

Soothe

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One night, two years post-anime, Misaki Aoyagi goes too far. Ritsuka is alone, in the rain. Contains: SoubixRitsuka, YoujixNatsuo

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1 - Sting

Ratings: T for shounen-ai, teeny bit of language and abuse. Mostly for the abuse; I think the shounen-ai is pretty mild.

Disclaimer: "Loveless" is copyright Yun Kouga. I only wish I owned that hot-@\$ kiss from "Memoryless", or possibly Soubi...Sooooooubi...(gets Yayoi tossed at her) Okay, fine, I'll take him.

Yayoi: Yuiko-saaaann...-cries-

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The storm had turned the sky a smoky color, the thick dark rainclouds blotting out what little light was left in the day. Different hues of gray and white bled together to set the mood for his languid walk. The droplets both agitated and calmed Ritsuka's burning skin as he stumbled down the pavement. He felt distant from everything except the pain of his own wounds.

It sounded *cliche*, without a doubt, but it admittedly fit the situation.

Ritsuka Aoyagi walked limply down the sidewalk, clutching a painful scrape on his arm after it had collided with the kitchen table...on accident, he would tell Shinonome-Sensei the following day at school. Wait...today was Saturday; he still had another day before he would see his teacher again. Good, he had enough time to create a valid explanation. Everything was an accident for Ritsuka; he was just accident-prone. Or rather, he was the accident.

Perhaps it was for the best that he left the house for the remainder of the night. His mother had one of her more violent outbursts this night, which--while they were occurring more and more-- didn't happen as often as the occasional slap on the wrist. Or face. But it had never been enough to drive him out of his own home...

...No. It wasn't his home. It was the "real" Ritsuka's home. **He** was just here for some unknown purpose except to fuel Mrs. Aoyagi's anger. And vent it, as well.

Ritsuka looked at his sky-blue shirt. The rip in his right sleeve would take a while to mend. he looked at his left sleeve. It was missing, ripped at the shoulder when he had tried to escape. Every time it was the same thing...

"Who are you! What have you done with my Ritsuka! GIVE HIM BACK! GIVE ME BACK RITSUKA!"

Ritsuka gently swept his fingers over his cheek, wincing in pain at the scratches there. "The fork," he concluded. He distinctly remembered a few things thrown at him or used against him. Unfortunately they were expensive things...

He had hurt her by not being Ritsuka. It was bad enough to lose Seimei; now she had nothing except a teenage boy in her house who looked, spoke, and acted like her youngest. But it wasn't him.

The rain pounded harder, the water weighing down both his hair and ears. He dragged his tail languidly, uncaring about what got caught in it. He had a habit of getting things caught on his tail: leaves, twigs...litter paper...Yuiko Hawatari...Ritsuka chuckled at this thought in spite of himself. The action made the bruise on his jaw throb and his whole face burned in agony. He felt his eyelids grow heavy and his limbs felt weak. *No...I can't go to sleep...not here...*

It couldn't be helped. Ritsuka found a brick wall and sat down, leaning helplessly against it. He landed much more roughly than he had intended to, due to his slender legs buckling from underneath him. "I must look so...pathetic right now..." he whispered to himself, his vocal chords feeling strained somewhat. But he knew he was right: if anyone was out right now, they probably would have tossed some change into his lap. He stared down weakly at his feet, noticing that in his haste, he had forgotten to put on shoes. His arms lay helplessly at his sides, cut and bruised. The old scrape on his wrist--which had just begun to heal--was bleeding again after his mother had torn the thin bandage off in her violent rage. His head slumped forward, too weak to fully support himself against the brick wall. Ritsuka stared at his lap and at the rainwater pooling in the creases of his shirt.

Then his eyes fell on something else: the cell phone attached to the lanyard around his neck. The one that Agatsuma Soubi had given him. He sighed. Now his mind track was on the university student and it would be hard to stray from that track. It always was when it came to Soubi.

"I'm sick of thinking about nothing but you!"

"So you've been thinking about nothing but me?"

"Go to hell! I'm really tired now!"

"S...Soubi...why do you always tell me you love me...?" he mumbled to himself, gripping the phone tightly. Were Soubi's declarations really only his orders from Seimei? He had once told him that he had fallen in love with the boy, but the enigmatic adult often told lies and made false promises.

Well, I suppose there were a couple justified promises, Ritsuka corrected, remembering the time when he couldn't get through to the older man's phone...he had printed out the pictures of the wildcat and hung them on his cork board. (1)

It was never that he didn't *like* Soubi. But he was twelve and the other man was nineteen! It wouldn't have been right to accept his advances, even if they were in the midst of a battle. And yet...even through the distrust and lies, Ritsuka still came back to him. Even after the subsequent two years of the similar--almost ritualistic--behavior, he always turned to the older man for comfort.

"If you want to hear my voice, you can just call me."

"I'm the first number on your speed dial. Call me."

"shoot...I can't believe...I'm..." He opened his phone and held down the "2." (2)

Soubi lay on the floor of his loft, taking a drag on his third cigarette when he heard a familiar chime. He pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and saw the red light flash. (3) "Ritsuka." He flipped it open. He was supposed to be procrastinating in regards to a project for class, but the young Sacrifice always came first, no matter how unreliable Soubi came across to him.

"Hello, Ritsuka?"

"... Soubi ...I--"

"Is everything okay? You sound upset."

"...I just wanted...to hear your...voice...I guess."

"...Where are you? I can come over right now."

"I don't know."

"You don't know where you are?"

"Find me...just find...me, please..."

"...That's an order...?"

"Mm."

There was a long silence as Soubi put on his coat, stuffing the half-empty pack of cigarettes into one pocket. He wasn't sure what to say...he suspected that Ritsuka was outside; he could hear rain falling in the background. Why would he be outside when it was getting so late? But when he heard the small boy's labored breathing increase in volume, Soubi pushed the questions to the back of his mind and decided to ask once he found him.

"Don't hang up."

"...I...I won't..."

"I love you, Ritsuka."

Another, longer pause as Soubi slid the key into the lock, sealing his apartment. The mixture of the loud rain and the increasing feedback on the other line made it hard to hear. But, as he walked downstairs, he heard a small reply:

"...I know you do."

Hello, everyone!! This is my second fanfiction posted here on FAC. This story was originally on my ffnet profile (Sei Ikari), but I decided that I wanted to move a few of the fics that I'm proud of over here ^__^

Next chapter: Kio, Natsuo and Youji enter the picture.

Footnotes:

- 1) Okay, I'm not entirely sure if this is the right name (too lazy to watch episode), but it's referring to episode 4 where Ritsuka orders Soubi to take pictures of that endangered wildcat. And when he tries to call Soubi, he can't get through because Soubi was on the island.
- 2) Soubi is Ritsuka's first number on speed dial, as we are well-aware of. I don't know if this applies to all cell phones, but on my phone if you hold down the 1 key, you go to voicemail. So, the next one would be 2, and Ritsuka's first speed dial.
- 3) I think Soubi's cell light turns red if Ritsuka calls. If not, then just pretend it does.

2 - Eden

Warnings: Abuse, language, POV changes, shounen-ai , later yaoi, incest (see below note)

Notes: I don't know if Kio/Soubi owns a car, but here they do.

Also, regarding Natsuo and Youji...there's some speculation on whether or not they are related (both of their surnames being "Sagan") but I'm going along with the idea that they are brothers.

Disclaimer: Loveless belongs to Yun Kouga.

"Sou-chan?"

Kio had to squint through the rain pounding off his windshield to get a good look, but he definitely knew that that was Soubi leaving the apartment. The hard, stoic look on his face was Kio's most reliable indication that he was concerned or frustrated. And not the "I-just-ran-out-of-cigarettes" frustrated.

"Soubi!" he quickly rolled down the window to call out to his roommate. Soubi didn't respond at first; he only walked to the car and turned to Kio to stare straight at him with that firm gaze Kio knew so well. The 'zombie' look. Kio swallowed audibly, but managed to ask, "what is it?"

Soubi once again said nothing at first, but finally said one word: "Ritsuka."

"What happened to Ritsuka-kun?" The remarkably young voice startled Soubi a little. He glanced into the back seat to see Youji and Natsuo in the car, leaning over Kio's seat to interrogate him. Which Soubi wasn't in a particular mood to put up with. Because he knew the longer he did, the longer his Sacrifice would be left out in the rain. He stared placidly at the barren streets before him. He couldn't even see where it ended. Could that mean he wouldn't find Ritsuka?

Kio finally broke the silence. "Get in." Soubi hesitated again. The blonde in the driver's seat ignored it and turned to the back. "Hey, you two. Wait inside in case Ritsuka comes here." he jerked a thumb at the apartment building nonchalantly.

The long-haired ZERO scowled. "We have names, Kio." But he let it go as he followed Natsuo out of the vehicle and rushed into the apartment building, shielding himself from the rain with his arms.

Soubi walked around the front of the car and slid into the passenger's side. He murmured an order to Kio --"Drive"-- before pressing the phone hastily against his ear, waiting for Ritsuka to talk to him.

Kio ignored the irony of Soubi's order and drove in the direction pointed to him.

*I wonder what would happen if I just...vanished?
Like my brother did?*

Ritsuka's feline ears twitched meekly in response to a distant crash. He knew that staying awake was the only thing he could do now to keep himself safe, so he had forced himself to listen more acutely to what was going on around him. Even the sound of the rain sloshing into the gutter just yards away gave him a headache.

Nobody came for him. It was probably a dog. In his dispassionate state of mind, he found himself hating the stupid animal. Then again...he supposed that was just the pot calling the kettle black. He was the stupid animal; he knew staying in that house was foolish. But he feared for his mother's well-being. If she was so enraged by Ritsuka's change in personality, how would she react if he just disappeared altogether? He sighed dismally, knowing that according to her, the "real" Ritsuka already had.

"S...oubi...I'm still here," he murmured weakly into the phone, which he had propped up against his shoulder. A logical part of his mind knew there was a risk of water damage, but it had slipped into the deepest recesses of his mind for now.

"I know...tsuka...oking for you..." the line was breaking up, as Ritsuka had feared. Now he hated the phone. It never let him talk to the one person he wanted to talk to.

The one person that he wanted to save him.

"I'm still here..."

In an instant, the soft blue butterfly wallpaper faded and vanished. Ritsuka just laughed, his face too numb to feel the pain from his bruises and cuts. His battery had died. Now he had no soothing image to help lull him away to a place where there would be no pain. Tilting his head as much as he could, he stared down the street. With his bleary vision, the road seemed to stretch on forever, never stopping until it reached its destination. He wondered where it would go, if he could get up and walk until there was no more road. Where he would end up. Shangri-La, maybe. Heaven, Nirvana, Eden, call it whatever you like. All he wanted was somewhere perfect where Ritsuka could be Ritsuka.

The cell phone slid off his sleeve and hit the pavement harshly.

"...Dammit. I think I lost the call." Soubi closed his phone in defeat, keeping his emotions to a bare minimum. Kio knew his exasperation, though. He hadn't practically hung off of Soubi for ages all for nothing. As strong as his mask appeared, Kio knew where its cracks were. And that was where he knew to search for anything human.

"Keep looking, he's hard to miss. Did he say what happened to him?" Kio asked, turning a corner haphazardly. He hated driving a car, particularly since they lived in Japan, but he knew Soubi wouldn't dare carry Ritsuka in the rain.

Soubi took his chin from his elbow resting near the passenger side window and quirked one delicate eyebrow upward. "What do you mean, 'he's hard to miss?'"

"Sou-chan, I didn't mean it like that; don't change the subject," Kio said, inwardly rolling his eyes. He knew sarcasm in this situation wouldn't help. Soubi looked bothered enough.

It took a while for the usually reticent man to respond. "His mother."

"His mother did what? Did he tell you what she did?"

"He didn't tell me it was her."

When did he pick up this habit of speaking for other people? Kio wondered if Ritsuka found it as irritating as he did. "Then how do you know his mom had anything to--"

"Because..." Soubi held his hand up to silence the driver. Kio glanced at Soubi in curiosity, trying hard to keep his focus on the road ahead of him. "She's...*troublesome*. In the worst possible way."

The car was silent.

"Yooooo-jii...what're we waiting for, exactly?" Natsuo drawled, stretching out languidly on the bed. The other ZERO wasn't quite sure himself. He stared idly at the phone, willing Soubi or Ritsuka to call. That way he wouldn't have to worry about them.

Like a damn weakling.

"We're waiting for something to happen, that's what. I just wanna know why Ritsuka-kun called Soubi," Youji replied, continuing his staring contest with the phone.

"Maybe the kid's desperate for something of Soubi's, you know?" the redhead leered, grinning mischievously. Youji twisted his face in a grimace. The phone had won the contest. Youji knew Ritsuka was 14 now, certain impulses would be kicking in...but calling Soubi so late at night for something so trivial? It was so strange, so..."un-Ritsuka."

Besides, if he were Ritsuka, he'd go for the ditzzy chick with the huge boobs. Without letting his brother in on his secret wishes. Natsuo absolutely adored him; if he found out about his thoughts, Youji knew he wouldn't be able to make up an excuse in enough time. He would run head-on into Natsuo's anger and turn Youji into a deer caught in headlights.

"I dunno. Loveless isn't connected to Soubi...but it has been two years," Youji replied thoughtfully, forcing himself away from the phone. He sat down near Natsuo and stroked the ZERO's cheek absentmindedly. Natsuo purred in content, not questioning why Youji felt like being affectionate.

"Maybe he finally wants to prove that connection."

Ritsuka was floating.

He lay in a vast sea of nothingness, being supported by an unseen force. One that he trusted. Seimei's arms, maybe. Though he hadn't forgotten about his shocking nightmare all that time ago.

His whole body felt as if it was burning, slowly, on the edges of his skin and spreading slowly inside him. He suddenly pined for growing pains, which he had been getting enough of recently. Ritsuka focused on the inside of his eyelids, looking for anything to stare at until he met an end. Whatever end he was to meet.

"Hey, there he is! Holy shoot..." His senses more acute, Ritsuka decided to initiate a guessing game with the outside world. Guess the Foreign Sound.

A car door opening. Garbled words of a distressed man. A car door closing. Another car door opening.

Someone lifting him into his arms. Someone pulling the angel, fallen from grace, back from the depths he had fallen so harshly into.

"S...Sou...bi...?" Ritsuka croaked, attempting and failing to lift his arm and feel for his lifeline. A warm hand wrapped around his wrist (lightly, so the bruises there wouldn't ache anymore than they already did) and lifted his arm. Ritsuka's hand pressed against his savior's face.

He smiled a little at feeling the thin rims of the oval spectacles. "It's me, Ritsuka. You're not too far from your house."

It suddenly fit in Ritsuka's head. The crash he had blamed on an innocent dog was nothing more than Misaki Aoyagi, looking for her missing boy. Not caring at all about the shadow of his "former" self. The ghost, the hollow shell in which the real Ritsuka was hiding.

And Ritsuka slid into the backseat of the car to let darkness--sleep, unconsciousness, death...whatever came first-- overtake him.

-End Chapter 2-

I torture poor Ritsuka, don't I? As much as it sounds like it...NO, RITSUKA IS NOT SUICIDAL IN THIS FIC. It'll be made clear later.

As mentioned above, the story will get a bit more intense regarding malexmale content (SoubiRitsuka, YoujiNatsuo), so the rating's a little high now, just to be safe.

There will probably be one or two more chapters after this one.