

# Karera No Ai

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*A young 18 year old boy, Kinou, is isolated from everyone by a horrible disease.  
He sneaks out in order to find his first love before it's too late.*

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# 1 - chapter 1

The bright sunlight shone through the small window in the dim room. The soft white sheets on the bed moved as a pale head popped slowly out of the sheets. His hair was a light blue like sliver color. His eyes were light green.

The young man groaned, trying to pull himself up. He narrowed his eyes, looking through the open window. He covered his pale skin from the bright morning sun.

“Oohayo, I am Kinou Sagara. I am usually stuck in my bed by my ill health. I haven't been to school in months. I have been in my bed for almost four months now.”

Kinou got out of bed and wobbled over to his slippers. After getting each slipper on he wobbled out and down the hallway. “Kinou! What are you doing out of bed! You know you were told by the doctor not to move!” A woman yelled, approaching the boy. He turned to see her wearing a long blue gown. “Mother...” Kinou replied slowly. The woman he called ‘mother’ stopped in front of him and smacked him across the face.

Even with such a light hit he could feel the blood, rush up his throat. Kinou coughed, letting the blood drip from his lip. While still on the ground, covering his face, his mother grabbed his loose kimono and dragged him back to his room.

“Stay in there and don't come out! You have all you need in there!” She yelled and slammed the door in his face. The boy reached up and touched his red cheek. Tears dripped down his face as he just stood there.

Back in bed, Kinou looked over at the table clock. “3:07pm...” He read quietly then sighed. “My life is so dull. I can't even get out of bed.”

He laid his head back down then picked up a book from his bedside table. “Ichigo meets Momo. Story by Kinou Sagara, art by, Kokoro Higarashi.” He began to read through the story, his palm touching the delicate pictures. With that, his memory of his childhood came back.

“Hehe. Kokoro-chan! We should make a story! Your art is so awesome, you can do all the pictures in it, I'll write it, okay?” A young boy who looked like a younger Kinou, said excitedly to a little black haired girl in a purple dress. The girl nodded shyly. “Yes. That would be fun. It could even make the stores.” She said, continuing Kinou's excitement.

The girl named Kokoro looked almost two years younger than Kinou and she had beautiful light purple eyes that shined with happiness. The two hugged.

Yet another flash back came to him, one from his early high school years.

“Ko-chan...” He said placing his hand on her shoulder. He was 17 and Kokoro was 15, her first year in high school. Kinou was already in his 3rd year. The girl turned, her black hair flying, now with a red streak on one side. “Yes?” The boy looked down, not knowing what to say. “Kokoro...I promised I'd be here to help you with high school. It seems now...I have to break that promise. I'm sorry...” The girl stood quiet. “I have...cancer and...I won't be able to go to school anymore...” He continued, looking at his feet.

The girl began to cry. “Kinou...n-no...” She sobbed, running up to him and hugging tightly to him. Silent tears fell to the ground from the young man's face. “I'm sorry.”

Now a year later, he was still in bed, his cancer still very small but still a threat to his life. It drained almost every inch of his energy so he was usually only allowed to stay in bed.

He sat there looking through the pages of the book. “Kokoro-chan...” He said silently as a shining tear dripped down his face.

He remembered the time that they promised to be together as boyfriend and girlfriend, no matter what. But now in this state his family would not allow one visitor to see him, not even his own family.

He remembered that Kokoro would try to visit him everyday since the day he left, but after some time of always being rejected, she slowly began to come less and less, then not at all.

Kinou got up from bed, walked over to his mirror and looked into it. His face was pale white; his eyes had almost lost all color. He also noticed that his hair was getting quite thin and it would fall out, more and more. His eyes showed much sadness.

He groaned then walked to his window. Opening the curtains, he peered out. Such a lively world out there that he would never see. Kinou glanced back at the door to his room then outside the window and back. His heart raced. “This will be my only chance...” He said to himself and unlocked his window. Luckily he lived in a one level house and his window was close to a lump in the ground which made escaping much easier.

The boy never took off his loose kimono or slippers because he could barely have the energy to change.

The town was bigger than he had remembered it. People would stop and stare at him, wobbling down the streets. Some even mumbled things. His eyes hurt by the sunlight but he wouldn't turn back; not

now.

Kinou had something set on his mind to do, but what?

## 2 - Chapter 2

Kinou stopped in front of a store, leaned down on a chair to sit down for a minute. He stopped and breathed heavily, covering his eyes. His heart beat quickly and every beat seemed as if knife was shot into his chest. Kinou placed his free hand on his chest, grabbing himself tightly.

“He-hello?” A woman's voice asked. Kinou looked up at her, squinting. The girl was wearing a white skirt with a dark blue sailor top. She had long black hair...AND A RED STREAK! Kinou's eyes widened as he stood up. The girl gasped. “What's wrong with you!?” She asked quickly, a bit freaked out. Kinou's mouth was opened, panting. “Ko-KOKORO!?” He almost shouted, some of the workers around the store stopped to stare.

The girl dropped her books and backed up with sweat forming on her face. “How-how did you know my name?!” She asked in a panic. Kinou's lightened face grew sad. “Don't you remember me? ...I'm Kinou Sagara.” The girl's face turned to tears. “Y—you, what are you... why...” She cried. Kinou wobbled over to her and embraced her. “We made a promise. Do you remember?” He asked. Kokoro nodded her head, burring it into his chest. Those around witnessing this all fell into awe.

Kokoro looked up into Kinou's eyes and smiled. “Can you run?” She asked him, still gripping to his kimono. The boy shook his head. “No. I'll just black out.” He answered slowly. She smiled at his response.

“That's fine. You don't look too heavy.” Kokoro remarked as she picked the pale boy up and began to run. “Damn! You are light!” She shouted against the wind. Kinou didn't reply.

Kokoro stopped in a sakura park. “Remember this?” She said as she let him down. There was a beautiful pond with sakura trees surrounding it. Kinou's eyes widened and tears formed. “This is where I confessed my love to you.” He said softly, smiling. The girl knelt down next to him and wrapped her arms around him, closing her eyes. “I missed you so much.”

Kinou grabbed Kokoro's arm and pushed it towards him. Kokoro's expression changed. ‘His skin...It's so...cold.’ She thought to herself. Kinou broke her out of her thoughts and pulled her on top of him. He was crying. “You-You were the one I wanted to see. All this time, I've only wanted to be with you!” He sobbed, tightening his grip. The girl didn't know how to reply but other than to hug him back. “Me too.” She whispered.

“You know what my childhood wish was?” He asked her. Kokoro became quiet, playing with his robe while thinking. “No, what was it?” She asked, looking up at his face. His white lips formed into a smile. “It was to marry you.” He replied. This shocked Kokoro very much and it showed on her face. The light green eyes traveled down to see her face. “I'm sorry. That was rude-” He started to apologize but was stopped by a soft peach finger pressed against his lips. Kokoro bent up and kissed his lips softly then looked into his eyes, showing much joy. “I do.”

Kinou stopped and stared up at her. "W-What?" He stammered. Kokoro sat up, looking up at the sakura above them. "I will live my life with you until the day you die." She repeated in a simpler form. Kinou sat up, watching her gaze at the elegant tree. "But...You know that...I won't be around much longer..." He said in a saddened voice. She turned her head back down and looked at him. "As long as I can be there till the end." She said sweetly.

The two sat there, catching up on old times till the time was getting obvious. "The sun is setting!" Kinou exclaimed as he jumped (almost falling back down) up. Kokoro stood up, catching him from falling. "But...What's the matter?" She asked then stopped. "You didn't sneak out...Not just to find me!?" She said, her voice rising more and more. The boy hung his head low in apology. "Forget about that!" She shouted as she, again, picked Kinou up and ran out of the park.

She stopped finally reaching Kinou's house. "Here. Should I sneak you in?" She asked. He shook his head. "No. It doesn't matter now. They will know." He wobbled the front door with Kokoro following him.

Mrs. Sagara opened the door. "KINO!" She shouted. She slapped him hard. "How could you? You're ILL!" She pulled him inside by his kimono but stopped. "Higarashi! How long have you been here?" She hissed. Kokoro's face darkened. "Long enough." She said, letting herself in, and pushing Kinou's mother's hand away. She slowly led him to his room. Mrs. Sagara growled.

### 3 - Chapter 3

Kokoro laid Kinou on his bed and smiled, wiping some hair out of his face. The boy smiled back, touching her hand. "I'll be here for you..." The girl said, lowering her body to Kinou. "... Forever." She finished as she kissed him on the lips. The boy pressed back, letting the kiss last longer.

Mrs. Sagara glared through the door, watching the two as they kissed. "Damn her." She growled then walked away. Kinou backed off the kiss when he heard his mother's foot steps. "What?" Kokoro said as she turned her gaze to the door. "Was she watching us?" She asked. Kinou nodded. "I think so." He responded quietly. Kokoro became silent. The two sat on the pale blue bed for some time, deep within thought.

"Kokoro-san?" Kinou started, his fingers twiddled with the bed sheet. "Do you really... Still love me?" His heart raced as the blood rushed to his cheeks. Kokoro was stunned by the question. "Wh-What? Do I... I mean yes..." She stammered as she lowered her face to the ground to hide her red face. Kinou cupped his hand to Kokoro's face and brought her up to him. "Good. I still love you too." He smiled at her as he spoke. The girl looked up at him with big blue eyes. She leaped up and hugged him with tears in her eyes. "Oh Kinou..." She cried.

Kokoro climbed onto the bed and laid next to him, hugging him close. Kinou blushed a light pink. Kokoro looked at him, resting her arm on her side. She smiled at him. "Are you feeling better?" She asked softly. Kinou lifted his hand up to his face. "I don't know any more. Heh. I don't even know if I'll live past this year..." He said quietly.

Kokoro gasped, falling over onto her back. "What do you mean!? Don't tell me you're losing hope..." She cried grabbing onto his loose kimono. Kinou's serious expression didn't change. "Why? Stop acting this way! You're scaring me! Please... Don't talk like you are wishing for death!" She cried sadly, tightening her grip on his kimono with tears running down her cheeks. The young pale boy turned to Kokoro. "What do you want me to think? Have hope that I'll live? This is going to kill me! Stop trying to say that there is hope! You and I both know I won't live." He fought back, raising his voice a little. Kokoro's eyes widened in fear as he spoke. "No!" She cried as she flung herself into Kinou's chest, clinging to his robe. Kinou's eyes narrowed as he looked down at the black hair. "Kokoro..."

Kinou's mother opened the door with a scowl. She brought in a tray of food but froze immediately, dropping the tray, making the food splatter everywhere. Kokoro stirred as she slept on top of Kinou's chest. She slightly opened her eyes as she felt a cold hand grabbing her head and jerking it upwards. Before she could react she was smacked many times. "Don't you touch him, you demon!" She yelled.

Kinou's eyes flashed open to find his mother abusing Kokoro. He jerked himself upwards, pushing his mother to the floor. Kokoro's eyes were small, showing much fear and pain. His mother got back up to her feet and wiped her cheek. "Kinou! How dare you touch your mother in such a manner!?" She screamed running up to him and smacking him so hard he fell backwards onto the soft pillows. Kokoro jumped onto of Kinou and screamed, "Stop! Don't hurt him!" She began to cry as she bent down,

hugging the cold, fainted boy. His mother growled as she grabbed Kokoro's arm tightly as blood slowly dripped out of the small crescent-moon-shaped gashes. Kokoro gapped in pain, but no sound came out. The brown-haired woman threw her to the ground, the girl screaming in pain. Kinou opened his eyes, wincing in pain. His mother turned back to him and smacked him. "Don't ever let me catch you like that with a girl ever again!" She shouted as she stormed out of the room.

Kokoro gasped loudly as she pushed herself slowly up. Two drops wet down the hard bamboo floor. Kinou laid on the bed in a daze, his eyes narrow, with almost no life in them. Suddenly Kinou went into a coughing streak. He began to wheeze as he coughed. It sounded so painful, Kokoro covered her ears and closed her eyes tight. Soon Kinou began to gag. Kokoro perked up and ran over to his side. "KINO!" Then all faded.



## 4 - Chapter 4

A bright light shown harshly through the light shades that shined onto the white bed. Kinou stirs in his deep sleep, disturbed by the sunlight and opens his eyes. "Huh? Where am I?" He asked in a tired tone, whipping his eyes. "The hospital." A female voice said next to him. "Huh?" Kinou asked jerking his head to the person. "Kokoro..." He said in a whispered. Kokoro looked down in a way that said 'I'm disappointed in myself'. "You had a heart attack." Kinou's eyes widened wide with surprise. "I did? I'm sorry! I bet I worried you." He said in a voice that sounded like he was going to cry. Kokoro got up and walked slowly towards him. She wrapped her arms around him loosely, hugging him lightly. "Yes. I was terrified... But you can't help it. You didn't choose to have a heart attack then." She whispered sadly. He looked at her messy hair. "She must have been here the whole time..." He said to himself, feeling a bit bad. "Kokoro? Did you stay here the whole time?" She nodded, wiping away a tear that fallen on her cheek. "Yes. You were unconscious for a day in a half. Luckily my mother said it was okay." She smiled a bit.

Suddenly there was a knock. "Ah, Sagara-san, you're up." A short-haired nurse said in the doorway. She walked in. "Nasaka-san?" Kinou asked, recognizing her from the last time he was in the hospital. She smiled and nodded. "I'm glad you remember me." She said with a laugh and placed a clip board on the side table next to Kokoro. Nasaka looked down at Kokoro. "Mm? Oh, is this your girlfriend, Kinou?" Kokoro blushed deeply as Kinou jerked backwards. "Ne!? Uh... Yes...I mean no... I mean she's a friend...my best friend." He stammered hopelessly. Kokoro watched Kinou stutter with wide eyes, not knowing what to say. Nasaka placed a hand on Kinou's head. "Heh, I understand what you're trying to tell me Sagara-kun." She said with a smile. "I need to give you an IV." The brunette said fixing a needle. The pale boy nodded and leaned his head back against the hard pillow. Kokoro squeezed his hand and he looked over at her. "It's okay. I've gotten a lot of these. I'll be fine." He reassured her placing his other hand over hers.

"Alright Sagara-kun, straighten out your arm." She ordered as she wiped a cotton ball on his arm. Kinou watched Kokoro with a smile, who wasn't paying attention. The girl seemed fixed on his arm with a tight expression. The sharp needle pierced through his thin pale skin as Kokoro winced, shutting her eyes. Suddenly there was a cold hand on her cheek that pulled her up. "It's okay. I'm fine." Kinou whispered while rubbing Kokoro's soft cheek with his spare hand. Kokoro blushed and looked down at the ground. Nasaka smiled as she placed the tape over the needle. "You are a lovely couple." She said sweetly as Kinou and Kokoro, both, looked up at her. Their faces slowly turned a light pink-like red. The young nurse giggled. "You don't have to act all embarrassed about it." She said with a smile. "I'll give you some alone time." Nasaka said as she got up and left the room. Kokoro looked down at her lap, hiding her embarrassment.

Kinou slightly blushed but his eyes stayed focused on Kokoro. He let out a weak arm, grabbed her face and brought her down to his level. The two stared at each other, looking deeply in each other's eyes for a while. Kinou couldn't stand it much longer. He pulled her into his and kissed her, at first softly, but it soon became rough. Kokoro's eyes filled with tears as she kissed the boy.

“KINOU!” A voice screamed.

## 5 - Chapter 5

It was nighttime with one or two small lights on in the white hospital room. Kokoro was chased out by Mrs. Sagara. It was the loneliest time for Kinou now. The nurses and doctors wouldn't check back in with him till tomorrow and Kinou wasn't tired at all. All that he had to do was read "Ichigo meets Momo". He sighed as he picked up the small paper-made book. Kinou smiled as he remembered that the two characters in the story were based on Kokoro and himself. His smile soon drooped down to a frown. "I wonder what she did to Kokoro after she dragged her out of here...?" He asked himself out loud.

"Who did what and you want to know what?" A male voice said at the door. Kinou looked up immediately looked toward the entrance of the room. "Hey." The boy said as he shot Kinou a peace sign then walked to the extra bed in the room. The boy looked about 19, dark brown hair, yellow eyes, and about 5'4. He wore a hospital gown with a white shirt and blue jeans in his hands. "Who are you?" Kinou asked the boy. "Me? Oh, I'm Kaworu. Ochira Kaworu, but you can talk to me like a friend. I'm guessin' you're Kinou Sagara, right?" He said with a smile.

Kinou nodded. Kaworu smiled as he reached in the pocket of his pants. "Hmm. Nice to meet you, I'm your new roommate." He explained and pulled out a cigarette. Kinou's eyes widened as he watched Kaworu stick the cigarette in his mouth and light it. "But-but-but...you're not allowed to smoke in a hospital." Kinou stammered. The boy looked up. "Mmm? Oh, heh, I don't really listen to `rules'." He explained with a chuckle as he flumped onto the bed. Kinou fell back onto the thin hospital pillow. Kaworu laughed. "So you don't want me? I can go ask for a different room if ya want." He said with a smile. Kinou shook his head. "No. heh, you saved me from complete boredom." Kaworu smiled. "Good `cause I was to lazy anyways."

The next morning Kinou awoke with a nurse complaining very loudly. "Aww! See? You woke him up!" Kaworu whined. The nurse put her hands on her hip. "Don't try to get out of this. You know you're not allowed to have cigarettes in a hospital!" She demanded. Kaworu shrugged. "Hey, call it habit." He said in a very lax tone. The nurse growled. "No wonder you had a massive heart attack! Don't ever let me catch you doing that again!" She said before stomping out.

"What happened?" Kinou asked. Kaworu laughed. "She found my stash and took it. Ah well, I'll buy more later." He said as he laid his head back. Kinou almost fell over. He steadied himself out and sat next down to Kaworu. "Mmm?" Kaworu muttered in question. "You do know that smoking is bad for you... And you haven't told me why you're in the hospital." Kinou said in a stern voice. Kaworu sat up, not looking Kinou in the eye. He raised his hand up to his face, as if to study it. "Heart attacks. I've been so reckless." He started out with a soft laugh.

"I've had two so far. I guess I've given up all hope for life. You see, I was in a biker gang when I was 18. We didn't listen to anyone but ourselves. We'd rob shops and threaten others to respect us by guns. I've also smoked since I was 9." Kinou sat quietly. "This is the first time I've seen him be serious since he arrived last night." He thought to himself. "Are you planning on quitting?" Kinou asked. Kaworu let out a soft embarrassed laugh. "Ah, well that's the problem. It's always hard to quit, right?" He sighed.

Kaworu looked over to the window for a moment in the silence. He suddenly jerks back. "Hey! I've never heard your story!" He exclaimed as he rested his head on his hand. Kinou looked back. "Huh? You want to know about me?" He asked. Kaworu nodded with a big smile. "Alright... I'm 18, I have cancer... I use to go to Yakama High. I left there about a year ago. I would of 4th year there if I was still attending it. I just recently reunited with my best friend, the one I love the most..." Kinou said quietly as his pale face turned a light pink. Kaworu smiled. "That's great! Oh, if you're interested, I'm 23." He explained. "Hey, that friend of yours got a name?" He asked. Kinou nodded. "Kokoro." He said lightly with a smile. "Kokoro? That's a funny name, but whatever." He laughed.

"Sagara-san! You're not supposed to be moving around so much!" The nurse complained as she walked in the doorway. She had light blonde, wavy hair with glasses. Kinou bowed slightly and walked back to his bed. "Hey, Sisu, where's my meds? I haven't taken my 13:00 h. ones!" The nurse glared at him. "Ochira-san, we are not friends so do not call me by my first name!" Kaworu stuck his tongue out and laid back on his bed. The nurse, Sisu Rumoki, scurried around the room for the meds and placed them in front of Kaworu. Kaworu raised his arms in the air as if to say 'yay' and gulped them down. Kinou sighed. "Oh, Sagara-san, you have a visitor." Sisu added. "Mm? Who?" He asked. "Me." Kokoro's voice floated in. Kinou turned to the door. "Kokoro!!!" He exclaimed as the nurse slipped out of the room. "Ehhh?" Kaworu exclaimed. "Who? Kokoro?" He asked as he got up. Kokoro cocked her head to one side. "Who are you?" Kaworu stopped in front of her and bowed. "Kaworu Ochira...and yourself?" She did the same. "Kokoro Higarashi." She said with a smile, but it soon faded into a wide-mouth-stare. "Mmm...They seem real..." Kaworu said blankly as he poked at her chest. Both, Kokoro and Kinou blushed a deep pink. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING KAWORU!?" Kinou gaped. The boy turned from the stunned girl's chest to Kinou. "I thought you were talking about a guy..." He said, still rather plainly. "A WHAT?!" The two screamed.

## 6 - Chapter 6

Kinou gaped. The boy turned from the stunned girl's chest to Kinou. "I thought you were talking about a guy..." He said, still rather plainly. "A WHAT?!" The two screamed.

Kaworu laughed shyly. "Oh, my mistake." He said with a smile in a high tone. Kinou let his body drop back on the bed with an `oof'. Kokoro blushed a little. That was the first time a guy had touched her there, and it had to be that creep! She whined at the thought. Kaworu walked back to his `area' of the room and sat on the windowsill.

"Mm, Kinou? You miss being free?" he asked as he watched the cars zoom by below. Kinou was quiet for a little bit, not knowing if Kaworu had a reason for saying what he did. "You see, I use to be in a biker gang. We were great! Heh. Though, the locals didn't like us very much, with our reputation of stealing while being armed. As well as going far against the speed limit. I was up next to the leader. We were great pals. Maybe too good, I don't know." He said quietly. "But one day while we were speed racing, because of my bad heart, I had an attack and got into a huge accident. I don't really remember it; I just recall what others have said to me. Anyways when I regained consciousness I was in a hospital, only for the police or their `victims'. I suppose they mixed me up with another guy, a civilian, and let me loose once my heart rate returned to normal and I was healthy again. Later on I got back in the biker gang that I was in before and continued to do the bad stuff for fun, like the old days. Well, at that time I had been smoking six packs of cigs a day; that soon turned on me and I had another small heart attack. Now I'm here... Locked up again with white all around...this time they were nice enough to give me a roommate; a cute one at that." He continued with a smirk. Kinou blushed. Kokoro had, by that point, sat down in one of the guest seats. "Will you go back to them when you're discharged?" she asked with a straight face. Kaworu chuckled softly to himself. "Maybe, I haven't thought much about it... I can't really lead myself to leave. It's because of Mizuka I suppose." He continued as his eyes never left the street.

"Is that why you sit there? Why you continue to watch the busy street? Are you waiting for this `Mizuka'?" Kinou said in a stern voice. Kaworu laughed and turned away from the window. "I suppose that would be the truth. Mizuka is my first and only love... I can't let that be." He said sweetly. Kaworu's face turned into that of a chibi's and said. "Heyyy~ I don't like serious moments like this!!! Make it stop!" He whined.

Kokoro and Kinou fell over. "Baka!! You don't just turn from being so serious to sarcastic!" Kokoro yelled at him.

Suddenly a nurse popped in. "May I ask you to be a bit quieter...and visiting hours are done, I'm afraid." Kokoro nodded and stood up. She bowed to Kinou and Kaworu. "Bye Kinou. I'll come later, okay?" She said as she left.

Once it was quiet again and Kinou had lain back down, Kaworu looked over at Kinou. "So, she's your girlfriend, I take it." Kaworu thought out loud. Kinou blushed slightly and nodded without looking up from the plain white sheets. Kaworu smiled to himself. "She seems good for you. She cares..." His voice

traveled off which soon became silent except for the small chirps of crickets outside. The boy laid down on his bed and shut off his light. "Well, Kinou, night."

The next day started out slow with Kaworu's rambling. "... And so, that's how you make an American pizza." The man explained to two of the nurses. They let out `O's and `Ah's. Kinou held his hand up to his forehead. "I really don't want to wake up to this every morning..." He said to himself with a low sigh. "Kinou! You're awake!" Kaworu exclaimed as the nurses swerved around to see Kinou. "You just missed out on learning how to make an American pizza! Did you know that it's almost completely different than how we do it?" He asked. The young boy groaned. "Yes I did..." He replied in an irritated voice. Of course, Kaworu ignored Kinou's rudeness and continued. "Did you know they have some state-of-the-art weapons over there?" He asked the two young nurses. They shook their heads excitedly. It was almost too obvious that they had fallen for his boyish good-looks.

Suddenly a nurse popped in. "Ochira-san, you seem to have a visitor..." She said letting the person through. He had long blond hair put up into a messy bun with blue eyes, wearing ragged muddy jeans and a white, with mud splattered on it, t-shirt. "Kaworu-sama!" He exclaimed.

Kaworu gasped as the nurses squealed at another pretty face.

## 7 - chapter 7

Kaworu got out of bed and slowly walked up to the man. The blonde smiled and ran up to Kaworu and embraced him. "How I've missed you, Kaworu!" He exclaimed. The nurse who was in the room pushed the other hallway nurses away so they could have their time alone. "Oh, Mizuka, how are you?" Kaworu replied, "How is the gang?"

Kinou almost fell over by the name `Mizuka'. "YOU'RE MIZUKA!?" He screamed. By his scream, Mizuka ran behind Kaworu and hid. "This is your roommate?" He stammered. Kaworu smiled. "Of course it is." The man smiled and pulled out a cigarette. Kinou could say no more but stared.

"Kaworu?" Mizuka whined. Kaworu turned around and put his hands on his shoulders. "That's Kinou Sagara. Don't mind him, I bet he isn't use to us. He's straight..." He explained. The blonde stood up straight letting out an `Oh'. By Kaworu's words, an anger mark popped up on his forehead. `They say that like it's an insult!' He thought to himself.

Now sitting on Kaworu's bed, Mizuka asked, "In the last hospital you didn't have a roommate...nor was the security as tight."

Kinou listened in as he held `Ichigo meets Momo' up to his face. `But the security here is really bad... I wonder what it was like at that hospital...' Kinou thought to himself.

"Mmm. Yes. It will make this night rather difficult, won't it?" Kaworu replied, turning from the windowsill.

`What is that suppose to mean, `it will make this night difficult'...!?' Kinou screamed in his head as cat ears perked up.

The new arrival looked over at Kinou with cat-like eyes. "How will we do it with him around?" He asked, continuing to stare at Kinou. Suddenly a hand reached down Mizuka's shirt. "What does it matter if he sees?" Kaworu said slyly.

Kinou fell off the bed and could hear laughing...but it soon faded into something that his ears did not want to hear.

Suddenly there was a LOUD scream. Kinou's head quickly jerked over to the open doorway. Kokoro stood there in shock, blushing wildly.

The two stopped where they were, shirts off and...Mizuka's pants where slightly pulled down, giving off a great view of his grey boxers.

Kinou pulled himself right-side up and ran over to Kokoro who couldn't exactly close her eyes. Kinou quickly pulled her head into his chest and turned to the two. "Put your cloths back on! It's one thing when you do that in front of me, but it's another when you do that in front of Kokoro!" He scolded them.

The two groaned but got off and redressed. "Blasted girl, why did she have to show up?" Mizuka groaned as he slipped on his shirt. Without being able to see, Kokoro flicked off the direction that she thought the man was standing. Mizuka's biker side began to wake up as his eyes grew wide in insanity. Kaworu, seeing this, kissed Mizuka quickly to calm his lover down.

Once things cooled down, Mizuka sat on Kaworu's bed, or to be exact, on Kaworu's lap, and Kokoro sat next to Kinou who was lying down in bed again. It was one of those eerie silences that you'd rather avoid. The room slowly dimmed by the setting red sun.

Suddenly a nurse popped. "Miss, visiting hours are over." She said in a stern voice but then looked up to Mizuka and smiled sweetly. "Not for you sir, you may stay as long as you may like." Kokoro jumped up and got up in the nurse's face. "How come he gets to stay and I can't?!" She complained. The lady sighed. "Miss, will I have to call security?" She said plainly. Kokoro growled and stormed past her.

"Mm, well I'd better be getting back anyway, I thank you for your hospitality." Mizuka bowed, still on Kaworu's lap. He turned to his boyfriend and smiled again. "I am happy I have found you." He kissed Kaworu, who did the same back. Kinou let out a `gah!' and hid his face as the nurse blushed with her hand pressed against her cheek.

"Bye." Mizuka waved as he left the building. The man got on his motorcycle and road up to Kokoro who was walking a few blocks away. "Hey, hey, so you're Sagara-sama's girlfriend?" He asked rather excited.

"I guess..." Kokoro muttered with a scowl on her face.

"What does that mean?"

"It means I don't know!"

"How do you not know?"

"I just don't! Stop following me!"

"But..."

"But nothing! Leave me alone!"

Kokoro began to walk faster. Though by doing that it made Mizuka just want to follow her even more so he sped up a little to catch up. "How about I give you a ride home? You know I don't go after girls, so you shouldn't be afraid." He said with a friendly smile. Kokoro stopped, making Mizuka slam on the brakes then back up. "What was that about!?" He asked rather stunned. Without saying anything, Kokoro slowly got on the bike. Mizuka looked at her, first confused, but then smiled and pulled off his helmet. "Here. You should wear this." Kokoro took the helmet and placed it on her head. "Thanks..." She said looking at the floor. "And we're off!" Mizuka exclaimed as he pressed on the accelerator. Kokoro screamed and her hands flew around Mizuka's waist. This was her first time on a bike and never knew what to do.



About an hour later Mizuka stopped at a small family-like home and let Kokoro off, getting off, himself, afterward. He walked her up to the door and smiled again. "I hope to see you again. Take care." Mizuka waved and walked down the steps as Kokoro stood in the doorway, waving back.

The girl shut the door and stood there in thought. 'Though they may be gay, they are nice people...I wonder what mom would say about this...' She shuddered at the thought. "Kokoro? Is that you?" a voice from another room sounded. "Yes mom, I'm home!" Kokoro replied.

## 8 - chapter 8

“WHERE'S KAWORU-SAMA?!” A voice boomed as it awoke the pale boy from his short night's sleep. He didn't have much time to sleep for Kaworu had been `flirting', if you may, with the nurses most of the night. Kinou pulled himself up and looked over at the door. All he could see was light blond, long hair with what seemed to be a black shirt and jeans.

“Mizuka?” Kinou guessed out loud. The man pulled his head in, his eyes starting to water. He ran up to the bed and fell to his knees. “Kinou! Do you know where Kaworu is?!” Mizuka panicked. Kinou plainly shook his head as Mizuka pulled himself up and threw his hands up to his head dramatically. “Ahh! They won't tell me where he is!” He shouted.

Kinou couldn't help himself but feel bad for Mizuka, for his boyfriend was missing when he came and everyone refuses to tell him. He began to think about what it would be like to be in his place and frantically searching for Kokoro.

He decided to help Mizuka out because he was already familiar with him and it felt like he had known him for a longer time. He drew his sheets off and pulled himself to his feet. He took a step forward to comfort Mizuka who had thrown himself to the wall and was sulking. Then something cracked and Kinou fell over painfully. Kinou cried out as he hit the cold hospital floor and Mizuka swirled around to Kinou. He shouted for a nurse then looked back at Kinou. “Are you alright?!” He asked with widened eyes. Tears began to stream down Kinou's cheeks as he slowly pulled his knees to his chest. Mizuka shouted again before things turned dark.

“Uhgmm...” Kinou moaned as he awoke in his familiar bed with Mizuka towering over him. “Are you alright? They said you had a panic attack and you broke your toe.” Kinou pushed his hands against the bed, pulling himself up into a sitting position. Ignoring his question, he asked quietly, “Did you find Kaworu?” Mizuka was silent and his face drooped into a frown. “They said they took him in for surgery. He had a blood clot around his heart. He almost suffered another heart attack but they stopped it in time...” He explained quietly. “Now I won't act like I understand medicines and such so I won't but that's the best way I can describe it.”

“Kinou!” a voice said in the doorway, one that had not been heard for a few days. Kinou's eyes widened with surprise as he saw the woman in the doorway. “Mother!” He exclaimed, rather shocked. Mrs. Sagara ran to her son's side. “Are you alright? I rushed here from work when I got the call from the doctors.” Mizuka backed off quietly without Kinou's mother seeing him and slipped out the door. “Your father has come back from China.” She said with a smile. “Is he here?” Kinou asked his mother still watching the doorway. She nodded. “Once you left I stopped drinking so much and taking drugs... Well I have an occasional one but I am taking less!” She coaxed as she placed her hand on the boy's cheek. Kinou's eyes moved from the doorway to his mother. “Are you serious? You really are trying to stop?” He asked her in a serious yet surprised voice. The mother nodded embarrassedly. “Here, I'll go get your father.” She said getting up and leaving the room. After a few minutes later she came back in with a man of 5'5 or so, long grey hair with a sliver-like blue tint, like Kinou's, braded down to his lower back.

Narrow eyes of a dark green showed through his shaggy bangs. He wore a black suit with a blue tie neatly done. The man looked just like a 47 year old Kinou. He bowed to his son. "Hello son, it is nice to see you. I have been reading that you have been sick. I was worried when I was in China. Are you doing well?" he asked. Kinou hadn't seen his father in three years and now he seemed to crawl back wanting to know everything about him?! Kinou was quiet. "Fine for someone with heart cancer..." Kinou said with a slight scowl, which his father ignored. "I read you have a roommate." He said with a smile. "Do you like him?" Kinou continued to keep his eyes away from his father's loving eyes. "I guess... He's annoying though." Kinou muttered. His father then frowned, losing confidence in his relationship with his son.

Mrs. Sagara perked up then, "So, why don't we do somethi---" suddenly a nurse popped in. "Oh, I'm sorry but," she points to a clock. "It's already 17:45 hours. Visiting time is over. You can come back tomorrow." She smiled then left.

Mrs. Sagara kissed Kinou on the forehead and went to the door. Mr. Sagara bowed yet again to his son. "I am sorry this day did not go so well." He said in a quiet yet painful voice as he turned to his wife. "Come, Shinku." She called her husband and left the room with Mr. Sagara following looking as if he were to cry.

Kinou awoke from his sleep and looked over at Kaworu's bed. It was still empty. Kinou caught himself feeling actually sad that his roommate was gone. It seemed much to quiet for him so he put on quiet music as he fell asleep.

## 9 - Chapter 9

The next morning Kinou awoke to the silence but to his surprise, Kaworu was there. Kinou jerked himself up to find Kaworu stuck with IVs, a heart monitor, and a cup over his nose and mouth to help him breathe. Kinou stared in horror as he watched the low heart rate pulse. A nurse was next to him to make sure nothing went wrong. She looked up at Kinou. "Sagara-san you should be..."

"What happened to him?" Kinou asked, cutting Nasaka off. She was quiet for a time then decided to reply. "He started to have another heart attack but we caught it before it did any harm. We had to do surgery to loosen the blood clot. He'll be fine, he just needs to rest and heal." She explained and finally smiled. Kinou was quiet, watching Kaworu's steady breathing.

Nasaka stopped what she was doing and turned to Kinou who hadn't moved his eyes from the sleeping Kaworu. "Kinou...you should be getting some rest..." She said with a worried tone. Kinou didn't even hear her by his deep thoughts.

After a few minutes of silence Kinou spoke up. "Are you going to tell Mizuka?" Nasaka let out a confused 'mm?' and looked at her sheet of visitors. "Mizuka....Mizu...ka...ah, here he is. Why should I tell him? He's not an Ochira or a relative of some sort...?" Kinou's eyes slowly turned from Kaworu's body to Nasaka. "Did you not see Mizuka last night? He was horrified. Mizuka...he...loves...Kaworu...Please, tell him, Nasaka-san. It'll just hurt him more if you don't." Nasaka was quiet as she listened to Kinou and thought for a moment. "Alright...I suppose I could give mister KadÅ• a call." She got up, holding her clipboard close to her chest, and walked to the door. "Press the red button on your bed if something happens while I'm gone." She added before she disappeared.

It was about two or three hours later before lunch came. Nothing happened to Kaworu in that time. His heart beat slowly, yet steady. Lunch didn't taste as good as it usually did, not that hospital food is the best. Kokoro was up in Osaka with her classmates, so she couldn't visit. Kinou's family was too busy with working on his mother's issues, so they couldn't come.

Kinou decided to sleep for a while and see what would happen when he woke up. He didn't expect much though, especially with how this day was going. His sleep, despite the fact that it was full of nightmares, didn't last very long.

The pale boy pulled himself up more on the bed and glanced over at the clock. 18:00 hours. He sighed and looked over at Kaworu. He was still asleep, his heart rate, low, like normal. There was a sudden moan and it came from Kaworu, or so it would seem.

A blonde head appeared from the opposite side of the bed and yawned. He looked up at Kinou. "Ah, Kinou, I didn't mean to wake you." Mizuka stammered. Kinou raised his hands to stop Mizuka and shook his head. "No. You didn't. The nurse called you?" He asked. Mizuka became quiet again. "Yes. I'm very

worried. What they told me...It scares me. I...I don't know what I could do...if I lose him..." Mizuka replied, beginning to sob.

"Mizuka," Kinou started. "I don't think Kaworu would want you to worry. He'll come to. Soon. Okay, so don't cry." The teen coxed as he stumbled over to the floor next to Mizuka. Mizuka's eyes filled with tears as he threw himself at Kinou and began to sob loudly.

Days had passed with Kaworu not stirring, Mizuka sleeping on the couch in the hallway, and Kinou hardly getting any sleep by worrying so much. Kokoro still hadn't appeared and Mizuka was unwilling to check on her, in fear that Kaworu would wake up while he was gone. It was only what seemed to be a week later until Kaworu finally awoke.

Kaworu slowly opened his eyes as the world pierced through like a sharp needle. His eyes strained as he groaned. Mizuka's head popped in the doorway, hearing his love's voice. Mizuka, to excited to say anything, jumped on Kinou's bed to wake him up and ran over to Kaworu's bed, eyes wide with joy.

Kinou slowly awoke. "Huh?" He moaned. "He's awake!!! Kinou!! He's awake!" Mizuka exclaimed as he jammed down on the nurse button. Kinou's eyes flapped open and almost fell out of bed, trying to get out of it.

Kaworu looked to his side, seeing that he was watched and smiled weakly. "Kaworu." Kinou said both surprised and happy. Mizuka hugged the lump in the blanket where Kaworu lay. "Mizuka...? Kinou...?" He asked quietly. The two nodded.

It was at that happy moment two nurses came barging in. "What is it...? Is that Ochira?" One asked as she saw the man awake. "Get back, Sagara, go to bed. You know you mustn't move!" The other reprimanded Kinou. He reluctantly walked back but a nurse pushed him to move faster. Mizuka ended up being pulled out of the room by security, crying. Kinou was drugged so he fell asleep.

## 10 - Chapter 10

After a few weeks of the same thing, having all the medical people working on Kaworu and all, Mizuka came back when it started to slim down a little. Though, Kokoro still hadn't come back. Every passing day, I could do nothing. I think I had just about memorized Ichigo Meets Momo because it was the only book I had that I could read. Well, other than those boring 'How to Clean Your House' or 'Baby Care' magazines.

"Kinou-kun, are you okay?" A voice said in his head. "No, I'm fine, Kokoro-chan." The boy smiled. "But you look so awful. You seem to get paler every day..." The younger Kokoro cried. There was a moment where the two were quiet, Kokoro staring deeply at the young Kinou, as if she was going to cry at any moment, Kinou, deep in thought. "I'll be alright..." The boy finally answered.

The very next day Kinou was called in sick and went to the hospital for a check-up. It seemed like one of the worst days ever in his life. They told him that it was final, that the test came in positive. He had cancer. That was when his mother began to change dramatically. She became harsh and cruel. She always was so sweet and kind, but now, it was almost impossible to see it like that. Mrs. Sagara also started taking drugs and drinking too much about a month after he was diagnosed. It was probably because of the stress taking care of such a sick child and she just didn't want to continue to watch him. Kinou's father wasn't around then, he was in China.

Kinou, like always, was snapped out of his thoughts by Mizuka entering. "Morning Kinou, How are you today?" He asked sweetly, stopping by Kinou's bed like he always did before Mizuka went to Kaworu's. "I'm doing okay... It's been really boring here. I don't have much to do." He explained. Mizuka hugged Kinou's head with a smile. "Wish I could help. But the nurses here don't like it though." He said, sticking out his tongue with a wink and walked over to Kaworu. He kissed his lover on the head and sat down in the chair next to the bed.

Kaworu opened his eyes slowly and smiled. "You came..." He said in a raspy voice. Mizuka's eyes watered up a bit. "Of course I did, love." Kaworu rose up his hand to touch Mizuka's cheek but he caught it and hugged him. "Don't over do yourself, love." Mizuka added, wiping away some hair in Kaworu's face.

Kinou watched the two and began to feel very lonely and hurt. The times he could use the phone, Kokoro hadn't answered. He began to get very worried with what had happened to her.

The two seemed to of felt the rain over on Kinou's side of the room because they both looked over at him. "Are you alright, Kinou?" Kaworu asked as loud as his voice could go. Kinou looked over at the two who both had worried expressions. "I'm just worried about Kokoro, that's all." He answered truthfully. "Hey, if you want, I could stop by her house on the way home." Mizuka added thoughtfully. "You'd do that?" Kinou asked, surprised slightly. It was probably due to the fact that he had never had any other friends than Kokoro and wasn't use to such offers. Mizuka nodded with a smile. "It's fine." Kinou looked down at his hands. "But I have nothing to give in return." He said quietly.

It was quiet for a moment as Mizuka and Kaworu looked at each other. Mizuka nodded and walked over to Kinou's bed and sat down next to him. "Kinou...why do you think you need to give me something? I would be happy to do something for you." Mizuka said coaxed. Kinou began to cry and threw himself at Mizuka, clinging tightly to him as he cried. Mizuka comforted him with what he could by hugging his friend back.

It was close to that time where the nurses would come in and kick out all the visitors so Mizuka packed up what he needed, kissed Kaworu one last time and said his good-byes. It was a quiet night as Kinou was stuck in his thoughts of Kokoro and Kaworu had fallen asleep, due to his pills.

It was not only an hour that Mizuka showed up on Kokoro's doorstep. It was around 19 hours. He rung the door bell and a little boy with black hair and big purple-blue eyes opened the door. Mizuka smiled sweetly. "Little boy? Would your big sister be at home?" Continuing to stare at him, the little boy shouted, "KOKORO!" A few seconds later Kokoro came stomping down the stairs in her pajamas and walked over to her little brother. "Mizuka? What brings you here?" She asked, letting the boy run off. "May I come in?" He asked. Kokoro nodded and stepped aside. Once entering, taking off his coat and shoes, the girl led him to the empty living room and sat down.

"I'm here on a request. It would seem Kinou has gotten very lonely." He replied finally. Kokoro's eyes dropped. "I'm sorry. Test just started a few weeks ago and I can't go anywhere. I'm usually stuck at a library or something..." Mizuka smiled. "I'm glad." Kokoro looked up at him, confused. "What? Why?" The blonde winked at her. "I'm glad that it isn't that you don't love him. I think that would break his heart." Kokoro looked down at the floor. "I never... meant to make it seem that way..." Without delay, Mizuka hugged Kokoro. "No. I don't think Kinou thought that for a minute." Kokoro began to sob, clenching his shirt in her hand. The male stroked her hair with a smile.

Suddenly there was the sound of a plate falling to the ground and a scream which made the two twist around to see what it was. "Mother!" Kokoro squeaked. "Don't `mother' me! Who is he and what is he doing in the house?" She replied in shock. Mizuka stood up, held up his hand and said, "Ma'am, I don't go for girls and personally I already have someone." It seemed to of taken her mother some time to figure out what he meant by `not going for girls' because she stood there as Kokoro and Mizuka said goodnight and left.

"Mom?" Kokoro asked, poking her in the arm. Mrs. Higarashi turned to her with horror written on her face. "Is that man gay?" She finally added. Kokoro couldn't help herself but laugh.

## 11 - Chapter 11

### KNA-CHAPTER 8

It was very dull in the hospital, like always, but this time Kaworu spent more time sleeping or off somewhere getting tests done. Kinou's life was becoming longer and more boring by the second. At this moment he was alone because some nurses and doctors had rolled Kaworu out only a few minutes ago.

"Hello?" a small and child-like voice appeared from the doorway. Kinou looked over at the door to a little boy with short light blue silver hair, like his own, wide pale blue eyes, and wore a white and green t-shirt and shorts. "Kinou?" He asked in the same quiet voice. Kinou nodded, still confused by the qualities of the child that reminded him so much of himself. The boy walked up to the bed and sat down next to him without a word. "Not to sound rude, I appreciate the company and everything...but I'm afraid I don't recognize you." Kinou stammered for the right words. The child shook his head. "No. I don't think you would. I was always alone...I was told not to go anywhere near you. Mother told me to play in my room instead." He said quietly. Kinou's eyes narrowed in confusion. "I'm sorry...I don't understand." The boy sighed. "I'm saying I'm your brother."

He said plainly. Kinou stared in silence, his eyes wide. "H-how old are you?!" Kinou asked abruptly. He held up his left hand and straightened out all his fingers. "Five? How would I not of known about you by then?!" He asked, not completely believing the boy. "Mama told me to stay away from you. I only did what I was told. I never really met Papa..." He said quietly, "till now. I wasn't supposed to meet you at all...Papa's the one who took me to see you. Mama would have flipped if she heard that this happened..." He continued explaining. Kinou though a moment then asked, "Papa's here?" The sibling nodded and pointed out the door. "He's in the lobby down the hallway." He said. Kinou got up and pushed on his slippers. "Are you allowed to get up?" the youngster asked. Kinou nodded. "Every now and then."

"What about your toe? I heard you broke it." He added. "It's okay. I'll be fine...wait...What's your name anyways?" He finally asked. "Yuriko." He replied. "That's kind of girlish...." Kinou thought to himself with a weird expression, which made Yuriko's face tighten. "Alright...Can you take me to Papa?" He asked. His little brother nodded and walked out the door with his brother trudging after him, wheeling the IV alone with him.

"Papa, big brother wants to see you..." Yuriko said as they entered the lobby. Kinou's father stood up immediately his mouth slightly open with surprise. Kinou's eyes gave him the same cold look like he had given him when he first saw him. Shinku walked over, his long braided hair flying slightly behind him. "Kinou, you shouldn't be out of bed in you condition." He said in a sweet quiet tone. Kinou just looked up at him, his eyes narrow. He didn't know why he wanted to see his father so much, especially when he didn't feel like he could be nice to the man yet. "You sound like her..." He said in anger. "Her? Who is 'her'?" His father asked. Yuriko backed off to the far side of the room, keeping away from the cold conversation. "That would be *your* wife!" He shot back, his voice raising. Shinku didn't even flinch when



Kinou got up in his face. "Kinou, I think it would be best if we went to your room so we don't involve others in our own family issues..." He said quietly as he looked down at his son with his beautiful blue-green eyes. Kinou let his head drop and nodded, leading his father back to his room. It was better that Kaworu wasn't there because he wouldn't have been able to leave in his condition and the talk would probably make him feel uncomfortable.

"Why, Kinou?" Shinku started as Kinou pulled the covers over his stomach. "Why do you hate me so much?" He finished. Kinou shot a look at him. "It's because you left me with that woman for China, you haven't been there for me my whole life, and now you tell me I have a little brother!?" He snapped. Mr. Sagara's eyes pulled together to hold away the tears. "I-I had no choice. I was shipped there at a time where our money was low and we were desperate. Do you think I wanted to leave my children? You were so small and Yuriko was still an infant. I didn't want to leave, I really didn't. From the letters I was sent, they said nothing of Mokachi turning to drugs or treating you badly." He paused, keeping his voice from cracking. "She told me everything when I arrived on Sunday. I was stunned and horrified, but I knew then that she was confessing that she had changed. My love for her hasn't changed. I-I don't want you to hate me..." Shinku began to sob. Kinou watched his father suffer his feelings with guilt. "Papa...stop. I understand now. Don't criticize yourself because of me." Kinou said with shame, hiding his face in his pillow. Shinku saw that his son truly felt sorry, walked over to him, and wrapped his arm around the boy. "Kinou, I would do anything for you. Don't ever forget that I love you." He said in a serious, yet loving tone.

"Should I come back later?" A male's voice asked from the doorway. "Mizuka." Kinou stated. The adult smiled. "Yup, well I don't want to be interfering in a family matter so I'll just le-" He stopped when Shinku grabbed his hand. "No, you aren't interfering at all. Please do come in." He offered, backing off from the grip.

Mizuka obeyed without heed and sat backwards in one of the chairs. "Mizuka KadÅ•. It's nice to meet you, sir." He said politely, offering out his hand. "Shinku Sagara." Kinou's father replied, taking the hand and shook it. Mizuka pulled his hand back and smacked him on the back in a friendly manner.

He stopped and stared at the older adult, who was sweating nervously, and then said, "Hey! You're Chinese-Japanese, aren't you?" Mizuka let off a wide smile. "My great-great grandpa was Chinese-Japanese. My mother was American." He giggled. "That explains my blond hair." He said, flipping it around. Kinou gazed up at Mizuka. "Wow. I never knew that. That's so cool!" the boy exclaimed. Shinku smiled, though he said nothing because Shinku is one of the more shy types that don't talk much around others they don't know well.

Mizuka then pulled out a few books and boxes from his bag, left by the door, that he brought in. "No matter how many times I come, I only see you with that little paper book! I felt bad so I decided to bring you some stuff to keep you busy. That's a puzzle, that's a book series that I personally love, uh, that there is a stress ball." He explained as he pointed everything out.

Shinku felt rather out of place and felt bad for leaving Yuriko by himself. "Kinou, I need to go. Yuriko must be bored and wanting to go home...oh, please don't mention that I showed you him. She'll be very angry with me." He said with a wink before disappearing.

"Strange father you have." Mizuka said after a few long seconds of silence and hit Kinou on the back.

“Oof!” Kinou coughed then shot a glare at Mizuka. Mizuka backed off, his hands up in surrender with a goofy grin.

## 12 - Chapter 12

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Finally having something more interesting than `Ichigo Meets Momo', (as much as he loved it, he still
had to admit it was rather boring by now) he read in-depthly, the new books Mizuka had left him. This
story was about a seventeen year old boy who ran away from home on the night his mother died. It was
a tragic story of how he survived on his own and later on fell in love.
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It had been so long since Kinou had read something new that he could hardly put the book down. He
was about twenty-six pages into the eighth chapter.
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But when he turned the page a picture fell out onto Kinou's lap. Confused and curious he lifted up the picture up to his face and studied it. It showed about five men, possibly a sixth, but it was difficult to tell if he was actually part of the picture or not. They were all crowded around a bunch on motorcycles. This must be the gang that Mizuka and Kaworu were a part of.

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Just to prove it, Kaworu and Mizuka were in the middle, Kaworu's arm over Mizuka's shoulder. The gang looked very friendly....sort of. There was a messy-brown haired man with many piercing in his ears, one eyebrow piercing and one on the right side of his lip on the right of Kaworu. Then to the left of Mizuka was a man with orange-dyed hair, about shoulder length, a major scar over his left eye(Kinou's POV), his eye looked like it had a white layer over the pupil, and his arms wrapped up in bandages. Was it because of all the fights he was in or was it because of fashion? Next to "Orange-Head" was a sleek-looking guy with nicely combed black hair. In his hands, which were raised up, were black glasses that he probably took off before the picture was taken. Though, unlike all the rest he didn't smile, though nor did he frown. It was just a plain stare that would give you the willies.

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Suddenly there was a moan and Kinou turned his attention to Kaworu. "T-that—s us...heh..." Suddenly before he could continue he started to cough violently. Kinou gasped feeling slightly helpless to help Kaworu. Once he had stopped he continued. "Tho-se are... the---group. Mi-ruka... Du-ra-zaki... and Zo—no..." He forced out. Kinou watched Kaworu, his mouth slightly open as Kaworu fought himself to speak. "That's...the gr...oup. O-Our gang...Mizuka's an..d mine.." He smiled weakly, his eyes showing little life.

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After that it was obvious to the both of them that he could say no more. Kinou's eyebrows slanted upwards, concerned. Though with Kaworu's catchy eye he immediately saw this and his eyes showed the same concern.

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But of course something had to happen at a time like this, there was a unexpected loud and continuant scream that came from the hallway. The two of them almost jumped and turned their attention to the door. It was a female and it sounded like "Get away from me", "Pervert" and other things, but they were more slurred and wasn't understandable. You could barely make out the second voice but it was obvious that it was a man.

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After all the screaming, which the yelling had made the two roommates look so creeped out that they looked as if they were possibly dead, there was loud thumping as the two bickerer ran down just outside the door. You could also hear the nurses and doctors begging for them to stop and sometimes threatening to call security. That didn't help, it just caused more quarreling. Kinou and Kaworu both seemed a slight bit relieved that their door was shut, cutting off some of the sound, unfortunately not as much as they might have liked.

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There was an abrupt silence, other than the patients and the nurses and doctors complaining. But of course this kind of a scene this would not be the last of it.

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Out of no where, the door suddenly slammed open with Kokoro running inside, her hair a mess and she clung to her shirt as if it where ripped. She immediately ran to Kinou and like a magnet, she clung to him. This all took Kinou and Kaworu by surprise and it was practically written all over their faces. Kaworu's

heart beat even raised a little by shock.

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Only five seconds later she was followed by a dark brown-haired man who looked a little agitated. The second the man entered the room, Kokoro's grip tightened which made Kinou wince. `This'll make a nice bruise...' he thought to himself, feeling a bit irritated by all this.

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But what brought everyone's attention was Kaworu's raspy gasp. His eyes seemed to have grown smaller. Once looking over, the man let out a gasp as well. "KAWORU, YOU'VE GONE STRAIGHT!?" He shrieked which made Kinou and Kokoro fall comically over. Though, Kaworu's face filled with disgust. He mouthed the word "no!" in a forceful way, showing that he was serious. The guy backed off with his hands raised and a sweat drop on his forehead.

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Okay, this really set Kokoro off the edge. One moment she was being hit on the next second he's a friend?! She was just about to lose it! "ENOUGH!!!" She screamed. "Who the hell are you," she yelled, pointing at the brown-head. "And why were you HITTING on me!?" Kinou reached out to stop her but she smacked his hand away. This was a first. Kokoro had never hit him before. She must be really mad. Though, she hit pretty hard, especially on his weak hand.

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The guy looked a bit confused on why she was snapping at him but then smiled slyly. "I'm Durazaki

Matenou. I'm an acquaintance of Ochira-san, here." He dodged the last part of Kokoro's question. Kaworu's face fell blank at the word "acquaintance". Though this made Kinou's eyes light up as he quickly grabbed the picture of Kaworu's gang off his bedside table and held it up besides Durazaki. Yes, it was a perfect match, though it looked like the picture could have been about a year old. Seeing this made a wide smile appear on Kinou's face. He was getting to know everyone so quickly.

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Kokoro, on the other hand wouldn't let this guy off easy. "I think I like this guy," She paused long enough to point her thumb at Kaworu before continuing. "better than you." She snorted. Durazaki, seeming like a strong-headed guy, only smiled and cocked his head. "And why is that?" He asked in a sweet voice. "BECAUSE THEY DON'T TRY TO RA—" Before she could finish Kinou slapped his hand over her mouth. Durazaki just laughed.

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But like all these happy moments, there was always something to ruin it. At that moment Mizuka ran in with a panicked look. "DURAZAKI!!! KAWORU!!! MIRUKA'S BEEN IN A CRASH!" He screamed, his voice breaking slightly. Panic struck everyone's faces all flushed a white, cold color(...Kinou's even more than it already is...).

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## 13 - Chapter 13

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The room was quiet. But it only took a small moment for one of them to move. Durazaki, without notice,
ran out the door. Kokoro and Kinou, besides the look of horror, they looked confused. Mizuka, without
saying anything, his normal happy-go-lucky expression, gone, walked up to Kinou's bedside. Confused
of what he was doing, Kinou's brows went down, as he began to say what? Mizuka plucked the picture
of the gang out of Kinou's hands and studied it for only a second. He then flipped it so Kokoro and Kinou
could see. He had had his thumb on one of the people in the picture. It was the orange haired boy with
the scar. Kinou and Kokoro took some time to take it all in.
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Mizuka placed the picture down on the bedside table and turned back to the three shocked stares. "I'm
going to go back now...I had to make you aware though." He walked up to Kaworu's bed and bent down,
looking into Kaworu's red runny eyes. Mizuka pushed himself up to Kaworu's forehead and kissed him
gently. "I'll be back. I promise." He said in a whisper, his eyes still the same. After that he ran out the
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Kokoro, unable to speak, she began to slowly stumble to the door. She looked almost like she was in a trance, like she was under someone's evil spell. Then Kokoro, too, disappeared from sight, leaving Kinou and Kaworu thunderstruck.

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Loud sirens screeched on the street. There were firemen, medics, and the police, along with a small crowd. The two got there by Mizuka's motorcycle. The blonde grabbed Kokoro's hand, pulling her quickly off the bike and dragged her through the tight crowd. Finally reaching the front where you could peek over the officer's shoulder to what was going on. Durazaki was there already, holding the hand of the boy who crashed in the accident. The one called Miruka, who was in a medical stretcher.

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Mizuka tapped the officer on the shoulder. "I'm his friend. I need to get through." The man in black nodded and let him past. "Whoa, little missy. You can't come through here." The officer said as he cut off Kokoro from Mizuka. Kokoro's heart beat hard against her chest. If she said she was a friend it would be a lie. Then a hand reached out and grabbed the officer's shoulder, pulling sideways. "The girl's with me." Mizuka said in a rather dry voice. Without letting the officer respond, he dragged Kokoro past him and over to the stretcher.

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“Mizuka! What took you!?” Durazaki squeaked, his voice cracking. His eyes were a bright red so it was obvious that he had been crying. Mizuka ignored Durazaki's complaint and stood over the injured boy.

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He looked no older than Kinou, possibly nineteen though. His face covered with thick layers of blood. He seemed to have a few rocks that had hit him in the face that the medics must have pulled out before. Though, close to his right eye, along with the deep scar, was a large scratch that went from his eyebrow tip down his nose and slightly onto his cheek, forming a backwards C-like shape. But the worst part was his leg. The right one had a huge piece of metal wedged deep into his muscle, slightly lower than the kneecap. The medics however had not removed that piece yet, if they were to do so it would have made Miruka bleed to death.

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Kokoro couldn't seem to keep her eyes off the wounds on Miruka as she stood back a little from the gang. She shut her eyes, turning her head, unable to look any more. Wait...Where did he come from? Leaded up against the ambulance was a tall male, about 20, black hair and eyes, and he wore a dark brown jacket over a white shirt with black, ripped up jeans. Unlike the other males in the gang, his hair was well taken care of. He couldn't have been part of them...but he looked so familiar.

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The male glanced over at her. When Kokoro saw this she jerked her head somewhere else. The boy just stared blankly at her then soon looked back to Miruka.

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And then it was back to the hospital. Though, instead of staying at the entrance of the emergency room, Kokoro went back to Kinou and Kaworu's room.

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As soon as she entered the door, both of the boys jerked their heads to the door with wide eyes of curiosity. Kaworu started to mouth `what happened? Is he alright?' but Kokoro stopped him. "He's gotten a lot of scratches, some bigger than others, and his leg...I think it's going to take a while to heal." She said nervously. You could just about see the tears form in Kaworu's eyes, even Kinou's. Kokoro looked nervously at the floor then walked over to Kinou's bedside and sat in the chair next to him. She could tell this was going to a very quiet day so she waited silently for the nurse to come and call her out.

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The next morning Kokoro showed up early to find Kinou and Kaworu's room filled with the members she had seen before. That is, other than Miruka. The room fell quiet when Kokoro entered. She slightly blushed due to all the eyes looking at her. "G-Good morning?" She said nervously, her grip on her black purse tightened. They all shouted back "Good morning, Kokoro." `How did they know my name?' She thought, a look of bewilderment crossed her face. Mizuka saw the look and laughed silently to himself. "I told them, I hope you don't mind." He said, a smile spread across his face. "N-No...That's fine." She stammered, closing her eyes in a forced smile. She was scared to open them to see those looks again. She turned left to go sit next to Kinou but screamed.

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There he was again (And he was in my seat!)! That boy! And that look! He just would stare so intensely at you it made you feel uncomfortable. Durazaki, who was near by, walked over to the black-haired boy and smacked him over the head, the male hardly reacts. "Zono! Don't scare the girl! It's rude." He snapped in a slight sarcastic way. The boy called `Zono' said nothing, just continued to stare. The others laughed except Kinou, Kokoro, and of course, Zono (well, Kaworu smiled, to painful to laugh).

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Durazaki let out a toothy grin. "Believe it or not but this guy's like the devil on wheels when he's ridin'." Kokoro, still being mad at Durazaki, walked past him and kneeled down next to Kinou, laying her head on his arm. Kinou looked down at Kokoro with a smile and began stroking her hair with his free hand.

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"How is it you can make her do that? Is she like getting paid a lot to do that for you?" Durazaki asked, bending over next to Kokoro, scratching his chin. An anger mark appeared on Kokoro's head. What is she? A dog? Kinou laughed nervously. "Uh...I don't..." His voice trailed off, unsure of what to say. Durazaki nudged Kinou with a smirk. "How much do ya pay her?" He asked with another chuckle. Getting irritating with this all, Kokoro jerks upwards, punching Durazaki in the chin, sending him

backwards to the wall, hitting his head. He let out a scream of pain as he hit the wall. Kinou, Kaworu, and Mizuka all watched in shock.

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“Ou—ch...” Durazaki groaned, gripping his hair. “dog....that HURT!” He snapped jumping up about to hit her back. Instead he hit Mizuka who jumped in front. Mizuka glared at Durazaki. The boy's eyes bugged in fear. He slowly slumped to the ground. The room became silent. Even the nurse who had been caring for Kaworu became quiet. Mizuka turned to Kokoro, at first with his glare but it soon faded into a smile. “I'm sorry.” He said in a soft nice tone then walked back to Kaworu. Durazaki, knowing this signal, immediately scrambled out of the room, tears shedding from his eyes as he left.

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Kokoro turned back to Mizuka who had his head shoved into Kaworu's chest as if he was crying. Her eyes narrowed in silence feeling a bit guilty. She was the reason Mizuka had to get angry with one of his gang members. The nurse felt it was necessary to let them alone because it seemed like a personal situation. Kokoro turned around and slumped down the side of Kinou's bed.

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Kinou and Kaworu shot each other worried looks. Even though they may have wanted to do something, they couldn't find the right words to say it. Kaworu stroked his hand through Mizuka's long soft hair as Kinou would glance down at Kokoro, unsure if he should do the same.

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Unexpectedly, Zono stood up and walked over to Kokoro who looked up at him. He then bent down to Kokoro's level with a stern look. "Get over it. Durazaki is stronger than you think. So are you." He mentioned, looking up at Mizuka who looked back at him, his eyes bloodshot. "Stop acting like wussy little children and get over it." Zono finished and stood. "I'm leaving." He muttered as he walked out the door.

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That had caused the whole room, even the little rats that happened to scurry about, become quiet. Kinou and Kokoro, not knowing Zono well enough to expect this outbreak stared at the door in shock. Mizuka sighed loudly, his eyes still puffy and red. "Thanks." He whispered with a small smile creeping on his face. Mizuka stood up and turned to Kinou. "Would it be alright if I treat your girl to sushi? I feel like I need to make it up." He asked. Kinou looked from Mizuka to Kokoro in question, and then smiled kindly. "Yes. That would be nice. Thank you." He replied. Kinou felt a lot more comfortable letting Kokoro go places with Mizuka without his supervision because he knew that Mizuka would try to do anything.

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Mizuka began to walk over to Kokoro who had also stood and was waiting by the door but was stopped by Kaworu. He had grabbed his hand and was holding onto it tight. He smiled in thanks and in being glad that Mizuka was himself again. His boyfriend smiled back, bent down and kissed him on the forehead tenderly. "I'll see you tomorrow, Love." He said and Kaworu willingly let go of his hand.

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Once the two had left the roommates spent quite some time just smiling at the door. "I'm glad that was settled." Kinou said with a sigh of relief. Kaworu answered with a proud smile.

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## 14 - Chapter 14

Good Morning Sagara-san, did you sleep well? A nurse, who was sitting next to Kaworu, greeted Kinou as he pulled himself up with a small yawn. Oh, good morning Nasaka-san! He replied. She smiled back to him and turned back to what she was doing on her lab top that was on a tray. Kaworu lifted up his left hand with a wave and a smile. Kaworu, He whispered with a small wave back. How are you feeling? He asked, cupping his hands around the white bed sheet. Kaworu smiled and nodded in reply. Kinou turned his head and looked out the door just in time for a new nurse to appear. She wore her hair in pigtails that fell down to her shoulders. She had grey, wide, welcoming eyes and she wore thin glasses that laid on her nose. The new worker smiled sweetly at Kinou. Hello Sagara-san. My name is Yuma Ono. It s time to take your bath. Kinou s cheeks flushed slightly as his mouth opened a little. The last time he was washed it was by a male doctor. Ono ignored Kinou s look of surprise and started to put some things on the bed. Then she grabbed the bed railing and began to pull it out of the room. She waved to Nasaka with a smile, waited for her to respond and disappeared with Kinou.

Miss Ono brought the bed into a room with a staff only sign, along with other bathing supplies. Kinou s face flushed as he nervously awaited his bath. Ono turned around with a soft washcloth and different doctor recommended soaps. My, my, you re looking healthier more and more. She teased as she placed the supplies down to pinch at Kinou s cheek. Ow! Kinou whimpered, rubbing his, now red cheek gently. Ono stuck her tongue out in a sarcastic way. Kinou only looked down, his hair and cheeks seemed to be the only main color you could notice. A soft smile came to Miss Ono s face. Don t worry. I m engaged. She boasted holding up a beautiful silver engagement ring. Kinou didn t stop blushing so Ono seemed to have given up on him. She slowly and gently pulled off Kinou s hospital gown and laid it on a stool. My, my, aren t you skinny. So skinny, it s horribly unhealthy! She muttered as she felt the easily-seen bones on Kinou s chest. Of course, touching Kinou s bare body wouldn t help his embracement. Even his neck was gaining color. Ono looked up at Kinou who was making a weird high pitched throat noise. She gave him a slightly irritated look. What are you doing? She muttered as she loosely glared at the child. Erk! Kinou peeped and quickly looked away. Ono groaned at the sight of Kinou s body then started cleaning his shoulders with a wet towel and some healthy skin soap. The more Ono cleaned, the more Kinou was screaming inside. Then suddenly the shut door opened. Oops. Sorry. I heard Kinou Sagara was in here&.but uh&.sorry for intruding. A familiar voice sounded by the door. The two turned their attention to the door where a blonde man stood with an apologizing gesture. MIZUKA! Kinou shouted in relief and ran up to him (obviously quite slow due to his conditions). Mizuka stared at the thin boney body that run up and embrace him. Kinou, what s wrong? Mizuka asked. Ono walked up to Kinou and Mizuka. If you ll read the sign, I believe it says Employees only . She hissed slightly. The gang leader turned and looked at the front of the door and at the sign. Oh, I must have missed that... He added innocently. Ono placed her forefinger on her forehead and massaged her temples. You must be more aware of your surroundings sir. Mizuka agreed in an apologetic voice. By the way Kinou, why are you waltzing around naked when your girlfriend s here? Kinou let out a high-pitched squeak. Kokoro s here?! Mizuka nodded. Ono signed loudly. Why don t you put something on before you go out? She asked Kinou who froze and turned to her, realizing his situation

and the fact that he was with a gay man and a woman&

Kokoro! Kinou exclaimed as he, Mizuka, and Ono entered the room. Kinou slowly shuffled over to her and gave her a gentle hug. Kokoro responded by hugging her boyfriend back then peered at Mizuka. How did you find them? She asked, letting Kinou climb into his hospital bed. Mizuka shrugged, not really giving an answer. This was when Ono stood up. He came into a staff only room&. She muttered. Mizuka gave out a weak laugh. But I thought that Kinou was supposed to be getting a sponge bath now& Kokoro thought aloud. He was& Ono replied in an annoyed tone. Kaworu, who was awake for all this, gave Mizuka a look of surprise and of jealousy. Mizuka noticed this and then walked over to him. Don t worry, love. I only think about you. He coxed. Kaworu gave an annoyed look but it soon lightened up into a smile. The young man rose up an arm and fit into Mizuka s hand. Suddenly a pillow was flung right smack into Mizuka sending him comically to the floor. Peeking his head up from Kinou s bed, Mizuka whined, What was that for? Kokoro shot him a look. Because we don t need to see your corny gay love. She hissed. Mizuka gave her the lip as he scooted back to Kaworu. Kaworu was laughing noiselessly to himself. Mizuka let a smile onto his face. It hadn t been that long since they met Kokoro. Was it a month? No, It was three months ago. The queer couple had gotten use to Kokoro s temper with gays and enjoyed her presence. Now, the question was did Kokoro enjoy theirs? Yes, even though she d never agree to it, she liked having them around. Probably one of the only gay couples she would accept, but of course she would never tell them that. Ono had left the group for their privacy during the visiting hours. It was an awkward silence when Zono walked in. The twenty year old walked over to a couch and sat down. He pulled out a book that fit nicely into his side pants pocket. The other four watched Zono speechless. Zono looked odd today. He wore a green button-up shirt that was neatly tucked into his beige pants. There was stitching on the left side of his shirt, it read, Ojo s Bookstore . Then above that was a blue rectangular pin that said, Hello, my name is Zono . You work at a bookstore?! Kokoro asked with her eyebrow raised in disbelief. Zono looked up from his book and nodded, looking back at it again. You know, I don t like your rude attitude. Kokoro hissed. Zono didn t seem to respond, his eyes continueing to read. Hey, don t ignore me! She growled. Zono slammed his book shut. The man stood up and walked over to Kokoro. Passing her he announced in a quiet voice, as always, Miruka s room. And with that said, he left, shutting the door quietly behind him. Mizuka smiled kindly and turned to his sick boyfriend. Kaworu? I ll be back in a while. I should go check up on him as well. Kaworu nodded, his eyes showing some disappointment. What s wrong? Mizuka asked as he kneeled down next to Kaworu. The gang s second in command smiled weakly and replied, I wish I could come too. Kaworu replied in a slight whisper. Mizuka wiped some hair out of his lover s eyes and kissed his forehead. You ll be able to soon. I m sure of it. He encouraged him. Kaworu nodded and softly pushed Mizuka to the door. Mizuka waved and left. Kokoro stared at the door for a few minutes. &&&.. I ll be back too& She said and ran after Mizuka.