

It was some sort of celebration, though for what, Shou wasn't quite sure. Osora had been interested in going, though, so that's how he found himself at a Junior High School at five in the afternoon, with the girl he considered his best friend. Looking around at the various activities and stalls full of food, Shou had to admit that he could see the appeal in something like this.

"I've never been to one of these...festivals before. What are we supposed to do first?" When he finally spoke, he had to repeat himself, the volume he was used to using not quite enough to carry over the sounds of people around the two.

Osora looked back at Shou, slowing to walk next to him instead of leading the way like she had been. "You've never been to a school held festival at all, or you've never been to a Mahō Festival?"

The slight disbelief in her tone made Shou feel like his answer of "Both?" was something strange. "My parents weren't too big on this kind of extracurricular thing." He said, rubbing the back of his neck with one hand, while the other waved in a vague gesture.

Osora let out a wordless huff, that only served to confuse Shou even more, before scanning the event surrounding them. After nothing more than a quick moment, her eyes lit up slightly in a way that carried to the rest of her face, cutting through her usual almost emotionless mask. Shou had been noticing that more and more, the change in expressions. He had seen it that night he had had dinner with her and her family, and he saw it when they were around their friends. It was the closest thing to a normal smile he had seen on her face.

"Here we go." Osora linked her arm through his, a move that was slightly startling to the boy, but paid the shock playing out on his face no attention as she tugged him in the direction of one of the games that had been set up. "Toy scooping. Maki lives for this one."

Shou pictured the twelve year old boy, Osora's younger brother, and nodded. It was easy to believe, putting together what Osora had told him about her brother, and what he had learned from meeting him. "How does it work?"

Shou listened as Osora went over the basics of the game, from the poi, the little bowl used to scoop up the floating prizes, to the prizes themselves. That light expression never left her face, and Shou found his eyes lingering for an extra moment on her face, before he turned his gaze to the pool full of floating toys in front of them.

A few minutes later found Shou with a poi in one hand and a bowl in the other, watching as Osora fished out multiple small dolls with an ease that came from practice. Hesitantly, he dipped the poi into the water, watching as the paper of the bowl softened immediately. "It's supposed to do that?"

"Uh huh. That's the point of the game. It makes it harder to lift the dolls into your bowl." Osora explained, not too bothered by having to repeat the information. She muttered a curse as the paper of her bowl finally broke, wrinkling her nose just slightly. The not-so-disappointed disappointment eased as her eyes moved from the broken net, to the prizes in her bowl. "Maki's going to be ecstatic. Come on, Queen Bee, let's see your skills."

Rolling his eyes at the nickname, Shou looked back down at his poi, some part of him already well aware that it would break as soon as he moved. And he was right. Shaking his head, he was interrupted by Osora before he could even speak, as she handed him another.

"You had it sitting in there for a while." She said, by way of explanation. Confusion. That was the emotion Shou seemed to default to when he was with her. He wasn't sure why, but it happened enough for him to take note of the feelings. They weren't unwelcome, just odd.

It took some work, and, admittedly, a third poi, but Shou finally managed to pull a small and blue toy that took on the characteristics of some alien he vaguely recognized. Scratch, or something along those lines, though he wasn't entirely sure. The huffed breath of air that passed for a laugh from Osora made it obvious she knew who the character was, though.

"Let me guess, you've never seen the movie Lilo and Stitch, either?" A slight shake of his head was all Osora needed to sigh. "All that anime, and you can't spare time for Disney. Movie night, then, with the others. Want to stick it in my bag, so you can free your hands?"

Shou nodded, studying the toy for another moment before dropping it into the black drawstring bag Osora was holding open. Her own had already been dried off and tucked in as well.

"Food or more games? I think the fireworks aren't for another hour or so, so we have plenty of time."

“Fireworks?” Osora’s nod, and the sparkle that returned to her eyes, drew a ‘huh’ from Shou. “Food, then more games. I’d be willing to bet two-thousand yen that you were too busy to eat dinner.”

Osora opened her mouth to deny that, pausing, before closing it again. She made a face at him, or as much as she seemed capable of doing, before speaking. “I hate how you do that. Yeah, I didn’t eat. I was working on this move Asaka showed me.”

Shaking his head, Shou followed Osora as she led the way through the throngs of people, hooking her thumbs through the belt loops of her shorts for somewhere to put her hands. He listened as she talked more about the move, and the training Asaka had been putting her through. He chimed in with the occasional remark about their sensei, noting the flickers of amusement passing over Osora’s face.

It was like Osora had some sixth sense when it came to finding anywhere that sold Kara-age, Shou noted, as his friend came to a stop at a food stall. He knew it was a favorite food of hers, but he had never really noticed just *how* much of a favorite. Five minutes and a quick argument about who was paying, with Shou insisting he pay and Osora shutting him down without much room to actually argue, they each had their food, and found a quieter place out of the way to sit down and eat.

Osora plopped down onto the ground near the tree without issue, though Shou was a bit hesitant when he followed. The joy with which Osora ate the chicken was admittedly just a tad bit endearing and amusing at the same time, and it brought a small smile to his face as he started on his own.

“Did Nakamura really crash another car on your guys’ mission last week?” Shou asked, after a few minutes of comfortable quiet and eating. The question drew a snort from Osora, and his eyes flickered up to her face for a moment.

“You should’ve seen it. She wrapped us right around a stop sign while we were chasing that car thief. Her exact words, once the ringing in her ears had stopped, were-” She set aside her food, straightening to mimic Reeha’s usual slightly stiff posture. “*At least this one was a rental.*”

Shou let out a snort, that quickly turned to snickering as he shook his head. Nakamura Reeha had the worst track record with ground vehicles he had ever come into contact with. She was brilliant, but arguably the worst driver in Japan. “Better than when she

crashed her father's car into the side of that bank."

"And yet, she somehow managed to directly hit the bank robber."

Falling into conversation about their friends and mishaps they both found amusing, time passed quickly. They finished eating, continued to talk and play more games, and watched a short play put on by a group of students from the school. It was refreshing, being able to focus on things other than the impending issues they would face, something other than the darker parts of the hero-training nobody liked to talk about. Shou had Osora to thank for that, her and her uncanny ability to know just how to distract her friends.

The sun eventually disappeared completely as time passed without Shou really noticing it's passing. He only really noticed it was dark when Osora grabbed his hand without much thought, tugging him towards the school building. He watched as she fished a key from her pocket, leading the way into the building and up to the top floor. As she came to a stop at a door, the key finally made some sense, when she unlocked it and held the door for him with a wink.

"After you, m'lord."

He never quite got tired of the friendly teasing. Huffing out a laugh, he bowed quickly, before stepping out onto the roof. Osora shut the door quietly behind him, a slight lightness to her step as she made her way to the edge, looking down at the people still milling about, and the glow of the various lights and paper lanterns.

A soft breeze blew by, sending a chill through Shou's bones that didn't seem to bother Osora at all. She had mentioned being used to the cold, a development that came with her need to wear as little fabric and clothing as she could, in case of an emergency.

"Watch the sky." Her voice drew Shou out of his thoughts, and he blinked upon finding her gaze not on the festival below, but on him, an eyebrow arched slightly. Furrowing his brows, he did as instructed.

Nothing happened. For three minutes, he watched the dark and star-filled night sky, a sort of rare sight in December, for some sort of...something. Just as he opened his mouth to comment on the lack of literally anything, a boom sounded, followed by a spray of color lighting up the sky, and leaving a sort of warmth and child-like excitement in Shou's chest. This seemed to be the trigger for the other fireworks, as they soon

followed the first.

Shou shifted closer to Osora as he watched the sky with widened eyes and a grin, his hands shoved into the pockets of his leather jacket for warmth. "It's amazing." He whispered, voice filled with the same child-like awe that had stuck on his face.

"I know." Osora answered in a voice not quite as soft, but still quiet, as though she was trying not to ruin the excitement crackling through the air. Shou glanced down at her for a moment, his gaze catching and lingering on her face.

In the flashes of light from the fireworks, her face was illuminated, revealing the small smile playing on her lips. An actual smile, Shou noted, not the one she wielded like a weapon during a fight. The red of her eyes was soft and sparkled happily as she watched the fireworks, and Shou found himself wishing he could take a picture. She looked so much softer in that moment than he'd ever seen her before.

He wasn't sure if she noticed his eyes on her, or was just looking to him to see his reaction, but her eyes met his, the sparkle staying in place. "Did I manage to get you to have fun?"

It was such a weird question, as though she couldn't tell this was possibly the most fun day he'd ever had. He laughed anyway, nodding. "You did. I have to say, though, the fireworks have been the best part."

"They always are." She bumped her shoulder into his, staying there instead of pulling away, and Shou felt the warmth in his chest flutter just slightly. It was sort of hard, pulling his eyes away from his friend, but he managed, turning them back to the sky as he leaned into her just slightly in return.

The confusion had faded just enough to give him a moment of clarity, something he hadn't expected, and wasn't at all sure how to react to. His feelings for Osora had changed, from something purely friendly, to something even more confusing. And he had no clue what to do about that, but sit here and watch the fireworks with her. He could deal with that later.