

It was easy, but it wasn't fair.

Von Makikolgami

It was easy to be fully in love when he was alone with Barnaby. It was nice, too, as long as they were in the blond's apartment and he didn't have his dead wife's and family's pictures staring at him, Kotetsu decided.

It was easy to let go of everything and be selfishly in love with his partner, who was so much younger and had so much love to give that Kotetsu could only gladly return, because Barnaby was such a good boy that he deserved to be loved with the most heartfelt sincerity.

It was easy as long there were no strings attached, as long as it was just the two of them.

It wasn't fair that Kotetsu kept postponing a meeting of Barnaby with his family, because he knew that the blond deserved to be welcomed with open arms as a lover and not just the greatest partner Kotetsu could ever have.

It wasn't fair that Kotetsu felt guilty about all of this, but still saw no other way to go about this.

But most of all it wasn't fair that deep down inside Kotetsu hoped that one day Barnaby would decide that somebody else was worthy of his love, that he wanted a family of his own, an offspring, maybe an adorable daughter just like Kaede was. That he hoped Barnaby would eventually abandon him and leave him with a broken heart, because then he would be his old self. Kotetsu had grieved for such a long time in his life that he almost didn't know anymore how to be happy and that he thought he didn't deserve to be happy at all.

And then there was the fact that Barnaby was a man.

Not that Kotetsu had a problem with the mere fact of two men were lovers, no, it was the fact that his lover was male and that he wasn't the dominant part.

It was easy to ignore his male pride as long as they were alone together, because Barnaby was gentle, he was warm and despite his earlier coldness the best lover that Kotetsu could imagine - after his wife of course.

Never once did Barnaby raise his voice at him for not returning the dishes to the kitchen or not getting the garbage out, no, the blond usually saw to these things himself and only with one glance Kotetsu felt guilty for not doing these things and vowed to do them next time, but sometimes forgot them anyway. And still Barnaby wouldn't chide him, but tidy up after him. He was such an angel sometimes that if he knew about it, he could make Keith jealous. If that boy knew what jealousy was.

Forgotten all the fights that they had when they started out as partners, forgotten all the pain and distrust that they went through at first. It was replaced with a thick fundament of mutual trust, gratefulness and appreciation. Sometimes, when Kotetsu was alone and closed his eyes, he could almost picture what Barnaby was doing right at that moment and he smiled a little, but only to himself.

Kotetsu decided that Bunny deserved better. He stared at the glass of untouched Bourbon in his hands, the ice in it breaking in two with a clunk when he set it down. He had to do it now, before his courage left him. Even if it meant driving out to Oriental Town all through the night, but this was important.

On his way down to his car, he took out his cell phone and called Barnaby to tell him that they were going out right now, no backtalk, this was important and that he was going to be there in a few minutes to pick him up. Fortunately, Barnaby proved to be cooperative and was there at the door with a small bag packed and only gave him a curious look as he climbed into the car.

"Is everything alright, Kotetsu?" the blond asked, mildly worried by the suddenness of all of this.

"Yeah, yeah, everything's fine, just get in and close the door behind you okay?"

Barnaby did as he was told without asking anymore questions and they took off, with Kotetsu driving all the way to Oriental Town in silence. He couldn't talk, because in his head he kept rewording what he wanted to say when he had arrived at their destination and practiced it over and over and was so occupied with it that even if he had wanted to, he wouldn't have been able to speak. Thankfully Barnaby decided to stay silent as well, even though his raised eyebrows and the occasionally opening mouth were signs that he was actually dying to know what was going to happen, where they were going and what was going on in general. But after a while, when he realized that this would take longer than he had anticipated, he just sighed deeply and closed his eyes, trying to nap until they arrived.

A few hours later, Kotetsu stopped the car in front of Oriental Town's cemetery and sighed as he killed the engine. By then, it was almost morning and the first birds were up and singing. Nobody was on the streets, but it was way too early for people to be anyway. So that was fine. It also meant that they would be completely alone for what Kotetsu had planned.

By then, Barnaby was fast asleep and breathing deeply in the passenger's seat, glasses a little askew, his mouth slightly open. A small frown knitted his brows, most likely from the change of environment as Kotetsu reached over to brush some curls

away from the other's sleeping face. He wondered, maybe for the millionth time, how a man was able to look so pretty without being such a femme like Nathan.

Barnaby stirred and turned over to Kotetsu, giving him his usual sleepy face, a deep frown that showed just how much he loathed being woken up from slumber. "Kotetsu-san... Are we there yet?" he grumbled, trying to stretch, but Kotetsu was still brushing his curls away as if he was obsessed with his hair all of a sudden. "Kotetsu-...san?"

He didn't receive an answer, even though Kotetsu contemplated giving him one of his usual replies, but then decided to go and kiss him deeply; Bunny deserved none of his evasive retorts anymore. He could feel the other stiffen in surprise for a split-second, but then decided to give in and he raised his hand to the back of Kotetsu's head, holding him close until they ran out of breath.

"Bunny, I'm sorry," Kotetsu murmured when they broke apart. He leaned in for another quick kiss to the blond's forehead before he turned around and climbed out of the car.

"Kotetsu-san? What's... what's this all about?" Barnaby asked as he adjusted his glasses and stepped out of the car as well, a little drowsy still. He stretched and yawned, but Kotetsu took his hand quickly and pulled him towards the cemetery, the other hand holding his hat in place so that nobody could see his bright red face. The blond stumbled over his own feet and the uneven ground beneath him, and Kotetsu could just feel that he wanted to ask what they were doing there, but then - after a few turns left and one right - they arrived at their destination and just as abruptly as he had to get up, Kotetsu stopped walking and fell to his knees.

"Kotetsu, where are we," Barnaby started, yawned and adjusted his glasses, just to look at the gravestone. "...Oh."

Folding his hands, Kotetsu closed his eyes and spoke out loud, despite his usual proceedings. "Tomoe... It's been a long time since I last visited, I'm sorry. Forgive me, but in my mind, you're always with me because I have this," he said, shaking his hands slightly to show his by now dull wedding band to the world. Besides him, Barnaby was still standing, but he was silent and observing.

"A lot of things have happened, actually. I've... I've found somebody who foolishly fell in love with me, an old grieving widower," he continued, still having his eyes closed so he wouldn't have to see Barnaby's pitiful and half-annoyed look.

"Kotetsu-san-" he could hear him start, but he paid the blond no mind.

"And... I love him, too," he confessed. A small clicking sound indicated that Barnaby's mouth snapped shut at this. "But he's still young, he deserves so much more than I am. He deserves to have so much happiness and I know there are things that I cannot give to him. I am and will never be able to make him as happy as you made me."

The words hurt and it felt like somebody put a hand around his heart and squeezed, pulled and his own words suffocated him. At the same time, hot tears shot into his

eyes and he had to squeeze his eyes shut further to keep on talking.

"Tomoe, I love you. And... I love him, too. But how can I be happy with somebody else but you? Nobody can ever replace you and I... I miss you. I miss you so bad... And being together with him is just a reminder of what we had and what we weren't allowed to keep. How..." he said, and then his voice broke as tears started streaming down his face, "how can I be happy, how can I make him happy if missing you hurts that much, even after all these years?"

"Kotetsu..." Barnaby said silently and knelt down beside him as Kotetsu started to sob, his shoulders shaking from the emotions washing over him. He held his hands together, took a deep breath and then started talking calmly.

"Mrs. Kaburagi... I apologize for intruding so suddenly, but I am the man who has fallen in love with your husband. I... I apologize for the trouble that causes you. It is beyond my intentions to cause him pain, to take him away from you or make him unhappy. No, my goal is it to see him happy and smiling because his presence makes me feel at home and relax. I do not think I could ever live without him again. It pains me to see in what kind of turmoil he seems to be from just being together with me. I apologize for that," he said with full earnesty, even though he was talking to thin, cold morning air.

"Tomoe-san, I... if it hurts him so much to be together with me I shall keep away from him, but I know that this would hurt him too, that he wouldn't be happy to isolate himself from his feelings. In fact, I think he is just trying to shut himself off because he's afraid of getting hurt ever since you were taken from him. Please, let me help him heal his wounds so that he can remember you without that pang of pain that he seems to feel every time."

"Tomoe... Tomoe, I..."

"Kotetsu-san, please." Barnaby said and put a hand on his shoulder. The man opened his eyes just to look at the blond's bright green eyes full of concern, worry and pain. "Please... I know you're hurt, but you don't have to punish yourself. From what I know you've lived in misery for long than enough... I love you. I will always love you because you were the one who saved me from myself and my past. So please... let me be the one who saves you from yourself."

"Bunny, I don't... I don't... I don't think I deserve you... and you certainly deserve more than me," Kotetsu shook his head, cheeks tear-stained although the flow of new tears had stopped.

Shifting where he knelt, Barnaby wrapped his arms around his still quivering shoulders and pulled him into a hug. "I do not want anybody else but you. I love you. Only you. Because you're you, with all your flaws and bad habits and all the pain that you carry around with yourself. Please... you helped me so much, now please let me help you. I... I do not want to replace your wife. I don't want you to be miserable. I don't care what people think, I will always want you. So please... allow me to love you."

"But you should have a family! You should marry, you should be a father, because being a father is the greatest thing you can be-"

"I know. But I want to be with you. I don't care about being a father if I can be part of your family," Barnaby protested softly, tightening his arms around the brunet.

Kotetsu's heart tightened again. "...I don't know if I can allow that."

"You can. Because I am with you. Maybe I can be a great uncle once Kaede is old enough to have kids of her own," Barnaby offered and pressed a kiss on top of the brown mop of hair.

"...Not anytime soon," Kotetsu growled and tightened his own hold on the other's back. Then he took a deep breath and as he exhaled, he let go of some of his tension. "Bunny, I want to let you love me, I want to enjoy this, but what about the public? Even if you don't care I am not sure if the company-"

"I'll make them adjust," Barnaby interrupted.

"Bunny, this is too big a thing, it's not something you can just... brush away with a smile."

"Trust me, I can," the blond insisted and pushed him away at arm's length. "If Nathan can own a major company and be a hero at the same time, it will be easy for me to convince the world that loving the greatest man in the world is no crime, even as a man."

"...are you talking about yourself?"

"No, I'm talking about you, stupid. You are the greatest man that I know, because you never really take things for granted," the blond denied and shook his head.

"Ah... about that..." the older man started, sheepishly because he felt like taking things for granted was basically what he was doing most of the time.

"You are a hero through and through and I never realized that I needed a hero until I met you. You are my pillar, my island of security. I need you in my life or I feel like I will go insane. So please... whatever you do, please don't even think about leaving me because you think it'd be better for me. Because that is not what I want," Barnaby explained firmly, making Kotetsu duck his head in defeat.

"I guess I can't argue with that," Kotetsu sighed and hung his head in defeat. Suddenly, all the tension that had kept him awake left him and he slumped into Barnaby's arms. "I... I guess I need some sleep... Could you... could you take the car to my brother's shop? He'll tell you how to get to my mom's house."

"It's been a long night," Barnaby nodded and moved to stand up, just to hesitate when Kotetsu mentioned his family. "Are you sure it'll be okay to meet them?"

Snorting, Kotetsu replied, "What, you just wanted to shout out to the world it's okay to love the greatest man in the world, but meeting his family makes you awkward?"

"Th-that's not it!" Barnaby protested weakly. "It's just... it's just you hesitated so long to introduce us, to even tell me about them that it feels like I'm pushing myself onto them. I... I don't want to end up being hated."

"Nah, they'll love you. You don't have any of my flaws, so it should be no problem at all," Kotetsu smiled. "I promise."

Barnaby looked at him for a long time before he sighed. Then he asked quietly, "...What about your wife?"

"Tomoe? Oh, she'd've loved you, too. I'm afraid I'd've been terribly jealous should you two ever have met, actually!"

"That's not true... I don't think she could have fallen in love with me, because she had you. Because like it or not, you are that special," Barnaby explained and leaned down to kiss Kotetsu's forehead quickly before he scooped him up into his arms to carry him back to the car, bridal style. "Though I don't think I'd've minded a threesome."

Kotetsu was almost too tired to respond, but that last bit made him start and sit up.

"What did you say?!"

In the end, it was so easy to introduce Barnaby as his lover that Kotetsu thought they had known all along, probably even before him. That wasn't fair!