

APRIL MOONE

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and the **BEAST**

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Strawberries and the Beast
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All the world's a stage. And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances.

—William Shakespeare

Japanese Glossary

Honorifics:

- <i>sama</i> :	highest level of respect.
- <i>senpai</i> :	used for senior colleagues, also as a title
- <i>san</i> :	typical honorific, used most widely
- <i>kun</i> :	personal, used for males
- <i>chan</i> :	very personal, reserved for loved ones, primarily female
No honorific:	very intimate, reserved for family and very close friends; considered highly disrespectful when intimacy is not earned

Words:

<i>Anō sa</i> (Ah-noo sah)	Copula for getting one's attention
<i>bakayarou</i> (bah-kah-ya-roo)	idiot
<i>desu</i> (dess)	polite copula
<i>fusuma</i> (foo-sue-mah)	long panel used to separate rooms
<i>gaijin</i> (guy-jen)	foreigner
<i>genkan</i> (gen-kahn)	entry foyer with raised ledge
<i>hai</i> (hi)	yes
<i>Ja na</i> (jah nah)	see you/later
<i>kore wa</i> (core-ay wah)	this
<i>kotatsu</i> (koh-tat-sue)	low dining table with heater and skirt
<i>Naruhodo</i> (nah-rue-hoe-doe)	I see/I understand
<i>ne</i> (nay)	Hey (at beginning of sentence) right? (at end of sentence)
<i>neko-chan</i> (neck-o-chan)	kitty
<i>onee-chan</i> (o-nay-chan)	sister
<i>onii-chan</i> (o-knee-chan)	brother
<i>obā-san/bā-san</i> (oh-bah-san)	grandmother
<i>sensei</i> (sen-say)	teachers, doctors, masters of a profession
<i>shoji</i> (she-oy)	wood and paper screen used as a door
<i>subarashii</i> (sue-bar-ah-she)	wonderful, excellent

yare yare (ya-are-ay)

well well, oh my

1: Strawberries

HE TASTES like strawberries. My strawberries. That's what I was thinking when he kissed me. I still don't know exactly how it happened. I don't know how I ended up between a wall and Keigo. I figured that the stray I'd picked up was in heat again.

Lunch was the same as it had been every day since the semester had started. I always ate on the roof of building two, alone. It had a nice view and no one had known about it. It was my quiet place. A place no one would bother me, get in my hair, or try to rough me up. And then he showed up.

Akatsuki Keigo.

About a month ago, the stray just appeared and announced rather boldly, and loudly, that he was going to eat lunch with me. I didn't kick his ass off the roof because I wasn't really annoyed. That, and his face was just too pretty to mess up. I shrugged and told him to do whatever he wanted, just to leave me the fuck alone. He still bothered me, talking all the damn time, but he wasn't as annoying as I thought he'd be—as I wanted him to be. He was actually pretty cool, but don't quote me.

So how did our relationship go from “leave me the fuck alone” to kissing? Well, it was rather clever of him, now that I think on it. We were having this fucking stupid conversation about which was better, movies or books—I mean, it's books. Seriously. So anyway, when I got annoyed, I had decided to eat my lunch. Even though I was annoyed with him, I offered him one of my strawberries, a fresh batch I had just gotten. He took the red berry cheerily and then ate it slowly, as if savoring every chew, eyes fixed on me the whole time. When he was done he gave his lips a long, slow lick. I must have licked my own lips, imagining the flavor of strawberry on them,

because he leaned toward me and brushed a thumb over my bottom lip.

“That was delicious,” he said. He licked his lips again hungrily and leaned closer. I could taste the strawberry on his breath. “But I’d rather eat you.”

“What?” I had asked, surprised, unsure of his meaning. Then I remembered—how could I forget?—the guy’s bisexual. He made it clear from the beginning that he liked to fuck women and men, and that he thought I was cute. I wasn’t into men in the least, but frankly the idea of others being gay or bisexual didn’t even bother me. My thought was, if you loved the person, who gave a shit if they were the same or opposite sex. Despite my indifference, I didn’t want to be labeled as one of them. I had enough guys on my ass, I didn’t need them literally in my ass.

Even with my own hang-ups—not minding gays, but not wanting to be one—I guess it was my own significantly smaller whimsical side that answered his request with my standard shrug and, “Whatever, do what you want.”

So he did. He wasn’t bad, as far as kissing goes. His lips were gentler than I imagined they would be. But I think that was to make up for his rough hands as they groped at my chest and shoulders. Even as I was letting him kiss me, rolling his tongue over mine, sucking at my bottom lip, I wondered why I didn’t slug him or knee him in the nuts for even thinking about making a move on me. Maybe I was curious. Yeah, that must be it, the privilege of youth.

“Hey,” I mumbled around strawberry kisses, “don’t get the wrong idea, man.”

He stopped sucking at my bottom lip long enough to look into my eyes. “What do you mean, Masaki-kun?”

“I’m no homo.”

His entire face lit up with a huge grin. “No, of course not. You’re not like me, the fag that’ll sleep with anyone.”

“Yeah, don’t forget it,” I muttered as he lowered his lips to mine again. I don’t know why I was still kissing him, only that he was so warm and delicious. He didn’t feel or taste anything like Yuki. I felt a little guilty, kissing this guy when I had a girl. But my curiosity won

out in the end. Or maybe it was horniness. Yeah, I'm going with the epic case of blue-balls syndrome I'd been cursed with for the past four months.

Speaking of balls....

"Whoa, hey, what're you doing?" I grabbed Keigo's hands away from my belt.

His lips moved down my chin and slipped to my neck. It felt so good that I shut my eyes to savor the moment. I was faintly aware that my shirt was open and he was nipping at my chest. I had to get a grip on the situation. "Hey, come on man...."

"I want...." Nibble, nibble. "To see...." Nibble lower. "...your cock."

I wasn't as shocked as I thought I should have been. I mean, I knew he liked dick. And while that didn't interest me, I wondered what harm there was in letting him get me off. Besides, it wasn't like Yuki was going to touch me any time soon. Keigo was pulling at my belt again. I looked down, thinking that I liked the look of him grinning up at me from his knees. Though it was the first time I'd had a man in the position.

I harrumphed. "You really do whatever you want, don't you?"

"Yep," he mumbled against my abdomen. "Best way to live life."

I thought that it must be nice to live like that—carefree, albeit a bit selfish.

Keigo opened my pants and reached inside until he found me. "Oooh," he said with slyness to his voice. "You're already hard. Are you that hot for me?"

I sighed and rested my head back against the wall he had me pinned to. "Don't be fucking stupid Akatsuki-san."

"I told you to call me by my given name already."

I grumbled an annoyed acceptance, though I had no intention of calling his name, and opened my eyes as I had another thought. "People can see us here."

He smiled and moved his hand around inside my boxers until he had an ass cheek in each palm. His hands were so hot against my naked skin, and then my boxers were being pulled down. "No one can see us here unless they are in that classroom." He nodded toward a set

of windows almost out of view from our spot. “And there’s no class in there right now. Besides, no one can see me on my knees.” He gave my ass a quick pinch and, before I could complain, he swallowed my dick.

“Ahh,” I moaned aloud, not meaning to. My hands went to his hair, buried deep so that his hair tie fell out, releasing all of his long, dark hair. I was surprised at how soft his hair felt in my fingers, like silk. “Ah... Akatsuki-san, you really are a homo. You’re good at sucking dick.”

He chuckled. His mouth felt even hotter than before. A mouth that tasted like strawberries. I smiled at the thought that my dick now tasted like strawberry. And I was content to let him finish sucking me off. He was good. Real good. Savoring, but loving. Strong, but tender. He had a good balance between pleasure and pressure. But then, he did something that brought it all to a rude end.

“Whoa!” I yelped, shoving him away from me. “What the shit do you think you’re doing, man?” I knew what he was trying to do and I didn’t like it. He was trying to put his fingers in my ass. No one had ever touched me there before. Thankfully, he didn’t get very far.

He grinned, licking his lips hungrily. “I was thinking about fucking you.”

I pulled my underwear and pants up, nearly catching myself in the rush. “No goddamned way,” I grumbled as I buttoned my top.

“Aw, come on, Masaki-kun.” He stood and touched my face. His stance and words were coaxing, but his eyes looked worried. “I’m really very good, and I can be gentle.”

I slapped his hand away, grabbed my bag, and turned my back on him. “Go fuck yourself, Akatsuki.”

2: Reflection

OH MY God, what did I do? That's what I was thinking as I watched Masaki disappear down the steps. It wasn't until he disappeared from sight completely that I sank against the side of the building with a sigh. I had never intended to go so far, but once I had kissed him, I couldn't stop. I felt like some other being, a person much braver and more outspoken than the real me, took over and made me do those things. I had wanted to be with Masaki so badly.

Our relationship, since it began about a month ago, had been like this every day. I teased, he got pissy, and we both laughed over it. Masaki may not have actually laughed, but I could see it in his eyes, in his relaxed stance. He was the most nonchalant person I knew, so laid back. I wished I could be like him. He was also a lot nicer than he wanted everyone to believe. I think I was his only friend too, which made me feel all that more special. I wanted to be special to Masaki.

We had Literature together. That's when I first noticed Uchida Masaki. Sometime during the first month of class, Masaki came shambling in late, hiding behind a pair of dark sunglasses and a mop of wild blond hair. Despite looking liken to a beaten dog, I was struck by how handsome he was. *Sensei* told him to take off the shades, which had been hiding a black eye underneath, nice and purple. My interest was piqued in that moment.

Over the next weeks, I found out more about the beaten dog. Masaki was a loner, everyone said, always on his own. And yet, he seemed to find more trouble than not. He was always in fights, but for what I couldn't really figure out. Some said it was because he was rude and crass, saying whatever he wanted—which was true enough, the guy had the mouth of a drunken sailor. Others said it was because

he was a bastard child, left by his father and then mother. That nobody wanted him, so he lashed out.

More than that, those rumors, I didn't know anything about Masaki except that he kept to himself when possible, was rude when bothered, and completely interesting. He missed class often. The days he did show up, he looked tired and sometimes had a fresh wound or bruise. He never smiled and always looked defeated, as if the world was against him and he was losing. Badly.

A couple of months into the semester, my interest had only increased. I wanted to know him, but wasn't sure how to go about it. I knew just walking up to him and trying to talk would get me nowhere—hit, if I was unlucky. Then I discovered my in. Masaki wasn't in class the day before, or the one before that. I had to stop by early to ask *sensei* a question, but he wasn't in yet. By chance, I happened to walk to just the right spot in the back of the classroom and looked out the window. I saw Masaki sitting on the roof of the next building, eating and reading a book.

The next day I decided to have my lunch there, and I got lucky. I mounted the top step and stopped, smiling. “*Yare yare*, if it isn't Masaki-kun.”

He looked up from the book he was reading and frowned. “Who the fuck are you?”

There was no recognition in his eyes—guess you have to attend class to recognize your classmates. It took every ounce of willpower in me to not turn tail and run away then. I may have been acting cool, but inside, I knew I was just a big fucking wimp. I wasn't the person I wanted to be. Still forcing my grin, I answered, “Akatsuki Keigo. Kei as in the character for ‘compete’ and go as in ‘protector’. I insist you call me Keigo.”

He eyed me for a moment, considering. “You here to try and beat me up, Akatsuki-san? 'Cause frankly, you look kinda weak. Besides, your face is too pretty to fuck up with my big fists.”

I should have been insulted, but I didn't want to get off on the wrong foot with the guy. I had to tread lightly with him, treat him gently, and take things as they came. I had to be a more carefree and less reckless me. I laughed. “No, not at all.”

“Yeah? What the fuck you want, then?”

I sighed, trying not to lose my smile. “Nothing, just here to eat.”

Masaki closed his book, shoved it into his pack, and came back with a bag of salty edamame. “That right?” He shrugged, popping the entire pod into his mouth. “Do whatever you want. Just don’t fucking bother me, ’kay, man?”

I nodded and sat next to Masaki, pulling out my own lunch, a bento I had prepared the night before. And there we sat, in comfortable silence, for the rest of the afternoon. Words weren’t needed between us. We barely knew each other’s names and yet, we had a connection. I knew then that we’d be instant friends.

Every day for the next week we had lunch together. Masaki didn’t say much, as usual, but he let me talk and didn’t seem annoyed. I had made a new friend, and despite knowing nothing about him, I was happy. I felt at peace when I was with Masaki. I felt comfortable. I was at home with Masaki like I hadn’t been with anyone.

Then, one day two weeks after my bold introduction, I felt a sort of sudden apprehension as I went to our secret spot. I couldn’t explain it, only that something felt... off. I was halfway up the steps to the roof when I saw it. Blood, leading up. When I saw the source, I gasped, dropping my things to tumble back down the steps as I ran up two at a time.

“Masaki? Masaki!” He was facedown on the top step, an arm and leg hanging over. Fresh blood rolled off his fingers, spotting the concrete all around him. “Oh my God, what happened? Masaki, talk to me.”

I carefully rolled him over and he moaned, blood and spit dribbling out of the corner of his mouth. I let out a long breath, relieved to know he was at least alive. A new bruise was blossoming on his right cheek, the eye already swollen shut. I examined the hand that was bleeding and saw that it was only his knuckles split open. He had been in a fight.

I clutched him to my chest, feeling his own move up and down as he breathed deeply. “Dammit, Masaki. Why?” He moaned something against me and I sat up. “What? What’d you say?”

He heaved in a deep breath and let it out slowly. I had to lower my ear to his lips just to hear him. "Sleepy...." He licked his lips loudly. "Let me sleep."

I let out a short breath, almost a laugh, and lifted him into my arms as I found my feet. He was heavier than I thought and I almost dropped him. When I found my center of balance, I rushed off to the infirmary.

"Oh my!" *sensei* exclaimed when I stumbled in through the door, sweating and exhausted. Carrying Masaki so far had nearly done me in, but I had to save him. She shot to her feet and came to us. "What happened?"

I didn't want to get Masaki in trouble for fighting so I said, "I don't know. I found him like this."

Sensei clucked disapprovingly and ushered me to a bed. "What's his name?"

"Uchida Masaki."

"I see," she muttered, scowling. To me it seemed like she knew the name. I guess he was famous for fighting.

When I got him down on the bed, I saw that the knees of his pants were spotted in blood too, like he had fallen hard. *Sensei* saw me frowning and shooed me out of the way.

"Uchida-san," she said in her soft voice, "can you hear me? You're in the school infirmary." There was no response, not even a moan as she took his vitals, checked his heart and eyes. All I could do was stand watch. I felt so helpless.

"Well, he seems okay. His heart rate is good. But he took a good knock to his head here." She brushed back his hair to show a big red knot with a gash. "He might have a concussion. He should be awake. Here," she said standing. "I'll get supplies to clean his wounds, you try to wake him."

I sat down next to Masaki on the bed. Still, he didn't stir. I leaned in close enough to smell the sweet tang of his blood. I felt instantly sick. "Masaki," I whispered against his face. "Masaki, can you hear me?"

I smoothed back his hair from his forehead, exposing that nasty wound. The moment my fingers touched his hot skin, he moaned, wiggling softly under my hand. I smoothed my palm over the unhurt side of his forehead, pushing his hair back. His good eye trembled, and then there was a crack of dark brown showing. “Hey,” I said softly, very aware that I was close enough to kiss him. “You okay?”

Masaki moaned again and licked his lips. “Thought I told you I wanted to fucking sleep.”

After a shocked moment, I laughed. “Sure, you sleep for a bit, but I have to wake you again.” I smoothed back his hair again. “*Sensei* thinks you may have a concussion.”

He mumbled something that sounded faintly like, “For fuck’s sake,” and closed his eye again. *Sensei* appeared and silently tended to his wounds. When she was done cleaning and bandaging him, she stood and looked him over.

“What’s wrong?” I mumbled from my spot watching fretfully in the corner.

She blushed and looked at me. “His pants... if we wash them now we could save them.”

I was confused for a moment and then realized she was embarrassed to take off his pants. I chuckled. “Okay, sure. I’ll take them off if you’d like.”

“Thanks,” she answered and pulled the curtain shut.

Alone with Masaki in our curtain of white, I reached for his pants. He remained motionless under my hands as I unbuttoned his fly. It wasn’t until I lifted his hips that he moaned. I stopped and looked up. He was still sleeping peacefully, his lips slightly parted. His chest moved up and down slowly, but steadily.

I took in a deep breath and went back to wiggling Masaki out of his pants. I couldn’t help but notice the patch of pale hair leading into his underpants. I felt a little ashamed for noticing, like I was some sort of pervert. When I had his pants off, I pulled the sheet up to his waist and opened the curtain enough to see *sensei* at her desk, writing furiously at an intake form.

I held out the soiled pants. “Here.”

She smiled, blushing lightly, and took the pants. “I’ll be back in a bit. Can you stay with him?”

“Of course.”

She smiled, touched my arm and said, “Thanks. You’re a good friend.” Her cheeks flushed again and I saw the look she was trying to hide. She thought I was cute.

I watched her go, contemplating her words. *Friend*.... I smiled and went back to Masaki, pulling the curtain shut again in case someone decided to come in. After pacing for a minute, chewing on my lip, I sat on the bed, against his hip. “Masaki?”

Nothing. I sighed and looked him over. Even beaten, he looked so strong. It was hard to imagine what could have happened. I had always heard he won all of his fights; he was a real beast when it came to his fists. And he never cheated or used dirty tricks.

“Oh, Masaki.” I sighed and rested my head on his chest so that I was looking at his feet. Under my cheek, his chest moved up and down. His heart pounded, strong and steady. I wanted to think it beat for me, but I was sure Masaki didn’t even know I was here. I don’t think he knew who I was when I picked him up earlier.

Staring down the length of his body, I got a sudden, wicked idea. I don’t know what possessed me, but I slipped my hand under the sheet and my thumb into the waistband of his boxer shorts. I only got a quick peek, but it was enough. “Oh my,” I gasped and took my hand back.

Two things surprised me. One, what made Masaki a man was big. Considering he wasn’t even hard, I was impressed—he was well over Japanese norm. But the more surprising thing I discovered was that Masaki was a natural blond. That made number two—Masaki wasn’t 100% Japanese.

“*Yare yare*, Masaki-*kun* is full of surprises.”

“Akatsuki?”

I flinched and looked up. His eyes were both shut, but he was awake. I suddenly blushed, wondering if I was caught. “I’m here.”

“What...” He licked his lips and winced. “What’s...”

“It’s fine, take it easy. Do you want something to drink?”

He grumbled an annoyed noise and moved against the bed. “Fuck.” Seeing that he was insistent on sitting up, I helped him. His good eye opened, the other struggling to do the same. My chest hurt, seeing him seem so weak and vulnerable.

I sat back, out of his personal space. “Do you know who did this to you?”

“Those fuckers... jumped me from behind.” He sighed and rested his head back, shutting his eyes. “I would have taken them if they hadn’t played dirty. Bastards.”

“Who was it?”

“Don’t matter.”

I frowned hard. “Of course it does.”

He chuckled—tried to chuckle, but ended up wincing. “What you going to do then, huh? Hunt them down?” He chuckled again, this time without the wince. “Might mess up that pretty face of yours.”

I was glad his eyes were shut so he didn’t see the look on my face. I knew I wore my emotions out there for anyone. And at that moment what I was feeling was something he wouldn’t want to see.

Damn. I’m starting to like Masaki, *really* like him.

“Fine,” I grumbled, ignoring my feelings. “I was just trying to help.”

His eyes opened then, both of them, though the swollen one was only a crack. I tensed, feeling the coldness in his stare. “It was your fault I was jumped.”

“Me?”

He sighed heavily and shut his eyes again, like it was a chore to keep them open. “Yeah. They thought I was your boyfriend. Called me a homo.”

I laughed. “That’s absurd.” Not only was it absurd, but shocking. Usually anyone I talked to, or slept with, ended up becoming an outcast. Masaki was my only friend for a reason. I had a bad rep, but not because I was a bad person. It was because I was too close to *senpai*. Everyone was afraid of his wrath.

I fear his wrath.

“Yep,” Masaki muttered. “Told them as much. Still got the jump on me. Fought dirty too. Fuckers. I’ll get them.”

I reached out to touch his arm. Masaki flinched and looked to me and then my hand. I snatched it away. “Sorry.” He might have thought it was because I touched him. But really, I was sorry that I got him hurt.

I stayed with Masaki the rest of the afternoon. When he said he wanted to go home, I was reluctant, but *sensei* gave him the go-ahead. I tried to go with him, worried, but he wouldn’t let me. Taking on his stubbornness, I followed him anyway, all the way home. I couldn’t live with myself if something happened to him. When we got to his place, I tried to talk him into letting me stay for a bit and watch him. He wouldn’t even let me inside. I wondered if he had something he was trying to hide. Regardless, I was worried.

“Come on, Masaki-*kun*. *Sensei* said it was okay for you to go home only if you had someone to wake you every hour. Otherwise, you’re going to the hospital.”

He scoffed, leaning against his apartment door like he was too tired to stand anymore. “Anyone ever tell you you’re a pain in the fucking ass?”

I grinned hard. “Yeah.”

“I mean,” he continued, “you’re like a stray cat that followed me home and just won’t go away. Honestly, how do I get rid of you?”

I smiled to myself, thinking it was funny that he called me a stray cat when I thought of him as my lone wolf. Guess we were both beasts in our own right. “Sorry, no way to get rid of me, Masaki-*kun*.”

“Fine. I’ll call my girlfriend and have her wake me up every hour. Happy?”

It took everything in me not to frown. He has a girl? When did that happen? Damn. Don’t be stupid, like he would ever be interested in me anyway. “Ah, yeah. Sure.”

He considered me long and hard. His swollen eye looked better and he could open it a bit more, but it was still gross. “Right. Whatever. See you.”

I frowned and turned away, heading back down the steps. I was almost to the bottom when I heard Masaki call out, “And thanks, Akatsuki.”

He wouldn't want me to acknowledge him, so I didn't. I smiled and kept walking. When we saw each other again the following Monday, neither one of us said anything about the incident. Masaki's eye was fully functioning and the knot on his forehead was hidden behind his hair. Besides a big bruise on his cheek and the bandages on his knuckles, he looked okay.

Life returned to normal. Over the next few weeks we had lunch together almost every day. The subject of the incident was never brought up again. Masaki seemed more and more relaxed around me every day, and I even managed to get him into a setting outside of school a few times. He was really an easygoing guy. He just didn't want to be bothered with bullies and bullshit. Anyone can relate to that.

When we did hang out, drank together, Masaki was quiet. He never had much of anything to say, and when he did it was usually accompanied by a four-letter word. Still, I had managed to develop a healthy crush on the lone wolf.

His bad attitude didn't scare me away like he intended. I saw him for the good guy he really was. I wanted to keep him, tame the beast and make him mine. I liked the way I felt when I was with Masaki. I was a different person when I was with him. I did and said things that the real me would never think to do. I was the person I thought I'd be if *senpai* hadn't been in my life so many years before. He made me weak and soft, a coward. I was tired of being that man. I wanted to be more, have more. I deserved more.

"That's right," I mumbled to myself, "I deserve Masaki."

3: Snow Princess

“WHO the fuck does that Akatsuki think he is?” I grumbled aloud. “*I was thinking about fucking you*, he says. What the fuck do I look like, a woman? If anything, he’s the one with the girly face. He should be the woman.”

As I was contemplating why I even thought he’d be the woman or that I might fuck him, a familiar voice called out to me. I turned, forcing a weak smile. “Yo.”

“Yo?” Yuki repeated, smiling. She was always smiling. Kinda pissed me off. “What kind of greeting is that?” She giggled and grabbed my arm, pulling it between her breasts.

Yuki knew I liked her big breasts, so she was always rubbing them on me. But no matter how hard I charmed her, sweet-talked, she wouldn’t let me touch them, much less put out. I was nearly at my limits with her. I liked her enough, but I couldn’t see where the relationship was going, especially without sex. And she was the one who came to me, confessing her interest. I only said yes back then because I thought she was cute. And I liked her rack.

“*Ne.*” She tugged on my arm. “What’s wrong? You look upset.”

I shrugged and pulled her along with me as I started to walk back toward building two. “Nothing, just this guy Akatsuki. We had lunch and he was being annoying, that’s all.”

Yuki gasped and I looked down, seeing her eyes wide with surprise. “You can’t mean Akatsuki Keigo?”

“Yeah?” I mumbled, eyeing her.

“But he’s....” She blushed and I stopped to face her, wanting to hear what she said. “He’s....” She leaned close, giving me a good view down her blouse, and lowered her voice. “One of *those.*”

I had to fight hard to suppress a grin. I knew what the rumors said. Keigo had said it himself. I just wanted to see Yuki squirm. She was so uncomfortable with sexuality. “One of what?”

She bit into her lip, wringing her hands together. “You know....” She lowered her voice even more so that I almost didn’t hear her whisper, “Gays.”

I burst into laughter. She was blushing the color of a strawberry. “Yeah, I know.”

She grabbed my arm hard enough to make me stop and look at her again. “You also know then that he sleeps with everyone?”

“Yeah,” I muttered, “I heard that about him too.” I wasn’t sure I believed the rumor since I’d never actually seen him with anyone, boy or girl. He was always hanging around me, the stray that he was, like I was his only friend.

“You should leave him alone. He’s only trouble, Masaki-kun.”

I was a little surprised. Yuki wasn’t the most up-front and outspoken person, but there was something about Keigo that bothered her. She genuinely wanted me to stay away from him. That made me curious.

“Do you know him?”

She gasped and looked up. I knew I was right. “Uh... yeah. I mean, not really. He knows my brother.”

“I see.” I wanted to press it further but Yuki was more likely to clam up than break. Plus, I figured I could just ask Keigo later and he’d tell me. Not that I believed a word that came out of his mouth. Guess I didn’t really care. “Come on, we’re going to be late for class.”

She smiled, her mood instantly turning back to annoyingly perky. “Kay!”

Yuki fell into silence next to me as we walked toward her afternoon class. She seemed fidgety, nervous the whole time. I could tell something was bothering her. Sure enough, just as we stepped inside the building she asked, “But why were you with him, Masaki-kun?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know. He just showed up one day, like a stray cat, and just kinda... stayed.” I lowered my voice and muttered, “I didn’t even feed him.” Returning to normal speaking level, I said,

“Whatever, he doesn’t really annoy me, so... whatever.” Wow, so fucking eloquent today.

“But,” she said, biting into her lip and fiddling again. We stopped outside of her classroom and I turned her to look at me. Just then Haruka appeared. She only offered me a passing glance. She had eyes only for Yuki. I wondered if I was the only one that noticed the way Haruka looked at her best friend.

When the door shut behind Haruka, I continued, “Hey, it’s cool. If he pisses me off, I don’t have to talk to him, right? Like today, he was annoying me so I ditched him.” Sort of. “I mean, do you see me hanging out with a jerk?”

That was only half true. Keigo was a pain in the ass and had brought me a bit of trouble. Not long after the stray first showed up, I got a good beat down. Bastards jumped me from behind, called me a homo. One even tried to rape me. I took the beating but saved my ass from being pounded. They warned me not to tell Keigo what had happened or I was dead. I wasn’t sure why they’d go so far, if they were serious, but I never saw them again after that.

I know they targeted me because of Keigo. Even so, I didn’t blame him. I mean, it wasn’t like I was a stranger to fights anyway. He took care of me after the attack and that was something I couldn’t forget. Besides, I kinda liked the guy. I couldn’t explain it, not even a little, but we were almost like friends. So, pain in the ass or not, I was willing to give Keigo a chance—which was completely not like me.

Yuki smiled. “I guess not. Okay, I need to go to class. See you later!”

I bent down to give her a kiss and ended up with a mouthful of hair. She had whipped around so fast that I never found her lips, much less skin. I sighed at the door as it shut in my face. “Prude,” I mumbled and shoved my hands deep into my pockets.

I didn’t feel like going to my afternoon classes, so I decided to skip. Just as I was turning to leave campus, I remembered that I had forgotten my book. I had slipped it under my bag when Keigo showed up and forgot to put it in my pack before I left. “Damn. Stupid. Fucking stupid.” I started toward my not-so-secret spot, hands deep in pockets. I must have looked as miserable as I felt, walking around

with a hard-on, annoyed at my clumsiness at forgetting my book and by Yuki's chastity.

We'd been dating for four months already. Four whole fucking months! And no sex. No tongue, no groping, no handling of "sensitive areas" whatsoever. Nothing. I've never been with a girl for so long and not slept with her, much less not gotten to second base. I've never been with such a prude. I was starting to feel really pent-up, and jerking off was starting to get really fucking boring.

Why did I even say yes to her? More importantly, why am I still with her?

As I mounted the stairs to go up, my thoughts went back to Keigo and his hot mouth on my dick. I moaned, grabbing myself. My hard-on was still strong and I wondered how fast I could get to the video store and home to jerk off. I felt a presence in front of me and looked up. Keigo was standing against the wall he'd had me pinned to earlier, smiling around a cigarette.

"Son of a bitch," I mumbled, coming to a stop. I hadn't expected him to be there still. I just wanted to get my book, pick up a porno, and go home. Now I had to add putting Keigo off to my list.

"Masaki-kun. Miss me already?"

I should have felt a little strange. I mean, I did kiss the guy, had my dick in his mouth. But for some reason I didn't feel any differently about him than I had when I got up this morning. I shuffled toward him with my hands in my pockets. I could feel him watching me, despite my best efforts to ignore him. "Yeah, right. Keep dreaming."

"Whatcha up to, Masaki-kun?"

I flicked my gaze to him for a moment. He was watching me, grinning, just as I had imagined. "I forgot my book."

"*Kore wa...?*" Keigo brought his arm out from behind him and held up my book.

"Yes, hand it over." I didn't like him smoking around it, much less touching it. "Now."

"Don't be so hasty." He flipped the cover over and read it. "This is some serious reading, Masaki-kun."

I gritted my teeth. It was a very expensive book. Besides, it meant a lot to me. Someone I loved greatly had given it to me. “Give it.”

He shrugged, and I snatched it away as he extended his arm. I shoved the book into my pack and turned away.

“Going to class?”

I stopped and turned to face him again. “Why are you being so fucking annoying today?” He only gave me a sly look, nearly batting his eyes, in answer. I huffed. “Not that it’s any of your goddamned business, but no. Getting a video and then checking out. I’m done for the day.”

“Oh yeah? I thought you had afternoon classes today.”

I frowned and looked at him. “You been stalking me, man?”

He smiled broadly. “No, we have a class together.”

“What?” I asked, surprised. I thought I would have known.

He stubbed out his smoke and came to me, still grinning. “Yep, literature.”

“No shit,” I muttered to myself. I never even noticed. Then again, I skipped more than not. And when I didn’t, I slept. I offered him a shrug and spun on my heel. “Whatever, later.”

“Wait.” He ran up to me. “I’ll walk with you.”

I shrugged, refusing to look at him. “Do whatever you want.”

He shuffled along next to me as I walked toward the station. We were silent all the way from the campus to the store. I wondered about him, in our silence. Keigo was nothing like me. He was cheery, outgoing, and personable. Sure, he was other things too, crass and loudmouthed, but still he was nothing like me. People usually used terms like aloof, stern, and ill-tempered. I couldn’t deny what they say about me when they’re right.

I stopped outside the video store and turned to Keigo, finally looking at him. He was tall and good-looking, for a guy, even if he had an effeminate face. I understood why he had a rep for being a boy-toy whore. “All right, I’ll see you later.”

“You’re renting a movie?”

I sighed, running a hand over my hair. “Yeah.”

“What one? I collect a ton of movies, maybe I have it already.”

I considered him for a moment, wondering what he was planning now. “Just a pink film. Need to relieve some tension, you know?”

He laughed. “I’ll say; you’re all sorts of grumpy.”

I gave him the finger. “Fuck you, man.” I turned away and started to go into the store when he grabbed me from behind. “Hey!”

“Shhh,” he whispered into my ear and I had to stifle a shudder from the warm breath on my neck. “No yelling, people will look.”

I jerked my arm out of his hand and turned to face him, scowling. “What do you want?”

“Don’t be so rude. I’m inviting you to my place for a movie. And if you’re a good boy, I’ll make you dinner.”

“No way, I don’t want to watch your gay porn.”

He laughed. “I’ve got porn with women too, *Masaki-kun*. I’m bisexual.” When he saw me considering his offer, he leaned in close and whispered, “What if I offer to finish what I started earlier? The blow job, I mean. No funny stuff.”

I frowned, but knew that I was sold already. Hey, it’s a free movie and head. Who would say no to such an offer? “No funny stuff?”

He straightened and put his hand up. “Trust me.”

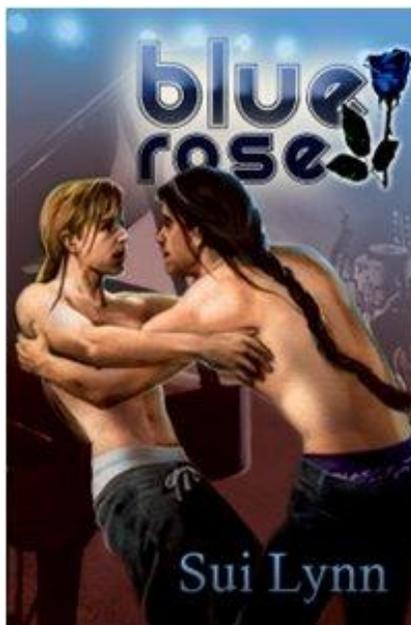
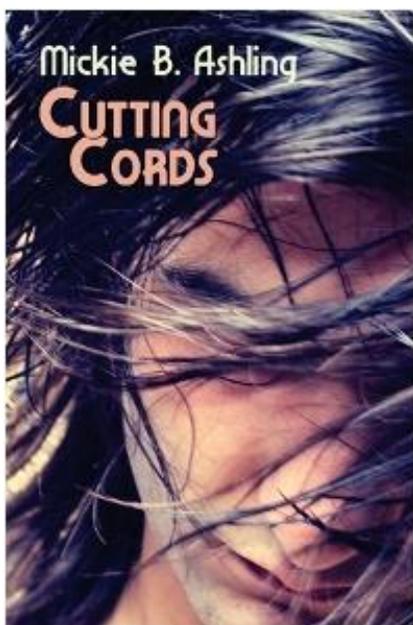
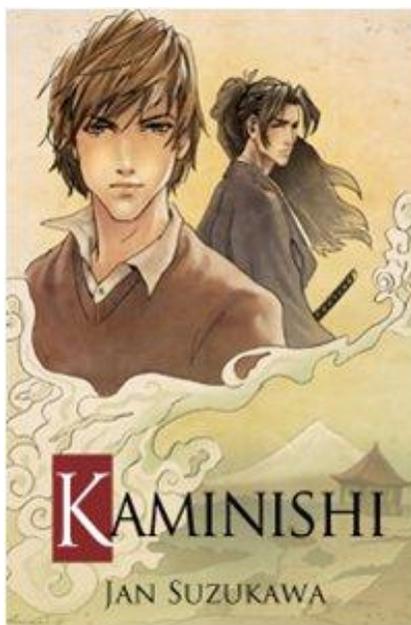
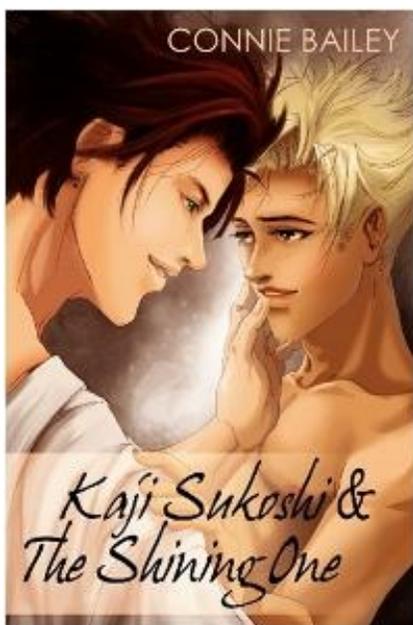
The thing was, I didn’t. I didn’t even know him really, only what the rumors said, that Akatsuki Keigo was a big whore and a liar. Even knowing that, in the time that I’d known him, I’d never seen him with anyone. Nor had I caught him in a lie. I’m a “take things at face value” kinda guy. Didn’t mean I trusted him though.

I sighed deeply, knowing I was probably going to regret it later. “Fine, let’s go.”

APRIL MOONE's obsessive love of anime and manga (to be honest, anything Japanese) inevitably led her to the yaoi genre. She wrote for years for herself and online venues but never dreamed she'd see her own fantasies in print. While she's not talking to the characters in her head, she loves reading, digging in her garden, riding her sports bike, or just playing with her two Australian Shepherds. Despite the naughty she writes, she blushes easily and can sometimes be found sporting a mane of purple.

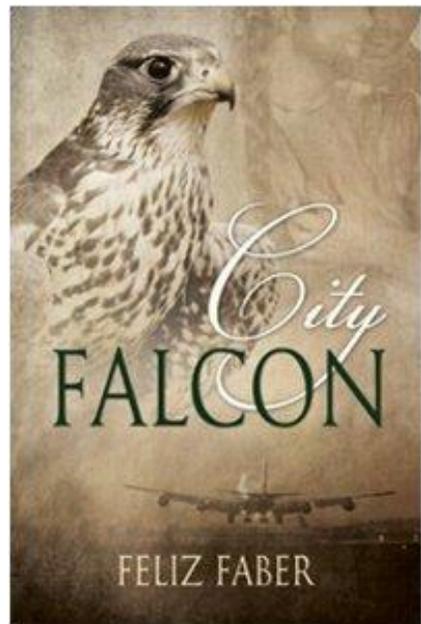
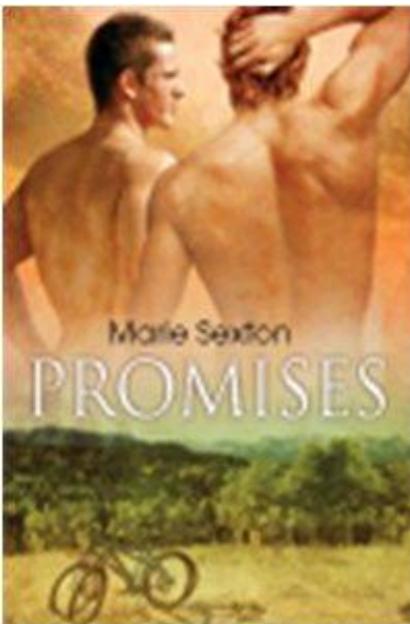
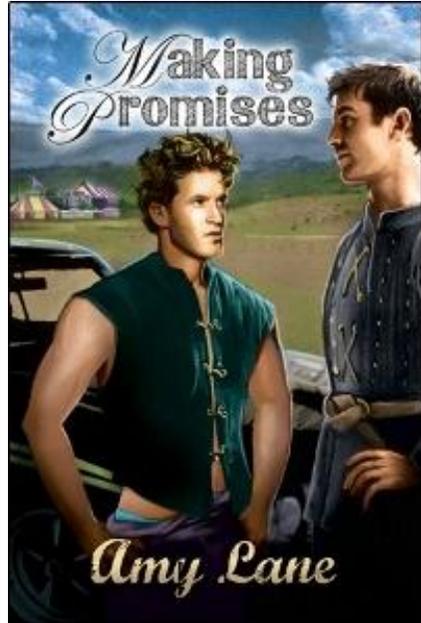
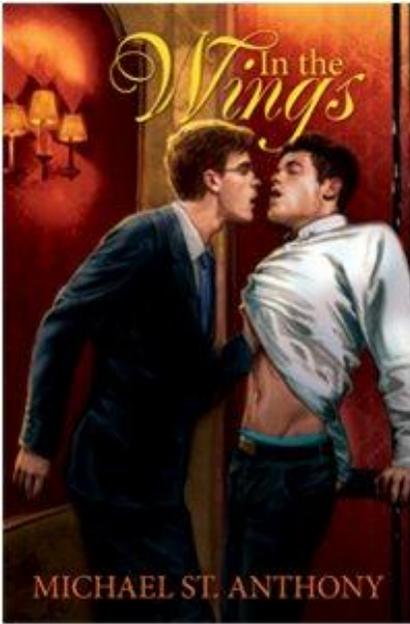
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