

To the Complaint

By: HatedLove6

A cocky and snide stranger out for a morning walk 'saves' the drunken Ryoji. They can hardly have a conversation without sarcasm being tossed around, but when Ryoji finds out why the man acts the way he does, he ends up feeling pity for the guy, and tries to keep him around. Well this guy doesn't want pity, but he does want something else. Ranka/RyojixOC
TamakixHaruhi

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Chapter 1

Hilo everyone! I had this idea stewing in my head for a while and thought that I should at least try it. I noticed that there was only one other RankaxOC, but the OC was female and that went against his promise. Anyway, hope you like it, please review.

"I got kicked out of ballet class because I pulled a groin muscle. It wasn't mine." -- Rita Rudner

The only noises were the buzzes from the lamp posts as their light cut through the dark, the few early risers driving their cars to get to work or just the opposite; going home; and last remnants of music in the all night bars. The soft snow was falling and flowing with the chilly breeze to land on everything, creating a white blanket. The ground was slippery and there were areas where there was a thin sheet of ice that cracked beneath my heavy brown leather boots. When I took a deep lungful of the scent, the only word I could think of to describe it was "white," and when I exhaled through my mouth, I could see the vapor of my breath swirl around and then thin out and distribute itself with the rest of the frozen air. Everything seemed peaceful, and it was as if, for those few minutes of complete silence, time itself, like everything around me, had frozen. I stood still, taking in that little piece of wishful fantasy, breathing slowly to make sure that I didn't crack it, like the frozen puddle being stepped, on with my loud and careless inhales and exhales. Unfortunately, the rarely viewed atmosphere was short-lived.

Two scrawny men were trying to rob and possibly rape a young red-headed woman that looked slightly drunk in an alley. I carefully walked behind one of them and kicked him behind the knees so he fell and then I kicked him down on his front. His partner, just realizing what had happened, turned and lunged toward me. It was easy to see coming so I merely stepped to the side and stuck out my leg, tripping him; he was drunk too because I could smell the strong and

very aged sake. His head hit the wall and he fell to the filthy floor littered with trash and slicked with snow and garbage slime. The first guy was trying to get up, but I didn't see him. He sprinted, grabbed the woman's purse from her arms and took off out of the alley, leaving behind his unconscious friend.

I turned to the woman and asked, "Are you alright, miss?" She wore a long flowing purple skirt that went down to her red flats. To keep warm all she had was a tan trench coat that didn't look very warm at all, but she wasn't shivering. All the booze must have numbed her senses quite a bit.

"I could have handled it!" She yelled... except... the tone of the voice was way too low to be a woman's.

With another long look, I realized that it was indeed a 'man in drag.' A cross dresser. He probably came from that bar I walked by earlier. "Sorry," I said. "Do you need a ride somewhere?" I didn't really care that he was a cross dresser as long as he wasn't a prostitute trying to get something out of me or a burglar, but he seemed too tipsy to be the latter, and too angry to be the first.

"No," he said, walking past me. "I'm just fine. I don't need your help." His voice slurred, but it was clear enough. He tripped and stumbled so much on the way out of the alley that I knew I would feel guilty if I just let him walk home alone.

"Hey," I said, quickly catching up to him in a little more than a few long strides out of the alley. "Come on." I took hold of his elbow and he twisted around and gave me a hard glare with his light brown eyes, but then he lost his balance for a bit. "You're tired, you just got robbed and you're drunk off your ass tonight. I don't want to get in your skirt, okay? All I'm offering is a place for you to rest and sober up."

"I've t'geh home... daughter," he slurred and tried walking away again swaying heavily from side to side as he struggled to take his steps.

I understood perfectly even though he slurred that sentence so much. All I needed to hear was 'daughter' and I knew I couldn't let him walk home. I grabbed his shoulder and got in front of him, staring at him in his droopy eyes. "That's why you need to let me take you home. If something happened to you I'm absolutely positive that your daughter will be very sad. So let me drive you...?"

The cross dresser slumped into my chest, passed out.

"Oh, great," I bit out, holding him up from under his armpits. He probably wouldn't wake up for a while and in the mean time, since his purse was stolen, I had no clue where he lived. "Well, nothing much else to do, but take him home with me," I murmured. I pulled him on to my back and held him by his legs, making sure that his skirt covered as much as it could. He wrapped his arms around my neck and nuzzled into my crocheted black and gray striped scarf. He slurred and murmured some incoherent words that I didn't even try to decipher.

I went to the nearest payphone and called the police to report the robbery and that the guy was unconscious in the alleyway. If they got the man to squeal out his friend, they could probably get the purse back in no time flat, although I couldn't guarantee that everything would be there. I made sure to say my address slowly so that they could just return the purse to my house. Hopefully before the man on my back woke up so I could drive him home and not have for him to get to know me. I lived in a nearby apartment and was about to do some early morning shopping so it was a fairly short walk. However, the man was heavy, I lived on the top floor and there wasn't an elevator. I had to adjust the man on my back every other floor so he wouldn't slide off. He occasionally giggled and said more words that I couldn't quite understand. No one was awake (it was around 4:30 in the morning) so I didn't get any weird or awkward stares like I'm sure I would have gotten if it was only a few hours later.

I sighed in relief when I got to my door. "Finally," I murmured. I struggled to get my keys out of my pocket and I unlocked my door and went inside. It was very cold because there wasn't any central

heating for the apartment complex and it was in the coldest parts of winter. I sat down on the matted floor and carefully set him down too, having him lean on my shoulder. I unlaced my boots and took them off, along with his shoes, and placed them at the edge in a neat line.

I picked the man up under the knees and across the back of the shoulders and set him down under the kotatsu **(1)** so he could warm up a bit and until I could figure out what to do with him. I noticed that the hem of his skirt was dirty, probably because of all his tripping, and I noticed a bit of dried vomit on the collar of his trench. That wasn't much of a surprise considering how drunk he was and how loosely he hung on to his purse. He curled deeper under the kotatsu and wrapped the futon around his shoulders, sighing deeply as he did. "Ha... hi," he murmured.

I got a pillow out of my room and gently lifted his head to tuck it under. I figured that he could sleep there until either he woke up or until the police came with his purse. I swept a tendril of his wavy red hair out of his face and noticed how pretty he was. *If he wanted to, I bet he could probably model, but I don't know of any industries who would allow regular time cross dressers unless it was a one time thing, I thought. Oh well. Too bad though.*

Hilo again. How did you like it, if you liked it at all? I would like to know if I should try and continue this. I'm not abandoning my other stories, I just had this chapter typed up for a while and wanted to know what you readers thought. I'll try and update if you do like it. Admittedly, I have not read the entire manga series and I most likely missed quite a few episodes of the anime since I don't remember too much of Ryoji, or maybe they didn't show too much of him anyway. Please review. Anon reviews are welcome.

(1) A low wooden table with a heating source underneath. There are two kinds, but in this case it's an electric kotatsu with the heater built into the table. During cold weather or season a futon or a heavy blanket is put in and then taken out to be a normal table during warmer seasons.

" The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage." -- Mark Russell

Chapter 2

Hilo everyone. Thank you Rita for your review, I very much appreciated it and decided to immediately get started on the second chapter for you. Seriously people, if I don't get reviews I tend to just not want to write them because without reviews I assume that you don't like it. So please review, they are important and I cherish each and everyone if it's fair (flames do not count as fair).

"It's better to stay silent and be thought a fool, than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt."

Feeling impatient, waiting a word from the police, I decided to poke around his pockets for anything that might have helped at all. Like perhaps he actually kept his wallet in his trench pocket, or even a cell phone... Okay, maybe not a cell phone, unless it had 'home' programmed in it, but almost anything would do. Gently lifting the edge of the blanket, I began to prod at the pockets, but was startled so much from something batting wildly at my hand that I yelped and jumped away from the sleeping drunkard, clenching my chest, panting. Sleeping Tranny merely mumbled something incoherent again and turned to his other side and snuggled even farther under the kotatsu to where he was nearly engulfed.

When I calmed down from my sudden fright I crawled to the other side of the small table and lifted the blanket to see what had hit my hand. Two large copper eyes stared back at me indifferently. "So that's where you went to Soudou **(1)**," I said, not really caring if I woke the guy up or not. I debated whether to drag her out from under there or not, but seeing as how the snoozer wasn't sneezing I figured it would be okay to just leave him. Unless of course the guy has a severe phobia of cats or is highly superstitious, but both of those would be quite rare, wouldn't it? Maybe. I don't know as long as there was a chance. "Come on Soudou. You've got to be hungry by now," I said as I patted the floor.

Her relaxed sleepy posture turned into a sleek focused crouch, with her long slightly bushy black tail flicking side to side playfully, right before she lunged at my hand with her claws unsheathed and teeth ready to nip. I was too quick for her and so she head-rammed into the wall.

I laughed aloud as she stumbled around for a few seconds before sitting down. "I just had to choose the idiot of the litter, didn't I?" I asked chuckling. These days, she was the only one that could make me smile and laugh.

She looked at me with a dignified 'to hell with you' look in her large round, gold-copper eyes, brighter than a shiny new penny. She even wasn't smiling anymore to add to her 'seriousness.' Her round head, medium length snout, and large ears made her look too cute to have any true desired look of 'anger' or 'pouty'; however she could pull off 'annoyed' and 'sarcastic.' Her short, sleek, glossy coat and her slight muscular build was that of a panther, and boy did she never let me forget it. There were so many times where she would hide up in high places, hiding in the shadows, sneak up on me, and then jump on my back, or more often my head. Of course there were times where I thought she was blind because she kept bumping into things, but after a visit with the vet, it turns out that she's just clumsy.

My clumsy cat that can make me laugh and is my current pride and joy... whenever I can find her and whenever she doesn't sorely irritate me with her answering machine or her claws.

I hovered my hand over her head, ready to pet her, before she hooked her claws around my sleeved arm and teathed my palm, her way of showing her affection. I lightly scratched the side of her head around her black collar with her name sowed on in bright orange. After a couple of minutes I shook her off and stood up to go to the kitchen to feed her, tripping on her on the way. She may act all mean, and disappear for a couple days at a time, but I know she loves me and really has separation issues.

In the end I decided to just let the guy be and work on a few things, like say, my photos for the sports article that was due today. As much as I didn't want him in my home or for him to be near me, there was no helping it. Besides, even if I did have his address, there was no way I was going to carry him on my back again, or, worse, bridal, from the car to the door. Plus, he might live in an apartment on some other floor besides the ground. Boy, would that be a serious pain.

Ryoji's P. O. V.

An agonizing headache forced me to realize my awareness to the fact that I was conscious, even though I really didn't want to wake up yet. My eyes were hurting before I even thought about opening them, I had a horrid taste in my mouth and I could feel that my body was stiff, but it was so warm under the kotatsu. Between the pulses of pain in my head, I wondered if Haruhi had made breakfast before she went to school, and if she would have a good day, and possibly tell me what happened. Either that, or hear it from Kyoya, either way was fine. The more I thought, the more I began to realize that something didn't seem right. For example, if I did happen to decide to sleep under the kotatsu in my drunken state, Haruhi would have kicked me and say something along the line of 'Get in your bed, we can't afford to waste money on heating the kotatsu, and change into your pajamas so I can wash your clothes this weekend.' She really does way too much, but she won't let me help shop, and it was a disaster the last time I washed clothes, plus she's such a good cook. She would make such a good wife, no matter how much I dread that particular thought.

Without opening my eyes, I scooted out from under the warmth and rested my head on the kotatsu enveloped within my arms to block out any light that might have been there. I grunted when I felt a sharp pain in my stomach-God I shouldn't have accepted that many drinks in one night! "Haruhi?" I tried, just in case she was still here and I just woke up too early, extending the last syllable in a whiny tone. If she had any mercy for her father she would hand me tea and aspirin,

maybe flu medicine too. I hadn't felt this horrible due to alcohol since... ever.

"Ah, so Sleeping Drunkard's finally awake. Ish," a deep haughty voice said, obviously very sarcastic. It was a voice that I didn't recognize, so that was definitely bad. I heard a light clunk and light clacks, almost like bee-bees bouncing off the table.

Ah. Aspirin. I slowly lifted up my head and opened my eyes-thank God it was dim-and spotted the two small oval white pills. Well, if I was kidnapped, I may as well take the aspirin, right? Or maybe I still wasn't thinking too clearly. I popped the pills and took a sip of the lukewarm tea. Ginger, maybe, but I wouldn't have been able to tell if I was just drinking sweetened water. I was just thankful that it was at least a little warm.

When I looked at my kidnapper, he was actually surprisingly rather good-looking. He had that messy-but-on-purpose short black hair that strayed thinly in front of his light brown eyes that were placed on his slightly defined cheekbones on his circle shaped face. He had a straight, flat, thin nose, thin lips, and a smooth chin. There were loud purring, which distracted my gaze to his black cat that was curling up on his lap. "So, are you fully awake yet, or shall I just slap you until you are?" There was a slight smirk on his cocky mid-twenties face, that irked me immediately.

"Yes, I'm up," I said, glaring at him in retaliation.

"That glare doesn't work as well as you're thinking. What, with your smeared make-up, tangled mess of hair, your five o'clock shadow peaking through, and that cute thin patch of dried drool on the side of your face." He had a full arrogant smile stretched across his face. I could tell that he knew that I was a tranny, and that he apparently didn't care, but still... To make fun of how horrible I looked? That was a bad thing to do.

I would have yelled at the bastard if he hadn't been right, so I had nothing to say in retort. I looked around for my purse for my supplies

to put on my face, but I couldn't find it around. "Where's my purse?" I asked, focusing my dark look on him.

His face turned serious, and said, casually scratching the corner of his mouth, "You were robbed in an alley. Since I didn't know where you lived, and you obviously blacked out, I decided to take you home until you sobered up. So, are you sober, yet?" His small smirk came back.

I had a tic mark on my forehead, and my eye was twitching. "Yes," I growled out.

Hilo again. Hope you like this so far. I'm going to try to put in humor in this, but it really depends on who's reading to consider it funny or not. Anyway, if you feel that Ryoji is out of character, please let me know. I read what I could on OM but he didn't show up much still, and he was only in two or three episodes in the anime.

(1) "Soudou" - It's not a name, it's just a word that means "black copper."

"Do not cut down the tree that gives you shade." - Persian Proverb

Chapter 3

Hilo everyone. The rest of the story will probably be in Ryoji's perspective, if not, I'll let you know. Hmm, what else can I say? Oh, I actually got a new cat! Strangely, when I first wrote Soudou, I hadn't had a cat for years, so I didn't particularly know how they would act. When I brought Yuki home, who looks the exact opposite of Soudou, she ran straight into a wall. I laughed so hard at the absurdity, and the coincidence, and then I picked her up and cradled her.

" Sometimes when you look back on a situation, you realize it wasn't all you thought it was. A beautiful girl walked into your life. You fell in love. Or did you? Maybe it was only a childish infatuation, or maybe just a brief moment of vanity." - Henry Bromel

I was almost thankful that he let me stay until my headache had subsided, and he even let me wash the smeared make-up off my face. After I came out, feeling more relieved than I was half an hour ago, he handed me another set of clothes, with a small box on top. "What is this?" I didn't mean for it to sound rude, but he hadn't exactly been cookies and cream either. He sounded like he wanted me out, and that I was a bother. Well, I could be at times, I admit, but I still didn't appreciate it.

"Clothes and make-up," he said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. "I'm letting you borrow the clothes since you're not exactly natty right now."

I would have argued back if I hadn't recognized the logo on the make-up box and the ornate sewing on the shirt. They were expensive! This had to be some sort of trick, right? There is no way that some guy would let a totally poor tranny wear these types of clothes and make-up for free.

"Stop gaping like a starved ape," he said, raising his voice a bit. "I'm only letting you borrow them. As in, I'm going to get them back after you wash them."

After a twitch from my brow, I swiped the clothes and went back into the bathroom. I whined to myself that I wouldn't be able to keep the items that only rich people could afford. *Wait a minute*, I began to think. *Why would a rich person or rich couple since I can't picture him being a tranny too, live in an apartment?* The thought was quickly dispersed when I held the sweatshirt over my body. It was gorgeous! I didn't care anymore; just to be able to wear these kinds of clothes would make me happy for a week.

I had completely forgotten about the sarcastic guy until I had come out of the bathroom. "The skirt and the sleeves are a little too long, fine, but where on earth did you get the boobs? Are they water-balloons or something? That's very unattractive in those clothes."

I was starting to hate this man. "Other than that?" I asked. I shouldn't have, but I thought he was the kind of man who used up all of his steam in one go.

"You have lipstick on your tooth," he uttered simply, giving me that coy smile, and sipping his warm tea from the kotatsu.

I went back in the bathroom, and there was indeed lipstick on my front tooth. *Does he treat his girlfriend this way, or was it just me?* Stepping out of the bathroom I asked, clearly in an annoyed tone, "Anything else?"

He shot back with, "Do you want a list?"

"OK, what is wrong with you? I haven't done anything to you, so why are you treating me like crap? Is it solely because I'm a transvestite?"

He gave me a hard stare. "No. I couldn't care less if you were a transvestite, gay, hermaphrodite, or whatever. The fact that you got

that drunk when you had to walk home in the snow and, to top it all off, while you had a daughter waiting at home. That is what irks me. That is what I don't like about you."

"How did you...?"

"Hurry up and get your things. I'm driving you home now," he ordered, standing up and going to the front, grabbing his jacket and putting on his boots.

I didn't know what to say. He was right, of course, but I still didn't like how he said it to me. I had gotten depressed last night, because it was obvious that Haruhi liked that idiot, Tamaki, which I would never allow. Not to mention, it was also the anniversary of Kotoko's death. I felt almost useless, like I was being left behind, and I just wasn't thinking last night. Thinking about it, after he had pointed it out, it was horrible way to act out. Kotoko would have been disappointed with me too. Was Haruhi worried?

After I put my clothes in a plastic bag, and put on my shoes, he led me to his oriental-styled car, which also looked expensive. It wasn't a sports car or a convertible, but from the sleekness and the fact that he kept it clean, it had to be expensive. And it was royal blue. *Did they just want to look rich?* I sat in the passenger seat when he unlocked it and noticed a photo hanging from his rear-view mirror.

It was a woman crouched over hugging a baby of about three. She had long black hair with tendrils framing her smiling face. Her dark brown eyes glittered with happiness. She wore the similar brand expensive clothes that I had on that covered some of her smooth fair skin. She was beautiful, and it was as if I could hear her laughing from the picture. The little boy had similar features with a chubbier face. He was probably hers, and most likely his.

There was no way I could argue with him for not knowing what having a family felt like. When he came in, I spied the wedding band on his left ring finger. I checked the photo, and saw the diamond ring on hers and confirmed what I had suspected. Maybe I could put us

on a lighter note if we just somehow started over, but I wasn't going to apologize, at least not yet. "Is she your wife?" I asked as he put the key in the ignition.

He looked at the photo and seemed to relax. "Yes." He decided to keep his answers short, which I wasn't going to accept.

"What does she do?"

"Modeling."

That explained some things. "She's a model? Why would a model marry a guy like you?" I asked, trying to joke around.

It worked because there was a smirk playing on his lips. "What did your wife do?"

I should have caught the 'did,' but the new conversation was going surprisingly well. "She was a lawyer and a damn good one too." I could feel a gleam of pride in my chest.

"A lawyer, huh? And why would a lawyer go out with a man who acted girly?"

I had set myself up for his sarcasm. "Hey!" To be honest, I didn't really know the reason why she said yes. I could only afford to buy cheap meals, I did act girly sometimes, she even said I was weird, and the only redeeming quality I had was that I protected her from a man that was going to hurt her once. Other than that, I had no clue what she saw in me, but I was glad she did. "Well what do you do?"

"I'm a photographer."

"For models?"

"I used to. I quit and went with sports."

I had a smirk of my own, and said, "I bet it was because she was getting jealous of you taking pictures of other women, huh?"

His face grew serious again. "Sure." He went back to one-worded answers.

"Lighten up, will you? Your wife won't like the wrinkles you're making. I'm only asking because I'm curious. You don't have to worry about me hitting on her either, because I'm not into women." *Damn my loose tongue! Damn alcohol!* I was expecting him to ask if she had died, and how, but he didn't.

"I'm not worried about you hitting on her," was all he said about it.

It wasn't long until we arrived at my smaller apartment. "Thanks for your help."

"I'm coming with you, you know."

"I know where you live. I'll return the clothes after they're washed, I promise." I was hoping he would forget I had the clothes after a while.

"No, I don't care so much about that, but I do want the clothes back." He locked his car and followed me up the stairs.

I was getting nervous with him standing behind me. When I opened the door I saw the club with Haruhi at the table with tea. "What the hell are you doing here?" I yelled, pointing at the blond idiot. I didn't care that the others were around, since they were more responsible, especially Kyoya.

"Hey Dad," Haruhi greeted, like the loving daughter I know she is. "Where were you this morning?"

I hurried to hug her, and said, "Aw were you worried about Papa? I'm sorry I wasn't here this morning."

"No, I wasn't worried. I was just wondering where you were," she said bluntly.

The man who brought me home snickered behind his hand, to which I shot him a glare. "Hey," he greeted. "I brought your 'Papa' home. His purse was stolen, so I'll probably be back later today or tomorrow to return it. Also, here." He handed Haruhi a small card, which she took it. "If he doesn't come home on time again, go ahead and give me a call."

I took it from her and yelled, "She won't need to because it will never happen again, you smart-ass!"

He reached into his pocket for another card to give to Haruhi, which she took and wouldn't let me have. "Thank you for bringing him home, and for your consideration. I'll apologize on his behalf for all the trouble I'm sure he caused."

Haruhi! That was so hurtful! I cried on the inside.

"Neh, he wasn't too much trouble, but you're welcome." He turned to the club members, and said, "Hey Hitachiin-sou **(1)** . Tell your mom I said hi, and that I'm doing well," as he walked out of the apartment, and closed the door.

Hikaru and Kaoru looked confused, I was confused, and everyone else looked confused.

Hilo again. So that is the end of chapter three. In case you're wondering, I didn't properly introduce the OC yet, and on purpose, and Ryoji hadn't introduced himself to the guy either. That was on purpose too. Hope you enjoyed it.

(1) "Sou" is short for "souseiji," which means "twins." You'll know more about it next chapter.

" Opera is when a guy gets stabbed in the back and, instead of bleeding, he sings." - Ed Gardner

Chapter 4

Hilo! I am so surprised I finished this so fast. I decided to write the next chapter on a whim and completed it in only two hours. I swear, it's like a record for me. I'm kind of hoping, this win invoke a bit of emotion, but I know there are some out there who are tired of the sad story... oh well, too bad. I'm playing that card.

" There's a strange sort of quiet when you're dying. It's as if you're in a glass room, ad the walls keep getting thicker and thicker." - Gabrielle Zevin

As soon as we heard him drive away, the twins lunged at me, wanting the card that I had planned on ripping up. "You can have it!" I yelled, throwing the card to them. I didn't know what was going on, but it had to be at least somewhat important if the twins were that impatient. Of course, then again, they were always a little impatient, but this seemed different, as if they were actually eager.

"Iemochi Washi," the twins read aloud. "Who the hell is that?"

"He seemed to know you though," Haruhi stated curiously. I was getting a little curious also, despite not liking the sarcastic bastard, but still grateful for the change of clothes and rescuing me, even though I don't remember that part.

Kyoya had brought out his laptop and looked him up the second the name was announced. "He's a photographer for sports' articles for several different newspapers."

"Eh?" The twins uttered, confused. "We wouldn't know anyone from *there* ."

"Interesting," Kyoya said, narrowing his eyes at the screen before tapping at his keyboard. After a minute for a report, he came back

with, "His past has been erased. As far as I can tell, this 'Washi Iemochi' doesn't even have a home address."

Now I was thoroughly confused. "But I just came from his apartment. How can that be?"

The twins, Kyoya, and the idiot thought. "Oh!" The idiot sprang from the kotatsu in excitement. "Maybe he's a spy-!"

"No," Kyoya interrupted. "He seems like an intelligent person, he wouldn't just blow his cover talking to Kaoru and Hikaru."

The idiot sank back before popping back up with a new bizarre theory. "Maybe someone's out to get him so he had to change his identity!"

Kyoya, again, shot him down. "They would have at least invented his past instead of leaving it blank, in addition, he wouldn't blow his cover."

After the idiot sat back down we all stared at Hikaru and Kaoru who were mumbling to each other. A minute later, there was a spark in their eyes, and they rested one fist in the other open hand. "Nyoko Eishi," they said together.

"Where'd you come up with that?" I asked.

"He's the only person who called us 'Hitachiin-sou' since he said he didn't want to bother deciphering which one of us was Kaoru or Hikaru."

Yeah, that sounds like him, I thought. "Does that mean he really did take photos of models?"

"Yeah, he even married one of them, but then he disappeared all of a sudden a few years ago."

Kyoya came back with real answers-or, more or less, his history. "Nyoko Eishi. His mother died of an illness when he was three, so

lived with his father, Nyoko Abe, a professional photographer for the modeling industry. He died of cancer twelve years ago, which was when Eishi dropped out of school to pursue photography while also working as a waiter. He found a job with the Hitachiin clothing line, photographing the models, which is where he met his wife, formerly known as Jukodo Yuya. They had a small wedding ten years ago and had a son, Nyoko Senzo, a year later." Kyoya's voice diminished while reading.

"What is it?" Tamaki asked, concerned. We were waiting for whatever piece of information Kyoya was about to reveal to us.

He pushed up his glasses before he looked at us, but I felt he was focusing more on me. "Five years ago, he, his wife and son, were found in their home, stabbed. Only he survived."

There was a pang in my chest. In the car, it seemed as if his wife and son were a touchy subject, so I had assumed that divorce was involved. I hadn't expected him to have gone through all of that.

"The assailant was found dead-she was shoved out of the window from the second floor. According to the police reports, Eishi said-after waking up from the head wound and the shallow stab to the lower abdomen-that one of the models was simply jealous and had assumed that he was being biased. When she was about to stab him again, he grabbed her wrist and just shoved her away from him, not really thinking about where he was pushing her. He was called on self-defense so there wasn't a trial. A quarter of a year later, he left without a trace for over a month and then sold his home with much of the items that were in it. That's when 'Iemochi Washi' started appearing as his main alias. He has at least ten more aliases for other magazines and newspapers."

" *The fact that you got that drunk when you had to walk home in the snow and, to top it all off, while you had a daughter waiting at home. That is what irks me. That is what I don't like about you.*" His words and the fierce hatred in his eyes bit back at me inside my head. I looked at Haruhi and wondered if I would be like him if I had lost her

too; bitter, easily angered, wanting nothing more but to be left alone, but I wouldn't know-thank god I didn't know what it was like. I could only imagine the kind of hell he's been going through these past five years. It made me think of Kotoko, and how I acted right after she had passed. He must have felt at least ten times worse than that.

"Yeah, that sounds about right," the twins said, with a touch of solemn in their voices.

"Mom was frantic when he hadn't shown up after a couple of weeks," one of them said.

"We thought he had just jumped off of a bridge or something," the other continued.

"Mom hadn't told us what had actually happened to Yuya or Senzo," they both finished. They were young, so of course what they were told was heavily sugar-coated.

"Thank you for the information," I said, not loudly, but they had heard me. "I think it's time you all go home."

Strange as it was, they agreed without whining or groaning. They could always see Haruhi at school the next day anyway. I guessed that solemn moments like that just made more awkward silences.

Haruhi looked back at me with an almost worried expression, and asked, "What's wrong Dad?"

I gave her a smile, no matter how weak it was, and hugged her tight. She could struggle and say all the mean things she wanted, but I wouldn't let go for at least a while. After a couple of minutes she gave up and just stayed still.

"It's okay Dad," she whispered. It was almost as if she had known what I had been thinking. To be honest, my mind was so jumbled that not even a psychic would be able to discern from one topic to another. I couldn't even tell if I was thinking words. When I let her go,

much to her relief I bet, she said that she would get started on dinner.

I looked down at my lap and realized I still had his (wife's) clothes. He had kept her clothes, make-up, his ring, photos, and probably as much as he could fit in a room. It was clear to me that he hadn't moved on after all the time that had passed. I felt sad, like the first anniversary of Kotoko's passing. It had been ten years since she died, and I knew I had moved on enough to actually start seeing other people (men), but what was I like after only five years? I couldn't remember. My only focus was seeing that Haruhi was safe, and happy, but it seemed like she had been doing the same for me. I remembered several instances where Haruhi had sacrificed special events at school just so I could rest so I wouldn't get sick. It must have felt like she didn't have a mom or a dad at times. A bit of regret started filling my chest, like I was beginning to drown.

I decided to wash off the make-up, change into my 'manly' clothes, and pray to Kotoko for a while. Maybe she would give me advice in my dreams.

Hilo again! Well, I hope you enjoyed. If not, hopefully the next chapter will be better.

" When you lose someone you love, you die too, and you wait around for your body to catch up." - John Scalzi

Chapter 5

Hilo! Wow this is definitely a record for me. two chapters for the same story two days in a row. Unfortunately I think I won't be able to go for a third. Have a happy turkey day!

" Chemistry can be a good and bad thing. Chemistry is good when you make love with it. Chemistry is bad when you make crack with it." - Adam Sandler

The night wore on longer than I had wanted it to. I didn't really mind the verbal flirting, or the faux-shots, or even the drunken bar fight, which was actually mildly amusing. What made it seem to last so long was that all I had been thinking about during my shift was that Nyoko Eishi guy. I honestly felt sorry for him, and wanted to start over *again*. The only time I didn't think about him was when some wise-ass decided that it was OK to grope me. It was a good thing it was at the very end of my shift, so I could escape before anyone pointed at me for giving him a black eye. He passed out, and probably wouldn't remember a thing when he wakes up, so lucky me.

"God it's cold," I complained to myself.

"Do you want a ride then?" A voice said somewhere behind me.

I was already irritated with the drunks, so I was sure as hell not going to accept a ride from any of them. I turned around to tell the drunkard to go home, but I was startled to see that it was the guy I had been thinking of all night. "What the-!" I exclaimed before I slipped on the icy sidewalk.

He shot out his arm and hooked it around mine so I at least landed softer than I would have. "Scared you?" He chuckled out, keeping his arm still so I could use it to pull myself up.

I forgot about the whole 'starting over' with him and shot him a glare. "No!" I defended.

He raised a brow and 'uh-huhed,' not believing me. "So, you wanna ride or not?"

"Yes I want a ride, but why are you here!" He wasn't a drunkard so it was OK.

"To offer you a ride oh ungrateful one." His sarcasm struck back. "Come on," he said and walked, probably towards his apartment building, leaving me to follow after him.

I focused so much on not slipping again, and not talking to conserve heat, that I bumped into him when he stopped so suddenly. Needless to say, I fell again, and I didn't have an arm to hold on to. When I looked up at him, he had the look that told me he was going to say something sardonic.

"Are you drunk again?" He asked, with obvious mockery glittering in his eyes. He offered his hand again.

Yep, there it was. "You stopped too suddenly," I replied, taking his hand and taking a minute to pat off the snow. Lo and behold, his car was conveniently parked less than fifty feet away from the bar. When we both got in the warm car I asked, "Why did you park here?"

"Because it was too cold while waiting for your shift to end," he said all too casually. "By the way, I do plan to pick you up every morning, at least until spring."

"Aw, so you do care about me?" I asked in a joking tone.

"No, not really. I'm just bringing you home so your daughter has one less thing to worry about."

"I was joking."

"I wasn't." There was a moment of silence, and me glaring at him. "You know that I was joking, right?" He turned the key and started to drive.

"Then act like it damn it!"

"But that wouldn't be any fun for me."

I gave up since I could already see that I was going to lose this one. That was when I noticed that the picture was gone. "Don't tell me you took down the picture just because I said something about it yesterday." I was kind of disappointed because she really was beautiful, and I never got a good look at his son. Senzo, wasn't it? And his wife was Yuya? I wanted to ask her through the picture how she could put up with his attitude.

"No, not because of you, it was just something else." He wasn't going to say anything more about the photo. "So, Hitachiin-sou probably already told you about me, right?"

"Yeah," I said, uncharacteristically sticking to only one word. I didn't want to bring up about his family's death; that would be too much. Unfortunately, he had caught on.

"So they did tell you everything. You don't have to beat around the bush. It's fine. I've accepted it." When we came at a red light, he told me to check the back seat.

"Oh my god, my purse!" I yelled excitedly, snatching it from the back seat. It was scuffed, and there were a few stains, but it looked like everything was intact.

"I don't know if everything is in there since there were only cosmetic supplies."

"Yup, that's everything," I said, still smiling. I was so happy to have it back since I didn't like borrowing anyone's mascara or lipstick, or just anything in general.

"You didn't have a wallet, or a cell phone, or keys in there?"

"No, I keep those in my jacket pocket. It's too risky to keep anything in my purse in this area."

"So I could have dropped you off at your apartment without you even waking up?" He grumbled.

"Yes, but I'm glad you were courteous to not go through my pockets." Even though I looked at him with a smile, trying to be friendly, he turned his head away as far as he could without taking his eyes off the road. "By the way, I'm Fujioka Ryoji, but everyone calls me Ranka."

He looked at the windshield fully again after I finally remembered to introduce myself. "Well you know my real name, and probably only one of my aliases, so you can call me by which ever."

"I'll stick to your real name."

"Fine, but if you happen to be with me and a publisher, or just my bosses in general, you'll have to call me by the given alias. It'll probably never happen, but there's always a chance."

"How many aliases do you have? And why?" I questioned loudly.

"There was hesitation on his part before he told me to give him a minute. He raised and sank his fingers on the steering wheel as he counted in his head. It actually made me worry on the answer I was going to get if he had to actually count. "I presently have twelve aliases."

"Twelve?" I was more than surprised.

"They are the different companies in the newspaper and magazine I work for. If they find out that I'm working for more than one, their business enemies, I'll get fired for conspiracy, so please try and keep it a secret. In addition to having all of those jobs, I get paid more."

"Isn't that fraud?" I accused.

"No, with the publishing business, we're allowed to have an alias, or author names, so if I apply for the job using my real name but put down my alias name, it isn't considered fraud. Besides, our aliases are tossed around more often than our real names that it doesn't seem to matter."

I could not imagine having thirteen names. Two were plenty enough for me. "Don't you ever get mixed up?"

"I usually just mail the pictures, or drop it off to the publisher, but there have been times where I have almost blown my cover, but I always find a way to fix it before any of the bosses suspect anything."

When he said, 'blown my cover,' it made me think of that blundering blond idiot, and how he was actually on to something. "I don't think I would ever be able to handle that."

"Well, if you know how to plan ahead really well, it's pretty easy, but exhausting all the same. I suggest you don't even think about trying."

"I wouldn't ever consider it." There was a short break before I continued. "You're crazy, you know that? You're even risking your reputation as a good photographer."

"Eh, I don't really care for reputation. 'Reputation is what everyone thinks they know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself.' If they find out and my reputation's ruined, oh well. That was my fault and I'll never try it again."

I may have had the genius Kyoya to give me information, but it was definitely obvious that I didn't know about him at all. It was something that would never be read from a computer screen. When we pulled up to the parking space, I offered some tea, and maybe a light breakfast, since it was around four thirty in the morning, but he politely declined, and drove off.

Hilo again. Well, not really eventful, but it relieved a couple hours of my boredom.

"Drink is the curse of the land. It makes you fight with your neighbor. It makes you shoot at your landlord and it makes you miss him ." -
Irish Proverb

Chapter 6

"I'm actually pretty smart, but I act dumb so people expect less out of me."

After only a few days, I was used to him picking me up in his warm car after my shift. I never saw the picture again, and had asked if I could see it again, but he refused to take it out. Stingy. He would also never agree to tea or something to eat when he dropped me off, and I would never see him at any other time of day. He didn't even ask about the clothes, which I was actually hoping he had forgotten about. I thought about going to his place once, to drop off some of Haruhi's cooking, as at least an attempt of a payment for his courtesy, but I changed my mind when I remembered all the little snide remarks he made at me. There were a lot. The man frustrated me more than that idiotic blond dolt, and that's saying something.

It was Saturday, so I decided to watch over Haruhi as she shopped. She refused to wear the cute light blue, slightly ruffled, dress I had gotten for her last week, and just wore her jeans and T-shirt combo. It made me cry on the inside when she didn't dress like a female. She was in the Host Club mess because they all thought she was a guy in the beginning (except Kyoya).

"What are you doing?"

The disembodied voice startled me, and I yelped. Haruhi didn't immediately look over, but I hid myself behind the aisle so Haruhi wouldn't see me anyway. I turned around, getting ready to strangle whoever it was, but it was only Eishi. *What the hell?* "Are you stalking me or something? And why do you always sneak up from behind?" It seemed as if every time I met with him, I became immediately annoyed.

He held up his shopping basket filled with food, tea and cranberry juice. "I was shopping, and I saw you stalking your daughter. As for the second question, I didn't sneak up on you. I just walked up to you and it happened to be from behind." Smart aleck. "You know, it would be less suspicious if you shopped *with* her."

"I know," I half whined, "but she banned me from shopping with her after trying to sneak in a few dresses for her."

There was a pause, and then he snickered behind his free hand.

"Shut up!" I demanded in a harsh whisper. "I only wanted her to look cute."

He raised his brow at me. "What do you mean?" He looked over me to Haruhi which wasn't a difficult task considering that I was at least half a head shorter than him.

"She's a girl, and she never dresses in dresses or skirts. I want her to be more feminine and cute." I didn't care if I sounded like a doting mother. That's what I mainly was anyway.

"Just let her dress how she wants. There's nothing wrong with it."

"But I want her to look cuter."

He raised his brow at me. "You mean you want other men to think she's cute too?"

I couldn't respond. He had ignited an argument between the doting mother and the protective father side in my head. I couldn't decide.

"Or maybe you don't want her to be like you?"

That was it. He had crossed the line with me. I was about to deck the guy right in the teeth, but I was interrupted.

"Excuse me, ma'am?" One of the employees of the store came cautiously. Maybe it was Eishi and my argument, or maybe it was the

expression on my face while I was struggling with my frustration.

"Yes," I said, more harshly than I had meant.

"You're lactating."

That question turned around my attitude to complete confusion. "... What?" I knew I heard the term before, but I couldn't remember when I heard it. Or what it meant.

"Ops," Eishi said. "I'm so sorry you had to see that, and thank you for pointing it out. She's been stressed lately." He placed his jacket over my shoulders, with a smile that I knew was fake. "We'll just pay for these and hurry on home." He then hooked my arm around his and started pulling me along. "Come on hun."

I played along, but when we got to the register, and after he paid for his groceries, I hissed, "What is wrong with you? When did I become your wife?"

"When your boob popped, and I didn't want to be seen arguing with a tranny," he said rather too bluntly, and headed to his car with the bags of groceries in his arms.

I inconspicuously looked at my chest to see a wet spot that was growing rapidly on one side. To hide further embarrassment, I took his jacket and wrapped it tighter around myself, and hurried after him. "Can you drive me home?" I hated myself for asking him, but I couldn't walk home with a first and third place chest. Not to mention the water was freezing my real chest. For now, I would forget about the tranny comments.

"Yeah, sure. I need the clothes back anyway."

Shoot. "What clothes?" I got in the passenger side, and put on the seat belt, just as he had sat next to me. I knew what he was talking about, but I just didn't want to give them back.

Eishi looked annoyed. "The clothes I let you borrow last week." He started the car and drove out of the parking lot.

I whined, "Can't I just keep them as a gift from a friend? I can get Haruhi to cook you a meal, or I could make some tea." There was my attempt at bribery. Pathetic, but it was all I had. I'm not rich.

"No." Shot down with one word. "I don't care if you haven't washed them, you can't keep the clothes any longer." Darn. There went my excuse to keep that cute sweater and skirt longer. "They don't fit you anyway."

That was overkill. "You just love putting me down don't you?" It was a rhetorical question, so I didn't want an answer, but he took me seriously.

"No, you're just really easy to mess with." I wanted to smack him, and I would have if he hadn't have been the one driving.

"I hate you so much." I didn't even spare him a glare.

"Don't say what you don't mean."

"I do mean it!"

"Ah. What a shame. I don't," he said in a monotonous droll.

"You're joking, right?" I could never tell when he was joking. His expression hadn't changed, but I felt that he could have meant what he said. Or not. I gave up trying to decipher his seriousness from witticism. Just to be a jerk, he didn't answer, and I could tell he was being a jerk because he had a sly grin on his face. "You're a jerk," I stated.

"Would a jerk lend you his jacket and give you a ride home?" Stupid word twister.

"Shut it."

A little bout of chucking escaped his throat, but he didn't try too hard to keep it down. Considering how serious he was the first time I had met him, I was glad he just didn't bottle it. I even saw teeth, so that was good too.

When we arrived at the apartment, I gave him back his jacket, and went to my room to change back into a man. I gathered his clothes and put them in a bag, and prepared to part with them. When I went out to the family room, he wasn't there, and after a bit of searching, I saw him in front of Kotoko's shrine with his hands in his lap and his eyes closed. He was praying with a face full of strong remorse. Just for that moment, I couldn't be mad at him.

"While taking a routine vandalism report at an elementary school, I was interrupted by a little girl about six years old. Looking up and down at my uniform, she asked, 'Are you a cop?' 'Yes,' I answered and continued writing the report. 'My mother said if I ever needed help I should ask the police. Is that right?' 'Yes, that's right,' I told her. 'Well, then,' she said as she extended her foot toward me, 'would you please tie my shoe?'"

Chapter 7

Yeah, it's been a while, but I'm not going to apologize. Just enjoy what you can, while you can.

"A blind guy on a bar stool shouts to the bartender, 'Wanna hear a blond joke?' In a hushed voice, the guy next to him says, 'Before you tell that joke, you should know something. Our bartender IS blond, the bouncer is blond. I'm a six foot tall 200 pound black belt. The guy sitting next to me is six-two, weighs 225 pounds and he's a rugby player. The fella to your right is six-five, pushing 300 pounds and he's a wrestler. Each one of us is blond. Think about it, Mister. Do you still wanna tell that joke?' The blind guy says, 'Nah, not if I'm gonna have to explain it five times.'"

"Your daughter looks a lot like her," Eishi commented. Despite the many times he had rejected my offers before, he changed his mind about the tea today. I didn't mind.

"Kotoko, her name; and yes, Haruhi looks more and more like her everyday." Our conversation was more than awkward. What were we supposed to talk about? He was basically my chauffeur for free, and it wasn't as if we had made any effort to be more than just acquaintances. Well he hadn't at least. It wasn't as if it was hard talking about my late wife or my daughter, but I wondered how he felt talking about them.

There was a few long minutes of silence. "You know, now that I look at you, you're not bad looking for a man," he said as he took a small sip of his tea.

"Really?" His praise lifted my mood immediately, and I was glad for the change of subject.

"Yeah... . If you brushed out your rat's nest, got proper sleep, and actually exercised more, you wouldn't look like a starving homeless person."

"You're trying to piss me off on purpose, aren't you?"

"Are you pissed off?" He asked, taking a small sip of tea after words.

"Yes."

"Then yes. I was trying to piss you off on purpose."

What was with this guy? Did making fun of people make him feel better? "I have no idea what your wife saw in you." I didn't mean to say that; it slipped, but he didn't seem to mind.

Without skipping a beat, he replied, "Neither did her father."

He didn't treat his own father-in-law like that, did he? I could only imagine what kind of arguments they had. Kotoko's father didn't like me much either, but it had nothing to do with my attitude.

Just then, his cell phone started ringing from his jacket pocket, in which he took his time answering. Knowing him, he was probably trying to piss whoever was on the other end. "Hello." He made his voice sound exhausted, as if he had just woken up. "I already sent in the photos... . Yes, I'm sure... . Musaki, I have a schedule, and I usually keep to it. I sent in the photos by mail and e-mail, you should have gotten them this morning... . Check in your pile of mail that you never sort through. You'll probably find more envelopes with my photographs you claimed to have misplaced... . I don't like walking in the office just to drop off photographs, I have a life of my own you know... . Shut up... . Musaki, I can't keep making copies for you. If you lost those photographs, and I don't see them in the magazine on Monday, I quit." With that, he hung up and stuffed his phone back in his pocket.

So he was harsh with other people. Good. I thought it was just me.

As I was about to ask about the phone call, the door burst open, revealing an irritated daughter.

"Haruhi, you're finally home!" I got up and gave her a hug around the bags of groceries. Something caught my eye at the door, and saw the idiot Tamaki Suoh. "What are you doing here!" I growled, pointing an accusatory finger at him. It was as if he was around Haruhi every waking moment! Before I could sock him across the jaw, I recognized the other members and changed my mind. Well, at least Haruhi wasn't alone with him. While Haruhi put the bags of groceries, the club came in to sit down with us.

"Nyoko!" The twins exclaimed, eyeing my guest. They charged at him, barely giving him time to set his cup down on the low table. They were on both sides of him, holding on to his shoulders, and glaring at him, waiting for some sort of explanation for his hasty retreat with barely a goodbye. Hani and Tamaki seemed surprised to see him again.

"Long time no see Hitachiin-sou," Eishi said, as if that was an OK response. He was pretending as if he hadn't done anything wrong.

It wasn't an OK response for either of the twins. "Where have you been?" They yelled.

When it was apparent that the twins weren't going to do anything drastic, he took back his cup. "Home. Working," He muttered, in between sips.

"We know where you live, and you weren't there." They let go of him and maneuvered around him to look at him square in the eyes.

"Then I was around town."

The twins grunted in frustration. His answers were too simple. "Call Mom. Tell her you want your old job back." They handed him one of their cell phones.

"No," Eishi deadpanned.

"Why not? Working for magazines and newspapers can't be that great, can it?"

"Not in particular, no." Eishi wasn't about to tell them anything. He definitely didn't want his old job back either.

The twins were getting sorely annoyed. Their expressions were evident enough.

"Did you tell your mother that I'm alive?"

"Yes," said one of the twins.

"And she's furious at you for just taking off. She was convinced that you had committed suicide," explained the other.

"Ah. Well, as you can see, I have not resorted to that, so you can tell her that she can stay mad at me for all I care."

He was even rude to his superiors. How in the world was he able to keep his job as a model photographer, or any job at all?

The twins picked up their phone and pressed a button.

"Who are you calling?" Eishi asked. For the first time that I've seen, he looked wary.

"Mom," the twins answered.

"What? No! Hang up!" He set his tea down and tried reaching for the cell phone, but the twins escaped to the other side of the table, and just then, the twins were sharing the phone with it on speaker.

"Hey, Mom. We found Nyoko, wanna talk to him?"

Their Cheshire grins appeared when their mother started screaming, "Yes, of course I want to talk to him! Put him on! Put him on!" She

sounded excited, but angry. Good. Maybe she will give him a lesson in manners.

Eishi's POV

It was inevitable that I would talk to my old boss, but I wasn't quite ready for it. I should have just dropped Ryoji off and left like I normally did. Curiosity really was a cursed thing.

I snatched the phone from the diabolical duo and went outside to talk. It didn't matter if they could overhear my end of the conversation, but I didn't want to talk to her in front of them.

"Hello Hitachiin-chama," I greeted cautiously. When I had worked for her, she wanted respect all the while to feel younger, hence the combination of "-sama" and "-chan" in the honorific. I was hoping it would earn me enough point so that she wouldn't chew me out as much. She would definitely still chew me out with or without the honorific.

"Where have you been?" She growled. I was almost positive that the eavesdroppers could actually hear her. She then proceeded to screech at me of how worried she was, but when she demanded that I come back to work, I couldn't take it. So I hung up on her.

The look on the twin's faces were priceless-if only I had my camera. "Tell her that when she's calmed down enough will I actually hold a conversation with her." I decided leaving would be best. If the twins didn't call her back within the minute, she would probably try and track me down. My apartment was one place, but I could always just stay over at a coworker's place, saying that my ex-girlfriend was after me .

"Paddy Englishman, Paddy Irishman, and Paddy Scotsman all went to a hotel. 'There's only one room left, and it's on the top floor which is 90 floors up, but the lift is broken so you'll have to take the stairs,'

said the secretary. They took the room and went up the stairs. When they got to the 30th floor, Paddy Englishman told a really sad story! A little while later when they got to the 60th floor, Paddy Scotsman told an even sadder story! And finally, when they reached the top floor, Paddy Irishman told the saddest story ever!... . 'I've left the keys on the front counter.'"