her ears as the room erupted in squeals and cheers. Such pandemonium in only one second, and this Kyo person wasn't even in the room yet! Behind Tohru was Shigure, Hatori, and Ayame sitting with earmuffs over their ears enjoying their tea as if there was no noise at all.

"You'll get used to it." Haru chuckled seeing Tohru's eyes swirling as girls pushed past her.

"Ahh..."

Suddenly the vivid orange hair startled Tohru as her eyes stopped swirling and she blinked those beautiful sapphire eyes at the man before her. He was also decked out in the costume Ayame had provided, though he had a bit of a rough look to him. His shirt tail was not tucked in all the way, three of his shirt buttons were undone and the tie hung loosely around his neck. The way he stood it looked as if he was not exactly interested in all the girls staring and gasping at the man before them. His hands were shoved deep in his pockets and his eyes were closed as if thinking really hard about something else. Suddenly he looked up and Tohru felt him take her breath away. He was staring right at her with the

most peculiar shade of amber eyes she'd ever seen.

She could see how all the girls in the room could go crazy about this man.

Kyo stared at her for a moment longer before a slight moue reached his lips and Tohru could feel her cheeks redden as she looked away. 'What was that?' She had to wonder as she escaped into the kitchen to busy herself with snacks and tea.

From outside the kitchen she could hear his voice greeting all the girl's fawning over him. "Hello..." Another round of squeals went around the room and Tohru laughed quietly. These girls really were simple minded weren't they? It was like they had a fan club or something. But that voice sounded so familiar, like she heard it before. It had to be him then!

Tohru emerged from the kitchen and suddenly remembered she wanted to thank Kyo. She stomped her foot lightly because she'd forgotten her mission. Why was it when he looked at her her heart just raced like the Indy 500 and her mind just went completely blank? Momiji did say she should have waited by Kyo's table. Oh well, maybe she would get a chance later on. Tohru put an apron on and balanced two trays on either hand before walking out of the kitchen. She walked over to Ritsu's table, which was the closest one to her at the moment, to see that only a few girls were at his table.

The man smiled shyly to Tohru. "Hello, Tohru-san."

She made a slight wave while placing down a plate of freshly cut fruit from the market. "Ah, hello, Ritsu-sama."

"Ritsu-sama," one of the girls asked, her eyes on Tohru, "who is this girl?"

Ritsu's face suddenly looked of total abhor. He slammed both of his hands on his head screaming, "I am SO SORRY! I have yet to introduce the one person who is not a Sohma living in this HOUSE! I am SORRY! I wish to jump out the WINDOW and let the glass stab me a million times over!"

Tohru's entire face widened as she tried to calm the man down. After a moment Ritsu bit his finger as one of the customers rubbed his hand gently. "I'm sorry for my outburst. Let me try again." He extended a hand towards Tohru with his eyes shut tightly. "This is a very special guest in our house. She is our temporary housekeeper, Tohru Honda."

The girls eyed her suspiciously and Tohru understood why Ayame didn't want her to live with the men in the first place. She decided to play along as a strict employee in front of the customers. She'd hate to make them lose business over her.

"It is nice to meet you." Tohru said with a deep bow. She turned to Ritsu. "Ritsu-sama, please call if there is anything I can get your clients."

Ritsu made a nod, fluttering his rather long eye lashes at the girls. "I'd hate to bother you, Tohru-san. Even if it was just a small favor for these wonderful girls before me..."

"No, no it isn't any trouble at all!" She put a fist to her chest. "It is my duty to do anything I can for the

hosts!"

Ritsu threw his hands up into the air once again losing control of his emotions. "Oh, no I've made Tohru-san go through so much trouble for ME! I'm SO SORRY! I cannot believe I am even able to speak out to her like this. Oh, God, please strike me down with a lightning bolt for my disgraceful actions!" He yelled out while gripping at his head.

"Ritsu-sama!" The girls swooned while hugging him. "Oh no, Ritsu-sama, you did nothing wrong! If it was someone, God should strike us with a lightning bolt for not seeing how distressed you were! Please spare Ritsu-sama and strike us!"

"No! Spare them and strike me!"

"No, us! We admire Ritsu-sama too much for him to die!"

Tohru backed away from the group now all on their knees pleading to the heavens. Sometimes she just didn't understand their relationship...

She turned away and set down new napkins for a group of ladies sitting at the coffee table, her thoughts still running around the idea of finally meeting Kyo. She stole a glance at his table, seeing a swarm of girls hovering over the zodiac cat. She sighed, 'wonder what he's like.'

She walked over towards Hiro now completely void of any guests. He sat tall with one leg crossed over his knee and his arm over the back of the couch. His attention turned to the housekeeper. "What is it?"

"Well, you looked so bored, Hiro-sama."

"And you care because?"

Tohru only offered a small smile. "Well with all the commotion around I thought I'd just see how you were doing. Is there anything I can get you?"

"No. I'm fine thank you. What, you don't think we were all fine before you came? I can get things I need by myself thank you." He responded sharply.

Tohru sat next to the younger boy. "No, that's not it. I only want you to be happy... but you're always so angry." She stared at the ceiling. "And you know, you're so young, why decide to join a host club?"

"That's none of your business." He quickly replied.

"Or is there something you hope to gain from being a host?"

Suddenly Hiro's mouth snapped shut and he stared at Tohru as if considering her for a moment. He spit to the idea and turned away. "No."

Tohru sat there for a moment. He was still a young teenager, maybe about fifteen or sixteen. What business did he have wanting to be a host club member? Maybe as a summer job? But there were



plenty of other things for a boy his age to do besides flirting with women!

"Don't you have somewhere else to be?" He asked finally, her presence grinding on his conscience. "Or are you going to just space out?"

"Ah, um, okay then..." Tohru got up and quickly walked towards Shigure also void of customers. It felt strange that she could talk to the Sohmas during business hours. She just didn't have anything to do since most of the day's quota were around Kyo.

Shigure waved her over with a friendly smile. "Tohru-kun!"

"Ah, it is a surprise to see you do not have any customers right now, Shigure-sama." Tohru said while holding the silver tray against her chest.

The older man sighed and put his feet up on the lounge chair working up a dramatic pose. "As soon as Kyo enters the room all the pretty girls go fluttering away. They leave me cold and yearning for attention." He whinned while putting a hand over his head. "Oh woe is me." He opened one eye in Tohru's direction. "Actually, shouldn't you be over by his table as well? I remember distinctly that you wanted to thank him."

Tohru waved her hands in front of her. "Oh, no he looks too busy right now, I'd hate to impose on his time with his customers. Maybe later! You know, when it's around closing time." She said. She patted Shigure's head making sure he wasn't sick for real. "Is there anything I can get you right now? You do look a tad bit pale. Maybe some tea? What can I get you?"

At her slightest touch Shigure pulled her wrist down and had Tohru sitting in his lap, straddling him by the waist as the tray she'd been holding clattered to the ground. His expression darkened slightly.

"You can get me a little kiss..." he said in a husky voice. She only stared at him wide eyed. Tohru was not all that afraid since there were a ton of other people in the room, but more confused if anything. Her eyes widened as she felt herself pin Shigure down beneath her. Her heart raced old feelings welting up in her chest. She had not been in such a position since...

"What are you doing to her!" Suddenly Tohru felt herself tumble backwards as Shigure's body was slipped out from under her. She buckled her knees together while pushing down her skirt, that was riding up. 'Why did Shigure do that? He, he wouldn't do something like that.' She wondered. She looked up with wild eyes when her heart skipped a beat.

The orange-top held Shigure by the collar. She couldn't believe her eyes as Kyo's face looked of pure murderous rage while Shigure's face remained blank with only a goofy grin on his face. She could feel the heat in Kyo's amber eyes as he gave a rather frightening glare at the older man. Why had Kyo come? Wasn't he in the mist of all those girls? And why did Shigure suddenly grab her?

She glanced back and fourth between the two men wondering what on earth was going on.

"What," Kyo asked again in a lower voice, "were you doing to her?"

## 7 - Oops!

In the mass of people, Ayame's silvery hair appeared. "Gure-san! What on earth are you doing?" Ayame asked obviously shocked at his friend's behavior. Thankfully all the guests were being steered away. He took one glance at the scene before him, Kyo strangling Shigure and Tohru looking between the two just as confused as everyone else. He glared daggers at Shigure while clicking his tongue. "To push yourself onto a young lady like that, nonetheless our guest and housekeeper!"

Kyo didn't let go on his steel grip on the older man but Shigure still looked indifferent to the whole scene. He glared at Shigure, his anger boiling over the top. "Why the hell are you grinning!" Kyo finally barked. The way Shigure just stood there smiling was beginning to piss him off.

Tohru got up off the couch trying to give Shigure the benefit of the doubt. "Ah, maybe it was an accident! Shigure-san would not..."

"Oh," Shigure turned to her with a heated glance. "But I would."

"Eh?"

Kyo shook Shigure rather violently. "Damn you, you sick Inu!"

Momiji, Hatori, and Haru escorted all the young ladies out of the hall, requesting that they close early. The girls all tried to see what the commotion was all about and why Kyo had got up in such a hurry, disappearing in the mob of other girls, pushing them out of his way. The other members of the host gathered around Kyo, Shigure, Tohru, and Ayame as the rest came later.

"But, Kyo-kun!" Shigure finally directed his voice to the younger man. Everyone's eyes widened when Shigure threw his grin at Kyo, which startled him. "Seeing how you suddenly appeared half way across the room in record time to save Tohru-kun from such a rascal like me shows how much attention you were really paying your customers today, eh?"

All eyes then focused on Kyo, his face freezing in place. 'Ha. He was caught.' The dog thought with amusement. Now that Kyo was momentarily stunned, Shigure released himself from the younger man's grip and dusted off his jacket. Kyo simply stood frozen in place as he continued to glare at Shigure. The older man tapped Kyo on the nose. "Just as I thought! Kyooo is a stalker, Kyooo is a stalker!" He sang.

"AM NOT!"

Tohru couldn't help but flush a pretty shade of cherry pink. Kyo... Kyo had been staring at her of all people? And was that same color also staining Kyo's face?

Shigure laughed. "Then how was it that you saw what was happening here if you had not had your eye on our precious flower the entire time you walked into the room?" Shigure asked matter of factually. He walked over to Ayame patting his back. "I believe I won the bet, Aya."

The once concerned king chuckled lightly as he shook his head in disbelief. The king turned away while fishing out some money from his pocket. "Well, I never."

Hatori raised an eyebrow. "Why am I not surprised that you were playing along?"

"Just a friendly bet, Ha-san! And besides, I was always good with acting," Ayame laughed while a few coins dropped into Shigure's hand.

"Acting like an idiot." His younger brother growled. Yuki's fist itched to punch his brother. Rather than defending Tohru, he was betting that Kyo wouldn't have his eye on her. Secretly, Yuki was happy Ayame lost. Served him right. "Some king you turned out to be."

"Oh, Yuki, have faith in your brother! My plan will fall together in the end, you will see."

"What plan! It's more than obvious that you don't make plans but rather do things on whim!"

"Exactly my plan! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"I'll skin you alive..."

"But look, dear brother!" Ayame pointed in the direction of Tohru and Kyo. "Look at the love struck Kyonkichi in action! And what a lovely blush Tohru has as well!"

Momiji stood next to Haru and sucked in a slow breath while putting his hands to his face. "Kyo has the hots for Tohru!"

Haru pulled out a camera and snapped a picture.

"I-I was just...!" Kyo couldn't come up with a likely excuse for having his eye on the girl. Ever since he'd brought her into the house, the air changed. It just felt better like something was lifted from the house. The other guys did not bother him as much for some reason and he couldn't remember the last time he'd had a home cooked meal. (Although he'd tried to be sneaky about taking leftovers.) And her voice! He did not do it intentionally but everytime he heard one giggle, one word, anything from her mouth he just stopped glued to the floor. It reminded him of the first time he saw her. Did she remember him? Did she know that he was the one that brought her here? What was it about her that made him act out so... so... stupidly?

But with her presence in the house, it still made him nervous. He decided it was better if maybe he did not associate with her at all. The sooner she was well on her way, the better it would be. That was his logic anyway.

But now here he was standing before this angel that dropped from heaven. And he was tongue tied for the first time in years.

He snuck a glance at Tohru afraid to see if she was going to scream or something but she only fiddled with the hem of her skirt while blushing a deep red.

Yuki tapped Kyo on the shoulder. "Kyo... you're drooling."

"GAH! Ju-just leave me alone!" He pushed past all the other guys and left through the back door to his little house just outside.

Tohru realized he was about to leave when her head snapped up and she put a hand out to stop him. "Oh no, please don't go yet!" The door slammed and she could hear his fading foot steps jogging down the cement walkway. She put her hand down. "I... still wanted to thank you."

Momiji touched Tohru's arm lightly. "Tohru, I think Kyo is just a little startled. He will come back." The small boy winked. "Who wouldn't come back if they knew a cute girl like you was here!" The boy laughed as Hatori dragged him away.

"That's enough from you."

Shigure then folded his arms together while leaning on a wall. "Tohru-kun, I apologize. It was really just an act, a bet between Aya and I to see if Kyo-chan still has any manly hormones in his body. I am sorry if I have offended you in any way. Is there anything I can do to repay you?"

"Get on your knees and beg for forgiveness." Hiro muttered even though he knew that Tohru would never say such a thing.

"Oh no! Please don't apologize, it's really okay!" She laughed lightly. "Surprised I guess is the word I should use to describe it..." she didn't mention the other feeling that rose within her when Shigure had pulled her over like that. She had not been in such an intimate position like that since him.

Shigure laughed. "You should win an award, Tohru-kun! You are playing your part perfectly!"

"My... part?"

"Tohruu!" The girl turned her head to see Momiji running away from an annoyed Hatori. "Ha'ri is scaring me!"

"Don't drag Tohru-san into this." The seahorse motioned for Momiji to get away from the housekeeper.

Tohru felt Momiji tug at her coat from behind looking much like a child trying to run away from an angry parent. "What happened?" She asked already forgetting Shigure's comment. Conversations in this house seemed to change every five minutes.

Hatori turned away while rubbing his temples. "Well, having closed early and apologizing to all those girls for an early close made a considerably large dent in today's count. That, and we're sending each girl a bouquet of roses as an apology." His eyes shifted to Tohru. "Don't worry. This was none of your fault so you do not have to worry about paying back for it."

Tohru let out a relieved breath.

"But you see, Momiji here is not chipping in his share for the flowers."

"I can't, I can't!" Momiji said stepping away from Tohru finally. "I'm saving my money right now, Ha'ri! Can't you put me on tab or something? Ya know, like at bars and stuff? I promise to pay you back, please, Ha'ri?" He pleaded. Hatori considered the late teen and nearly walked away, giving up. Sometimes that boy could be as stubborn as a mule. That and he didn't feel the need to hear Momiji's endless crocodile tears. Hatori already had enough problems on his plate as it was.

"I don't know what you're saving for but fine. I'll record this in our accounting."

"Thank you, Ha'ri!" Momiji smiled.

Tohru felt her feet turn in at the question rolling in her mind. "What are you saving for, Momiji-kun?"

The blond boy shook his head 'no'. "Nuh uh, Tohru! It's a secret." The aura around the boy suddenly grew solemn as she blinked. In an instant he grinned again. "Bye bye." He skipped away.

Tohru left that thought and turned her gaze to the back door where Kyo disappeared into his lonesome house. Why didn't he stay inside the main house she wondered. Now that she thought about it, the leftovers sometimes disappeared the next morning. He must have been sneaking them at night. Maybe he would rather have a proper meal rather than cold leftovers.

She put a hand to her head, blowing her brown bangs away from her eyes. What was that feeling within her just at the sight of Kyo and what about the entire rescue? Shigure said he was only joking but still Kyo had come to her rescue. He was protecting her even though he barely knew her. She guessed she could say the same for all the Sohmas. They were all being so kind to her. She closed her eyes, thinking of something that she could give Kyo in return for his noble actions.

High above the house, a light rumble sounded, noting that a storm was cooking up. She put a finger to her mouth. "I guess it's going to rain..."

A hand patted her lightly and she looked up into Ayame's confident-filled face. She wondered where on earth he got all of that confidence...

"Kyonkichi hates rain."

"Eh?"

Ayame turned to the window with Tohru. "He doesn't like rain. Normally before bed if it's raining, Gure-san forces him outside to check all the gates are locked." Ayame chuckled while flipping some hair over his shoulder. "I suppose it's Gure-san's way of torturing him."

"That's terrible!"

"Not so! Had it not been that fateful night that Kyonkichi was turning in he would not have met you." Ayame looked on with a serious pose. "As it is, Kyo has never fallen in love before."

Tohru's head turned instantly at that. Never... had he fallen love?

Ayame's stance and voice grew serious, matching the gray clouds blanketing the sky. "It might not be my place to say this but Kyo's parents died when he was very young. All he used to do was spar with Yuki and Haru-kun trying to beat away all his anger. Usually it ended up with him getting knocked out. As he got older he began staying with the family in this house for the summer while his master was away. But..." Ayame paused, "...there were some... changes with the hosts. Kyo did not feel like he belonged here anymore and decided to move into the guest house just outside."

"Changes." Tohru repeated.

How sad Kyo must have felt. She knew when her own parents passed away it was hard despite how she'd continue to smile. She wondered how Kyo must have felt. So alone like he had no where to turn. And when he finally found himself with the other hosts, there was something that made him feel unwelcomed. Tohru suddenly clenched her fists and raised her head to Ayame. "How can I help him, Ayame-san? I want to help Kyo-kun very much! Anything, please just tell me what to do!"

Ayame's face softened. Inside he was glad that Kyo had pulled this girl into their home. Truthfully, he at first wanted to throw her out, but seeing how this must have been this first female Kyo had ever had enough consideration to bring inside he decided she could at least stay the night to recover. But it seemed that the girl was growing on him. It must have been fate... maybe this Tohru Honda would be the other half to Kyo. He could almost feel her engagement band burning in his pocket. He sorely wished that she would stay with them as long as she could.

But for now...

"Ayame-san?" Tohru asked again. "Please, just tell me what to do! I want to help any way that I can."

Ayame raised a finger under Tohru's chin, tilting it up. "How about a delicious early dinner, Tohru?"

"Y-yes!"

He'd let time tell.

## 8 - Love fool

"Rain again." Tohru stated flatly. Ever since the incident with Shigure and Kyo it had been raining every day three days straight. The customers were not coming in due to the horrific storm occurring on this day in particular. Forecasters predicted a devil of a storm to come in later that afternoon so she decided to make an early dinner. As she went away cooking she hummed lightly as the light pitter patter of rain knocked against the window over the sink.

"Mama tells me I shouldn't bother  
that I ought to stick to another man  
a man that surely deserves me but I think you do!"

She laughed while forming the shape of a rice ball. She couldn't remember the last time she'd sung so happily.

"So I cry, I pray and I beg

Love me love me  
say that you love me  
fool me fool me go on and fool me!"

Tohru continued to hum the tune while preparing the rest of the meal and wandering around in her own thoughts. She never noticed the small guest house across the back of the house until Momiji pointed it out, but now she found herself staring at it every so often. She only wished Kyo well.

She began wrapping up a small bento box and smiled at her fancy work. She couldn't remember the last time she ever made anyone a small meal like this before. On occasion she used to make lunch for Uo and Hana but she had not seen them in a long time. Eating alone, she didn't care too much about how it looked since she was eating alone. She placed the lid on the box and put it in a small blue bag with drawstrings. It looked very nice. Since she'd come to live here, she'd already forgotten how long she'd been a guest. It felt like she'd been with the Sohmas for much longer than just a few weeks. Her culinary was also getting to it's top perfection. She only hoped it would suit Kyo's tastes. He never said anything but she wondered if he was only eating the meal out of politeness.

She sat at the kitchen chair and began placing on her galoshes and raincoat, tucking the bento box tightly within her coat.

"Honda-san..."

Tohru knew the voice already and laughed while giving Yuki a pleasant smile. "Really, Yuki-kun, Tohru is just fine!"

Yuki shook his head and stood directly in front of Tohru as she tugged a rainhat onto her head, hiding those blue ribbons in her hair. He felt a small smile tug at the corner of his mouth. She looked so

adorable. "Tohru-san, why do you insist on going to that baka-neko's house? He's perfectly capable of coming over here if he was that hungry."

"Oh, but I'd hate to make him upset. I know how much he doesn't like the rain-- maybe he's really like a cat or something-- and it really is no trouble to me at all! And besides," Tohru frowned slightly, "Kyo-kun must be lonely. It wouldn't hurt to visit him."

Yuki sighed and only straightened her cap to her raincoat slightly over her head. "You, Tohru-san, are really too kind." The girl smiled and made her way to the door. "Please be careful, the rain is really picking up. If you'd like, I'll walk you over--"

"No, no, I'll be fine! It's only a moment away from the main house. I'll be fine, but thank you!" She opened the door and stepped outside. "I'll be going now!"

"Come back safely."

Tohru hurriedly ran for the small house not too far away as Yuki watched her knock the door and enter the house. He only chuckled to himself thinking about how he was so used to her being there, seeing her flitting around the house like the busy bee she was.

Since she'd come to live with them, Yuki found that talking to her was pleasant. More so than talking to the males in the house anyway. He'd just pick up a book, find Tohru, and sit in an empty chair reading, while she hummed and went about her housekeeping. Yuki insisted that he help her but she always told him it was no trouble at all and she wanted to work off her debt herself. She was very happy when he told her she was more than 3/4 of the way to her goal. And despite all the housework she did, she looked like she enjoyed it. In fact, he'd never seen the house look so clean. She even went through the trouble of finding a vase and placing assortment of flowers in it. The main house was looking more like a home rather than a bachelor's hog pin. She was probably always lost in her own thoughts as she cleaned but every once in a while he caught her off guard when she thought he was too busy in his book.

It was a face of worry, anxiousness, and worst of all sadness.

He wanted to know, why was it that she looked sad? Was it running out of her wedding? He thought more on the topic noting that there had not been anyone coming around to look for the girl at all. Not a word, not even a rumor. Yuki narrowed his eyes at that. Some groom her fiancée must be.

Yuki knocked the thoughts from his mind, not wanting to curse a man he'd never even met. There must have been something good about him had Tohru accepted his proposal at all. She did not seem like a shallow girl either-- a bit of an air-head-- but loveable all the same. He turned to the counter to see Tohru had left him a small snack. He smiled and picked up a carrot stick. It seemed that Tohru already predicted that he'd come in to the kitchen to see what she was up to.

Despite the every now and then glances at Tohru's sad face, Yuki also noticed that she didn't look as broken down as when she first arrived. She seemed to be revived and full of life as the days went by. He did not want to see her so sad and crying ever again. He'd grown to love her like a sister. Tohru was more relatable than his rather loud older brother anyway.



And what of the day when Tohru would finally fulfill her debt? Would she walk away from them forever? After he'd just grown to have her around the house, her kindness and bumbling attitude, everything would just suddenly vanish? Like she was never even there, everything would just go back to the way it was. And then where was Tohru to go?

Yuki bit into the carrot a little harder at the thought of Tohru crying again. He swore until the day that Tohru was completely safe he would watch over her. He took one more glance at Kyo's house and walked out of the kitchen to see what Haru was doing. He didn't ever want to see her so unhappy ever again.

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Kyo punched the air in repetition when a sudden knock came to the door. Without having to think about it, he already knew who it was. Every day since he met Tohru, the girl just showed up on his door step bearing her home-cooked meals. Usually he would come in the kitchen unnoticed and just grab a small bite or cook something himself in his little home. He hated to admit it but, her cooking was better than his.

He went to answer the door to see a slim yellow figure smiling up at him. "Hello, Kyo-kun!"

Kyo pushed himself back to let the girl into the house. "Come in..."

Tohru continued smiling as she draped her coat and hat on a hook by the door. She stared at it for a moment before turning to Kyo. "It looks like you put a nice hook for your coats here! You don't want to lay your coat on that box anymore?"

Kyo closed the door and turned away blushing. The only reason why there was a hook now was because she always came over. He'd normally just throw his coat on an empty cardboard box he'd use as a side table, but as he grew accustomed to expecting the girl to come over, he decided putting up a hook would be a bit more... considerate.

"The box was getting soggy..."

Tohru panicked. "I'm so sorry! Was it my coat that was making everything wet? I'll pay for a new box-- no a real table! I'm sor..."

"It's fine!" Kyo shouted at her instantly quieting the entire room. He looked away. "Um... no it's okay, I was planning on... just throwing the box away..." Tohru stepped closer to him.

"Did you just move in here? I-I mean, there are just still so many boxes here that you use as furniture is all..." Her heart jumped when Kyo turned his eyes on her looking actually gentle. She still remembered the first day she'd visited him. They both felt awkward as she constantly thanked him for taking her in, and how she really didn't drink but was just so upset she threw all caution to the wind the night he'd found her. He'd only ate the small meal she brought out to him silently while never looking her in the eye. But now, this must be the first time he'd ever looked at her in the eye since the first day she actually met him at the host club. And his eyes still took her breath away.

"I used to live in the main house..."

"Oh, yes! Ayame-san told me that! But he said there were some changes and you..." Tohru trailed off thinking how Kyo moved out. She wondered what it was that made him move out. Suddenly Kyo's face scrunched up and he looked angry. "Ayyyyyaaaa, was it something I said? Oh, I'm sorry!"

"You... you really shouldn'y come to visit me... Tohru..." Kyo spoke out trying to control his anger. The sudden thought of why he moved out reminded him of the girl's presence in his house. She shouldn't be with him.

Tohru took a cautious step closer to Kyo so they were only inches away from each other. His face blushed as she looked up with worried eyes. "But you're so alone. Doesn't that bother you?"

"As long as I'm away from you it's fine by me!" He shouted out, backing away from her. Instantly he wished he took back his harsh words. He didn't mean that. No, he really did not mean to say those hurtful words.

Tohru's eyes widened as they glistened with unshed tears. She wanted to be friends with Kyo. He really did remind her of the lonely cat in the zodiac story. It made her heart sink at the thought of Kyo hating her presence. She really was dimwitted. "I... I just..."

Kyo felt it twist his heart as he watched her tear up. He barely knew this girl and here she was making him start to feel... feel so hurtful. No one had ever shown him such kindness. Taking time out to go visit him, make meals for him, talk to him. No one did that even when he used to live in the main house. He was normally on his own just doing his own thing, but here she was trying to be nice while he was just yelling at her. But this was for the best, wasn't it? She couldn't be hanging around him despite how comforting her being there with him was. And here he was doing nothing but making her cry in return for her kindness. The girl that was making his heart rip apart. But he had to make her leave.

Kyo walked to the door. "You should go."

"But I..."

"Just get out!"

Tohru jumped at his harsh tone and ran for her coat and shoes. She slipped it on and before leaving she turned to Kyo with hurt, painful eyes. He started back at her waiting for her to run away, slap him, do something. But she just stared at him blankly, rain drops sliding around the brim of her hat as she glanced away. She sniffed and looked down as she placed the bento box in his hands clasping his with her own hands. He felt his face warm at the contact.

"I...I just made this for... you. If you were hungry that is. Y-you don't have to eat it..." She swiftly turned away hiding the tears and Kyo felt like dirt. No he felt lower than dirt.

Just to see those eyes filled with tears that he made fall, it made his heart ache. He'd never felt any bond so strong to the girl that just fell onto their door step. Her light smile, her beautiful brown locks, and those expressive eyes that first caught his attention. And now a frown was shoved in front of all of that. He

wanted to punch something. How was it that one girl could make him act so stupid! Angrier than normal! Foolish! Like a total asshole! He ground her teeth together as he leaned against the door frame. He wanted to run out and tell her he didn't mean to yell... but this was for the best.

Wasn't it?

With rather solemn eyes he watched Tohru slosh through the mud returning to the main house.

'I'm such a fool.' She thought, salty tears mixing with the cool wet rain. 'I don't know why he makes me feel so happy when I'm with him, but he suddenly puts up a wall and pushes me away. Maximum rage. I know he hates me now! I should have known that he hates me. That's why he keeps pushing me away. I'm such a complete fool.'

Kyo closed the door, pain sinking into his chest. He couldn't bear to watch her anymore. He knew he upset her, he wasn't blind. But it was better that she didn't get too close to him and learn of his biggest secret of all...

## 9 - The sohma family secret....

Only about two hours later did the rain pick up just as predicted. Tohru walked around the main hall nervously, dusting idly while thinking about her last encounter with Kyo. Why did he suddenly yell at her? Did she say something wrong? She was a complete idiot to make Kyo so upset he'd thrown her out of the house. She was so startled she nearly tripped back into the main house.

The girl closed her eyes while wiping the table just slightly slower. She hoped that Kyo and herself could be friends. He did after all take her in. She wanted to make it up to Kyo, but she wouldn't even want to talk to herself knowing that she made Kyo that upset! She clutched the rag with both hands while scrunching up her face in dismay.

"Tohru-kun, are you alright?"

Tohru turned over her shoulder surprised to see Shigure standing there, arms behind his back leaning over her. He looked quite comfortable in his everyday dark-blue yukata. She thought he was in Ayame's room playing some card game with the king. Maybe he lost? She turned around and began furiously rubbing the table.

"Y-yes! I'm doing perfectly fine! Why ask, Shigure-san? Eh hehe?"

"Hm... you seem to have something on your mind. You have been dusting the same table for the past ten minutes."

Tohru stopped scrubbing and sagged her shoulders. "Is that how long you've been in the room? I didn't even notice, I'm sorry..."

Shigure waved a hand at her. "Please, you give me too much credit!"

"It makes you sound like a stalker..." Haru muttered as he walked barefoot across the hallway behind the pair and into the TV room. Shigure sweatdropped as Tohru just gave a slight smile.

"Anyway," Shigure turned back to Tohru opening his arms in a fatherly way, "do you care to tell Shigure-otosan? Hm? As one of the elders of this house I have an open ear if you care to tell me anything, Tohru-kun."

She almost smiled at his playful tone but couldn't shake off the previous events with Kyo. Tohru sighed and turned her attention to a small vase of Daisies on the coffee table. "It's just... is there something I'm doing wrong, Shigure-san? Something I should know not to do in this house? No one laid any rules for me and I'm afraid to make anyone in your family feel upset by my presence. I promise as soon as I finish paying my debt I'll leave, but while I'm still here..." Tohru looked down holding the dust rag close to her apron.

After a moment Shigure ran a hand through his rather messy black hair. "There are things about our

family I don't think are very important at the moment, but if you're referring to Kyo-kun when you say 'making anyone feel upset', don't mind him. He's just a late bloomer." Shigure clasped a hand over his mouth as if giving away a terrific secret.

"A late bloomer?"

"Ah, forget I said anything. But to reassure you, there is absolutely nothing that you're doing that is wrong. I feel as if this family is actually beginning to hold better since you walked or rather fell through our doors." Tohru laughed at the rather embarrassing entrance she'd made when she first came to their home. Seeing her giggle put Shigure into better spirits already. Yuki was right, a smile suited her more than a frown.

He sat next to Tohru on the couch while placing his hands on his knees. "I've never seen Ri-chan stand so calm for over twenty minutes while in the presence of other people. You have a calming effect on him. Hi-kun is actually letting you help him with his school work--a miracle on its own since the boy thinks he knows everything-- and that is a major improvement on his part. No, Tohru-kun, you are doing nothing wrong. I promise."

"Then why is it as soon as I mentioned how Ayame-san told me that Kyo-kun stopped living in here with you all, Kyo-kun got so... angry?" She had a mental flashback of Kyo's angry voice bellowing at her to leave immediately. But when she turned around to stare him in the face and give him his food, a flash of sorrow crossed his features. What was it that was making him so angry, angry enough to make him sad?

Shigure looked out the window not responding to Tohru's question. He didn't know what to tell her. He gave Tohru a short bow. "I think I've said enough today. 'Tori-san might give me a lecture. Excuse me.'" Shigure walked past Tohru, leaving the girl full of more questions. It seemed as much as she'd come to learn of each of the Sohma boys individually, there was still so much she didn't know about them. Shigure could be so full of flirtatious body language one moment and act as a serious adult the next. He said there were some things about their family that was a secret. He also said that Kyo was a late bloomer. There was still so much she wanted to know but didn't know where to get the answers.

She sat alone for a while thinking to herself before glancing at the clock. It was way past eight and she didn't want to wallow in her negative thoughts anymore. It was better to be positive right?

Giving up her thoughts on why Kyo would be so cross with her, she threw the dust rag into the laundry-shoot and walked into the TV room to find Hatsuharu and Momiji laying on the couches channel surfing. Momiji sat up on his knees and gave a wave to Tohru.

"Tohruuuu!"

Haru plugged one ear as the boy practically screamed bloody-murder into his ear. "God, the girl knows her name, Momiji. You don't have to yell at her everytime you see her."

Momiji put both of her hands on top of his mouth. "Oh, okay."

Tohru smiled and sat next to Haru. "What are you watching?"

"Nothing really. There isn't anything on TV."

Tap tap tap

The sudden noise made Tohru jerk around in search of its origin. "Um... what was...?"

"Oh, that's the tree branch hitting the window. See, see?" Momiji said pointing at the window. "Wow, it really looks like it's going to be a bad storm." The boy turned to Haru. "Haru, should we go tell Kyo to lock the gates now? They might fly open like last time."

"Last time?" Tohru asked to no one in particular.

Momiji grinned catching Tohru in his net so easily. "Yes, last time no one went to lock the gates on a bad storm like this. Even though trying to push those doors open is really tough, the wind seems to just blow them open without a problem." Momiji closed his eyes. "Last time, the doors swung open into the street. The doors don't normally open all the way, just enough for people to slip in and out, but on that particular stormy night, the doors opened fully, blocking the streets. A red car was driving down the road trying to get home. The driver could barely see as it was when suddenly WHAM!" Momiji clapped his hands startling Tohru. "The driver crashed right into the gate door! In the morning we saw that the driver only had minor injuries and we were thankful that nothing serious happened... but still," the boy gave Tohru a mischievous look, "would we be that lucky next time?"

Lightning flashed, lighting up the entire room and highlighting Tohru's terrified eyes. "That's horrible!"

"Yes, and that is why Kyo needs to go close the doors right away."

Tohru jumped out of her seat already heading to the back door. "I'll go tell Kyo-kun right away! Poor driver-san, I won't let it happen again!" She rambled to herself as she disappeared from the room.

Haru turned off the TV and put his feet up on the table. "You're a horrible liar, Momiji. The gate doors don't even reach the street when fully open."

Momiji crossed his legs and stuck his tongue out. "I want Tohru to be happy. And I want Kyo to be happy. A little lie that might get them closer won't hurt."

"Are you conspiring with Ayame-san and Shigure-oniichan?"

"Nope, just doing this out of my own will." Momiji looked out the window suddenly quite passive.

Haru sat up from his slouched position. "What's up."

"Nothing it's just... I hope that Tohru accepts our family secret." Momiji looked down to his lap. "If Tohru does what I hope she does, she could possibly find out. I just don't want..." the boy looked to the blank television screen as if waiting for his answers. "I don't want the same thing that happened to Ha'ri to happen to Kyo. But then again I don't want anyone to be alone because of our secret."

"Even if it only applies to Kyo now?"

"I just don't want her to run away from us because of it." The blond turned towards Haru. "Do you think she will?"

"But the consequences..."

"I know, but there's always that chance she won't run away like Kana."

There was a thick silence engulfing the room after that. Everyone knew about the difficulty that Hatori faced and Haru himself did not want to see such a sight ever again. A sight that would tear even the blackest soul apart. Haru only braved the thought that Tohru was nothing like that woman.

Tohru Honda would be different.

After a moment Haru shrugged whispering, "I don't know... I don't know how any normal person would handle something so strange like a boy changing into a cat."

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Tohru slammed the back door closed as the wind pushed her along with it, forcing the door to slam harder than it needed to. She began trudging towards Kyo's house forgetting about his earlier burst of anger and worrying more about another victim to the gate doors. Her own mother died in a car accident and she would do anything to prevent another loss, even to a complete stranger.

Tohru stopped halfway on the path and looked up to the light inside Kyo's abode. But what if he really did not want to see her? He said he'd rather not have her anywhere near him. She would hate to invade his space again.

A sudden thought crossed her mind and a slight smile graced her lips. She turned to her right, veering off her path and heading straight to one of the smaller gates and tugged on the iron handles to close the gate and lock it. She would just do Kyo's job! He hated the rain anyway right?

She pulled the two doors with all her might almost slipping in the mud as her arms gave out. She caught her grip anyway, her vision beginning to cloud over as rain pellets smacked her in the face. It stung, like getting pelted by miniature pebbles in the face. But she wouldn't give up now! She finally got the doors together and pulled the latch over the handles so it would not flop around in the gusts of wind.

She trotted to the opposite end of the grounds and sighed in relief to see that the second smaller gate was already closed and only needed to be locked. She pushed the lock through the handles and was about to go for the main gate when a white flash struck across the sky. She screamed in fright and ran frantically for the largest gate. Following the lightning was a 'boom' of thunder, rattling the poor girl down to her bones. Another flash crossed the black sky, this time making an awful crackling noise as if the lightning had struck a tree.

She was so stupid to be out in a storm like this! But she had to do what she was set out to do!

CRACK CRACK BOOOM

"AHH HAHHHHHH!" TOhru screamed, her piercing voice echoing off the walls surrounding the house. She was utterly petrified and suddenly her rain hat flew off her head, her hair fluttering around wildly making her vision even worse. The rain hurt, the water slightly cool down her neck, and the gusts of wind whipping her hair in her face.

"T-Tohru?"

She spun at the voice. It wasn't even loud compared to everything around her, but she heard it clear as a bell. There Kyo was standing with his own black rain coat on with his head tilted to the side. The sudden sight of Kyo made Tohru suddenly at ease. "K-Kyo-kun!"

Earlier after he yelled at her, Kyo had been brooding at the table about going back into the main house and apologizing to the housekeeper when he heard the gates knocking loudly in anguish to the livid winds. He figured no one would go out and close the damn doors and he for one did not feel like hearing the constant slamming of gates. He put on his rain gear and headed for the door.

Just as he opened the door a bright flash of lightning flew in the heavens and he heard her scream. Her bone chilling scream. With flightly feet, he didn't even bother to close the door as he ran out into the rain and toward the gate where he saw that familiar yellow rain coat. Her hat flew away and Tohru already lost her grip on the door handle as she struggled to hang on.

"Tohru, what are you doing out here? Get back in the house!" Kyo said a bit louder now knocked out of his stupor.

"I-I know you d-don't like the r-rain!" She blurted out her eyes closed at the moment.

"To hell with the rain! At least it doesn't make me scared! Please just get--"

CRRRACK A BOOM

"KYO-KUN!" Tohru instantly launched herself into Kyo's arms, the other boy catching her as she gripped him tightly, the lightning-flash scaring Tohru and muffling a rather more subdued boom.

She felt to the floor with a thump and she scraped her elbows on the cement. She was startled for one thing. She glanced under her chest to see she was holding a puddle of blackness. She lifted it up while trying to tame her wild locks of hair to see it was Kyo's raincoat! She peered inside. And it was his clothes!

Suddenly she felt movement on her lower stomach, seeing that she was practically smashing some kind of moving object. She scrambled to sit upright as she pulled from underneath the wet clothes a cat.

A cat?

Her eyebrows furrowed together as she started to sway back and forth. "But how can that be? Kyo-kun was just here a moment ago and now here I'm holding a... a neko-chan? Ehh...?" Her eyes began to



swirl and the orange cat looked away.

"Now you know..."

"Eh?"

"You know my secret."

"It talks... too?" There was a low rumble in the skies as Tohru suddenly caught herself short on breath. She almost went crossed eyed as she began falling to the ground. "I'm sorry... Kyo-kun." In the distance Kyo and Tohru could hear foot steps coming closer.

"Tohru-kun! Kyo-kun!"

"Tohru-san!"

"Kyonkichi!"

Tohru fell over embracing the small cat as her world was rendered in complete darkness. She heard the random voices approaching her, as she and Kyo blanked out. The figures fell to her side, worry and surprise written all over their faces.

"Tori-san, what do we do?" Shigure asked worried.

Hatori's eyes were filled with apprehension as well. He shook the feeling down and gave orders. "Bring her to her room and call Mine-san to change her clothes, we will figure out what to do from there. Ayame, help me close this gate."

"Can do."

The three men carried off their tasks, two handing the gate and one running back into the house with a soaked woman in his arms as five heads watched the entire scene from the windows with shocked features. Each of them with the same thought running through their minds.

'What will happen now?'

To be continued...

## 10 - Bearable

my favorite chapter! :P

"Musume... Musume-channnn..."

A voice was calling Tohru 'young lady' again. Oh, was that entire Zodiac Host Club nothing but a dream? Was she back at home? Tohru gripped her sheets closer to her body.

"Young lady wake uppp..."

Tohru flipped over onto her back letting her head just lightly touch her wrists. Who was that calling her? She moaned and felt a warm object move away from her as a voice continued to call her gently.

"TOHRU-KUN, GET UP!"

Well, sort of gently anyway.

"AYYYAAAAA!" Tohru snapped up to find it was not a dream. She really was still in the Sohma's house, back in that same room she'd come to know. She rubbed her tired eyes, letting them focus with the morning light. She tilted her head to see not Ayame this time but Shigure. She gave a tiny sigh, "It's very frustrating when you keep passing out in front of those gates and find yourself in this same room." She gave Shigure a good morning smile anyway despite him waking her up.

Shigure laughed and sat at the edge of her bed with his hands folded within his sleeves. "Are you okay now? How are you feeling? Mine-san came in and dressed you and your clothes are in the laundry already so don't worry about it."

Tohru nodded mutely and thanked Shigure for everything. Shigure stared at her anxiously as she only stared back with a confused look. 'Is Shigure-san feeling okay? He's looking at me a bit strangely...' Suddenly she recalled everything from the day before including...

She gasped, pulling her hands up to her cheeks. "Kyo-kun! Oh, Shigure-san! Where's Kyo-kun!"

"Ah, I thought you'd ask that." Shigure motioned with his head to the opposite end of Tohru's rather large bed to see an orange cat still sleeping. "You just let go of him a few moments ago and I put him in safe distance."

She stared at the adorable cat, watching it's breathing motions as it softly purred. She wished to hold the cat but thought better of it. Why was a strange cat in her room was what she should have thought about before thinking about petting it! "W...what do you mean?"

"What I mean is that neko you're looking at is indeed Kyo-kun."

"T-that's impossible!" Tohru whispered rather loudly to not disturb Kyo's sleeping form. She felt herself lean back against the head board while continuing to stare at the cat. Was that adorable cat really Kyo?

Shigure put both hands on his knees preparing himself to tell Tohru exactly what was going on. "I know you're confused but let me explain a little. You see, us Sohma's were cursed. As you know we refer to ourselves as the Zodiac Host Club. Well we were not named that for nothing. We were all once cursed. To have any person of the opposite sex--and not being related to us--hug us would cause us to transform into one of the twelve zodiac animals, ah including the cat."

"But... but you hugged me remember, Shigure-san? And you did not transform into a... ah what is your zodiac name? Oh right an Inu dog. Momiji-kun hugs me all the time and he does not turn into a..." Tohru shook her head as she got off topic. Why were they all content to hug her while... "Why is it that Kyo-kun cannot?"

"Because Kyo-kun is the only one left that is still cursed."

Silence engulfed the room as Tohru let this new information sink in. Shigure only waited patiently as Tohru began to put the pieces of the puzzle together. 'It makes sense now, I suppose. Shigure-san said Kyo-kun was a late bloomer. He also said there were some things that were a secret in their family. Kyo-kun never embraced any of his customers, and,' Tohru's eyes suddenly fell with a bit of sadness, 'Ayame-san did say Kyo-kun never fell in love.'

She put a finger to her lip and glanced at Kyo. "So this is... normal?"

"An odd way of putting it, but I suppose you're right." Shigure motioned for Tohru to look at him now, all serious matters coming into play. "But Tohru-kun. I need you to keep this a secret. You must not let anyone know that Kyo-kun is still cursed. I only imagine that it would put suspicions on our family and we would have to take drastic measures on you."

"Drastic?"

"We'd have to erase your memory."

Tohru gasped but instantly raised a determined fist to Shigure. "No!" She spoke loud enough to rouse the sleeping cat from his dreams. "I won't tell a soul, cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle-- no ten needles-- in my eye! My mother said it was a terrible thing to talk about other people's secrets and if it is one thing I know I can do right, it's keeping a secret!"

Shigure laughed and ruffled Tohru's hair. "You really are kawaii, Tohru-kun." He got off the bed and threw a pair of clothes onto of the slumbering cat. "Oi, Kyo-chan. Put these on, okay?" The cat poked his head from under the clothes.

Shigure left the room and just as the door slammed a 'poof' filled the air. Tohru felt the bed shift weight and turned to see Kyo in a cloud of smoke, his bare chest in view and he was...

"NAKED! AHHH!" Tohru jumped off the bed tugging the bed sheets with her leaving Kyo without anything to cover himself with.

Kyo was just as embarrassed as she was as he turned around but fell off the bed, shaking the ground. Tohru continued flailing her arms around, hiding behind the sheets as Kyo waved at her from behind the mattress to conceal his manhood. His face was of pure embarrassment as Tohru only continued to squeal and panic.

"GOD TURN AROUND, TURN AROUND!" He screamed while motioning her to turn her back to him.

She spun around, only to tangle her feet in the sheets and fall over on her face.

After a few silent moments, Kyo came around the bed, dressed in khaki cargo pants, a plain white t-shirt, and a black collared shirt over it. He carefully walked around the big lump on the floor that was shaking. Curious as to what she was doing, he bent down and lifted a corner of the sheet where Tohru's head was.

He cocked an eyebrow up. "Um..."

Tohru lifted her head only laughing. He blinked as she was just giggling idiotically. "I'm sorry, Kyo-kun, but that was just funny! I'm sorry! Ahaha!" Kyo shook his head at her silly face and helped Tohru up and out of the mess of sheets. She let her laughter die down and Kyo couldn't help but crack a smile as well. The entire fiasco was comical; in a very embarrassing way.

He looked down at her yellow pajama set. "I'll... let you change out of your night clothes." He said trying to change the subject.

"No, wait, Kyo-kun!" He stopped and Tohru let her arms fall to her sides. "I... I am really sorry about making you upset yesterday. I didn't mean anything to make you upset but I guess I can see why you wouldn't want me to be around you. I don't think I would want to transform into a cat everytime a boy hugged me. And I can sort of understand why you wouldn't want to be around the other Sohmas. They were all released from the curse."

"Yeah, and they won't let me forget it." Kyo glared at the wall and Tohru looked up. "I mean, what does it take? They all did it, even that annoying Momiji did it! I can't figure out what it takes to just fall in love with someone! Gesh, and they rub it in that I'm still cursed, those jerks, and it pisses me off!"

"I..." Tohru paused suddenly reminiscing on old times with a certain person. "I don't think that falling in love is planned. It's just something that happens... it might not be with the right person, but deep down I think, I think that you know you're in love just when it happens." Kyo was now glancing at her softly as she smiled.

"And how do you suppose anyone would love a guy that turns into a cat? Once a girl surprised me and hugged me on accident. She was horrified and smacked me away in my cat form. She was hysterical that a host member suddenly transformed. Hatori had to erase her memory..." his gaze hardened as Tohru fidgeted under his gaze. "Aren't you?" He asked with a rough tone to his voice, "Aren't you horrified to learn I'm a cat?"

Tohru shook her head furiously. "No, no I'm not, Kyo-kun! In fact, I really like the cat from the zodiac.

Everyone thought I was crazy but I always wanted the cat to be happy." She took one step closer to Kyo. "I want to be your friend, Kyo-kun. Shigure-san said I would not get my memory erased if I kept your secret and I promise I won't tell a soul! And..." Tohru had a flashback of the storm yesterday "...and I'm really glad I found out actually. I know why you don't want me around and it's a very good reason. I was scared at the least when I first found out--"

Kyo scoffed at that. "See? You were scared of me." He growled and turned away to leave her room.

"Wait, Kyo-kun!" Tohru walked after him when he stopped short, having Tohru accidentally hug him from behind. With a 'poof' Kyo was a small cat again. After the initial shock, Tohru slid her face down a wall while cursing herself. "Oh, I'm such an idiot! I just figured out I'm not supposed to hug you, and I did it! I did it anyway! I'm so sorry!"

Kyo only gave her a blank stare. "It's okay... it doesn't hurt or anything and I'll change back soon..." Tohru looked at him with a stream of tears falling down her face. The small cat sweatdropped. "What's with the tears? I'm not that scary."

Tohru shook her head negatively. "No, you're not scary. I was just saying, I was scared when I first found out that you transformed into a cat because... well..." She looked away when Kyo picked up his clothes with his mouth and walked to the other side of the bed. With a small 'poof', Kyo was back in his human form. She looked over the bed side to see the tuft of orange hair moving to get his shirt on again.

Kyo turned to face her, his amber eyes darting into her blue orbs. His eyes looked wild like fire as he stared at her, only his eyes showing from across the bed sheets. "So you were scared of me."

"Scared that you'd be even more mad at me..." She finished quietly. Kyo felt his heart ache again. He stared down at Tohru's brown hair hiding her face from view. She was scared that he'd be mad at her? For seeing his cat form? That was so silly.

She started sniffing. Kyo got up and went to her side, bopping her head softly with his fist. "Oh, come on, don't cry, it wasn't like I turned into a man-eating gorilla or anything." She let out a small chuckle between her sniffing. He saw it wasn't really cheering her up and he sighed. "I... I'm sorry too then." She finally looked up but Kyo averted his eyes elsewhere afraid that if he looked her in the face he'd lose all his nerve.

"I didn't really mean to yell at you, okay? It's just... you know, no one ever came to see me, and in the middle of a crazy storm either. And talk to me and stuff..." He stole a glance at her and just as quickly turned around, seeing that she was in fact staring at him. His face reddened slightly as he confessed what was bothering him. "It just pissed me off that you were being so damn nice to me. No one normal would go through all that trouble to go see me. But there you were." Kyo smiled as he stared at the plush ivory carpet. "In your little rain coat and holding a bento box... for me..."

I thought 'what will happen if she finds out? I turn into a cat?' It would embarrass the hell out of me to say the least, and it did. But to say that you don't mind seeing it... and that turning back into a human just makes you laugh..." he turned around with a soft gaze that Tohru just stared at, mesmerized. "...that kind of just makes it bearable."

Tohru gave that a thought and gave him her warmest smile. It touched her, made that funny feeling come bubbling back into her chest. "Kyo-kun doesn't hate me?"

He shook his head. "No."

"I'm so happy! Thank you so much! I'm so happy!" She beamed. Her smile was contagious. He found himself smiling all the same. Suddenly he didn't feel so alone like he used to. Something just filled an empty void in his heart. Watching her smile, he caught himself staring at her lips. He instantly blushed and walked past her toward the door.

"I'll, let you get dressed now."

As soon as he opened the door all seven host club men came piling through the doorway all ontop of one another.

Shigure looked up with a small grin. "Um... good morning!"

"You were listening!" Kyo screamed as Tohru stood in the background just shocked.

"Just a little!"

"We heard almost the whole thing!" Momiji chimed in.

"GET THE HELL AWAY FROM HER ROOM YOU DIRTY BASTARDS!"

"Kyonkichi is so sentimental!" Ayame laughed as Kyo pushed all the men away from the door.

"GO TO HELL!"

Kyo slammed the door closed, hitting his relatives (some distant relatives as he'd like to say) in the face with the door, leaving Tohru alone. She calmed her racing heart and sat back on the bed, a smile reaching end to end. He didn't hate her! In fact, she was positive that deep down Kyo would one day fall in love and he would then be really happy. And not cursed! Behind that rough exterior, Kyo was a very kind person. She bounced back onto her bed, her cheeks still tinged with red. Everything just seemed ten times better now that she knew that she was welcomed by the cat of the Sohmas. She turned towards the corner of the bed where Kyo had just been sitting.

He was so startled when he transformed back into a human, it was adorable really. And he was naked! Not that she didn't entirely mind, just his upper torso was something to behold. It was obvious he was a martial artists like Yuki told her with muscles toning his rather tan chest. She wondered what it would be like to...

She bounced back up, her face beaming red. Where did that come from! She was day dreaming too much. Suddenly she gasped. "Breakfast! I almost completely forgot! Everyone must be starving by now!" She scurried over to a drawer where Mine had put a few garments she could wear while she stayed. She quickly slipped on a blue short-sleeved dress, combed her hair to put a ribbon in her brown locks and slipped on her house slippers before running down the hall at top speed.

Hiro felt a 'woosh' go by as Tohru continued to ramble down the stairway. "And all the customers will be here at 12 and I did not get around to setting up snacks and seating! Okay okay, first thing's first: breakfast. Shigure-san likes toast with eggs, Hatsuharu-san hates eggs, but likes oatmeal with chocolate suyrp. I wonder if Kyo-kun is joining us this time? Oh, and then Momiji-kun..."

Hiro shook his head and walked at a much slower pace. Besides the fact that Tohru had just learned the Sohma's greatest secret she acted like nothing happened. But he admitted, even just a little bit, that with that 'annoying girl' in the house trying to brighten up every day, it made life that much more bearable.

## 11 - Feelings i don't know i had

Weeks went by without a hitch. Tohru was happier than ever now that Kyo showed up for meals and was found more frequently in the house. It made her happy that he was not avoiding her anymore. But everytime it even looked like a drop of rain, the gates would be shut closed. She guessed Kyo did not want another lightning incident to happen. It was actually very sweet of him.

Now that she had been working for the Sohmas for about two months she was growing very fond of all of them. She did not grow up with much family as a child and then lost her mother as a young teen. She stayed with her grandpa but he was not around the house much. She did not have any siblings either.

Living in the house with everyone was so riveting and warm. There was always something to do and someone to keep her company, and when she needed to be alone she could find it sitting outside on the porch or in her bedroom. A place she was especially fond of was the balcony right in her own room. She didn't notice it before but one day when she was cleaning her room she opened the french doors and found the refined balcony, a calm, relaxing place. The summer breeze would waft through the air and the view of majestic mountains bordering the horizon miles away would leave her eyes searching for what lay beyond it all.

"Nezumi-chan..." A girl chirped using Yuki's nickname. Tohru's mind snapped back to reality as she walked away from Yuki's table and back to the kitchen. "I don't want my time with you to ever end."

Yuki gave her a charming smile. "Unfortunately it will, but there will always be tomorrow where you can occupy my time with your delicate beauty, princess."

"Oh, Prince Yuki!" The entire group of girls chimed nearly passing out in their seats.

"Okay, it's closing time." Ayame clapped his hands. "We wish you a pleasant evening and don't hesitate to come for another visit," Ayame blew a kiss with mysterious rose petals fluttering around him while striking a pose, "darling."

"AHHH! AYAME-SAMA!" The girls squealed with hearts beating in their eyes.

The girls left chatting quietly as Hatori finally closed the door signing the end of the day.

Tohru walked out of the kitchen while removing her apron. She noticed Ayame still standing in his calculated pose as if frozen. "Ah, Ayame-san... they left."

He unfroze and put his hands to his hips. "Oh did they? I didn't realize! Ha Ha Ha!"

"I think he was too engulfed in himself to realize it." Yuki muttered while passing by. He loosening up his tie. This week's costume was a hospital theme: everyone decked out in scrubs, doctor coats or nurses outfits.



"Ah that reminds me!" Ayame exclaimed standing up straight while clapping his hands to gain the attention of all the men. "In three days will be the Blossom Ball!"

Kyo slouched in a chair and turned around to stare at the king. "Where'd you come up with a stupid name like that?"

"In honor of our dear little flower here, Tohru!" Ayame laughed while placing Tohru in front of him. She looked around at everyone staring at her and then pointed at herself.

"For me?"

"For being debt free, Tohru!" Tohru continued to stare up at Ayame upside down. "You mean you don't know yet? With your hard work you have paid off that bill that made you to first start working here! I'm so proud of you! So proud in fact that as a going away present I decided to have our first summer ball in your honor!" Ayame took her by the hands and began spinning her around. "Yes! Yes, my dear girl, you've done it!"

Haru pulled a cord as confetti rippled down from nowhere and Momiji blew a noise maker.

"I paid my debt!" Tohru said while Ayame threw her up in the air. Surprisingly he was very strong... or she was just very light.

She landed in Yuki's arms as he set the girl down and also gave her a slight hug before laughing with Tohru. "Congratulations!"

"It was all thanks to you, Yuki-kun, thank you so much!" Tohru laughed as Momiji suddenly pulled her away. Excited wouldn't do justice to the feeling of accomplishing her goal.

"Tohru! Tohru! You're free! You're not our housekeeper anymore, you can do whatever you want!" He laughed as he let go of her.

She was so happy. She had finally fulfilled her duty and earned her money! But then--

She stopped twirling as Kyo caught her by the arms so he would not transform, both of them only inches away from each other's face. The room fell quite after Momiji stated what they all seemingly forgot.

If she had finally fulfilled her debt, that meant she wouldn't be living with them anymore.

Kyo's wide eyes seemed to sadden somehow but she was the only one to detect it. She stood up as he let go of her arms as she finally let it sink in. She was not obligated to stay with the Sohmas any longer.

The thought reached everyone's mind at that instant when she stopped laughing. "T-Tohru..." Kyo said trying to clear his dry mouth.

"I guess this means, I'm free to go right, Ayame-san?" She asked trying to keep the cheer in her voice as she turned away from Kyo. She didn't know why but at seeing his rather shocked face she hated to make him sad.

Ayame nodded. "I... guess so."

She nodded. "I'd hate to be a burden if I'm not paying for my debt anymore."

"No, you'd never be a burden to us." Hatori spoke up.

Momiji already looked like he was about to cry. "But now Tohru is going to leave us! Wahhh!"

Tohru smiled lightly in Momiji's direction trying to find some words to comfort him.

"Let her go." Hiro's voice suddenly entered the conversation. Tohru turned to him, his back faced the other way. "She shouldn't be living with us anyway." He spun around angrily. "You all act like it's the end of the world if she left! We were fine before she came, why should you all get so mushy over a stupid girl like her! She thinks she's a burden? Then let her leave!"

"Hiro!" Haru barked smacking the boy on the back of the head.

"That's not nice!" Momiji chided.

Tohru put her hands up in defence. "Please, don't fight over me." They stared at her. "Hiro-san is somewhat right though. You all will be just fine! I know you will. You all have each other still and what's most important is that you all can live together peacefully. I'm so grateful for everything you've done." She gave them her ever hopeful smile. The one they were going to miss so much.

'All my memories here, my experiences, and everything. I'm so happy I met everyone here. I don't think I want to forget any of them. Never.'

She turned to Ayame again. "Ah, so..."

The snake put his hands up. "You are not obligated to leave right this instant, Tohru. If my opinion counts for anything I'd rather you stay until the ball is over. It will give you time to pack and find transportation home."

Haru smirked. "Like she had anything with her to start with."

She bowed. "That is very kind of you, Ayame-san. I'll work on that right away."

"You can use the computer in the TV room."

"Oh yeah! Oh, but I don't know where..."

As the group talked, Kyo only looked on with thoughtful eyes. He knew this day would be coming but he didn't realize it would be so soon. She really was going to leave. Despite how detached he was at first, as she let him open up he felt so welcome in the house. He could tell her things he'd never imagined of telling other people. Even if he said he went to Africa riding a purple, two-legged elephant across Zimbabwe, she would listen. She was always there with that warm smile and open mind. That funny

tightning in his chest twisted again as his mind lingered on what life would be like in their house once Tohru left. He stared at her with a small frown.

And he didn't want her to leave.

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It was already the night before the ball and Kyo went on top of the main house roof. No one else ever came up there but him and he was happy to get away from all those idiots below him inside the house. He put his hands up behind his head and layed down on a different corner of the roof. He just felt like testing out different spots of the roof to see where he could see the best stars. If he sat on the side of the roof where the street wasn't there, it was much darker and quieter. Not to mention there was a great view of the mountains on this side. He looked up and just stared at the little blinking dots thrown about the sky. He wondered how far they could reach.

Then his mind drifted to the only female residing in their house. She was going to leave in two nights and there wasn't one thing he could do to stop her. Even though she continued to do chores around the house like nothing changed, something did change. She was overly happy all the time and seemed to make rounds around the house to see everyone about five times a day. Maybe she was just as sad about the whole ordeal. But then why didn't she say anything?

Actually she wasn't the only one to change. He also found himself spending a bit more time with her. And yet everytime he even got near her, his stomach would do flip-flops. He turned on his side feeling a certain spot on his back knot together. He stared at his clenched fist. She should go though. She didn't need to hang around the Sohma house anymore. She still had people to go home to right?

Kyo thought about her ex-fiance and his fist tightened. She had been living with them for almost 2 months and there wasn't a sign of the bastard looking for her at all. It was as if she fell off the face of the earth! Didn't that man even care at all? Didn't he know what he was missing? He was a damn fool for making her run off for whatever reason she did. She deserved better than a guy who wouldn't even go looking for his bride!

'Someone like you?' His mind quipped.

Kyo's face blushed and he flipped back onto his back. When did he start thinking like that? Tohru wouldn't-- no she couldn't-- want a guy like him! I was cursed for cripes sake! And besides...

'I want to be your friend, Kyo-kun.' A flashback of Tohru smiling up at him was drawn in his mind.

She only wanted to be friends. He shook his head. And he only wanted to be friends too! What the hell was he thinking! She was leaving anyway! She would forget about anything that happened at the Zodiac Host Club.

'But will you forget about her?' His mind teased again.

"God, shut up!" Kyo growled out loud while punching the side of his head lightly.

He turned back to his side when he saw a light go on below him. He crawled over to the side of the roof

to see a balcony right there. It had a small chair and table in one corner and on the other side were two french doors opening now. The main house was enormous with more than twelve bedrooms on a two story mansion but he never noticed that this room had a balcony.

It nearly made his heart stop.

Tohru opened the doors letting the white linen curtains wave lightly in the breeze. She looked around cautiously before stepping out in her nightgown and feeling the cool breeze on her bare shoulders. She wore a pink nightgown fitting around her middle and flaring out just barely grazing the floor. The top part of the sleeping garment had ruffles around her torso and light pink spaghetti straps to hang over her slender shoulders. With her hair down and flowing freely Kyo thought she looked almost unreal.

He was right. The first night he met her out on the street, he wondered what she would look like sober and dry, not in the muddy state he first found her in. He admitted she was quite pretty even though she was soaked to the bone and drenched in alcohol and mud-- okay well maybe not the best first impression-- but still lovely to say the least. Now here she was and he was right: she looked even more beautiful.

"It's pretty." Tohru spoke out loud while leaning on the railing, staring out at the stars.

"Yeah..." Kyo commented not looking at the stars but rather her. He slapped a hand over his mouth and scrambled away from her eye's view.

"Oh, I know!" He heard her footsteps trot back inside and the porch light went off. He heard her walk back outside and she gasped in pleasure. "Wow, there are so many stars!"

Kyo looked up as well and indeed it was a sight to behold. There were millions of stars out tonight. He glanced to the side and didn't like the feeling that he was listening in on her and decided to make himself present. It just didn't feel right, like he was looking in on her personal moments by herself. But how would he just enter her thoughts? It had to be something smooth, cool, refined...

"You like stars?"

'Oh because that was anything like you just described.' He mentally scolded. He could have sworn his voice hitched just a bit.

"AH! Don't hurt me Spiderman!" Tohru shrieked but only saw Kyo lean down over the roof top. "Oh, Kyo-kun! I-I didn't know you were...!"

Kyo was careful to hold in his laugh but a smirk reached his lips. "Spiderman?"

The girl sighed. "Bad experience. I thought I saw him crouched in front of my window as a teenager in the middle of the night." She waved her hands in front of her rapidly. "But Kyo-kun what are you doing up on the roof?"

"I come up to the roof a lot, but this is the first time I've seen you out here."

"I normally do this earlier in the night." She admitted. She looked up at Kyo who was grinning at her. "I always wanted to get up to the roof but I'm afraid I'll fall and I'm not too sure how to get up there."

Kyo extended his hand out to her. "You wanna come up?"

"Ah... um I might be too heavy for you."

Kyo turned away pretending not to care. "Fine fine, just stay down there. I don't care."

"No wait, I...!"

Kyo laughed and looked back down at her. "You know, it's okay to tell people what you want sometimes. You don't have to feel unworthy and all that stuff you always talk about. We never hear you complain or ever ask for stuff, so it's okay to tell what you want."

Tohru stared at him for a moment before nodding. "Kyo-kun... I want to... sit on the roof... with you if that's okay."

He didn't know why. It was a simple request but the last bit of 'with you' sent jolts up his spine. He nodded mutely and extended his hands while anchoring his legs on the roof. "Grab my hands and I'll pull you up." She nodded and jumped up a little before grasping his hands. He held onto her forearms as he hauled her up, her feet dangling over the edge of the roof. After a struggle he finally pulled her up, Tohru holding onto his upper back as he finally got her to sit on the roof.

"Wow! It's so high up here!" She said in awe, staring down at the grass way below. "You'd die if you fell!"

"Okay, just don't think about stuff like that." Kyo drawled, surprised at her unintentionally morbid comment. He looked at her arms to see she was still holding on to him as she looked around her in amazement. He blushed but prayed it was dark enough to disguise his face color.

She looked to Kyo and then her hands and let go of him like he was fire. What if she accidentally made him transform? She put her hands in her lap as Kyo noted that he kind of missed the warmth. "S-sorry."

"It's okay."

They were silent for a moment before Tohru tried to make conversation. "Ayame-san is ready with all the preparations for tomorrow's party. Are you excited, Kyo-kun?"

"No. Those parties just piss me off."

Tohru's curiosity wondered on that subject. "Why is that?"

"Because... you have to dance... with people." It sounded stupid, but it was true.

"You can't dance?"

"No!" He answered quickly. "No, what I mean is yes! No!" He slapped his head; he just sounded so

stupid!

"Is it because you're cursed, Kyo-kun?" Tohru asked carefully afraid he might get touchy on that subject but surprisingly he didn't. He only sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

"Yeah. That's it."

She turned her whole body in his direction with a determined face. "But when you're dancing you don't have to touch bodies!"

"But all those girls want to dance close! I twisted a girl's arm behind her back when she almost did it. I didn't mean to but I was already pissed that night." Tohru looked at him knowing there was more behind the story. "I was pissed 'cause that damn Momiji kept bugging me all day and then Haru spit gum in the grass making me step in it."

Tohru smiled. "I don't think they mean it..."

"Annoying brats." Kyo muttered.

They both fell silent only staring up at the evening sky. In each other's company, star gazing just seemed that much more fun. Kyo offered to show her a few constellations that he knew of as she tried to see the same patterns in the sky. She got excited everytime she found the picture Kyo drew with his fingers as he pointed to the stars. He found himself smiling along with her as the night carried on. She put her knees up to her chin and started humming quietly as the pair continued looking up at the sky.

He turned to her slightly. "You sing a lot don't you?"

"Ah! Is it annoying? I'll stop!"

"That's not what I meant!" He blurted.

"Oh..." Tohru closed her eyes. "Yeah, I used to sing a lot before I met Satsuki." Kyo turned toward her at that and she stifled out a small giggle with her eyes still closed. "I guess I really don't talk about him do I? Satsuki Sonto is... um was... my fiance."

"Why'd you stop singing when you met him? It's not annoying or anything..."

"I don't know. But lately I really just feel like doing it. Hana-chan and Uo-chan liked my singing too-- oh they're my best friends-- but I haven't seen them in months." Tohru opened her eyes staring at the large blanket of stars as Kyo only stared at her carefully guarded facial features. It was so unusual for Tohru to suddenly talk about herself so openly like this. "Satsuki said my friends were no good but they told me he was no good for me either but I wouldn't listen..."

A breeze blew and Tohru closed her eyes again as if digging deep within her mind for memories she tucked away somewhere. "And now I don't know where my friends are. Satsuki said... he said it was okay, that he was the only friend I needed. And I believed him."

Kyo never took his eyes off of Tohru as she shuddered under the summer breeze. She was only wearing a thin night gown so he took off his cotton jacket and put it over her chest.

She looked at him then and thanked him with rather glassy eyes. She really was trying to hard not to cry.

"Why... did you love him?" He asked after a moment. He didn't like to pry but the question was rolling around in his mind. And it wasn't only him but Yuki as well. He remembered Yuki growling about how a man that supposedly loved Tohru so much, didn't even go search for her after so long. There had to be a reason Tohru loved him. For once, Kyo found something Yuki and himself could agree on.

Tohru pulled the jacket closer and partially hid her face from Kyo, only her eyes glimmering in the moonlight. "I loved him... because... this might sound stupid..." She paused and pulled loose pieces of hair behind her ear. "Because he forced me to."

Kyo was puzzled by that. "Forced you to love him? There sure as hell better be a better reason than that." He half laughed, "I mean, how can anyone force you to love someone...?" Kyo saw Tohru was dead serious and his grin faded away.

She leaned her head on her arm now staring at the tiles of the roof. She was looking everywhere but at Kyo. "It sounds so strange doesn't it? I don't think love is supposed to be planned and that's what I believe, but he made me feel like all I had in the whole world was only him. He told me he loved me, he always treated me kindly, but did not let me out at all. Like he planned to make me feel like all I had in the world was him. I was only allowed to love him.

"One day he was so furious that Hana-chan came over to greet me, he slammed the door on her face and told me she was nothing but a black witch. For lack of better words anyway." Tohru shuddered. "I don't know why I believed him. I really thought he was a good person. I told Hana-chan to stay away from me. She was doing nothing but hurting Satsuki and my relationship, but what I didn't see was she was trying to help. She and Uo-chan respected my wishes, and... I haven't heard from them since. I sent a letter telling them of my wedding but they were not to come. Satsuki said only family should attend, but seeing how small my biological family was, Hana-chan and Uo-chan were like my family. Still, I did not invite them by Satsuki's orders. He was only 'protecting me' or so he said. I'm so blind and trusting hua?" She smiled and continued, "I wanted to believe I loved him and that he was only protecting me..."

"And when he proposed to me that fateful day, I was scared. I was so afraid I was going to be all alone for the rest of my life. There wasn't anything I had but him, or so I was led to believe. He was always so dominant in everything we did. I... I only realize this now after I caught him... with another girl," finally her voice cracked and tears poured from her eyes, "in our bed. I was horrified, to hear another woman calling out his name! Having sex with her!"

Kyo put a gently hand to her shoulder and the girl leaned on his shoulder. If it was one thing he really hated it was seeing a girl crying. "I really thought-- I really thought he loved me. That I was the only-- the only girl that h-he would want to be with. I am such a fool and unworthy of any man! I was just... just not good enough for him! I'm such a fool--!"

"No you're not!" Kyo suddenly bursted out. Tohru looked up and Kyo narrowed his eyes. "Stop saying you're unworthy and you're a fool! You're not!" He drew closer to her so that Tohru backed away just a

little to prevent their heads from hitting each other. "What that bastard did to you is wrong! It's just sick! In fact, I'm glad that you found him sleeping with another girl because at least you would find out what a real asshole he is before you got married!"

"You deserve so much more than that, Tohru. Much more! You-- you shouldn't have to put up with crap like that! Not you, you're too nice for some guy to be jerking you around like that! And what-- it's been 2 months since you've been here? Hell, he hasn't even gone looking for you, Tohru! If I had found out that you ran away, I'd go find you, not let you run around a town you don't know in the pouring rain! Anything bad could have happened to you!"

"But it didn't." She smiled while quieting his voice. "You found me."

Both young adults fell silent and Tohru leaned her head back on Kyo's shoulder, all his senses focusing on that one spot where they touched. Kyo for one was surprised at his outburst but Tohru didn't seem to mind at all. Since when did he start expressing himself so openly to anyone?

"I think I know why I stopped singing now. Because like a caged bird, it doesn't want to sing unless it's in the sunshine. I wasn't free. But here in this house with everyone, even with the title of a slave or housekeeper, I've never been so free in my life. So happy... with you, and Yuki-kun, and everyone."

Kyo stared out into the night sky his temper going down gradually. "You are not going back to him... Satsuki... when you leave here, are you, Tohru?" Her answer he prayed would not be yes.

"I don't know yet, Kyo-kun."

"You shouldn't."

"I know." She replied just as quickly. "Thank you for listening to me, Kyo-kun. I don't think... I've ever told anyone that. And if you'd like, I'll dance with you tomorrow." Kyo looked at her. "So that other girls won't be trying to hug you too close and you can enjoy the party. I want you to be happy, Kyo-kun."

"You always say that."

"It's because it's true."

Kyo felt suddenly much closer to Tohru than ever before. She'd told him nearly everything that had been running through her mind. It just made him yearn for her to stay even more. She was always saying that she wanted him to be happy but he only wished her the same.

"You should go to bed now." Kyo finally said. In response Tohru yawned sleepy-eyed. She only laughed when Kyo gave her a crooked smile. "You look tired."

"I guess so." Tohru glanced down at her lap. No one ever cared for her the way Kyo did. Satsuki never really asked her what was on her mind nor did he ask about her concerns. She turned to see Kyo's wild amber eyes and she felt her heart race. She shouldn't be thinking of things like that at a time like this! She was going to leave them soon... and everything she'd come to know about Kyo and the rest of the Sohmas. She felt her doubts rise within her but she pushed them down. She knew she was going to



leave them the day she started working off her debt. Why was it suddenly so hard to let go and leave? She already decided to leave, there was no turning back.

"Thanks again, Kyo-kun. It really meant a lot to me." She looked a bit sad thinking that in one day she'd be gone. "I'll miss you so much." She just couldn't put it past her lips to tell Kyo she was leaving in a day.

"Aw, stop acting overly grateful, you always listen to everyone else's problems it's only fair that I listen to yours, even if you don't ever talk about it."

With someone like Kyo there to tell her he was willing to listen to her complain and listen to what she thought, it made not only leaving the roof difficult, but leaving the Sohma house period more difficult if not impossible. To tell the truth she was scared. If she left, she'd miss them all but if she stayed she feared she wouldn't be able to ever part.

She smiled anyhow and started to climb down the roof, her legs dangling.

"Whoa, watch it!" Kyo grabbed her seeing she was about to fall off the roof causing a 'poof' and Tohru sitting back on the roof as Kyo pulled her up before he transformed.

"KYO-KUN! I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry, oh I'm such an idiot!"

Kitty Kyo poked his head out from under his clothes and watched Tohru panic. She was just too adorable to get really mad at and besides it was an accident.

But he wouldn't let her know that. "Well watch it next time." He only responded.

"Right!"

"But it's okay if it's just the two of us or whatever."

She relaxed hearing that it was okay now. "Right..."

"B-but I didn't mean anything funny like that!"

Tohru watched the cat for a moment before giggling and scooping Kyo into her arms. If Kyo was not covered in fur Tohru would see the ultimate blush covering his entire kitty self. She hugged Kyo and kissed him on the cheek.

"What the hell?"

"I always wanted to do that." She confessed. "You're such a good friend, Kyo-kun, even in your cat form." She put him down and an apologetic face returned. "Ah, I hope you didn't mind me hugging you!"

"It's fine." He quickly replied turning around so his tail swished in her direction. "Just, go to sleep and be careful climbing down." She watched Kyo's tail twitch side to side and grinned. Beneath that rough facade, Kyo was such a kind person.

"Night, Kyo-kun." She walked away into her bedroom and closed the door. She locked the balcony doors and went to her bedside when a jacket fell off her shoulders. She picked it up and remembered she forgot to give it back to Kyo. She stood up about to go give it back when she thought better of it. He would transform back to a human and probably did not want her to witness that. She placed his jacket at the foot of her bed and tucked herself in the down feathered quilts before going off into a fitful sleep. A dream of Kyo and herself that she would not remember in the morning.

Once Kyo transformed back into his human form, he quickly dressed and sat up for a little while longer to stare at the stars. He thought back on Tohru's tale of her fiancé and only shook his head in dismay. Finally, Kyo got up as well and went for the ladder on the other side of the roof. Tenderly he touched his cheek where Tohru had kissed him, sending his face cherry red again. She'd been through so much, and it really explained much of her personality. Now more than ever he wanted her to be happy. He could see why Yuki always fussed about her well being, but Kyo wanted her to be more than happy and singing. He just didn't know what exactly it was that he wanted her to be. Now more than ever...

he didn't want her to go.

## 12 - Dance with Me!

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The other two males agreed and sipped their punch simultaneously.

"Yuki! Shi-chan! Haru!" From the kitchen bounded in Momiji in a similar suit get-up except that he wore black dress shorts instead of pants. He twirled around laughing. "I'm so excited, there is so much to do tonight! Aya-chan did all the decorations so nice too!" He put his fists up to his mouth in utter excitement. "And I heard that Aya-chan ordered a super nice and yummy cake too!"

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"If I had a dime for everytime you act like a dirty old man, I'd take the first vacation trip ticket to Hawaii."

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She clapped her hands in delight. "Oh, I'd love that, Yuki-kun! Thank you so much!" The pair walked away as the other four men watched her walk away.

"I really am going to miss her though." Shigure said after a moment.

Haru nodded his head. "I think we all will."

Momiji pumped a fist into the air. "We have to make tonight extra special for her!"

Haru looked around the room and caught the tuft of orange hair in the mist of the party. Kyo's eyes were already searching out for Tohru. Haru smirked. "I think I know how."

Kyo finally got away from all the girls and stood off to the side looking around the room. Unconsciously he was already searching out for a particular person. The person that he had been thinking about all day, but had yet to see at all. She wouldn't have left already had she? She didn't say good bye!

"Hey." Kyo turned around to see Hiro giving him a snotty look. "I didn't think you'd show up."

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"H-Hiro-sama?" Hiro turned around to see a girl about his age smiling at him. "Um, do you want to dance?"

Kyo waited for what Hiro would say, but the boy only gave the girl a devilish smirk. "Well I can't refuse to a babe like you, can I?"

She blushed as Hiro took her by the arm and led her to the dance floor. To this day Kyo couldn't figure out how that kid could be such a brat one minute and a total womanizer the next. Watching the two dance for a moment his attention turned to a laugh further away from where Hiro and the girl were dancing. It was so odd how he could hear her voice even in a noise environment like this.

He looked and then a couple moved out of the way for Kyo to find Tohru dancing with Yuki, the pair laughing as Tohru tried to follow Yuki's dance steps. She stumbled again and burst out laughing as Yuki smiled along with her. Yuki spun her around carefully and Kyo caught a glimpse of her face, smiling and laughing, just enjoying herself. She was breathtaking. When Tohru finally turned back to face Yuki, the pair froze and then laughed again in amusement.

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"If you want to dance with her that bad, why don't you go cut in?"

Kyo turned to be faced with Ayame. "She's dancing with tht damn rat right now!" He barked, shrugging Ayame's hand off his shoulder. The silver haired man put a index finger to his forehead chuckling lightly.

"My dear boy, as the night grows longer, the girl will be swept away by another man and your chance will fall through." Just as Ayame said that, Haru tapped Yuki on the shoulder and the pair switched so that Haru began dancing with Tohru. "Ah, see what did I tell you? Without knowing it, the girl of your dreams will be gone without any idea of how you feel for her. Frankly, I find that selfish."

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Behind the dance party Momiji gave Haru a high-five. The smaller boy 'incidentally' knocked Ritsu into the dance floor.

The night wore on as did Kyo's patience and temper. So far nearly all of the Sohmas cut in before he could. Even Hatori danced with the girl! There was always an inconvenience for him not to walk over, whether a girl asked him to dance with her, a crowd of people would prevent him to walk over, or a banana peel-- he had no idea where it came from-- was placed right where he was walking and made him fall over, get up and see that Tohru was already dancing with another person. He was very pissed off now.

Finally he saw Ayame dip Tohru and his hand began rising up her leg and thigh. Kyo almost flew through the roof. He had it! He would dance with her no matter what, and no one, and he meant NO ONE, better get in his way right now or they'd end up with a bloody nose. He walked over shoving people out of his way when suddenly the stage light turned on.

"Hi everyone!" Momiji smiled. "The ball is coming to a close and we have a dedication actually. You see, our very good friend, Tohru Honda-- I'm sure you've all seen her bustling around-- is leaving us tomorrow. To see her off we threw her this really really nice party! Don't you think?" The crowd applauded and Momiji jumped to the other side of the stage. "Well before we eat cake, we want Tohru to come up here for a moment!" The stage light turned over to the center of the room where Tohru stood holding her hands while turning side to side. "Yes, you Tohru! Come on, don't be shy! Come on!" Momiji cheered.

Tohru nervously walked to the stage and climbed the stairs to where Momiji stood. The boy held the microphone to her. "Do you have anything to say? Oh, a speech!"

Tohru grew nervous by the minute. "Ah um... a speech?"

Momiji nodded while clapping. "A speech, a speech!"

She took the microphone and looked out at the crowd, barely since the lights were nearly blinding. She laughed, "I feel pretty! Oh so pretty!" Someone of the guests giggled at her reference to West Side Story. She shook her head. "Well... I am very grateful to the Sohmas for not throwing me into a lake like I originally thought they would do when they found out I didn't have any money on me." She laughed nervously.

"But besides that, I've learned so much from staying here, and I found so many friends. I'm really going... I'm going to miss everyone very much. I..." Suddenly her eye caught Kyo's, he staring up at her with a slightly miffed look. "I..." She lost all train of thought as she stared back at Kyo. She learned so much about him, and she wanted to learn more. She wanted to see him fall in love and break the curse finally. She wanted to sit on the roof and watch the stars with him. He told her so much to learn from. He was the first person to listen to her complain and let her tell what she really wanted. There was still so

much...

Momiji saw Tohru staring blankly as she took in shallow breaths. He worried what was the matter with her. "Tohru? Tohru are you okay?"

What she wanted...

A single tear fell from her eye. She shut her eyes closed tightly exclaiming, "I don't want to leave. I... I want to stay!" She spun around to run off the stage after placing the microphone back on its stand. She felt so embarrassed at expressing herself like that in front of so many people. She hiked her dress up and escaped through the main doors and outside of the house. She wanted to run, just go somewhere else. She couldn't stay there, she didn't belong there! Even though at the sight of finally seeing Kyo tonight made her want to stay forever, she knew she couldn't. She had to go back to her old life. She didn't belong!

'Then where do you belong?' Her mind asked as she slowed down her pace, standing in the middle of the path way. She stared at the floor, tears forming in her tightly shut eyes. Without knowing it she was deciding the path she'd take. Behind her was Kyo and in front of her was Satsuki. And there she was, deciding her destiny in the middle. She felt like she was caught in a game of tug-o-war: her heart wanting to stay with Kyo and the Sohmas, pulling her towards them, but Satsuki had her mind under lock and key, not giving up the fight either. It pained her being unable to draw any conclusion.

Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki...

"Where do I belong?"



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"Hi everyone!" Momiji smiled. "The ball is coming to a close and we have a dedication actually. You see, our very good friend, Tohru Honda-- I'm sure you've all seen her bustling around-- is leaving us tomorrow. To see her off we threw her this really really nice party! Don't you think?" The crowd applauded and Momiji jumped to the other side of the stage. "Well before we eat cake, we want Tohru to come up here for a moment!" The stage light turned over to the center of the room where Tohru stood holding her hands while turning side to side. "Yes, you Tohru! Come on, don't be shy! Come on!" Momiji cheered.

Tohru nervously walked to the stage and climbed the stairs to where Momiji stood. The boy held the microphone to her. "Do you have anything to say? Oh, a speech!"

Tohru grew nervous by the minute. "Ah um... a speech?"

Momiji nodded while clapping. "A speech, a speech!"

She took the microphone and looked out at the crowd, barely since the lights were nearly blinding. She laughed, "I feel pretty! Oh so pretty!" Someone of the guests giggled at her reference to West Side Story. She shook her head. "Well... I am very grateful to the Sohmas for not throwing me into a lake like I originally thought they would do when they found out I didn't have any money on me." She laughed nervously.

"But besides that, I've learned so much from staying here, and I found so many friends. I'm really going... I'm going to miss everyone very much. I..." Suddenly her eye caught Kyo's, he staring up at her with a slightly miffed look. "I..." She lost all train of thought as she stared back at Kyo. She learned so much about him, and she wanted to learn more. She wanted to see him fall in love and break the curse finally. She wanted to sit on the roof and watch the stars with him. He told her so much to learn from. He was the first person to listen to her complain and let her tell what she really wanted. There was still so

much...

Momiji saw Tohru staring blankly as she took in shallow breaths. He worried what was the matter with her. "Tohru? Tohru are you okay?"

What she wanted...

A single tear fell from her eye. She shut her eyes closed tightly exclaiming, "I don't want to leave. I... I want to stay!" She spun around to run off the stage after placing the microphone back on its stand. She felt so embarrassed at expressing herself like that in front of so many people. She hiked her dress up and escaped through the main doors and outside of the house. She wanted to run, just go somewhere else. She couldn't stay there, she didn't belong there! Even though at the sight of finally seeing Kyo tonight made her want to stay forever, she knew she couldn't. She had to go back to her old life. She didn't belong!

'Then where do you belong?' Her mind asked as she slowed down her pace, standing in the middle of the path way. She stared at the floor, tears forming in her tightly shut eyes. Without knowing it she was deciding the path she'd take. Behind her was Kyo and in front of her was Satsuki. And there she was, deciding her destiny in the middle. She felt like she was caught in a game of tug-o-war: her heart wanting to stay with Kyo and the Sohmas, pulling her towards them, but Satsuki had her mind under lock and key, not giving up the fight either. It pained her being unable to draw any conclusion.

Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki...

"Where do I belong?"

## 12 - Dance with Me!

"Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to the Zodiac Host Club's first summer bash, the Blossom Ball! Might I add that all you beautiful women look dazzling tonight? Ohoho, don't worry there will be plenty of time for you to swoon over my beauty later."

"Sometimes I really wonder if I was adopted..." Yuki muttered darkly while Shigure only sweatdropped. "I can't be related to that man up there."

Ayame spun around with the microphone in hand and raised his hand over his head. "And now, let the ball begin!" Suddenly the chandeliers and dim lighting turned on and the entire main hall lit up. Everyone gasped with admiration. The hall was decorated in absolute beauty. It was as if walking through a fantasy land. There were flowers of every shape and size on every table, white rose petals spread across the ballroom floor and crystal-like dew drops hanging from the ceiling where light would shine through giving off a delicate shimmer about the floor.

Light green satin draped about the windows and buttercup yellow tablecloths covered the tables. Beside every wall stood about 4 servers all carrying silver platters of food. A small orchestra played Vivaldi's "Spring" music right below the stage where Ayame stood in the spot light as the young ladies stared at the decorations. To the corner of the room, two french doors were open to view a rose garden and water fountain in the middle, shooting out water in fascinating patterns. It was a magical scene to behold.

Haru walked over to where Yuki and Shigure were standing. He cleared his throat to gain their attention as he stuck his hands in the pockets of his black tie get-up. "Ayame really out-did himself huh?"

"You know how he is: if it's not over the top it's not good enough." Shigure laughed. He looked around the room to see all the girls in their pastel colored clothes, searching out for their former housekeeper. "By the way, has anyone seen Tohru-kun? She is after all the reason for this party."

Yuki was watching the sight of many guests partaking in some kind of classic dance before giving Shigure's words a thought. "Last time I saw her was with Mine-san. Mine-san looked like she was going to have a heart attack if she didn't get Honda-san to put on her latest work."

Haru turned away. "Girl's are so hard to understand." He tugged at his collar. "And why do we have to wear these stupid suits? The only people it actually suits is Shigure-niisan and Hatori-niisan."

Shigure gave Haru a thumbs up. "Hm, you don't say?"

"You look like butler." Yuki laughed. Suddenly the room burst in screams and a mob of frills and colors mad a mosh pit in one corner of the room. Yuki chuckled and drank his cup of punch, trying to ignore the late arrival of Kyo. "Sounds like that baka neko has arrived."

The other two males agreed and sipped their punch simultaneously.

"Yuki! Shi-chan! Haru!" From the kitchen bounded in Momiji in a similar suit get-up except that he wore black dress shorts instead of pants. He twirled around laughing. "I'm so excited, there is so much to do tonight! Aya-chan did all the decorations so nice too!" He put his fists up to his mouth in utter excitement. "And I heard that Aya-chan ordered a super nice and yummy cake too!"

"Ah, leave it to Momichi to think about dessert." Shigure laughed. "Though that cake really does sound good from the way Aya was describing it. Apparently Tohru-kun wanted to bake a cake, but Aya insisted on ordering the finest French pastries and cakes for this party." He sighed, "As the saying goes, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach! Ahaha..." He looked to the three younger boys who were not paying attention to him but rather what was behind him. "Yuki-kun? Ha-kun? Momichi? Hello?" Shigure shook his head.

"Honestly, how do you younger Sohmas think you'll snag any girls when you don't even participate in conversations without spacing out? It's a major turn off if you ask me." Shigure was waiting for some kind of reactions but nothing came. He raised an eyebrow and turned around to see Hatori escorting a young lady towards them, the seahorse with a small smile on his face.

"Honda-san..." Yuki said his mouth hanging open just slightly. To say the least they were stunned.

She held onto Hatori's right arm with a shy smile, her eyes cast downwards in complete embarrassment. She didn't feel like she was in a dress but rather just another costume that Ayame brought out for their weekly themes, except this time she was the only one dressing up in a rather embellished dress. Everyone's stares were not making her blush go away either.

Her dress was a rich cream color with a dark rose colored design around her bust. The skirted part had three layers, each with the matching rose design trailing around the entire hem of the dress dusting the floor. Every layer had a scalloped cut that was shaped around the design. The dress swelled only at her bust as the rest flowed around her with a similar dark rose colored ribbon wrapping just under her breast into a simple bow, the ends streaming down almost to the floor. The top of the dress had a lacy material but cut in the same fashion as the bottom of the dress showing off her bare, slender shoulders.

She also had matching gloves that went all the way up to the middle of her upper arms with the same cut as the top of her dress and a pair of mary jane styled dress shoes the same color as the design and ribbon. To finish off the look, there was a dark rose colored choker around her neck with a pearl dangling from the front. Entwining with her brown locks of hair trailing down her back was a simple cream hair clip holding half of her hair up. Mine-san even took the opportunity to put a pair of pearl earrings on the girl and light makeup. Despite how complicated the dress sounded, it was very beautiful and becoming on the rather shy girl.

Tohru shuffled her feet trying to hide her face in Hatori's arm. It wasn't just the Sohma men that were giving her looks but some of the guests whispered around her. "Um... how does it look?"

Shigure regained his composure and gave her a light smile. "It looks nice, but you look stunning." He sighed and raised his voice to a slightly higher pitch. "The picture of innocence! What man wouldn't want to sweep you off your feet? Ah, makes me want to be young again." He grinned, his voice suddenly growing husky, "Although, age is not a restriction in my eyes."



Yuki scoffed at Shigure's attempted advances on Tohru. "Then at your age, your eyes must be getting bad just like your brain if you think you'd be able to sweep Honda-san off her feet with a line like that, you perverted dog."

She blushed further.

Momiji gave her a huge hug. "Tohru, you look like a princess! Oh, I'd love to be your knight!" Haru only peeled Momiji off of her like fly paper dragging the boy to a safe distance from Tohru.

Shigure nudged Hatori, the other man's smile fading as Shigure gave him an impish smile. "Why still hold onto dear Tohru-kun like that, 'Tori-san? Eh? Eh? You want to keep her all to yourself, don't you?" Shigure smacked his friend playfully on the shoulder. "Ah, you dirty old man you!"

"If I had a dime for everytime you act like a dirty old man, I'd take the first vacation trip ticket to Hawaii."

Shigure put a hand to his cheek. "Tori-san, you're so cruel! You wouldn't happen to be taking me with you on this trip would you?"

"No."

"Oh woe is me!"

Hatori turned to Tohru and patted her on the head. "This is going to be a while. Go have fun, Tohru-san."

She nodded and let go of his arm. Yuki stepped up to her and offered her his arm. "Would you like to see all of Ayame's decorations? Maybe you'd like to see the garden?"

She clapped her hands in delight. "Oh, I'd love that, Yuki-kun! Thank you so much!" The pair walked away as the other four men watched her walk away.

"I really am going to miss her though." Shigure said after a moment.

Haru nodded his head. "I think we all will."

Momiji pumped a fist into the air. "We have to make tonight extra special for her!"

Haru looked around the room and caught the tuft of orange hair in the mist of the party. Kyo's eyes were already searching out for Tohru. Haru smirked. "I think I know how."

Kyo finally got away from all the girls and stood off to the side looking around the room. Unconsciously he was already searching out for a particular person. The person that he had been thinking about all day, but had yet to see at all. She wouldn't have left already had she? She didn't say good bye!

"Hey." Kyo turned around to see Hiro giving him a snotty look. "I didn't think you'd show up."

"Why the hell not, you little brat?" Kyo growled, angry to be bothered at a time like this.

"Because at the last ball you nearly dislocated that girl's arm." Hiro pointed out in the mist of people to one girl that had her left arm in a sling. Kyo gulped and turned around.

"Whatever, I was in a bad mood and if she got any closer I would have transformed." He hissed back to the teenager. Hiro was about to retort something back when a soft voice called at him.

"H-Hiro-sama?" Hiro turned around to see a girl about his age smiling at him. "Um, do you want to dance?"

Kyo waited for what Hiro would say, but the boy only gave the girl a devilish smirk. "Well I can't refuse to a babe like you, can I?"

She blushed as Hiro took her by the arm and led her to the dance floor. To this day Kyo couldn't figure out how that kid could be such a brat one minute and a total womanizer the next. Watching the two dance for a moment his attention turned to a laugh further away from where Hiro and the girl were dancing. It was so odd how he could hear her voice even in a noise environment like this.

He looked and then a couple moved out of the way for Kyo to find Tohru dancing with Yuki, the pair laughing as Tohru tried to follow Yuki's dance steps. She stumbled again and burst out laughing as Yuki smiled along with her. Yuki spun her around carefully and Kyo caught a glimpse of her face, smiling and laughing, just enjoying herself. She was breathtaking. When Tohru finally turned back to face Yuki, the pair froze and then laughed again in amusement.

Kyo couldn't help but smile a little. She just looked so content but a slight feeling of jealousy came over him that Yuki held Tohru so close, the type of closeness Kyo could never achieve for fear of transforming. He felt a man pat him on the back.

"If you want to dance with her that bad, why don't you go cut in?"

Kyo turned to be faced with Ayame. "She's dancing with tht damn rat right now!" He barked, shrugging Ayame's hand off his shoulder. The silver haired man put a index finger to his forehead chuckling lightly.

"My dear boy, as the night grows longer, the girl will be swept away by another man and your chance will fall through." Just as Ayame said that, Haru tapped Yuki on the shoulder and the pair switched so that Haru began dancing with Tohru. "Ah, see what did I tell you? Without knowing it, the girl of your dreams will be gone without any idea of how you feel for her. Frankly, I find that selfish."

Kyo glared but Ayame already started walking away to chat with a group of girls. He turned back to Haru leaning in close to Tohru to whisper something into her ear to make her flush a pretty shade of ice pink. She looked beautiful like she always did as she continued spinning around the dance floor with Haru. He wanted so much to just hold her, feel the softness of her skin on his hands as they danced. To just imagine it wasn't enough.

But he couldn't. No, no he could! He would dance with her before this night was over! They promised it the other night! He started walking over to Tohru once Haru and Tohru's song was over when suddenly he saw Ritsu stumble onto the dance floor and right onto Tohru. The man looked like he was about to scream but Tohru smiled lightly and said something to Ritsu. The man nodded and took her hands

carefully as a waltz played through the entire ballroom.

"What the...?" He looked around for the person that pushed Ritsu at Tohru. The monkey would never initiate a dance like that! Something was going on here.

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Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki, Kyo, Satsuki...

"Where do I belong?"

## 13 - Kyo, my family and me

As soon as Tohru flew off the stage and headed for the doors, Kyo ran after her. He saw her stumble over her words and when he saw her tear up, he knew something was wrong. All his anger was pushed aside at the sight of her trying to run away. She couldn't leave yet! He pushed through the crowd and met up with Yuki at the door who was looking just as frantic.

"I'll go get her." Kyo said, the statement coming out more like a command than a comment. Yuki stopped as soon as Kyo disappeared through the doors, his hand extended slightly as the doors closed. Yuki promised himself he'd help Tohru as long as she'd allow him to, but his instincts held him back, telling him he couldn't help her this time. There was a force holding him away and he could not take a step closer to Tohru. Why was it that Kyo could step past this invisible barrier?

The party members gathered at the windows to see what was happening outside, but it was too dark, only light enough to see silhouettes. Hatsuharu came up behind Yuki and stopped as well. It was as if there was a magnetic force propelling the former zodiac members away from the door.

"Why didn't you go after her too?" Haru asked after a moment, side glancing at Yuki's perplexed features.

Yuki thought a moment only staring at the door with his arms limply at his sides. His violet-blue eyes dimmed. "I've never seen Kyo act like this before. Not only that but I can't get myself to get any closer to the door. Something's telling me we're not to go..."

Haru nodded. "I can feel it too. I think this is supposed to happen though. This feeling is similar to when Momiji was released from the curse." Haru caught Yuki's eye finally. "I wanted to run to him, tell him he couldn't fall in love with that girl but there was a force pushing me away from him." Haru sighed, "Kyo must have it bad."

Yuki stepped closer to Haru, hoping Haru wasn't talking about what he was thinking about. "What are you implying?"

"Well, duh, can't you tell he's head-over-heels for her?" Haru crossed his arms.

Yuki spun on Haru at that comment. "What?" He looked around and lowered his voice, "How do you know that?"

"He's been around the house more, he talks more, he doesn't yell that much, he just can't look Tohru in the eye, he blushes anytime she comes within two feet of him-- I thought it was obvious."

Yuki stared at Haru and then back at the door. "Do you think...?"

"If she does, it'd be a miracle. I never thought Kyo would get so close to a girl."

"Honda-san is not just any ordinary girl either." Yuki said in defense to Tohru. "I bet she could break the curse once and for all."

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Kyo ran outside to find Tohru just standing in the middle of the cobblestone walkway. She heard his footsteps and panicked. Her face flushed and she turned to run away from Kyo but he caught her arm.  
"Tohru!"

"Please let me go!"

He couldn't watch her go away just because she didn't think she belonged there. Of course she did! If anything she belonged with him. She was like his better half, she couldn't think she didn't belong.

"No, Tohru."

She cried out feeling her legs give in but she only continued to pull away from Kyo. "If I stay, I won't be able to go back. I'm no good for anyone. I want to stay but I can't. I won't be able to go back..."

"Don't be stupid, why would you want to go back to that guy? What's there to go back to with Satsuki? There are people here that care about you!" He could feel his grip on her wrist tighten. "Don't be blind and think that you leaving is for the best! Hell, open your eyes and see that everyone here needs you!"

'I need you...what could I do to make you stay?'

As if on instinct he spun her around and crushed her against his chest wrapping both of his arms around her petite frame in fear of her running off again. He said if she ever ran away he'd chase after her didn't he? He'd never let her run away now. She said she wanted to stay. Why didn't she say so before? He held her close, afraid to see her disappear. He didn't care if he transformed. All he cared about for the moment was her staying with him.

"Kyo-kun! No, don't...!" Tohru called out his name in panic, her eyes tightly closed in fear of feeling a poof of magic and the boy would disappear into his cat form. He only held her impossibly closer.

She stood quivering, thinking that everyone would find out his secret now and all their memories would have to be erased.

Nothing happened.

She opened an eye to see Kyo still standing there hugging her in his human form, slightly shaking. She looked up seeing Kyo's eyes also tightly closed. She never saw him so close before. Was this real? Did he really not transform? Tentatively she raised a hand and came closer to his face. She hesitated but gently put her hand to his face, he suddenly leaning in to her touch. Her heart began to beat wildly when she could almost hear him purr. She smiled through her tears, happiness swelling in her chest.

"K-Kyo-kun! You didn't transform! Kyo-kun's not cursed anymore!" She spoke out excitedly in his arms. Kyo finally opened his eyes to see he was infact still standing on his two feet. She looked up at him with

shining eyes as he stepped away from her. "I'm so happy for you!"

Kyo's eyes grew to the size of sausers. He didn't transform? He leaned away from Tohru and stared at his untransformed body. "What the hell?" He pushed Tohru towards his chest again and there was no poof. He pushed her onto him again making she squeek at his rather forceful pushes onto his body. "Why the hell aren't I changing?" He growled while continuing to push Tohru onto his body.

"K-K-Ky-o-o-ku-n!" Tohru gasped between his thrusts, her entire face going beat red.

Kyo's face flamed up and he stopped pushing Tohru upon his figure. 'Idiot! It looks like you're raping her!' His eyes strayed away as Tohru almost laughed.

"Kyo-kun, it's true... you're not going to transform." She gave him an earnest smile while averting her eyes to stare at the gates behind Kyo. "You... broke the curse."

Suddenly Kyo knew what that funny feeling inside his chest was everytime he got near her. It was love, love that she let grow inside him. And for the first time in a long time, he gave her a real smile. He didn't say anything but held her closer to his heart, tenderly and gently. Tohru's eyes widened at such a smile from Kyo. As he pulled her close, she leaned her ear against his chest, listening to their heartbeats thump as one. Why was it though that he didn't transform?

Kyo's body suddenly felt very weak and his grip on Tohru slacked. Chemicals running through his body suddenly made the boy feel very sleepy. Tohru looked up as Kyo's eyes began losing focus.

She watched as Kyo began falling backwards, the doors behind him suddenly bursting open as Tohru continued to call out to him. "Kyo-kun...!"

'Don't leave yet...'

Finally he collapsed.

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Later that night, Tohru stood outside Kyo's old bedroom where Hatori was inside checking Kyo over. She was still dressed in the gown Mine had made for her, too worried to think about changing clothes. Apparently after she ran off the stage Ayame had to call attention back to the ballroom and soon everyone forgot about the run away girl. Momiji and Haru stared at Tohru now pacing back and fourth nervously while playing with her silky gloves she took off, wringing them in her hands.

Both boys disappeared behind the corner and out of Tohru's view. "Well that plan kind of failed." Momiji whispered.

"But it was fun to see Kyo so pissed off, heh." Haru said in return.

"But Kyo was only supposed to get angry enough to actually get to dance with Tohru but it turns out he never got the chance at all. Tohru must be very sad she didn't get to dance with him."

Haru smirked. "Don't worry, there will be another chance." He put a foot up against the wall and crossed his arms. "I don't think Tohru will be leaving any time soon."

"Why's that?"

"Because she said she didn't want to leave. And what's more, Kyo isn't cursed anymore. You saw it, he was just laying there passed out in her arms. Also, Yuki and I couldn't get past the doors when Kyo ran after Tohru." His eyes shifted to Momiji as the boy's eyes widened remembering a similar scenario. "As soon as he passed out, the air didn't seem as suffocating and we ran out when Tohru screamed."

Momiji gasped. "So that means that he really loves Tohru!" Haru nodded and the smaller boy couldn't contain his excitement. "So now all of us are not cursed anymore! That's wonderful!"

Haru suddenly frowned as he glanced back over his shoulder to the pacing Tohru. "Now the only problem is, does she feel the same?"

The door opened and Tohru immediately came towards Hatori.

"Don't worry, he'll be fine. It's normal for a Sohma to lose all his or her energy after being released from the curse. He'll be up and about soon enough."

Tohru felt a deep breath escape her lungs. "Thank goodness. So he's okay then?"

"Perfectly fine. You should get some rest, Tohru-san." Hatori bowed and began walking away.

"Ah, Hatori-san!" Tohru ran up to the older man. "Why... I mean I know why, but why was it that Kyo-kun didn't transform tonight? I thought Shigure-san said when a zodiac member fell in love..."

"Well that's precisely what happened then." Hatori gave the girl a rather soft look. "Don't worry about it." He walked down the hall to find Momiji and Haru with rather impish grins on their faces. "And what are you two doing?"

"Nothing, Ha'ri!" Momiji laughed.

Hatori watched them for a moment and continued walking. "If you're plotting some scheme for those two, you're not the only ones." With that he disappeared into his own bedroom leaving the other two Sohma boys to wander elsewhere in the house before anyone caught them.

Meanwhile, Tohru stood in front of the wooden door, staring up at the frame wondering about the male just beyond that door. Sighing she leaned her head on the door with a small thump. So it was true then, Kyo was not cursed anymore... but who had he fallen in love with? There were so many girls at the party and besides the second half of the ball she had not seen Kyo all evening.

She remembered while dancing with Haru, he whispered in her ear that Kyo really wanted to dance with her. At the thought of her promise the night on the roof, she blushed. While twirling around she tried to find Kyo but it seemed there was just no sight of him. Every time she'd try to find a moment to search



him out, another one of the hosts would politely ask her to dance. Even Ritsu! She was surprised the man would engage in offering to dance with her to say the least. He must have really grown more confident in himself. All of them changed just a little right before her eyes.

And now Kyo had fallen in love and the curse was finally broken. She thought she'd feel ecstatic when Kyo would finally not be ostracized for his 'late blooming' as Shigure would put, but suddenly she didn't feel all so happy about it anymore.

She walked away from the door and went back to her own across the grandiose stairwell. She looked down to see all the party decorations and lighting had suddenly vanished like it was never there and the victorian styled room was put back in place. It reminded her of Cinderella. At the stroke of midnight the spell would be broken.

She shook her head and walked into her bedroom thinking of the irony in that statement and shut the door quietly not to disturb anyone down her hall. As soon as she saw her bed her entire body felt heavy and begged for rest. She quickly stripped off the dress leaving it in a pool around her feet, bathed, put on her sleeping clothes and hopped into bed.

She put her wrist to her forehead staring up at the canopy above her four poster bed. She just didn't know why she didn't feel as happy as she thought she would be. In fact she felt very sad. Not only that but Kyo questioned her leaving, making her wonder 'why' herself.

Why did she want to leave so badly? What was there to go back to? Satsuki? Her friends that would hate her for not taking their advice? And what was she to do? Decisions never came to her and her head began to pound. She made up her mind before. She was going to leave so she should stick with her original idea.

She leaned over to turn out the light and turned to her side, pulling up the covers to her chin. In the corner of the room was one small suitcase that Shigure bought her for the few items she had been given since staying with the Sohmas. She turned away from the suitcase and closed her eyes to try and catch some sleep. There was just too much on her mind.

So this was the end of her story wasn't it? The end of her adventure. Now she would only go back to being plain Tohru Honda, the girl that was always caring about the world and everyone in it. But who was there to care for her? Maybe that would be another chapter, just another dull chapter in her ordinary life.

'There are people here that care about you!'

She shut her eyes, curling herself into a tight ball. My Family: She decided would be the title of this chapter in her life. She finally felt sleep take over as she drempt with a bittersweet smile graced on her lips. Dreaming of the family she'd come to know and love dearly.

And this would always be her favorite part of her life story.

## 14 - Au Revoir Dear Tohru

The following morning there was no life in the kitchen. No breakfast, no singing, nothing. It felt as if the fire had gone out.

Tohru sat on a chair in the great hall wearing a cotton, powder blue dress that was given to her as a present. Mine insisted on her keeping it and threw in a bonnet that Tohru preferred not to wear at the moment.

"Tohru-san, the car is ready," Hatori called to her while putting his coat on. "Do you have your things ready?"

"Yes, Hatori-san."

"Very well, we have the car waiting and there will be an escort at the airport to assist you. Come."

"Oh, okay!" She stood up and picked up her single brown suit case, walking over to Hatori. She looked around to see that none of the other Sohma's were around. "Where is everyone?" She asked as Hatori opened the front door for her.

As soon as Hatori opened the door the front garden was a thrilling scene. There they were, all of the Host Club members standing in a calculated pose, which Ayame most likely set up, just like the first time she ever met them. They all stood with half-hearted smiles trying to be as happy as they could for their friend.

Hatori ushered her forward when she didn't move and she gave him a nervous smile before approaching the group. Suddenly Ayame stepped forward to give her a white carnation. She looked at it for a moment and then back up at Ayame.

"It's for you, Tohru. Please take it." She reached out and accepted the single flower. Then, suddenly as if on cue, one by one each member extended a single carnation of multiple colors for her to have. She thanked each one of them personally as she held a beautiful bouquet of carnations. Momiji finally came up to her with his yellow flower and tied an orange ribbon around the entire bouquet. He stepped back while staring at his feet.

"We'll miss you..." he said not looking up at her.

Tohru smiled and faced all of them, now looking quite gloomy. "Thank you for everything. It means so much to me!"

Ritsu was already crying. "But Tohru-san, you said you didn't want to leave!" He burst out.

She tilted her head and only kept smiling. "I think you'll all do fine. Your curse is completely lifted, everyone seems to get along well..." She looked down at the flowers thinking how there was one

member of the club that was not outside this morning. "You don't need me anymore..." she whispered for no one to hear. She looked up with a cheery smile. She didn't want their final good bye to be so sad. "So! I'll be going now! I promise to write every now and then. I think I can find a place to stay now that I've earned enough money. Please don't worry about me."

She waved and turned to go to the car. How she wished to say good bye to Kyo, but it might hurt if she saw him again. She didn't want to see the pain in his eyes. She knew if she just closed her eyes, she would always be able to see Kyo. She couldn't fathom how much she was going to miss all of them.

She jumped when a hand reached out to stop her. She paused in her step hoping it was who she thought it was holding her back. Carefully she turned around.

Yuki stood there holding her hand. He raised it to his lips and gently kissed her hand. "Please take care of yourself Hon- I ah mean... Tohru-san."

Tohru was a little disappointed it wasn't Kyo but was touched all the same. Yuki was like a brother to her, always watching out for her when she was staying with them. She promised to never forget him. "Please do that same for yourself, Yuki-kun."

She looked up at a certain window and only turned away. She'd hate to leave without saying good bye to him but...

She smiled wide and got into the car. "Good bye everyone! Take care!"

"Au revoir! Good bye!" Everyone chanted collectively.

Everyone waved to her as the car started rolling away. Shigure, Ayame, Momiji, and Yuki all ran to the gates to continue waving at her down the street as the black car disappeared, the girl driving further and further away.

Shigure stopped waving and put his hand down with a slight smile. "She's really gone now."

The yard was silent for a moment when suddenly the door slammed open to reveal Kyo scaring everyone (especially Ritsu to say the least) out of their skin.

"Did she leave?" Kyo asked already short of breath. Hatori glared at the boy.

"You're in no condition to get out of bed yet! You might fall faint."

"Did she leave yet?" Kyo only repeated.

Haru nodded. "She left like twenty-three seconds ago."

Hiro crossed his arms looking another direction. "That's exaggerated."

"No really. She left twenty-three seconds ago, that's how long it took to read from 'Everyone waved to her as the car started rolling away,' moment till now. I timed it."

"Freak."

Kyo ignore them and went around to the side of the house. He pulled out Haru's bicycle and mounted it.

"Where are you going?" Shigure asked watching Kyo get up on the bike. Hatori grabbed the bike by it's handles, stopping Kyo from moving any further.

"Do not leave, Kyo."

Kyo jiggled the handles to get Hatori off of it. "Leave me alone, Hatori." He growled while peddling, nearly running Hatori over.

"You can't catch up to her now!"

"I've gotta... I've gotta say bye to her at least!" He yelled behind him as he peddled out of the main gates. "And don't try to stop me!" He yelled as an afterthought.

Ayame snorted and flicked hair of his shoulder. "Sometimes I wonder if he remembers we're rich or not? We do have an extensive number of cars you know."

Shigure laughed. "Well running after the girl of your dreams on a bicycle is a bit more ah how would you put it? Dramatic in a sentimental way."

Hatori began walking back into the house. "I call it stupid."

Hiro started walking in Hatori's path as well. "I give him ten minutes before he passes out."

"Fifteen." Yuki argued as everyone started walking into the house.

"You're on, Nezumi."

"Can a bike even catch up to a car in real life?" Momiji wondered as he closed the door.

----

Kyo peddled down the streets in search of the car he'd seen from his window. When he woke up that morning his head was still spinning. Slowly he went to the bathroom to wash his face when the thought hit him. Tohru! She was going to leave today! He ran to the window to see her already getting into the car when he dashed down to the front of the house to catch her before she went.

"She can't go yet! She can't!" He muttered as he jumped on the stair railing and slid down the banisters. He got outside to see everyone staring at him in shock. When he saw that the car was gone he decided to go after her. No matter what happened.

He turned a sharp corner and went full speed down the road weaving in and out of traffic, people on the side walk yelling at him to slow down but he didn't care. He had to catch up to her!

Suddenly in his view he caught the same car that Tohru left in. He looked down at the bike's handles to see a bell. Silently he wondered why Haru even had a sissy bell on his bike to begin with. He started ringing it frantically and waved a hand in the air. Maybe she would see him.

On the other hand, in the car, Tohru was watching out the window as people passed by when a ringing noise repeated over and over in her ear. She looked around and didn't see anything. She got up out of her seat and turned to look out the back window to see Kyo on a bike waving at her! She gasped in surprise thinking of Kyo riding his bike at top speed in his condition and immediately turned to the driver.

"Mr. Driver! Wait please stop the car!"

"Oh man, this is my jam!" The driver had his music high as he sang to the tune blasting on the radio.

"Get low, Get low  
Get low, Get low"

"Mr Driver!" Tohru called again. She watched as the driver took a hand off the wheel and waved it from right to left.

"To the window, to the wall, (to dat wall)  
To the sweat drop down and fall (fall)  
To all these females crawl (crawl)  
To all skeet skeet skeet skeet skeet skeet"

"Mr. Driver Sir!"

"All skeet skeet, got, I got what?"

"DRIVER!"

The driver was startled at Tohru's scream and turned down the radio. "What is it, lil' missy?"

"Just stop the car please! There's a person...!"

Just outside, Kyo's legs were burning as he was getting closer to the car. Maybe if he got close enough he could yell out her name to get her attention. He peddled faster. 'Almost there...!'

To his utter horror the car stopped dead and it was impossible to put his breaks on soon enough. He ran right into the bumper of the car, smacking himself into the back windshield. From inside the car Tohru was screaming bloody murder as a flat faced Kyo was smashed all over the window. Kyo slowly slid down the window and fell off the trunk of the car in a heap.

The passenger door swung open and Tohru ran out frantically falling to his side. "Oh, Kyo-kun!"

"Oh, shoot man... damnit that hurts!" He moaned on the floor while covering his manhood.

"Here let me help you up..."

"Ah, don't touch my arm, it stings!"

"Well I'll lift you..."

"Ow Ow..."

Tohru backed up. "Okay okay, just stay calm... stay calm...!" She wasn't so sure if she was saying this to relieve herself or Kyo.

The driver also came out walking quickly to the scene. "Oh my Gosh! Oh my Gosh!"

Tohru looked at him. "I know! Help me get him into the--!"

"My car! My baby car! Did he put a dent in my baby?" The driver went around to inspect the back end of the car and was relieved there was not a scratch. He breathed on the car and rubbed it with the inside of his coat to see it shine.

Tohru's eyes swirled a little. "Ah, Driver-san, can you help him into the car?"

The driver turned around. "Oh! Oh yeah, sure. Sorry about that, son, you shouldn't be ridin' a bike like that around town, you know?"

"I'll keep that in mind." Kyo growled out about to chew the driver's head off for nearly getting him killed.

Tohru and the driver got Kyo into the back seat and the bike hauled on top of the car. Tohru closed the door to sit next to Kyo. She leaned over to inspect Kyo as he felt his entire body tense up at their closeness. "You have a bump on your head! Oh, this is all my fault! Ah, hospital! Where's the closest hospital?"

"D-don't worry about it. I'm okay." He said as he watched her tears come fourth. The pair stared at each other for a moment longer before Tohru looked away. Kyo watched her sadden and then brighten up while speaking to the driver.

"Um, can you please turn around and take us back home, Driver-san?" Kyo stared at Tohru. "I'm sorry to cause you inconvenience."

"Hey, hey!" The driver turned around with a crooked smile. "Any friend of Master Ayame is a friend of mine." The driver made a fast illegal U-turn making both young adults feel slightly sick. "LET'S ROCK!"

----

As soon as they got home Hatori led Kyo back to his room while Tohru followed anxiously. In the background there was an exchange of money between Hiro and Yuki but Tohru didn't figure it concerned her at the moment.

Kyo, despite ramming Haru's bike into a car, was fine. It was a miracle really. Hatori bopped Kyo on the head. "Stop doing such reckless things. It is unbecoming of a man who won't admit his feelings."

"W-what!" Kyo barked, but Hatori already left the room, leaving the door open. Tohru turned to Kyo and held his hand.

"Are you sure you're okay? You ran into that car pretty hard."

"No thanks to that looney bastard of a driver." Kyo muttered. Tohru squeezed his hand tighter and he looked up to see her worried eyes. He turned away. "I'm fine, really."

She let go and nodded her head. She was glad he wasn't really hurt. She smiled trying to make him feel good. "Okay."

'I thought I'd never see him again...'

Kyo snuck a glance at her. "Why'd you come back? Aren't you going to miss your plane?"

'I couldn't just watch her walk away...'

There was a long silence making every movement seem very loud and the tension build just slightly.

She smiled at Kyo, making his heart flutter. He thought he'd never see her smile again. "Of course I'd come back if you were willing to ride a bike all the way down town after me! And I had to make sure you were okay..." Suddenly she felt Kyo touch her face making the girl freeze on the spot. His hands were rather rough but warm to the touch.

"I'm glad... you came back..." he said softly. He realized her face blush and he instantly pulled his hand away.

Secretly, Tohru never imagined hearing those words from Kyo. In fact she didn't think she'd even get to see him before she left. He really looked so happy to see her. She felt like she was in one of those old films. He asked her before, what was there to go back to if she left the Sohmas, but now she understood something. Going back to the Sohma house was so much easier than leaving because there was someone to go back to here. She stared at Kyo, the fuzzy feelings never dying down within her.

'There was someone to go back to here...'

"You know... maybe it will be okay..." Tohru started off. "If I stay a little longer... here." She looked up at the ceiling. "I mean, there really isn't anywhere for me to go right now, and I'll send a letter to my grandpa telling him I'm fine. And maybe... maybe I'm just not ready to leave yet."

"Thinking in the car I realized I really never had much of a family. I think that the Sohmas are the closest thing I've ever had to it." She turned to Kyo with a bright grin. "I'd hate to impose but I'd love to work here again. I'll do all the house work in return for my boarding. And I don't want any money...!"

"OF COURSE YOU CAN STAY!"

Tohru nearly jumped onto Kyo's lap as Ayame appeared behind the couple holding both by their shoulders.

"Damnit, Ayame, can't you freakin' knock on the door?" Kyo shouted obviously angry for being snuck up on like that.

"It was open! Ha ha ha!" Ayame grabbed Tohru's hands into his larger ones. "I thought you'd never ask to stay longer. Stay here as long as you like, Tohru. I want you to spend the rest of your days here in utter happiness!"

"Oh get off her you sicko." Kyo muttered.

Tohru smiled. "You never know when I might have to leave though, if that's okay."

"Of course not! Please, we want you to stay with us as long as you like!" Ayame raised his hand toward the window while propped one foot on the bed side. "For infinity and beyond!"

Kyo crossed his arms. "I think it's 'to infinity and beyond'."

"Well, whatever."

Tohru clasped her hands as she watched Ayame and Kyo squabble. Turning around she saw the rest of the members watching from the door way with rather happy smiles. She guessed she found a new home here with the Sohmas. The only thing she could think of was, 'I'm home.'



## 15 - Prelude to the Summer Getaway!

Two weeks went by after Tohru established her new home. To say the least, everyone was ecstatic that the girl would be staying. She never felt so loved by many people. She never thought she could even have this many people around her. Not only that but they were all handsome men! She only frowned thinking how much Satsuki would hate her living in a house full of only men.

And to top it off, she had their family secret! They would transform into the members of the zodiac if they were hugged by the opposite sex-- not anymore of course-- but no one would believe her if she tried to tell anyway. Now that she was a resident with the Sohmas without any obligations for staying, Ayame instructed her to drop the 'sama' while around customers. It was time they knew Tohru would be there to stay and she was no stranger to them. The customers found it strange but didn't question Ayame or Tohru. In fact, they grew content with Tohru's presence. Perhaps that in itself was strange.

On the other hand, Kyo was acting as odd as ever these days. He was acting normal on the outside, but his way of talking and his daily patterns seemed... just different. Tohru thought maybe it was that girl that he'd fallen in love with that was making him so different. He must be anxious to tell her how he feels or something along those lines. She sighed wondering who this mystery maiden was anyway. Oh and speaking of Kyo, he moved back into the main house. Everyone teased him about moving back in only because Tohru was living with them now, but Tohru decided that couldn't be the reason. He probably felt like he belonged there now. The cat was finally living with the rest of the zodiac members!

It really made her happy.

She brought herself back to the task at hand, refilling trays with fantastic little desserts on each table. She wandered around the great hall, trying to move around the groups without disturbance. It was not the Zodiac Cat day, so the stream of customers was fairly slow. She walked past Haru's table to hear a snippet of their conversation.

"Hatsuharu-sama, have you... ever been in love?"

Haru stared at the girl a moment as she looked up with shining eyes. "Why do you ask that, sweetie?" He responded after a moment feeling a sensitive topic coming on.

The girl blushed scarlet and looked down at Haru's chest. "Because... I think... I love you. I want to be with you always, Hatsuharu-sama!"

Haru looked down, his face darkening. "What... did you say?" Suddenly Haru stood up pushing the girl down and away from him. Tohru gasped and froze in her steps. What was the matter with Hatsuharu?

"H-Hatsu...!" She stuttered.

The girl looked up at Haru with fearful eyes. "His eyes are so dark," one girl noticed. Everyone tensed around Haru feeling a small prick at their backs. "B-black... Haru-sama?"

Tohru quickly looked back to Haru to find his eyes were indeed slightly narrow and his usual cool grey eyes were hard and cold as steel. So this was... Black Haru?

"AYAA! Black-san! It's Black-san, what am I suppose to do! Ah, eh, Yuki-kun!" Tohru ran for Yuki, the other man instantly standing up with a serious face. The girls he was entertaining all watched with excitement.

"Honda-san! What is it!"

"You think you love me, little girl!" Yuki and Tohru turned around at Haru's deep voice. Tohru had never seen Black Haru before. He really was a completely different person! Haru got in the girl's face. "Ha! Don't make me laugh. You want to know if I've been in love?"

"I...I..."

"Well I'll tell you! Yeah, I've been in love. No, I AM in love!" Haru backed the girl up against the seat, putting a hand right beside her head. "But this girl doesn't love me back." Haru turned his face slightly as the girl sat still in her seat. "So can you really love me, hua? What do you think? Love is so easily given? Hua?" The girl squeaked as Haru's breath tickled her earlobe. "Answer me."

Yuki put a hand on Haru's shoulder. "Haru, knock it off." Haru spun around and threw a punch right at Yuki's face.

"You knock it off!"

Tohru gasped and covered her face. "Yuki-kun!"

SMACK!

She looked up and was surprised to see that Yuki caught Haru's fist in his hand. "Haru, you need to calm down!" He argued while gritting his teeth together. "This isn't the place to be acting like this!"

"Why the hell should I? What are you, my mother? Rin will never love me back, Yuki!" Haru shoved Yuki away from him when one of the other girls in Haru's group grabbed onto his arm.

"No, Black-sama! Don't be so cruel!"

Haru turned around with a catty grin. He pulled the girl up barely inches away from his face. "You should save your love for someone else. A host club member and love are never used in the same sentence." Slowly Haru kissed the girl on the cheek making her blush further. He let her go and glared at Yuki before exiting the main hall.

"I've had enough of this crap. I'm leaving." With that he disappeared from the scene.

"Sometimes he is such an idiot..." Yuki muttered.

Tohru looked at Yuki who only stood up glaring right at the door Haru had exited through. She turned to the girls at Haru's table all sitting in complete shock. She was about to walk over to them and calm them down when they all burst out in squeals and tears.

"Ohmigosh, Black-sama is the coolest!"

"HE KISSED ME!" One girl exclaimed.

"I love his wild side!"

"HE ACTUALLY KISSED ME!" The same girl continued to scream.

Tohru sweatdropped as she watched the girls actually get excited over seeing Haru in such a temperamental state. Maybe that's why he was that wild card, hua?

"So... so this is... normal?" Tohru asked out loud. She couldn't believe these girls actually liked Black-san. He was a bit scary.

Yuki shook his head. "I guess so. Haru's never raised his hand to a girl ever, so just his explosive nature is a flip side to his normal side which girls seem to like. If you ask me, it's just weird." The pair continued to watch the girls flaunt over how awesome Black Haru was.

Tohru looked at Yuki. "That was amazing how you caught his punch, Yuki-kun. It's very admirable."

Yuki smiled. "Thank you, Honda-san."

"Tohru is just fine!"

"Ah, I always forget that."

Tohru and Yuki walked away towards Yuki's rather full table of girls snapping photos of him.

"That was a brilliant fight of Haru-sama vs. Prince Yuki!"

"Prince Yuki's picture! I want a copy!"

"I'm going to make a flip book out of this!"

The girls began chatting amongst themselves while Tohru brushed lint off of Yuki's white shirt without a thought. Yuki stiffened slightly never being so close to a girl. Then again, Tohru was a special girl. Never had anyone cared so much about him before. Cared about all of them here in this Sohma house.

His heart warmed at the thought.

"Ah, by the way, Yuki-kun, if you don't mind me asking that is, who is... Rin-san?"

The question startled Yuki as Tohru only smiled up at him. "Rin?" Yuki turned away. "She's a member of

the zodiac too."

Tohru clapped her hands. "There are girls in the zodiac too?"

"Yes, and Haru fell in love with Rin. He's told her a number of times that he really loves her, but... she acts indifferent every time. I don't know much about it either, but if you want to see Black Haru, talking about Rin is a sure way to do it." Yuki smiled when he saw her distressed features. "Don't worry about it. He will be fine, Tohru-san." He looked back at his table of awaiting customers. "I had better go."

"Ah, you should!" Tohru smiled. Yuki walked away from her as she turned back to the door Haru left through. She never thought about it, but if every member of the zodiac was released from the curse, that meant they had fallen in love. But then why was it that they were in a host club that entertained women when there was, at one time, a special woman that they loved? Were they all crushed by a former love or something?

"Tohru?" Momiji asked appearing in front of her. "Tohru do you have a minute?" The question was instantly forgotten as she gave Momiji her full attention.

"Ah, yes, Momiji-kun. What can I do for you?"

"Well, you see, remember that time I wouldn't give Ha'ri any money because I was saving my money? Well, I have a present for you!" Momiji thrust in her face two tickets. "Tada!"

"Train tickets to... the beach? Oh, Momiji-kun, this is too much! I couldn't accept this! No! No, I couldn't!"

Momiji gave her a puppy-eyed look. "But... but I really want you to go have fun. I could only afford two tickets and I really was hoping you'd go with me." Momiji turned away with crocodile tears staining his eyes. "I'd be so... so sad if you didn't want to come, but that's okay."

"Momiji-sama!" The fan girls cried at Momiji's table at his utter cuteness.

Tohru's face suddenly brightened up. "Okay, I'll go!"

"WAI!" Momiji's tears suddenly vanished as he hugged Tohru. "Oh, thank you thank you thank you!" He ran off to his table with a plotting little smile on his face. If Tohru only knew the trouble she was getting herself into later on that week.

---

Two days later, Momiji peaked his head into the kitchen to make sure no one was there. He jumped up on the counter and grabbed Yuki's cup, filling it with tea. He looked around to make sure no one was watching as he slipped a tablespoon of paprika into the tea giving it a quick stir, succeeding in spilling some of the tea out of the cup. He heard footsteps coming and the boy jumped off the counter, abandoning the hot tea, and ran for the table where he put on a foot cast and hauled crutches under his arms.

Kyo walked in wearing his exercising clothes and completely ignored Momiji as he went to fill his water

bottle. He opened the cap and filled the bottle almost to the top before twisting the cap back on. He opened the spout to take a small swig and was satisfied with the water. He turned to leave through the back door when Momiji finally made himself noticed.

"HI KYO!"

"God, I was hoping he wouldn't bother me." Kyo muttered at his failed attempt to get away without Momiji saying a word. "What do you want?" Momiji motioned towards his 'broken' leg. Kyo raised an eye brow. "So? What is it?"

"I broke my leg!" Momiji said proudly.

"Congratulations. Call me when you break the other one as well-- we'll throw a party."

"No, you're missing the point, Kyo!" Momiji said, his eyebrows furrowing together. "Don't you know what tomorrow is?"

"Aren't you going to the beach with Tohru?"

"Nope nope! You are!"

Kyo stared at the smaller boy. "Don't jerk me around or I'll seriously break your other leg, Momiji."

"I can't possible go to the beach with a cast on! And I really want Tohru to go to the beach but she can't go alone! What if a molester gets her or something."

"Oh, and if you went with her she'd be really protected."

"Exactly, so that's why you should go with her!" At that moment Yuki walked into the kitchen searching for his tea cup.

Kyo thought about it then. Himself and Tohru alone at the beach? For two days? His face heated up at the thought. He pointed a thumb at Yuki behind him who started drinking his tea. "Why don't you ask that damn rat to go with her? Why the hell does it have to be me? I sure as hell won't be swimming!"

Momiji put a finger to his mouth. "Um... Um... Yuki's sick."

Kyo just raised an eye brow in disbelief. Yuki was never sick since he was a kid. "He's sick." Kyo repeated with complete doubt.

"He's sick! Just look at him!"

Suddenly Yuki's throat caught on fire feeling a spicy substance in his tea. He spit the tea out in the sink and began coughing rather violently, his nose running from the heat of the paprika.

Kyo watched with shocked eyes. Yuki was coughing and blowing his nose.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" Kyo barked at Yuki, but the rat could not retort any comment at the moment.

"See?" Momiji said trying to hold his laughter in. "So you have to go with her! Please, I really want Tohru to have a good time!"

Yuki coughed rather loudly. "I can't breathe!"

"Um... okay then." Kyo kept staring at Yuki's back before shifting his gaze at Momiji. He gave Yuki one more confused glance before going through the back door.

"W-water!" Yuki cried running to the bathroom.

As soon as Yuki left the kitchen as well, Momiji watched him go with bright eyes before bursting out in laughter. Call it evil but it still was amusing.

Tohru came in looking behind her with a worried face. "Is Yuki-kun alright? I saw him running to the bathroom." Her eyes widened and it looked as if her hair was standing on end. "Ohmigosh, did I poison him with lunch? I knew Kyo didn't like leeks but Yuki-kun...!"

"No, it wasn't lunch, Tohru." Momiji wiped tears away. "He's just not feeling well right now."

"Is it the summer season? I know it's getting a bit warm outside..."

Momiji looked away with a impish smile still grazing his face. "I guess you could say he couldn't handle the 'heat'. Oh Tohru," Momiji moved around the table so she could see his broken leg, "I accidentally fell and hurt myself. I'm sorry I can't come with you tomorrow to the beach."

"Oh that's horrible!" Tohru exclaimed. "Yuki-kun is sick and you broke your leg!"

Momiji only smiled. "It's okay! 'Cause Kyo said he would take you in my place so you can still go!"

"I'd feel awful knowing you and Yuki-kun are here in pain. Maybe we can go another time."

"No way, these tickets are nonrefundable and they're your present!" He folded his hands together and leaned her way. "Please say you'll go with Kyo? He won't bite you."

"I don't know... I couldn't leave you and Yuki-kun and go have fun knowing both of you are suffering so."

"Don't worry about us. Ha'ri is a doctor and he'll make sure we'll be fine."

Tohru looked out the kitchen window to see Kyo going through some of his basic moves, his body already looking slick with sweat from the summer heat. He'd been acting so strange lately so maybe this would be a great opportunity for him to tell her what was on his mind. It also seemed that Momiji was persistent to make her go. Ah, maybe she would be hurting his feelings if she didn't go and not only that, it would be a waste of Momiji's money! She'd never waste his savings, that would be evil!

She turned to Momiji. "Okay! I'll go!"

## 16 - Sea shells by the sea shore

Ahh! I've never been on a train before!"

Kyo stared at Tohru as she glanced up at the black train in awe, the train making the tooting noise on a deeper note than those she's seen in a toy store. She was as excited as a poor man finding a million dollars. She never been on a train before hua? It puzzled Kyo. "Really?"

"I've only flown on an airplane, but this is wonderful! I'll have to be sure to bring Momiji-kun a souvenir when we get back!" Tohru looked back at Kyo. "Kyo-kun, let's have a really good time okay?" She pulled her small knapsack over her shoulders and ran towards the train. "Come on!"

"It's nothing to get all excited about."

She turned around giggling. "I'm just happy my first train ride will be with you, Kyo-kun!"

Kyo blushed seeing how excited Tohru was as she giggled. He didn't know something so simple like a train ride would make her so happy. He walked over to Tohru who was getting her ticket checked. One thing he was glad about was that Tohru was not like most other girls; thankfully she traveled light.

The conductor smiled at the two as he checked their tickets. "Going on vacation?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I guess so..."

The elderly man tipped his hat. "Ah, you picked a fine time to go then! Is this your honeymoon or something? Anniversary?"

Kyo's face went bright red and Tohru only laughed nervously.

"WHAT?" Kyo cried out.

"Ah, actually we're just... friends. Kyo-kun was nice enough to take me to the beach." Tohru only smiled wider. "I'm so happy!" She gave the conductor a friendly wave as Kyo and herself hopped onto the train.

They found their seats and Kyo placed their bags overhead before sitting down across from Tohru. She observed the cart seeing how plush the room looked. Not only was she riding a train, but in the first class cart as well! "I can't wait to see the beach. Uo-chan invited me once and it was really fun." Tohru said while staring out the window.

Kyo leaned his fist on his chin. "You always talk about this Uo and Hana. You must have been really close friends."



She beamed. "Yes! We were always looking out for one another!" She stared right back at Kyo.

He watched her for a moment realizing that was all she was going to say. He didn't press on the subject anymore and suddenly the train began moving. He looked out the window to see the scenery flash by and as the train gained speed, it only blurred into a mix of greens and blue. The train passed over a bridge, the endless trees cutting stopping short to a view of a gorgeous scene of water twinkling in the sun's rays.

"Ohh! It's so pretty!" Tohru exclaimed. She laughed, "Don't you think, Kyo-kun?"

"Hua? Oh, it's nice."

She nodded and turned her attention back to the window.

"We'll be arriving at Blue Beach in approximately two hours, folks!" Another conductor called in the cabin while staring at his pocket watch.

Kyo leaned back into his chair looking rather bored. He could take a two hour nap then if this was going to be a long ride.

Eventually Tohru lost interest of the window as soon as the endless trees popped back into view and she stared at Kyo now in a light slumber. His features looked so relaxed and calm as she watched his even breathing. He really was a handsome young man. She rolled her eyes to the center of the train and slowly got up, careful not to disturb her traveling companion.

After a moment she returned with a quilted blue blanket and draped it over Kyo's shoulders before sitting back in her seat. Those amber eyes opened and stared at Tohru as she crossed her legs while bending over to grab her jacket.

"Tohru?" Kyo sat up when the blanket fell onto his lap. He lifted it up, holding the cozy material in his hand.

"You were sleeping and there's a slight draft in here. I thought you might get cold." She said while buttoning her jacket. Kyo felt someone else watching them and turned to see a pair of boys nudging each other while making gestures at Tohru. Of course, she didn't notice though. He glared hard making both boys turn away quickly. He turned back to Tohru who's eyes were down cast as she fiddled with the buttons on her chest.

Kyo watched her fingers in fascination then back at her face. He blushed seeing he was caught staring at her. "A-aren't you cold too?" He quickly recovered.

She blushed as well seeing Kyo's intense gaze at her hands. "I'm fine, really!"

He took another glance at the seats next to them, seeing that the other guys were still glancing over while they thought Kyo wasn't watching. He ran a hand through his hair sighing, "You know, this blanket is big enough for the both of us." He got up, balancing himself on the moving floor, and sat right next to Tohru, blocking the leering eyes from her. He spread the blanket on her lap and turned away, crossing

his arms.

She stared down at the blanket and put it up on her arms. "Thank you very much, Kyo-kun."

He only nodded before closing his eyes again. To his complete surprise, Tohru leaned her head on his shoulder, closing her eyes lazily as well. He felt thousands of jolts run up his arm at the innocent contact. He tried to calm his heart but her entire aura made him sweat with nervousness. Now he knew he wouldn't be getting any sleep on this train ride.

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"We're here!" She laughed as Kyo held out a hand for her to jump off the train. He turned around to stare at the beaches and waves crashing onto the shore. It was a refreshing spectacle in comparison to the town they lived in. "I guess we should go look for that hotel Momiji-kun wrote down."

Kyo put a hand into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. "Rainbow Hotel." Kyo rolled his eyes. "Could that brat pick anything more fruity than a Rainbow Hotel?"

Tohru pointed across the train station. "It looks like there's a sidewalk. The hotel isn't that far away." Kyo and Tohru began walking towards the hotel, which was hard to miss, only a few blocks away. It looked like this part of the beach was strictly reserved for guests since further down, there were plenty more people. Probably a public beach, but in this area it was mostly deserted.

They finally got to the hotel and walked into the lobby. To Kyo's relief, it was normal-looking inside, nothing like that it's name implied. He walked up to the front desk, Tohru right beside him.

"Hello, is there something I can help you with?" The woman at the desk asked.

"We've got a reserved room under Sohma?" Kyo asked while reading the paper Momiji provided.

"Ah yes, we were expecting you." The woman began typing away at a computer. She typed in something and checked Kyo's ID before handing them two keys. "Here you are, your room is fourth floor three doors to your left."

"Thank you." Kyo handed Tohru her own key when he looked at them closely. His mouth ran dry and he spun on the clerk. "I think you made a mistake, why do we both have the same key number?"

The woman folded her hands together, staring at the both of them with a confused look. "Come again?"

"We have the same key!" Kyo pointed at Tohru while blushing furiously. He really blushed a lot lately. "I can't share a room with her! That's indecent!"

"Oh!" The woman's fingers flew at her keyboard again, typing madly. She continued typing only shaking her head negatively. "I'm sorry Mr. Sohma but all our other rooms are booked this weekend." She looked up and smiled toward Tohru. "You'll just have to behave yourself with a pretty little thing like her, won't you?"

"That's...! You don't have any other rooms!"

"Nope." She smiled.

Kyo and Tohru turned away from the desk, Kyo looking as if he was about to keel over with a heart attack. Tohru knelt over to Kyo.

"Kyo-kun, it will be okay. There are two beds in the room so you can't do anything improper to me."

"Oh... okay then that isn't as bad-- hey wait, I wasn't going to do anything like that!"

Tohru only laughed and pushed the button to the elevator. "I was kidding!"

He only snorted and bopped her head lightly. "Terrible joke."

"I'm sorry, haha."

As they finally reached their floor, Tohru opened the door to the room stepping into the stuffy area. "I'll turn on the vents." She coughed while walking further into the room. Kyo opened up a sliding door that faced the beach. At least Momiji picked a nice location. The vents turned on and Tohru sat down on one bed.

Kyo put his bag down on an empty chair before turning toward her. She rubbed the bed sheets with open palms and stared right back at him.

"I'm kind of hungry." Kyo said after a moment.

"That sounds good, let's go see what they have around, okay?" Tohru opened her bag and pulled out a small purse before the pair left their room. She just remembered her left her own room key on the bed and turned around to get it when she ran right into Kyo's rather hard chest. Wow, was he close to her!

"K-Kyo-kun!"

"S-sorry." He moved out of the way, only to have Tohru mirror his moves. He moved to the other side to have Tohru do the same. Finally she got around him and went for her key while the male slapped his head.

'You're acting like an idiot! If I was cursed I would have already transformed into a damn cat! You're not doing anything indecent sharing a room with her! It isn't like you're in the same bed! Stop getting all nervous!' He mentally scolded himself.

Tohru came back, her face also tinged with pink. "Let's go eat?" She asked walking down the hall. Kyo only nodded.

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The sun was already setting as Kyo and Tohru walked back to their hotel. From all their traveling both of

them were rather tired. Tohru suddenly stopped walking to admire the view.

"The water looks really nice." She turned to Kyo. "Can we go closer?"

He stared at her innocent eyes. How could he refuse?

"Kyo-kun?"

"Yeah?"

Tohru stopped walking and wiggled her toes in the sand. "Do you think I should learn some kind of martial arts or something?"

Kyo turned around to watch her expression. Why would she want to learn to fight at all? A mental image of Tohru beating someone up was quite hard to imagine. "Why would you want to learn that?"

She leaned forward with a determined face. "In case someday I might... um, need it. It's something good to know! Ah, and a great form of exercise I bet!" Her eyes began to swirl already. "I think I have a few moves too, yeah, um, right-straight!" She took a swing at Kyo only for her punch to graze his arm ever so slightly.

After a moment Kyo cracked a smile. "Wow, you suck." She looked up and smiled sheepishly. "See, the way you hold your fist when punching is like this," he demonstrated with his own fist.

"R-right!"

"Now when you punch, you have to have control and keep your eye on the target."

Tohru and Kyo spent some time on basic punches and stances. Kyo admitted Tohru wasn't exactly a fighter, but she tried anyway. It still bothered him though why she suddenly brought up the idea of learning martial arts. What need would she have of it?

After a while they ended the lesson and finally started walking closer to the water.

"You know, you don't have to learn martial arts for exercise. There's plenty of less strenuous things you can learn." Kyo said after a moment.

She laughed. "I guess so..."

Kyo stopped her for a moment by the shoulder, staring at her seriously. "Who are you protecting yourself from?"

Her eyes twinkled with the sunset. She didn't want to worry Kyo at all but was it right to keep this to herself?

"I would just like to know..." she paused, "in case anything happens to me."

Kyo rolled his eyes, "You don't have to do that. I'm here so don't worry about a thug running out of no where and attacking you. I wouldn't let him hurt you." Kyo thought back on his words and began studdering. "I-I mean, the chances are slim to none anyway! So don't get any funny ideas by that."

She tucked stray hairs behind her ear while laughing. "You're right, haha."

"But if you really want to learn, it's okay too, I mean." Kyo looked away and Tohru felt a warm sensation run through her veins. Kyo would really make some girl happy one day. He was a truly caring person.

They made their way to the shore when Tohru bent over and picked up a butter-orange looking shell. She held an open palm to Kyo and offered him the shell. "Here!"

"What's this for?"

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'What? No, don't think like that! Kyo-kun is in love with another person! And besides, what about Satsuki? Don't you still love him?' She argued in her mind.

'I don't think I love him... he treated me bad, Kyo-kun even said so!' A little voice in her head argued.

'Then why do you still cry at night when you don't think anyone is listening? Why do you still let him hold you under lock and key?'

"What would I make a sissy shell necklace for?" Kyo asked breaking her train of thought.

"Um... maybe you could give it to that girl that broke the curse for you." She turned around giving him her best grin. "Like a thank you gift or something."

Kyo stared at her for a moment catching a brief glimpse of sadness as she quickly turned around to look for more shells. She thought he was in love with another girl? Someone besides Tohru herself? No wait, but he couldn't be in love with Tohru!

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"Do you like it?"

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## 17 - Be Still

"Day two of our super cool Blue Beaches vacation!" Tohru cheered sitting up in her bed. The alarm clock rang 9 AM. Kyo told her the night before that she should sleep in. 'You're always up so early...' he said. She agreed to his wishes but in the morning light she instantly woke up, awaiting to embrace the new day.

"Mgh..." Kyo responded still a bit sleepy. Tohru looked toward Kyo's disheveled sheets and laughed quietly while turning off the alarm.

"Kyo-kun, I thought you were an early riser..." Tohru wondered outloud as Kyo turned his head to her side while hugging his pillow to his head so only his eyes peaked out at her. She blushed seeing him look so adorable with sleep still swimming in his eyes.

"I didn't sleep very well last night..." He mumbled.

"Was it too cold? I could have turned the air down and just opened the window. I'm so sorry, I was inconsiderate to your sleeping patterns!"

"That wasn't it... I um... had a sore back." He lied. Really he just couldn't sleep knowing that Tohru was in the same room as him. After he realized that he really did like Tohru while standing at the beach the evening before, he didn't know how to go about courting her. It didn't matter anyway since she thought he was falling for a different girl. In reality, he couldn't imagine himself wanting to be with anyone else but her.

But he could never tell her that... not now anyway.

"Oh." she only answered. "Well, I'll go get dressed in the bathroom okay?"

"Sure." He turned around as she got up from her bed and stayed that way until he heard the click of the bathroom door. Finally he released a breath and sat up in his own bed as well while hitting the palm of his hand to his forehead.

"Damn it." He cursed aloud. Why did she have this effect on him so that he just turned into putty the instant she walked into a room? This wasn't like him at all. He got up and quickly dressed out of his pajama pants and into a pair of blue jeans that ripped at his knee. He just started taking off his shirt when the click of the bathroom door sounded and it swung open.

"Oh!" He heard Tohru. She stared at him as he was already lifting his shirt, his amber orbs only staring back at her. She 'eeped' and turned around quickly while panicking in her usual fashion. "I'm so sorry! I thought you were still sitting in bed so I changed quickly so you can use the bathroom, but I--!"

"It's okay, I'm done."

She waited a moment before turning around to see Kyo had his eyes closed while he tied his shoe laces, sitting on the bed. She'd never seen Kyo with his shirt off before, well save those few time she ran into him on accident and saw him transform back to a human on occasions, but it still made her heart race. She didn't want to stare at him so openly and tried to pretend it didn't happen. He would think she was a sicko or something!

She walked over to her bag to get her hair brush, combing out the few knots in her hair before braiding it and then slipping on a pair of pink flip-flops on her tiny feet. Her entire wardrobe was made by Ayame and Mine. She kept telling them they really did not need to make her clothes and that she was fine with the few outfits she had, but the duo always managed to 'slip' clothes into her room.

Kyo finished up getting ready as the pair went down to the lobby for a quick bite before touring the area. They went to the lobby where they were serving continental breakfast. It was all typical breakfast foods so they each picked a few items and sat down at a small table out-looking the ocean. It looked like a great day to swim. Clear skies, a beautiful sun, the ocean pleading for someone to jump into it's refreshing waters.

"Do you think we can go for a swim later, Kyo-kun?" Tohru asked before taking a bite out of her red apple slice.

Kyo already took a bite of his muffin and unfortunately couldn't answer her right away. She waited but Kyo just kept chewing. He looked rather annoyed with the dry muffin.

"Don't you hate it when that happens?" Tohru laughed after a minute of Kyo chewing his food.

He finally swallowed the thing and took a sip of milk saying, "Stupid dry muffin." He coughed and settled for eating a small bowl of cereal. "Sorry, I was distracted by that God-for-saken piece of shoot."

Tohru feigned a shocked look. "What? I didn't know it tastes like...!"

Kyo gave her a weird look. "It was a joke. It doesn't really taste like..."

"Erm, ah, o-okay." She looked away and dipped some kind of sandwich into her coffee. She leaned over and took a bite out of it.

Kyo watched her with fascination. "Do you like that?"

She looked down at her sandwich and then back at Kyo with a bright smile. "Yes! My mother used to make it for me when I was smaller... ah, but I used chocolate milk instead of coffee."

"What is it?"

"Peanut butter spread on bread and folded in half. Then I dunk it in this coffee and milk mixture."

"Sounds weird."

"AH! Does it? I can eat something else if it bothers you!"

"Can I try?"

Tohru stared at Kyo and nodded. "Of course!" She ripped a piece of the folded up sandwich and dunked it for him. "Here!"

Kyo went to grab it but the bread dripped with the milky substance. "It's all soggy now."

Tohru looked down to her hand and beckoned it closer to Kyo. "Here, just take the bite from my hand."

"Are you serious?"

She went back into panic mode. "Ah, what am I thinking? This is inappropriate! It's a bad idea! Here, I'll eat this and you can dunk your own if you'd..." Suddenly Tohru saw Kyo lean over and nimbly bite the bread from her thumb and index finger. He paused, still hovering over the table as she let go of the piece for Kyo to eat. She could feel his warm breath stirring sensations on her sensitive fingers. After chewing he looked up and Tohru found her fingers jump away from him and settle in her lap. It made her heart race!

He smirked, "Wow, that's gross." She only looked at him shyly. "But it's pretty okay."

She bit her lip gently trying to make her blush go down. 'Please calm down my foolish heart.' She tried to find the words to fill the silence. "Um, maybe it's an acquired taste!"

"I bet."

"S-So, Kyo-kun," Tohru stuttered, trying to get her act together, "did you want to go for a swim?"

"Sure, if you want..."

"But you don't like water do you?"

"It's okay or whatever... I just don't prefer it." He said while putting some peanut butter on his toast.

"We could just play in the sand then."

Kyo gave her a doubtful look while folding his bread in half and dunking it in her milk and coffee mixture. "And I look like I'm five?" He took a bite of his own bread.

"Ahaha, it's really fun." She only laughed. "We could make a sand castle!" He caught himself smiling with her only shaking his head side to side.

"Okay, we'll check it out later."

"So you like the dipped bread, hua?" She asked after a moment of watching Kyo eat his own toast.

"It's not as bad as I thought."



"Maybe I could make it for you when we get home!"

He blushed thinking of Tohru making him a special breakfast. Something that only he and her shared. Something special.

"Sure, Tohru. Sure."

---

They walked down a path that led to the beach. Tohru took her slippers off and hopped onto the hot sand as Kyo also took his shoes off.

"Let's make a castle right here!" She said ploping down onto the sand. Kyo knelt down next to her as she began gathering sand into a mound.

"It's too close to the water. It'll just wash away."

She looked to the ocean and back at Kyo. "Do you think so?"

"The tide will just get higher you know."

"Oh..."

Kyo stared down at the sand and sighed, taking a seat next to her. "But we can make it here if you want."

She smiled and they began making a castle.

After a few minutes, Kyo sat back, leaning his palms on the sand. "This looks really stupid."

"Eh?"

"Is it supposed to be a sand castle? It looks kind of lopsided."

"Ah! Maybe it can be the Leaning Tower of Piza!" She giggled. Kyo smirked and tilted his head to the side still staring at the 'castle'.

"It still looks really weird."

"We could make another one!"

"If you want to..."

She gave him another brilliant grin. He could hear his heart hammering in his chest with just that token of a smile.

"Kyo-kun?"

Her voice pulled him out of his stupor. "What?"

"Um... well I've been meaning to ask you, how are you feeling lately?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it's just the past few days," she put her hands to her sides staring down at their little leaning tower, "you've been acting differently. Y-you don't have to tell me what it is, it's just that well," she stole a quick glance at him before turning away, "I'm worried about you."

Kyo looked off into the horizon as a breeze blew by. She was worried about him because he'd been acting differently? He didn't expect her to pick up on his emotions but it seemed his body language said enough. He blushed at the idea of telling her what was really bothering him.

"It's nothing." He smiled in her direction. "Don't worry yourself about it, you worry about too many things. What's bothering me..." he looked down at their tower as well, "I don't know if I can tell you yet. But maybe it'll just pass."

'Falling in love with Tohru? Just let it pass? I don't know if I ever could...'

With the tower between the couple, Tohru placed her hand on top of Kyo's, looking up with fretful eyes. "I'm sorry if I'm prying, I just care so much about you. I'm concerned about you, Kyo-kun. Please don't hesitate to tell me what's wrong. I really want to know what you're feeling."

'If only I could tell...' He closed his eyes.

Suddenly a wave came crashing down on them.

"Wahh!" Tohru cried.

Kyo opened his eyes when the wave receded back to the ocean. "Damn you ocean!" Damn you to hell!"

"Our castle! It melted!"

Kyo looked down to see the tower indeed washed away. "It didn't melt... the ocean just messed it up."

She looked down at her wet clothes and laughed while standing up. "Well, if I'm wet, I might as well swim!"

Tohru instantly began shedding clothes off her herself while laughing about how the ocean spray tickled. Kyo was turned around, ringing his shirt dry, when he jumped back shielding his eyes from her body. "W-what the hell are you doing?"

She turned around saying, "What? I'm going to go swim..." He peeked between his fingers to see she was wearing a swim suit that thankfully was not scandalous. It was a simple purple-colored two piece.

No overly exposed skin, no provocative string bikini. Kyo glanced around to see there were a few other people on the beach and sighed. He thanked that Ayame or Mine had provided an appropriate bathing suit for her at least.

"What, did you think I was just going to swim nude?" She laughed nervously.

'Heh. That wouldn't be a bad idea...'

Kyo punched himself in the head.

"Kyo-kun!" Tohru cried running to this side. "Are you okay?"

"Yes..." He brushed her off of him and just trudged over to the water. Tohru stared at his back and simply shrugged her shorts off. She ran into the wave and dove right in.

"Ohh, it's cold!"

Kyo put his feet in and watched her wade in the shallow water. She waved at him and he gave her short wave back. Behind him he heard a group of girls giggling. Turning around he saw they were quietly talking about him but he only turned around ignoring them. He only had eyes for one girl now.

'I was worried about you...'

He closed his eyes again.

'I really want to know what you're feeling...'

'Could I? Could I ever really tell her what I'm feeling?' He wondered.

'I just really care about you...'

Tohru...

"Come in, Kyo-kun!" Tohru called as a wave knocked her over. Opening his eyes just in time to see her get knocked over, Kyo laughed out as she reemerged from under the water sputtering.

Kyo took his shirt off as well and tossed it toward Tohru's and his things before walking over to her. "You know I don't like to get wet..."

She put her fists up. "You don't have to go in then! I just thought you looked lonely standing at the shore!"

'I haven't been lonely since I met you...' he thought. Tohru stared up at him as he watched her with a small smile. Tohru's eyes widened. Maybe he was enjoying himself now!

"Kyo-kun, maybe...!"

"Hey, look out!" He yelled jumping in front of her.

The next thing she knew, she and Kyo were tumbling under water and finally her back suddenly hit the sand hard. She stiffened until she felt the water regress back to the ocean before letting out her breath now panting lightly on the shore.

"Tohru..."

She looked up and there Kyo was on top of her, both of his hands above her head and his legs sprawled around her legs not to crush her under his weight. Her eyes grew when she thought about their current situation and heat rose to her cheeks, both Kyo and herself thinking the same thing.

'Be still my foolish heart!'

Kyo rolled over her and got up from the sand pulling her up with him. "A-are you okay?"

She only nodded as she rubbed her sore back. "I'm sorry, I wasn't looking..."

"Don't apologize for something you couldn't predict." He watched her rub her sore back and concern came over him. "Hey, are you okay?"

"I-I'm okay, I just hit my back kind of hard on the sand."

"Let's go back to the hotel maybe you should go... take a look at it." He muttered while grabbing their things. That had been very embarrassing. Thousands of thoughts ran through his male mind as he began walking for the hotel without Tohru, trying to calm himself down. First the whole breakfast since now this! What was coming over him? He ate food from her hand... like they were a real couple of something! And now he'd just found himself in the most heinous position on the beach: him in just his swim trunks and her in her purple bikini. Oh God, what was he supposed to do? She didn't know how much she was affecting every part of his body!

Tohru followed him without a word seeing how awkward that was for both of them. Secretly, to her it felt rather nice... being so close to him just then. But what was she thinking? Kyo wouldn't like her that way! She was just thinking about this too much. They were friends! Nothing romantic would ever happen between herself and Kyo! It just couldn't!

Could it?

---

Tohru took a shower and put some ointment on her back seeing that a shell scratched her. Feeling rather refreshed she walked out to find Kyo sitting on the balcony looking out at the beach.

"I know you don't like to get wet, so sorry I am being such a bother. We can do what you want for the rest of the day." She said startling him. He turned away.

"You're not a bother. Stop talking like that." He hopped off the railing and walked to the bathroom to take

a shower as well. Tohru didn't know what to do. She was just putting him in a bad mood now! She had to make his vacation with her fun too! She leaned on the railing looking down at the plaza a few blocks away. Maybe Kyo would rather walk around than go swimming anymore. Besides, today was their last day at the beach. She turned to the table to see that Kyo had kept all those orange shells he and herself picked out the other day. She guessed he left them out to dry. She hoped that special girl would like his present.

Even though she wished that girl would be her.

The afternoon ran smoother than that morning, the pair just touring around the plaza that Tohru spotted from their room. Kyo didn't seem to be in a bad mood either which cheered her up ten fold. She stopped to look in a window.

"What is it?" Kyo asked coming to her side.

"Do you think Momiji-kun would like that?" She asked pointing at a little bunny in swimwear holding a glass of lemonade. "I want to bring him something for being so kind as buying tickets to go to the beach..."

"How the hell would I know if that brat would like it?" He wondered aloud as Tohru just giggled.

"I'll only be a second, Kyo-kun," she promised as she went inside to buy Momiji a gift. Kyo leaned on the wall when his eye caught a familiar person across the street. That same person suddenly turned on him as well giving him a smile. No way... it couldn't be!

"S-Shishou?" Kyo stammered out as her former master came over. The man was taller than Kyo with grayish hair. "You cut your hair, master!"

"Kyo! So nice to see you, what are you doing by the beach this summer? Yuki-kun and the others did not come?"

"Ah..." Kyo's face darkened. "I should be asking you why you're here." He quickly changed the subject.

Kazuma faltered before smiling. "You're avoiding my question, Kyo."

"Sorry if I took so long!" Tohru came out of the store to suddenly run into Kyo with open arms. She stepped back and looked over Kyo's shoulder, staring at the older man. "Eh?"

Kazuma's eyes rolled back to Kyo, the young man's aura just exploding with nervousness. "So this is why..."

"TOHRU!" Kyo suddenly yelled out making Tohru jump at her name. "Ah, I mean, this is Tohru Honda... she's boarding at the main house-- I mean she's working or whatever but everyone's nice, and..."

Kazuma's grin only grew wider. "Hello musume-san..." he raised an eyebrow at Kyo, "I am correct saying you are a 'young unmarried girl' am I not?"

Tohru bowed while Kyo just turned away to hide his face. "Yes, sir, it's a pleasure to meet you... um..."

Kazuma turned on Kyo. "Kyo, you have not spoken about your master to this girl? I'm surprised."

Tohru's head popped up. "Oh! You're Kyo-kun's master? That is wonderful!" She clasped her hands. "He tells me you are the best!" Kyo's face only reddened further as his master's eyes creased with his ever handsome grin.

"I see. Well let me introduce myself properly. I am Kazuma Sohma, Kyo's former master and adoptive father."

"A Sohma! Oh that's wonderful! And you're Kyo-kun's father? That's even more amazing! Are all the Sohmas handsome? I didn't know Sohmas were just about everywhere around here!"

Kyo pushed his master away. "Okay, nice to see you Shishou, I'll phone once in a while..."

"Oh, but don't you want to know what I'm doing here at the beach?" He asked knowing Kyo's feeling for the girl the instant she came up behind them. "I'm training."

Kyo stopped at that. "You were training?"

Kazuma nodded his head. "In the art of cooking."

Kyo and Tohru both fell over.

"Well it is admirable that you are willing to learn that kind of art." Tohru said politely.

"Your cooking always sucked..."

Kazuma gave Kyo a sharp stare at that, but only laughed it off. "Yes, I believe this is an area I needed improvement in so I've come here to learn a little."

Tohru stepped forward. "If you would like, I would be happy to teach you what little I know about cooking!"

"Oh, I'd hate to bother your vacation..."

"No, no it would be an honor to help someone as great as Kazuma-san! I've seen Kyo-kun fight with Yuki-kun and Hatsuharu-kun and he really is good, I'm amazed really. Not to mention Kyo-kun taught me a few basic moves too!"

"Please don't show him..." Kyo muttered seeing Tohru about to demonstrate a punch.

She put her arms down instantly. "So to know that such a great person like you taught him, well it's just so awesome!"

Kazuma looked at Kyo and the boy only shrugged. Kazuma nodded. "Then let me take you to my beach

house."

---

Tohru and Kazuma stood in the kitchen, Tohru being a patient teacher and Kazuma being a good student. With his fast hands and sharp memory he copied Tohru's movements perfectly. Besides burning only the edges of their meal, dinner was delicious.

Kazuma took a bite and his eyes lit up. "I don't think I've had something this good tasting in a long while. I thank you very much, Honda-san. It was a pleasure you teaching me."

"Oh the pleasure is all mine!"

Kazuma turned to Kyo. "How do you like it, Kyo?"

Kyo looked up and back at his plate. "It's good."

"You know, Kyo used to cook when he lived with me," Kazuma said starting a conversation with Tohru. "He'd rather labor in the kitchen than risk his life with my poison," he said while taking a bite of his rice. Tohru giggled at that as Kyo only ignore them.

"It was better than dying of starvation, Master." Kyo responded after a moment.

"That is true."

"You two must get a long very well." Tohru said making both males look at her. "I mean, it's obvious you know each other very well."

"I nearly raised Kyo as a boy..." Kazuma said after a moment reminising on old times. "And he's dear to me." Kyo stared at his master, a sense of nostalgia running through his own memories. Indeed he too missed those days.

After dinner, Kyo and Kazuma washed dishes as Tohru cleaned the table. It was plesant silence, just like when Kyo used to live with the man. Kyo would wash, Kazuma would rinse, just like old times.

"She's a nice girl, Kyo." Kazuma said after a moment. "You're in love with her aren't you?"

"WHAT?" Kyo dropped the plate back into the sink and quickly lowered his voice. "What are you talking about?"

"You didn't transform. When Honda-san ran into you earlier this afternoon, you didn't transform." Kazuma darted a glance at Kyo. "Is this why you're here? On a date? Wow, you really are growing up."

"It-it's not a date, Shishou!" Kyo hissed trying to keep his voice down. "That damn Momiji broke his leg and he insisted that I take Tohru here in his place. That's it."

"I see..." Kazuma took a glass from Kyo's hand as silence englufed the kitchen. "So are you courting

her?"

"Shishou!"

"I'm done cleaning the table." Tohru said entering the kitchen. Kyo stopped gawking at his master and began furiously scrubbing at the last glass in the sink. She watched the pair and only saw Kazuma give her a slight smile before turning around to finish drying the dishes.

"Don't lose her." Kazuma whispered in Kyo's ear before hanging the dish rag on a rack. Kyo dried his hands and stared at Tohru, she watching with confused eyes. He wouldn't dream of losing her. Ever.

---

The pair said their good byes to Kazuma as they stepped out of his summer house after more conversing between Kyo and his master. "It was nice meeting you, Kazuma-san," the young girl said.

"And a pleasure meeting you." He turned to Kyo. "Tell Shigure-san I say hello as well as Yuki-kun and everyone else."

"Sure thing, Shishou!" Kyo called out as he and Tohru began walking back to their hotel. "Bye."

Kazuma watched them go before the phone rang. He waited a moment longer before closing the door and going in search of the phone. "That must be her calling."

Meanwhile, Tohru and Kyo walked in calm silence. "He's a very nice man. I can see why you want to be like him." Tohru said as they walked further away from Kazuma.

"Yeah... he's like a father to me since I spent mostly all my childhood with him. He's pretty cool."

Tohru nodded and the night fell silent. She looked up to the sky and smiled. "You know, Satsuki would never take me out like this..."

Kyo looked at her a moment. She was still thinking about that guy?

"Actually... I don't remember him taking me anywhere really..." she said quietly. Kyo put his hands in his pockets and grunted. She turned on him. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah. Dandy." He retorted with slight sarcasm. Kyo picked up his pace as Tohru had to quicken her own as well. She decided not to say anything for the rest of the night seeing Kyo's body language changing.

'Why is she still thinking about that @\$\$ hole? Doesn't she see that just thinking about him is making her upset?'

'Making her upset or you?' his mind responded. He took a deep breath. He shouldn't be thinking like this at the moment. Right now, Tohru needed to have someone ease that pain.



Actually he recalled another reason he couldn't get any sleep last night. Besides the fact that Tohru was in the room with him, he heard her quietly crying. He remembered sitting up and looking over to her side of the room, her face turned towards him just quietly crying in her sleep.

'That bastard.' Kyo thought. He promised he'd help Tohru though this. She needed to feel better about herself. She needed someone to tell her... he loved her...

"That's stupid."

"What?" Tohru asked.

"Ah, nothing."

She nodded and turned away, frowning as he watched her on the corner of his eye. If she would stop thinking about him then maybe she would stop crying.

But he didn't know if he could tell her he loved her, and if she would feel the same.

## 18 - And then there were thirteen

Ah, Shigure-san!"

Shigure smiled warmly at Tohru as she and Kyo found him in the train station. Leaving the beach early that morning, Kyo and Tohru did not talk very much on the ride home. She didn't know what to say to Kyo since he seemed to have an aura around him... something conflicting within him.

But he was not mad, that she was sure of.

She saw Shigure from across the station and ran over to the zodiac dog, Kyo following not too far behind her. Shigure wore his gray yukata with his hands tucked away into his sleeves. He greeted the pair and they went to the car awaiting their return home.

"How was it?" He asked as he slammed the door closed. The driver pulled away from the large station.

Tohru beamed. "I had a lot of fun! Oh, and I met Kyo-kun's master, Kazuma Sohman-san!"

"He says hi..." Kyo added.

Shigure rubbed his chin as the car began the journey home. "Ah, it has been a while, Kazuma-san..." He turned to Tohru. "So you enjoyed yourself? I'm glad to hear that."

Tohru nodded but frowned slightly. She took her bag off her shoulders and sat back beside Shigure. "How is Momiji-kun and Yuki-kun?"

Shigure blinked and raised an eyebrow. "I don't think I quite understand..."

Kyo's ears perked up. "Wait, what?"

"Yuki-kun and Momichi are perfectly fine." Shigure looked as if a light bulb went on and he smirked seeing how shocked Kyo looked.

The boy leaned over Tohru, who was sitting in the middle, to get in Shigure's face.

"You mean that brat's leg is fine and that damn rat isn't sick?"

"Seat belt, Kyo-kun." Tohru reminded as Kyo grunted and quickly buckled himself in.

"What are you talking about, Kyo-chan?" Shigure laughed. "Looks like someone let the sun get to their brain and melt it."

Kyo looked of rage. "THOSE ASSES!"

Tohru looked relieved. "Ah, they're okay then! I'm so glad!"

Kyo turned on Tohru with an angry face. "Don't you see that little brat was playing us the whole time? He faked it all! Damn him to hell!"

Tohru blushed and clasped her hands in her lap. "... I am glad you came with me anyway..." she said quietly only Shigure hearing it. The older man let a grin trace his lips.

"Momichi tells us that he could not book two separate rooms so you and Tohru-kun must have shared a room, eh?" Shigure put a hand to his face turning the other way. "My what a naughty boy, Kyo-chan is!"

"What the hell? You're the one thinking dirty crap, you damn dog, I didn't do anything to her!" Kyo defended himself.

"But you thought about it! Oh, don't lie!"

Kyo opened his mouth and shut it quickly. Okay so he thought about it... for a split second! It wasn't like he daydreamed like some pervert!

"Oh, we're here!" Tohru exclaimed staring out the window. Kyo snuck a glance at Shigure, the other man merely grinning at him. Kyo growled and opened the door to let Tohru out first, then him, and Shigure. "I haven't been so excited to come home before."

"Well, welcome home then." Shigure said beckoning the two into the house. Shigure didn't have to be a mind reader to figure out something more than just a little beach time happened when the pair were away. Now it was only a matter of time before Tohru would return Kyo's love. Nothing could spoil this moment. Oh, he couldn't wait to tell Ayame! They'd have so much fun!

Tohru awaited to see the main hall filled with her beloved friends and their customers, but was startled to see everyone in complete chaos. Everyone was running around like it was the end of the world or something.

"They're coming! Oh, hi, Tohru-- They're coming! Hurry, go get ready!" Ayame babbled running past them.

Shigure's eyes widened. "They're coming?"

"Yes!"

"Oh no, Kyo-kun, lets go."

"Right." Kyo started off for his room leaving Tohru standing at the door watching in awe.

"They're coming...?" She repeated to herself. Suddenly she caught Hatori's eye and the man came right for her. She took a step back, bumping her back against the door. "Wha...?"

"Put these clothes on." He passed her a bag. "They're Yuki's, they should fit well enough."

"Wait, but!"

"Tohru! Hurry, hurry, they might be here any second!" Momiji called from upstairs.

Tohru had absolutely no idea what was going on but in all the movement she just went with the flow and ran to the bathroom.

Hatori appeared again and tossed her a roll of cotton bandages. "Here, while you're at it." He pushed the bathroom door closed leaving Tohru with her knapsack still over her shoulders, her eyes now swirling.

"Um... okay..."

Moments later Tohru came out of the bathroom with Yuki's clothes hanging rather pitifully on her thin shoulders. Holding up the bandages she scratched her head in thought. "I don't get what the bandages..."

Hiro saw her and gasped. "Put those on your chest, you stupid girl! Men don't have breast!" She 'eeped' and ran back into the bathroom, unbuttoning Yuki's shirt and trying to figure out how to bind her breasts. She finally got it around her torso and pulled tight, constraining her breasts. She slipped the shirt on again and stared at herself in the mirror. Flat as a pancake.

She came back out and Yuki happened to pass by at the moment. "Honda-san!"

She was almost relieved to see she caught someone's attention. She went straight toward Yuki with a panicked face. "Yuki-kun what is going...!"

"Please, you must button your shirt up properly. Like this." Yuki reached for her chest and buttoned it all the way to her neck. "We will have to do something about your hair as well, here." Yuki pulled the ribbons out and gave her hair a little wave. "Ayame and Ritsu have long hair so they won't think much of it, but the ribbons give it all away. Oh, and maybe keeping your voice down an octave..."

"YUKI-KUN!" Tohru finally screamed making the entire house silent for a moment. It was rare that Tohru ever raised her voice. Yuki put his hands down to his sides seeing Tohru look like she was about to pass out. "What on earth is going on here? Why am I dressed like this? Why do I have to conceal my um, womanly parts, and why is everyone running around?"

Yuki paused for a moment before a knock came to the front door. Everyone gasped and turned back to Yuki and Tohru in apprehension.

The young man only sighed. "They found out that a girl is living here with us."

"Who is they?" Tohru asked quieting her voice.

"The Zodiac girls."

"Eh?"

Suddenly the door did not yield to the knocking when it burst open, smoke engulfing the doorway. Tohru looked up to see four silhouettes, two short ones and two rather tall ones standing in the foyer.

"Is there really a woman living here?" A girl burst out.

Shigure gave a slight wave. "Ah ha... Kagura, nice to see you."

The Zodiac boar ran to Shigure. "Tell me! Is there really a woman living here, Shi-chan? That can't be, my darling Kyo cannot be seduced by another woman!"

"I don't know if any seduction is going on in this house..."

A tall girl then came out of the sun light to look rather dark and annoyed. Her outfit was a bit risque for a woman of her age, but it completed her look without a doubt. She just screamed 'bad @\$\$'. "There was gossip at our Zodiac Girls Club about a female boarding here." Her cool eyes closed. "We had to check this out."

"H-Hiro-chan?" A smaller voice. "Is what Rin-oneesan says true?" A smaller girl, looking to be like a high-schooler, came from the doorway as well and found Hiro instantly.

"Kisa..."

Tohru had never seen Hiro's face actually blush before. Even with all the girls he swooned she'd never once seen his face turn pink like this just now. She gulped. If these girls were zodiac members, she recalled Yuki saying there were only three. So who was...?

"Kureno." It was Hatori who said his name. "It's been a while."

The last silhouette came out of the light to reveal a thin man with chestnut colored hair. He looked rather stiff standing in the doorway but a voice as calm as the sea breeze contrasted it. "I just happened to be on my way here when I met with Rin-san, Kagura, and Kisa-chan."

Tohru felt her breath hitch at the sight of him. It had been so long since she last saw him and she never expected to see him here of all places! She counted with her eyes, there were eleven Sohmas standing in this very room. Plus Kyo made twelve. Since Kyo was the cat then where was the last member of the zodiac?

Yuki leaned to speak into Tohru's ear. "These are the three girls of the Zodiac and that is Kureno Sohma, the rooster."

"Sohma...?" Tohru asked aloud. Kyo, not to far away, felt Tohru's sprits flare.

Suddenly Kureno stared right at Tohru, his eyes widening slightly. "To...Tohru-san?"

Tohru suddenly forgot about everyone in the room. It had been so long since she'd seen anyone from back home. She gasped and instantly ran into Kureno's arms.

"Ku-chan!"

Everyone's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates. "KU-CHAN!"

Tohru buried her face into Kurenno's embrace. "Oh, I've missed you so much! I... I had no idea you were a S-Sohma!"

The man stared down at her and smiled softly. "So my eyes are not deceiving me... it really is Tohru-san."

Kyo's temper flared at the sight. If Tohru had been confused just a moment ago, he was completely lost. Why was Tohru hugging Kurenno and calling him such a stupid nickname like 'Ku-chan'? What was he to Tohru? Why did he just embrace her?

Shigure nudged Kyo's side. "Jealous are you?"

"Go to hell." He muttered.

"So," Rin put a hand on Tohru's shoulder, "who might you be?"

"Eh...? I'm Tohru...Honda..." She said slowly. Oops, maybe running into a man's embrace like that was not so smart since Yuki just told her the other Sohma girls didn't know a girl was living here. They might think she was a homosexual male or something! "Ah, but I'm not like that!" She instantly replied to her own thoughts.

"What are you talking about?" Rin barked.

"What a strange fellow." Kagura added.

Rin took a strand of Tohru's hair into her palm, twirling it around her finger. Tohru suddenly felt a pair of eyes watching rather carefully. Looking to the side, she saw Haru with a blank look, his lips just slightly parted. 'Rin! This is Rin-san that Hatsuharu-san was getting upset about! I wonder what it is? She's really so mysterious and beautiful. Ah, but why would talking about her make Hatsuharu-san so mad? Doesn't he love her?'

'She'll never love me back!' Haru's voice echoed in her mind.

She stared up at Rin's unyielding, cold orbs. Why didn't she love Haru as much as he loved her? Her stare made Tohru feel a gust of icy wind blow through her soul. "Tohru Honda... masculine don't you think? For such a feminine face..." Even her voice was so mature and serious... what an amazing person.

"Tohru is our help, Rin-san." Ayame pointed out seeing that Tohru was not responding.

"Strawberries," Rin turned her head slightly chilling the room at her observation, "he smells like strawberries."

All the men froze at that.

"Ah ha, yes well, Tohru does love strawberries!" Ayame sweatdropped. "And it is a bit offensive thinking that the poor boy is a girl don't you think?"

"Then why is he wearing Yuki's old clothes?" Kagura asked already sitting down for some tea. She pulled out two cups and poured Kisa a cup as well as one for herself.

"He's poor!" Ayame said.

"But if he was working here, surely you would not let him use Prince Yuki's clothes..." Rin said with a bit of spite.

"Um..."

"And what man would go hug Kurneo-san?" Kagura filled in after Rin.

Ayame looked at Ritsu, cowering in a corner. "Ri-chan would!" Ayame grabbed Ritsu by the scruff and threw him at Kureno.

"PLEASE, DON'T KILL ME! I WON'T HUG YOU, I PROMISE!" Ritsu exclaimed into Kureno's face. 'I'M FEMINIE, BUT NOT GAY!'

"Well there's a surprise..." Hiro muttered under his breath.

"Well there's only one way to find out, hua?" Rin smiled darkly while Tohru just stood like a statue. Rin grabbed Tohru's wrist roughly, everyone gasping.

"Wait, please...!"

"Rin-oneesan!" Kisa exclaimed seeing how rudly she grabbed Tohru, the other girl closing her eyes tightly.

Suddenly she pushed Tohru at Kyo, surprising everyone with the rather rude behavior. Even Kagura looked up to see if Kyo would transform at the touch of the so called 'man'.

"Whoa!" Kyo yelled out trying to catch Tohru before she ran smack into his face. Tohru stumbled over and hit Kyo's chest causing both of them to fall over from the impact. Everyone gathered around to see Kyo's transformation, but surprisingly there was only Kyo and Tohru in a heap.

"Ow, my head..."

Tohru sat up. "Kyo-kun! Are you okay?" She picked his head up and stared at him. "I'm really sorry!"

"It's okay..."

Kagura blinked. "Well, I'll be... Tohru-san really is a guy."

Rin looked shocked as well. "That can't be. Tohru-san is a girl! Look at her, I'm no idiot!" She yelled out.

Ayame let out a breath. Thank goodness Kyo's curse was lifted.

Kisa stood back from the group and bent down to peer through everyone's legs at Kyo and Tohru. She watched them for a moment and saw a tinge of pink on both Kyo and Tohru's faces at the close proximity of it all. She gasped while standing up and looked at Hiro.

"Hiro-chan..."

"You saw it, Kisa." He cut her off. He looked back at her. "Do what you will with that information."

Kisa turned back to the rather annoyed Rin and the surprised Kagura. She gave a small smile and giggled. Maybe she could keep this secret to herself for a little while longer. Rin had no idea how right she was about the sex of Tohru Honda.

Kagura pulled Kyo up from the floor, making Tohru let go of him. "Kyo-kun darling, how have you been?"

Kyo stared at her and turned away. "Fine."

"But you never phone me anymore!"

"When did I ever start calling?"

Kagura's eyes watered. "I can't stand you working here at a Host Club! Making women happy- feh! What about making me happy? At least at our club, we don't waste time flirting with guys!"

"You guys just have sissy tea parties and gossip. That's so lame."

"Kyo-kun's not being nice!" Kagura whined. "Why can't you just say you like me?"

"I don't like you!"

"Kyo you're being mean!"

Tohru got up with the help of Momiji and stared at the two bickering. It was amusing to say the least but there was a sence of distraught that hit her.

Kyo kept turning away from Kagura but she always popped up playfully in his face. "Come on, Kyo-kun, you missed me even a little?"

"I missed you like I missed Shishou's burned dinners."

"Kyo I love you! Doesn't that mean anything to you?" Kagura finally burst out. Tohru gasped and looked away. This must be that girl. The girl that broke the curse for Kyo. She half hoped it wasn't real but the



truth was, this girl even admitted that she loved Kyo. Tohru had never said that.

She turned away from the group as Kyo watched her walk away and toward Kureno. "Tohru!"

Kagura stared at Kyo and then pulled him by the ear. "Tohru? Tohru? What about me? Don't tell me you're bent that way, Kyo-kun, or I'll KILL YOU!"

"What? Get off me woman!"

Tohru tried to beat down the pain in her chest and smiled at Kureno who only watched with curious eyes. "Ku-chan, how is everyone at home?"

The man stared at her a moment not believing that she just fooled everyone for being a male. He was even surprised why Kyo had not transformed.

"Let's talk about that later, Tohru-san."

She only nodded and stared back at Kagura beating Kyo up. The same thoughts she had only weeks ago came back. Why was she still living with the Sohmas? They really didn't need her anymore... especially him. He certainly did not need her anymore.

But in her heart... she needed him.

## 19 - Show me love!

Tohru finished washing the dishes and sat down to rest. It was quite an ordeal that morning since Kagura, Kisa, and Rin had arrived. She really wanted to speak with Kureno but decided to respect his wishes and leave the matters for later. In all honesty, she had not seen Kureno all day beside that morning. She had not seen Hatori either.

Tohru excused herself to go do chores, a get away from the awkward situation. She couldn't help but wonder why it was such a big deal that she was a woman living with the Sohma men. It was not proper for one thing, but she did not know her presence would bring such chaos into their unique family.

Kagura seemed to be such a fun-loving girl... but a love for Kyo. A love...

Kisa was so adorabe. Tohru wanted to talk to her more, but feared getting the Sohma men in trouble. If she talked too much she might give away her position. Then again, Kisa kept giving Tohru strange little smiles...

Rin was the most enigmatic of the three. She had an air of respect around her and didn't seem to like Tohru too much. But earlier when Rin saw Haru she turned away and avoided him at all costs. At any rate, the three girls were very unique and beautiful just like all the Sohmas were. Boy, did they have good genes.

Now that she thought about it, Rin was that girl that Haru was yelling about wasn't it?

"Haru fell in love with Rin. He's told her a number of times that he really loves her, but... she acts indifferent every time."

She thought back on Yuki's words and stared up at the ceiling. She wondered why Rin did not love Haru back...

She could hear some of the host members arguing about one thing or another and decided to go outside and clear her thoughts. She got up from her seat and stepped outside when she heard hushed voices outside. She stopped and was about to turn away when she heard her voice.

"No, Haru."

"But why, Rin? God, why don't you love me like I love you? We used to go out and...!"

Rin spun on Haru, her narrow eyes trying to pass the message of 'go away'. Tohru watched from behind a small pillar. "That was then, this is now. And you always say you love me! Do you really love me?"

Haru growled, on the verge of changing black. He took a step closer to her. "I don't get you."

"And I don't get you!" Rin whispered back non too softly. She motioned her hand to the house. "You

think this makes me love you more? Flirting with millions of other girls really makes me love you, Haru." She walked away. "You just don't understand. You're such an idiot."

Haru grabbed her by the arm and spun her around to face him again. "I am not an idiot."

"You are!" She looked away. "I don't want to talk about it."

"The girls at the host club," Haru started as Rin's eyes widened at the mentioning of the customers, "they say I'm not stupid."

Rin slapped Haru in the face, ripping her arm from his grasp. Haru kept his face turned the other way as Rin glared at Haru. He could feel his entire face stinging with hurt, but nothing hurt more than her silent scowl. She didn't say anything, just staring at him with glassy eyes. Was she about to cry? She closed her eyes, swiftly leaving the scene.

Haru stayed on the lawn, his fists clenching as Rin walked away. "Damnit... damnit..."

Tohru felt bad for eavesdropping but didn't like seeing Haru so angry either. She stepped down the porch and walked slowly toward Haru.

"Hatsuharu-san?" She asked quietly.

"Why?" He cursed to the wind. He loved her so much. He just couldn't understand what was making her so angry! "Damnit, why?"

Tohru put a hand to his shoulder. She was risking her life here if Black Haru decided to show up. "Hatsu..." Suddenly Haru turned into her embrace, like a child crying to his mother for comfort. Her eyes widened as he leaned his head on her shoulder, shaking.

"I know she loves me... the way she looks back when I look at her, her secret smiles, the way she thinks about others behind her facade... I love everything about her. I just don't get it." He continued.

Tohru let him lean on her shoulder as he kept cursing himself and everything around him.

She stared past his shoulder watching a bird flutter around a bird bath. "Maybe..." she started off, "Rin-san cannot understand why it is that you love her so much if you're willing to be a host.

"I mean, Yuki-kun told me that love and host are never used in the same sentence." She looked down at his domino-colored hair as he stared down at her feet. A slight breeze went by.

"I do it," Haru finally spoke up, "because I want to make her happy." Tohru finally caught his cool gray eyes as he looked up at her. He was not white or black, she noticed. He was really just a normal man, confused to why the love in his life was not returning his feelings. " 'A host makes women happy but a man makes onewoman happy' as it goes," he looked away, "I don't know how to make Rin happy though. What does she want of me? I don't understand, so if I continue to be a host, perhaps I will learn to make Rin happy by example of those other girls."

"I think it's every girls dream to have the attention of only one man. Being with other women perhaps... is making her jealous."

"You think she's jealous?" He half laughed.

"Perhaps." Tohru sighed, "I know that it sounds selfish, but to a girl she wants to be special. Treated like and loved like an individual. Thinking that if you learn to please many women might help you learn to make that one special girl happy, it won't." She closed her eyes gravely thinking of Satsuki, "It just won't make that one girl happy.

"My mom used to tell me that everyone is an individual. To learn to love them you spend time with them and get to know them." There was silence in the afternoon air as the pair stood on the lawn.

"I can't learn to make Rin happy by making other girls happy..." Haru repeated to himself.

"Spend time with her, hold her, show her you love her and only her." Tohru smiled.

'Show her I love her hua?' Haru's eyes closed and he only leaned his head on her chest again thinking over what Tohru just said to him.

"Thank you."

Tohru finally put her hands around Haru's back, rubbing it soothingly as the younger man tried to calm his nerves. There were no more words spoken after that, both swimming in their own thoughts.

'What I would give just to be with you...'

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Finally at the end of the evening, after Tohru happily made dinner for the entire zodiac family (Kyo and Kisa helped her out in the kitchen) the girls stood up from the couches after chit-chatting for hours on end. Everyone was seated in the main hall now, Kureno and Hatori rejoining the group as well. "It looks like we better head home now." Kagura said. She spun on Kyo with hearts in her eyes. "Good bye, Kyo-kun, my love!"

"Devil."

"What was that?"

"I said BYE." Kyo said a bit louder.

Rin stood up as well and ushered Kisa to the door. "We'll stop by again sometime." She said staring right at Tohru.

'Do you think she can tell I'm a girl? Oh she probably does! I hope I don't get the Sohma men in too much trouble if they find out!' Tohru thought while saying good bye to the guests.

"Rin."

Tohru looked to her side to see Haru walk up to Rin with his hands to his sides. Rin stared at Haru with the same narrowed eyes she had earlier that afternoon. She leaned her weight to one side, her hip jutting out to the side while she folded her arms around her.

Haru only stared at Rin calmly despite her body language. "Um, it was really nice seeing you again."

"Sure."

"And... I..." he paused staring her straight in the eye. He really wanted to make Rin happy. He didn't care how hard it would be or how many times she pushed him away because he was a host. He loved her that much. Enough to make this decision on his own. "I decided to quit being the Wild Card Host, and leave the main house."

Everyone gasped and Tohru caught Rin's eyes widening and her entire body slacking.

"W-what?" She asked in confusion.

Haru decided he was already half way into the river, it was time to jump in. He kissed her full on the lips, her eyes wide and stricken. She tried to push him away but he only held her tighter before she gave in to his passionate kiss.

"I want to be with you, Rin." He said as their lips parted. "Host or not, I've always cared about you. Someone told me," Haru looked away a little embarrassed, "that not only do I say I love you, but I need to show you I love you." Haru pulled a hand through her silky hair. "What good is being a host when I can't... I can't have you?"

"Haru, no..."

"I want to make only you happy."

Silence engulfed the room and finally Rin let a few warm tears fall from her eyes. No messy sobs, just tears telling Haru everything he needed to. That's what she'd been waiting for him to say.

"So those other girls?"

"Only you, Rin." He said briskly. She looked around at everyone watching them and just put her hands around his neck, hugging him close. She cared so much for him.

'So that was it.' Tohru thought to herself. She just wanted Haru to be with her. She wanted Haru to show her that he loved her. Saying it was one thing, but to show someone you loved them was another.

Tohru sighed happily and caught Kisa's stare. The girl stared at her with innocent eyes and then smiled. Tohru was not sure what she was smiling about but just smiled back.

"That was a nice thing you did, Tohru-san..." Kisa whispered.

"What?" Tohru asked.

Kisa nodded, "I heard this afternoon... what you said to Haru-niichan. I came outside to look for him or Rin-oneesan and didn't want to interrupt." She whispered. "It made me very happy. Haru-niichan loves Rin-oneesan very much and I know she loves him too. She was always trying to protect him but who was there to protect her?" Kisa looked down, "You made them both very happy."

Tohru watched the young girl cast a wary glance at Hiro from across the room. Kisa looked away instantly and just watched Rin and Haru hug.

Rin let go of Haru, both of them giving each other one more glance at one another's face. Rin's features stayed void as Haru's features broke into a smile, startling the zodiac horse.

"I'll see you soon."

Suddenly she raised a hand to his cheek and nodded. "Okay." Haru could have sworn he saw a ghost of a smile caressing her lips. She turned and walked out the door with Kagura.

"We'll be checking in again soon." Rin said, giving Tohru one more fleeting stare down.

"Bye bye! See you later!" Kagura called over her shoulder.

Kisa tugged Tohru's pants so the girl would bend over to let Kisa whisper in her ear.

"And one more thing?"

"Yes?" Tohru responded.

"I won't tell Rin-oneesan that you're a girl."

Tohru blushed as Kisa skipped out the door to follow the other two Sohma girls. Tohru wondered how she knew.

Shigure closed the door and suddenly everyone released sigh.

"Glad that's over." Kyo muttered.

Ayame turned to Haru who was already walking away. "Haru..."

The man stopped walking without turning around. "I really love her, Aya-niisan. I want to take the same path as Kurenno. I want to show her... that I love her."

Ayame looked away in thought. "I understand." Haru nodded before Yuki stopped him. Haru looked into Yuki's worried eyes and smiled. "It's okay. I know what I'm doing."

"Are you sure, Haru?"

"I'll still visit frequently and summer is coming to an end, Yuki." Haru held Yuki's gaze, "don't you wish for something to happen before summer ends too? You worry about me too much anyway." Haru put a hand on Yuki's shoulder. "Maybe that's why I fell in love with you."

"WHAT?" Tohru squeaked as Kyo rolled his eyes in the background.

Yuki gave Haru a dull look. "Must you always bring that up?"

"B-but, I thought that Rin-san was Hatsuharu-san's...!"

"Oh no," Haru chuckled while hugging Yuki close to him, "Yuki is my first love. He broke the curse for me. He will always be dear."

Yuki fruitlessly pulled away from Haru's arms snaking around his neck. "Will you cut that out? People are going to start thinking we're gay."

"I wouldn't mind... maybe bisexual would be better. Would you mind?"

"Yes. Yes, actually I would very much mind." Yuki said peeling Haru's arm off from around him.

Tohru only muttered incoherent noises as Haru excused himself.

"I...I would have never guessed!" She continued with swirling eyes.

Yuki sighed and looked at Haru's back. "But he really did always love Rin." He smiled warmly, surprising Tohru. "It makes me hope to fall in love again."

Tohru nodded. "I'll miss Hatsuharu-san very much."

Momiji looked like he was about to cry. "Does that mean Haru is going to resign? Just like Kureno?"

Ayame stayed silent. Tohru thought it was odd that he was acting rather serious.

"Yes." Shigure said seeing that Ayame was not responding.

"But he will be happier than he'd ever been." Yuki said after a moment. Tohru nodded and turned to the group of men.

"I hope I'm not prodding but... I've always been wondering this. If you have been released from the curse by loving someone, how did you know you were in love?"

Momiji looked thoughtful, "to be honest, it just happened."

"She made me like the happiest man in the world." Hatori said.

"We were high school sweethearts." Yuki responded.

"Then what happened?" Tohru asked again. Everyone stared at her sadly.

"I told her I still needed to take care of something." Ayame said.

"She feared me." Hatori said.

"She just didn't love me the way I loved her." Momiji said.

Tohru turned to Kureno. "So even if you fall in love sometimes it... doesn't last?" She looked down rather sadly.

Kureno nodded. "But everyone learns to love again."

Tohru thought on that sentence for a while. "I'm so sorry."

Shigure waved a hand at her. "Don't be! Falling in love was quite the experience and as the saying goes there are plenty of fish in the sea!"

Yuki gave Shigure a side glance. "What makes you so sure any of those fish want a perverted idiot like you?"

"Who wouldn't want a piece of this hot muffin?" Shigure laughed.

"But that certain person broke the curse for you!" Tohru stated bringing everyone back on topic. "Didn't that mean something?"

"It did, Tohru," Hatori said, "and those special people made us who we are today. That's it. It's okay to move on."

Tohru only nodded now feeling quite sad for the Sohmas. But Hatori was right, the people we fall in love with shape who we are but it was okay to stop loving someone. Even if they did not return your feelings all the time or leave you in heartache, it was okay. There were plenty of other people around you that would be there.

And she hoped she could be there for the Sohmas as long as she could.

"Um... one more thing."

"Go ahead." Shigure smiled.

"Why did it matter if Rin-san, Kagura-san, and Kisa-san knew I was a girl or not?"

Everyone sweatdropped.

"Um, Kagura has a thing about any woman, besides the customers, being so close to Kyo-kun." Shigure responded. "Also, it's sort of an unwritten rule that no one of the opposite sex is supposed to live with us."



Same goes for them. Oh, they host their own club not too far from here, just on the outskirts of this town. It is mostly where the female society gets together to do who-knows-what."

"In other words he never asked or thought about what they did." Hiro clarified.

Shigure nodded. "That's why I think Rin and Ha-kun are going to move in together somewhere. Oh boy," Shigure sighed, "but what a mess it would have been if they knew a woman, nonetheless a cute woman was living with us."

"I'm going to get you in trouble, then?" Tohru panicked.

"No, no, don't worry." Shigure looked to the door, "we won't let anything happen to you. Besides, I don't know how long we can really keep this a secret, but the initial shock might have sent them through the roof and you packing your bags. But Kagura is normally the one that throws a fit when it comes to Kyo-kun."

Tohru laughed. "I see. She really loves, Kyo-kun then." She watched everyone's face fall seeing how forced that statement came out. "E-excuse me, I'm a little tired from all that traveling and finally being able to meet the Sohma women. If you don't mind...?"

Hatori motioned his hand upstairs. "Please, have a good nights rest, Tohru-san."

"Thank you. Good night everyone."

Everyone gave her a collective 'good night' as she excused herself and went to her bedroom to change her clothes and go to bed. She didn't want to see his reaction to what she just said. What was she thinking? She only tried to block the thoughts that her time with Kyo at the beach might be her only time with him ever.

Back in the main hall Momiji turned to Kyo after she was well out of range. "Kyo, why didn't you stop her?"

The boy only shrugged and turned away. "Why would I? She said she was tired."

"Kyo, you know what I mean!" Momiji pouted.

"And what about you, you little faker? Yuki's not really sick and your leg looks fine! You set us up!"

"That's because I know you like Tohru!"

"What?"

"And she likes you!"

"..."

Seeing that Kyo had nothing to say to that Momiji nudged Kyo. "So what are you going to do?"

Kyo punched Momiji on the head. "You talk to much."

"Waaahhh! Kyo hit me! Someone! Kyo hit meeee!"

"You are SO annoying." Kyo muttered while Momiji continued to cry.

"Kyo-kun, taking it out on Momichi won't solve your problems you know." Shigure said after a moment trying to get his voice over Momiji's rather loud one.

Kyo clenched his teeth and walked away. "I'm going to the roof."

"Did you see her face everytime you and Kagura were together? She really was trying to smile for you, Kyonkichi." Ayame said inspecting his nails. "I think she thinks that you and Kagura are an item."

"What!" Kyo thought about it and he could not imagine himself with Kagura in that manner. At one time, yes, but now...?

"A hot item, perhaps?"

"Hell no! That woman would be the death of me I tell you!"

"Then tell Tohru that you really like her!" Ayame said. "My gosh, you act like a sissy pre-teen."

In all honesty, Kyo wanted to tell Tohru he liked her too, but he was afraid of what she'd say. And there was that Satsuki guy always lingering in the back of her mind. He just didn't know what to do about his feelings.

Every smile, every look, every word... he couldn't comprehend why it was that he loved her so much. He didn't want to be the host that made women happy. He wanted to be the man that made one girl happy. One Tohru Honda. He wanted to show her he loved her, he wanted to tell her he loved her, but didn't know what to do. He felt shy and awkward, but at the same time strong and free when he was with her. He just didn't know why it was he loved her so much but he guessed it didn't matter since he loved her anyway. And yet that same question lingered in his mind: would she love him too?

## 20 - where would you be?

Tohru opened her eyes the next morning. She didn't sleep too well the night before. She rolled her shoulders and stretched her back before dressing for the day. After her vacation at the beach, she missed sleeping in her room and running through the daily routines with the Sohmas. She couldn't believe how routine it had become in this house.

She finally made it down to the dining room to see that Kureno was sitting there patiently. She wasn't used to anyone being up before her and yet here Kureno was sitting, dressed, groomed, and rather serious as ever. She was startled to say the least but smiled anyhow.

"Good morning, Ku-chan."

"Ohayou." Kureno greeted. "Do you mind if we talk now?"

"Um, sure." She sat down next to the older man. She grinned. "I really have missed you and Uo-chan. How is she?"

"She's doing fine. A baby is on the way actually. We're expecting our child sometime in November."

Tohru gasped. "Really? That's wonderful! And how is Hana-chan?"

"Fine."

The girl's smile diminished and she looked Kureno in the eye, making the other man lean back slightly. "Just fine?"

"Yes, Tohru-san."

"Ku-chan, you are not a good liar I'm afraid," she giggled. Tohru looked up at him with shy eyes. "Please tell me how they are really doing."

Kureno then looked right back to Tohru with forlorn eyes. "Terrible."

She only looked at her hands. "I miss them terribly too."

"When Arisa told me that she had not heard from you in so long after your wedding she began to worry. I knew you were getting married in this town to Satsuki and decided to visit my family to see if they heard any rumors about a wedding, but it looked like you found them before I got to find you."

She blushed. "I had no idea you were a Sohma."

"I suppose changing my last name to Uotani threw you off."

"I never asked either I suppose," Tohru laughed.

"Tohru-san," Kureno put a hand on Tohru's, all serious matters coming into play. "We didn't hear from you in so long, and Satsuki Sonto-san did not come back either. What happened? Saki-san, Arisa, and I, we're very worried."

Tohru only shook her head. "You all shouldn't worry about me... Hana-chan and Uo-chan warned me, they really did. It was my fault for not listening to either of them."

"Saki-san also worries. She claims her electric signals were not picking yours up at all. She wanted to come look for you herself, but something stopped her."

"Hua?"

"Something about the beach and cooking... I'm not sure what it was." Kureno stared off as Tohru's eyebrows knitt together. For some reason she got the feeling of deja vu. Kureno turned his attention back onto the female beside him. "What happened, Tohru-san?"

Tohru sighed and told Kureno of her short adventure before meeting the Sohmas. After she poured everything out to her friend she fell silent. "That's it. I was very ashamed and didn't think Hana-chan or Uo-chan would ever want to speak to me again..." She shook her head, "I was so wrong about Satsuki."

Kureno handed her a tissue as Tohru dabbed her wet eyes. "They would never think ill of you, Tohru-san."

"I would."

"You are too hard on yourself. Although I do find that you seem very happy here with my relatives." Kureno chuckled and leaned forward on the table. "I don't think I've seen you smile so much before."

Tohru looked up at that. Had she changed that much?

"You really have matured. You look healthy, happy..." Kureno turned to her with a slight smile, "It suits you more than a frown."

She guessed he was hinting that she was not happy with Satsuki which was not a complete lie. She did feel more at ease without that man looming over every single thing she did. But he was there for her during the hard times as well. She still felt connected to Satsuki even though she'd begun new bonds with a certain orange-top. New bonds she hoped to grow off of, but still, what about Satsuki?

"I still... love him..."

Kureno frowned at her confession. "He did not come looking for you at all?" She shook her head no.

"Silly isn't it? Thinking I still love him after all these months..."

"Don't make the same mistake twice."

"I know, but I can't help it. How do I? The man I thought I... I thought I really loved, he betrayed me. I'm a grown woman, but things like that," Tohru touched her chest tenderly, "it still hurts so much." She closed her eyes and looked down to her lap. "I don't want to forget him, but I don't want him to haunt me either."

"Arisa would want you to be happy. She doesn't want to lose you and neither does Saki-san. They miss you and want to see you well." Kureno leaned back in his chair while Tohru continued to stare at her lap. After a moment, Kureno finally came out with his reason of going in search of Tohru from the beginning. Seeing how much she'd grown from the last time he saw her, he didn't know if she was going to make the choice he intended to hear. Hatori had made clear of that.

Finally he said, "Tohru-san, why don't you come home?"

She gasped and turned around. "Go... home?"

"We will keep you safe from Satsuki Sonto-san." Kureno paused and stared at the ceiling in deep thought, "That and I don't think Arisa would let him within ten feet of you, even with her pregnancy."

"Go back... home..." Tohru repeated to herself. Yuki walked in and saw Tohru and Kureno sitting at the table.

"Good morning." Yuki greeted.

Tohru smiled and said she'd start breakfast. Yuki nodded seeing her pleasant smile. He hoped it would never go away. He offered to help make breakfast but Shigure popped in from a different room to warn Tohru of the burnt crisis that Yuki went through. The house was slowly waking up.

But even with that, her mind was swirling with the thought of going back home to her friends. She missed them so much, but she had made her home here with the Sohmas.

In effect of her current thoughts, she ended up burning breakfast.

"Yuki's influence must have rubbed off on poor Tohru-chan." Shigure cried while eating his blackened toast.

"Oh shut up." Yuki muttered throwing a pair of chopsticks at Shigure. "Honestly, and you are an adult."

"Tohru are you okay?" Momiji asked seeing Tohru munching on her fish without much attention. It was obvious since she'd been chewing the same bite for quite some time now.

"Eh?"

"Are you feeling okay?" Momiji asked again causing most of the people around Tohru to stop what they were doing and zone in on the girl. All the men watched on with interest, even Kyo.

She waved her hands up, "Yes, I'm okay, please don't worry." She looked back at her half eaten plate with anxious eyes again. Kyo noticed her body language and turned on Kureno. He had the gut feeling

that her restless emotions had something to do with him. How was Kureno connected to Tohru? What had he said to made her upset? Or even worse, what did he do to her? Kyo's eyes narrowed at the thought.

Kureno cleared his throat, "I think I am to explain." Kureno looked to Hatori and the man nodded to continue. "I asked Tohru-san if she'd like to come back home."

Everyone's jaws dropped. "Hua?"

"You see, I am married to Arisa Uotani--"

"Ah yes that spunky blonde!" Shigure laughed. Kyo in the background sighed with relief. So Kureno wasn't a long lost boyfriend or something to Tohru.

"You are such a pervert." Yuki muttered again.

"And Arisa is one of Tohru-san's best friends. She has been worrying about Tohru-san for some time and I offered my wife to come look for her here since I know that you all live in this city. It was quite a sight to see Tohru-san bording here." He turned to Tohru who blushed. "So I have offered to take her back home."

"Is that true?" Haru asked Tohru.

"Y-yes...I did not know Ku-chan was a Sohma since he changed his last name to Uotani."

"Are you... thinking about going home?" To everyone's surprise it was Kyo who asked that. Tohru caught his eye and had to turn away. She didn't want to leave him... but only staying here was hurting her more now that Kyo and Kagura were together. It was just torturing herself really.

But would she really be home? Without Kyo?

"I'm thinking." Tohru finally said. She couldn't look at him. Everytime she caught his eye her heart raced and her cheeks flushed. She just couldn't look him in the eye. Leaving the first time was hard, trying to leave again would be impossible now. Now that she developed feelings for the orange-top anyway. She excused herself for the rest of the morning.

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Later that day Tohru sat outside on her balcony, thinking. She looked up at the roof and decided to give it another try. She grabbed a chair and jumped to catch the ledge of the roof before swinging her legs up. Rolling onto the roof she sat up and stared off into space. She couldn't believe how hard it was to get up on the roof by herself! She felt proud of her accomplishment and finally settled herself on a corner of the roof, tucking her knees under her chin, thinking of what she was to do.

"Decided to steal my spot hua?" A voice entered her thoughts.

"Kyo-kun!" Tohru jumped and flailed her arms. "Sorry, I'll move, I didn't mean...!"

He laughed lightly. "I was kidding."

She blushed. "I don't want to steal from you, Kyo-kun."

'You already stole my heart.'

"I doubt you ever would." He replied.

Together they basked in the afternoon sun. He already felt nervous just sitting up there with her. Yuki told him to go talk to Tohru. He really didn't like taking advice from that damn rat, but then again, he was already thinking of spending a little time with her. He was just surprised to see her up on the roof, wrapping her arms around her thin legs, thinking.

"I'm scared."

The statement startled Kyo and his features softened. "Why?"

"I'm not sure," she looked down as the wind blew through her locks of hair, "When Ku-chan say's 'home' I don't know what to think. Mom always told me home was where the people you love are. But what if the people I love are in two different places?"

"Well, that's for you to decide. Where is it that you want to be?"

"I... don't know."

"You do know." He said sternly. "You just don't tell people what it is that you want."

She dropped her head onto her knees and whispered something. Kyo leaned forward to hear it better.

"Here." She paused and hid her face from Kyo in her knees. "Here with you. That's what I want."

It actually surprised him. She wanted to be... with him? She blushed and began getting off the roof muttering apologies. Kyo watched her go and then turned his attention to the sky as he heard her jump down from the roof. He wanted to tell her but just listened to her feet tap lightly to her bedroom.

"Don't lose her." His Master's words echoed in his mind. He shook his head and listened to her door squeak open. She was brave enough to tell him what it was she was thinking and all he was doing was sitting here on the roof.

"Don't lose her." The words chanted in his mind again. What would he be if he lost her? Who would he love if wasn't her? No one.

Suddenly he found himself down on her balcony and stopping her from closing the door with his foot. He didn't know when he was already in her room, but there he was.

And there were her tears.

"Don't cry, Tohru." He said with concern as she tried to turn away from him. "Don't cry."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be."

She looked up at him and only cried even more pushing herself away from him. It hurt too much to be torn between her friends and the man standing before her.

"Man, I'll have to get used to you crying, ya know?" He tried to joke. Tohru stifled out a small laugh but only coughed and continued to sob.

"You... don't have to..."

He tilted her chin up. "But I want to."

'Tell her.' his mind chanted. 'Tell her.'

With his thumb he brushed her tears away. "Just don't cry. It's... a lot nicer when you smile."

Tohru could feel her heart thump rapidly with his thumb on her face. It just felt so nice. No one ever touched her so tenderly, so soothingly.

So lovingly.

And she didn't want it to ever end.

Kyo backed away from her and dug into his pocket. "Um, close your eyes." He said nervously. Tohru complied and did as Kyo instructed. Suddenly she felt something smooth on her finger tips. "Open." He said just above a whisper.

Tohru opened her eyes to see the shell that she and Kyo had picked on the beach, bound with a leather string. Her mouth hung open slightly as she held it up between herself and Kyo.

"I... I broke the other ones trying to make a hole in it to put the string through. It isn't much but it... oh damnit, just take it okay?"

Tohru's eyes glimmered and she gave Kyo the nicest smile she had. She always smiled, but this must be the first time the smile was for something he gave her.

"It's wonderful. It's just wonderful, Kyo-kun." She pulled her hair back and tied the necklace on her neck. She touched it with her hand and stared up at Kyo, he staring at her ever so softly.

Suddenly he reached out for her silky hair. He'd longed to feel it run through his fingers and it was softer than he ever imagined it was. "I thought you might like it."



"I-- you were giving this to the girl that broke the curse for you."

Kyo gave an even chuckle. Feeling daring, he moved close to her ear. "Who said it wasn't you?"

Suddenly the door opened. "Tohru, do you know where the soap...?" Haru stopped dead in his tracks to see Kyo and Tohru standing in the middle of her room with Kyo's fingers laced through her hair.

"Whoa..."

"YOU BASTARD! Don't you freakin' KNOCK?" Kyo yelled out, he and Tohru jumping away from each other instantly.

Oops, moment lost.

"Well good thing I didn't knock, or you might have don't something indecent to Tohru here." Haru responded. "What are you doing in her room anyway?"

"None of your damn buisness!"

"What? Kyonkichi in Tohru's room? I have to see this." Ayame's voice was heard down the hall.

"He's deflowering our little flower!" Shigure's voice followed. Kyo's face went beat red and he just pushed past all the Sohmas.

"LEAVE ME ALONE!"

"Aw, Kyo-kun was caught doing a dirty act! Shameful!" Shigure called chasing the poor cat-boy around with a newspaper. "I'll have to smack you for that!"

"Hit me with that thing and I'll send you flying, you damn dog!"

Tohru watched everyone chase after Kyo and she just looked in the mirror at her necklace. No diamond or pearls could place this necklace. Nothing. And what she said was true. Her home was where Kyo was. And that was right here.

This was where she wanted to be.

## 21 - short skirts among other things

Kureno ruffled Tohru's hair lightly. "Are you sure you're not ready to come home yet?"

Tohru laughed. "Yes, I want to know more about the Sohmas still." She clasped her hands. "Are there any other secrets about you I don't know, Ku-chan?"

"None that I know of, Tohru-san."

She laughed again as Kureno began opening the door.

"Ku-chan?"

"Hai?"

Tohru turned around to see a few of the hosts lingering around the main hall. "Did Uo-chan know? About all this..." She said a bit quieter, referring to the Sohma curse.

Kureno gave Tohru a peculiar look and then broke out in a grin. "About me being the Zodiac Host Club Rooster? You might say so."

Tohru's eyes widened. "She knew?"

"She also knew I was a rooster."

"She hugged you? B-but what about her memory? I thought no one could know such a secret!"

Kureno nodded. "Yes, and I was glad she did find out. She was frightened and tried to hit me with a broomstick, but after the fact, she said she loved me anyway." He looked away in nostalgia. "And I wouldn't want it any other way. I told Hatori-san about it, but I also told him that I wanted to marry Arisa." Kureno, for as long as Tohru knew him, never blushed so dark a shade before. "She promised never to tell anyone either and Hatori let us be." He turned on the shorter woman with pensive eyes. "I hope Hatori-san lets you be well also."

"He shows me nothing but kindness." Tohru smiled. "But anyway, that's a nice story, Ku-chan. I can't believe Uo-chan tried to hit you with a broom though."

"She couldn't find her lead pole... thankfully." He added as an after note. Tohru just laughed nervously. He waved to everyone. "Take care."

"Ah Ku-chan!" Tohru fished a letter from her apron and handed it to Kureno. "Please give this to my friends? And don't read it!"

He took it and told her it was in safe keeping. With that, the man departed with good news for his wife.

If he didn't come home with good news he'd have hell to pay.

"Okay, everyone!" Ayame announced while clapping his hands. "Back to business, eh? We must get the room ready for our customers!"

"I think it looks fine." Hatori muttered.

"Oh, Tori-san! This room must look better than fine! I must look fabulous! Yes, lots of colors-- lots and lots of colors! Food! Oh only the most opulent tastes and--"

"Forget I said anything." Hatori said while walking away.

Ayame spun around to find Shigure leafing through the paper. "Don't you agree, Gure-san?"

Shigure instantly popped out of his seat and went to hold Ayame's out reached hands. "Of course, Aya! I'd follow you to the ends of the earth and beyond!"

"Gure-san, you are my light and true companion!"

Hatori just sighed. "Don't you two get tired of this?"

Tohru moved towards the king of the club. "Is there anything you'd like me to do?"

Ayame winked. "Just be your cute little self, yes? Having you here in my home is enough really! I'm so happy you chose to stay with me, my dear Tohru!"

"She wasn't staying here for you, you know." Kyo growled while setting up tables.

"Oh, and I suppose she's staying here for the food?" Ayame snaked an arms around her waist and struck a dramatic pose. "You know she wants me."

Suddenly everything just flipped upside down. Kyo never thought about it, but Ayame was quite close to Tohru. And that damn Yuki too. Momiji, Haru-- oh hell she was living in a house full of all men! This wouldn't do! He wouldn't let anyone take Tohru away from him.

'Since when did she becomes yours?' he asked himself.

Ayame watched Kyo's distorted facial features and grinned. He already got the cat in the bag. Oh how much fun it was to tease the young.

Ayame pushed Tohru closer to his side. "Unless, you were already pinning for her, Kyonkichi."

"A-Ayame-san!" Tohru blushed.

"You dirty man!" Kyo yelled out.

"You know you want her!" Momiji chimmed in while riding on Haru's back. " 'Oh Tohru, I love you so much!' "

" 'You're just too good to be true...' " Haru added.

" 'Can't take my eyes off of you!' " Momiji sang, motioning towards Tohru while batting his eye lashes.

"Stop it, you brat." Kyo punched Momiji on the head causing the teen to fall to the floor.

As Momiji began crying for all he was worth, Tohru's face only turned red at the thought of Kyo and her. But that was impossible! He was with Kagura... right? But then how does that explain the other day when he gave her the necklace? It seemed like Kyo was going to tell her something else before Haru came in. She could still feel his hands on her face, sending sparks throughout her body. Even when she was dating Satsuki, she never felt like this. Her entire body tingled.

" 'I love you baby! And if it's quite alright, I need you baby!' " Everyone was chanting in chorus now to 'Can't Take My Eyes Off of You'. Kyo tried to contain himself but it wasn't working too well. He was itching to punch someone right now. He caught Yuki staring at him from across the main hall and today in particular the stare was most annoying.

"You're staring at me."

Yuki's eyes only dulled. "And? It's a free country, I don't see any laws saying I can't just look at you... even though it's not a pretty sight to see." He added at the end in a lower tone.

"Yeah well your friggn' face is just girly."

"Is that so?"

"Yes that's so."

"Girly rather than your face that's uglier than a gorilla's butt."

"STOP!"

Everyone turned to Tohru, who was staring at everyone. "Um... I just... it's getting closer to opening so we should really get things in order." She didn't know why, but with everyone singing and Kyo and Yuki arguing, it was just system overload. They all acted like a group of children sometimes!

Yuki's face softened and he stood up from the wall he was leaning on. "Of course, Honda-san."

"They will be arriving soon, won't they?" Shigure added. "Kyo-kun, won't you help Tohru-kun with the tea?" He asked while bumping elbows with the younger man.

"Why the hell should I? Tohru can do it just fine."

"Because as your elder, I asked you to help her." Shigure inspected his nails in the same fashion as

Ayame. "Unless you want to be a lazy @\$\$ and not help out."

Tohru rubbed her head, "um, I can do it by myself. Really..."

Shigure shook his head 'no'. "Kyo-kun must help you." His voice grew into a sing along. "Kyo is a lazy @\$\$, Kyo is a lazy @\$\$!"

Kyo glared at Shigure's head and just went to the kitchen. Even though he only made an appearance once a week, recently he found himself helping out and making quick appearances to help Tohru with her chores. He decided that Shigure was poking fun at him.

The jerk...

As Kyo disappeared into the kitchen, Tohru looked sternly at the rest of the Sohmas. She didn't like to act like their mother, but enough was enough. "I don't think that teasing Kyo-kun is very nice."

Ayame waved a hand at her. "Don't worry about him, Tohru-kun. He's a big boy!"

"But Kyo-kun doesn't do anything like that to you." Tohru turned away to help Kyo with the tea. "It just doesn't seem right."

As she left Shigure chuckled. "Ah, young love."

"She scolded me! Me, the KING!" Ayame complained.

"Someone should yell at you sometimes," Hiro muttered.

Hatori turned to his long time friend while Ayame sat crying pitifully on his shoulder. Hatori didn't know who was worse, Ayame crying or Momiji crying. "So you think she loves him too?"

Shigure nodded his head. "Well, it must take a lot for Tohru-kun to actually, well, softly scold us." He turned to Hatori with sad puppy eyes. "What if she decides to not make dinner tonight? I was looking forward to it too! I couldn't bear to go out to eat anymore-- think of all the MSG or useless calories we'd be gaining again!" Hatori didn't say anything while Shigure came an inch closer to Hatori. "Do you think you'd make dinner, Ha-san?" He asked in a small voice.

"Keep dreaming."

"You're so cruel."

---

In the kitchen Tohru stopped and watched Kyo.

He was up on the counter, balanced on his knees while looking into the cupboard. She couldn't help but glance at his rather firm behind. Embarrassed at her thoughts, she looked away. Not that the sight was a bad thing to see.

"Where is that tea?" Kyo wondered aloud grumbling.

She busied herself by the sink to boil some water while Kyo moved to the side to search within the cupboard. "Um, which one, K-Kyo-kun?"

Hearing her faltering voice, Kyo stopped searching and bent under the cupboard door to glance at Tohru. Her face was pink and she looked a bit flushed. What was making her so nervous? He dismissed it, only wondering for a second if Ayame had said something to her to make her embarrassed.

"That one that is kind of sweet? I dunno, but I like it."

Tohru looked up at that. He liked that tea? She only served it on the days that Kyo would be hosting. She felt that since that day was always one of the special days, she might as well serve special tea. She had no idea that Kyo really liked that tea though.

"It's in the yellow box," she laughed, "I didn't know that you liked that tea."

"Yea, it's pretty good." He shuffled around the cupboard. "I don't see the yellow box."

Tohru wiped her hands on her apron and left the tea kettle on the stove. "Here, I'll get it." Kyo hopped off the counter to allow Tohru to climb up and search for it. "I know it's here somewhere..." She was a bit shorter than Kyo and ended up standing to search in the cupboard.

This time it was Kyo who began to blush. He was curious to find this mysterious yellow box with the sweet tea and stood close to Tohru. Maybe he would see where it was. But as soon as she stood up, he found the hem of her awfully short skirt tickling his nose. 'Whoa, buddy, hormone signal saying back off!' His mind freaked out. He almost got a nose bleed and moved elsewhere, not caring where that tea was anymore.

Tohru held the box firmly in her hand and turned around carefully to face Kyo. "Ah! Here, Kyo-kun, I found... KYO-KUN!" She only found him a few feet away with a bloody nose. "Kyo-kun, your nose!" Tohru was so frantic at the sight of blood she lost her footing on the counter and screamed as she tumbled to the kitchen floor.

"Tohru!" Kyo let go of his nose and ran to catch Tohru. He didn't catch her the way he planned, but still saved her from head injury as she fell on top of him, both sprawled on the kitchen floor with tea bags tossed everywhere. His eyes widened as he felt all her weight onto of him. Images of a certain beach scene played in his head.

"Tohru-kun!" Kyo and Tohru turned to the doorway to see Shigure running in. "Oh, my are you okay? We heard you scream." After Shigure came Hatori and Ayame as well.

Ayame pointed at Tohru with a ghastly face. "MY POOR BABY! Quick! Call the doctor! I need help!"

"Oddly enough, I know you need help but I'm no miracle worker, Ayame."

"Did Ha-san just make a joke?" Shigure wondered. "He really amazes me." Hatori then cleared his throat and looked away. Shigure stared at him and then at the pair sprawled on the floor. Shigure's eyes widened rather largely and he looked away instantly.

Tohru realized she had not fallen hard on the floor, but Kyo had caught her. She sighed and just let her head drop on Kyo's chest in relief. "Phew, I'm okay now. Kyo-kun saved me thankfully."

Kyo tensed at the feeling of her relaxing over his body. He could feel his hormones acting up and hoped to God she didn't notice anything and that she would get up soon. Not that he minded this position, but things like this could be done in a different circumstance.

'AH! Baka, stop thinking like this!'

Tohru looked up to see Hatori and Shigure looking away from Kyo and herself with rather red faces. What was the matter with them?

Ayame cleared his throat and put a hand down to help Tohru off the ground. "The shade of blue is quite nice on your bottom, Tohru-kun, but maybe next time you can skip on the paw prints?"

Tohru gasped and quickly grabbed Ayame's hand, standing up to pull her skirt down. Oh, how embarrassing! She couldn't believe what a shameful thing she'd just displayed for Hatori, Shigure and Ayame! Her undergarments for the world to see!

To say the least, Kyo was surprised. Hatori, okay he could understand why the man would look away, but Shigure? Being the perverted dog he was, Kyo was surprised he actually looked away. But glad nonetheless. Shigure wasn't that bad after all. And Tohru's panties? Paw print? This was really doing a number on his rather unsettled hormones. He tried not to think on it, but how could he not? He mentally beat himself for imagining bad thoughts.

Tohru began bowing madly while Kyo sat up on the floor. "I'm sooo sorry! I can't believe I just... you know! I feel so scuzzy now, gomen nasi! I was such a fool to climb the counters like that! We were trying to get the tea and Kyo-kun couldn't find it, so I tried to find it. I did but then Kyo-kun had a nosebleed and I fell, and, I'm...!" She quickly turned around with a broom appearing in her hand. "I'll clean it up right away!"

Shigure watched as she began tidying up the floor, still muttering apologies. Shigure walked over and helped Kyo off the floor. "A nosebleed eh? I wonder what you saw that made you get a nosebleed."

Ayame laughed. "What in deed. Whatever it was, he must have liked it, don't you think, Gure-san?"

"A female's bottom? I'm sure he liked it."

Kyo gave Shigure an evil glare while the other man only kept smiling. Shigure for one was surprised Kyo didn't burst out violently. Quite but deadly wasn't Kyo's thing. More like violent and angry.

The tea kettle boiled and Kyo just walked away from Shigure to prepare the tea. He stood there for a moment and glared at the tea kettle. Finally he turned off the heat and shook the tea kettle violently into

the tea pots.

"Damn you stupid tea to hell!" Kyo cursed.

Hatori made Ayame and Shigure get out of the kitchen. He for one didn't feel like getting scalded by hot water today. Guess he was violently angry.

Tohru on the other hand was still trying to calm her nerves. She felt so unclean, flashing everyone with her panties! She snuck a glance at Kyo. At least he didn't see. She would have died right on the spot.

Seeing Kyo punishing the tea for no reason, she put the broom down and went to Kyo's side.

"Damn friggn' tea!" Kyo kept cursing while water splashed everywhere. Misdirected rage. Some of the water splashed on her apron and Tohru put her hand up to block any hot water from hitting her face.

Tohru watched for a moment and smiled. He must have been just as mortified as she was. Softly, she placed her hand on his tensed arm and at the slightest touch he paused. His head snapped to her and their eyes met.

"Kyo-kun, you're making me wet."

Kyo's mouth just hung open. He wasn't sure if Tohru understood what she just said but suddenly he really needed to get further away from her. He could already feel a hot sensation run throughout his body. This wasn't good.

"W-what?"

Tohru laughed and took the kettle from Kyo's hands. "You were getting hot water all over the place."

The boy turned away. So that was what she meant... oh boy, this girl really knew how to drive a guy crazy. 'Dirty mind! Idiot, idiot, idiot!' He cursed himself.

"I'll finish the tea." She said.

"O-okay."

Tohru finished preparing the tea when the main hall just outside the kitchen burst with voices. The club must have opened by now. She turned around holding Kyo's tea cup. She stared at it fondly since it was a shade of orange.

"Kyo-kun, do you want to try the tea?"

He looked up from the table. He didn't know why but even though he decided sitting at the table would put some good distance away from him and Tohru, he still wanted to be close to her all the same time. Without knowing it, she already had him wrapped around her finger. He just couldn't say no to her.

She smiled. "Maybe you'd like a slice of cake with your tea? I baked it yesterday for the Sohma girls, but



they left before I could serve it. It might be really good!"

He couldn't get the image out of his head. Would this be what it would be like to live with Tohru? Just the two of them, sharing a snack and tea? She calming his nerves but making them race all the same? He watched her place a plate of cheesecake in front of him with his tea cup beside it. He didn't know when she did that but that was Tohru for you: always thinking of others. She sat down next to him at the circular table and poured herself a cup of tea. No one had ever made him feel so wanted of his company. What was his life like before he met her? He probably would still be living alone in that house outside the main house.

He watched her take a small bite and grin. He picked up his own silver fork and followed suite and his eyes lit up. "Whoa, this is good!"

"Do you think so? Is it too sweet?"

Kyo took a bigger bite. "No, it's actually really good-- I mean," He looked away, "it's... it's okay or whatever..." He heard her giggle and he turned to her again. He watched her face light up with utter gratitude. He could live off of those beautiful smiles of hers.

Tohru took her fork and poked a strawberry, popping the juicy fruit into her mouth. He laughed and leaned on the table to watch her enjoy the cake. The fork that was playing at her lips... how envious he was of the item for the moment. What would her lips taste like? He shook his head and just watched her. He pushed his plate closer to her and rolled his strawberry onto her plate. "Do you like strawberries?"

She had the fork between her lips and she stared at him with those beautiful sapphire eyes. They lit up like diamonds. "I love strawberries! Thank you."

He pulled his plate back toward him and began to eat his slice again. "I thought so..."

She watched him take another bite as crumbs littered the corner of his mouth. It reminded her of a cute little child eager for dessert. Honestly she found this disgusting, but on Kyo it was... well, adorable. Dare she say it... she might even say it was rather sexy. "Kyo-kun," she laughed with a light blush. The young man turned to her with questioning eyes. She only giggled and leaned over to dabbed the corner of his mouth making Kyo freeze. "You've got a little cheesecake..."

She never got to finish her sentence since the next thing she knew, her lips met his in one sweet kiss. yeahy finally!

## 22 - Our private confession

He didn't know what came over him. The tea, the closeness of their bodies, her giggling, it could have been a number of things that gave him the urge to taste those lips of hers. But he did it. He kissed her. She was even better than he ever dreamt her kiss would be like. So sweet she was, like sugar, and the hint of cheesecake and strawberries tingled his senses. It was like a drug and he craved more.

Suddenly all his senses zoned in on reality. 'What are you doing?' he screamed at himself.

Kyo tore himself away from Tohru as if she suddenly lit on fire. They both leaned away from each other, Tohru touching her tender lips and Kyo staring at her wide eyed. He couldn't believe he'd done that. She probably hated him now! He felt like a lecher! He had no right to straight out kiss Tohru. Oh God, he wasn't thinking at all.

Tohru on the other hand was mostly confused. Thousands of emotions threw her for a ride. He kissed her! But had she kissed him back? She couldn't remember! Oh but it was a wonderful feeling. But wait! Did he think she didn't like that kiss? What if he realized that she was nothing but a worthless girl and that's why he broke off the kiss? What about Satsuki?

After that final question, her mind drew a blank. What about Satsuki? Oh God, what was she going to do?

"Kyo-kun..." she whispered. Kyo gulped hearing his name on her lips. Those supple lips that he'd just kissed moments ago. Suddenly tears welled up in her eyes and she got up. "I'm sorry!" She burst out before running from the kitchen with an arm covering her eyes.

"Tohru!" Kyo yelled out. He should have ran after her, but his feet were glued to the floor. What had he done? He screwed up everything and now she ran away crying. She hated him. It was too soon and he practically imposed on her. He pounded his fist on the table while clenching his teeth. "Damn it!"

Tohru heard Kyo's loud curse and it frightened her even more. He must have been so angry! She felt her chest heave as she ran past Haru and straight to her room.

Haru peeked around his box of things to see a flash of brown hair zip by him. "Tohru?"

She closed the door with a slam and locked the door while sliding down the cool wood and slinking down to her knees.

Haru stared at her door for a moment. What was the matter with her? He carefully placed the box down and closed his packing box. Haru pulled from his back pocket a permanent marker writing, 'Clothes', before capping the marker and walking over to Tohru's door. He listened for a moment to hear her quietly sobbing.

Knock Knock Knock

"Tohru? Tohru, what's the matter? Tohru open the door." It was Haru.

Tohru didn't answer she just stared at the floor in dismay.

"Tohru, come on, talk to me, tell me what's wrong in there." Since Haru was no longer a host he was packing his boxes for his moving day. Seeing Tohru in such distress, he never actually saw her so upset before. To say the least, it was a bit scary. He knocked again only to hear her blowing her nose.

Tohru crossed the room to sit on the floor by her bed. That one kiss... it was actually very nice, but the look on Kyo's face after they kissed...

She shuddered. This only complicated things even more.

True, she really liked Kyo and as of lately she'd grown to like him even more. But wasn't he and Kagura an item? Then why did he kiss her?

And what about herself? Was she still engaged to Satsuki? Was she not being faithful anymore?

Knock Knock Knock

"Tohru, come on! Open up please!" Haru said through the door. Tohru looked up and heard the door knob jiggle. She got up and ran for her balcony and opened it up. Staring over the ledge she hopped over and held onto the rails while making her way down her room. It was crazy, but she needed to get away. Lucky for her, a rose trellis was below her window and she climbed down the rest of the way. Without a thought on mind she took off, running to cool her nerves.

Haru finally burst through the door and was surprised to see the room completely empty but the linen curtains blowing in the wind. Haru's heart raced and he ran over to the balcony to see Tohru on the ground.

"shoot." He cursed. He was actually surprised she was able to get down. He sped down the stairway and into the main hall where the festivities were. Ritsu was the first to turn to him.

"Hatsuharu-kun!"

"She's jumped out her window!" Haru burst earning the attention of Yuki, Shigure and Hatori. "Tohru actually jumped!" He looked around at all their frightened faces. "Oh, but she's alive or whatever." Everyone released a breath.

Kyo, pacing the kitchen, heard Haru. His heart leapt and he charged into the main hall, earning a squeal from the entire room of girls.

"Where'd she go?" Kyo asked, completely ignoring the girls groaning for him.

Haru ran for the door. "I don't know, but she was crying an awful lot!"

Before Kyo could run with Haru he had a hand shoot out in front of him and a pair of dark violet eyes glaring. "What did you do to Honda-san?" Yuki growled quietly.

"None of your damn business!"

"The hell it is my business, you stupid cat!" Yuki shouted uncharacteristically.

Kyo for one was startled to actually hear the other man curse at him. Kyo stared at Yuki before brushing past him. He didn't say anything. He didn't owe Yuki an explanation of anything at all. This was between him and Tohru and right now, she was the one he needed to talk to and worry about.

Haru and Kyo ran out the doors leaving everyone else in complete suspension. Shigure was about to go after her as well but Hatori held him back. Hatori merely shook his head. Shigure stared at him and then to the door. What made her run away so abruptly?

Yuki clenched his fist while standing next to Shigure. "If it has anything to do with that baka neko, he's going to answer to me when he gets back."

Hatori looked back at the customers watching with worried eyes. "Kyo won't come back without Tohru-san. I think you know that already, Yuki."

Yuki could help but feel rather angry at Kyo. He promised himself that he wouldn't allow anyone to make Tohru upset anymore. At first he was positive that Kyo would only cause her more pain but seeing that Tohru was most happy around the cat, he let them be. But now Tohru had run away and his first guess was it was Kyo's fault.

"What an idiot." he whispered.

-----  
Haru and Kyo ran outside as Haru ran toward the streets and Kyo searched the grounds around the house. Kyo checked in every place he could think of. He was so stupid! Or she was so rash! Whichever it was, he had to find her. He just couldn't believe she'd run away. But where would she go?

Meanwhile, Tohru had stopped running after a while with no idea that Haru and Kyo were out searching for her. She wandered just beyond the hills of the Sohma grounds, trying to get herself together as she collapsed on the grass. She hoped that no one would notice her disappearance for a short time. She just needed to think.

Lucky for Haru, he spotted her familiar form from a distance. Immensely mollified she was okay, he trotted over to Tohru and she looked up at him with tear stained cheeks as he approached her. Finally standing before the girl on the ground, Haru wasn't sure what to say. Was she mad that he came?

"Tohru?"

Tohru couldn't say anything. She didn't want Haru to see her crying like this. She turned away from Haru, only the grass softly swaying around her to accompany her choked sobs. "I'm a fool."

Haru sat next to Tohru. "Why would you think that?"

Tohru wiped her eyes with her palms. "I can't be with Kyo-kun. I'm not good enough for him. And then he kisses me and despite how much it felt right, I know it's wrong! And then the look on his face. He looked deeply bitter. He knows that I am a worthless girl..."

He was taken back when she said Kyo kissed her but figured it was about time anyway. Haru lifted Tohru's chin up. "Tohru, please stop thinking of yourself that way. I don't understand why you always refer to yourself as worthless."

Tohru stared off at her small toes. "Because Satuski makes me feel that way."

Haru's eyes widened. "Satsuki?"

"He was my fiance... or is my fiance." Tohru moaned with frustration. "I'm so confused."

Haru rubbed her back. "Tohru, I think you are too hard on yourself. Maybe it was a misunderstanding."

"But the look on Kyo-kun's face! I... I made him sad. I don't want him sad. And then he cursed when I ran away, so I made him mad." Tohru couldn't contain her eternal guilt. It was tearing her apart. Why did Satsuki have such a hold on her when her heart was also tugging her toward Kyo?

Haru leaned back to be supported by his elbows as he stared up at the cloudy sky. "Kyo get's mad easily and I don't think it's directed toward you anyway. If anything, it's something he did that was really stupid." He paused and sat up, holding his hand to her. "Please, just come home. Kyo was worried when I said that you jumped out the window."

Tohru looked up with surprise. "Eh? I didn't jump. There was a trellis right under my window and I climbed down it."

"Oh. I was hoping you had some magical powers or something... you know, something that would give this story a twist? Us Sohmas with a curse, you with some kind of awesome witchcraft... it would have made a cool story."

Tohru smiled. "Too much fanfiction, Hatsuharu-san?"

The other boy looked away. "Maybe." He stood up with Tohru and put an arm around her, rubbing her shoulder warmly. "Come on, I bet Kyo's really scared right now."

Tohru stared at Haru questioningly. "Scared?"

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Haru and Tohru walked in the direction that Kyo was and to say the least Kyo was looking terrible. He had finished searching the inside of the Sohma gates and was searing down the main streets.

"Kyo!" Haru called out. Kyo looked up and saw Tohru walking beside Haru with her hands tightly clamped.

He dropped everything and ran for Tohru. She was startled when she felt Kyo grab her roughly.

"Tohru, why did you run away?" He nearly yelled at her, shaking her shoulders. "Do you know how worried I was? What the hell, you're such a scary girl, you know that?"

Tohru's eyes just filled up with more tears at hearing Kyo actually yelling at her.

"I... I'm sorry."

Haru put a hand on Kyo's shoulder telling him to ease up. Kyo watched her sniffle and just turned away trying to get his own emotions in check.

"Oh, stop apologizing for something that wasn't your fault." He tried with a softer voice.

"But I made you mad..."

Kyo turned around when she said that. "You... you didn't make me mad, Tohru. I thought that I made you upset."

Tohru shook her head still cast downwards. "No, I wasn't upset... just... confused. You," Tohru faltered over the word, "k...kissing me wouldn't make me upset. Never."

Haru had a grin forming on his face. Oh did he have some stories to tell when they got back to the Sohma house. A kiss? A misunderstanding?

"Drama drama drama..." Haru muttered while walking away and into the Sohma gates. "I'll catch you guys inside the house, and no running away anymore."

Tohru blushed and dried her tears away.

"Hey," Kyo started. Tohru looked up at him to see him facing her with a tender facade. "Are you okay?" She'd never seen Kyo really that scared before. She didn't think anything could scare him.

Without knowing it, she reached up to touch his cheek before letting her hand run down the side of his face and back to her side. "Kyo-kun, I'm not upset that you kissed me." She stared at the fountain beside her. It glistened in the afternoon sun. "I still just, I'm still scared about relationships. My heart is telling me yes, but my mind is saying no." She looked up at Kyo with a small smile. "I'm just a crazy person."

He took her head in his hands and kissed the top of her brown hair. "Then I'm crazy too." He had to tell her how he felt. It was now or never.

She felt his lips on her head and on command she closed her eyes imagining those lips on her own once again. "It's me that's causing you so much grief. I'm just in the way, Kyo-kun."

Kyo almost chuckled. Same Tohru always degrading herself for nothing. He wanted nothing more than to make her see that she was perfect. "Stupid girl, you're... you're more than anything I've ever wanted, than I ever dreamed."

Tohru half laughed. "Did Kyo-kun say that to Kagura-san too?"

Ouch.

Kyo made contact with her blue eyes. Was that also bothering her? He didn't know Tohru to say such words even though her voice held no malice. "No. Kagura and I are not an item."

"...But were you?" She saw his open his mouth and shut it quickly. "You can tell me the truth," she looked him dead in the eye, "I won't get mad."

"Do you ever get mad?" Kyo joked. She smiled and it eased the tension even just slightly. Kyo sighed. "I won't lie to you, Tohru. Yes, at one time we were... sort of an item. But it just wasn't working out. I broke the curse for Kagura, but for me, nothing changed. I was still cursed." He paused, his hands still cradling her head gently as he searched her face for any kind of angry reaction, but nothing surfaced. Tohru was just that understanding. He brushed away a few strands of hair from her cheek with his thumb.

"I just never loved Kagura the way I love you." He said.

Tohru was short of breath. Did he just say, what she thought he said?

Kyo noticed Tohru's rather stiff figure. "What's the matter? Please, Tohru, I don't..."

"What did you say?"

Kyo was now confused. "What?"

"What you just said."

" 'Um... Tohru, I don't...' "

She gluped and shook her head while trying to clear her dry throat. "No, no before that."

" 'What's the matter?' "

Tohru laughed seeing that Kyo didn't know what he said himself. "Did you really say that you loved me?" She whispered.

He paused. Did he say he loved her? Crap! He didn't even know he said it! That wasn't the way he wanted to tell her he loved her! He even let it slip? She watched him with waiting eyes. Eyes that were anxious and rather scared. It didn't matter. It was true. He'd really fallen for Tohru. He loved every single thing about her. It was bound to come out eventually, and it was just a matter of when.

Yes. He was in love with Tohru Honda.

He took hold of her hand and smiled as they began walking home. "Yea. I'm... I'm in love with you."

There he said it. And he couldn't believe what a good feeling he got out of saying it. "I'm in love with you." He said again.

Tohru let Kyo drag her home as she grinned from ear to ear. Then the necklace, the kiss, and everything. The person who broke the curse was none other than herself. Kyo had chosen to love her.

But what about herself? Did she love Kyo as well?

"And don't worry about, you know, trying to make me happy or whatever." Kyo said after a moment. "I mean, I... I love you... but it wasn't like I was professing my undying love or anything... so..." he turned around to see Tohru staring at him with that cute little gaze of hers. He blushed, "you don't have to say anything. I just wanted you to know that I really care about you. I'll wait Tohru. I'll wait for you to love me too."

'But I already do.' She thought secretly with happiness bubbling in her chest at the private confession. 'But can I ever really let go of Satsuki?'

And her heart sank.



## 23 - An unexpected request

A week went by and everything fell back into place. Well somewhat anyway. Haru moved out of the Sohma residence to live with Rin, while Hiro returned home as well to get ready for the up coming school term. He and Kisa would be attending the same high school, Tohru was informed by Yuki earlier that week.

The club members did not seem fazed by the loss of two Sohma members and activities bustled in the main hall as usual. Despite the fact Kyo told her he loved her, none of the other men harassed her about the fact. But then again, who knew what happened when she wasn't present in the room. Oh the gossip!

But we digress.

Tohru stretched her arms up high over her head sighed. She smoothed out her old western styled dress with it's ample amount of skirts and rather itchy stockings before fanning herself slightly with her gloved hand. It was much too warm to be wearing such an outfit. Ayame's theme was the old west and everyone was dressed like cowboys, cherifs, and anything in between. The entire hall was also heavily decorated with catus and tumbleweed decor. A theme it was indeed.

This week, Tohru refilled glasses with cactus juice. Ayame said it helped the complection and the customers hurriedly took this advice in hopes of beauty. Tohru tasted it herself and Kyo warned her not to fall for Ayame's insane lie. She was so gullible sometimes. She paused in her serving and couldn't help but stare at Kyo's rather sexy outfit. Cowboy hat, button down shirt with the top few undone... it made her blush at her thoughts. It felt strange though because Kyo wasn't acting the way he normally did while he was hosting. He looked rather bored and didn't really pay much mind to the girls. She wondered what he was thinking about...

She went by Yuki's table hearing a snip of their conversation. "Oh Prince Yuki," one girl said shyly turning away from Yuki while he watched her with full attention to the color of her stained cheeks. "I'd hate to monopolize all your time. The other girls would become jealous... I just don't want this moment to end."

Yuki leaned over. "Princess, as long as you hold onto these memories, the moment will never end. A beautiful girl like you will always be embellished in my mind. Just as the flow of ink forever stains it's beautiful witting on fine white paper."

"PRINCE YUKI!" All the girls swooned.

Yuki gave them his charming smile and they all began squeeling with joy. Sometimes Yuki wondered if these girls were really that simple minded. Was it really that easy to be swept off one's feet with such nonsense? The funny part was none of these girls really knew who he was. To them, he was just Prince Yuki of the Host Club... and yet it made him wonder if that was all he really was.

"Yuki-kun," Tohru voiced out, "I believe the next group is waiting." Yuki nodded and bid the girls a good

afternoon.

"Good bye, Prince Yuki! Enjoy the brownies I baked you!" One girl chirped.

"Every bite will soothe my soul till our next meeting."

The girl fainted.

"Don't faint! You're missing his charming-prince-like-smile!" The girl's friend yelled while catching her star struck friend. She began smacking her repeatedly. "Wake up!"

Yuki sighed and loosened his collar while Tohru only chuckled at the slightest change in Yuki's facial features. These girls always brought Yuki goodies and presents but the truth was Yuki had no idea what to do with it all. "Yuki-kun has so many admirers." Tohru giggled. Behind the lounge chair Yuki was sitting at was a massive pile of different goodies from various customers throughout the day.

The rat looked behind him at the pile with a rather depressed look. "I just can't seem to say, 'I don't really care for sweets'." Yuki confessed to Tohru. The other girl smiled.

"It's the thought that counts."

"But I can't eat all of that."

Shigure tip-toed over and grabbed a platter of small cakes from a blank looking Yuki. "Well I know you're watching your weight, Yuki--"

"No, I'm not--"

"--So I'll just take some okay?" Shigure laughed. He appeared behind Hatori who was hosting a different girl. "'Tori-san, would you like a taste?"

Hatori turned the other way. "No."

Shigure moved to put the cake in his face. "Please? I'll even feed it to you if you want."

Hatori closed his eyes. "Definitely no."

Suddenly Ayame spun Shigure around so the two friends were almost in a hugging position.

"I'd love some cake, Gure-san." Ayame bent his head to eat the cake right out of Shigure's hand. "Mm, it tastes so good."

"Oh, Aya!" Shigure cried. "We only do this at our sleepovers, not in front of the customers!"

Ayame held Shigure's hands with his own, the pair off in their own world now with shojo bubbles and random floating flowers everywhere. "But I cannot wait until dark to eat sweets. The ones where I can eat it from your hand are just so much sweeter."

Shigure posed with a hand over his head. "And those that you feed to me are just as sweet."

Ayame held a fork with a small bite of cream pie on it before Shigure's mouth. "Would you like a demonstration?"

All the girls around them burst out with squeals. "Romance between two friends! WAIII!"

"Grab the camera!"

"I'll buy that fork Ayame-sama used as a souvenir!"

Yuki slapped a hand to his forehead. "I hate it when they do that," he growled while watching his cousin and brother make a scene in front of the scary fan girls.

Tohru just sweatdropped and led Yuki's next group of ladies to his table. She made sure they were all settled and left with a friendly wave.

After living with the Sohmas for so long, the customers were taking a liking to her. No more evil eyes or anything, they were actually quite nice. Sometimes.

She began dusting the mantle over the unused fire place. She was really enjoying herself here. She turned around slowly to look in Kyo's direction. Since the day that they shared their first kiss, Kyo was acting a bit like a high school boy. He stumbled sometimes over his words and got angry a lot, but then tried to cover it up by speaking in friendlier tones to her. Once he even made a small lunch for her! She found it quite adorable. And the way his presence seemed to calm her, it was a nice feeling. He let her feel free.

Even now, they met on accident on the roof. One night, she'd discovered a small step ladder leaning on her balcony. She had no idea how he got it there, but was thankful all the same. It made climbing the roof that much easier. She wondered if they really met on accident or was it planned? Secretly, she always hoped that Kyo would be there to keep her company while they stared at the stars. Sometimes she would begin to doze off and Kyo would have to wake her and tell her to go to bed. But sitting on the roof was so much more calming.

Every so often, his hand would 'accidentally' brush hers. She wasn't too sure if it really was an accident, but she liked to pretend he did it on purpose. She really wanted to hold his hand and open share her love as well but she didn't know if she was truly in love with the man. She wanted to, she really did, but her mind kept telling her no. She couldn't give her heart so freely in fear of being hurt again.

She watched wistfully as Kyo's eyes suddenly met hers across the hall and then just as quickly looked away. She giggled-- he acted like he was caught seeing something he wasn't supposed to see.

Around the other Sohmas, Kyo was rather loud and always being teased. It usually ended up in his anger meter jumping way off the charts. But when it was just him and her, she got to see the softer side of him. Still, he was awkward when it was just the two of them. Not that he was the only one feeling awkward. She took much of that into her own account especially when he watched her or said

something that made her blush. Numerous times he said something along the lines of her being cute or funny but she couldn't be any of that! She was so plain and uncute! But he always made her blush anyway. It was cute.

Not that Kyo would like to be called cute at all.

Suddenly the main doors opened as Tohru continued to carry on her chores.

Ayame popped into the doorway. "Welcome ladies! You are new guests here I see." Ayame looked over the serious blonde woman and an indifferent raven haired girl. He met their eyes again and put a hand toward them. "Please come in and enjoy the atmosphere of our small topia."

The blonde girl backed away from Ayame's hand just as quickly as he put it out. "Don't touch me your faker!" She shoved him and Ayame stared at them bewildered.

"Gure-san! She actually pushed me!" Ayame complained while Shigure ran over to hug his friend.

Hatori stood up and stared at the new comers. The blonde girl looked around the room in rage while the other girl stepped into the room closing her eyes as if blocking out all the noise.

"My electric waves are feeling uneasy."

"The hell it does!" The other girl said. Hatori stepped up to the girls, his rather serious tone fazing over the blonde girl's loud one.

"Arisa-san?"

Uo jumped at the man calling her by her first name. She stared at him and then smiled.

"Hatori! Whoa, you scared me. Haven't seen you in a long time."

Hatori turned away while motioning Uo to follow. "Making a scene here is not wise, please have a seat." He eyed her stomach. "And uncontrolled anger is not good for the baby either."

Very few things made Uo blush, and talking about her and Kureno's child was one of them. Sometimes she just couldn't believe she was holding a little life in her womb.

She clicked her tongue and turned to her darker friend. "Hanajima and I are looking for our friend, right?"

Hana nodded. "Precicely."

Hatori nodded. "Tohru-san, I presume."

Hana looked around the room with the same blank stare. "We're making sure..." Hana's eyes met Hatori's, "this is a good environment for our Tohru-kun."

Hatori could feel a prick at his back. Were these two really her friends?

"We trust that Tohru-kun is being take care of..." Hana stared off. "Proper eating, sleeping..." her eyes seemed to suddenly glow, "she's not being over worked..."

Hatori never lost his cool, but this girl was... how should he say, creeping him out.

Suddenly the group heard a rather loud gasp. The two girls and Hatori turned around to see Tohru staring at them wide eyed.

"Hana-chan! Uo-chan!" Tohru nearly wailed running over to hug her friends. Both Hana and Uo went in to hug their sorely missed friend, the three girls screaming with joy. She embraced them tightly as she rambled about how glad she was to see them in so long. Tohru leaned away from them. "How did you...?"

Uo held a familiar piece of stationary between her index and middle finger. "Kureno gave me a letter from you. As soon as I read it, I forced him to tell me where you were."

Tohru sighed. That was Uo for you.

Hana put a hand on Tohru's shoulder. "We are fine that you decided to stay here..." her eyes loomed around the room full of promiscuous flirting, "we're only here to see that this lifestyle is most fitting."

"And to see who this cutie pie you wrote about is." Uo laughed in a rather loud voice while smacking Tohru lightly on the back. "Come on Tohru, we want to hear the gossip! Have you guys kissed yet?"

Suddenly a certain orange head popped up among the crowd and Tohru hoped that he didn't hear that. How embarrassing!

Uo stopped laughing and looked down at Tohru's attire. "What's with the dress?"

Tohru's eyes lit up. "Oh, you see, Ayame-san makes clothes as his real job aside from the host club and he makes outfits. This one is an old western theme!"

"It's interesting."

Tohru beamed. Uo paused to take in Tohru's full apperance. She did look brighter, not as skinny anymore, and most of all absolutely happy. Uo could still remember that old Tohru figure from a few months ago. She always looked so pale and depressed despite how she tried to smile for everyone. What had caused her this change? The Tohru standing before Uo was a resemblance of the former Tohru she knew in high school.

So much had changed over the years...

"Tohru-kun, you seem to be much healthier from the last time we've met." Hana cut in as if reading Uo's exact thoughts. "Taking care of yourself?"

"Of course! With all the Sohmas looking after me, I always feel good. They're almost like family." She

smiled. Hatori even cracked a small smile at Tohru's kind words. "They were even so kind to give me a permanent living quarters."

"Oh in that case." From no where, Uo tossed down two rather large suit cases. "Mind if we stay the night?"

"EH?"

## 24 - Hatori's memories

Hatori placed four rather large bags on the floor of Tohru's bedroom before standing up straight with a tired sigh.

"Ah, Hatori-san, are you sure this is okay? My friends staying over I mean..."

Hatori felt his back crack from sitting so still all afternoon as he moved the suitcases against the wall with the heel of his foot. "It's no trouble at all," he mumbled without looking up at Tohru.

Hatori began to leave when Tohru reached out pulling his western styled coat. She didn't know why she did it, but she couldn't find her voice to call him out. Hatori seemed so quiet. "Um, Hatori-san... I'm a little scared about something."

He stopped at that and turned to face Tohru. Just like everyone else, he cared deeply for the young girl. Tohru was relieved to see Hatori look her in the eye. For a second she was worried that he was upset about her friends staying the night and was just trying to be polite.

Hatori searched her eyes for a moment seeing there was something on her mind. He'd try his best to see what was wrong. "Why are you scared?"

"Well, remember that time you said, 'love is a strong word and once you've said it to another person, you had better keep your word.'?" The older man nodded. Tohru felt her hands fidget as she sighed. "Well what if... what if I can't love a person back even though I want to? That maybe," Tohru looked toward her bedsheets, "it might hurt the person in the end?"

Hatori raised an eyebrow and Tohru almost wished she didn't ask Hatori. He must think she was a crazy woman! But still, she really loved Kyo and wanted to tell him she loved him just as much as he loved her. There was always that hesitation in the back of her mind though. If she said she loved him and she happened to go back to Satsuki, what about Kyo? She couldn't, no she wouldn't, ever leave him like that. It would be a lie then. Her love for Kyo would be nothing but a lie. She didn't know if she could live with herself.

Hatori thought on that for a moment and guessed that she was talking about Kyo and herself. He closed his deep gray eyes momentarily while a flash of a pretty young woman's smile flashed across his mind. It had been a while since he last thought about his own past love. A love he promised to keep throughout his entire life.

"Spring." Hatori muttered with his deep voice.

Tohru looked up after a long pause. "Spring?"

Hatori allowed himself a smile as he walked over to sit on a wooden chair by the door in her room. "Her favorite season was spring." Tohru watched with curiosity before sitting on her own bed across from

Hatori. The man finally opened his eyes, both of them settling on the female across from him.

"Do you know that the best feeling is to say you love someone and have that person say you love them too?"

Tohru was startled by such a comment. Someone that would return your love...?

The doctor closed his eyes briefly, losing himself in old memories "The first person I fell in love with was Kana."

"Eh, Hatori-san...?"

Hatori continued, not hearing Tohru. "She was a customer here at the host club and met me by accident. She'd originally requested to see Shigure but was placed with me. At first I only saw her as a customer as she saw me as a host.

But as time went by, she'd been requesting to see me more. She even requested me for a whole day. She and I would talk and spend time with each other. She wasn't like any of the other women that I'd met. She was quite deep and refined. It was a wonder why she'd ever visit a host club at all. Without knowing it, Kana had placed herself in my heart.

Then months later, I met Kana out of the Host Club hours on a date. Without all the other people there I felt more at ease and she let me be myself. There was no quota to fill, only her. Then that night she'd hugged me without me realizing it and that's when she found out. I was transformed into a strange creature.

She was petrified and ran away with wonderous fright in her eyes. It tore me up inside at the sight of her running from me. She was the first person that had come to know me for me. Not as a host club member. Then she saw my zodiac form and could not believe her eyes. As days went by I had not seen Kana in a very long time. Ayame and Shigure worried about my health since I'd lost sleep and dazed while hosting.

That's when I knew I'd fallen in love with Kana. I never loved anyone as much as I loved her. I searched for her, longing just to see her smile, hear her voice, anything. I wanted to tell her I'd fallen in love with her. I ran into her at a coffee shop down town. She turned to face me and that lovely smile disappeared. She looked terrified and tried to run again. But I wanted to tell her everything.

And I did.

She only cried and wished we had never met. That she was afraid of the form I'd turn into... a freak. She could not love me even though I'd already given her my heart. It didn't take me long to know she and I would never be. It was only hurting the one that I loved most...

so I erased her memory of me and our time together...

It hurt to see the person I loved most suffer. Even if we could not be together it gives me some happiness to know that she is happy at all." He turned to the window with a forlorn face. "Even if I am not



part of that happiness."

Hatori watched as Tohru's eyebrows furrowed together and her cheeks flush with sadness. Hatori only leaned over and brushed a stray tear off her face.

"But I'm okay, Tohru-san." Hatori gave her a small smile. "She'd given me maybe the happiest time of my life and broke the curse for me without knowing it. Even though the pain hurt, I'd grown from it and learned that I would never know what could have been without telling her that I loved her. I would have never know what would happen. Love is a strong word that you don't fling around carelessly," Hatori's voice dropped to almost a whisper and Tohru covered her mouth to muffle her sobs, "but if you truly feel that you love a person, tell them."

"Hatori-san..." Tohru mumbled. She let her tears flow as she jumped into Hatori's arms, giving him a hug. She couldn't believe how lovingly Hatori cared about a woman. How much pain he carried but lived all the same.

Hatori's eyes widened slightly as Tohru hugged him. "I want Hatori-san to be happy too. Happy and in love with someone who will return his love too!" Tohru cried. Hatori felt a smile tug at the corner of his lips seeing how Tohru cared for him as well. He hugged her back briefly, happy that this girl was a truly honest person. She was different from Kana. She didn't run away but braced herself with whatever came her way. She embraced him rather than pulling away.

So much time had passed since him and Kana. So much had changed.

This was the first time he had thought about Kana in so long. Maybe it was Tohru that made him tell her. Maybe he just felt it was time he told someone rather than have it under a closed lid. But it didn't matter why he did it. Having Tohru tell him she wanted him to be happy...

...was worth revisiting those sad dreams.

Hatori didn't know if he'd find love again but for now this was fine. He'd watch over Tohru and see that she would be happy as well. He wished that Kyo and herself would fall in love and have their love returned all the same.

Wasn't that what everyone hoped for?

Ayame poked his head into the room. "You've been up here for quite sometime, To..." He stared at the scene before him, Tohru in Hatori's lap and the man's arms hanging loosely around her waist. "What is the matter with the men of this house trying to grope the one female that lives here?" Ayame asked with utter outrage.

Hatori was already up and right besides Ayame, glaring at his friend. "Stop imagining dirty things." With that, the doctor strode away. Ayame looked back at Tohru now using a tissue to wipe away her tears and Ayame watched her seriously for a moment before going to find Hatori. He trailed after the doctor as the two walked to the main room.

"You told her about Kana?" Ayame immediately asked.

"How did you know?" Hatori asked after a moment.

"Well you have very few secrets, Ha-san. And I can only think of one that you could tell Tohru that would make her cry and hug you."

Hatori looked away as Ayame leaned forward to look into Hatori's hidden eyes. "Feeling okay, Ha-san? You don't have to go back to the club if you're not up to it."

Hatori stopped at the doors to look at Ayame. Ayame blinked as only an earnest smile grazed Hatori's lips.

"You worry too much. Maybe you should apply yourself into worrying about Yuki more than you do me." Hatori put a hand on top of Ayame's head. "Kana and I are a thing of a the past. It doesn't concern me anymore." Hatori opened the doors and went back to his seating area. From across the way, Ayame saw a tuft of white and black hair appear from the doorway as Haru greeted his cousins. He did come visit periodically. He instantly went over to Yuki and the pair began chatting.

Ayame grinned and began wandering into the room as well. "Maybe so, Ha-san... maybe so." Ayame watched his dear friend tell Tohru's friends to meet her upstairs as the snake frowned slightly.

'But did you tell her the rest of your tale, Ha-san?' Ayame thought to himself. 'That you secretly cried? That you made yourself seem so cold to keep others away? Did you tell her the pain you were inflicted with knowing that the one girl that you loved most didn't return your feelings?' Ayame closed his eyes, 'Or maybe you didn't tell her the real ending of your story because it's too painful to share? Oh, Ha-san,' Ayame took full stride into the victorian room while making talk with a group of girls, 'sometimes you and Tohru have so much in common, more than you think you do...'

Hatori gave oral directions to Tohru's room as Uo and Hana gave their thanks before wandering off into the enormous house. He looked to the side to see Yuki, Haru, Kyo, and Momiji watch the girls with wary eyes before they scuffled away like a pack of wild animals after them. Hatori watched the pair go up the staircase before returning to his seating area, his mind still swimming with the previous conversation with Tohru.

Tohru was worried about telling Kyo about her feelings it was apparent. She didn't want to tell Kyo knowing that her heart was still clouded with another man. It was quite smart and thoughtful actually even though Hatori never really thought Tohru to be the type to lead a guy on...

But then again, had Kyo told her he loved her, would his love ever be returned? Would Kyo feel that same pain Hatori did so many years ago knowing the girl that he loved would never be able to return his love? Hatori felt his back crack again as he rolled his shoulders.

So much time has passed, and so much had changed...

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Uo opened Tohru's bedroom door, peaking her head in. "Tohru? Are you here?"

Tohru sat up and briskly strode to the door. "Uo-chan! Hana-chan!"

Uo looked relieved that they finally found Tohru's room. "Phew, this house is so huge! Good thing we didn't take a left at that blue hallway."

"I thought it was the green one." Hana said.

"No, that was the one near the potted vase hallway."

"The black vase?"

"No, no, the white one."

"Oh yes."

Tohru giggled, "yes, this house can get a little confusing."

Hana looked around the room with her hands clasped in front of her black summer dress (if such a thing existed). "I see they house you in a room that suits you..."

Uo gave a long whistle with both hands on her hips. "Wow! Would you look at this room? It's bigger than my garage!"

"You live in an apartment Arisa," Hana stated with the same flat voice, "you don't have a garage."

"But if I did, this room would still be bigger!"

Tohru laughed nervously. "Ku-chan didn't come with you, Uo-chan?"

Uo stopped admiring the room and turned to Tohru as Hana lifted up a small desk lamp. "Hua? Oh, no, he was needed at work and couldn't get away. But it's okay, I promised him I'd take it easy for the baby." Uo winked, "and besides, it's only for one night!"

"This is made of sterling silver..." the darker girl spoke while caressing the base of the lamp.

"Oh yes, you really do look radiant, Uo-chan!" Tohru said after a moment. Uo thanked her and brought her hands to her stomach on instinct.

Hana finally put the lamp down and stepped next to Tohru. "We really did miss you, Tohru-kun." Her eyes darkened and Tohru already knew what her friend was going to ask. "Any word from Sonto-san?"

Tohru looked away. "Um... Satsuki...? I haven't seen him since... ah that day." Tohru didn't know why but just saying 'our wedding day' didn't seem appropriate. It really wasn't a wedding anyway.

Uo punched her fist into her left hand. "If I ever get my hands on Sat-SUCKIE, I'm going to beat the day lights out of him."

"Uo-chan! But in your condition!"

Hana closed her eyes muttering, "Oh, even in Arisa's condition, I wouldn't be surprised if she still attacked him and won."

Arisa growled in frustration. "Gesh, Tohru, I still can't see why you fell for such an idiot like that guy. I couldn't believe my eyes when I read your letter! That horny bastard! If that was me, I would have walked right in that room and busted his naked @\$@ right there and then!"

U-Uo-chan!" Tohru cried.

"I love Arisa's visuals..." Hana chuckled softly.

Tohru's eyes looked down with shame. She knew her friends would be mad that she didn't listen to them. "I... I know I'm such a fool. I don't know why I let him control me like that."

"Oh, that's easy," Hana put a warm arm around her friend, giving her a slight squeeze, "because you are so pure of heart, Tohru-kun."

Uo sighed and pushed her blonde hair out of her eyes. "Yeah, I guess your best attribute can sometimes be your flaw too, hua?"

"But a very cute flaw." Hana added.

Uo bent to Tohru's eye level with a smile. "We didn't come here to have you hear the 'I told you so!' lecture. We just wanted to make sure you're doing okay here. We were worried when we didn't hear from anyone in months. When Kureno came back from here with that letter from you, I almost cried. I was so happy! But why didn't you phone or anything, Tohru? We were worried sick."

"I was afraid that you'd hate me for choosing Satsuki over you and Hana-chan." Tohru put a hand up to hold onto Hana's forearm as she squeezed. "You two are some of the most important people in my life. I couldn't ask for more from two people. I'm so sorry I made you worry."

Uo just sighed and hugged Tohru to her chest in a motherly fashion. "Well all I know is your mom would be happy to know you're okay. We promised we'd look after each other didn't we?" Tohru nodded mutely and Uo laughed. "Then who said we'd ever break the promise? Even if you were a thousand miles away, we'd still watch out for you."

That strangely enough made Tohru think of Kyo. It was some time ago that Kyo said he would run after her if she ever ran away. He would watch out for her as well. Tohru smiled and hugged Uo fiercely. She was so lucky to have wonderful friends. She didn't know why she doubted them for a second. "I love you both so much."

Hana stared at her for a moment before a wide smile grew on her lips. There was something else it seemed that Tohru loved.

Hehe, electric vibes were great.

Uo let go of Tohru while clicking her tongue. "Tisk, whats with the sudden mushy mood?" She pumped a fist in the air. "We're going to have a sleepover just like the old days! Before Sat-SUCKIE ruined our lives!"

Tohru only laughed nervously at the happy yet spiteful tone of Uo's comment. Just like the old days hua? Tohru felt her situation was just growing into something better every moment. She could still remember that girl so broken up inside... like a marionette just doing what her master would say. So sad, so quiet, so alone.

And now this... she'd been cut from her strings and she ran like there was nothing stopping her. She smiled more, talked more and laughed more. Slowly she reverted to her former self. She didn't feel like there was anything to hide anymore. Her friends cared for her, the Sohmas were like family to her...

"Um, just one second, guys." Tohru laughed as she slowly turned the doornob to reveal the younger Sohmas (this not including Ritsu, Ayame, Shigure or Hatori) falling into her doorway. They all fell ontop of one another and stared up at Tohru.

"T-Tohru!" Momiji cried. "We weren't sneaking up to your room to make sure your friends were sane human-beings that were only coming here to kidnap you and keep you forever!"

Kyo spat at Momiji. "Don't tell her that, you idiot!"

"Waahh! Kyo's yelling at me!"

"Well it was your idea, you stupid cat!" Yuki growled at Kyo.

Kyo smirked. "But you were just as concerned when Uotani-san pushed Ayame into a wall."

"You have to admit, it was awesome." Yuki said with a slight smirk as well.

"Don't worry, I got a picture." Haru lifted up a camera from their dog pile.

Tohru smiled as she stared down at the Sohmas while Uo and Hana popped up behind her to stare at the rather handsome young men. "Um, would you like to meet my two best friends in the whole wide world?"

Uo laughed while trying to hold her stomach. "Hahaha! Are these the kids that Kureno was talking about? Oh man, I didn't know they were so funny!"

Hana closed her eyes. "Yes, I believe the only ones that attended your wedding, Arisa, was those three older men... Hatori-san? Shigure-san? Oh, and the excentric one... Ayame-san..."

Uo bent down to stare at the males on the floor and whispered, "So? Is it safe to ask if any of you are still cursed?"

Tohru gasped but then remembered that Kureno told her that Uo already knew. She quickly turned

around to see if Hana heard, but her friend was idly staring at the ceiling fan.

The males all looked at each other before silently shaking their heads no.

Uo moaned and rolled her eyes. "Damnit, I was hoping I'd get to tease the hell out of someone."

Kyo growled at that seeing that he was the last one off the curse. "Why the hell would you want to do that?"

"So I could re-live the days where I could torture Kurenno by hugging him and make him turn into a rooster." She thought on that a moment. "Although I found that amusing, it was pretty cute too." Suddenly Uo grabbed Kyo by the scruff and gave him a noogie. "But you, orange-top, I bet you're still fun to tease even if you don't transform into whatever animal you are! Bwahaha!"

Kyo tried to push her away. "Get off me!"

"Ah ha! Be careful not to hurt the baby..." Uo said in a mock mother-like voice.

"But what about me?"

"Oh, you? That's fine."

Tohru's eyes widened further as she turned to see if Hana heard that either.

"Don't worry, Tohru-kun." Hana smiled while continuing to stare at the ceiling fan. "I've known for a long time now."

"EH?"

"Yes..." She turned to look at the other men getting up off the floor. "What I didn't know is how handsome the men of the Zodiac Host Club really were." Hana pointed a perfectly shaped black painted finger at the Kyo struggling to get away from the blonde. "Except him. I knew he would be handsome."

Tohru blushed from the root of her hair. "What? H-how?"

"Because a good man raised him."

"Eh?"

Hana was already extending her hand to Yuki. "Hello, you must be that kind gentleman that Tohru wrote about. Yuki-san was it?"

Tohru already felt things in the house were about to get a lot more exciting.

## 25 - oh pretty tiara

Arisa stared hard at Kyo, her eyes piercing right into his very soul. Her blue eyes narrowed as Kyo's mirrored her actions. Haru, Momiji, and Yuki watched between the rivals.

Kyo grinned. "So what are you going to do about it?" He asked with a rather cocky voice.

"I won't let you win over Tohru that easily..." The Yankee muttered. "Not over my dead body. I won't let her be brought down to that level again."

Kyo glared as the pair continued their staring battle. Tohru glanced between the two. She knew something like this would happen once Uo and Kyo were together. She only hoped her secret crush and her best friend would not resolve to violence over her.

She put a hand up to Uo seeing the fire already blazing in her friend's eye. "Uo-chan, please, it's not that big of a deal..."

The other girl slammed her fist on the low table in Tohru's room, now glaring at Tohru while the housekeeper shrunk back slightly. "Of course this is a big deal! I won't let that carrot-top do something that could potentially destroy you! I'm your friend, Tohru!"

"Wait." Everyone's head snapped to the other side of the table. Hana's fingers flickered, almost looking as if she'd created electricity within herself at the snap of her fingers. "Reverse revolution." She revealed a four of a kind of threes.

"Hanajima!" Uo cried with absolute happiness as she dove to hug her friend. "You saved Tohru!"

"Naturally..." Hana responded.

'You guys act like this is a life threatening situation of me deciding to kidnap Tohru or something when it's just a stupid card game.' Kyo thought darkly while pretending to ignore Hana and Uo hugging each other in victory of trumping over Kyo's hand of cards.

Tohru let out a breath. "Whew, I thought I was done for there! I didn't have anything to play after Kyo-kun did a revolution."

Kyo rolled his eyes. "What kind of cheap trick was that anyway?"

Uo let go of Hana and nudged Haru in the side, who happened to be sitting next to the pregnant woman. " 'Cheep trick' he says, hua? I think he's just a sore loser since his revolution move didn't go the way he planned."

"Speaking of which," Hana smiled rather wickedly, her eyes glowing with a fantastic violet sheen as she showed her empty hands, "I am the rich man." Ah, she loved it when she won. Haru watched on with

facination.

"Alright, Hanajima!" Uo laughed.

"Can you like, predict people's cards or something?" Haru asked.

"No... it is simply good luck on my part." Hana looked up at Haru making the other boy blush suddenly at such an intense stare. "Not to mention Kyo is sitting right in front of a mirror... yes, very good luck on my part..."

"WHAT?" Kyo cried in outrage, whipping around to see there was a giant mirror behind him. "Oh mother fu...!"

"Ah ah, language, Kyon Kyon." Uo reprimanded.

"You freaking cheaters!"

"It's not their fault you're stupid," Yuki snapped earning a roar of laughter around the room. Kyo sunk lower in his seat still muttering curses under his breath while carefully guarding his cards.

Tohru placed her remaining card down, happy that she was not the poor man this round. "Oh, I am the noble man!"

Kyo stared down at his hand and scoffed. "Pass."

Uo smirked, and with a satisfying toss right onto of the already played cards she threw down her remaining card as well. "Common man."

Everyone in the room turned to Kyo.

"POOR MAN." They all laughed simultaneously.

"DAMNIT!" Kyo bellowed, dropping his cards after everyone laughed. "This game is so lame!" He watched as Hana took a paper crown from a fast food restaurant, Tohru took a plastic tiara, and Uo took a brown hat that reminded him of a train conductor.

Hana adjusted the hat to fit over her thick black hair. "Don't be a sore loser..."

"And anyway, who's fault was it for stealing other people's turns?" Haru added.

"Yeah, Kyon Kyon!"

"I said it was an accident! And don't call me Kyon Kyon, Yankee!"

"Psh, I call you whatever I want, POOR MAN." Uo laughed.

Momiji sat on Kyo's lap waving at the three girls. "My turn, my turn!"



"Get off me, you brat!" Kyo yelled trying to push Momiji off of him.

Hana smiled. "Okay... here you shuffle and pass the cards."

Kyo watched as Momiji began handling the cards. "Why make him do it?"

"Because I said so and I'm the rich man." Hana almost laughed. Almost.

Yuki watched on with captivation. "So this is a game you three played in high school?"

Tohru turned to Yuki, her tiara falling lopsided on her head. "Yes! It's really a lot of fun so you can go next turn okay, Yuki-kun? I'll help you."

Yuki laughed and straightened Tohru's tiara. "That would be nice, thank you, Honda-san."

She giggled, "Tohru is fine, Yuki-kun. Tohru is fine."

"Ah, I always forget."

She laughed some more.

Kyo glared at his cousin, jealousy bubbling over. What gave Yuki the right mind to act so prince-like when he was not hosting at the moment? Did the other man have feelings... for Tohru?

Yuki's glance turned on Kyo. "What is it?"

Kyo growled and stood up as another game of Rich Man Poor Man began again.

Yuki crossed his arms and looked away annoyed. He already knew Kyo was going to start yelling his head off. "Let me guess, you're still mad that you're the poor man? How childish."

"That's not it!"

Yuki stood up as well. "Well I don't see why you're always getting upset randomly."

"Maybe it's because I'm sick of looking at your pretty-boy face."

"Well, I'm tired of listening to your nasty voice." Yuki looked down to see Tohru watching the cousins with worried eyes. "It's okay, Honda-san."

"Yuki-kun..."

Yuki smiled as Kyo began to seethe. "Don't worry, Kyo is just a big, jealous, idiot."

"Hey, you damn rat, stop talking to her and face me!"

Something clicked in Yuki's brain and the prince's lips curled into a slight smile. 'Oh, so that's what's bothering him is it?'

Suddenly seeing Yuki smile began to grind on Kyo's nerves. "Mgh, what the hell are you smiling about?"

Yuki folded up his sleeves, "Well, I thought you'd be more mature than this, Kyo. But if you want to know what I'm laughing about," Yuki unbuttoned three of his shirt buttons now looking up at Kyo with amused eyes, "you'll have to beat me first."

"Easy enough. Here I go!" Kyo pulled back his fist and ran at Yuki as the rat boy put his own hands up to block Kyo's moves.

Tohru got up from her spot and stared at the two fighting. They only sparred on the day that Kyo was present at the Host Club and even then their actions were not as passionate as the ones they displayed in her bedroom.

Yuki blocked Kyo's punch by dodging left. The rat ducked under Kyo's range and kicked up into his stomach forcing Kyo backwards.

"Kyo-kun!"

But just as soon as Kyo was kicked away he flipped forward, crouching low and tripped Yuki onto the ground. The other boy fell over but just as quickly rolled away to get back on his feet in time to block Kyo's incoming round-house kick and rapid punch combo.

"Don't worry." Tohru turned to Haru who took over her place in the card game, the tiara now placed over his domino colored hair. "It'll be over soon enough." He placed a card down. "Binding on the spades."

Tohru turned back to the two boys fighting. Lucky for her the room was quite large, enough to contain their sparr anyway. She watched the two boys exchange blows when Kyo threw a hard punch right at Yuki's abdomen.

"Yuki-kun!" Tohru yelled out as she covered her face with her hands. After a few silent moments besides the light flapping of playing cards she peeked between her fingers to see Yuki caught Kyo's fist.

"I win." Yuki grasped Kyo's fist, almost crushing it under immense pressure, pulling Kyo's fist back with his left hand while turning slightly to ram Kyo with his right elbow forcing the orange-top to fly backwards.

Suddenly the door opened making Kyo tumble out the door and hit the wall. Tohru gasped and ran after Kyo as a rather scared head peaked into the room.

"I heard some yelling and came to see what the commotion was about, but I should have guessed that Yuki-kun and Kyo-kun were fighting. Tisk tisk, you all could have at least changed out of your costumes before settling down to play with Tohru's friends." Shigure said. He turned to Kyo's crumpled form behind him. "Is it over?"

Yuki sighed and placed a hand to his hip. "Yes."

"Oh good, minimal damage this time! I'll go call someone to fix that hole in the wall now." Shigure moved out of Yuki's sight for the young man to see a rather large hole where Kyo had hit the wall. "Next time try not to wreck the house too much, okay, Yuki-kun?"

"I didn't expect him to go flying that far," he confessed. He walked out into the hallway to find Kyo rubbing his head irritably with Tohru fussing over him like a mother hen.

Kyo glared at Yuki. "What do you want now?"

"You didn't win, but I'll tell you why I was smiling anyway." Yuki turned to Tohru with a much softer smile. "Hon-- I mean, Tohru-san, can you give us a moment please?"

"Ah, um, sure..." She stared between the two before walking back into the room to suddenly be embraced by Shigure, crying how happy he was that she was unharmed.

Yuki turned back to Kyo with narrowed eyes. "You're really an idiot, you know that?" He hissed.

"Oh, you made her go away for you to tell me that?" Kyo spat back.

"No, I made her go away to tell you this: stop acting like a stupid prat. You're making a moron out of yourself."

"Sure, you're just trying to look good in front of Tohru, you damn rat."

Yuki sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "You don't get it, do you?"

Kyo looked away while clenching his teeth. "What the hell are you blabbering about?"

"I think we both know why you're so sensitive about Honda-san talking to me. Stop acting like an idiot and get it through that thick skull of yours," Yuki bent over to talk closer to Kyo's ear. It made the other boy flinch at their closeness. "I'm not trying to take Honda-san away from you. Don't get all jealous about nothing. I see how much you really like her, I'm not blind, and she seems happy with you, though I don't know why. Stop jumping down my throat every time I get near Honda-san. She's like a sister to me and you acting like a buffoon is making her upset so stop it." Yuki stood up and gave Kyo one more glare before returning to Tohru's room. "Idiot." He added as an afterthought.

Kyo sat up on the floor and felt a blush stain his cheeks. Was his emotions really that plain? But then again he spent much of his younger days sparring with Yuki enough for both of them to know much about each other. One thing Kyo knew was when Yuki said something, he usually really meant it. Kyo punched the floor before getting up and going back into Tohru's room.

"Ah! And there's the house destroyer!" Shigure yelled pointing at Kyo while he had his other hand wrapped around Tohru.

"Oh get off her, you pervert." Kyo said rather calmly. All this activity was really starting to wear him down and he just didn't have the energy to get all upset. Shigure wasn't doing anything too bad... yet.

"How can you call this perverted?" Shigure hugged Tohru while striking a dramatic pose.

"I agree." Kyo turned around to see that Ayame had made his way to Tohru's bedroom as well. God, he just didn't get a break around this place. "That is nothing in relation to perverted!" Ayame went to Tohru's other side while holding her hand out in his own. "This dear flower of the Sohma house will never be deflowered until she is well and married!"

"You wish you had this kind of love!" Shigure teased Kyo.

"Like I wish I had a root canal..." Kyo muttered.

Hana and Uo looked up at the comment about Tohru before giving each other an uneasy glance. They looked at Tohru for any reaction but she just made those trademark incoherent noises. The two girls shugged and went back to their card game.

Suddenly Shigure and Ayame pulled their bodies impossibly closer to Tohru who was blushing at the root of her hair. "But flirting is very acceptable, especially since Tohru-kun is so adorable." Shigure laughed, his voice dropping an octave lower. He twirled a piece of her hair within his fingers and Ayame kissed her palm lightly.

"I must say, not as adorable as you though, Gure-san."

"Oh, Aya."

Yuki and Kyo punched both of the men while quietly leading Tohru back to the card game.

Hana smiled and laid her last cards once again. "Rich man."

"Noble man!" Momiji laughed while grabbing the tiara off of Haru's head.

Haru pouted. "No fair, Momiji, I wanted the tiara!"

Uo stared between Haru and Momiji. "Momiji, you didn't want to be the rich man?"

"No, I wanted the pretty tiara!" He giggled. "It's so pretty!"

"But as rich man, you get to make rules." Uo reasoned.

"But the tiara is so pretty!"

Uo stared at him for a moment before shrugging. Momiji was a cute kid, she wondered if her child would be as bubbly as he. If her child was, she'd have to buy a case of Valium to calm the kid down. "I guess it is, hua?"

Haru glared at Momiji. "You could have at least let me wear it for the rest of the round." Momiji rocked back and forth with his legs crossed, laughing. Haru looked too adorable pouting.

Uo stood up on her knees while cracking her back gently. "Whew, it's getting harder to stand up..."

Hana helped Uo balance herself before the Yankee pointed at the door. "Okay! The card game was fun but it's getting late now. We're going to do some girl stuff now so you guys have to leave!"

Kyo glared at Uo. "Hey, hey, hey! Who died and made you boss?"

Hana raised a hand. "I did."

"You're not dead!"

"Or am I?"

Kyo opened his mouth but was too befuddled to respond. "What?"

"Okay, get out now!" Uo motioned for all the boys to leave.

Tohru hugged each of them good night before they left her room. Kyo was the last one to leave and Tohru felt her cheeks already heating up and her arms tingle just thinking about him in her arms.

"Um..." Tohru blinked rapidly while looking away at the same time. "You and Yuki-kun fight really well. I couldn't imagine any other people as strong as you both, eh I mean, maybe your master is though!"

Kyo smiled but covered it up with a grunt. "You... you watched carefully, yeah? That move the damn rat did was what I taught you."

Tohru clenched her fist. "Right!"

Kyo stared down at her, his smile melting through his act. He shouldn't be so jealous. Even if Yuki was trying to romance her, Tohru wouldn't fall for him. She probably wouldn't even know she was being romanced anyway, but still. He loved Tohru that's all that would matter. Who cared about Yuki anyway? Then again, he did knock some sense into him...

Kyo placed his hands on her shoulders. "Good night."

Tohru felt her heart jump as Kyo's face neared hers but suddenly a rather clamorous cough interrupted them. She quickly looked to see Hana innocently staring at the ceiling and Uo searching through her bag. Kyo let go of Tohru instantly and felt himself grow nervous as well. He almost forgot they were there. He put a hand behind his head nervously.

"Good night."

"Good night, Kyo-kun!" How she wished he would kiss her.

He stared at her a moment longer unable to draw himself away but finally turned on his heel and went to his room. Tohru stepped out of the doorway to watch him go, her heart tugging for her to go to him.

But she couldn't.

Sighing, Tohru went back to her room and closed the door. Hana then felt Tohru's waves jumble up. Her waves were conflicting. Even so, without her electric signals it was obvious who the man Tohru wrote about in her letter was now. Tohru didn't have to say anything, it was obvious she had feelings for Kyo Sohma.

Hana turned around to dig through her own luggage, a smile creasing on her lips.

Uo pulled out her pajamas and cheered. "Okay! Let's get this sleep over started!"

Tohru's eyes lit up. "We haven't had one of these in such a long time! What number is this? We used to count the sleepovers we used to have..."

Uo put a finger to her lip. "I dunno, I think this is... number 45?" The girl shrugged and looped both of her arms with her friends. "Who's counting anymore anyway? We're going to cheer you up, Tohru, and catch up on some sorely missed gossip!"

Hana smiled. "Arisa, you sound so enthusiastic. What are we going to do tonight I wonder?"

Uo grinned, a tell tale sign that Tohru would be in for a long night

## 26 - Truth or dare

Uo rolled on her side doubling over in laughter on the bed while Tohru knelt on the floor to stare up at Uo. She giggled as well, the laughter contagiously echoing off the walls.

"Oh, man those were the good old days!"

Hana, who was sitting up at the corner of the bed, cracked a smile as well. "I do not recall a single day that week where Uo was not online."

Uo propped her face up in her hands with her elbows on the bed. "Hey! It was a really good story okay? That fanfiction stuff is really addicting. Don't act like you didn't stay up to read some too, Hanajima."

"Yes, but I'll confess the more lemony stories were quite fascinating."

Tohru sweatdropped and ate a cookie as Uo closed her eyes.

"Ah of course. You and your lemony lemons." Uo grinned at Tohru, "While Tohru here was the sweet-toothed romance reader."

The girl laughed while licking chocolate off her of her ring finger, "but they were so sweet! You couldn't help but get lost in all the drama." Both girls nodded.

"But experiencing romance and reading about it are two completely different things."

Uo raised an eyebrow. "How would you know that, Hanajima?"

"You'd be surprised." Hana smiled with a mischevious grin while spooning a good amount of their sleepover concoction onto a cookie. "Mm, who would have thought sour cream, Oreos, powdered sugar, butter and white chocolate would taste this good?"

Tohru laughed, "even though it looks absolutely disgusting." She sat on her heels and burried her face into the side of the soft bed sheets. "I can't believe we even made something that looks so gross."

"It looks like shoot you mean."

"Uo!"

Uo shrugged and ate a slice of cheesecake. "I'm staying off that stuff, it's way too addicting."

Tohru laughter was muffled in the sheets as Uo polished off her fourth slice of cheesecake. The girl raised her head from the cloth, her braided pig tails flopping up as well. "I guess it is addicting hua? We're still eating it after all these years passed."

"And besides," Uo touched her stomach affectionately, "I think my baby wants cheesecake."

"Four giant slices of it?" Hana asked while daintily taking a bite of her cookie.

"Hey hey, pregnant woman wants cake you give it to her!" Uo laughed.

Tohru laughed. "As long as you brush your teeth."

Hana's lips curled into a smile. "Speaking of which, remember Arisa hated her retainer?"

Tohru nodded. "She hid it under her bed all the time refusing to wear it until one day she jumped on the mattress and broke it on accident."

"I wore mine." Hana reminded Uo.

Uo pouted. "It was stupid okay? Weren't braces bad enough? Why make you suffer with a retainer?"

"So your teeth will remain straight?"

Uo threw cookie at Hana, telling her to be quiet.

Hana looked up while brushing crumbs off her silky black night gown. "Let's play a game."

"That sounds like a good idea." Tohru confessed. "How about truth or dare?"

Uo laughed. "That game is so scandalous!" She lowered her voice. "Let's do it."

The three friends burst out laughing.

Tohru felt relieved. It felt good to re-live her days with her two friends like nothing in the world could ruin this night. It was comforting sharing stories, reminiscing on old ones, eating junk food till they drop... it made her miss the days before she met Satsuki.

Tohru pointed at Uo. "Truth or dare?"

"Dare."

Tohru thought a moment before slamming her fist into her open palm. "I dare you to go to the window and shout, 'Good night moon!'"

Uo stared at Tohru as if she had grown three heads. "Are you kidding me?"

Tohru looked between her friends confused. "What?"

"Tohru, it's okay. We're adults. We can handle a real dare."

"But... ah, that was my... dare..." Hana looked away and Uo just sighed. "Was that not good? I'm sorry!"



"No, no, I'll go do it." Uo got up from the bed and went to the window screeching, "Good night moon!"

"Shut up over there, some people are trying to sleep!" A neighbor yelled from the distance.

"Yo, I'm just saying good night to the moon ya' jerk!"

"What do I care? Shut up!"

"You shut up before I come over there and...!"

Hana pulled Uo away from the window. "Yes yes, we know, but think about the baby right now, Arisa."

Uo went back to her sitting place muttering curses before just shaking her head and laughing it off.

Tohru looked scared. "I didn't know truth or dare could be so violent."

Hana giggled.

Uo grabbed a bag of Frosted Mini Wheats. "Okay, truth or dare, Hanajima."

"Dare." Hana said with a bit of edge.

Uo thought a moment before shaking the box of cereal at Hana. "I dare you to go to the bathroom and make it sound like you're having a heavy makeout session when one of the Sohmas pass by."

"Is that it?"

Uo thought a moment and grinned. "Fine. A hot, passionate, monkey sex session." Hana's eyes widened to that while Uo popped a cereal piece into her mouth. "Revenge for the retainer story."

Hana gave it a thought and closed her eyes. "I suppose that will do."

Uo and Tohru exchanged glances before running for the door. "This we gotta see!"

The three girls hid in the bathroom while Uo peaked outside to see a man walking past. "Okay, okay, someone's coming!" She whispered while shutting the door.

Hana sat on the toilet seat cover as Uo and Tohru stood off to the side by the shower curtain, already holding in their laughter. They heard soft feet walk past the door.

Poor soul whoever it was passing by.

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"Ohhhh..." Ayame looked up from his book. "Ohhhh..." He turned to the bathroom door hearing a strange womanly moan coming from the door. Was everything alright? He was about to knock on the door when

the moaning became more fierce. "Oh, right there! Oh yes!"

Ayame was speechless. His mouth opened and closed as he backed away from the door. He wasn't so sure which female that was but it sounded like she did not want to be interrupted at the moment. Even for Ayame, the suggestive noises brought suggestive thoughts to his mind.

Hana felt herself laughing as Uo and Tohru looked on the verge of passing out. She played off her laughter, pretending to make it like a playful giggle. "Please, I need... I need... oh!" Hana made short gasping noises and muffled her cries of laughter with her palm. "You feel so good. I don't know how you do that, you bionic seahorse you!"

Ayame nearly tripped over himself. He briskly walked away from the door, his entire face feeling rather hot at the images playing in his mind. He didn't want to think about it but he couldn't help it either. The faster he got away from this situation the faster it would go away!

The girls waited a few moments and peeked out of the door. They looked at each other and erupted in laughter.

"Did you get that on video?" Hana asked. Uo walked over to a potted plant in the corner of the corridor and pulled out a small video camera.

"Yeah I did."

"Excellent."

Uo raised an eyebrow at Hana. 'Bionic Seahorse', hua?"

Hana smiled. "Pretty creative, hua?"

Tohru's lips turned into a smile and shook her head. "I'll explain to Ayame-san another day. I feel a bit bad."

Uo clapped Tohru on the back. "You're too nice."

Hana began walking back to Tohru's room. "I believe it is your turn, Arisa."

Uo smiled at Tohru. She was too nice for her own good sometimes. She followed Hana and Tohru followed behind them. "Okay okay. This game's only getting started anyway."

"Tohru's turn." Hana said. "Truth or dare?"

"Ah..." she really really wanted to say truth, but feared what her friends would ask her. And as it went, saying 'truth' was always the whimpy thing to do so she said, "dare!"

Hana smiled. "I dare you to go to Yuki's room and steal a pair of his boxers."

"Okay!" Tohru stood up. This wasn't too bad, she'd just say she was going to start some laundry, it was

simple.

"Wait," Hana put a hand up to stop Tohru from moving any further, "I didn't finish. You have to steal a pair of his boxers and wear them out of his room over your underwear."

"Eh?" Tohru squeaked. "But- but that's awkward! Can't I just put it over my clothes?"

"Nope."

Uo looked between the two. "Oh man, that's so bad."

"Why Yuki-kun?" Tohru asked trying to maybe get her way out of this one.

"Perhaps, Kyo then?"

"NO!" Uo and Hana stared at Tohru. "I-I mean, it would be too obvious because I just did Kyo-kun laundry so he'd know something was missing..."

Hana stared at Tohru watching the blush rise to her cheeks. "Did you say the white haired boy was sleeping over tonight?"

"Hatsuharu-kun? Ah yes, because Rin-san was sleeping over Kagura-san's tonight..."

"Fine then, if not Yuki's boxers, wear Hatsuharu's boxers."

"What?" Tohru asked again. Even more awkward!

Uo was bouncing her knees up and down, "yeah, what if Haru doesn't wear boxers?"

"Ah, there is the possibility he wears briefs." Hana replied.

"No, no that's not it!" Tohru cried.

Hana stared at Tohru. "Okay, I'll allow you to skip your dare if you're not wearing any underwear, Tohru-kun, only because that's freakish."

"No it's just that what if they're in their room? Sleeping? That would be so horrible!"

Everyone was silent for a moment before Hana turned to Tohru again. "So are you wearing underwear?"

"YES!"

"Well my dare still stands. Either Yuki or Haru's underwear you must steal, wearing it all the way back here."

Tohru sighed. Well she voted on Yuki being in his room by this time and Haru? Well, she hoped he was still downstairs playing video games with Momiji. "Okay, here I go then."

-----  
Tohru peeked into Haru's room, happy to find that the boy wasn't there. She slipped in and rummaged through his burrow to find a clean pair of black boxers. Even though he moved out, he left plenty of clothes in his old room. They were rich after all, it wasn't like Haru didn't have a thousand other pairs of underwear. She held them in her hands and looked around the room quickly. She stared at the boxers before hurriedly taking off her sleeping shorts and pulling on the boxers. She hopped across the floor like a deer, hoping to be home free, when it turned. She felt her heart stop as her hand froze mid reach for the handle.

There before her was Haru with a towel around his shoulders with damp hair, wearing his pajama bottoms. He was staring at her with those cool gray eyes. She in turn was wearing her tank top and boxers.

Correction, his boxers.

"Ha- Hatsuharu-kun!"

Haru didn't say anything and just stared at Tohru, his eyes slowly making their way to her lower half. His eyes then went back to her scared eyes.

Tohru didn't know what to say. "Ah, I um, it's just..." Oh she wished the floor would swallow her up right now!

"They look good on you."

Tohru stopped muttering and stared at the man. "What."

Haru walked into his room as Tohru went outside. "Night."

Tohru stared as the door closed and silence engulfed the hallway.

She walked back to her bedroom trying to dodge anyone passing by in the hallways. Actually there wasn't really any one wandering around but she couldn't help but try and be cautious. If anyone, she hoped she didn't run into--

"Tohru?"

"KYO-KUN!" Tohru caught sight of him and in an instant knocked right into him, slamming Kyo into a wall as she fled to her bedroom in safety. "It's not what you think, I'm so sorry!"

Kyo shut his eyes at the horrific slam of her door and then a squeal of horror from Tohru as he heard her friends try and hush her. He couldn't believe Tohru just shoved him into a wall like a mad animal looking for an escape route. It was a bit scary.

"Tohru! Tohru calm down!" He could hear Uo say.

"But Kyo-kun saw me! He saw me, ohmigosh, he saw me in Hatsuharu-kun's boxers!"

Kyo's eyes widened at the last snip of the conversation and his feet headed straight to Haru's room.

Meanwhile, in Tohru's room, she eventually calmed down when Hana assured it it was okay and Kyo would never know who's boxers she was wearing as long as she didn't tell anyone. Tohru for one was just glad her dare was over.

She hoped to stick with truth from here on out.

Uo grinned at Tohru. "I don't know, Hanajima, it looks like Tohru kind of liked that. It was thrilling wasn't it, Tohru?" Tohru shook her head 'no' but thought on it. Uo saw her falter and nudged her. "So?"

Tohru gave an impish smile. "It was... kind of fun."

"That's the spirit! Come on, it's your turn, Tohru. Don't be nervous, here here, eat some chocolate, loosen up!" Uo grabbed a chocolate chip cookie and dunked it in chocolate icing while handing the messy treat to Tohru.

Tohru finally laughed out, enjoying herself to no end. She couldn't believe how absurd she was acting tonight but then again when was the last time she did anything so funny? Stealing a boy's underwear? Who would have thought it?

"Okay okay, let me get out of Hatsuharu-kun's shorts first, I might get chocolate on it."

Hana giggled, "Ah, there's Tohru-kun thinking about laundry."

"Wait wait, I want to take a picture first!" Uo laughed, scrambling over to the bed side to grab her digital camera. She turned it on and focused it on Tohru. "Come on, pose for me! The camera loves you!"

Tohru thought 'what the heck' and posed with one hand on her hip with the other pointing up and off into the distance with a rather serious gaze. The picture was taken and the trio huddled around the camera to look at the image before bursting out in fits of laughter. All the sugar was really starting to kick in.

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KNOCK KNOCK

Haru looked up from his book before placing a book mark on his page and getting up, feeling the soft carpet under his toes. He slowly went to his door.

"Yuki, I told you I can't see you any more. I'm with Rin now, you just have to move on..."

Upon opening the door Haru got Kyo's fist straight in the jaw. Haru's face only turned the other way before opening his eyes and staring at Kyo. "Ow."

"Whatever you did to Tohru, don't do it again." Kyo warned.

"Oh?" Haru almost laughed at how serious Kyo looked. "FYI, Tohru sort of just took them and had them on before I came into my room." The corner of Haru's lip lifted ever so slightly. "I guess she likes to do freaky stuff once in a while when she's thinking about you. Maybe wondering how it would feel to..."

Kyo's entire face went beat red. "Oh shut up you weirdo."

"You gotta admit, she looked pretty cute in boxers."

"STOP!" Kyo warned raising a fist at Haru who already shielded himself.

"Haha, you're too easy, Kyo."

"Whatever." Kyo responded seeing that Haru didn't do anything to Tohru. He almost felt bad for hitting him, but then again Haru was laughing at him which was pissing him off even more. "And whatever that was about you and Yuki," Kyo put a hand up, "I don't even want to know." With that Kyo walked away half relieved and half freaked out. Why did Haru assume he was Yuki?

Kyo only shrutted.

Haru on the other hand leaned on his door frame, still smirking. Haru used to freak Yuki out by pretending to still 'love' him. Honestly he would always have Yuki dear to him, but Rin was the person he loved. He just liked to tease Yuki once in a while knowing how Yuki hated that Haru used to always pester him about it.

Then again, something odd was going on tonight. Why would Tohru want to wear boxers? Not to mention he could recall hearing Ayame screaming about Hatori being a naughty seahorse. Now Kyo came and randomly punched him.

He only walked back into his room and locked the door. After a moment he grabbed a chair and put it up to the door knob.

Just in case.

-----  
It was already about three AM when the girls felt sleep take over finally. Their game of truth or dare had ended and now the three friends sat in the dark staring at the ceiling as they lay next to one another.

"Okay!" Uo finally announced, her voice rather raspy with fatigue. "Here's one: if you could be any dog-- I mean any dog-- in the world, which one would you be?"

Tohru thought a moment before replying, "I think I'd like to be a chocolate Labrador."

"Oh good one!" Both girls chimed.

"How about a Dalmation?" Hana suggested for herself.

Uo gasped. "No way, I wanted to be a Dalmation!"

"Or how about that dog? You know the one like Lassie?"

All three girls ooh-ed at the idea of a Collie.

Uo laughed. "okay, I'll be Lassie. That just sounds bad @\$\$ doesn't it?" Tohru and Hana agreed and continued to laugh at their incredibly random thoughts at 3 in the morning.

"Tohru-kun," Hana asked after a moment of silence, "you didn't tell them did you?"

She turned to Hana. "About what?"

"Well, I recall Ayame-san saying you would not be 'deflowered' until you were well and married..." Hana turned to face Tohru as well, only her eyes in view. "You didn't tell them you weren't a virgin did you?"

Tohru's cheeks flamed and hoped the darkness would hide that fact. "Well, no... I didn't tell them." She wished her first time wasn't with Satsuki but it was. She still remembered that night. He was so kind and gentle with her. It made her love him even more. Then their love-making turned very dominant where he would sometimes force her into situations she didn't want to think about for a moment. Now that she thought about it, were they making love or did he only want her a sex toy?

That was it wasn't it? He was just toying with her.

Tohru turned back to the ceiling lost in her thoughts when Hana groaped for her hand, squeezing it lightly. "Don't think about him, Tohru-kun."

"There will come someone better, someone that will treat you right." Uo added. Tohru's eyes filled with tears and she could feel the warm drops flow down her face. Sometimes when a person stays up for so long, they turn into an emotional wreck. In this case: Tohru.

Uo sat up to stare at Tohru. "Tohru, why are you crying?"

"I don't want to think about him anymore, Uo-chan." She confessed with a slightly shaky voice. "I don't want to hurt anymore, but he's always haunting me and I can't let go. He won't get out of my mind."

Uo watched Tohru shut her eyes tightly, trying to rid the feeling of his hands on her body, his voice whispering into her ear...

Uo hushed Tohru as Hana patted Tohru's hand. "You fell in love with the wrong person, it's okay, we're here for you, Tohru-kun." Hana whispered. "We won't let something like that happen to you ever again as long as we have a say in it." Hana smiled with a thought of changing the topic slightly. "Kyo seems to like you very much, he wouldn't want to see you cry."

Tohru let out a small gasp between her tears at the thought of Kyo. Kyo... would he still want her? Would

he still love her even though she was another man's lover before? Would he still think of her the same?

As if reading her thoughts Hana added, "I don't think he would see you differently, Tohru-kun, if he really did love you. And by his waves," the girl closed her eyes having flashbacks of all the careful soft glances Kyo had given Tohru throughout their stay, "I'd say he really does adore you."

"Who wouldn't adore you?" Uo laughed.

Tohru smiled and was glad her friends were there to comfort her. She sat up and pushed the covers down as she crawled to the foot of the bed. "Thank you. I'm going to go get a glass of water, so you can go to sleep, okay?" She groaped in the dark for a jacket to cover herself with and found something underneath the bed.

Both girls nodded and said good night to Tohru as she disappeared from the room. Hana and Uo laied back down on the bed listening to Tohru descend the staircase.

"She is a good person." Uo said.

"She tries so hard." Hana replied. "I wish that Kyo does not break her heart."

"By the way things are going with Tohru, I hate to say it but, I hope she doesn't break his heart." Hana turned slightly to the blonde girl. "I mean, it's obvious he likes her but Tohru is still wary about dating and guys at the moment. She really gave Satsuki everything, you know? I wonder if she'll be able to return Kyo's feelings." Silence filled the space between the friends as Hana stared at the window, moonlight flitering through the linen curtains.

"I do too..."

-----  
Tohru walked into the kitchen and turned on a small bar light to keep the harsh lighting from her eyes. She was tired but needed to walk a bit to clear her mind. She found a glass and poured water into it before downing the cool liquid. It calmed her nerves as she leaned on the counter staring out the window. So much time had passed and Satsuki still had not tried searching for her. If she still loved him, if she was still his pawn, where did he stand in his game of his?

"Tohru?"

Tohru nearly jumped out of her skin and spun around to see Kyo. What on earth was he doing up?  
"Kyo-kun? It's late, you should be in bed by now!" She hissed.

Kyo grunted. "I... couldn't sleep and I thought I heard someone walking around." He paused for a moment. "I should be asking why you're up."

Tohru looked away smiling. "I guess you don't sleep really at sleepovers." She clasped her hands in front of her while blushing.



Kyo took in her appearance. He never really saw Tohru in her night clothes, but when he did she was normally a bit more covered. She wore a pair of short pink shorts revealing her long slender legs and a white tank top hugging all her curves. In all honesty, when he ran into her earlier that night, he didn't see what she was wearing since she pushed past him like an angry bull and shut the door. Draped over her was a jacket that looked familiar.

"Oh, isn't this my jacket?" Kyo asked after a moment. He stepped closer to the girl as she glanced down at the rather large article of clothing. Kyo felt his hormones react to her scantily clothed outfit under his jacket. He never felt such an urge to cross the few feet between them and ravish her lips.

"I'm sorry, I never returned it from that other night on the roof top did I?" Tohru thought about that memory when she first opened up to Kyo about her life. She remembered him lending her the jacket but she must have misplaced it and forgot to give it back. She began to shrug her arms out of the sleeves giving him a cute glance. "Do you want it back?"

Kyo stopped her motions. "NO! I mean, you can keep it... for now or whatever, it's a bit cool in the house..." Kyo rambled. God how she could tease him without knowing it. Having her take any clothes off would make him snap in an instant.

"Oh okay," she pulled it back over her shoulders and put her empty glass into the sink. She was a bit too tired and didn't want to disrupt anyone sleeping by running the faucet. She watched him for a moment taking in his form. How she would love to wake up to his face every morning. His messy dark orange hair, his wild eyes... she turned away. "Um, I'll see you in the morning, Kyo-kun."

"Wait." Kyo put his hand to the counter to block Tohru from passing him. She looked up, fearing he could hear her heart beating out of her chest. She wanted to be with him. She wanted to be in his arms and hear him tell her he loved her. She wanted to hear those words and repeat it right back to him. Listen to him, talk to him, just be with him. It haunted her mind, thinking of what could be between Kyo and herself.

Kyo leaned his head on Tohru's shoulder as she watched him in the dim light. "You really drive me crazy. You don't even know it, but you really do." He felt Tohru wrap her arms around his neck and her face buried in the crook of his shoulder. "Tohru?"

"I'm so selfish," she whispered, "You are too kind to me, Kyo-kun, and yet I have given you nothing in return. You deserve better."

He listened to her breathing before pulling away from her. "You're not selfish. You rarely ask for anything so stop worrying about it." He put his hands to his side still watching her. She looked like something was on her mind as she stared up at him, sleep mulling around her her orbs. He pushed hair away from her eyes, catching a small glimmer in her eye. "Tell me what you want." He whispered wondering what was rolling around in that mind of hers.

Hearing his voice sent shivers down her spine. No one ever asked her that question so intimately. Satsuki never did. She knew if she could change the past, the man she'd want to share a bed with for the first time would have been Kyo. He deserved so much more than her. She smiled and only leaned her head on his chest.

"I want to tell you my feelings but I can't. I don't want to say something I don't know is true," she said. "I want to say it very much but I'm afraid... I..."

"Shh," Kyo hushed her. She looked up to see him giving her a firm look. "I told you I love you and that's that. I don't need an answer right away, it's okay. So... so don't worry so much, crazy girl."

'And you did give me something. You gave me acceptance, care, and a reason to be. Even if you can't say I love you now, it's okay. I'd wait for you.'

Tohru breathed deeply, feeling comfortable standing with Kyo. Her eyes fell half lidded as her eyes focused on Kyo's lips parallel to her eyes. Kyo felt himself bend slightly at their closeness, wanting to feel her soft warm lips just once more. They were only breaths apart. He wanted to kiss away her pain.

They were so close.

He wanted her so much.

Kyo sighed and turned away knowing how close he was to losing all control. Tohru's eyes opened as if coming out of a trance, watching Kyo shake his head to himself. "Come on, it's really late. You should get some sleep." He grasped her hand and led her back to her room.

She followed silently before squeezing his hand. 'Thank you, Kyo-kun.'

## 27 - Heated Dreams and Snaps for Ayame

After Kyo walked Tohru back to her room, he went off to sleep as well. He didn't know she had such a power over him like that, making him yearn for her and yet keep her away all the same. He didn't want to push her for anything she wasn't ready for.

But Lord, how much he wanted her.

Kyo slipped into bed, feeling his weary muscles relax at touch of the soft mattress below him. What it would be like to hold her in his arms, safe by his side... sleeping so peacefully.

Arg, he couldn't sleep like this! Kyo flipped over, pushing the sheets down to his stomach. He was feeling hot now, that his blood was pumping faster. She just drove him crazy sometimes, like the effect cat nip had on an innocent kitten. He closed his eyes trying to push these emotions away and catch some sleep.

"Tohru..." he muttered.

Suddenly there was a knock at his door, making Kyo's eyes snap open. He turned to his digital clock reading 4 AM. Who would be knocking at his door at this ungodly hour? Before he got up to answer the door, it opened.

As it creaked open, the girl entertaining his current thoughts appeared, poking her head in.

"Kyo-kun..." she whispered.

"Tohru?" Kyo asked sitting up. Tohru's eyes fell on his shadowed figure and she smiled while entering the room quietly and carefully shutting the door behind her. "What's the matter?" Kyo asked. Why was she up still? Was there something else she wanted to talk about?

Tohru leaned her back to the door, glancing up at him with her hands behind her back. "I... can't sleep." Suddenly Kyo's ears perked hearing the faint but ever present 'click' of the door lock.

"Oh..." Kyo answered rather lamely. Tohru pushed herself off the door and slowly walked to Kyo's bed side. Kyo took note that she was taking off his jacket as she walked toward his bed, letting the material slither down to the floor.

"It's a little warm in your room, Kyo-kun." She muttered while running a hand through her silky hair.

"Yeah, I was just thinking that!"

She giggled and fell to her knees at his side. "And I was just thinking about you."

Suddenly Kyo's mouth went dry, feeling Tohru's hand rest on his thigh. He pulled away, still staring at

the girl. She cocked her head to the side still smiling. What was wrong with her? People do scary things when they had lack of sleep!

"Kyo-kun..." she beckoned, her voice dropping slightly. She sat up and began crawling onto Kyo's rather large bed. "I'm so hot..."

"Ah...!" Kyo for one was tongue tied as Tohru continued to advance toward him and into his lap, crawling on all four as he watched the girl's intense gaze. He couldn't look away from her.

Suddenly Tohru pounced on Kyo, her smile turning rather playful as she straddled him between her legs. Kyo fell back on his bed as Tohru stared down at him. She beginning to kiss his neck hungrily while moaning at the touch of Kyo's hands rubbing her back.

'Wait, when did my hands...?'

"Make love to me, Kyo." Tohru commanded, her voice rather pleading as her breath tickled his neck. She didn't call him 'Kyo-kun'? "Please, make me yours. I can't sleep without you." He put his hand out and she grabbed his as well, their hands entangled with each other's as Tohru kissed Kyo's hand.

"Tohru?" Kyo asked, absolutely stunned. Did she really want this?

Tohru gave a yowl, startling Kyo out of his wits. "I'm so hot, Kyo! Make love to me, you sexy beast!"

"WAHH!!!"

Kyo's head came in contact with the floor as the man fell off his bed, sheets and all. The alarm went off and Kyo just laid in a heap on the floor, sweat glistening on his copper tone skin. He rapidly got to his knees and slammed a hand on his alarm before staring at the bed. What was all that about? Was it a dream? But it felt way too real!

Looking up at the sunlight flitering through the blinds he scratched his head and untangled himself from the sheets. What a strange night that was! He put a hand to his neck, feeling Tohru's kisses on his sensitive spot. It couldn't have been real, she would never do something like that. His imagination was running with him.

"I need a cold shower..." he muttered walking to his bathroom. He froze in his step, staring at his dresser, wide eyed.

There sitting nicely folded was his jacket.

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Tohru waited by the door with Uo and Hana that morning, reminiscing on that morning's events as Uo and Hana said good bye to the Sohmas. The previous night, when Kyo had returned to her room, she found Uo and Hana fast asleep. She decided not to wake them and merely crawled back into bed without a sound. They all woke up reasonably late except for Tohru of course. They didn't understand how she could run on about four hours of sleep.

Tohru just went about doing her morning routines of folding laundry and staring breakfast while the house was still quite. This morning it was Kyo's laundry to fold. She went to his room to put his things on his dresser when she saw him sleeping rather restlessly. She put his things down and sat beside him, watching him twitch and moan. She placed her hand on his neck, rubbing it softly up and down while hushing him. Slowly he calmed down and Tohru smiled. He looked calm now. She wondered what he was dreaming about, it must be an intense dream.

'Maybe he's dreaming about fighting with Yuki!' She thought. 'Or he's having some kind of adventure!' She sat still, watching his eyebrows knit together for a second before his hand came out and began to weave his fingers with hers. She stared at their clasped hands and smiled before squeezing his hand as well. She suddenly remembered Hana and Uo. She could sit at his side, watching him sleep but duty called. Blushing, she slowly raised his hand to her lips and lightly kissed it before taking her hand back and walking out of Kyo's room. She closed the door, staring at the indentations on the wood thinking how much she's grown to love Kyo. 'If only I could tell him...' She backed away from the door, still looking at as she made her way back to the kitchen to see if her friends were awake.

When Hana and Uo went downstairs, they found Tohru and the other Sohmas eating breakfast. After breakfast, Uo and Hana packed their things and headed off home.

"Tohru? Tohru, we're leaving now." Uo said calling Tohru out of her thoughts.

"Eh?"

Hana smiled. "Thinking about someone?" Tohru blushed and swatted playfully at Hana's arm. "Ah, I thought so."

"Are you sure you can't stay another day?" Tohru asked.

Uo laughed. "No, no. Kureno is expecting us back. I promised him only one night."

Tohru nodded. "I just missed having your company and all."

Hana fixed Tohru's hair ribbon slightly. "I have done a full check on this house and I must say it is a good environment for you, Tohru-kun." She looked to the Sohmas watching them from the seating area as some looked away rather quickly. Hana had to crack a smile at that. Maybe their game of truth or dare did get a bit out of hand last night.

Tohru opened the door and helped her friends with their bags. "Have a safe trip okay? Oh and visit again!"

"Promise to write sometime." Uo gave Tohru a tight hug.

"And you do the same! Tell me when you and Ku-chan think of a name for the baby, alright?"

"Sure thing." Uo peaked into the house to wave at the Sohmas. "Thanks for everything guys!"

They all said their good byes as Tohru's friends left. Before getting into the cab, Uo grabbed Tohru's head, bringing it to hers gently. "And don't let go of Kyo. He's a keeper." Tohru blushed but only nodded. Uo patted her head and climbed in after Hana. Tohru stayed at the door step waving good bye until her friends disappeared from the gates, a smile never leaving the young woman's face. 'Till next time, be safe.'

As soon as Tohru closed the door, all the Sohma men released a sigh of relief.

"Who would have thought Tohru-kun had such interesting friends." Shigure muttered.

"I saw one of them run across the lawn barking like a dog last night." Momiji added.

Ayame covered his face with a hand. "One of them sounded like they were making love in the bathroom."

"Who didn't hear that?" Shigure moaned, recalling Ayame burst into his room looking deathly white like he'd never seen before. "Tori-san's such a go-getter."

Hatori glared. "I told you, that wasn't me."

Shigure waved a hand at the other man. "Hai, hai."

"Fine, don't believe me, but Ayame had no right to burst in my room and yell at me."

"You were defiling a young woman! Making her cry out with your passionate love making! Little scoundrel you are!"

"I said I didn't do anything. Drop it!"

"Shh! Tohru might hear!" Momiji hushed everyone.

The seating area fell silent.

Haru leaned toward Hatori. "So... bionic seahorse, hua?"

Hatori quietly stood up and walked to the window, brooding.

"I saw Honda-san sitting in nothing but her underwear for two whole minutes." Yuki quietly confessed. Everyone's eyes, especially Kyo's, darted in Yuki's direction. He glared back at the fellow host members. "What? She was in plain sight! I was just going back to my room from the bathroom!"

Kyo raised a fist at Yuki. "You should have closed your eyes, pervert!"

"Oh and that's smart. So I'd run into a wall and break something like you did yesterday."

"You said two minutes! It doesn't take that long to walk back to your room!"

"I was too shocked to do anything, stupid cat."

"Don't call me stupid!"

"Um," everyone turned to the new voice which was Tohru's, "I hope my friends staying wasn't too much trouble."

Everyone's face darkened while Shigure waved a hand at her, "D-don't worry about it. Aya was fine with it and whatever the king says goes, eh hehe."

Tohru glanced at everyone's rather depressed faces. "And if there was anything... strange last night, please let me take the blame for it. We were playing truth or dare." Her eyes fell on Haru. "I'm sorry, Hatsuharu-san about... ah, running into you like that."

Everyone looked at Haru but he only shrugged and told her it was okay. "Besides," Haru said, her eyes now turning on Yuki who ducked his head, "I'm sure something more embarrassing happened to you last night." Tohru's cheeks flushed at a certain memory of her sitting on her heels for two minutes stripped down to her under garments singing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. God how she hoped everyone was asleep by that time of night.

"Yeah," Kyo said, "And what about certain people's little freaky games at night, hua?"

Hatori sighed. "Were Ayame and Shigure at it again?"

Kyo blinked. "N-no, I'm talking about someone else." Kyo was grossed out by what Hatori implied anyway.

Yuki stared at Kyo with wide eyes. "Why are you looking at me while saying that?"

"I don't know, why don't you tell us about your gay lover?"

Yuki instantly turned on Haru. "Haru!"

The other boy was just looking the other way as if he didn't hear the comment. "What? I know you were my first love and all, but you have to let that go. You know we can't be together anymore..."

"We never WERE together! You've been doing this since we were kids! Stop freaking people out and telling them we're... ya know... because we're not!"

"Not what? Gay? It's okay to say the word. Only people that are hiding the fact they are gay are afraid to say 'gay'."

"I'm NOT GAY!"

"No one said you were, dear Yuki. Don't be defensive. I believe you."

"Haruuuuu."

Haru began waving a finger in the air while singing, "If you were gay, that'd be okay. 'Cause I mean hey, I'd love you anyway..."

Tohru waved her hands up. "Ah, where would that leave Rin-san?"

-----  
After a long explanation of last night's events, the air was cleared... sort of. Besides the fact that Kyo was very suspicious of Haru and Yuki wanted to break Haru's neck, everything was fine.

"I hope you're not mad at me," Tohru panicked. "I promise next time we'll be more careful!"

The Sohmas all silently gave each other looks before smiling at Tohru. She didn't invite friends that often and it was only a game. Her friends didn't have sick twisted thoughts of what was 'fun'.

"It's okay, Honda-san. If those friends of yours are important to you, they are important to us too." Yuki assured her.

She was relieved when the tension fell apart instantly after she told them her friends were just playing a game. She clapped her hands saying, "Maybe next time we play, you'd like to join us--"

"NO!"

"YES!"

Everyone turned to the only man who said yes.

Shigure shrugged with an impish smile. "It might be fun and entertaining at the same time. Three girls and all of us?" Shigure stroked his chin. "Image the turn of the game play."

"You sick bastard!"

Shigure instantly got beaten to a pulp as everyone looked away indifferent.

"It hurts... 'Tori-san, call the doctor."

"I am a doctor and no I'm not going to help." Shigure moaned in pain as Hatori ignored his pleas. "If I help you this time you won't learn anything."

"Cruel I say! Cruel!"

"No, it's payback for the bionic sea horse."

Tohru stared at Hatori. "What?"

"It's nothing, Honda-san."



"Eh?" Tohru's eyebrows knitted together. "But I thought Hatori-san was the zodiac dragon..."

Shigure burst out laughing, fully recovered from his first attack as Hatori covered his face. For some reason, Tohru wasn't too sure she wanted to know what was so funny about Hatori being a 'dragon'.

"Don't you dare say a word, Shigure, or I'll never cook a thing for you again." Hatori muttered.

"Understood."

Tohru smiled nervously. "Um, by the way, where did Ayame-san go? I haven't seen much of him lately. Is he okay?"

Hatori looked up at the change of topic. "Actually after the customers left, he disappeared. The only time I saw him was when he came in to yell at me for no reason last night."

Momiji looked around. "But he was here just a moment ago."

Kyo and Yuki chuckled darkly. Kyo crossed his arms muttering, "Good. 'Bout time he vanished."

Tohru's face looked of absolute horror. "We should find him! Right away! What will the Zodiac Host Club do without the king? He's one of the most important parts of it!"

As if on cue, the house began shaking causing Tohru to go into panic mode.

"Earthquake! Brace yourselves!"

The doors burst open as Ayame zoomed into the room, his eyes never blinking. "Did I hear something about the king?"

Tohru's eyes remained wide. "T-that you are one of the most important parts of the Host Club?"

"Oh dear Lord, here we go again..."

"Did you hear, Yuki? I am the most important part of this club! Me! The KING! Ahaha!"

"No, actually Honda-san said you are one of the most important parts but I cannot see how she arrived at that conclusion seeing how you do nothing but get in the way normally." Yuki responded while Ayame kept laughing. "By the way, where did you disappear to?" This got the snake to stop laughing.

"Well! While everyone was keeping Tohru's friends company, I, the MOST--"

"You are not." Yuki interrupted.

"--IMPORTANT member of the club was creating our next project to please the beautiful girls of this city!" Ayame leaned forward to thrust a script in Yuki's face, all the Sohmas gathering around Yuki to stare at the white paper. "Tada!"

"A play?" Momiji asked. "Oh, I'm so excited, Aya-chan!"

Ayame put his left pointer finger under his chin with his thumb grazing the corner of his lip. "Yes, with my genius mind I have created a wonderful play that we can broadcast to our customers. A refreshing experience and a wonderful way to see those beautiful smiles of women! Not to mention I spent the whole night creating this fantastic play. Ah yes, I have done it again with my ingenious mind!" Ayame snapped his fingers while closing his eyes with a happy grin. "Snaps for Ayame!"

"Don't," Yuki groaned, "Talk about yourself in third person." The members looked over the script one at a time.

Ritsu blushed. "I don't know if we can pull this off."

"I never really acted before either." Momiji confessed.

"Sounds stupid." Kyo cut in.

Hatori flipped through the script. "Actually, Ayame, this is not half bad."

Ayame looked like a little boy that just received a toy car for his birthday. Actually, the Sohmas being ultimately rich, Ayame probably received a real car instead of a play one. "You really think so, Ha-san? You know that your opinion counts ten times everyone else's opinion---"

"WHAT?" Everyone screeched.

"--So we're doing it!" Ayame pumped a fist into the air. "This will be our shining moment, Host Club, we're going to do a play!"

"All because Hatori said it was 'not half bad'?" Kyo stood up at that. "Screw this, count me out of this circus act."

Ayame stopped Kyo with his open palm. "You cannot leave, I have set up roles for at least six actors!"

"So? There's seven of you, I don't have to do this at all."

"Oh, Ayame-san your play looks marvelous!" Tohru quipped excitedly. Kyo watched her bring her clenched hands to her face. "I cannot wait to see it!"

"See it? Dear girl, you are going to be in it!" Ayame laughed.

"E-eh?"

Kyo put his foot down to that. "Oh hell no, don't you dare manipulate her."

As if on cue, Yuki also protested to that idea. "Yes, leave Honda-san alone."

Ayame grabbed Tohru, pushing her close to his side. "But she wants to, isn't that right, Tohru?"

She looked between the two opposing sides when she caught Kyo's careful glance.

"Go ahead and tell him what you want. Tell him what you want to do." He said knowing Tohru wouldn't want to participate in such a mediocre play concocted in one night sitting.

Tohru got a determined face remembering to tell people what she wanted. Kyo relaxed seeing Tohru pull away from Ayame. The king watched with apprehensive eyes as Tohru turned to face him silently.

"I've made my decision." Her eyes suddenly sparkled with the moon and the stars. "I really want to be in your play!"

Everyone fell anime style.

"That's the spirit! Now chop chop, we've got a production to get started on!"

Yuki crossed his arms smiling lightly. He'd have to give in and be part of the play now if Tohru was going to be in it. "Well if Honda-san will be in it..."

"So will I." Kyo finished. He had to be in the play to make sure Ayame wouldn't use her easily persuaded mind to do his biddings.

"Who's playing what parts," Shigure asked slightly afraid of what his dear friend would say next. Ayame pulled out a hat and everyone groaned.

"What is it with you and picking things out of hats?" Hatori asked.

"He's been doing this since we were kids." Yuki said. "If you ask me it's a stupid way of making decisions."

Ayame scoffed. "Hey, I made all my student council choices by this method!"

"And that's why our senior end of the year trip was to a staple factory." Hatori reminded him.

Ayame shook the hat. "Well this is different!" He put the hat in front of Tohru first. "Go on and show them my hat method works, Tohru!"

"Okay!"

"Don't agree so willingly!" Yuki and Kyo shouted at her as she put her hand into the hat.

She let her hand mingle in the hat a while before taking out a strip of paper. One by one everyone pulled out a strip when there was finally one left.

Ayame pulled it out of the hat. "Since you all are so unconvinced with my hat method, I'll take the leftover." He waved the paper in the air. "Okay, open it!"

Everyone simultaneously opened his or her paper rather dramatically, staring into the papers.

Kyo sighed. "You don't have to be so dramatic. Everyone will find out who's playing who in the end you know." He watched some faces turned relieved while others looked around for a hole they could crawl into and die. He quirked his eyebrows seeing everyone's reaction. What was the big deal? He opened his own paper. 'It's just a stupid play...'

His eyes widened as his eyes shot up at the only female in the house, she staring right back at him with wide blue eyes. "Holy hell."

## 28 - The mystery at the beach house part 1

Ladies and gentlemen!" Haru's voice echoed around the room while his small figure from a distance gestured towards the crowd of people that had squeezed into the main hall. As if on whim, the entire room had transformed into a theater. Although the thought of recreating a theater in such a space was beyond comprehension and any kind of common sense, they did it. "Welcome to the first Zodiac Host Club Play: Mystery at the Beach House."

The audience cheered as Haru took the applause with grace. His eyes adjusted to the lightings and he could finally see faint figures in the sea of people watching. He caught Kagura, Rin, and Kisa's eyes in the front row. Boy were they in for a surprise. Kisa waved happily while Kagura read over a pamphlet and Rin stared back at Haru expectantly. After only a week of preparation they managed to put together a play. He told Rin about it but she was still in doubt about the whole fiasco. Still, the three Sohma girls showed up for the opening night. He couldn't believe they did it: costumes, backdrops, props, music, and of course script. He hoped they could pull this off. "Please turn off all cell phones and refrain from talking. Enjoy the play." Haru bowed while walking off stage. The audience bustled while squealing excitedly and the ring tones of girls shutting their phones off faded away.

Kagura looked around at the rather full audience with an eyebrow raised. Rin along with Kagura were both slightly in doubt about the play, but knowing the men who were about to put together a show, they knew it would certainly be a night to remember. "My my, there certainly are a lot of people here tonight." Kagura laughed. "Do you think I should harass Kyo-kun some more? Maybe call his name out repeatedly in a indiscreet whisper. Oh or keep taking pictures and wave at him everytime he speaks. Ohoho!" Kagura put a hand to her mouth while chuckling like a mad woman.

Rin turned to Kagura and just shook her head before her eyes traced back to the stage.

Kisa giggled and clasped her hands. "Kyo-niichan might get nervous on stage."

Kagura laughed. "Even better!"

Rin eyed Kagura. "I thought you told me you were over Kyo."

The brunette turned to the oldest of the three with the same smile. "He was the one who dumped me first you know. I still had feelings for him when we broke up."

"It's so odd when you say he 'dumped' you. I imagined you two would be together forever or something." Rin muttered. She picked up the pamphlet to examine the cover idly.

Kagura looked to her lap, pressing her thumbs together. "I did too..."

Kisa felt her cousin's grief of her old love and gently tugged her sleeve. "But you are happy, ne, Kagura-oneechan? You told me you were happier now."

Kagura sighed. "You're right, Kisa-chan. That was all so long ago, but Kyo-kun was and always will be someone special to me." She touched her heart, "he did after all break the curse for me. In a way, I'll always love him but I know my love won't be returned, even if I threw myself at Kyo-kun for the rest of my life." Her voice grew softer as she continued, "And yet... I know that would not be fair to him or myself. I hope he finds someone he really loves since that wasn't me."

"Kagura-onechan..."

Kagura was silent before pulling out a camera, her attitude making a completely unexpected volte-face. "So until that day I must embarrass and annoy Kyo-kun till he snaps!" She turned to Kisa with a wild look in her eyes, "and it's so much fun!"

Kisa just smiled. It was true Kagura had gotten over Kyo since she started dating again, but sometimes Kisa knew Kagura was wondering what could have been between them. Anyhow it didn't matter now that Kagura was really happy, not just pretending to be happy. Kagura just got her kicks by annoying Kyo to no end.

Now that Kisa thought about it, what ever happened to Tohru Honda?

The theater house lights dimmed and everyone grew silent. The surround sound of the mysterious theater played as a happy tune wove itself through the ears of the customers. They ooh-ed and aww-ed as professional lighting came to play on stage, drawing the attention to the red curtains with embedded gold tassels as the female group hushed. A voice came over the small orchestra, narrating the beginning of the play.

"Two young lovers met fatefully on Valentine's Day. As the saying goes, the pair had what was called 'love at first sight'." Rin closed her eyes with the slightest smile on her visage. Haru's voice was always soothing. "Ever since their unexpected meeting, they could not tear themselves from each other's arms. Unfortunately, the female was already with another man. She eventually came to terms with him and thought it was better to just be friends. He agreed unwillingly as he watched the girl of his dreams walk away from him and into another man's arms. He would smile and put up a front of being fine, but no. Friends was not what he wanted them to be. He wanted her to be his woman.

Acting still as her friend, he offered for the girl and her new boyfriend to stay at a wonderful beach house with him and many of their other friends. The couple agreed, excited to spend their summer vacation with friends. But unknown to anyone a murder was at hand.

Would love be able to really conquer all?

And so our story starts as always: Once upon a time..."

The curtains opened to a scene inside a summer beach house. There was a projection in the background of what looked like a real ocean, the sound of seagulls and crashing waves lightly fluttered throughout the theater. It all seemed so real. Off to the side Shigure and Hatori sat in chairs pretending to talk until they actually began speaking.

"I cannot wait for Tomoe and Eriol to join us at our summer beach house." Shigure laughed good

naturedly. "They really do make a lovely pair."

Hatori leaned back into his chair. "Tomoe is growing to be such a beautiful girl, I can see why Eriol would fall in love with her. It was so long ago when they bumped into each other."

"Three months ago to be exact."

Hatori nodded and paused to look out the fake window. He was really annoyed that he had to be in the play. He rather be in the back doing props or something along those lines but no, here he was staring out at a fake window with fake ocean waves behind it. Sometimes he wondered why he did all this. "Eriol must be so happy to have fallen in love with a kind-hearted girl."

"Not on looks alone, but personality and love." Shigure commented. "And Eriol, despite how soft spoken he is, loves that spunky girl."

"That's not part of your line..." Hatori whispered.

"Oh well!" Shigure whispered back.

A knock came to the door. Shigure stood up staring out at the audience. "Oh! There seems to be someone at the door! Because I am the butler of this estate, I'll go get it." He went over to the door and opened it only to have Momiji launch himself at Shigure.

"We're here!" Momiji cried while bouncing in Shigure's arms. Shigure didn't remember Momiji being quiet this heavy. Perhaps he was getting too old or Momiji was just getting too big to be jumping on people. He chose the latter. Momiji looked up at Shigure with adorable wide eyes and the older man couldn't help but crack a wide grin at his costume. "I cannot wait for Tomoe-chan to come! She's my best friend, you know?"

The entire audience erupted in squeals. Momiji was dressed like an adorable girl. He wore a salmon colored skirt with brown pants underneath and a brown and pink colored shirt. He wore a wig that matched his natural blonde hair and of course his sugary-sweet smile for the world to see.

Ayame came in next, strutting his stuff. Hatori mentally slapped his head thinking Ayame looked more like a pimp than anything else. "As I am Eriol's best friend." He said in a deep manly voice. The girls in the crowd cheered again at seeing Ayame so handsome with his hair pulled back with an elastic.

Shigure closed the door as Ayame and Momiji followed him across the stage. "Yes, we are all awaiting Tomoe and Eriol to arrive now."

Momiji hopped around Hatori while the man closed his eyes. "I cannot wait, we're going to have so much fun!"

Ayame tapped his chin. "Yes, but I only hope that Miroku does not stir trouble."

Hatori stared at Ayame thinking on his next lines. "What do you mean?"

"Miroku is still bitter that Tomoe chose Eriol over him. The man is very calculating and deceiving. We all had better keep a watchful eye during our stay, for I feel that man's plotting."

"Agreed." Everyone said.

Suddenly there was another knock at the door as all the actors looked at one another, exchanging glances as to who would answer the door.

"Go answer it!" Ayame beckoned, pushing Shigure to the door. Shigure gave Ayame an irritated look before turning the door knob. A new figure emerged from the doorway making the girls livid on the edge of their seats.

"Oh, I am sorry to keep you waiting," Yuki flashed the audience a charming smile, "I hope we're not too late."

"PRINCE YUKI!" The entire audience erupted seeing Yuki playing the main character, Eriol. Howls and whistles went round as Yuki flushed slightly from all the attention. He knew this was just acting but it was still nerve racking to know that an entire room full of girls were watching his every move. He had to do this right or only Lord knows what might happen. Ayame was right in hiring a couple bouncers at the door or those girls might end up climbing up the stage. The group quieted down and Ayame spoke out his next lines.

"Of course not, Eriol! You're just on time!"

"Ah," Yuki smiled while lying through his teeth, "my BEST friend, Robin. I'm SO happy you could make it..."

Ayame stared at Yuki for a moment as if actually considering this words before grabbing his brother. "Oh, Yuki, you've never greeted me so happy! Good, good, very good! I know for a fact those words were honest, no acting needed for those warm tender words! Love me little brother! Love me!"

Yuki shoved Ayame off of him, raising a fist but remembered they were doing a play. He gave an unalarming smiled and straightened his shirt. "Who is this 'Yuki'? I believe I am ERIOL." Yuki said loudly for everyone to hear. "You idiot." He muttered as an afterthought. Why did he join this play? Oh right, Tohru. Yuki gulped thinking about the next scene. He had been practicing this part over and over but couldn't get it right. It was just too embarrassing! He held out his hand toward the door while forcing a smile on. His teeth were clenched so hard Ayame, not standing too far, could practically hear his teeth grinding together. "Please watch your step my dear, Tomoe." A slender hand reached out for Yuki's hand placing it within his.

The entire room was floored with amazement.

"KYO-SAMA!" They squealed.

Indeed, all the stage lights turned off with just a spot light on Kyo's form. He stood with an orange wig of layered hair touching his lower back, wearing a lavender purple dress that covered his manly body. His entire face was covered in delicate make up, able to fool just about anyone of his gender just by looking



at him.

Yuki for one had not seen Kyo's costume until now and boy was he glad they went along with the 'picking roles out of the hat'. This was absolutely priceless. Perhaps Kagura could make a copy for him, blackmail would always be nice in future cases. But then again, he was the one holding Kyo's hand like they were lovers. Yuki felt the urge to rip his hand away but remained still. Oh well, at least he wasn't the one wearing a dress.

After a moment the stage lights dimmed on, letting the other actors recuperate from their bursts of laughter that was hidden with the audiences cheers and the dimming of the lights.

Kyo already had a vein at his head. "Thank you, Eriol, for..." Kyo stared at Yuki thinking of every curse word he wanted to scream out at having to hold Yuki's hand at the moment, "... thinking so kindly of me." He squeezed Yuki's hand, nearly crushing his bones as Yuki twitched slightly.

The boy twisted Kyo's wrist slowly so the audience did not see. "You're welcome, Tomoe."

Kyo glared at Yuki and pulled Yuki towards him and pushed him away making Yuki fall on his butt. "Oops! Oh my, I guess I don't know my own strength! Clumsy me, ohoho!" He mocked in a high girly-voice.

"Stupid cat."

"Damn rat."

"Acting people, we're acting!" Ayame hissed at the boys. "Ahaha! Dear Tomoe, you must be taking plenty of Calcium these days!"

The audience laughed at Ayame's attempted joke.

Momiji went over to Kyo and hugged him. "Tomoe, I'm so glad you were able to make it!"

Kyo put a smile on through his pearly red lips. "I can't wait!"

Shigure turned around bursting out in laughter. He just couldn't keep a straight face on with Kyo looking like a girl and actually smiling. 'Enjoying this much, Kyo-kun? I never knew you were such a good cross-dresser!' He thought with glee.

Kyo's face flushed. He still remembered when Ayame had finished dressing him and he had to come out in public wearing this hideous outfit. He wanted to rip it to shreds. Ayame told him he had to have an effect on people since Tomoe was supposed to be a beautiful maiden. Kyo cursed and complained and attempted to step on the dress and rip it as an excuse not to go along with the idiotic idea of being the lead girl.

'But I think Tohru will be so sad if you're not in it,' Kyo could hear Ayame in the back of his mind, "and she was working so hard on her lines. Tsk tsk, Kyonkichi, how selfish of you!"

Kyo just swallowed his tongue and endured this total embarrassment. Later he knew a punching bag was waiting for him in the Sohma's gym. He glared around the stage, his smile not very convincing anymore. "I am very glad Eriol and I can join you all, but I must ask where is Miroku?"

Suddenly dramatic and dark music played as a staircase lit up, all the other stage lights dimming slightly to focus the audience's eyes at the staircase. Everyone gasped as a figure appeared at the top stair case. "Tomoe," the figure growled, "so nice to see you again."

Kyo stared up at the figure, not believing his eyes or ears. "Miroku..."

The light came on at the top of the stair case where Tohru stood wearing blue slacks and a cream button-up shirt, bandages around her breast to hide her more womanly features. Her hair was tied up high upon her head, hidden beneath a large hat as she glared down at Kyo. 'Wow, she's really into this...' Kyo thought to himself.

Tohru turned to the audience. "Ah! My dear Tomoe has arrived as well as those bufoon-sans, Robin and May, their best friends. And most of all that nitwit," Tohru narrowed her eyes, "Eriol. How I hate that man for taking Tomoe away from me, but no matter! After tonight she will either be mine alone," she stared at Kyo with a heated glance, making his eyes widen at her rather passionate voice, "or no one's at all." A certain dream sequence replayed in Kyo's mind as he watched a totally transformed Tohru play the villain. She was absolutely petrified last time he saw her. But then again, Ayame and Shigure dragged her away some time ago, perhaps they gave her some profound confidence in herself?

Backstage Haru leaned in to Ritsu who was wringing his hands nervously. "Tohru is a very good actress surprisingly."

"Ayame did make her eat Soba noodles filled with his self confidence this morning." Ritsu looked down with woe, "I wish I ate some as well. Perhaps I wouldn't have had to back down from playing my part as Tomoe and forcing poor Kyo to do it. Oh, I am such a coward and I can't do anything right!" Ritsu looked to the ceiling. "No! I must be strong! Tohru-san said I could do it and I think I can too! If she can eat Soba noodles and be a wonderful bad guy, I can too someday!" He turned to Haru with a smile. Really, Haru never saw Ritsu smile as much as he did since Tohru came upon their home. "And then Tohru-san and I can eat Soba noodles with confidence together!"

Haru smirked slightly, "I don't think that has anything to do with it but... okay. Besides," Haru watched the stunned Kyo in his drag queen outfit, "This is too good to pass up." Slowly Haru pulled his own camera from his pocket and snapped a picture. "Priceless."

Ritsu waited for Tohru to finish her narrative before dimming the lights on her and closing the curtains.

Haru went to the audio controls and played background music as the actors fled the stage to help set up the next scene and dress accordingly. Haru turned on the microphone.

"And so, with a plot that was only beginning to thicken, Tomoe and Eriol make their stay with their friends. The day went on and it was time for everyone to go to sleep. But trouble was brewing within the home and Miroku was sure he would take his ultimate revenge on the two lovers." Haru read from a script.

Everyone dressed and shuffled to get the new setting up before the curtains rose and the stage lights flooded the floor.

"Oh, Robin! May! Come quick! Tomoe's door won't open!" Yuki called to Ayame and Momiji. The pair were sitting in what looked like a separate room as Yuki burst through a stage door, dressed in pajamas that showed much of his rather toned chest. Once again squeals and photo flashes went around the room. Momiji and Ayame got up from their stage room and followed Yuki's frantic motions. Everyone scrambled across the stage and to another stage door where Yuki tugged on the door handle. "It won't open, I fear something bad has happened to Tomoe!"

Momiji watched with watery eyes. "I'll go get some help. Maybe the butler has a spare key! Don't worry, Tomoe! May will save you!"

Yuki pushed on the fake door that was curtained from the audience to see what was going on inside the room where Kyo was in. Yuki turned on Ayame with a slightly panicked look. "Please, Robin! You are normally so good at solving problems, can you think of anything?"

Ayame polished his nails against his shoulder while inspecting them. "Yes, I am very good at solving problems."

"And you are so handsome and intelligent!"

"Of course I am!" Ayame laughed while holding his hand out to see this shine in his nails.

Yuki glared at Ayame. He knew Ayame added those lines in. "And you have an ego the size of China."

"Of course I-- hey wait! That's not your line."

The audience giggled.

Yuki sighed and motioned his hands to the door. Ayame shook his head and took on a thinking look.

"I see. Did you try knocking?"

Yuki shook his head 'no' and began knocking on the door while calling out Tomoe's name. "Nothing! Oh, I am very worried now!"

Ayame put both hands on the door. "Maybe we could break the door down."

Suddenly from across the stage Momiji returned with Hiro at his side. "I couldn't find the butler but the cook has come to see if he could help!"

Hiro stood off to the side while the audience 'aww'ed at Hiro. They had not seen him in a while and he was so cute with his 'I-hate-the-world' attitude! (If you could call that cute anyway...)

"What is the problem? Why did you have to drag me out of bed for?" Hiro asked while tapping his foot.

From the audience Hiro heard a small voice calling at him. He turned to the audience and zoned in on Kisa waving and smiling at him. Suddenly he grew slightly nervous knowing that Kisa was watching this play. Damn it why did they decide to change the script so he had to be in it? The only reason he did it was because Kisa said it would really make her happy to help Haru with the play.

Damn him and his stupid soft side for the girl.

Ayame motioned to the door. "The door will not open and Tomoe is not answering the door. Please do something!"

"I'll see what I can do." Hiro rolled up his sleeves and spit into both his hands, rubbing them together. "OPEN SAYS' A ME!" He cried while facing his palms to the door.

He immediately walked back to Ayame, Momiji, and Yuki. "Nope, nothing works."

"You baka! That wasn't any help!" Momiji yelled at Hiro. "My best friend is in there and I think something happened! Wahh!"

Hiro shrugged. "Hey, hey, if you wanted to unlock the door you should call the butler."

"I can't find him right now!" Momiji said.

"Try harder!" Hiro shouted back, really sounding mean.

Momiji ran at Yuki. "Wahh! Hiro's not pretending to be mean, he's really yelling at me!"

"Don't go crying to that guy, you dumb bunny." Hiro muttered.

Yuki glared at Hiro making the high schooler actually stunned. He turned away with his hands crossed over his chest.

"Well I can't help you, miss. I'm of no use as you can see. I have no key, only master Miroku or the butler has the keys. I'm going to bed." Hiro threw his hands up at Momiji and began walking off stage. "Stupid play..." he muttered under his breath.

Yuki gently pulled Momiji away from him and Momiji's crocodile tears vanished. He backed up from the door as Ayame stared at Yuki. "Eriol, what are you doing?"

"I'm going to break down the door!" Yuki responded.

Ayame knocked the door again. "Tomoe! Tomoe can you hear me? Tomoe, open the door!"

Momiji watched on with fascination. "Please, someone do something!"

Yuki rammed his shoulder into the door but it would not budge. "Damn!" He cursed. Ayame moved in to help Yuki as well. The pair began ramming the door with their shoulders while Momiji called for Tomoe

over and over wondering what happened to his friend.

Finally Yuki and Ayame burst into the room, now hidden behind the curtain that shielded what was inside the room.

Momiji stood outside the door so the audience could see him still as Ayame's voice echoed throughout the room.

"Oh, my dear Lord."

"TOMOE!" Yuki shrieked.

Suddenly the small curtain was raised as the audience gasped in horror. There on the floor was Kyo with a dagger through his heart, blood staining the pajamas he wore.

Yuki fake sobbed as Ayame stared at the body in shock. "Why?" Yuki cried over dramatically. "Why did this happen?" He asked while pounding on Kyo's 'dead' body.

"Ow... Ow..." Kyo muttered. "Not so hard, you jack @\$\$!" Yuki hit Kyo once more, just a little harder than normal before covering his face with his hands in mourning. Momiji burst in tears as the lights dimmed and a stage light turned on to see a depressed Tohru standing to the side.

"I didn't want her to die... I didn't mean it to happen this way."

The entire stage darkened and the curtains were dropped as the audience applauded.

"There is a brief intermission. Please return in ten minutes." Haru announced as Ritsu turned on the house lights.

Kyo, Tohru, Momiji, Ayame, and Yuki all got up from the stage and approached Haru.

"That was great." Haru complimented.

"I dunno, I'm dead for half the entire play." Kyo muttered while rubbing his sore ribs. "And freaking 'Eriol' here is beating the shoot out of me while I'm dead."

"Payback for shoving me earlier." Yuki replied.

Kyo just huffed, blowing his bangs out of his face. "This is so stupid. Why did Ritsu chicken out of his part? I don't want to be a freaking girl!"

"But you are the most important part!" Tohru piped in.

Ayame grabbed Tohru's hand and kissed it gently. "And you are playing your part perfectly well, dear Tohru. You really are a well-rounded woman: cooking, cleaning, talking, walking, acting..." Ayame turned to the sky as mysterious flowers fluttered around him again. "You'll make a wonderful wife someday!"

Yuki raised an eyebrow. "That sounds like something Shigure would say. Vulgar and stupid."

"You think so? I did get that line from him."

"Idiot."

Tohru smiled up at Ayame from under her hat. "Ayame-san has been coaching me! I'm so nervous but I can't let you all down because of me!" She bowed. "I'll keep trying my best."

Yuki's face softened seeing Tohru's determination. "You're doing great, Honda-san."

"Yuki-kun is too nice!"

Kyo glared at Yuki but didn't comment anything. He turned his attention to Tohru who seemed still jittery. She had a right to, he guessed, since Haru told them just a while ago that Kagura, Kisa, and Rin were out on stage. Last time he remembered the three girls didn't know Tohru was actually a girl. What were the chances that she would end up being the villain? "Are you having fun?" Kyo asked, catching Tohru's attention from Yuki. "I mean, if you're really not enjoying it or something, you can stop."

"Oh, no no! It's very fun to act with all the Sohmas! I just pretend it's like, ah, dress up with Hana and Uo-chan!" She smiled. "Thank you for thinking so kindly of me, Kyo-kun."

Kyo's face flushed and he turned on Ayame, trying to change the topic. "And what the hell? Why do we need an intermission? This play is hardly long enough for a stupid intermission."

Ayame laughed. "My, dear, boy!"

"Don't call me that."

"Intermissions are a great time for our customers to chat about our performance and allows the drama to be drawn out! Suspense, I tell you, suspense!"

"I'd like to thank Mine-san for making all these costumes." Tohru smiled. "She's so artistic!"

"After the play, Tohru." Ayame's face softened slightly, Tohru catching a brief look of tenderness from the older man. Ayame shook his head and laughed while clapping his hands. "Okay people! Quick break and back into costume! The audience wants to know what happened to our little cross dressing Kyonkichi!"

Momiji watched Ayame seek out Shigure and Hatori. "I'm surprised that Aya-chan didn't want to be the main character."

"I'm still pissed I had to be a freakin' girl." Kyo growled throwing down his wig.

Tohru immediately picked it up. "I dunno, all the girls out there liked Kyo-kun's costume a lot."

"Who the hell cares? It's not cool for a guy to be praised for dressing like a girl."

"I'm SO SORRY!" Suddenly Ritsu fell from no where and ran around apologizing for dressing like a woman.

Tohru looked down at the orange wig, feeling the coarse hair between her fingers. "Well, I thought," she blushed, "I thought Kyo-kun looked good too..." she punched the side of her head lightly, "eh, silly me hua?"

Kyo watched her for a moment before snatching back the wig. "I-it's only for one night. I can tolerate it."

"Kyo-kun, don't..."

"I'll do it, okay?" He shouted at her. He immediately blushed and looked away. "I mean, it's just a play, or whatever." He turned to her with a rather soft look. "You're doing pretty good yourself out there."

She blushed red. "What? You really think so? Thank you so much!"

All of this Yuki watched from a far. He watched a gracious smile reach her lips as Kyo only stared back just as tenderly. Their love was so obvious. Obvious to everyone but them. Then again it was a bit odd to be looking at Kyo standing in a dress and Tohru standing as a man, an evil man to boot. Yuki's face scrunched up in dismay thinking of the next part of the play. He hoped Kyo wouldn't freak out like their rehearsals they practiced so many times before. 'Just the last half and we're done. We can put this all behind us... just one more half.' he thought to himself.

Of course he knew something would go wrong though.

## 29 - The beach house mystery part 2

Kagura looked royally pissed. "Why did Kyo-kun have to be the first to die? I'm going to have a word with Ayame-san about this! It's an outrage, can't he see that Kyo-kun is the best actor up there?" Kagura pouted while Rin rolled her eyes.

"He's dead for half the play."

"It must be so hard to stay dead all that time though! That's real skill!"

Kisa covered her mouth while giggling at her older cousins. If only they knew that Tohru was a girl! To see the girl Kisa met only once before up on stage being the villain was just too funny. Tohru was a bit clutzy and humble but the girl up on stage tonight was a total transformation. In fact, Kisa admitted she was taking her role in full stride. She only wondered how much longer Tohru could keep her secret from her cousins. At any rate, Kisa knew she'd stand to Tohru's defense if Rin and Kagura decided to go berserk on her. There was just something so friendly about Tohru!

"Kagura-nee-chan is protective of Kyo-nii." Kisa smiled. Rin leaned over almost smirking at the playful tone.

"Are you happy Hiro-kun decided to be in the play as well, Kisa-chan?" Kagura asked. Kisa nodded her head mutely. Kagura sighed and fell back into her seat. "Well, at least Hiro-kun is alive in the play."

Kisa blushed. "It was very nice of him to do this for Haru-niichan. He means very much to me and for Hiro-kun to do this, it makes me so happy."

Rin's attention was averted to the young girl and she gave that a thought. It really was a nice gesture for Hiro to join the play with Hatsuharu. Even though it took a lot of coaxing, the other high school boy did the favor. Rin had to admit her own closeness to Hiro was similar to the closeness between Kisa and Hatsuharu. She found it a bit humorous that Haru was wary of the idea of Kisa and Hiro going out, while she, on the other hand, was the one pushing the youngsters together. She turned away from Kisa and let her eyes roam the stage curtains. That was an attribute she loved about Haru, he was protective of the ones he loved, always doing it discreetly.

"I'd say Hiro-kun did it more for you than Haru." Rin said.

Kisa's face flamed and she stared at the sheep print on her dress. "R-Rin-neesan is only saying that. Haru-niichan says that Hiro-kun..."

Rin turned sharply on Kisa. "Whatever 'Haru-niichan' said, forget it. He's a big idiot."

Kisa's eyes widened and Kagura nudged her while whispering, "Kisa-chan, she's joking!"

She released a breath while grinning. "O-oh..."



Rin scoffed at how easily Kisa was moved. "You should know me by now."

"H-Hai!" Kisa stuttered again. "It would be bad if Rin-neesan thought Haru-niichan was a baka!"

"Then again, he really is a baka with this black and white hair." Kagura said tapping her jaw. She turned to Kisa with a smile. "So it's okay for you to call him a baka too!"

"E-eh? Kagura-neechan doesn't like Haru-niichan either?" Kisa asked wondering why she called Haru an idiot.

Rin played with a strand of her long black hair muttering, " 'Baka' in Tagalog is 'cow'."

Kagura put a finger to the air, "You know, the Filipino language?"

"Oh." Kisa thought about it and laughed like the cute girl she was. "Then Haru-niichan is a BAKA!"

Somewhere back stage, a certain domino haired man sneezed violently.

"Hush hush, I think the play is starting again." Kagura laughed.

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After the intermission the curtains rose for the second half of the play.

Momiji, Ayame, Yuki, and Haru were present around Kyo who was lying on the floor with a dagger in his heart.

Yuki looked to the audience. "After seeing my beloved dead on the ground we went in search of a detective. We still have yet to see anything from Miroku and I have a guess he has something to do with this." Yuki crossed his arms. "When that guy shows up he'd have to do a lot of explaining." Yuki turned back to the other actors as they began the detective work.

Haru was dressed as a classic Sherlock Holmes as he paced back and forth in deep thought. He scratched his chin. "I see... and when you burst through the door you found her dead."

Everyone nodded.

Haru pulled out a pipe and played with it at his mouth. "I see... we must take a few steps back and look at the situation from a far away stand point. It seems that Eriol was going in to say good night to Tomoe when he noticed she was not answering the door. He ran to find May and Robin, their two best friends, and the three tried to get into Tomoe's room. Now, May here," Haru looked to Momiji, "went to find help, but the cook did not have a key. The only person with a key was the butler, am I correct?" The actors gave Haru a collective nod. "In the end, Robin and Eriol ended up breaking the door down to find Tomoe dead. Was there anything else?"

Yuki acted remotely depressed while kicking Kyo lightly on his foot. "She was still warm when we found her. She couldn't have been dead for long."

"Very good. Anything else that comes to mind?"

"No. It's just like we told you, Sherlock." Yuki said.

Haru put the pipe to his lips. "Indubitably." He blew a few bubbles from his pipe while striking a pose.

"You just use that word because it makes you sound intelligent." Kyo muttered on the floor with his eyes closed. Haru continued to puff bubbles from his pipe before kicking Kyo's rear side with his rather pointy shoes. He smirked with satisfactory seeing Kyo writhe in slight pain.

Haru turned to Ayame, ignoring Kyo's growls from below. "You said there was the owner of this beach house."

Ayame nodded. "Yes, it is Miroku, but no one as seen him since..."

Suddenly from across the stage came Shigure in his pajama set. "The cook has just told me that Tomoe's door would not open and she was not answering. Dear God, tell me she's okay." The group moved away for Shigure to see Kyo's body. "Oh no!" Tears flowed from Shigure's eyes. "I'm so sorry we could not protect you!" Shigure fell to Kyo's side and cried. "Oh how I wish you were still alive! I'd love to see your lovely smile, your full lips, your full bosom and the sound of your delightful giggle!" From below Shigure, Kyo twitched.

Yuki inched over to Shigure and smacked him on the head. "Take it easy, he's not really dead and it's disturbing when you're talking about the baka-neko here."

Momiji gasped. "Ohmigosh, the butler is Tomoe's secret lover! See the way he speaks so casually of her? It's him, it's him!"

Everyone gaped at that. "What?"

Momiji pulled at Ayame's shirt to gain his attention. "Can you believe that? It was Tomoe's secret lover that killed her! It was him!" He cried while pointing at Shigure.

Haru dropped his act and went to Momiji's side. "Momiji, that's not part of the play..."

Meanwhile Ayame shook his head. "My, my Gure-san, you just can't keep your hands to yourself. A secret lover? I would have never guessed!"

Shigure stood up looking rather disgusted. "What? Aya, I like the ladies, I like all ladies, but I don't swing that way."

"Oh really, what about that time we went to the Bahamas and we got really drunk? I do remember distinctly you were hitting on that man beside us..."

"Hey! At least I hit on a human! You were totally going at it with that tree!"

The audience watched on with confusion, others giggling at their 'friendly' dispute.

Ayame gasped and stomped his foot. "You promised you'd never tell anyone that! I'm telling 'Tori-san!'"

Shigure looked panicked. "No! Don't tell him! Ha-san! Don't listen to Aya!"

"LALALA! I'm not listening!"

(5 minutes later)

Hatori's voice, now the narrator, came over the microphone. "And so as Eriol's best friend and the butler run off, May, Sherlock, and Eriol still ponder upon the dead girl." The air filled with the sound of paper rustling. "Apparently the butler returned all the house keys to Miroku before he retired for sleep, which was before Tomoe left to go to sleep as well. Therefore, Miroku is the only one with the keys and he is still -- would you two stop fighting? Shigure! Stop touching Ayame! Ayame let go of Shigure's -- Miroku is still missing." The sound of Hatori trying to break up the fight was still heard faintly as the microphone turned off.

Haru cleared his throat. "Um... right, so we will continue." He straightened his hat on his already messy hair. "So the only suspect we have is this Miroku fellow who is still absent. Is there any reason he would have to kill Tomoe?"

"I'm telling you, it was the butler." Momiji muttered. Yuki gave the boy a look of exhaustion and Momiji just smiled and began rocking back and fourth on his feet.

Yuki was still shaking his head at the thought of Shigure and Ayame totally making fools out of themselves on stage but quickly returned to his role. "Ah, Tomoe and Miroku used to go out. She broke up with him later and she and I have been a couple."

Haru turned away. "I see... a revenge."

"Revenge?" Momiji asked.

Haru blew some more bubbles from his pipe. "Yes. It is all so clear to me now. Tomoe had not been cheating with the butler, but rather with Eriol."

Yuki stared at Haru. "What? But she's supposed to be going out with me I thought. How can she be cheating on me when we're going out?"

Kyo twitched slightly on the floor again, feeling rather lame at the moment. It was disgusting how they spoke about him as if he really went out with all those idiots. First Miroku, then Eriol, and now the butler. Damn it he wouldn't go out with any of them! Well, maybe Eriol. That guy's a pretty cool character being able to break down doors and--

'What the hell am I thinking? I am MAN for cripes sake! STOP IT! Okay, think of Tohru. Yes, good start. Tohru is a girl, ah, okay... but she's playing a man. So does that make me in love with a man? BAH!'

Haru continued his explanation as Kyo was entertaining his own thoughts. "Miroku couldn't handle knowing the fact that Tomoe was playing so many different men-- the little tramp-- and decided to put her out of her misery. She was just a sex fiend looking for a good one night stand. Miroku decided he couldn't have her cheating on so many people and wanted to rid her of all her sins, that little skank."

There was a long pause before:

"What the heck are you talking about? That made absolutly NO sense!" Yuki exclaimed throwing his hands up in the air.

Momiji on the other hand was just shaking his head. "Tomoe, I never knew you were such a sex fiend."

Yuki turned on Momiji. "She's NOT! Haru, that's not in the script!"

Haru suddenly found his nails very interesting. "Well I was improvising with my lines..."

"In other words you totally forgot what you were really suppose to say!" Yuki slapped a hand over his face dragging it down slowly. "I'm surrounded by idiots tonight..." he muttered. "Okay, here's what I think-- or rather what you were really supposed to think-- Miroku couldn't handle that Tomoe chose me over him and sought revenge on her, trying to get her to love him again. She refused and things got out of control. As you can see by her bedside, she was eating a snack of bread and butter." Yuki pointed at the knife lodged in her chest. "She couldn't find a butter knife and instead took a steak knife. Miroku threated to kill her with the knife and she still refued to love him and he stabbed her." Yuki glared at Haru. "THAT'S what I think happened."

"Ooh..." Haru pointed a finger at Yuki. "You're good." Yuki just rolled his eyes earning more giggles from the audience.

Finally a new figure appeared on stage. Momiji's face lit up with delight at seeing Tohru. "Miroku!"

Tohru smiled at Momiji as the boy ran over and hugged her, the audience cheering at Momiji's cuteness.

Haru nudged Momiji. "You're not supose to sound so happy to see a bad guy."

"Oh right!" Momiji pushed away from Tohru and put his fists on his hips, pouting at Tohru while lowering his eyebrows. "Miroku!"

Tohru walked over to the group. "Before you blame me, which I figure you will, let me tell my side of the story. I did come to see Tomoe before bed and try to persuade her to love me again. She refused and I grew insanely jealous. I threatened her with a knife and as she struggled against me. I accidentally hit her on the chest with it." Everyone gasped and Yuki went before Tohru.

"So it was you! You jealous man, how could you!"

Tohru turned away toward the audience. "Wait, let me finish."

"Oh no, we're done with listening to you! We have all the evidence we need! Buck'em boys!" Haru said

throwing his hand past his shoulder as if calling someone to charge.

"Ah, no wait, let me finish please, Sherlock-san!" Tohru knelt down to Kyo her cloak fluttering around her neatly. "I did not kill Tomoe. When I stabbed her, the blade did not pierce her. It pierced her journal that is within her robe." Tohru lifted Kyo's night gown top to show the journal. "At the impact she fainted. I was frightened by the fact that I actually stabbed her. I do not know how the knife was lodged into her chest in this manner."

"Then how do you suppose she died?" Haru asked.

Tohru looked up at Haru. "Suicide?"

"Wrong answer! You know you stabbed her. None of us stabbed her and why would she stab herself?" Haru threw his hand over his shoulder again. "Buck'em boys!"

Yuki grabbed Haru's hand and forced it down. "Stop saying that!" Yuki turned to Tohru. "Miroku, why did you try to stab her? I loved her so much!"

Tohru turned on Yuki with all the sadness she could muster. Yuki was actually taken back by the glittering of tears in her eyes. "As did I, Eriol! I loved Tomoe with all my heart and all my being! I did not mean for her to die!" Tohru put her head to Kyo's chest, a single tear falling.

Yuki felt his mouth opening and closing before he shook his head. Damn, Tohru was really into this right now. She could take his breath away with just one of those single tear drops. She was surprisingly way better at this than any of them! He carefully looked at Haru. At least Tohru remembered all her lines... He turned back to the villain. "Ah, but n-now she doe not walk among us anymore."

"She chose you over me," Tohru said, "and I have to let it be. I will never have her." There was a pause, and Tohru could hear some of the audience sniffing. She hoped she was doing well so far! She looked up at Yuki. "A moment with her... my last request..."

Yuki nodded, backing away from the couple as the lights dimmed around them, leaving Tohru and Kyo in the spotlight.

Tohru stared at Kyo's face, pushing stray hairs from his face. "I'm sorry I tried to hurt you, my darling." She gulped. This was the scene where she was supposed to kiss Kyo. Oh, but so many people were watching! And wouldn't this be awkward since some of the audience members did not know she was a girl? It might look weird! Ayame had reassured her that it was okay because she was living out many girl's fantasies. She wasn't too sure what Ayame was talking about, but just followed his instructions bravely. It was just a kiss, it wasn't like she had not kissed Kyo before. But this was different! Kagura, Rin, and Kisa were out there somewhere watching this! 'Uwaa... I'm so nervous!' Her face flushed as she neared Kyo's lips.

"Here it is," Shigure said from behind the curtains along with Hatori, Ayame, and Ritsu, watching with awe. "They're going to kiss. My sweet flower, good luck!"

"Shh!" Ayame scolded.

Kyo poked one eye open to see Tohru leaning over him, the light around her making her look almost angelic as her eyes closed and she came closer and closer slowly. Kyo on the other hand could feel his eyes being squeezed tightly as he anticipated Tohru's lips coming closer, his face flaming red right now. He'd kissed her before but it was on accident. This kiss would be planned! Not only that, but he'd be kissing Tohru as a girl and she as a man! This really couldn't get any weirder...

As Tohru's face came closer the audience held their breath. It was as if every girl in the audience was fulfilling her dream of kissing Kyo as they watched the play.

They were inches away when Tohru gasped in horror as her large hat fell from her head, allowing her long brown locks to come tumbling down and tickle Kyo in the face. "Ah! My hat!" She quickly brought her hands to her head to find the hat fell off. In her frantic movements she felt the bindings around her breast come loose and she gasped while clutching her chest. Her bosom was not exceptionally huge or anything but the simple motion drew attention to her feminine body parts.

Momiji gasped. "Miroku's a woman!"

Haru looked even more shocked. "Lesbians."

Tohru held one hand to her chest while waving the other at Haru. "No, wait!"

"WHAT?" A terrible banshee screech cried from the audience. Kagura was up on her feet in an instant. "KYO SOHMA!"

Kyo's eyes snapped open at hearing Kagura's angry cry while Haru pointed at Yuki accusingly. "You were dating a lesbian!"

Yuki only sighed again. "Why does everyone insist on straying away from the script?"

From the side the three Sohma girls made their way up the stage, Kagura looking livid of the three. "You were hiding a girl here! Rin-san was right! C'mere Kyo-kun, I'm going to wring your scrawny neck!"

"Oh shoot!" Kyo got up and ran before Kagura could catch him.

"GET OVER HERE!"

"HELL NO, WOMAN!"

Rin went over to Tohru while Kisa stood before Tohru. "Ah, wait a minute, Rin-oneesan!"

WHACK!

"The rule forbids the opposite sex to be living with the Sohmas." Rin simply stated ignoring the cracking of a stick somewhere behind the scenes. The audience began to get restless.

Kagura came from backstage dragging Kyo's lifeless body toward his original spot, dumping the corpse

on the floor with a proud smile on her face as she tossed a broken broomstick off to the side. Suddenly she felt two strong arms pull her away. "Hey!"

"Shh, we'll explain later!" Ayame scolded while holding Kisa's hand as well with Hatori leading Rin off stage as well. "We'll talk about this after the play!"

"You defied the rules!" Rin snapped. "We all agreed..."

"I know, I know, but this is an exception! Now hush and I promise to explain later!"

"You'd better." Rin said darkly.

Hatori and Ayame released the girls as the group watched the ending of this crazy play.

Tohru looked side to side while panicking. What was she to do? This wasn't in the script! "I, ah I mean...!"

"My poor little flower... I wish there was something I could do to save her now! I just-- Ri-chan!" Shigure put a hand out to stop Ritsu, but the other man ran out frantically before he could catch him. "Ri-chan, come back here!" Shigure motioned but Ritsu continued on his impromptu.

Suddenly Ritsu appeared from the side, running at Tohru. "Of course he er... she is not a lesbian! Miroku's a transsexual!"

"WHAT?" Everyone exclaimed.

Ritsu put a hand on Tohru's shoulder, acting nothing like his real self. "Miroku was confronting Tomoe about his freak accident. He had surgery and the files were mixed up and insted he got the wrong surgery. He had a sex transplant. He asked Tomoe if she'd still love him in a woman's body, but with a man's heart. Tomoe would not have it though. Embarrassed and frightened, Miroku attempted to kill Tomoe but instead only made her pass out!"

Everyone stared at Ritsu never hearing him act so... confident.

"Wait," Haru shook his head, "who are you again?"

Ritsu looked side to side. He didn't know what he'd sat to that! He just wanted to go save Tohru!

"Ah!" Tohru smiled and motioned toward Ritsu. "He's my surgen! Eh, um Dr. Stevensen-san!"

Everyone just stood there completely blown away by the absurdity of this entire scene. This wasn't like anything they rehearsed.

Haru finally broke the silence looking totally shocked. "Okay, this is some freaky Jerry Springer shoot."

Yuki decided if you couldn't beat them join them. "Fine!" He pointed at Tohru. "Miroku's a transsexual looking to still love Tomoe but it doesn't change the fact that she," he exclaimed pointing at Kyo, "is dead

now!"

Momiji pointed at Kyo. "Look at the way she died though. She's facing up."

"So someone must have stabbed her." Tohru said while blushing. "Um, you know after I tried to."

"But the door was locked and there are no windows in this room." Yuki reasoned.

"I did not lock the door when I left and the keys were still in my own room when I came here." Tohru said. "Who ever did it had to have come in, killed her, and locked the door to make it look like I was the murderer."

Momiji gasped everyone turning to him. "What is it?" Yuki asked.

"N-nothing, Eriol!" Momiji smiled nervously. "Um, you know, why don't we all sleep on it? Maybe we'll think better with a full night's rest." He began pushing everyone out of the staged room when Haru halted everyone.

"Wait a second." He looked from Kyo's body to the door and then to the dagger. He gasped as well looking like he'd just found a million dollars. "Oh wow, that's SO cool! It all works out so perfectly."

"What is it?" Tohru asked rather excitedly.

Yuki raised an eyebrow. "Honda-san, you already know how Tomoe died though," he whispered.

"I know but it's still so exciting everytime I hear it!"

Yuki just shook his head.

Haru paced back and fourth and turned to the audience. "So here is how Tomoe died, leading to the true killer.

Miroku came in to see if Tomoe would still love him. She refused and Miroku attempted to stab her. Hitting her journal in her robe, he stunned her and Tomoe passed out. He feared her killed her and fled the room.

Later Tomoe could hear a ruckus outside her door. As she began to come to, someone was knocking on her door. She got up and went to unlock the door but in her dazed state did not know the door was already unlocked and accidentally locked it. That is why when everyone was trying to open the door it was locked because Tomoe had locked it. She still could not figure out what was happening in her state of mind and that's when it happened.

Someone was trying to open the door and whoever had rammed the door open," Haru turned to Yuki, "inadvertently hit the knife into her chest with the impact of the door sending the knife into her heart and Tomoe on the floor." Slowly Haru rose a hand to point it at Yuki. "You. Killed. Tomoe."

Gasps went around the audience as Yuki feigned a shocked look. He backed away while holding his



chest. "NOOOO!!!"

Haru's voice gained amplitude and he continued to point at Yuki. "It was YOU!"

"Ah cruel world, why did you send such a curse upon this house?" Momiji asked to the sky as Yuki continued to cry out in agony.

Yuki went to Kyo and grabbed the knife from his chest. "Good bye cruel world!"

"No, Prince Yuki!" The crowd screamed.

But it was too late, Yuki plunged the knife into his chest and fell across Kyo's in a heap. 'What a message,' Yuki thought darkly as he fell on Kyo's already K.O.ed body, 'killing yourself solves everything.'

Kyo woke up with a start, feeling a warm body over his. "Eh? What the hell?"

Yuki pushed Kyo's head down. "Shh! Shut up, stupid, you're supposed to be dead!"

"OW!"

There was a moment of silence as the two lay lifeless on the floor.

Over the microphone Hatori's voice entered the audience's ears. "And this," he said as the curtains closed, "is the story of true love till death do they part." The music cued and everyone burst out in applause.

Tohru ran to Kyo's side, helping him sit up after Yuki got up from their mini dog pile. "Kyo-kun, are you okay?"

"Ah, I think so. Just blanked out for a second there."

"Get up, hurry!" Ayame said helping Kyo and Tohru up. Kyo still held onto Tohru's hand as everyone linked his or her hands with one another's for a collective bow. The curtains opened one more time as the actors all bowed to the audience.

"Thank you, thank you!" Ayame called while catching a bouquet of flowers. Yuki caught an airplane with a girl's phone number on it.

Anyhow they gave one last bow before the entire show was finished. Everyone dispersed from the stage, some complaining more than others. Tohru just gave a sigh of relief, glad the affair was over. She was so nervous! Even worse when they drifted away from the script! Tohru smiled at Kyo and moved to change out of her costume. She let her hand slip away from his until he held her back by the hand.

She turned around. "Kyo-kun?"

Kyo moved closer to her and kissed her on the cheek. "You... were great."

She blushed and looked down to their entwined hands. "So were you."

"I was dead."

"Still very important!" She giggled. She squeezed his hand before mouthing 'I'll see you later,' and letting go of his hands before turning away to dress out of her clothes. Kyo watched her leave.

Maybe this entire play was worth it. Tohru looked so happy yet nervous while playing her part. Even though Kyo thought the entire thing was cliché and stupid, it was fun.

"Those names weren't even original. You totally stole them from Inuyasha, Card Captor Sakura, Rurouni Kenshin, and Teen Titans." Hiro complained to Ayame as they walked past Kyo. "And the way Tomoe died? That was from Spiral! You're so unoriginal!"

"Psh," Ayame turned away while putting his hand in front of Hiro's face. "Talk to the hand 'cause the face ain't listening."

"And when do you ever?" Hatori muttered while passing by with a clip board in hand. Suddenly the stage was full of men taking apart the set and chattering with each other about the stage.

Ayame swept stray bangs from his face. "Well, tonight's performance was well done."

"No it wasn't." Yuki said.

"So I took the pleasure of hiring a camera crew to film our superb acting skills. Don't worry, editing will be done to clean up the footage."

Kyo's mouth almost hit the floor. "WHAT?"

Haru grinned. "Awesome. We'll cherish the memory of Kyo crossdressing forever."

"This is so going on Japan's funniest Home Videos."

"We'll sell hundreds of copies to our customers!"

"Profits!"

The Sohmas all began chatting as Kyo only sunk down in a corner, wishing he really was dead right now.

And so ends the first Zodiac Host Club Play.

"Hey!" Kagura said tapping her foot impatiently. Everyone turned to the trio of cousins waiting to have an explanation of what on earth was going on. Kisa looking nervous, Kagura looking angry, and Rin looking as if the first person to stare her in the eye would turn to stone. "You all mind telling us why you have a girl in your house when we ALL know it's against the rules?"

Ayame and Shigure exchanged looks. Oh boy, did they have a long explanation.

### 30 - Blasf from the past

Yuki's eyes scanned over to the woman sitting in front of him. She had not recognized his presence the entire time she'd sat down and she looked rather intense. He couldn't figure out this strange girl sitting while looking behind her as if she was being chased by a mad man. Why was she even here? He wasn't exactly used to being ignored. It seemed rather cocky but he was after all the prince of the host club. He finally cleared his throat loudly making her gray eyes dart towards him.

"Are you okay?" Yuki asked finally leaning toward the girl.

She looked away. "Why do you ask that?"

"Well, you haven't spoken a single word since you sat down." He responded. She wasn't like the usual group of girls that requested him. Normally the kind of women that requested Yuki were obsessive type of squealing girls. But not this one, this one was quite silent and reserved. What was she doing with a host club? And if she was to choose a host club member, it should have been more of perhaps Hatori's type or maybe even Kyo (since no girl could resist him really).

The girl looked over where a table of screaming girls were, hovering around Kyo's table. Very few other people were attending to the other host members and it looked as if a few of the men even started a card game. She didn't know why she was even dragged here. The day before, her friend, Kimi, took her to a play. She sort of liked plays and agreed to join her, but she was not expecting to find the entire cast to be males. Even the shocker at the end that one of the males turned out to really be a woman was a surprise! Then today, Kimi insisted to go back with her to this host club, and she agreed, just going along with whatever her hyper friend asked. She didn't know why she was so easily persuaded. Perhaps it was her way of avoiding the mundane nothingness of her empty apartment down town.

Upon coming to the Sohma house, she found the beautiful Victorian room lavishly decorated as if someone important, like a queen, was to arrive. It certainly looked different in the daytime. Kimi immediately left her side to join the group of fan girls crowding around a table as she just watched for a moment.

Didn't look like her kind of thing.

Surprisingly no one came to greet her and she just walked over to a basket of fortune cookies. Taking one and opening it, it read, 'Monkey-sama awaits you!'

'What an odd place...!' She began walking aimlessly through the mob of girls, trying to find this 'monkey' table. Somewhere...

After a good ten minutes she gave up in the push and shove of rather aggressive young women. She didn't need this right now. She began pushing her way out of the madness. 'How does Kimi even consider this place fun?'

"Kimi! Kimi!" She fruitlessly called out. She felt herself trip over someone's foot on the floor, stumbling around like a fool. She finally found a passage way out of the maze and burst through the girls as if she had just risen from the depths of the ocean, gulping for precious air.

Trying to escape the mad mob of girls, she sat down at a more seclusive area of the room only to turn around and see herself sitting in front of what looked like a Greek God.

That was their theme, Greece. Indeed everyone was in togas and had a wreath upon his or her head. There was only one female, who she assumed to be the one actress from the night before, and she was chatting with a boy with black and white hair. He was not wearing a toga though, but normal clothes.

Once again, what an odd place.

She turned back to the Greek God before her and realized he was speaking to her. "Excuse me?"

Yuki cleared his throat. "I asked if you were requesting a different host. It doesn't seem that you would go for the 'Prince' type, if you don't mind me saying." He watched her facial expression turn from surprise to nothing. She didn't even bat an eyelash at him. Not even a blush. She really was a strange girl.

She looked him up and down. Rather dark gray hair, a wiry body, violet eyes, a charming smile... a prince he says. She closed her eyes. "You do not remind me of a prince." Yuki's eyes widened at that. "You look rather normal... if you don't mind me saying." She opened her eyes as violet clashed with gray, the pair staring at each other as if something had just sparked.

Normal...

She stood up. "I'm sorry if I was bothering you, I should be leaving now." She bowed and abruptly turned away from Yuki, impressed with how much she'd just spoken a moment ago.

"W-wait!"

The girl turned around slightly to see the prince stand up in a crooked stance.

Yuki walked over to the girl asking, "What is your name?"

"..."

For the first time, Yuki felt his heart race unexpectedly. What an odd feeling in his chest. "I ah... that is if you don't feel comfortable..."

"My name is Machi...Kuragi."

Yuki brightened up at the small tid bit of information he'd collected from the girl. "Kuragi-hime..."

She thought on the horrific 'princess' and shook her head. She was far from a princess, she was too shy, nervous, quiet... anything but a princess. But if that was what he insisted on calling her, she guessed it

was okay.

"Yes." She replied. Machi was curious why her voice sounded so dry and unsure.

Yuki frowned. "You don't like that do you?"

"It doesn't matter to me." She quickly covered.

"I can tell you don't like it."

Machi stared at Yuki for a moment longer and only turned around to walk out of this host club. It frightened her how he nearly read her like a book. She shouldn't have said anything to this man! She put a hand to her cheek feeling flush.

Yuki watched her leave, completely ignoring the mob of girls, as she walked away from him. He decided she might not really care what his name was, but it was okay.

She said he was normal. Something so trivial might have hurt a man's ego, but not Yuki. All his life, people had told him how handsome he was, how important he was, how special he was. Sometimes he wished to just disappear and be like everyone else. Like no one would be expecting anything of him besides just being alive. Sometimes he just wanted to be normal. Being cursed with the spirit of the rat didn't help his 'normal-ness' either.

Tohru may be one of the very few outside of his relatives that accepted him for who he really was. Sometimes he felt she treated him special though. Like always tending to his table first during hours and such. It didn't bother him really but Machi struck a chord within him. He sat back down in his chair and slapped a hand over his face.

How cliché! Yuki Sohma thinking so intimately about a woman he'd only briefly met! Love at first sight nonetheless! Slowly he slid his hand down his face while releasing a sigh.

The last woman he'd fallen in love with never learned of his feelings. She left to study abroad and never returned. She always treated him normally: played tricks on him, invited him with friends to the movies, go ice skating, sometimes even study together. She didn't place him on a pedestal...

...those happy memories suddenly bubbled to the surface.

So for this girl from out of nowhere to come and tell him she didn't really see a prince but a normal person made him happy. No one had ever told him that. How strange but beautiful. Something so simple could brighten up his day. Even if he never saw Machi ever again he was happy to know there was someone in the world that saw him for who he was. Not a prince, not a host, just Yuki.

"Yuki-kun!" The young man straightened up and turned to see Tohru's smile and her cute little head bobbing up and down. "There's a message for you from one of the customers!"

"Oh." Yuki returned her smile. It always made him smile to see Tohru so happy. "What is it, Honda-san?"

Tohru cleared her throat and let her eyes float to the ceiling as if she was ready to repeat a memorized speech. "She says, 'It didn't bother me, but thank you for thinking kindly of me.' Hm, that was it." Tohru watched Yuki for a moment and giggled. "She was very soft spoken but she left with a little smile on her face. Almost like she found something fascinatingly cute. Did you know when someone says you're cute, it is usually a form of saying 'I love you'? Yes, my mom used to tell it to me all the time. Maybe that quiet girl thought you were cute, Yuki-kun?" She clasped her hands behind her back while smiling. Smiling because of how cute Yuki's face looked red as a ripe cherry.

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Ayame watched Tohru tell Yuki something and his face go bright red. Ah to be so young.  
"Find your little brother interesting, Aya?"

"Of course, Gure-san! What better past time than spying on my little brother and getting the latest gossip! I wonder what it was that Tohru told him to make him blush so hard!" Ayame responded to his long time friend. Ayame placed a card on the table. "Hit me."

Hatori shifted his eyes to Tohru. "To be honest, I'm surprised she'd still living with us."

"The way Rin-san looked livid yesterday. I'm surprised Tohru-kun is alive!" Shigure laughed.

"Don't even joke about that. Remember that time some little boy threw Rin-san's doll in the mud when she was still small? I don't think that child ever walked again."

"True true." Shigure folded his cards as Ayame and Hatori showed their cards. "Tori-san wins again." Ayame grabbed the deck and began shuffling again. Shigure leaned his chin on his open palm. "Last night went better than I thought it would though."

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Flashback

"Why don't you give us an explanation of what is going on here?" Kagura said.

"It's a long story Kagura-chan." Shigure tiredly explained while rubbing his temples. "Can this wait?"

"NO."

"Scary!"

Hatori stepped in. "We will explain. Come." Ayame, Hatori, and Shigure lead Kisa, Kagura, and Rin away to the office/library. The customers were all leaving and the other host members were busy cleaning up and ushering the ladies out. Yuki and Kyo waited around for Tohru though. The small group went away un-noticed.

Upon entering the enormous library Kagura threw her hands up and spun around as soon as the door closed. "Okay! We've been waiting now tell us what the hell is going on!"

"Kagura-nee-chan..." Kisa said, rarely hearing Kagura curse.

"Well you see, Tohru-kun has been boarding with us for the entire summer. Wait wait, don't throw that chair at me just yet Kagura-chan!" Shigure panicked seeing Kagura's hand involuntarily tighten on the chair she was leaning on. "You see, Tohru-kun was running away from a bad situation one night. She was alone, scared, confused, and broken. Kyo-kun found her outside the gates and helped her inside."

Kagura nodded silently as Rin leaned against a wall, propping one foot on the wall. Kisa took a seat in the chair Kagura was leaning on.

"Kyo-kun is so nice." Kagura whispered.

"When Tohru-kun came to, she was in a tizzy. Yuki-kun invited her to stay until she could get her debt paid off during her short stay with us, also because she had no where to go. She really wasn't supposed to be a permanent member of this household but after paying her debt off..." Shigure looked up at the large bookshelves lining the walls from end to end. It felt so awkward telling this tale as if it happened so long ago. Had she really been with them so long?

"Well she decided to stay a little longer and we let her." Ayame filled in seeing Shigure was taking too long to answer.

"What? You know that's against the rules!" Rin once again scolded. She stood up straight. "If you won't kick her @\$@ out, I will Ayame."

The king put a hand up. "Wait. This is where it gets interesting." He drew out a dramatic pause. "You see, the night before she was supposed to leave we were throwing a summer party in her honor. Weeks before this, there seemed to be a little how do you say... spark between Tohru and Kyonkichi."

"Oh? My little Kyo-kun?" Kagura asked now totally engrossed with the story. "Romance!"

"Yes, yes. That night, Kyonkichi hugged Tohru-- oh but she already knew about the curse since she accidentally ran into Kyonkichi in the middle of a bad storm." He watched the girls faces contort into funny looks. "Ah, long story, but I digress. He hugged her and a miraculous thing happened, the curse broke! Once and for all, Kyonkichi was not cursed, it was splended! A real sight to see, he finally bloomed into a young man!"

"Yay, Kyo-kun!" Kagura cheered. "Wait. So that means...?"

Shigure clapped his hands now cutting in after Ayame. "Well, skipping a few details--"

"You mean a lot of details." Hatori muttered.

"Kyo-kun confessed to Tohru-kun that he loves her."

"That still doesn't explain anything about why that girl is still living with you. Fine. Kyo and her hooked up. But she is not a Sohma. She can't live in the main house with all of you. She's a female and she's a stranger!"



"She already knew about the curse." Shigure said.

"You should have erased her memory."

"She promised she wouldn't tell."

"Damn it, Shigure, don't be so stupid! What if she lied? Hua? You could have put the entire family in danger! So you took in a sad girl and got a love interest for Kyo, I don't give a damn! What I care about is making sure this family doesn't get messed up because of... of some GIRL!"

"She only means well, Rin-san."

"You don't know that! Even if you do now, what about back then? She knew you were rich people! She could just be hanging around for the money. She knows our biggest secret, she could have done anything with that kind of information. Potentially destroyed our family! Don't you remember making that unspoken rule? No outsiders living with us! And in your case, any female ones!"

"She broke the curse for Kyo-kun, Rin." Hatori reasoned.

"Kyo could fall in love with the wrong person. It happens, you know." She shot back bitterly.

Everyone fell silent after her remark. Kisa felt the tension fill the room, it was almost suffocating. Would they kick Tohru out now?

Ayame saw the hurt run through Hatori's eyes but he gently patted his friend on the back. Rin made a low blow reminding Hatori of Kana like that. He knew she was only trying to think of the good for the Sohmas but he knew Tohru was a different person.

He fished around his pocket and found the metallic circle brush against his finger tips. "You know how we said Tohru ran away from a bad situation?" Ayame pulled out an engagement ring from his pocket and held it up for Rin to see. "Her fiance cheated on her, mentally abused her, and did who knows what else to a poor girl like her. She was in need of help and we gave it to her. I understand that the Sohmas are very important to you, Rin, they're important to everyone! But we all agreed to help Tohru out and so we did take a big gamble back then, letting her keep her memories of our curse, but look at us now. She's still with us, still going on and doing everything she can to help us in return. We really didn't sacrifice much to help her but she'd giving everything up to start a new with us. A new start with Kyo."

"She'd been hurt and she bounced back. She's like part of the family now and if you can't accept that, I'll be happy to leave the Sohma house along with Tohru-kun." Shigure added.

Ayame rolled the engagement band between his fingers. "This ring is what bound her to her old life but she gave it up. She trusted us and we trust her. What does it matter if she's an outsider or not? Kureno got married to Arisa-san."

"That's different." Rin interjected. "I liked Arisa-san."

Ayame gave a hearty laugh, clearing some of the tension in the room. He flipped the ring in Rin's direction, the girl catching the glimmering band in her open palms. "Who said you wouldn't like Tohru? FYI, Arisa and Tohru are best friends."

Kagura's eyes widened. "No kidding!"

"Nope!"

"I like Tohru-nee-chan." Everyone turned to Kisa. "I knew she was a girl the moment I saw her."

"You never told us, Kisa-chan, you little sneak!" Kagura joked.

"I... I thought Rin-neesan would be really mad and I didn't want Tohru-nee-chan to get in trouble. Besides, Kyo-nii seemed to really like her. I want her to be part of the family!"

"Kisa!" Rin said in surprise.

The smaller girl only smiled. "I can tell she's a nice person. She wouldn't give out our secret. I bet... I bet one day she and Kyo-nii would get marri...!"

Suddenly the library door opened to reveal Tohru standing in the middle with Yuki and Kyo on either side of her. She quickly entered the room giving the three Sohma girls a deep bow.

"I... I'm sorry if I've offended you in any way. To be honest, I would have told you I was a girl, but I didn't want any of my friends to get in trouble because of me. It... it looks like I've already done too much damage-- too much!"

"Tohru-kun," Shigure tried to passify.

"And I hope you can forgive me. I'll do whatever it takes! I'll go to your home and be your housekeeper! I'll move out right now! Please, anything, I just don't want anyone to be mad especially if it's over me."

Rin stared at the girl apologizing like crazy. If she was in Tohru's shoes she knew she wouldn't be so nice. She would have just flicked them off and went on living with the Sohmas. Either this Tohru girl was just too nice of a person or she had absolutely no backbone.

Kagura walked over to Tohru and grabbed for her hand. "It's okay. I understand it must be hard for you living with the Sohma guys. None of them can cook, save for Hatori-san. The day we came to visit a couple weeks ago, I thought there was something different about everyone, but I guess we just didn't see it. I'll admit I was pretty mad and all, but..." Kagura tugged Tohru in and gave her a tight squeeze. "How can I be mad at Kyo-kun's little sugar-bunny! Oh, you two must be so cute together!"

"Uwaaa!"

"Knock it off, Kagura!"

"Oh, don't hide it, Kyo-kun! I guess I can't run around screaming how much I love you anymore!" She

latched onto Kyo while laughing and tugging at his cheeks making Kyo rather annoyed and embarrassed at the same time. She teased him relentlessly now-a-days.

"Get off me, woman!"

"You're just too cute!" Kagura turned on Tohru who was watching with confusion and happiness. "Tohru-chan, you're going to have to talk to me! I want to know everything about Kyo-kun's sugar bunny!"

"STOP CALLING HER THAT!"

"Aww, why not? You think it's a cute name, don't you, Tohru-chan?"

"I..."

"See? Oh Tohru-chan, we'll have to get together sometime!"

"Ah, o-okay, Kagura...-san."

"No no not like that!" Kagura laughed and did a little twirl. "Ka-gu-ra-chan! Ne?"

"Yes!"

Kisa walked over and also began chatting with Tohru as Kyo blew off some steam and Yuki just watched the three girls with a smile. He was glad they were accepting of Tohru, but Rin...

Rin stood off to the side staring at the ring. "Rin-san." The girl turned around to see Shigure looming over her shoulder. "We promise you, Tohru-kun is no threat to us. You should really get to know her, she's good for your health." He pounded a fist to his chest. "Keeps a man young I tell you to have a cute little maid like her around the house!"

"You're just a pervert." She muttered while walking past him. She stopped to see Hatori standing by the window, watching the flickering of car lights on the street. "Hatori-san." The older man turned his attention to Rin and she only stared back at him. "I... I'm sorry."

He only nodded. She was mad and wasn't thinking, just blurting things to get her feelings out. It... it did hurt but he wouldn't show it to her or them. "It's alright, Rin, don't worry about it." She watched him for a moment, taking a second glance before moving away.

Rin went to Ayame and dropped the ring onto his hand. She didn't look him in the eye, just watching her cousins talk to this Tohru Honda girl. She was like family to them, hua.

She turned on her heel to the door when it opened again. Her eyes widened at seeing Hatsuharu.

He walked in and ruffled Tohru's head earning a little giggle from her as she continued to try and answer Kagura and Kisa's questions at rapid fire. He stopped in front of Rin as she stared at him.

"You knew this whole time too, didn't you?" She asked.

He merely shrugged. "Yes, but just like everyone else, I knew you'd hate the idea. Decided to keep it on the down low."

"You jerk!" She went to punch him but Hatsuharu caught her fist and pulled her in for a kiss. It was rather rough and short as he pulled away from her lips and just held her intimately, holding her gaze in his intense steely eyes.

"She's really not a bad person, Rin."

"I never said she was a bad person. She's just sneaky."

"Naw, we forced her to hide herself. If we let her be, she would have been as open to you as a book."

"Still..." Rin said, beginning to run out of excuses for Tohru to get out of the house.

Haru chuckled and watched Rin glare around the room, looking at everything but him. It was a trait he found rather cute. He kissed her cheek and whispered, "Want to know a secret? Tohru was the one who helped me be with you. Just so you know."

She watched as Haru's hand fell away from her waist and he joined Yuki on the opposite side of the room. She touched her cheek, blushing slightly at Haru's deep voice still echoing in her mind.

Maybe... maybe she wasn't that bad.

End Flashback

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Tohru smiled down at the stationary and inspected her handwriting. She addressed the envelope Arisa Uotani and slipped the paper inside before writing her own address on it. So much had happened since Uo and Hana left from their little vacation. She promised to write and here was her second letter already! Yuki told her about e-mails and how much faster they were than the old snail mail, but she loved writing letters. It just seemed old fashioned and personal. She wrote about the play and how she'd send a copy as soon as Ayame got them in, she wrote about almost kissing Kyo in front of so many people on stage, her confused feelings about Kyo, and about the confrontation with the Sohma girls. She wrote to Uo that Rin said hello as well as how Kagura, Kyo's ex girlfriend, was trying to play matchmaker between Kyo and Tohru. By the time Tohru looked up it was beginning to get to closing time for the Host Club and she wrote about three pages to her dear friends. She got up and went to finish her rounds for the Host Club.

Kyo on the other hand was listening to a few girls chatting around him. Actually, he wasn't really listening but was tuning them out. They wouldn't notice anyway. He didn't understand what girls liked so much about him anyway, was it because they were not allowed to touch him when he was cursed by the cat? Or was it his looks? It was probably something stupid anyway.

He would rather just sit in peace listening to only one voice. He closed his eyes and saw an image of Tohru. One certain voice...

Kyo looked up to see a crowd of girls moving away as a head of light brown hair came into view and finally she came in front of the mob smirking down at Kyo.

"Ah, so you are the famous Kyo Sohma."

Kyo stared at her. "Can I do something for you?"

She tapped the side of her chin while eyeing him up and down rather uncomfortably. "You're pretty cute..."

Just passing by, Tohru looked up to see a rather full bodied woman leaning down to Kyo, showing an ample amount of cleavage in his face. She stopped dead in her tracks never seeing such behavior, even in this host club. That woman...

"Hey, sister, back of the line!" A smaller girl cried. The women turned around to see walls of girls glaring at her. "You didn't even pay to visit the Host Club! Kyo-sama doesn't even like a girl like you!"

"Of course he wouldn't want to see a girl like me!" The woman laughed as if they were all imbeciles, "He rather see a real woman."

"Oh you little...!"

From her purse she threw down fifteen thousand dollars on the table before Kyo. Kyo's eyes widened as he stared at the money and then at the woman smiling devilsh. "I'll pay you fifteen thousand dollars if I have you all to myself this afternoon."

From among the crowd, Ayame could be heard asking for people to step aside. When he got to Kyo to see what the commotion was all about he stared at the woman, the money and then Kyo. With these three items, something didn't seem right. "Excuse me miss, is there something I can... assist you with?"

She stood up straight and flashed him a seductive smile. "My name is Yumi Toega."

"Ah, yes, Yumi-san, I'm afraid you cannot just walk in here and claim a host club member. Further more, Kyo-sama here is our special host, therefore unable to be taken for any number amount of dollars." Ayame flicked hair over his shoulder. "But you can monopolize any of the other host's time." He inspected his nails, "Namely the Host Club King is open for single appointments."

"Go away you faker." Yumi said pushing him away.

Ayame glared at the girl. "Of all the nerve!" He turned to Hatori. "Ha-san, she called me a faker and pushed me! Me! The King!"

Yumi turned back to Kyo while rolling her eyes at Ayame's drama. "So what do you say, handsome?"

You and me for a whole day?" She began tracing her finger down Kyo's toga. "We could have so much fun..." He stopped her hands from trailing any lower than his stomach, holding her wrist rather roughly.

Suddenly the entire hall hushed as a silver platter crashed onto the tile floor, food and liquid spilling everywhere. Kyo shot up as the crowd moved for Kyo to see what it was.

And there Tohru was, with rather shocked eyes with her hands frozen in place where the tray previously lay in her hands, staring at Kyo and Yumi. Her body went frigid and it looked almost like she was frozen in time.

Flash backs of a woman crying out Satsuki's name... a voluptuous body... her fiance's betrayal...

Tohru felt like every breath she took was deafening loud as she only stared at Yumi.

"It's you..."

## 31 - Don't cry

"It's you..." The entire hall watched as Tohru began walking over to Yumi and Kyo very slowly. Every step she took echoed on the marble floors, causing her heart to race faster. Everyone was watching her and yet she felt like no one was there. "You are her."

Yumi looked side to side as if Tohru was talking to someone else. "You talking to me?" She asked rather high pitched while pointing a finger to herself.

"It was you I saw. You I saw with Satsuki..." Kyo stared at Tohru as she walked in a trance, her eyes void of any emotions. "You are that girl." Kyo got up in a hurry to stand away from the woman that was attempting to take him for a whole day. His chest constricted hearing Tohru's voice quivering. Damn and she was recovering so well from Satsuki! She had to beat this, she couldn't let this woman tear down everything Tohru had just built! 'Be strong, Tohru.' He thought helplessly.

The two women stared at each other, one rather simple and plain, almost half a foot shorter than the more curvy and heavily made-up woman. Tohru held a firm stance while still holding that blank look. Kyo couldn't understand what she was doing just standing there. She wasn't even crying nor did it look like she was breathing.

Yumi's gaze pierced at Tohru when suddenly a quiet chuckle escaped from her throat.

"Tohru?" Kyo asked, almost worried that Tohru would fall over at any given moment. The girl began to chew on her bottom lip, still glued to her spot on the floor as Yumi's chuckle erupted into cackling. It made Tohru's stomach drop.

Yumi thought a moment and allowed for her laughter to die down while waving a hand at Tohru good naturedly as if this was all a joke. "Satsuki? What does that man have anything to do with..." She stopped mid sentence and blinked her ruby colored eyes. Yumi stared at the smaller girl and shook her head. "No way. No freaking way." She turned around to the crowd of girls who were watching with confusion. "I can't believe I'm standing in front of the little miss perfect that Satsuki was talking about!"

"Little miss perfect?" Tohru asked.

Yumi laughed while flipping her thick, honey-brown hair over her creamy shoulder. Bending down slightly, she put a hand on Tohru's shoulder. "Honey, no man wants a little house wife before they get married. They want something fun and exciting, not plain and boring. I think it goes the same for all these girls visiting this host club, wouldn't you say? A getaway from reality." Yumi's voice dropped slightly sending quivers down Tohru's spine. "Women here want men that are fun and exciting, ya know?" Yumi looked Tohru up and down, the smaller girl wearing a Greek Goddess get-up with leather bound sandals. Such a plain face, flat hair with ribbons and not much of a chest size. Yumi's face scrunched up in dismay. She looked as blank as cold tofu. She pulled away from Tohru while her voice raised again to its normal tone, "And no offence, but I'm a bit more exciting than you ever will be."

Tohru backed away from Yumi feeling inferior, a state of mind she did not want to return to. She could see that Yumi was a lot more womanly than she would ever be but was that why Satsuki left her? For something more exciting? She gripped at her shoulders.

"It's okay. We all can't be as great as me. To Satsuki, you were just a fall back, a back up, a nothing to him."

Tohru shut her eyes while gripping herself fiercely. 'No... no don't say that...'

"That's enough!" Kyo yelled to Yumi, but she just continued like a train with no breaks.

"How could a runt like you measure up to me? God, look at you, you're shaking and growing pale! Suck it up, girl, that's why you couldn't keep Satsuki." She folded her arms together. "You've got no backbone! A little house wife, haha!"

"He... he said he loved me though." Tohru finally sputtered out.

"Haha, probably loved how you were such a fool I bet! He told me how easy you were to bed. Repeatedly I might add. It was like a joke after a while, no thrill." Everyone gasped at the revelation and Tohru's eyes widened in disbelief. "Tell me, are you one of those girls that dream of a fairy-tale romance, hm? Your one true love comes and whisks you away and you live together for all eternity, right? That nothing can get inside the little happy bubble you've created and he'd always be there to care for you." Yumi laughed again as Tohru's face burned with embarrassment. "Oh you're such a riot, little miss perfect! What the hell kind of world do you really live in? Like I said, men don't want a fairy-tale, they want action and, honey, Satsuki wasn't getting it from you."

Yumi looked as if she was enjoying herself, making Tohru feel inferior without really doing it on purpose.

It was in her nature to be a total dog.

Yuki suddenly went to Tohru's side squeezing her shoulder gently. Tohru snapped out of her momentary darkness. "Excuse me Toega-san, but I'd like it if you would not speak to Honda-san in that manner. No, infact, I'd appreciate it if you didn't talk to her all."

Momiji came to stand in front of Tohru as well. Ritsu shyly pulled on Tohru's dress to lead her away from the obnoxious woman. "Yeah, you're not being nice at all! Even if it was you that was sleeping with Tohru's ex-fiance, you don't have to talk down to her like she's stupid! So what if Tohru dreams of a fairy-tale life? It beats the life of a common whore!" Momiji cried out rather angrily with tears forming at his eyes.

"Momiji!" Hatori scolded as Yumi's jaw dropped.

It hurt Momiji so much that a sweet person like Tohru would just stand there, taking all this hurt from another person. He had never heard anyone talk to her in this manner and it scared him. He couldn't believe there were people out there like Yumi that would ever dare talk to Tohru like she was nothing, insult her to her very core, and announce to the world that she was 'easy' in bed. It scared Momiji of some kind of cruel world Tohru had been living in for so long. He didn't mean to say such an awful thing



but he couldn't stand on the side lines anymore. He didn't care if Hatori beat him with a stick later for calling a woman a 'whore'.

"I hate to say such mean things, especially to a lady, but what I hate more is a person who has no self respect for herself or other people!" Momiji pointed at Tohru. "She is my friend, you meanie! Tohru gives and gives; she gives love! You give as well, Toega-san." His eyes narrowed rather uncharacteristically. "You give...!"

Haru slapped a hand over Momiji's mouth to muffle the rather obscene words from his mouth. "Damnit, where did you get such a filthy mouth?"

"Probabbly learned from the best." Yuki muttered.

"Only when I'm black."

"Sure sure."

"Let me go, Haru!" Momiji said struggling in his cousin's arms. Haru turned Momiji around so the smaller boy could burry his face into the crook of Haru's arm while crying how it was unfair.

Haru hugged Momiji and only molified him. "Come on. Momiji. You can't protect Tohru by crying into my shoulder like this. She needs all of us now, come on." He knew Momiji was pained at such a sight but Momiji quickly sobered, trying to be strong for Tohru.

Meanwhile, Ritsu moved Tohru away and then let go of her to clasp his hands in nervousness. Tohru saw his fear and clasped her own hands over his with unspoken words of comfort, not daring to turn around and let Yumi see her sad face. 'Be strong! She's... she's not right. Satsuki really loved me. I know he did... even if I was just... just a little house wife...' Tohru shut her eyes anyhow, holding Ritsu's hands with her own. 'Just don't cry... don't cry... don't cry...'

Kyo on the other hand was silent the entire time. He just crossed his arms and glared at Yumi causing her stunned figure to jump at the sight of his angry eyes. Suddenly the room went up five degrees at the rather murderous glare Kyo was giving the woman. She backed up two steps feeling a bit threatened at the moment.

"Hey, hey, I just came here to have a good time, okay? I don't want any problems." She said.

"Take your filthy money and get the hell out of here. Don't ever think twice of talking to Tohru in the disgraceful manner you just did. The hell with you, even if you paid the host club a million dollars to have me, I'd pay you triple that amount just so I don't have to see your nasty face anywhere near Tohru."

She stared at Kyo with shocked eyes. His voice was rather commanding and rough, like he wasn't afraid to lash out at any given moment. She looked at the host club members all standing up for Tohru as her mouth made the shape of an 'o'.

"Oh my God, don't tell me." She eyed all the members side to side. "She's living here," she motioned her acrylic nail side to side, "with all of you, isn't she? Well, we can see who really gets around." The

customers watched on with abhor. "Ohoho, little Miss Perfect is such a hussy!"

SLAP

Tohru spun around at the noise afraid to see what happened. Kyo didn't hit her did he?

To her utter surprise, it was not any of the Sohmas, but rather one of the customers. Yumi's face was beat red with a hand print as she turned to look at the smaller girl with her hand still extended from the slap.

"Don't talk about Tohru-chan that way!" She screamed. "None of us know what is going on, but you can't come in here and start running the show! So what if all of us visit the Sohmas for our own selfish reasons? At least she is strong enough to be happy with what she has and not try and find a happier state of mind. She is always grateful for what she has! A fairy-tale romance is admirable! Obviously your childhood glossed over and the first thing you did wasn't worry about what pair of jeans Barbie would wear. It was which pair of jeans you'd be pulling off for the next playboy that wanted you!" Yumi stared down at the woman yelling at her with narrowed eyes. "Tohru-chan's the nicest and most honorable person out of any of us here, so don't you dare call her a hussy!"

"YEAH!" Everyone chanted.

"She never did anything wrong!"

"Get out of here, TRAMP!"

Yumi looked of absolute outrage as the Sohmas all grinned slightly at the scene. She picked up her money and made a straight line for the door, all the while the customers jeering at her causing pandemonium. She'd never been so humiliated in her life. What kind of woman was Satsuki trying to play at?

"This isn't over, you stupid dog." Yumi muttered over her shoulder as Tohru watched her leave. The door slammed closed and the entire room burst out in applause.

"Ding dong the witch is dead!" The girls chanted.

Ayame laughed, "Yes yes, the witch is gone! I cannot believe the absolute bravery that you ladies have demonstrated today for our beloved Tohru. Bravo you deserve an applause for yourselves!"

Tohru walked next to Ayame and grabbed the attention of the girl that slapped Yumi. "Thank you for..."

"Don't worry about it!" The girl cut in. "God, half the girls in this room wanted to beat the crap out of that woman anyway. It was my pleasure to stick up for you."

Tohru bowed. "I don't want to be a burden to you."

The girl only smiled. "Even when we were mean to you, you were always so cheerful and nice. I cannot stand to see someone like that woman hurt you so, so please it was nothing."

"Thank you though." She turned to the Sohmas as well. "All of you." Tohru's eyes moved towards Kyo's eyes and she immediately looked away seeing that he was watching her. "I... I'm going to excuse myself." She bowed and headed to the kitchen.

Shigure clapped his hands. "Well! Now that's over, as a reward to each of you lovely ladies, I shall humbly ask that you each allow me to give your cheek one soft kiss."

"Ooh, Shigure-sama!" They all squealed.

"No no, It would be my pleasure to be able to kiss an angel."

"You're such a sicko." Yuki muttered.

Momiji ran over to Ritsu who was standing off to the side still nervous. "Are you okay, Rit-chan?"

Ritsu's entire body suddenly relaxed. "Yes, I think I am fine, thank you, Momiji."

Momiji smiled and then looked on toward the main door where Shigure was handing out his kisses like chocolate on Valentine's Day. "But for Tohru to see someone so close to her sadness, it must have affected her greatly. I hope that she is okay." He turned to Ritsu. "To be honest... I was scared for her."

Ritsu nodded. "I... I think Tohru-san is very strong. Much stronger than I ever will be." Ritsu looked down speaking in a small voice, "Perhaps I should eat those confident filled soba noodles."

Momiji laughed. "You're so funny, Rit-chan. What you did today was pretty brave though."

"I just cowered after taking Tohru-san away from Yumi-san."

"Even just the smallest things can mean everything to a person." Momiji said peering up into Ritsu's face.

The other man looked up and thought a moment before giving Momiji one of his rare smiles.

-----  
Tohru went to the kitchen and sat down with a glass of water in hand. She didn't cry at least in front of Yumi. That was a positive. But then, she felt her entire body go numb when she saw that she was the person that helped destroyed her relationship with Satsuki...

"Tohru?"

She looked up to see Kyo watching her from the doorway. He quickly walked over to her and sat down next to her watching with worry.

"Kyo-kun you should be attending to..."

"That doesn't matter right now." He quickly replied. He watched Tohru bend her head low. "Are you going

to be okay? If you want, I'll go find Yumi and..."

"No, no, no! That would be horrible! I don't want you to beat her up, Kyo-kun!"

He smirked. "Who said I was going to beat her up?"

"Eh?"

"So your true feelings come out. If you wanted, you could have beat the crap out of her and we'd all stand back and just watch. We could just say it was an accident."

"Kyo-kun..." Tohru warned with no avail since the thought was absurdly humorous.

Placing his elbow on the table, he leaned his palm on his cheek while turning his body toward her. "You didn't cry though."

"What?"

He watched her seriously. "You didn't cry even though I know all that stuff really hurt you. Why not?"

"I... I don't know. If she saw she was getting to me then she would get more pleasure from my pain. Despite how awful and cruel that sounds... It just made everything within me shut down, I didn't have time to cry." She turned away from Kyo, trying to shield her body from him.

He watched her strange behavior. "What's wrong now?"

"You must think... differently of me now, Kyo-kun."

"What? Why would I?"

"Because," Tohru turned to him with pink grazing her face deeply, "I'm impure."

He blinked a few time before blushing as well. "What the hell? Tohru, I..."

"Even though everyone kept saying how... how they wanted to keep me pure till I was married, it wasn't true. I lied to everyone and, well, I'm sorry for that."

"You didn't lie."

"I didn't tell the truth either, so it must be just as bad."

"Tohru, look at me." Kyo gently led her face to meet his and her heart raced at how close they were. She could smell the soap Kyo used and she could see the intensity in his amber eyes. She could melt into his embrace if she dared to do so at this very moment. "I don't think any different about you, Tohru. When you really love someone, that's how you express it." He gulped feeling rather jittery about talking to Tohru about this delicate subject, especially since she was the woman occupying his thoughts night and day. "You... you really loved him and having sex with him is... is, well it was wrong, but it was okay! You

loved him! But, I mean, he was a total bastard--Oh gezz!" Kyo slapped himself noting how he wasn't making any sense.

She only smiled and nodded her head. She understood. "I'm glad then... that you care about me then, Kyo-kun."

He watched her for a moment thinking how much she'd gone through these past months. She was really growing before his eyes.

"You're getting stronger I think."

"Really?"

"Yup. For a dummy like you, you're pretty strong."

"Kyo-kun is stronger than me." She smiled.

Kyo grinned seeing the little ray of sunshine from her smile. He hesitantly placed his hand over Tohru's. "But seriously, you're okay?"

"I think so, it's just everything she said is true, don't you think? She is a bit different from me, I can see that." She stared into her water glass. "Am I boring? Honestly?"

"Don't be stupid. Everything that woman said was a bunch of bull. Don't ever compare yourself to her, you are nothing like her, and you shouldn't. She is just so full of herself, so to hell with her. You don't need that, Tohru, you're free."

"But it's not good to be boring either..."

"No, you're not boring. I mean, you live in a house of crazy Sohmas, how much more action do you need in your life?"

She laughed. "Well it's only because you all are so interesting."

"You make our lives interesting."

'You make my life interesting...'

She looked up at Kyo without any words to fill between them. Finally she sighed, "Kyo-kun is too nice to me."

"Idiot." He cursed quietly. He watched her for a moment noticing how strong Tohru had become over the summer she'd spent with them. In return, she made him strong as well. Made him want to be stronger for her. Kyo bopped her lightly on the head. "Yeah well don't get too used to it. Sometimes I won't be nice!"

"Oh, right!" She laughed while pulling her hand away from Kyo's instantly. Kyo smiled at seeing her usual happiness arise. It was forced but he knew if he kept pressing her for her health status it would

only worry her some more. Only God knows how much he loves her. "The little house wife better not get too used to Kyo-kun being so nice or else she'd be spoiled!" She joked.

Kyo laughed. "I don't think anyone could ever make you a spoiled girl."

"You don't think so?"

"No, and further more, you are not anyone's 'little house wife' understood? That name just sounds so degrading." He watched her fiddle with a strand of her hair while blushing. He could see her though, sitting with her children, helping them with their homework at the table, worrying about them when the weather was bad outside, and even waving to her husband when he came home. She'd run into his arms and kiss him, asking how his day was, and he in turn would ask the same question. What a daydream. "But I think that you'd probably make a really good wife someday." He muttered absentmindedly.

"What?"

"I- I didn't mean anything funny by that!" He quickly covered while turning scarlet. Whoa, when did that thought come across his mind? "I... I gotta go, you know, hosting..." He said while the chair beneath him screeched against the tile.

Tohru gathered all her determination. "Yes! Please go back to the main hall and don't worry about me! I'll be fine!"

"Okay." Just as quickly, Kyo left Tohru in the kitchen. As soon as Kyo left, Tohru sagged her shoulders and slumped over the table. Yumi was right about one thing. This wasn't over, something was brewing and it was unsettling.

She sipped her water and once again stared at the pair of blue eyes reflecting back at her. "I'd make a good wife someday...?" She looked to the ceiling and smiled. A second chance at marriage to someone that would love her and someone she could give her love right back to. She hoped to be a great wife someday. It was most girls dream to grow up and get married to a special person. And what sound would her name have with the last name of the mystery man she'd someday marry? What would it sound like?

But that was someday...

Every so quietly she whispered, "Tohru Honda." She pause. "Tohru Sohma..."

It didn't sound bad at all.

---

Kyo stumbled out of the kitchen only to run into Haru.

"Kyo, what are you doing?"

Kyo looked around as if there was something he forgot. "Um... I just went to see if Tohru was okay."

"Is she?"

"Yes."

"No she's not."

"What?"

"Indeed, Kyo-kun." Shigure appeared behind him. "When a woman says she's okay, she's really not. Haven't you learned the language by now?"

"What are you talking about? She said she was fine!" Kyo growled.

"Ah, so young, so naive, how much I pity you." Shigure grinned.

"But this is Tohru we're talking about." Haru said before Kyo could get angry with Shigure. "When as she ever thought about herself before another person? Exactly." Haru said before Kyo could answer him.

"Fine! Then what do you want me to do?"

"You have to make her really feel better, Kyo-kun. Take her out on a date." Shigure intervened.

"A date?" Kyo asked in utter outrage. "Whoa, who even said anything about some stupid date?"

"It will really mean so much to Tohru-kun, and you are being so selfish in not taking her!" Shigure pouted.

"Shut up, you're supposed to be an adult! Stop trying to make me feel bad!"

"Kyo-kun is so mean! Fine then, I suppose I will have Yuki-kun take Tohru-kun out on a date for two... alone... secluded... they can feel their body heat mingling with the close proximometers..." Shigure leaned close to Kyo's ear. "His hot breath exciting her supple skin..."

"FINE! I'LL GO ON A DAMN DATE!"

"That's the spirit! I'll reserve a table at a nice restaurant for you two, all you have to do is go back in there and tell Tohru-kun you two will be going out for dinner at eight, okay?"

"FINE!" Kyo didn't mean to yell as loud as he did, but just the thought of something so perverse made Kyo actually think Yuki would do such a thing. Which he wouldn't or else Kyo would have seriously murdered him.

He walked back into the kitchen to see Tohru shut her mouth closed tightly and turn pink. What was she doing?

"Eh? Kyo-kun, what are you...?"

"You know, you've had a rough day and I don't think you've ever really been out and around besides grocery shopping and stuff like that so..." Kyo rubbed his neck trying to word it best without using the word 'date', "Do you want to go out to eat at eight?"

She smiled, "With you, Kyo-kun?"

"Um, yea..."

"Just the two of us?"

"YES! Just answer yes or no!"

She giggled seeing how pink Kyo was turning himself. "I'd love to go out to dinner with you, Kyo-kun! I mean, if it's okay..."

"Yeah, yeah it's fine, don't worry about it..." he muttered. He was playing this way too cool. Was he really only doing this for Tohru? The thought of taking her on a date did cross his mind once... or twice...

..but he didn't think it would really happen anytime soon! What the hell was he supposed to do?

And yet, Tohru's reassuring smile melted away his fears. Like anything he did would be fine with her. And it was. The thoughts of crying, pain, and even the future faded away from her mind for the briefest second.

And it was wonderful.

"That makes me so happy, Kyo-kun, thank you so much."

He looked up and felt warm inside. Even the smallest things could mean everything to a person. Everything.



## 32 - DATE!

Kyo stood by the main stairwell while looking at his watch anxiously. "Damn it, why do girls take so long?" He asked quietly.

"Ah ah, patience, Kyo-kun," Shigure scolded softly, "Good things come to those who are patient."

Kyo rolled his eyes when suddenly Mine appeared from one end of the stairwell where Tohru's room was. Subconsciously he straightened up and cleared his throat though he did not know why. "Are you ready?" She asked bouncing lightly from one foot to the other. He felt awkward just standing there with his hands limp on either side. What was he supposed to do with his hands? Put them in his pockets? No, his hands felt clammy. Why was he so nervous? It was just Tohru for cripes sake!

Yuki looked up from his book as Shigure, Ayame, and Hatori all sat up as well from the seating area.

"Yes of course, Mine-chan." Ayame smiled. "Bring the princess downstairs!"

Mine grinned and turned around. "Come on, don't be shy, Tohru-chan. It's so adorable on you!"

Slowly Tohru came toward the stairwell making everyone's jaw hit the ground. She wore a deep red dress cutting straight across her bust showing enough cleavage to leave plenty to the imagination. The length went down to the middle of her thigh and accented her body in all the right places, just the top and straps of the dress lined in a lighter red and she wore black heels on her freshly painted pink toes. There were no ribbons in her hair tonight, and only the shell necklace that Kyo had given her decorated her torso. Light makeup adorned her facial features accenting her beautiful eyes that Kyo loved so much. Kyo never thought of Tohru as a stunning beauty but tonight she ran chills up his spine.

Tonight she looked absolutely seductive.

Kyo for one couldn't help but let his jaw drop slightly. He'd always seen her wearing pastels and bright colors, but a deep, dark-red mini dress? He didn't know if he'd be able to last the night.

Mine put her hands on her hips seeing Tohru begin to fiddle with her purse when no one made a comment. "Well don't just stare at her! Say something!"

Kyo's face burned as Tohru looked away embarrassed. Suddenly he was tongue tied and nothing would come out of his mouth. "Ah I..."

Shigure bumped Kyo out of the way. "Tohru-kun, you look drop dead sexy!"

"Shigure, you freakin' bastard!" Kyo scolded.

"Ha! How's that for a complement?" Shigure asked Ayame as the king nodded in approval.

Hatori looked down at Tohru as she came down the stairs noting how 'bare' she was. "Do you have a jacket?" He asked with a raised eyebrow seeing the bare skin of her small shoulders.

Mine appeared from no where and handed Tohru a black long sleeved bolero that tied below her breast. "Of course she has a little something to cover her arms! Hatori-san, don't be silly!"

Hatori fingered the thin material on her shoulder. "This 'bolero'... it's see-through."

"The latest style!" Mine chuckled while slapping his hand away from her project.

Shigure nudged Hatori as the doctor snapped his hand back from Tohru as if his hand had slipped into a mouse trap. "Oh come on, 'Tori-san, don't be such a party pooper. You act like she's your daughter." Shigure leaned close and wiggled an eyebrow. "Oh, but such a sexy daughter you have! I bet you want to keep her all to yourself, don't you?" Hatori only shook his head in dismay.

Kyo nodded at Tohru trying to play his emotions off coolly. "You look... r-really hot- I mean beautiful- no I mean...nice." He mentally slapped himself. That was the best he could come up with? Lameo! And since when did he ever say 'hot'?

"Thanks, it was all Mine-san's work." Tohru responded understanding what Kyo was trying to say. She didn't want to make him even more uncomfortable. He groaned. She was better at this 'playing cool' than he was at the moment.

"You give me too much credit, Tohru-chan!" Mine laughed while bowing down at the compliment.

Ayame inspected Tohru's outfit critically. Tohru noticed a small sense of sadness wave over him but she must have just imagined it. "Yes, it really is a splended piece, Mine-chan. If I do say so myself, Tohru here looks anything but a boring girl." He gave her a wink. "You're rather naughty tonight, aren't you?"

"Nii-san!" Yuki cried with a red face.

"Come, Yuki, give the girl some attention." Ayame laughed while pushing Yuki toward Tohru rather forcefully.

Yuki sighed and turned to Tohru apologetically. She must feel so uncomfortable with the stares and unusual outfit. He had to admit though, Tohru looked well, like a very mature Tohru at the moment.

"It's okay, Yuki-kun. Ayame-san is only being nice..." Tohru tried to console.

'In a perverted way.' He thought darkly before actually saying, "Honda-san, you look... really, really pretty."

"Watch it, rat-boy," Kyo barked.

"In fact," Yuki continued as if he hadn't heard Kyo at all. He cocked his head to the side and chuckled, "you um...look cute."

"CUTE?" Suddenly Momiji slid down the banister and jumped onto Yuki's back to give Tohru a thumbs up. "I'd say she's hot stuff, baby!"

Kyo pushed Tohru by the middle of her back, his face burning like Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer. Why did they have to tease her so much? They were putting such dirty thoughts in his mind and he couldn't have that! He was going to be alone with her for a couple hours! What were they insinuating? He was surprised Shigure didn't pounce him and shove a condom in his face. "We should go now." The sentence was more of a command than a suggestion.

"Oh okay." She said with swirly eyes.

"Have fun, kiddies!" Shigure laughed as Kyo opened the door for Tohru and glared at his relatives before slamming the door closed. Momiji and Yuki went to the window to watch as Tohru bowed apologetically for something but Kyo just tugged her toward the limo brushing off whatever it was she was saying. They rolled away in the car and Yuki sighed while crossing his arms together. 'Well there they go.' His relaxed features suddenly went into deep thought.

"What is it, Yuki?" Ayame asked.

"You did that on purpose didn't you?" He turned to Mine, "And you too, Mine-san."

"Do what, Yuki, dear?" Mine asked innocently.

"You knew Honda-san was hurt from Toega-san's comment earlier today about her being boring and just a 'little house wife'. So you cooked up an outfit for her like that and a date like this." He turned away. "That's just like you to be sneaky about your real intentions good or bad."

Ayame sighed and nodded seriously. "Tohru does too much for us. She must really feel like all she does is take care of the house and feed us."

"The little old lady who lived in a shoe..." Momiji said out loud. "Tradgic..."

"Tohru needs to go out and feel attractive again. Staying with us all the time won't make her feel any younger. As if she already has so many children." Ayame snapped his fingers. "I know! Boys night out! That'll take your minds off of their date!"

"We weren't really thinking about it that hard..." Yuki muttered.

"Alright, break out of kegs!" Shigure laughed.

Momiji threw his hands up in the air, "If there's drinking we should call Haru over! It's no fun around here with out him."

"And Rit-chan?" Ayame asked.

"I don't know... you know how he gets when he's not sober..." Shigure moved his finger in circles near his temple. "Crazy..."

"Fine, go call Ha-kun up and we'll order in pizza! Ah, it feels just like old times." Ayame laughed while walking to grab the cordless phone.

Yuki groaned. "And you suppose eating pizza three days straight is okay? I nearly died."

"Better than your charcoal rich diet." Shigure snickered. Yuki chose to ignore this fact.

Momiji skipped away, "I'll go get Ha'ri to keep an eye on Shi-chan and Aya-chan."

Shigure pouted. "We don't need 'mom' to watch us."

"Your drinking games get out of hand sometimes." The college boy reminded.

Ayame smiled deliriously, "Ah yes," he gave Shigure a heated gaze, "what wild nights we have together."

"Aya, not in front of the kids..."

Momiji plugged his ears just like a little boy and ran away screaming for Hatori to control their rabid hormones.

Yuki watched everyone go to the TV room and he turned to the door.

"Yuki dear, where are you going?" Mine asked as she lingered back.

He turned the door knob and paused. "I'm going for a walk, Mine-san."

"Don't forget a jacket. It's beginning to change seasons."

"Right, right..." Yuki went to the closet door and plucked out a random jacket out of the number of expensive ones in the dark area. It didn't seem to fit him quite right, perhaps he was growing? He looked at the sleeves with little thought. Or maybe he picked up someone else's coat.

"Something on your mind?" Mine asked.

Yuki turned around. Before Tohru, Mine was a sort of mother figure in his life. Aside from being crazy and sometimes scary with Ayame, Mine was very perspective and could tell when Yuki was worlds away from Earth. When he was younger, he would tell her what he was thinking with the promise that his brother would never know. Mine would hold fast to her promise. Tonight in particular he didn't really feel like explaining the tumbling emotions within him. "I guess so..." Was his lame response. With that he closed the door and left Mine wondering what that was all about.

"Yuki left?"

Mine spun around at the voice to see Ayame approaching her. "Ah, yes, he said he had something on his mind and wanted to take a walk."

Ayame stared at Mine for a while as the woman turned away nervously. "You know, I thought that dress looked familiar, the one Tohru was wearing I mean." She looked at the vase of wilting flowers by the window with worried eyes as Ayame only watched her with a rather sad face. "It's that one that sits in the back on the manequin, isn't it?"

Mine was caught. She was hoping that Ayame wouldn't remember that dress but she thought wrong. Her usual cheery voice dropped, "yeah..."

"The one," Ayame tilted Mine's head up. When did he close the distance between them? "You were saving for our first date."

She could feel her breath hitch. "Ayame..."

"Mine, I'm sorry if you feel I'm not paying any mind to you. No, I think about you every day it's just," Ayame's voice gradually grew softer as Mine's heart raced, "there's too much going on right now and I don't want to make a commitment I don't know I can keep. That wouldn't be fair to you, Mine-chan."

Mine turned her face away as she leaned into Ayame's frame. "It's okay, Ayame..." She paused. "Is it Yuki that worries you?" She asked carefully.

She could feel the vibrations of his voice. "I hate to say it but yes. When that girl he loved moved and never returned, he was saddened even though he didn't show it. I know as his older brother he'd never want to share things like that with me," Ayame looked past Mine's shoulder as she bit her lip knowing that Yuki did share that bit of sadness with her, "I don't want Yuki, despite how much he dislikes me, to feel as if he's alone. As if I don't care about him and I just move on without him. I don't want... I don't want him to feel like he'd lose another person."

"Ayame..."

Ayame's lips were set in a straight line as he spoke rather seriously. Mine loved his fun and crazy side but she knew deep down inside, even people like Ayame had demons. "On the other hand I'm selfish in trying to keep you all to my self." He touched her hair, worn in loose pigtails letting his long fingers trail away. "More than anything, I'm afraid to lose you, Mine-chan. To end up with nothing. But I don't want to make you wait for me. It's unfair..."

"Shh..." She put a finger to his lips, hushing him. Perhaps she, aside from Hatori, was one of the few people that could make Ayame quiet. "Even if you told me to leave, you know I wouldn't. I couldn't."

Ayame smiled at the woman he'd loved for years. "Soon, Mine-chan. I promise to give you all of me soon."

"And I'll be waiting."

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Yuki walked down the path kicking a stone down the empty steets. They were in a more secluded part of

town where there were very few neighbors but he could see their lights glowing in their windows. It was so quiet.

He made it down to a more populated area in their town and continued walking, looking in at the store windows at people. Seeing how Tohru secretly felt she was boring reminded him of Machi. Since the day he met her, he couldn't stop thinking about her. Cliche as it sounded, Yuki hoped to see her again. She spoke very little but she was the first person he met that actually saw him for him, not the prince of the Zodiac Host Club. Even when he was at the club with all the girls he talked to, he sometimes felt lonely. He wasn't really carrying on a conversation but rather just nonsense. Besides Tohru, he couldn't remember a time when he could talk freely with someone. The girl he first fell in love with never knew of his feelings. She went off to Germany to study medicine and he never heard of her since.

But now the loneliness only grew as he was known as the Host Club Prince. Put on a pedestal, praised, and worshiped by a number of girls but he didn't want any of that. He wanted to be normal. He couldn't help but suddenly think about Machi.

He kicked the rock when it hit someone. "Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean..."

"It's okay," the girl said, "it only hit my ankle."

Yuki's eyes widened as he stepped closer. Honestly Yuki felt like one of those characters in Kagura's one of many chick flicks. Boy goes out wandering the city with a girl on his mind and bam! There she is in the flesh to scared the living day lights out of him. And to think if he kicked that rock any harder it would have seriously injured her, perhaps render her unable to walk. She'd go on living knowing some strange man kicked a rock at her and made her lose her leg and she'd hate him for the rest of her life!

He was running away with his imagination when he needed to stop and get back to reality. "Ah, Kuragi-san!" Yuki called seeing her about to walk away.

Machi's eyes widened at the man approaching her. It was that prince guy from the Host Club!

"I didn't know you lived this close." Yuki smiled as she stared at him blankly.

"I do."

Yuki and Machi stared at each other and looked away after a moment. He for one didn't know what to say to her but really wanted to talk to her, get to know her more. Why miss a perfect opportunity?

Machi could tell there was something he wanted to say but didn't say anything about it. She smiled slightly. It was a small apology, an excuse to get away. "I should be going now..." she paused, "I'm sorry--"

"Yuki." Yuki instantly filled in for her. "I'm Yuki Sohma."

"Yuki-san, it's nice to meet you, I should be going..."

"Wait, ah Kuragi-san, would you like to get something to drink?"

Machi stared at him. Yuki was such a nice person... and did she really have anything better to do when she got home? She would just go home to her empty apartment, alone. She looked away. "I don't know..."

Yuki's body slumped slightly but he smiled anyhow. "It's my treat, but I'm afraid you'll have to choose the cafe, if you don't mind, since I am not familiar to this part of town."

Machi finally turned back to Yuki with wide eyes. Yuki's heart leapt for the sign of interest. She had such a cute look to her as she thought on his offer. "You want me... to choose?" She'd never really been asked to make decisions but rather just went with whatever everyone said or just didn't make the decision. This man she'd only met once before was being such a kind gentleman. A complete stranger...

She'd never say it but she wanted to know more...

"I suppose," Yuki perked up slightly at her soft voice, "it'll be okay. Just one drink though if you don't mind."

He flashed her a pleasant smile. People normally say that a smile is a smile, but Machi knew this smile was completely different from the one he presented at that Host Club. The smile wasn't forced but rather natural and relaxed. It felt strange how she noticed such small things.

Yuki offered for her to lead the way as the pair began walking with her towards town. "I'm really glad I ran into you tonight."

Machi was silent for a while as she looked up at the evening sky. 'Me too...'

In a world full of people, the both of them suddenly didn't feel as lonely as they thought.

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"Oh God, watch out for that-- AH!" Kyo braced himself against the seat of the limo as Tohru fumbled away from him.

Unfortunately all the other drivers were out on account of 'vacation' and the only available driver was the same one that attempted to kill Kyo way back when Kyo had been chasing Tohru on Haru's bike.

Tohru sat up, "Driver-san, can you...?"

"Honey came in and she caught me red-handed  
Creeping with the girl next door  
Picture this we were both butt-naked  
Banging on the bathroom floor."

"Why does he have to sing and drive at the same-- WHOA!" They turned a sharp corner as Tohru went flying into Kyo's lap. The driver was oblivious to everyone screaming and honking at him outside the car.

"How could I forget  
That I had given her an extra key

All this time she was standing there  
She never took her eyes off me... woot woot, I love this song!"

"Slow down you crazy bastard!" Kyo yelled when he was thrown forward. He regretted getting into a limo. The thing had no seat belts.

"What's that, sonny?" The driver asked turning around as they came to a stop. "We're at the restaurant, Master Sohma."

Kyo instantly opened his door and pulled Tohru with him while glaring daggers at the driver.

"Ah thank you for the... exasperating ride, Driver-san." Tohru said while trying to brush down her fuzzy hair with her hands. The driver nodded as Kyo ushered Tohru to the restaurant.

The driver saluted the couple as he turned the radio up louder:

"But she caught me on the counter  
(It wasn't me)  
Saw me banging on the sofa  
(It wasn't me)  
I even had her in the shower  
(It wasn't me)  
She even caught me on camera  
(It wasn't me)..."

"That song was SO inappropriate." They listened as the music died away along with a screech of tires burning rubber. Kyo growled, "As soon as we get home, I'm firing that son of a..." Conveniently a large truck passed by that was honking its horn. Tohru laughed nervously and tugged Kyo to the restaurant.

"Ah, Master Sohma!" The host greeted as Kyo and Tohru entered the fancy restaurant. Tohru was stunned at the elegance of the setting. Red carpet lined the floors and crystal lighting shimmered on lamps. A man came and took their light jackets as the Host jotted notes down in his book.

"Hello." Kyo said while Tohru continued to look around in awe.

"Yes we're expecting you! Welcome to Sakura, this way please?" The host grabbed two menus and began walking up a flight of stairs. Tohru looked around to see this was definitely an up scale restaurant. What her mother would think of her going to such a beautiful restaurant! Not to mention with a handsome escort!

She was so nervous as Kyo pulled out her chair for her to sit down on. They finally got settled as the host opened the menus and laid them down before the couple. "Enjoy your meal at Sakura."

Tohru and Kyo stared at the menus in amazement. There were so many choices! Not to mention each one had a hefty price tag on it!

"Kyo-kun, I... I don't know what to choose." She blushed, "I'm not used to this kind of eating I'm afraid..."



Kyo grinned. "It's okay. I'm getting Chilean Sea Bass, what do you want to try?" He paused as she looked down at the menu. "And don't worry about the price tag."

"But it's so much! I can't afford it! I'm sorry!" She instantly responded. He chuckled knowing that was what she was worrying about.

"Tohru, it's okay, I promise. The Sohma family is very rich, and what kind of date would I be if I let the lady pay? It's really okay."

She blushed and Kyo knew the mistake in his sentence. He called himself her date! He began to blush as well but Tohru just buried her face back into the menu while muttering a small okay.

She continued to look. She didn't want to get something huge and messy even though her stomach was willing to eat anything at the moment. Kyo would think she was a pig! Nor did she want to ruin Mine's work of art she was wearing. Then again she wasn't up to a salad either since she was famished from skipping lunch that day. Soup? No, she might slurp and create rude table manners. A sandwich? How many times would she ever come back here? She couldn't eat a sandwich! "How about some sashimi? Or Sushi? Sukiyaki? I'm not sure..." She said nervously after a while.

Kyo glanced over the menu. "Why not all three?" He asked without looking up at her.

"Ah! That's definitely too much! I couldn't eat it all!"

Kyo browsed the menu before looking over at Tohru. "Well, I'm really hungry."

'Me too!' She thought excitedly at the thought eating anything at the moment.

"We can share, how about that?"

Tohru brightened up. "Oh that sounds good!"

The waiter came by and took their orders not a moment later. The pair sat back and looked down below where a dance floor was displayed in the center. Tohru turned to Kyo and thanked him for taking her out.

"It's been so long since I've been out like this, it feels nice!" She said.

Kyo took a sip of his wine. "I'm glad then."

"In fact, I'm really happy you took me out tonight, Kyo-kun. You..." Tohru's voice quieted slightly, "you are very important to me."

Kyo paused his glass over his lips and watched as Tohru smiled into her lap. The last time she talked about going out was at the beach when she mentioned about Satsuki. He warmed slightly seeing that she had not even the slightly thought of the man at the moment. She was happy.

He was happy.

Tohru stared wistfully as people fluttered down below to some kind of ballroom dance. She stood giggling. "Kyo-kun, do you want to dance?"

"What? Now?"

"Well, it'll pass time until our food comes, don't you think? And besides," she walked around the table and pulled him up, "we never did have that dance, remember?"

Kyo stared at her sweet, pleading visage. How could he say no?

They made it down the stairway and towards the dance floor where Kyo took hold of Tohru's hand and spun her onto the dance floor before the pair began rocking slowly back and fourth in time with the music. At first they carried about a foot of space between them but by the third song Tohru settled for holding herself closer to Kyo. She blushed at such daring acts on her behalf, but silently jumped for joy when she felt Kyo lean into her as well.

"Maybe it's good we saved our first dance till later." Tohru said.

"Why?"

"We wouldn't have as much fun as we do now!" She laughed hugging him slightly to suggest they wouldn't have been able to hug before.

Kyo chuckled as well. "I guess so."

Finally the pair grew hungry and returned to their table to chat about mundane things in life when their food arrived at the table.

"Enjoy." The waitress said.

They said their thanks for the meal and the pair began eating.

Tohru's eyes instantly lit up at tasting Kyo's cooked fish. "Oh this is delicious!"

He found himself smiling with her.

She beamed while rocking side to side with her chopsticks clutched in one hand, "This really is the best food I've ever tasted!"

Kyo watched Tohru eat, surprised how happy she got after trying a little of everything. He held back his laughter as he watched her slowly eat faster while trying to be polite at the same time. He'd never seen Tohru so hungry before. Oh well, it wasn't like she was the fattest thing on two legs. And if she was hungry she should be eating! Even though she was obviously more hungry than he was, she went along praising the good company and good food while trying to eat daintily. That was just the way she was, thankfully for every single thing including the food currently passing through her mouth.

"We can go out more like this... if you want." He said as they conversed over their food.

"Oh no, this is too much really. But going anywhere with you, Kyo-kun, well it's just so much better!"

He had his chopsticks in his mouth as she said that and Kyo felt warm all over. To this day she still knew what to say, the one thing that would make his day better than it already was. But here he was when he was the one who was suppose to be making her feel better.

But was that the only reason for this date? Just to make her feel better? Didn't he want this too? Just the two of them out and about without all the Sohmas lurking around every corner felt like a private moment with Tohru. It felt almost possessive in thinking he had her all to himself, like a spoiled child. He wanted to do something extra special for her. Something they both enjoyed.

A private moment...

Kyo grinned knowing exactly what he would do.

-----  
After dinner and dessert (which Kyo ordered one of everything on the menu for Tohru to taste), the pair walked outside into the slightly cooler air. It was a sign of the fall season approaching. They walked to the curb when Kyo held Tohru back.

"Why don't we walk home?"

"Oh sure!" She smiled while patting her stomach lightly. "Probably need to walk off all that eating! Weight gain is increasing, you know?"

He laughed and led her down the sidewalk. "I doubt you need to worry about gaining wait, Tohru."

They continued to chat while walking at a leisurely pace until they came upon the street where the Sohma house was. Tohru was about to turn the corner when Kyo held her back again.

"Kyo-kun?"

"Follow me, Tohru. Oh and close your eyes." Tohru watched Kyo smirk, making her heart race faster. How she would melt at such a gaze. "I want to surprise you."

She nodded and slowly closed her eyes. Kyo waved a hand in front of her face to make sure she had those peepers closed before taking hold of her hand and walking down a path.

"K-Kyo-kun," Tohru stuttered feeling a branch brush against her open-toed shoes. She wasn't afraid but when she had her eyes closed, things just touching her without knowing what it was kind of freaked her out.

"It's okay, we're almost there." After about two minutes, Tohru began tripping all over the path. There were no branches or debris around the walking area and if there was, Kyo cleared the path a little so she wouldn't trip. Tohru tripped again.

"What the hells the matter with you?"

"Tehehe!"

Kyo turned around to see Tohru laughing with her eyes shut tightly. "What is it?"

"It's nothing, Kyo-kun, it's just funny how I'm stumbling around wearing these high heels. Ahaha, gomen gomen."

Kyo stopped walking causing Tohru to run into his back. She was about to call out his name again when suddenly she felt strong arms lift her off the ground bridal-style and begin walking again.

"Ah my dress!" Tohru laughed and quickly scooped up the fabric closer to her bottom. "It's a bit too short for this kind of thing."

"No one's around." Kyo said while blushing. The thought of seeing her undergarments were a bit too much for his mind. If she was already wearing such an arousing dress, he didn't know what lay beneath that dress would do to him.

"I could be flashing the trees!"

"The trees don't care!" He argued while she giggled some more.

"You don't have to carry me, it's okay."

"Can't have you breaking an ankle or something. Besides it's faster this way."

"Sorry, Kyo-kun."

"Don't be." He poked her playfully on the side of her leg. "You'll just have to carry me back home, okay?"

They both laughed at the mental image of Tohru trying to carry her up the slope and onto the main road.

Finally Tohru felt Kyo come to a stop and put her down gently. They stood in silence for a moment. All she could hear were the crickets soft hum and the sound of the wind brushing the grass around her ankles. It was just so quiet. She groped for Kyo's hand.

"Scared?"

"Ah, a little!" She confessed.

Kyo put his hand out for her to grab. He gently held her hand as well before leaning over to catch a glimpse of her serene face. Her eyes were fluttering with excitement and her long hair was whisked with the wind tickling his forearms. Even her smell, like the day he met her wafted through his senses, sugar and fruit, it was so fitting. She was just so beautiful inside and out. He was tempted to lean in and kiss her but thought better on it.

He breathed out. "Open your eyes."

Tohru let her eyes flutter open and she took in the sight. She remained speechless for what seemed like eons.

"Tohru?"

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"Tohru?"

"It's beautiful," she breathed.

When she opened her eyes she found herself in a wide open field with not a soul around for miles. The field stretched out endlessly toward the same mountains she could see back at her bedroom balcony. Behind Kyo and Tohru was the path that Kyo had taken her down and the black outlining of trees lining the field. The zero population and remoteness of the scenery made the boundless sky the real breather.

Millions upon millions of tiny lights enveloped the skies, going on forever. She had never seen such a beautiful sight in her entire life. It made Tohru feel so small. All those nights sitting on the roof with Kyo could not compare to the amount of stars she could see from here. With her right hand still holding onto Kyo's hand, she extended her left hand toward the heavens, wondering how such a sight could take her breath away.

Just deep blankets of stars in an open field, sharing this sight with Kyo.

Kyo watched Tohru bring her hand back down while continuing to stare upward. "I want to reach up and touch the sky, it just goes on forever and ever." She turned to Kyo and jumped into his arms. "Oh, Kyo-kun, this is so wonderful!" From the sudden weight, Kyo lost balance and fell over onto the thankfully dry grass. They scrambled up into a sitting position; Tohru sitting in Kyo's lap with her legs swung to the side while he held her back with one arm and the other on the plush grass for support. She continued to hug him muttering her ultimate thanks over his shoulder.

He blushed, hugging her back nervously at their current position. He tried to make conversation. "It's nothing like the stars we see at home. When I was smaller I would run away from home and come here. It is sort of like my secret spot... I guess."

"Like Yuki-kun's!"

"What?"

Tohru shook her head. "N-nothing!" Oops, she promised not to tell about that! "B-but this is really a special place," Tohru looked up again only to find the moon. She was slightly disappointed there wasn't a full moon out, but the quarter moon felt just fine. She took a deep breath while closing her eyes and rocked into Kyo, burying her face into the crook of his neck. "Beautiful..." She whispered.

Kyo breathed out feeling Tohru's small frame pressed against his and her soft hair brushing against his face. "Yeah..." He muttered wondering what he was referring to; the moon or her.

"It's better than anything I've ever imagined. Kyo-kun is too kind to me." Kyo let her go as she backed

away to stare into Kyo's eyes.

Kyo looped his hands around her back squeezing her gently. "A special place for a special person," he replied huskily.

She blushed while pushing him playfully. "K-Kyo-kun."

He laughed out loud knowing that would make her embarrassed. It was corny but it served its purpose anyhow. He knew he'd die if he ever saying anything, even if it was in a joking manner, like that in front of his relatives. They'd never let him live it down. Meeting her eyes again he briefly kissed her forehead sending shivers up her spine. She never met a man who treated her so kindly. She pulled his hair away from his face, tracing the lines of his angular jaw with her eyes. Their noses were just barely brushing as her eyes drooped slightly feeling Kyo's hands move from her slender waist, running up her bare back and back down. They were so close.

It all felt like a dream.

Kyo leaned in and kissed Tohru on the lips, both of their eyes closing.

Was this real?

She kissed him back, holding his head close to hers as his soft kiss turned rather wanton. There was no right or wrong, just this moment to hold forever. He didn't know what possessed him to hold her kiss longer than he expected, but her sudden eagerness to kiss him back drove him over the edge. Tohru felt Kyo lean forward, pressing her back against the grass as he continued to send butterfly kisses down her neck. She never thought she'd feel so much love for anyone like this again. She unlaced her hands from the back of his neck gently grazed his toned chest with her fingers as he hovered above her. With the dim moonlight above, it made his eyes glow almost like a cat.

She slowly brought her hands to the sides of his face, pulling Kyo down to kiss her and his skin jolted like electricity at their touch. She felt so daring. Maybe it was the wine? The surreality of it all? The fact he kissed her and told her he loved her? She didn't know why she did it but at the moment all caution was thrown to the wind. She wanted to show him she wanted him just as much as he wanted her. Kyo growled, feeling a huge energy and life emit from Tohru as he held himself up with one arm and let his other hand caress her silky bangs. She moaned at his touch making Kyo's head dizzy.

Finally they came up for air. He stared at her softly smiling face, her pink lips, and her brown hair fanned around her. It took all his self control not to ravish her again. "Damn it, you don't know what you do to me, Tohru." He kissed her lightly again and again. "I love you so much."

"Kyo-kun..." Tohru whispered, seeing the endless night sky beyond the man filling her current thoughts. She never felt such a deep emotion like the one she shared with Kyo. With just their second kiss there was so much to read between the lines. So much she wished to convey through that kiss. She began to sit up and Kyo moved around her so she could lean on his chest while they continued to stare at the heavens, pointing out constellations and squeezing each other's hand once in a while.

There was so much she wanted to say.

Slowly she turned around and just as she leaned in he did as well to kiss each other gently once more in a slow kiss. She licked her lips and put a hand to Kyo's chest, listening to his heart beating in time with her own.

"Kyo-kun, I don't want to ask you for anything since you've given me so much already."

"What is it?"

"But if it's anything can you promise me something?"

"What is it?" He asked again while chuckling.

Tohru got up from his embrace, suddenly missing the warmth they shared as she got on her hands and knees to look Kyo square in the eye. He only stared back at her confused as she continued to search his amber eyes.

"What the heck are you doing?" He finally asked.

She tilted her head to the side, a trait that Kyo always found quite cute on her before inching closer to Kyo. He half expected her to kiss him again but she bumped her head with his gently. "Promise you'll still love me tomorrow."

He gave her an odd look but laughed anyway. "You're a weird girl. Yes, Tohru, I promise to love you tomorrow."

"Always?"

Why was she asking such a weird question? 'Would he love her tomorrow', of course he would! He put a hand on her head ruffling her hair.'

"Itsumo."

-----  
Kyo opened the door to the Sohma estate, letting Tohru in before him. They still had their hands entwined with one another's as they entered the warm home. The entire walk home, the pair walked in compatible silence, just Tohru humming some kind of nameless tune. It made Kyo smile knowing she only sang when she was happy. As Kyo closed and locked the door, Tohru took off her balero and hung both of their jackets in the closet.

"We're home!" She announced. She waited a moment only to hear faint sounds. "Where did everyone go?" Kyo walked ahead of her hearing strange sounds coming from the TV room. Hearing a familiar tune, his pace quickened.

"Oh hell no!"



"Kyo-kun?"

Kyo and Tohru burst through the doorway staring at the spectacle before them.

"They're freaking DRUNK!"

"EH?"

"I wanna be your lover," Shigure sang, "your only latin lover.  
We'll go around the world in a day." Shigure rolled his hips around.  
"Don't say no, no.  
Shake it my way, oh shake your bon-bon,  
shake your bon-bon, shake your bon-bon."

Kyo slapped a hand over his face at the horrid sight before him. "Why are they singing kareoke?" He wondered out loud. "Not to mention they're half drunk."

Indeed, there in the room was Ayame, Shigure, Haru, Momiji, and Hatori. Ayame, Shigure, and Haru being drunk out of the five, Momiji video taping, and Hatori just watching. Among them, pizza boxes littered the table, various kareoke disks thrown about the room, and alcohol and sodas littering the floor like they'd just thrown a wild party. Kyo put a hand up to shield Tohru's eyes as Shigure began unbuttoning a few of his shirt buttons to give off a 'latin flare'. Momiji just burst out laughing as did Ayame.

"I didn't know there was a miniture stage in the TV room." Tohru said behind Kyo's hand.

"The idea of even having that stupid thing is dumb, but Ayame wanted it there." Kyo glared at Shigure, "You damn dog, put your shirt back on!"

"You're in the presence of a lady!" Momiji giggled as well from behind the camera eye.

Shigure's song ended and he caught the sight of Kyo and Tohru. "The love birds are back so soon!" He laughed. Jumping off the stage rather awkwardly, he nudged Kyo roughly as the already pissed-off-man backed away. "Only a quickie, hua, Kyo-kun? Oh you naughty boy!"

"Damnit, Shigure, you're drunk!" Kyo responded ignoring the fact that Shigure was assuming he and Tohru had sex.

'Gah, don't think about that right now!'

'So you can think about it later?' An evil voice asked in the back of his mind.

Shigure stood up, wavering side to side. "Of course I'm not drunk!" He smiled in Tohru's direction as the girl watched on with wide eyes. "Both Tohru-kun's look... very nice."

Kyo shook his head and pulled Tohru away from Shigure. "Damn sick, bastard..."

Momiji put the camera down and hugged Tohru. "Yeay! You're back! Did you have fun?"

"Oh yes, thank you for asking!" Tohru said as Haru came onto the stage next, choosing his song. She looked around. "It looks like you all were having a lot of fun!"

Momiji nodded. "Yes! Well, I am drinking soda, Haru was too until I think Aya-chan put something in his drink for kicks. Now Haru is crazy too!"

"College reble." Haru muttered into the microphone looking in Kyo's direction. He raised his fist up slowly. "Power to the people."

"Amen to that!" Momiji cheered.

"What? That doesn't even make sense!" Kyo yelled in outrage.

Haru put his hand in the air with just his thumb, pointer, and pink jutting into a rocker pose, as he bent his head down dramatically.

"Backstreet's back, alright

Hey, yeah  
Oh my God, we're back again  
Brothers, sisters, everybody sing  
Gonna bring the flavor, show you how  
Gotta question for you better answer now, yeah"

Haru drew his hand across his face, really getting into the song now.

"Am I original?  
Yeah  
Am I the only one?  
Yeah"

Next he drew his hand down his body rather slowly.

"Am I sexual?  
Yeah  
Am I everything you need?  
You better rock your body now

Everybody  
Yeah  
Rock your body"

Kyo and Tohru sat down to watch the Kareoke performance. Momiji grabbed his camera and sat right next to Tohru. Tohru was surprised that Haru even knew Backstreet Boys. It was how do you say... a

little freaky.

"Wow, Hatsuharu-kun is very talented!" Tohru said while watching him choreograph his own dance routine.

Momiji laughed while filming the whole thing. "I think he's just tipsy."

"Acting like an idiot is more like it." Kyo muttered. He watched Haru do an impression of a robot and spin around into a split before popping back up and continuing to dance. It looked like he forgot about singing and was pretty much just dancing now. "Hatori, how long have they been doing this?" Kyo asked with an eye brow raised.

Hatori turned to the three sitting on the floor and crossed his arms. "I'd say they just started. Ayame found it in the closet and tried to set it up."

"Did you sing yet, Hatori-san? I bet you're very good." Tohru smiled up at him.

Kyo and Momiji stifled a slight laughter as Hatori coughed from embarrassment.

"Hatori? Sing?" Kyo looked at Momiji. "He wouldn't."

Momiji gave a smug smile.

Kyo's eyes widened. "He didn't."

"Oh. But he did." Momiji tapped the side of the camera showing the evidence.

Ayame leaned over onto Hatori, pressing all his weight on his friend. "Oh Ha-san sang so beautifully! Who would have known? Then again, in our younger days, Ha-san sang in the chorus."

"Ayame, don't you dare say another word or I'll tell every single one of the customers that time you tried to make out with a tree."

"I understand." The silver haired man instantly replied as they watched Haru run off the small stage and grab some leaves from a potted plant in the corner and began waving them around as if he were in a rave. Even Tohru had to burst out laughing.

The party went on for two more hours when a thought suddenly hit Tohru. She sipped her soda as Shigure took another turn and looked around to stare at the couch.

"Where is Yuki-kun?"

Kyo sat up from the floor to see the rat was missing. "Yeah, wasn't he here with you guys?"

Ayame hic-uped and shook his head. "He went for a walk... but that was so long ago!" Ayame put a hand up to his forehead. "Oh where did my brother go? Oh, Mine-chan disappeared as well! My loves, where have you gone to?" Suddenly an empty soda can came sailing through the air and hit Ayame

square in the face.

"I'm right here! Please be quiet, the neighbors might call the police thinking we're torturing people over here." Ayame looked up to see Yuki close the door behind him.

"Yuki-kun, welcome home!" Ayame slurred.

"I'm home." Yuki turned to see that Tohru and Kyo were back from their date. He brightened up. "Honda-san, did you enjoy yourself?"

She smiled up at Yuki. "Of course! Kyo-kun was very nice. I'd love to go out again with him."

Kyo blushed scarlet and Yuki just smirked. "That's good to hear."

"Where did you go, Yuki-kun?" Tohru asked, watching him sit on the couch beside Hatori.

"I... went for a walk." She watched as a ghost of a smile crossed his features. There seemed to be something more.

"For more than two hours?" Kyo asked with skepticism.

Yuki's smile disappeared and he gave Kyo an annoyed glare. "Yes. Mind your own business and shut up."

"Ohh, touche." Momiji said as Tohru only watched on with curiosity.

One could almost see the cat ears poking from his orange hair. "No, you shut up!"

"Shut your face." Yuki responded knowing it was a juvenile thing to say. It really didn't make any sense either. Kyo opened his mouth only to be cut off by Yuki's hand. "FACE." Yuki cut Kyo off again, "FACE."

"Damnit, what jumped up your @\$@ and died?" Kyo grumbled while turning back to Shigure's performance of "I like big butts." It was disgusting but better than looking at Yuki's nasty face.

Yuki caught Tohru staring at him worriedly and he only winked ever so slightly. So he was just teasing Kyo? She watched Yuki lean over to whisper in her ear.

"I'll tell Honda-san later."

"O-okay."

Haru waved at Yuki tiredly. He sat next to his cousin as a slow smile crept upon his face. Haru gave out a long yawn and extended his hand around Yuki's shoulder. Yuki glared at the other boy while Momiji and Ayame burst out laughing while Tohru's eyes grew to the size of dinner plates and Kyo just looked away.

"That must be the worst move ever." Yuki growled while tossing Haru's arm away from him.

"It wasn't suppose to be discreet."

"Haru, you must be seriously drunk."

"No. Shigure-niisan is seriously drunk. I am merely horny."

"GOD...!"

Haru point a finger at Yuki's disgusted face and with a monotone voice said, "got'ch ya."

"Haru you're not funny," Yuki muttered while sinking down into his chair. He wondered why he even bothered coming back home tonight. He'd much rather be back at that little coffee shop with Machi again.

The group watched as Shigure began shaking his butt while howling like a dog. This was just too weird. This time both Yuki and Kyo covered Tohru's eyes.

Yuki looked to the clock. "It's nearly one in the morning now. We should get to bed." He said trying to get this party wrapped up.

Kyo rolled his eyes. "They won't settle down. Just look at that," Kyo said motioning toward Shigure who was slapping his own behind. "We'll have nightmares."

"Maybe I can get everyone to calm down!" Tohru said with a determined face.

Yuki put up a hand, "Please, Honda-san, I rather not see you get molested by butt-shaker on stage over there."

Momiji sat in Tohru's lap with a smile. "I think you can settle everyone down. Why don't you sing a pretty song?"

"I don't think..."

"Please?" Momiji asked. "I really love it when you sing..."

After a moment she gave in to those adorable eyes. "Okay."

She stood up when Shigure was done and climbed on the small stage. She went through the list of songs and came upon a slow one that would hopefully make everyone calm down.

A slow piano started up and Ayame scoffed. "It's too slow!"

"Shh! Tohru's singing now!" Momiji hissed while video taping. She focused on the small screen and began singing.

"Why, oh why do I love you so much?  
My tears overflow this much"

She opened her eyes as the beat picked up and her voice gained amplitude, softer than the original singer, but still lovely to hear. Kyo watched in awe since he never heard her sing in such a manner.

"Back in that time, there was so much to lose that I couldn't sing anything  
A place just a little ways away--That was where I was"

All the men watched her smile as she sang, her voice lulling them to a higher state of mind. Passionate, tender and loving was what she tried to project. She was singing this because she was happy. She blushed as she continued to sing.

"Why do I love you so much?  
"Your voice rings inside me so much it makes me sad  
Just what it was that supported me so much  
From afar, I realize it now"

An instrumental picked up as she brought the microphone away from her lips. Sometimes singing what she wanted to say was so much easier than saying it herself. Singing this song, she could relate to it. Why did she love Kyo so much? Did she really have an answer to that? It was something she couldn't express in words. It was so easy...

Already she could see Ayame, Shigure, and Haru calming down as they stared at her. She smiled and continued her song.

"Like a lost child, crying and searching  
But there was no such thing as forever  
'It's okay if you don't believe in anyone' you whispered  
Were the two of us really alike?"

Were she and Satsuki ever alike? He was the one who took her from her friends and made her believe she was nothing. Kyo brought her back though, he was the one she loved so much. Tohru breathed at the pause in the song before trailing off the last verse.

"Why do I love you so much?  
It's so easy I just can't answer"

There was complete silence as Tohru put the microphone down. Maybe it was really bad singing? She'd destroyed their ear drums? They were deaf now?

She closed her eyes. "I ah..."

"That," Shigure interrupted quietly, "was beautiful." Opening her eyes she saw all her friends grinning at her. It really did feel good to sing so openly now. It made her feel alive again.

"Arigatou!" She called while bowing.

She turned off the karaoke machine quietly as possible and went off stage to the linnen closet across the

hall as everyone began piling out of the room. She pulled out blankets and handed each of the Sohmas a blanket claiming it 'might be chilly tonight'. As they proceeded out of the room, she came around the table and draped a blanket over Momiji before taking the camera from his hands and placing it on the table. He was just too cute to wake up!

'Thank you so much everyone. Not just for listening to me, but for being a family to me.' She thought as she went to dress for bed.

Later that night as Tohru was walking from her bathroom to her bed, she stopped to look out her balcony window. There weren't nearly as many stars out and the moon was covered by clouds. She breathed, remembering her time with Kyo in the meadow. She turned to her door, staring at the wooden frame with thought.

-----  
Kyo turned over in his sleep as Tohru poked her head into his bedroom. Was this okay? She wasn't doing anything bad, she just wanted to talk to him. Creeping over to his bed side she saw that he was asleep. She smiled lightly at his calm figure. No, she wouldn't bother him now.

She placed a blanket over Kyo. Staring at it now, it was the same blanket she covered him with on that train ride to the beach. That all seemed so long ago. She wanted to keep her memories of her and Kyo forever. She promised that even if she couldn't say she loved him, she'd show him. And one day, she prayed for the strength she needed to tell him exactly how she felt.

Exactly how much she truly loved him.

She kissed him gently on the forehead only to have Kyo shift and open an eye at her and then close again. "Tohru?" She was about to hush him back to sleep when he pulled her down with one hand, bringing her head down to his shoulder. "Tohru..." He mumbled. "Are you okay?"

"I... I just wanted... to talk to you, Kyo-kun," she whispered. She wasn't sure if he was awake or talking in his sleep. When he didn't reply, Tohru tried to get out of his hold.

"Just sit here with me, Tohru." He muttered again, holding her with both of his arms now.

She blushed as she stiffened at the sound of her name. He was dreaming of her? Oh, she hoped it was a good dream at least. She slowly brought her legs up on his bed awkwardly since he was holding her torso. She didn't want to wake him up. She cuddled into his chest trying to get comfortable when she heard Kyo sigh and place his chin on top of her head. Was this okay? To be sleeping next to him like this? They weren't doing anything but still, wasn't this indecent?

'What are you talking about? It isn't like you've never slept with a man before!' The little voice in the back of her mind said.

'But I haven't,' she argued, 'I've slept with Satsuki but this is different. This is gentler and more loving. He doesn't want me in his bed just to have sex, he wants me here because he loves me.' She smiled, 'I'm sleeping next to Kyo-kun, the person I really love.'

To that, the little voice had nothing to say.

"I... I love you... Kyo," she whispered dropping the horrific off his name. There she said it, but it didn't count since he was asleep. That wasn't fair. She sighed at her cowardliness and shook her head. The only time she had courage was when the man of her dreams was asleep and didn't hear a word she said. She listened intently to his even breathing and she felt herself grow sleepy as well. She entangled her leg with Kyo's subconsciously and wandered off into her own dreamworld. She hoped she and Kyo would meet together in their dreams as they lay together sleeping side by side.

'Promise me you'll still love me tomorrow?'

'Itsumo.'



## 34 - words you should not say

Warning for Language

Tohru washed dishes with Ritsu the following morning after the wild party the night before. Tohru for one had to admit it was a night quite out of the ordinary.

"Ri-chan-san, why didn't you join the kareoke game?"

Ritsu looked down into the soapy sink. "I am not very good when it comes to drinking... I'm afraid I cannot hold my liquor."

Tohru smiled nervously. "I see."

Kyo entered the kitchen and Tohru flushed at the sight of him. They exchanged a small glance before Kyo disappeared through the back door and Tohru went back to furiously scrubbing dishes. Ritsu looked to the door and then back at Tohru who was still blushing.

"So you had a nice night, I hope..."

"Oh it was fantastic!" Tohru's eyes widened, "I-I mean..."

Ritsu smiled and Tohru couldn't help but see how calm Ritsu was. Her on the other hand had her heart beating like a jack hammer just thinking of what went on hours ago.

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That morning when Kyo woke up, he was daft to find Tohru in his bed. At first he was surprised, but then he was scared shootless. They didn't do what he thought they did. Did they? He could have swore he went to bed alone! He knew he drank one too many glasses of alcohol!

He scooted away as carefully as he could to see Tohru's eyebrows furrow at the loss of contact with him. He glanced under the sheets to thankfully find both of them were fully clothed.

And that was a relief.

He moved back toward the girl and watched her sleep a little longer. She looked content and happy when he returned to her side and Kyo wanted to say there watching her sleep. He knew he had to wake her though. It wouldn't be good if anyone caught them in such a position.

"Hey, sleepy head." Kyo brushed his finger tips down the length of her arm.

Tohru's eyes opened and after yawning she smiled. "Good morning." Suddenly her eyes snapped wide open. "Kyo-k...!"

"SH!" He hushed her, quickly slapping a hand over her mouth. "You might wake everyone!"

"I'm so sorry for entering your room without your permission, I just came in to talk and you were sleeping! I didn't want to wake you but then you hugged me and I couldn't get out, and I thought it would be okay if I slept next to you- oh but it was too forward of me and I...!"

"Tohru, you didn't do anything wrong!" Kyo cried, stopping her in her rant. He put both of his hands on either side of her tangled brown hair. "It's okay. It's really okay. I didn't mind."

"You didn't?"

"No."

"Oh."

"It was..." Kyo felt his face grow warm, "nice to wake up with you."

"Oh." Tohru's face reddened to match Kyo. She laughed nervously while trying to bat Kyo's hands away from her. "I look like a mess!" As soon as she said that Kyo kissed her on the lips and her entire body slackened.

"You look beautiful." Kyo chuckled seeing Tohru try to cover her face in embarrassment. She was just too cute. "Anyway, you better get outta here soon. It wouldn't be good if you got caught in here. Not good for either of us," he added.

Tohru nodded and kissed Kyo on the cheek before crawling out of the warm bed and onto the cool floor. Before reaching for the door knob she turned around to stare at Kyo in bed.

"Maybe next time, we can meet like this on purpose," she teased. She missed Kyo's jaw drop at her joke as she closed the door, preparing for the day ahead of her.

-----  
"Tohru-san?"

"Eh?" Tohru was knocked out of her stupor as Ritsu called her back to the present. "I'm sorry did you say something?"

"Today during the club, will Kyo-san be working as well?"

Tohru washed the last plate and then turned to Ritsu with a curious look. "What do you mean?"

Ritsu stopped what he was doing and looked at Tohru with a shocked look. "You haven't heard?"

"Eh?"

"OH DEAR GOD, PLEASE STRIKE ME NOW! RIGHT HERE ON THE SPOT! HOW COULD I HAVE WENT ON MY DAYS, WITH HOLDING SUCH IMPORTANT INFORMATON--!"

"Ri-chan-san! Please, please calm down!" Tohru panicked.

"NOOO, THIS IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE!" Ritsu appeared with a knife in hand. "PLEASE LET ME SACRIFICE MY BODY FOR SUCH FIENDISH ACTS!"

"RITSU!"

After a good cool-down on Ritsu's part, Tohru got him to sit down while handing him tissues to wipe his face with.

"I'm sorry, Tohru-san."

"No please, it's really alright." She smiled while placing a lock on the knife drawer. She stopped and turned to Ritsu seriously. "But what was it you were saying before?"

"Oh, well you see, there was talk among Shigure and Hatori that Kyo-san... Kyo-san doesn't want to be part of the Host Club anymore."

"Really? But he is the special member!"

Ritsu nodded. "Yes, I am not sure how Ayame feels about it..." Ritsu covered his face in shame, "I shouldn't even know such information. I'm an evesdropper, I'm so sorry."

"No, please if you don't mind, tell me more."

Ritsu bit his lip but decided to continue. He had to be confident in himself! "Kyo-san told them he doesn't want to be with all those customers anymore. He said he learned to care for someone." His eyes fell on Tohru. "And I hope I'm not assuming too much but... I think that person is you."

Tohru's entire face went bright red and she fiddled with her fingers. "He... he said that?"

"Well that is what I heard Shigure say."

"Oh."

There was silence before Ritsu called Tohru's name out softly. She was still lost in her own thoughts she didn't notice Ritsu tap her shoulder.

"AH! I'M HERE!"

"I DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU!"

"I'M NOT SCARED!"

"I AM!"

"WHY ARE WE SCREAMING?"

"I DON'T KNOW!"

Tohru laughed and shook her head. "What is it that you were asking, Ritsu-san?"

Ritsu watched Tohru relax and he smiled. He didn't know what their family would do without her. "Do you care for Kyo-san too?"

Tohru nodded. "Yes..." She looked away, "I just wish I could tell him."

"Why can't you?"

"I feel like something within me... something won't let me give my heart so easily. Despite how much I want to, I just can't say it." Tohru shuddered. "After all this time... he still has me under lock and key."

"He?"

"Oh, it's nothing." Tohru smiled. "But yes, I care so much for Kyo-kun. So very very much..."

"I... I know it's none of my business but you should tell Kyo-san what you feel. M-Maybe it would be best for not only you, but him as well."

Tohru gave that a thought and slid her hand across the table to touch Ritsu's hand.

'Then why won't you tell him you love him? Why not?'

'Something is stirring... and I don't know what to do.'

-----

The host club hours were open and Tohru saw that all the girls were looking rather disappointed.

"Kyo-sama is late today." One girl muttered.

"Attention, ladies!" Ayame said from the second floor. "I am sorry to announce that Kyo will not be hosting with us any longer."

"WHAT?" Everyone erupted.

Yuki leaned in to Tohru. "I wouldn't be surprised if they brought out torches and pitch forks."

"Yes yes," Ayame said with a slightly sad voice, "I know you will all miss him, but he has decided to give

his heart fully to a woman. As our motto goes, 'A host is a host, and love is love', and the two should never meet.

"Kyo has found love in someone, but that should not sadden you. Love is something that blossoms and grows, just like one day love will grow with you and that special someone. You would not want to keep Kyo all to yourselves would you? No, love is not like that." Ayame paused and smiled warmly, "You may notice how many of our members are now standing down from their membership: Hatsuharu, Hiro, and now our very own Kyo. One day, sadly enough, we cannot entertain such beautiful women anymore. Each of us shall learn to love again! But which host do you think will be next?" Ayame turned slightly to Yuki. "Who will be next?"

Yuki's eyes widened. No, he couldn't know anything about Machi. Could he?

Ayame clapped his hands. "Ah, romance is in the air, ladies! Romance, romance romance! I'd be happy to let you direct your love towards me now! I can take it!"

"AYAME-SAMA!" The girls all cooed.

Tohru laughed slightly seeing how Ayame really loved to be an attention seeker... but sometimes she wondered what his motives really were.

"I still cannot believe I am related to him so directly," Yuki muttered.

Tohru laughed and excused herself from the scene to tend to Hatori's table. She walked over smiling. Kyo really loved her... she was being so selfish in not returning her love to him in words. Oh how she wished to tell him so much. Turning to Hatori's table, Tohru looked up to see Kyo standing by the door way, watching the activities. He slowly turned to her with a soft smile. It melted her heart.

"Tohru-san, are you okay?" Hatori asked seeing Tohru space out.

She took a fleeting look at Kyo and nodded with a small blush. "Yes..."

Hatori caught what it was Tohru was looking at. Was it really that plain to everyone's eyes? Why wouldn't she just come out and say to Kyo she loved him? Was it that other man still lingering on her mind? He watched Tohru refill trays before getting up to leave.

"Why won't you tell him?"

Tohru turned around slowly hearing Hatori say that. "W...what do you mean?"

Hatori smiled. "Tohru-san, why won't you tell Kyo-kun your feelings? Is it your ex fiance? Is that what's holding you back?"

She turned fully toward him, her eyes wide with shock. How did he know?

"Please, Tohru-san," Hatori said now sitting up toward her. His voice softened despite how formal he spoke with her. She had to tell Kyo. "Kyo-kun's curse maybe broken, but do you really think that's all that

matters? He's fallen in love," Hatori's eyes focused in on hers, a certain memory resurfacing within his mind, "don't you think he at least deserves to know if the girl will ever love him back?"

Memories flooded Tohru's mind of Hatori's story.

How could she be so selfish?

"Hatori-san... it's not... it's not easy..."

"They say time heals wounds but if you find medicine for your wounds it would heal faster, don't you think?" He asked.

Coming from a doctor and a friend, it made strange sense. She nodded. "I understand. I'm just nervous is all, silly me."

"It's okay, Tohru-san." He patted her head as his small group of customers came toward him. "Tell him you love him... and mean it with all your heart."

"Hatori-sama?" A girl called. Hatori turned to the girl as Tohru had her head bent. "Will you be with us now?"

Hatori nodded and stood up, resuming his cool type persona while entertaining the girls.

Tohru could hear her heart pounding in her chest. Kyo really loved her... he didn't know it but he already had her heart. She could feel it. The lock and key...

...were slowly being unlocked.

"Tohru?" Tohru jumped and slowly turned to see Kyo standing before her, not wearing his usual costume that Ayame made up, but rather just his normal clothes. "You were spacing out."

"I-I'm okay..."

Kyo smiled. "You need help with those trays?" He asked, taking two from her hands. Before she could protest he kissed her on the forehead making her hush instantly.

"Kyo-sama?" Tohru and Kyo turned to their side to see a pair of girls staring at them with wide eyes. "What are you...?"

Kyo stared at them and merely shrugged. The girls stared at him and then Tohru and suddenly everything clicked.

Tohru for one was surprised how openly Kyo had just shown his feeling for her. She wanted to do the same. Quickly she tip toed to kiss Kyo on the corner of his mouth. She took a fleeting look at him and was happy to see he only smiled back.

'She's really is opening up. She's not holding back what she really feels anymore.' He thought.

The two girls only stared in disbelief. So this was the person Kyo had given up being a host for. They should have been furious but for some reason, they were not. They were rather happy it was Tohru. They only bowed before leaving the couple be.

Kyo turned to Tohru as she turned to him as well, both of them chuckling like there wasn't a care in the world. She loved him so much. When she thought about it, she broke the curse for Kyo, but he broke the curse for her as well. A curse Satsuki had brought upon her and Kyo had slowly but surely helped her though. He never commanded her to do things, he never questioned where she was going, he just loved her, and only her.

He smiled as they started for the kitchen so Tohru and Kyo could put their trays down. She leaned her head on his shoulder with a smile. Today. Today she would tell him everything she'd been holding inside. She would tell him she loved him.

After returning from the kitchen, she stopped Kyo in the back of the room, holding both of his hands in hers. "Kyo-kun, there's something I want to tell you..."

-----  
A man glanced down the worn cobble stone street. It was one of the finer residential areas of this city. One could tell just by looking at how upkeep the streets were. He walked up to a pair of rather bold gates and then down at his note.

"This must be it."

He opened the doors and walked into a beautiful victorian styled home with rose bushes bordering a rather lavish grounds. Could this really be the place? He shook his head and continued to the main door. He ran a hand through his dark black locks and puffed his chest out. It had been too long...

...it was time to take back what was his.

He opened the doors to a scene of girls mingling with other men who he presumed to be these 'host club' people. He looked around and noticed a few girls staring at him. He gave them a cocky smile, melting their hearts as they stared openly at the rather handsome man. He was tall and lean with spiky black hair. He dressed causally in dark brown pants with a fitting black shirt and stole the girl's attention with the most piercing ice blue eyes anyone had ever seen.

He looked around the room once more searching out for his woman only to finally spot her in the back of the room laughing and smiling...

... with another man.

"H-hello." The man turned to his side to see a girl blushing while smiling up at him. He really was not in the mood for these girls and his blood boiled at seeing her with some other guy. She leaves and already found a bastard to sleep around with!

He looked back with a fake, but dashing smile. "Hello, young lady."

Tohru paused mid sentence to turn to the hosting area, his voice piercing her like needles. Kyo watched her facial expressions and noticed she wasn't paying attention to him anymore.

"Tohru?" Kyo called out to her with no response. "Hey, Tohru what's the matter with you?"

Tohru's hands dropped to her sides and it seemed as if all color had drained from her face. As if her spirit was stolen and all that was left was a motionless woman. He quickly turned when he heard a group of girls squealing and zoned in on a male he was not familiar with. He was surrounded by a few girls, two looping their arms with his, giddy with excitement.

"I used to hold his arm like that." Kyo's head snapped back to Tohru who looked mortified with wide expressionless eyes. Her lip trembled and he could already see her eyes tear up with so much pain, hurt, confusion. "Why?" She asked, heaving a sob. "Why are you here?"

"Who's here, Tohru?" Kyo asked while shaking her shoulders. Her eyes were still trained on the man across the room.

"Satsuki."

Tohru was lost beyond comprehension. Was he real? Was Satsuki really there standing among the host club? No, her mind had to be playing tricks on her, how would he find her? Why would he show up out of the blue? She felt old emotions rise within her, pain exploding in her chest like never before. So much hurt resurfacing it made her feel as if she couldn't breathe. Couldn't feel. Like an Anaconda snaking it's way around her body only to constrict before she realized it. It was getting harder to breathe.

On the other hands, Satuski had a girls looped on either side of him when he felt a rude hand shove him backwards.

"What the frack are you doing here?" Kyo asked with a voice smooth as glass. Satsuki took a moment to see it was the man he saw Tohru speaking with. So he had the nerve to shove him did he?

"Watch it." Satsuki growled.

"Go to hell."

The foot steps seemed so quiet in Kyo's hears. He didn't see anything, he didn't hear anything, all he focused on was the idiot before him that made Tohru upset and feel unworthy. The piece of shoot that had the balls to actually show up nearly half a year later. Kyo wouldn't stand for it. He didn't care what consequences happened after this but the man before him would have hell to pay.

"Kyo-kun." So those footsteps were Tohru's. "Kyo-kun, please." She said holding his arm with tears in her eyes. Her touch felt like fire on his arm, igniting a sence of protection within him.

"Tohru-koshii," Satsuki smiled devilishly. Tohru's fearful eyes turned on the man. He looked the same. Those cool icy-blue eyes, piercing through her very core. "It's been so long, koshii."



"Don't you dare call her your 'darling' you mother...!"

"Satsuki," Tohru cut in after Kyo, "w-what are you doing here?" She looked away still holding onto Kyo's forearm. "Please, go away."

"Is that anyway to talk to your fiance, koshii?" He took a step closer to her.

"Please..."

"I've missed you." Another step closer.

"Satsuki..."

"I want you to come back home." Satsuki grinned seeing Tohru shaking in her boots. She was always so easy to convince. Such a soft girl. "Tohru-chan," he said, "you will feel safe with me, just like you always did. I've missed you."

She felt herself sink as her eyes widened. No, she didn't want to be like that again. No! She didn't want that! She didn't want to be so alone again, not ever.

"That's enough, of you!" Kyo growled holding Tohru away from Satsuki.

Hatori stepped before Satsuki. "Sir, you are making a scene and I can't have you scaring the ladies in this room. You are in no position to trespass into our home and harass Tohru-san."

Satsuki looked around him to see many of the customers were staring at the comotion between himself, Tohru, and Kyo. "I don't see how I'm harassing my fiance. I only want to take her back home now." His eyes fell on Tohru. "It seems like Tohru-chan has been playing too much and forgot to come home where she belongs."

"You talk like she's a child!" Kyo yelled. "She's an adult, you idiot, and she can make decisions on her own."

"Can she?" Satsuki asked with an air of confidence and cockyness in his voice. "She made the decision of being with you, and that's not the best decision."

"Satsuki, you're not being fair." Tohru cried. "I don't want to be with you anymore!"

His voice was so sugary and sweet. "You say that with such emptyness, darling." So dark and bone chilling. He wasn't listening to her, he just wanted her back no matter what. "I need you back with me. I've changed, koshii. I'm a better man. Don't you believe me, my love?" He took another step toward the girl.

"D-don't call me that!"

"You say you don't want to be with me, but who will love you the way I love you, koshii? Freak of nature

over here? You'd choose an orange top over me, who has been with you since college?" Satsuki put his hands on his chest, "who will love you the way I do, koshii?"

"Stop calling me that, Satsuki! Stop it!"

Satsuki made a move to hug her when Tohru screamed and ducked before yelling out and shoving him away from her. She opened her eyes to see she actually pushed him away from her. Not far, but the point was she physically denied him. She was about to smile at her accomplishment but thought better of it. Tohru frowned when she saw Satsuki turn a dangerous glance on her.

"It looks like you learned a few things while I was away."

"While you were away? Satsuki, I ran away from you! Y-you cheated on me..."

"It looks like you did the same." He cut her off now glaring at Kyo.

She shook her head in disbelief while trying to calm him down. "Please, don't jump to conclusions. When did you get to be like this? You were always so kind to me and now you're acting like a... a jerk."

Satsuki burst out laughing and made a gesture right back at her. "Yeah well when did you get to be such a whore?"

With that one word it sent Kyo flying right at Satsuki and he landed a punch square in the jaw making Satsuki's head turn to the side and his body slam into the floor. Sprawled over on his back he blanked out for a moment groaning in pain. Tohru screamed and backed away when the entire hall fell silent. It was so quiet not even the birds outside the window dared to chirp and even the air conditioning fell dead. Satsuki blinked and looked up at an orange haired man with his fists raised, glaring at him as if he was the devil himself. Satsuki felt a warm sticky substance at his mouth and brushed it with his thumb only to see it was his own blood.

"You little bastard..." Satsuki drawled, the corners of his eyes narrowing into slits.

Kyo was about to lunge again. How dare he! How dare he defile Tohru like that! He was about to pummel the man to death when he felt Yuki and Shigure pull him back by his arms, holding him away from the devil of a man.

Kyo pointed a finger at Satsuki, murder swirling within his fiery amber eyes. "Don't you ever call her a whore!"

Tohru ran over to help Satsuki up, but he pushed her away and stood up by himself. She moved away from him, standing between Kyo and Satsuki in disbelief.

Satsuki glared at Kyo while pointing at Tohru. "I call em' like I see 'em!"

Kyo continued to wrestle out of Yuki and Shigure's grip letting out a string of foul words as Ritsu and Ayame hurriedly escorted the ladies out. They didn't even question what was going on, never seeing Kyo so angry before.

Momiji came to Tohru's side standing in front of her and Satsuki as she collapsed to the floor crying. He didn't want any harm to come of Tohru and at the moment this situation was spiraling out of control. He stared at Satsuki, his eyes still cold and blue. Such a contrast to Kyo's fiery amber ones. As the two men glare at each other, Momiji knew something bad would come of this. It was like fire and ice and there was no compromise. The stage was set and the massacre was about to begin.

## 35 - Decisions

Tohru couldn't believe her eyes. Satsuki was back. He was actually back and he wanted her to go home with him. She felt the cool floor beneath her hands as she watched his feet struggle against the host members holding him back from Kyo as the pair continued their verbal spar.

Ayame stared at Satsuki as he tried to wrestle from Haru and Hatori's grip. "Sir, why don't we settle this like gentlemen?" Ayame turned around at Kyo, "Kyo, lower your fists and stop acting like some savage."

Hatori nodded saying, "We understand you miss Tohru-san, Sonto-san, but you have no right to come in during hours, scare the girls, and then create a situation between yourself and Kyo-kun. You must calm down."

Satsuki glared at Hatori before pushing both him and Haru off. He wiped blood from his lip with his fist. "Sorry to barge in. I don't think I introduced myself either. I'm..."

"We know," Hatori said with a rather cold tone, "who you are."

Satsuki turned sharply to the crumpled Tohru on the floor behind Momiji. "Nice to know I've been talked about."

She flinched.

Everyone began to come to her defense, the sounds of their voices melting into one of flitting chatter in Tohru's ears. She just wanted everything to go away!

"Hatori!" Kyo yelled out. "You can't be serious about even considering this man to take Tohru back! He's dangerous! He cheated on her! He...!"

"Kyo, that's enough!" Hatori bellowed hushing everyone's talk.

That comment shut Kyo's mouth and he turned away. He didn't miss the smirk on Satsuki's face though. His heart was racing and his blood was boiling. Everything was going so well until he showed up. Tohru looked as if she wanted to find a hole and crawl into it. All Kyo wanted to do was make her smile for him. Now all he could see was her distant frown as if looking back at a life of dispare, like she wanted to change it all.

Momiji watched the pair carefully before turning around to face Tohru who was staring blindly at the floor. "Tohru? Tohru, are you okay?"

Her mouth was dry and her body shook. Why was this happening? She wished Satsuki never came and found her in the first place but knew such a wish was a naïve and foolish thing to consider. Sniffing, she stood up with the help of Momiji, holding onto his shoulder and wishing to gather the strength to stand up for the first time in her life. She prayed for the strength she needed. The boy opened his mouth to repeat

his question but Tohru began to speak shakily, letting go of the Sohma for support.

'It's okay to tell people what you want...'

She needed to stand up for herself.

"Why did you come back...?"

Satsuki's face fell with pain. "Tohru-chan, I've told you. I'm lost without you. I'm nothing without you."

"That's bull!" Kyo burst out.

"Lost without me?" Tohru asked.

Kyo stepped toward Satsuki once again raising a fist. "Stop putting nonsense into her head! She doesn't want to hear it!"

"Why don't you let her talk for herself, hm?"

"You..."

"If you were so lost without me, why didn't you come looking for me?" Tohru cut in quietly. Her voice cracked from the tears she tried to hold back since Satsuki walked into the room. Still, she spoke slowly and deliberately. "It's been more than half a year and the season's have changed. Yet you come now of all times." A tear escaped her eye when she blinked, "If you were so lost without me, why didn't you? Why didn't you even care?"

"Toh..."

"Why didn't you even look for me!?" She screamed while stomping her foot, the noise echoing like shattered glass. Everyone jumped from her outburst. Her face was flushed and her lower lip quivered from hurt and confusion. Shaking her head, her purple ribbons shook side to side, tangled in her brown tresses. "Did you ever love me at all, Satsuki?" She asked quieter.

The room fell silent as her voice echoed in the grandiose room. Tohru's hands were balled tightly as she shut her eyes tightly, her face hot and cold at the same time. She felt angry, relieved, confused, anxious, she felt everything but happy. She felt a familiar warm hand come across her forehead and stroke down her cheek. Chills ran down her back at the sweet sensation the touch gave her.

She opened her eyes to see Satsuki's piercing blue eyes stare back at her intensely. "I'm sorry," he whispered. Finally her tears spilled forth and she felt him latch onto her, hugging her fiercely. "God, I'm so sorry. Yumi told me where you were when she saw you. I was relieved to hear your whereabouts. I thought... I thought you'd come home on your own, but to see you here with another man, it made me jealous. I'm sorry, koshii. I'm sorry for making so many wrong choices with our relationship."

"Satsuki..."

"Come home with me. Even just one day, I'll show you, I'll be better for you." She leaned into his touch, remembering the better times of their relationship. The time when he was so loving to her. When he was the man she fell in love with. "Tohru-chan..."

"Satsuki?" She asked questionly. It felt as if the man she first met had returned to her. He was being so honest with her just like old times.

He chuckled quietly while stroking her hair. "Yes, it's me."

Suddenly she felt herself being ripped from Satsuki's embrace and her world spun only to meet a pair of familiar amber eyes. She blinked at his pensive features. Kyo looked serious as a heart attack. What were those emotions that washed over her just moments ago?

"Come on."

"Eh?"

"I said come on!" He growled irritably while tugging her away. "I need to talk to you in private."

Kyo took her by the wrist and led her away to the TV room while Satsuki made a movement to go after them, but was halted by Hatori's hand.

"Please stay in the main hall," the doctor requested.

Satsuki's once warm and soft tone turned bitter once again. "Who do you think you are? The God of this house? That's my fiance in there and I'm..."

"I don't particularly care who you are," Hatori boomed, "but Tohru-san isn't anything you can claim and you have no say in what she wants to do. She is a dear friend to us all and almost like a daughter to my friends and I," Hatori continued as he pointed in the direction of Shigure and Ayame, "I suggest you stop stepping on my feet and back off before I take actions I do not feel are very gentleman-like." Shigure and Ayame were surprised how eerily cold Hatori spoke. It seemed that he did not like this situation one bit since it put Tohru in an awkward position. As Satsuki stared at Hatori, it looked as if the two men were sizing each other up. Hatori felt pitty for this young man, having so much anger and possession issues. "The Sohmas have many connections and you are in no position to go against my orders unless you don't mind having half of Japan hunting you down, Sonto-san."

Satsuki glared at Hatori and looked away. "Whatever. In the end," Satsuki smirked, "Tohru will come back to me."

Yuki coughed, "I doubt that. She'd never go back to being your little play thing."

"What's it to you?" Satsuki snapped.

"You like making enemies don't you?" Yuki muttered while placing his right arm across his chest and leaning his left elbow on his right hand. "That girl in there," he pointed toward the room occupied by Kyo and Tohru, "if anything happens to her, the slightest thing, you'll regret ever showing your face around

the Sohma household. We got her back on her feet and we're not about to let you push her down again." Yuki now stood inches away from Satsuki, meeting his own cobalt eyes with Satsuki's unmoving blue ones. "Dare to break her heart again, pretending to love her-- which we all know you really don't-- I'll personally see to it that I slowly break every one of your fingers and let you watch with excruciating pain and then gouge those sinful eyes out of your eye sockets."

"A little graphic there, aren't you?" Satsuki snickered nervously.

Yuki saw him sweat and a grin crept upon his features. "If thinking about it makes you nervous," he lowered his voice an octave, " just imagine what it'd feel like."

To Yuki's pleasure, Satsuki flinched away from him while narrowing his eyes. "You all talk big, but just because you have connections and money you think that will stop me from having Tohru again?" He pointed to himself, "Sorry boys but she's mine and mine alone. Always."

-----  
In the TV room Kyo dragged Tohru in and sat her down on a chair.  
"Kyo-kun."

"Tohru, what's the matter with you?"

Tohru was at loss for words. What had she done? "W-what do you mean?"

"Why do you let him still control you like that? Damn it, he doesn't deserve you! You are too good for him. He's just using you, can't you see? As soon as you go back to him it's all going to start all over again! The worthlessness, the isolation, the--" Kyo thought of his dear Tohru making love to that man and didn't even want to mention it to her, "--lies. I won't let him hurt you."

"Satsuki isn't a bad a person," Tohru defended quietly. "He was there for me when I needed him."

"Like he was there when he decided to screw another girl."

She gasped, "Everyone has their mistakes, we're all human, Kyo-kun!"

"But he's not making a mistake, he knew what he was doing!"

"How do you know that?"

"Cause I know!" Kyo began pacing around the room throwing his hands up in the air. "Why the hell are you defending him anyway, Tohru? Why?"

She opened her mouth to reply but snapped it closed. There was a pregnant pause and Tohru thought on that. Why was she being so defensive? She didn't like Satsuki anymore, right? What was there to defend for him? He was the one who hurt her in the end. She was so confused, and didn't understand why she was acting like this or where her emotions were leading her. She wanted to forgive Satsuki, but she didn't want to hurt Kyo either.

Suddenly she felt Kyo hold her head gently between his hands, forcing her to look into his steady eyes. "Tohru, look at me. No, look at me." He said sternly. Tohru finally got herself to look into his eyes. "I don't want to see you hurt."

"I won't...!"

"No, I'm just warning you," Kyo kissed her forehead, "I don't know much but that Satsuki guy...he's dangerous, Tohru. There's something about him, there's something amiss with him. Despite how much you know about him and think he's a good person, he's trying to hurt you and I don't want anything to happen to you, Tohru. You need to stay here."

A faint memory clicked in Tohru's mind. Something so familiar about that tone...

"Tohru..."

Tohru backed her head away from Kyo and stood up, staring at him with wild eyes. "Why?"

"Why what?" Kyo asked. "Why do you have to stay here? Because that man is dangerous! He's no good for you, Tohru, and he cheated on you! Don't you remember? He played with your mind. Please, I need you to stay here where you'll be safe from him."

Tohru shut her eyes tightly, tears welting in her eyes. "You're just like him aren't you?" She cried. Kyo just stared at her. "It's just like when Hana-chan and Uo-chan used to visit me! He said they were no good, I should stay home with him where I'd be safe, that he would love me!" She said, touching a quivering finger to her heart. It burned and ached as if she just punctured her already beaten heart. Kyo's eyes widened noting the connection as Tohru shook her head side to side.

"No, Kyo-kun, I will make my decisions! I won't be locked up again!"

"But...!"

"I won't be controlled! I won't be alone again!"

"You won't, just stay here with me and everyone else."

Her voice was desperate. "Stop trying to... to... decide... stop!"

"Tohru, I...!"

Suddenly Tohru did something Kyo never expected. She slapped him straight across the face with giant tear drops falling freely down her ghostly white cheeks. He touched his own red cheek, feeling the heat transferred from her hand to his face while gaping at Tohru with her hand still out stretched. Her eye's widened with fright at her irrational actions. She had never hit him before, never.

She stood still, feeling like someone was suffocating her to her final breath. Why did she hit Kyo? She loved him, she loved him so much. He was only trying to protect her.



Why couldn't she see that?

"I... I just don't want to see anything happen to you," he muttered quietly.

Tohru bowed her head. "Then nothing will ever happen to me."

Kyo watched the woman before his eyes. He could still remember the first time he met her, she was so shy and hiding everything she really felt behind a smile. She slowly grew from that girl into a person that really smiled because she was happy, she frowned when she was really sad, and spoke what she really felt. She wasn't anyone's marionette anymore. What right did he have to tell her what to do? She was right, he was doing exactly what Satsuki had done to her. Perhaps not for the same reasons, but he was still setting her boundaries he had not right to establish. She was her own person.

Kyo quickly turned his face away from Tohru to hide his grieving face. Never in his life had he ever thought he would come to love a person as much as he loved Tohru. She accepted him even knowing he was the only one of the Sohmas still cursed by the Zodiac. She always forgave him when he would get angry. He just wanted to love her and only her. Standing here watching her have a mental crisis and not being able to help her was tearing him apart. Satsuki was using Tohru's kind soul to persuade her to go back, and ultimately, Kyo couldn't do anything to stop Tohru from making her decision.

Looking up, Tohru saw Kyo's moisten eyes and his lip tremble. Her strange actions were harrowing for him, she could see it. In her entire stay with the Sohmas, she had never once seen Kyo cry. He was only trying to think of her.

Because he loved her.

Tohru covered her face with her hands, taking a few steps to finally fall into Kyo's back while choking back her wretched sobs. "Kyo-kun, I'm so sorry. God, I'm so sorry! I'm so frustrated and scared."

Kyo stayed still, feeling her warm breath on his back. He blinked back his tears. She needed him to be strong for her right now. "It's okay, Tohru, you're going to get through this."

"I don't want to fight with you! I don't want to hit you!" She shook her head, trying to hold back the tears. "I'm just so sorry!" She cried as if she just committed a sin. Finally he turned around and gently placed his hands on her shoulders when she leaped into his arms crying. Kyo continued to calm her while she repeated her apology over and over.

Finally Kyo kissed Tohru on the cheek, rubbing away her tears. "I love you, Tohru."

"Kyo-kun..."

"Whatever will make you happy, do it. No one is stopping you from making the choice you want. This is your life, Tohru."

She nodded her head and released a deep sigh. "I want to be with you but as much as I know you don't want to hear it," the one word made Kyo freeze, but he had to be strong for her, he couldn't break down

now, "Satsuki will always be my first love."

Kyo felt his heart clench as Tohru slowly let go of him. "Everyone deserves forgiveness, don't you think?" She asked, caressing his face. "Even just one day, Kyo-kun..."

'Please don't...'

"I want to see if Satsuki is a real changed man. It doesn't mean I love him but, I've got to give our relationship another chance. I... I want to be friends with him. I may not love him but I wouldn't want to forget about him either." She looked up at his forlorn eyes. "Kyo-kun must be... so mad at me."

He stared at Tohru, etching her face into his memory, every line and every curve. "I'd never be mad at you..." He said, feeling Tohru squeeze hands tenderly.

"Just one day..."

"Just one," he repeated to himself. "You don't want me to come along?"

"I need to face my demons alone... I want to be strong like Kyo-kun. I want to break my curse once and for all."

Kyo clenched his teeth, the pressure almost giving him a headache. Finally he sighed saying, "just one day... like you said." He grinned, trying to lighten the tension in the air. "I think I'll survive one day..."

"Thanks." Tohru pulled Kyo's head to her and every so gently kissed him on the lips, savoring all his sensations deep within her soul. She never met a man like Kyo, so understanding and so caring. She had the words at the tip of her tongue. Those three words meaning so much.

She couldn't say it though. Not yet.

They pulled away from their last kiss as Kyo's hands overlapped hers which were on his face. He felt her tiny knuckles on his fingertips, wanting to hold onto her hand forever.

"Promise me the same thing you did that night under the stars..." she whispered, leaning her forehead on his. Up close, Kyo could see the tear drops soaking her dark long lashes. "Please."

Kyo's hands clamped on Tohru's, the pain eating him from the inside. He wanted to cry, force her to stay, anything, but he couldn't. Even if it was painful he wouldn't control her the way Satsuki did. Kyo nodded seriously while kissing the tip of her nose, soft as a feather. "I promise, my love."

And that was the last time Kyo saw that beautiful smile of hers...

...one last time...

## 36 - search and rescue team

Shigure paced around the main hall, a cigarette playing at the corner of his lips. He went across to the fireplace, stopped, turned around, walked toward the window, stopped, and repeated the process over and over.

"If you keep walking like that, you're going to burn a hole in the floor," Hatori warned.

Shigure stopped and turned to his friend sharply. "And sitting there is any better, 'Tori-san? Why don't you worry a little more instead of acting so fringed all the time?" He snapped.

"Hey, don't get upset with me..."

"Why not? You're not helping this situation anymore than I am!"

"STOP!" Ayame cried sitting up from a red sofa. "We're friends, okay? We don't fight about frivolous things like how helpful we are or are not! We're all on edge here so please, we have to be calm." The white haired man paused, waiting for his two best friends to cool down. Shigure sighed, his body slackening.

"I'm sorry, it's just been nearly a week without Tohru-kun," Shigure muttered before walking back to the window, hoping to see her bounding down the pathway with Momiji at her side, both carrying loads of groceries. "She's been gone too long for my taste."

Hatori rubbed his temples. "My cell phone has not rung at all. There's no trace of Tohru-san or Sonto-san as of now. I've checked all residence under Honda and Sonto and the Sonto household said they haven't seen them in months. Our connections are on the lookout but still nothing yet."

"Do you think she chose Satsuki-san over Kyo-kun?" Ayame asked slowly. The void room echoed and only the grandfather clock's ticking of its pendulum pulsed through the room. Since Tohru was officially missing, they halted all hosting hours, fretting over their former housekeeper friend.

"I doubt that because Tohru-kun promised to send word if anything happened to her," Shigure said. "He's holding her captive or worse."

"Don't think of that at the moment," Hatori instantly responded shooting Shigure another annoyed look. Shigure stared at the doctor seeing the worry fill his tired eyes. His complexion didn't look any better, making his friend seem rather old.

"Tori-san, perhaps you should sleep a bit? Just a little." Shigure offered gently while patting Hatori on the shoulder. "Ri-chan is sitting by the phone so you don't have to worry." He chuckled lightly, "it's the only thing we could get him to do without panicking."

Hatori shook his head negatively, "I could say the same for you, Shigure. You look like a mess. More

than usual anyway."

"Ah, so you still tease me at least."

The doctor smiled slightly. At times like this, he was glad to have Shigure and Ayame as friends. It was almost as if they kept each other in check. Hatori looked to the stairwell, where all the younger Sohmas were residing. "But that aside, I wonder how they are coping..."

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Yuki watched Kyo pace the floor as he sat at his desk typing away at his laptop. For the past week Kyo had been hovering around in Yuki's room. Yuki wasn't sure why, but didn't ask on it. Right now he didn't feel like having a verbal spar with Kyo and it wasn't what either of them needed right now. It did bother him though that everyone gravitated toward his room since Tohru left. To him it felt as if they needed to be with someone, like they were holding onto a raft fearing an angry storm would blow them away.

Yuki turned away from Kyo and looked over his reading glasses at the laptop, not focusing on anything in particular. He still couldn't believe she had decided to leave the house with that scum. She was too soft hearted, but he couldn't blame her. No. Yuki could never do that, but still, he worried a great deal over her. With a sigh he pushed up his reading glasses and began typing away some more.

Momiji sat across Yuki's lavish yet simple bedroom on the bench below the window looking out toward the street. He didn't have his usual smile, no candy playing at his lips, and no facial expression. How much he missed Tohru. It was a sure sign of fall since the window felt cool to the touch, and golden leaves littered the ground, swirling in intricate patterns as a delivery truck passed by. Momiji sighed and leaned his head on his knees tucked under his chin as Kyo passed by him for the hundredth time.

Kyo. The poor man was a wreck. He couldn't sleep and if he did, it was restless and not nearly long enough to be called healthy. He would usually walk around Yuki's room in silence, going over any angle he might have missed. Where could she have gone? Where did Satsuki take her? She was only supposed to be gone one day and it turned into a week. After the third day he began making phone calls around town to the places Tohru normally visited. None of them had seen the 'cute Miss' at all. It worried him to no end. He was such an idiot to actually let her go! But no, it couldn't have been helped. He wouldn't control her, but damnit, he felt like a complete fool! He should have went with her, made her call every ten minutes, been more careful, sent a spy to follow her. He should have done a lot of things but that was the past and this was now. Now more than ever he felt utterly useless.

He paused and turned to Yuki. "Anything?" He croaked. Even his voice was giving way.

Yuki shook his head and turned to his cousin somberly. "Kisa just IMed me that she hasn't heard anything down in their part of town. She has called the police down there and Honda-san has not turned up anywhere. Kagura has also texted me from her cell phone saying she found that Yumi woman from before but she has not seen Sonto-san since the day she told him where Honda-san was. Apparently Yumi-san is very angry with Sonto-san for using her."

"I don't care about her; I want to know about Tohru."

Yuki was getting tired of Kyo's snappy attitude. That was all he heard all week and he was ready to throw a punch at his cousin. He wouldn't though. He knew Tohru wouldn't want them to be fighting; she'd want them to be working together. Yuki turned quickly to a flashing box and read the message before turning to Kyo again. "Nothing still."

"How...?" Kyo said, balling his hands into fists, "How the hell does someone just disappear into thin air? That bastard, I'm going to knock his brains in when I get a hold of him! Damn it that son of a dog!" Kyo flipped a chair away from him, the wooden furniture clattering against a wall and falling limply to the floor.

Yuki shook his head at Kyo's dirty mouth and turned to his computer again. He had done extensive research on their city and nothing had turned up at all under Honda or Sonto. He felt like he was just running in circles now.

"What would he want with Tohru though?" Momiji asked barely over a whisper, still staring out the window in dismay. "Tohru isn't rich or possesses any incredible power. Why would anyone want to keep Tohru away like that?"

"It's control," Kyo said. "It has nothing to do with what she has, but what he has. He had control over her, lost it, and wants it back. It isn't about her, it's about him." Kyo's eyes narrowed. "It's the sense of power he thinks he can possess over another person that makes him feel so great. Without Tohru, he loses."

"Don't you get it? She has been out of his sight for nearly half a year and the only reason he let it go as long as it did is because he had a new play thing. Yumi was not as easily controlled and she left because she was not brainwashed. She wasn't a soft, stupid girl like Tohru."

Momiji watched Kyo clench his teeth, pain fusing through the young man. "Kyo..."

"That Yumi girl wasn't nearly as kind-hearted as Tohru. That stupid stupid girl..." Kyo's bangs covered his eyes as he thought about Tohru, flashbacks of their first meeting in the host club hall, when she found out he was a cat, their time spent on the roof, the summer dance when she broke the curse for him, their time at the beach, when he kissed her for the first time... so many memories passed his mind as he thought on Tohru. He couldn't lose her. He promised her so long ago that if she ever ran away, he'd find her. He would find her.

"And when Satsuki realized he had no power over anyone he didn't like it. He went to find Tohru to make her his puppet again and have that sense of control. That sick bastard. Makes me want to vomit."

The room went still as Kyo's venom snaked its way through Yuki and Momiji's ears. That must be the most he'd spoken all week. They both knew Kyo would murder Satsuki if he had the chance. Venting his emotions was a good sign anyway, more than breaking another piece of Yuki's furniture. All Yuki had left was his desk and his burrow. Kyo had made a mess of his bed, walls, table and anything else that wasn't nailed to the floor.

Like he said, he was too tired and stressed to fight with Kyo. He did wish he would destroy his own furniture though.

"Can't you think of any place, Honda-san might be? Any idea?" Yuki asked taking his glasses away while rubbing his tired eyes.

"I don't know where the hell that guy lives! And you said that Kagura said that Yumi girl had never been to Satsuki's house so she's no use. Who the hell else knows anything about that bastard?"

Yuki's head snapped up, gaining Kyo's attention. "Uotani-san and Hanajima-san." Kyo stared at Yuki and bolted to Yuki's desk and grabbed his cell phone. Yuki sighed and ran a hand through his unwashed hair that was already looking quite shabby. "I'd appreciate it if you would use your own cell phone, stupid cat."

"Shut up, I'm calling Kureno." Kyo snapped while finding Kureno's number in Yuki's phone. Yuki leaned against his desk waiting to hear what Tohru's friends had to say. Maybe they had a lead on where Tohru went! Yuki even sent a message to Machi about Tohru but Machi said no one in her apartment building was listed under Sonto or Honda either. Closing his eyes, Yuki could still see a smiling Tohru, singing one of her favorite songs. He missed her.

Kyo listened to the phone ring once, twice, and then...

"Hello?"

"Kureno, let me talk to Uotani."

There was a pause and Kyo felt his patience waning. He heard a shuffle in the background and then Uo's voice came on the line.

"KyonKyon? What is it, Ku-chan says you sound flustered."

"Never mind that, do you know where that Satsuki guy lives? Did Tohru ever tell you anything about where he lived or something?"

"Well, both him and Tohru used to live over here, but apparently when they were getting married in that city where you live, Tohru had a flat somewhere because Satsuki couldn't afford a place since he was paying for the whole wedding. If you ask me," Uo chuckled, "he was just a cheep turd I... hey wait!" Uo's voice sounded high pitched suddenly, Kyo never hearing Uo sound so panicked. "What happened? Where's Tohru?"

"Tohru-kun?" Kyo could hear Hana's voice echo in the background. He could almost see the vibe girl glowing mad.

"Satsuki came here a few days ago and Tohru wanted to see if he was really a changed man or not. It... It was her decision." He felt rather lame and stupid the way it came out, but it was the truth.

"YOU BAKA!" Uo screamed into the phone. "The hell's the matter with you? You know what Tohru went though, you dumb shoot! How could you let her go so easily? Don't you know how that guy ruined her? Made her practically a slave to his every whim!" Kyo felt his chest tighten with every biting word Uo screamed at him. Normally words didn't affect him much but he was already feeling so guilty about

Tohru's disappearance. He couldn't blame her friends for hating his guts. He hated his own guts. He could almost see Uo foaming at the mouth, ready to bite his head off like a mad guard dog. "God, Kyo, you are such a dumb shoot!"

There was only silence over the phone as Kyo tried to get a grip on himself. Uo was yelling so loud, even Yuki could hear her every word. His face even colored slightly from the words coming out of the pregnant woman's mouth.

Kyo wanted to cry. Really he really did, but this was no time. He needed to know where Tohru was. Uo was about to let him have it again when Kyo hurriedly cut her off.

"Listen, Yankee, this isn't the time to be cursing me out. Tohru's in trouble right now, do you think she'd really want us to sit here arguing? Stop blaming me for something that already happen, and help me find her! Stop insulting me about not saving her when you didn't save her either when she got in this mess to begin with! Even though you hated Satsuki you still let her go marry him, didn't you? You did it because you know Tohru can make her own choices! You don't control your friends and I don't control Tohru. Now stop jumping up my @\$\$, and help me! God, Uotani," Kyo's voice began to crack, desperation filling his voice. Would he ever get to see Tohru's lovely smile again? Kiss those lips ever again?

Uo was silent over the phone and he heard another person being passed the phone.

"Hello?"

Kyo let his tired brain process who was speaking. "Hanajima."

"Yes, I'm sorry but Arisa is a little flushed right now, caring a child and all." Her voice was rather calm in comparison to Arisa, but there was still a sense of worry etching her voice. "Please, tell me what happened to Tohru-kun."

"Satsuki made a visit here and Tohru wanted to see if he was a changed man or not. She promised to be gone only one day, but that was a few days ago. I didn't want her to go, but it was ultimately her decision. I didn't want to control her."

"I see... and you let her go."

Kyo could sense the tense tone in her voice. "Are you going to jump down my throat about it too?"

"You say it was her decision, but was it really? You still had the power to stop her, make her see the danger she was in. Did you not think of that, knowing how dangerous Satsuki is to Tohru-kun? Tohru-kun is such a giving girl and gives everyone the benefit of the doubt. Knowing that, you still let her go?"

"She said...!"

"I'm not saying it's your fault," Hana said with a bit of an edge. "I'm saying I can't believe you did not protect Tohru-kun and you let her walk into trouble." She paused and Kyo listened to her ragged breathing. "Why? Why did you let her go?"

Was she... crying?

"Hanajima..."

The girl choked back her tears and covered her face. Her friend... her dear Tohru-kun.

"I let her go because I trust her..." Kyo said after a moment, catching Hana off guard. "I let her go because I love her. Isn't that why you let her stay here? Because you trust her? Don't you love her too?"

Hana bit her lip while shaking her head. She smiled slightly, "You really are much like Kazuma."

Now that caught Kyo off guard. "W-what...?"

"Tohru-kun's address," The girl spoke clearly. "I believe I had the letter Tohru-kun sent us a very long while back with the address... hold a moment."

After a few more exchanges of words, Kyo snapped Yuki's phone shut. Momiji swung his legs over the bench, staring at Kyo with some excitement, a little life returning to the boy. "What did the nice ladies say, Kyo?" Kyo glared at the rabbit, catching the sarcasm in his voice. He ignored him for a moment and pushed Yuki's laptop toward him, typing away.

"What are you doing?" Yuki asked as Kyo scribbled down something on a piece of paper. It was a miracle really when Kyo straightened up with the biggest grin Yuki had ever seen since the tenth grade when Kyo kicked some guy's @\$@ for stepping on his ceramic project. "What is it?" Yuki asked again. They waited in anticipation. Yuki admitted that Kyo really handled that well. Yuki knew if someone had said such words to Kyo over the phone a year ago, he would have already broken the phone or threw it out the window. He crossed his arms. "Speak up, stupid cat."

"It seems that Tohru's mom used to live down town. The person that Tohru rented from remembered Tohru's mom and gave Tohru a room without a second thought. The only thing is the landlady didn't know that Tohru's mom got married and just assumed Tohru was just a love child. When Tohru got a flat down town, she didn't put it under 'Honda' or 'Sonto'. She put the room down as 'Tohru Katsunuma', her mother's maiden name. That's why we're not coming up with anything." Between Kyo's fingers he held a small sheet of paper with his handwriting scratched over it. He smirked. "I got the address."

"Let's go tell Hatori," Yuki said jumping from his desk. Any lead was better than no lead. He just prayed that Tohru was safe. He picked up his cell phone and began dialing the number to Haru's cell phone.

"Momiji, go get the car."

"Right! We're going to go get Tohru back! Yeay!" Momiji bounded down the hall as Kyo and Yuki went to the main hall to relate their new findings.

'Hold on a little longer, Tohru. I promise not to leave you but please be safe!



## 37 - I love him!

Upon opening her eyes, Tohru blinked rapidly as her world came into focus. When had she fallen asleep? The boys must all be worried about her since she wasn't down stairs with them eating breakfast. She yawned, feeling surprisingly heavy and empty inside. Why did she feel so weak? She moved to the side of the bed but stopped short of letting her toes hit the ground.

"What?"

She looked around her and found herself in her old bedroom she once shared with Satsuki. The wallpaper looked dull but besides that everything was spotless. The entire room looked as if it had been untouched, as if time had not affected the home at all. Glancing at her wrist, she found it hand cuffed to the headboard of the bed. She stumbled over the side of the bed trying to pull her wrist from the cuffs. She climbed toward the headboard and sat on her knees while trying to pull her arm away. What was this? Why was she here?

She remembered now. She left the Sohma house and upon coming back home... she blacked out. Had Satsuki put her here? She looked down at her clothes and saw she was wearing a different set of clothes. Had Satsuki dressed her? She only shivered and pulled at her wrist harder, feeling the metal scrape against her small wrists. She was not home anymore... she was just not home.

"Ah, you're awake."

Tohru spun around at the voice, holding her captive wrist with her other hand behind her back. "Satsuki."

The man came into the bedroom with a tray of food for Tohru. She stared down at the glass of milk, toast, strawberry jam, and bran muffin. "I hope this is to your liking. I'm afraid I have not been grocery shopping."

"Why am I here?" She asked automatically.

He attempted to reach for her but she jerked away. "You wanted to come home, don't you remember?"

"This isn't home! I said I wanted us to become friends! Friends don't... don't handcuff their friends and... and...!"

She felt Satsuki approach her and sit at the end of the bed. She moved away from him, gathering her knees closer to her body. "The handcuffs are merely to make sure you don't run away, Tohru-chan. I want you here with me always." From his hand she saw the shimmer of a key hanging from a chain. "I have the keys. Maybe if you are a good girl I'll let your hand free." He turned to the window, the sun rays shining on his rough face. Why was it that he looked so distorted? "I've bolted the windows shut and we're on the fifth floor. No one will be able to see you from where you are pinned to the bed." He turned with a smile. "Mine."

Tohru sat in stunned silence. Had he completely lost his mind? She watched Satsuki smile and get up while moving to the door. He had not touched her. She pulled against her handcuffs, saying, "S-Satsuki, you can't leave me here like this! What has gotten into you?"

"It's for your own good. It seems that you forgot where you belong. Don't worry, Tohru-chan," Satsuki disappeared from the doorway, "who will love you more than me?"

She stared at the door with wide eyes. This was all a mistake; she was such a fool for falling into his trap! Satsuki was clearly losing his mind. Now what was she to do? She glanced down at the tray of food Satsuki left at the foot of the bed. How was she to get it now? She reached out with her big toe and dragged the tray to her side, inspecting the items. Just looking at it made her sick.

Her memory filled in. She left the Sohma house and came here with Satsuki. He offered to make dinner before she was going to leave the apartment and return to the Sohma house but after eating she felt light headed. She remembered lying down briefly on the couch when Satsuki approached her and she fell asleep. Had he drugged her?

She stared at the food and pushed it away. She wouldn't chance it, who knew what he could do to her when she was knocked out cold. She let her head hit the headboard and she blew her bangs out of her face. What had she gotten herself into?

'Kyo... I'm scared...'

The only thing she could think about was how right Kyo was and how stupid she was. If she had just listened to him then maybe none of this would have happened. She closed her eyes.

"Now what am I supposed to do? I wish none of this ever happened..." she began crying in desperation. Now she hated herself for crying like a baby. Was this all she could do? Cry?

"I'm so stupid. I almost wish Hatori had erased my memory of the Sohmas. I wouldn't have caused anyone so much pain if I didn't know them at all." She continued to sniffle. "Wouldn't this life be better than knowing the kindness of the Sohmas and then having them taken away? To have a taste of what is good and have it all taken away. I almost wish I didn't meet them. But, Kyo-kun..." the thought of Kyo made her cry even harder. "Kyo-kun, I'm so sorry I hurt you."

Unknown to her, a pair of eyes watched and a pair of ears listened.

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Days past and Tohru began to feel as if death was better than sitting in this room like a prisoner. She refused to eat or drink anything when Satsuki came in with a new tray everyday.

"Darling, won't you eat a little for me?" Satsuki asked kindly, sitting close to Tohru. She said nothing and just stared out the window. Satsuki took a piece of bread off the tray and bit into it, chewing and swallowing. "It tastes good, are you sure you wouldn't share this with me?"

"I'd rather not thank you..." Tohru said quietly. Her voice was hoarse and her head ached from the bright

sunlight and malnourishment on her part.

Satsuki sat still for a moment staring at Tohru. "Why are you so defiant?" He asked suddenly sharply. The next thing Tohru knew, she was on her back, Satsuki straddling her on the bed while she screamed for him to get off. He forced the piece of bread into her mouth nearly choking Tohru. "Eat something! Why won't you eat something?" He screamed at her.

Her eyes watered and she reluctantly chewed the bread while lying on her back. It was difficult but would do anything to get him off her. Her eyes pricked at the pain surging through her mouth and throat.

As soon as the bread was all swallowed, Satsuki sat up and gently lifted Tohru to a sitting position. "Drink." He commanded. She drank.

He put the glass away and sat still again as Tohru had her head still raised defiantly. She was positive that someone would come looking for her eventually. She'd choked down bread in that manner until someone figured she was missing.

Days before, Tohru glanced into the waste basket to find the cell phone Hatori let her borrow in there, smashed to tiny bits. So Satsuki took all her possessions did he? The day after her initial kidnapping, Tohru decided to be as resilient as her body would allow. She wouldn't cry for Satsuki, she wouldn't let him take her down without a fight. He could take all her possessions, her body, anything he thought would suit, but he could never take her heart again. Her heart was with Kyo. She only wished she told him sooner.

"You know, Tohru-chan," Satsuki said softly pulling Tohru from her thoughts, "I still love you very much." From his pocket he pulled out her old engagement ring making Tohru feel uneasy.

"...Where did you get that?" She asked.

"Ayame-san threw it back at me the other day. He said I should keep it since you would never wear this ring again." Satsuki's eye glinted as he reached for Tohru's hand.

She pulled it away. That ring was like the chains of a slave.

Satsuki instead grabbed her handcuffed wrist making her scream in pain but she bit her lip. Her wrist was rubbed raw from the cuffs and it ached to be pulled so roughly. She balled her hand tightly but Satsuki eventually clawed her palm open to expose her bony fingers. She shook her head in dismay as he got a hold of her ring finger.

"There," he said with a sigh once he slipped the ring onto her finger, "just like old times." He bent down to kiss Tohru's brow as a single tear escaped her eye. "I'll make a deal with you, okay? If you be a good girl and keep this ring on your finger, I'll uncuff you to the bed. If you take it off and I find out, I'll cuff both of your hands to the bed, leaving me able to do anything I want with you."

Tohru stared at him. "No."

"Are you sure, darling?" Satsuki asked pulling her wrist. Tohru felt the aching bones of her wrist beg for

relief.

She shook her head. It wouldn't be any good to resist. Even if she refused he would make her wear the ring. She bowed her head.

Satsuki smiled and pulled out the key to her wrist's freedom. "That's good. I'll be back later then." Tohru felt the relief of her wrist coming free from its awkward position and she got a good look at her raw and red wrist. She continued to shake her head when she heard the door slam closed and once again Satsuki was gone.

The ring burned her finger. It itched like some disease spreading through her body. She hurriedly tore the ring off and threw it across the room and cradled her hand soothingly. "Please, someone help me..." She begged to the heavens. She took the water Satsuki left her on the tray to clean her wound and tore a part of the bed sheet to use to bandage her wounded wrist. Finally she stood up for the first time and stretched her aching legs and back.

It felt as if she forgot how to use her legs. She walked slowly to the window and stared down at the street. Were the Sohmas even looking for her? Did they think she ran off with Satsuki? She glanced down at the floor to find the engagement band by her foot. She picked it up and let it shine in the sun light. With sadness she slipped the ring onto her finger, feeling the weight of its burden on her. It wouldn't do her any good to have both hands cuffed to the bed.

How much longer was all she could think about.

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It was on the last day Tohru was held captive that Satsuki really snapped on her. He entered her room as usual but this time had no tray of food. When he entered the room Tohru stood up with her left hand in view to make sure he didn't think she was hiding her hand from him.

She watched him carefully as he approached her. What did he have planned?

"Kyo-san I believe is looking for you as we speak."

"Kyo-kun?" When was the last time that name rang in her ears? It sounded like music.

"I was around town and heard a couple talking about the Sohmas looking for their former housekeeper. It seemed like everyone was on the lookout for you."

Tohru couldn't help but smile the tiniest fraction. Her hope had been rekindled.

Satsuki brushed her hair and for the first time she didn't care. "Are you happy with me, darling?" She turned to him as he continued, "I am happy with you."

She dared to speak out saying, "I was never happy with you."

He stopped brushing her hair and his eyes narrowed like a wolf ready to bolt at its prey. His icy eyes

pierced at hers and he slapped her across the face making her fall over onto the bed. She squeaked from the shock of the pain hitting her face but didn't move. She wouldn't let him get the best of her. Kyo was going to save her, she knew it!

She moved to sit up on the bed as Satsuki took deep breaths while continuing to watch her. "You don't know what you are doing, Tohru-chan. Stop being so foolish!"

"Y-You don't control me, Satsuki! You could hold me here as long as you see fit and I will never be with you still!" Tohru was surprised with herself seeing herself finally speak with such emotion for so long. She felt her wings spread without the help of anyone.

"Don't talk to me like that! You need me, Tohru-chan. You need me!"

"Who says? Who says I have to listen to you at all? Satsuki is not a nice person at all." Her eyes did not waver at all. She remembered Kyo telling her to say what she really felt. To complain a little. Tell people what was on her mind...

She stretched her wings as she perched on the side of the opened cage door.

She controlled her voice, deciding on a stern yet soft tone of voice. "I think... I think you are the one who needs me more than I need you. Satsuki look at you, you are not the man I met so many years ago. You... you lost sight of what was important in our relationship and just used me like I was nothing to you. I wanted us to be friends but that was not enough for you either." Tohru then looked sad. Looking at Satsuki, she saw not a monster but a person who was lost and lonely. Was that why he controlled her the way he once did? He was afraid... to be alone? "We are over Satsuki. I've moved on and so should you."

She leaped into the air soaring among the other birds.

There was silence before Satsuki's voice became misty and elusive. It made Tohru's skin crawl. "You hate me don't you?"

She said nothing.

Satsuki grinned at her. "This makes everything so much nicer."

"What are you talking about...?"

"You see, even if Kyo-san finds us, I'll be waiting for him. I will kill him."

"No! You can't!" Tohru panicked.

Satsuki smiled. "I will, unless you do something for me."

Tohru stared at Satsuki. She knew this was not leading to something good. She took a few steps away from him as he sat on the bed side, staring at her eagerly.

"Profess your love to me by sleeping with me."

"Never."

"Then he dies."

Tohru stared at him. He sat on the bed with a cocky grin. Was he serious? He couldn't be. Tohru stared down at her unusually pale hands. She couldn't fight him off if he tried to jump her either. "You wouldn't kill, Kyo-kun. Satsuki is not like that." She balled her fists. "I don't think you would do it..."

Satsuki grinned and suddenly fell into a bone chilling cackle. His rich voice echoed off the void walls as Tohru watched him stand up.

"You don't think I'd do it, Tohru-chan?" Reaching behind him, Tohru gasped seeing him pull out a hand gun. He examined it for a moment, feeling the full weight of the weapon before suddenly turning the gun on Tohru.

Her body ran cold, staring at the other end of the barrel. He began walking toward her.

"Darling, I'm mad about you. Mad enough to kill anyone who dares to take you from me."

"You're... you're mad, Satsuki."

"He won't die if you sleep with me." He was getting too close for comfort.

"G-Get away from me!"

Satsuki grabbed Tohru's wrist and flung her to the bed, pushing her over onto her back as he put the gun away again. She lay quivering on the bed, feeling the sheets beneath her, cool and damp from her sweat. He bent to her eye level, steady as a heart beat.

"The bullet would go straight through his heart."

Tohru couldn't help but burst with tears. "Stop it..."

Satsuki bent over to capture her lips with his, pressing his lips hard over hers. She squirmed and tried to push him off of her. She finally freed her lips from his and shoved his face from hers while rolling off the bed and off to the other end of the room. She ran for the door which was finally unguarded but found it locked to her despair.

"Where are you going, Tohru-chan?"

She spun around, her heart racing a hundred beats per minute. Her lips felt dirty and she desperately wanted to rinse her mouth. But right now, staring at Satsuki waiting for her on the bed, nothing made her feel more disgusting.

'I love him... I love Kyo so much. What would life be like... if...!' More tears pooled at her eyes which she

tried to blink away. 'If he died?'

"There's no where to run, Tohru-chan. What is your decision?"

"Leave Kyo-kun out of this! He's done nothing to you! Please, just s-stop this..." She watched him continue to stare at her. Was he sane? 'Please, Kyo... please, where are you? I'm... I'm so scared...'

"He'll die. Is that what you want, darling?" She took a shaky step forward. Her knees were practically knocking together with fright. 'I don't... I don't want him to die...'

She stood before Satsuki and he grinned. He knew what she had chosen. Such a soft girl, she was.

"I'll save Kyo-kun's life... with my body..."

"That's good, Tohru-chan," he said reaching out for her.

"I'll save him because I love him. And nothing will ever change that."

His hand stopped. She closed her eyes and heard him stand up, a head taller than she. Would he just get it over with? Hadn't he done enough damage to her? She just continued to fill her thoughts with Kyo and how he would come. He would come for her.

"Look at me." Tohru's eyes fluttered open but suddenly her head was jarred to the side when he took her head forcefully in his hands. "Tell me. Look me in the eye and tell me you love him!"

"I... love him."

SLAP!

"You stupid dog!" Tohru's body fell to the floor, her face hidden away behind her curtain of brown hair. "You love him even after being with me! You're such a dirty tramp!"

She said nothing for a moment before raising herself up on her elbows. "You would have killed him... even if I slept with you, wouldn't you, Satsuki. You're too cruel!"

"No, I have a better idea now." Suddenly there was a knock at the front door and Satsuki bolted. "Looks like our visitors finally arrived! Bwahaha!" She watched him pull his gun from his back belt.

Tohru scrambled to follow him out. "SATSUKI, NO!" He slammed the door on her face as she desperately pounded on the door. "NO! KYO-KUN, IT'S A TRAP! GET OUT OF HERE! GET OUT! GET OUT!" She listened as the door opened and three gun shots flew through the air. "KYO!" don't worry this is not the end its 95% complete just let me think and then i will put the other chapters in! thank u for being patient.

## 38 - tears for kyo (last one!)

Kyo stormed up the flight of stairs, faster than he ever ran before. Time was ticking away and every moment he spent away from Tohru the more danger he was putting her in. He cared so much for her he only hoped he made it in time.

He came upon the door and banged on it with his fist three times. He stood ridged waiting for someone to open the door at the count of five before he bust the door down with his bare fists. "Open the damn door!" He bellowed while banging on the solid door again.

"God, Kyo, leave us in the dust why don't you?" Yuki panted behind him as he, Shigure and Hatori came around the corner just in time to hear Kyo yelling.

Kyo said nothing and sensed someone coming to the door. This was it. He was going to beat the crap out of Satsuki! The door creaked open and Kyo slammed the door open, hitting the man in the face. He reached around the door and grabbed him with both hands, ready to strangle him.

"Got you! You little son of a...!"

"KYO STOP!" Suddenly Kyo was whacked on the back of the head with a newspaper and Kyo stopped mid sentence.

"What the hell was that for?" He screamed at Shigure. The older man pointed and Kyo turned to the man he was dangling from the ground with his arms. It was senior citizen just staring up at him with a crooked smile. "You've got to be kidding me..."

"My, my, you boy scouts just get more and more aggressive every year, don't you? Got me with the door and everything." The old man said while pushing his glasses frame up the bridge of his nose. "I'll buy some candy if that's what you came around here for, sonny, but in my day, a kid didn't go around swinging doors open. Why, we had to walk fifteen miles to the closest house! With no shoes!"

Kyo almost fell over while the old man continued his rant. "S-sorry old man."

"Idiot, it's the next door over," Yuki said pointing. The rat boy walked over and raised his hand to knock before pausing. Just behind this door, Tohru was there. Was she okay? Or was she...? He didn't want to think about it. He knocked the door hard.

"Honda-san! Honda-san! Are you there?" Yuki called. Kyo meanwhile apologized to the old man and ushered him back into his apartment door before closing it and running to Yuki's side.

"Damn it, you could have warned me earlier!" Kyo growled.

"You're an idiot for not even reading the apartment number, stupid ca--"



Their bickering ceased as the door flung open and the bullet missed Kyo. Everyone would have breathed a sigh of relief except upon turning around, he saw red.

The shot went for Yuki, right at the side of his abdomen. It was unexpected for a bullet to go sailing through the hallway in such a quick moment. Yuki yelled in pain, clutching the wound, as he looked up to the wild gaze in Satsuki's eyes and he audibly gasped. He feared the next shot would end his life and he shut his eyes. Two bullets sailed through the air but neither ever made their mark. Yuki stared and saw Kyo had Satsuki by the hand, aiming the gun away from any of them.

"Yuki-kun!" Shigure ran over to the injured cousin. "Are you okay?"

"Go! Get Honda-san! Get her now!" Yuki yelled shrugging him off. Shigure was startled to say the least and almost fell over as he dashed into the apartment. Yuki lifted his hand to see the shot only grazed side, but blood soaked his white shirt and it soaked fast.

Hatori stared at Yuki for a moment, reaching out to him but Yuki shook his head violently. Yuki bit back his tears and motioned for Hatori to follow Shigure in. Hatori almost snorted at Yuki's reckless gallantry but saw that his wound was not critical. At the least he would faint. He turned his attention to Satsuki and Kyo, struggling against each other for control of the gun while Satsuki suddenly punched Kyo and the gun went flying. Hatori jumped slightly when both men came at him and he stared down at his feet to see the gun. He kicked it toward Kyo and the boy caught it but not before Satsuki tackled him again and the gun was once again up for grabs. Hatori was about to go after Satsuki but Kyo yelled, "Go get her the hell out of here!" Hatori looked down at Yuki to see he had already blacked out. He ran past them to follow Shigure into the apartment.

The room was immaculate, as if no one had ever touched the place. It was too ordinary for there to be a hostage in this home. He heard a vase break and spun around to see Kyo punch Satsuki, the man falling over on the table and onto the floor. Kyo's eyes shot up to Hatori. "Stop gawking! Find Tohru and get out!"

"She's mine!" Satsuki bellowed as he lunged at Kyo again. The pair continued to tumble around the room, legs and arms floundering about. Satsuki dropped the gun just as Kyo right hooked him in the jaw. Satsuki fell to the floor with the gun barely two feet beside him. He reached for it when Kyo kicked his hand out of the way and tackled him away from the gun.

"Hurry!" Kyo yelled to Hatori.

"Help me with this door," Shigure called down the hallway leading to a bedroom. It seemed everyone was giving him one too many orders today. Hatori drew his attention to the door Shigure was talking through.

"Tohru-kun, I want you to get away from the door." Shigure stepped back and ran himself into the door. Hatori approached and the two men together ran at the door. "At the count of three. One, two three!" All at once the door broke open and they stopped to stare at the girl covering her ears and shaking her head.

She was as skinny as a rail. Her skin looked almost like an eerie shade of olive green and her sparkling

blue eyes were dull and shallow. They both took notice of her red and blue wrist and a bruise mark on her bottom jaw. She had not showered for days and the room smelled of a thick body odor and humidity mixed in. They were glad they made it in time but aghast with the scene before them. Satsuki had gone too far.

Tohru stopped shaking and gradually brought her hands away from her ears. Her breathing turned shallow as she saw two familiar faces staring back at her. Were they real? She stood straight and watched them with wide eyes. They came... they finally came.

Shigure rushed to grab Tohru into a hug, burying his face into her hair. "Tohru-kun," Shigure cried, holding her tightly, "you're okay."

Tohru's face burned scarlet with relief, fear, and total exhaustion. She cried into his shirt, gripping onto his clothing. "Shigure-san, Hatori-san you really came."

"Shh, we're getting you out of here," Hatori said, watching the door. "We need to move."

"Haru-kun called the police and they should be here any moment. Kyo-kun..."

Tohru gasped and raised her head from Shigure. "Kyo-kun!" She pushed past Shigure and ran into the main room.

"Tohru-kun, come back!" Shigure cried.

Tohru saw Kyo's figure and she stretched her arms out to hold him. He turned to her, his amber eyes widening. "Kyo-kun!" Tohru wailed, so happy he was not shot. She was entranced with Kyo's safety that she did not realize she had just kicked the gun toward Satsuki who instantly picked it up.

It happened all too fast. Suddenly Satsuki pulled her hair back, snapping her sideways and onto the ground on her knees. She didn't have the strength to get up as she stood still, facing the carpeted mats below her. She could hear Kyo screaming for her but at the click of a loaded gun all was silenced.

She nearly stopped breathing as time slowed down. She barely raised her head to see Kyo kneeling on the floor directly in front of her and Shigure and Hatori frozen in their spot just feet away from them. Her eyes shifted slowly to the gun raise at her temple and the mad man holding her down by her hair. "S...Sat..suki...?"

"Quiet!" He barked, pushing her head to the ground.

"Tohru! Are you okay?" Kyo asked. He felt stupid asking such a question when clearly she was not okay. Tohru on the other hand smiled regardless of everything happening at the moment. She thought for a moment she was just going crazy, lost her marbles, whatever. But even so, at least she'd die smiling with the thought of her love, knowing she was able to see him one last time. Just to hear his voice again made her smile all the same. To hear the concern in his voice, the concern, the love. She nodded her head slowly.

"You came..." she whispered. Satsuki tightened his hold on her hair making her scream with pain.

"I said quiet!"

"Leave her alone!" Kyo shouted.

Satsuki pulled Tohru up so Kyo could see her tear streaked face. Satsuki leaned close to Tohru smirking at Kyo's anger. "Don't tell me what to do or I'll blow her pretty little brains all over this apartment!" Satsuki's finger closed around the trigger tightly making Tohru squeeze her eyes shut.

Everyone stood silent as the tension smothered the air. Kyo was at a loss. He was so close to her. All he wanted to was to hold her once more, feel that she was real... He closed his eyes and opened them. Now what? He turned to the open hallway, hoping the police would show up soon when he noticed something. Where was Yuki? He turned to Satsuki and hoped he didn't realize what he just did.

"What do you want?" Kyo finally asked.

"Simple really. Tohru does not love me at the least. I have nothing but hatred to the stupid girl now." Satsuki exposed his teeth looking like the devil himself as Tohru sat frozen under the gun. "I want her to suffer."

Suddenly, Kyo could see Yuki with what looked like a golf club, staggering as quiet as a mouse toward the back of Satsuki's head. If it was Kyo, he'd have sliced his head off in a heartbeat, but then again, Satsuki had Tohru like a shield at this moment. It was possible he could hurt Tohru. He decided for the first time in a long time, he'd see what Yuki would do. Kyo's eyes darted quickly to the side hoping to stall time. "...So you want to kill me?"

"No. I don't want to kill you. That would be too easy." Just as quickly, Satsuki turned the gun barrel over his shoulder and shot a bullet before quickly placing the gun back at Tohru's temple. Yuki had barely dodged death once again, the bullet missing his head by mere centimeters. Satsuki's eyes darted to his side. "I know you're there Sohma, I can see your reflection in the window. If you try anything funny I'll pull the trigger on her next time. Don't think I won't do it. You said you'd break off every one of my fingers for hurting her? Well how about me hurting you but shooting off every one of her fingers while she screams to be killed instead?" He barked. Everyone paled and Yuki unenthusiastically threw the club to the side, the metal clanging against the wall loudly. "Good... now stand where I can see you, you little dumbass."

Kyo looked disappointed as Yuki stepped away from Satsuki's back. Yuki glared at the man like no one had ever seen before. Hatred mirrored in his eyes as he showed himself in front of Satsuki, his breathing labored and his face ghostly white.

"If you hate Honda-san that much, why don't you let her go then? You bastard..." Yuki growled clutching his side painfully.

Satsuki chuckled, "I want her to suffer. I want her," Satsuki pulled Tohru's hair so that she winced in pain, "to remember the pain of seeing the one she loves," he turned to Kyo, "when he does not love her back."

"I love her!"

"Silence!" Satsuki bellowed once again. He was holding Tohru so tightly she barely had time to cry. What was he getting at? Kyo on the other hand stared wide eyed. He stared at her exposed neck and how her jugular moved up and down erratically as she struggled against Satsuki. He had to save her. He just had to.

Satsuki turned on Hatori, his eyes blazing like hot steel. "You. I want you to erase Kyo-san's memories of Tohru. All of them. I don't want him to remember ever meeting her, ever talking to her, ever even laying a hand, on her disgusting body." Satsuki barked. "And if you don't do as I say, I promise you I will shoot her. Then all of you will suffer and not have your precious little whore."

Everyone turned to Hatori who stood stunned. He had not had to erase anyone's memory since Kana. Could he do it again?

"I said to erase his memories!" Satsuki said.

"I won't let you do that." Kyo said glaring at the man before Hatori could speak up. "You can't take my memories."

"Fine. Keep your memories and I'll end her life. Say good bye!" Satsuki's finger applied more pressure to the trigger.

"NO!" Kyo cried desperately as Satsuki paused with a grin. "Don't shoot her!" He was so close. The woman he loved was barely three feet away from him and he couldn't save her. He... he couldn't. If he forgot her, his life would be empty again. His entire life would be nothing if not for her. It'd be like starting back at one.

"Kyo-kun..." Tohru mouthed without a sound coming out of her. A tear fell from her eye like a shimmering crystal before dripping onto a familiar engagement band on her finger. He stared at it wondering why she was wearing it to begin with and it pissed him off. She didn't belong to him anymore. She was free. He knew she was. She had to have told him she didn't love him anymore to make him hold a gun to her head. Damn Satsuki.

He clenched his fists. There was a plain solution to all of this. It would be difficult but he would have to give up his memories of Tohru. He would not remember a thing.

"Hatori-san..." Kyo said quietly. "Do what he says..."

"Kyo-kun," Hatori stepped forward. He did not want to be the decision maker of this entire engagement. Kyo not remembering anything of Tohru? What would their lives be like from then on? "I... I can't..."

"Do it! Do it or she dies!" Kyo's teary eyes turned on Hatori. He looked so scared and angry. "What the hell is there to think about? Erase my damn memories!"

Hatori felt panicked. Kyo was right... it was Tohru's life on the line here. But still, it was plain to the eye that they belonged together. She'd be torn if all her time spent with the man she loved were washed

away like sand in the sea. All the fragments could never be put together again. But Tohru's life...

Hatori approached Kyo and held his hand to his forehead but pulled away.

Hatori turned on Satsuki, "How did you know of my powers?"

"Tohru here was babbling to herself the other day. I couldn't help but listen in on it. Your powers really are of great use don't you think?" Satsuki began to cackle as Hatori turned away with a frown.

This was not fair. This entire situation...

Hatori lowered his hand over Kyo's eyes only to feel warm tears brush on his palms. The feeling only made Hatori's heart tighten and he choked back his own tears. He could feel the great sadness from Kyo just by those warm tears flooding his eyes. Eyes that would never remember the girl he loved and longed for.

"Kyo-kun, don't... don't forget me..." Tohru said even though Satsuki once again barked at her to silence. Her voice cracked as she pushed on, "I... you shouldn't get involved... please..." Her hand reached out for him, desperately wanting to hold on.

"I told you if you ever ran away, I'd find you. You're special Tohru. Don't worry about anything. You'll be... you'll be okay. Ayame, Momiji, Haru, Shigure, Hatori, hell even Yuki... they'll protect you. They'll remember. You'll remember." Tohru watched as Hatori pulled his hand away and Kyo continued his intense gaze, his eyes bright as the moonlight she remembered on their first date. "Even if I forget these memories, don't cry it's going to be okay."

"K-Kyo-kun..."

To see her in such pain... "I said it will be okay!" Kyo shouted to cut her off while shutting his eyes. Even with his eyes closed he thought of every moment he had with Tohru since she first descended into his life. Every moment imprinted that was about to be cleaned away. Maybe if he thought really hard, he would remember. But it was only wistful thinking. He knew of Hatori's powers and he would take the person's memory away from that very moment to the first time they met that person... he knew he would forget everything about his darling Tohru.

The last image he had of her was that beautiful smile the last time they kissed before she left the Sohma house. Those smiles that were only for him... he didn't want to forget. It felt like cold ice in the pit of his stomach. His memories were all he had of her and now he'd lose that too. "Even... even if I forget these memories..." His voice fell quieter, "I'll just fall in love with you again." Her lip trembled as Hatori's hand to cover his face.

Tohru's eyes widened as a bright light emitted from Hatori's hand. Kyo's body pulsed and he fell forward in a heap almost as if he'd just passed out.

"KYO!" Tohru screamed more tears flooding her eyes. When the bright light flashed, Shigure and Yuki both lunged at Satsuki by surprise, pinning him down to the floor as the gun skidded away from him. Tohru flew from his iron grip and rushed to Kyo forgetting everything in the room. Shigure took a good

swing at his skull, punching the insane man out cold. Even with such resentment to Satsuki, Shigure didn't make a noise or a curse. Neither did Yuki. Hatori stared at his hands hating himself for what he just did. There was no other choice though.

Kyo lost his memories.

Everyone was utterly quiet, the storm clearing away only to find the destruction in the wake of its path. There were no words for what they felt. It was unfathomable and unnecessary. The only thing ringing through their ears...

... Were Tohru's sobs...

"Kyo!" Tohru cried while shaking him. "Kyo!" She pulled him up to cradle his face in her lap as she cried with grief. "Wake up. Please wake up!" She didn't deserve such kindness from him. She pushed his orange hair from his face as her tear fell onto his cheek, rolling off his skin and onto the floor. "Kyo, I never told you but... but I love you so much. I love you. I never told you because I was scared, I wasn't ready, and I was a fool." She closed her eyes while shaking her head. "Now it's too late..."

'I'll just fall in love with you again.'

She cried in torture. It wasn't fair. "You have to wake up and remember! Wake up so you can tell me you love me too!" She knew he would eventually wake up, but she wanted to hear him with the tone he used only for her. That voice that said he would never leave her and that he'd always love her. She gently lowered her lips to meet his, kissing him tenderly before moving away and letting her fingers trace his jaw. "Kyo, I love you." Using her arms she deputed her sleeves and smoothed away her tears. "I always will."

Seeing him still not moving she breathed shallow and shaky. "I'm so sorry." She felt her chest tighten as she let him go and she turned away to pound her fist into the floor. She loved him and he loved her. Wasn't this supposed to be a happy ending for them? Wasn't everything else that happened to them enough? When would the hurting end? She couldn't live with herself knowing she loved him so much but he never knew. Now he would never know.

"I love you so much..." she cried while balling her fists. Her hair covered her face as the room fell silent. The sound of car door slamming and police sirens echoed outside as Tohru heaved her aching heart and continued to try and restrain her lonely tears.

After a moment Tohru heard shuffling next to her and she turned to see Kyo waking up. She paused to stare at him and he blinked, only staring right back at her with blank, unmoving eyes. She hopped for a moment that he didn't forget her. That it was all a joke and he'd just hit her on the head and say, "stupid, I'd never forget you!"

But he just stared at her.

He forgot her.

He didn't remember.

Her lip trembled and she continued to weep. She bit her lip, trying to control her sobs raking through her small body. She loved him and he'd never know. It was unfair. This wasn't happening.

'I'm sorry Kyo. I'm so sorry.'

She felt hands move over her own and she blinked away her tears to see clearly. Slowly, she followed those warm hands up to his arms, chest and finally met his warm amber eyes.

"I love you too."

With a gasp, she stared at Kyo who was sitting up as if he'd just woke up from a deep sleep. He grinned at her as her eyes only widened.

"K-Kyo..."

"I'm glad you finally said it though. I think that's the first time you just called me just 'Kyo' too." She sat breathless until he nodded in understanding. His eyes seemed to tell her all she need to know. He remembered. He didn't forget.

He still loved her.

"Well don't just sit there staring at me. You look like a fish with your mouth opening and closing like that," Kyo joked while ruffling her hair playfully.

Her heart swelled and she lunged herself into his arms crying with happiness. "Oh God, Kyo! You-- how? Oh, I'm so happy!"

They heard a swarm of people barking out commands around them, and Sohma members hugging Tohru from every which way, but she wasn't there anymore. She kept her face buried deep in Kyo's warm chest, listening to their hearts beat together.

He patted her back, holding her safely in his strong waiting arms. He let her cry and babble. He didn't care. He thought he'd lost her forever...

He raised her chin to catch her lips once more before rescue workers came to take her.

...but now forever was only about to begin.

HOped u enjoyed the story while it lasted sorry but there will be no sequel!