

# Chapter One

It's a bright and early morning. I stretch my arms as wide as I can as my mouth expands like a balloon to let out a rather long yawn. I rub my eyes with my hands balled up into fists before moisturizing the inside of my mouth with the surface of my tongue. I lazily glance over at my alarm clock.

"Oh crap! I'm late!" I say, panicked.

I hastily brush my teeth and put my clothes on before grabbing the banner me and Yuri made for the festival. I quickly rush out the door and start bolting towards the school down the sidewalk before abruptly stopping. I turn my head backwards to look at Sayori's house. I think for a moment about what she said yesterday. Thinking about her sharp words hit me like a brick to the forehead.

"No. No! I can't leave Sayori behind. I have to check on her." I say to myself.

I don't care how late to school I am. Sayori is going through a lot right now. The least I can do is walk with her to school. I march back towards her house and swing open the gate. I turn the doorknob and it unsurprisingly opens as effortlessly as usual.

"Typical Sayori. Always leaving your door unlocked." I mutter to myself.

I slowly make my way up the stairs and raise my fist to knock on the door, but I hesitate for a moment. I stop myself and shake my head.

"Screw this." I think.

I gently open the door.

I suppress the urge to scream. I stare in horrifying shock at Sayori. But that's the last thing I remember, because after that, everything just went black.

## Chapter Two

A sad looking Sayori stares at me as I lay in the hospital bed. She glances over at me and realizes my eyelids slowly lifting themselves up.

“Sayori? What...what happened?”

“You fainted when you walked in my room. I think you must’ve had a seizure or something.”

“I don’t think it was a seizure. I thought I was supposed to smell toast?”

Sayori giggles.

“That’s a stroke, silly.”

“Oh...right. I honestly don’t remember what happened.”

Just then a nurse walked in and asked if I was feeling better upon noticing that I was awake.

“Yeah. Yeah I’m fine. I don’t know what happened.”

“Do you remember anything?”

“I remember everything except the moment right before I fainted.”

“Well you’ve been in here for about three days now. I think your friends and teachers were getting worried, so we sent some police to the house where they found you and that girl.” the nurse replied.

“So am I good to go?” I ask.

“We have to do a few psychiatric evaluations first, but then you should be on your way.”

“Okay.” I say with disappointment.

“So...” Sayori said casually.

“So.” I say back.

We both chuckle to ourselves before gazing into each other’s eyes. I’ll never get tired of that ocean blue sparkle I see whenever she looks at me.

We’re left alone for a few minutes before we finally do the tests and I’m allowed to leave. But when I do, I realize I’m way too exhausted to do anything. Even after all that rest, I still have sleep deprivation.

Me and Sayori chat as we walk to my house.

“So that was weird.” I say.

“Yeah...I wonder what happened.” Sayori says.

“Maybe I fainted because I’m so sleep deprived.” I joke.

“Well if you would stop staying up on your phone all night.” she teased.

“Hey c’mon! It’s not all night. I get an hour of sleep before school.”

“Ehehe. C’mon, you know that’s not enough.” she says.

“I know. But I just can’t help myself. You get sucked into it, you know?”

“Yeah I get it. But you gotta control yourself sometimes, too. Otherwise...well...this happens!” she explains.

There’s a brief moment of silence.

“So, did I miss anything at school?” I ask.

“I don’t know. I haven’t been going.” she informs me.

“Huh? Why not?” I ask with concern.

“I just...was worried about you...” she says shyly.

“Sayori! You can’t just skip school! I’ll be fine. Don’t worry about me.”

“Hmmpf.” she grumbles.

“Listen, I really appreciate it. But that doesn’t mean you need to sacrifice your own time for me. You have to go to school, Sayori!”

“Well...I tried going to school, but I was so worried about you being in the hospital that I couldn’t think straight. I was getting distracted in class and I couldn’t focus at all.”

I notice Sayori looking almost horrified at her own words as she spoke.

“Woah! Sayori! You alright?”

She shakes her head.

“No...no I’m alright. I was just...thinking about what happened.” she said with a sad sigh.

“I’m alright, Sayori. It was just a little sleep deprivation. It’s not a big deal.”

“I meant what I was thinking about when I couldn’t focus in school. I was thinking about all the possibilities of what could happen.”

“Sayori...” I sigh.

I see a bench on the side of the sidewalk and decide to sit down and watch the sunset. Sayori notices me and follows suit. We don’t say a word for a while and instead just stare in awe at the beauty of nature.

“It’s so beautiful, isn’t it?” Sayori says.

“It is.” I respond, “It really is.”

“It’s funny how something can be so gorgeous as it’s disappearing. You only really appreciate the beauty of it when it’s going away.” she tells me.

I don’t respond. Silence fills the atmosphere once more.

“What do you think...?” Sayori asks.

“About what?”

“I don’t know. Just anything I guess. What’s on your mind?” she asks.

“Gotta give me two pennies first.” I tell her smugly.

“Isn’t it a penny for your thoughts?” she asks in confusion.

“Yeah, but I’m giving you my two cents. You’re not gonna scam me, missy.”

Sayori chuckles and playfully shoves me.

“You’re stupid.” she giggles.

Sayori rests her head on my shoulder. I blush as I feel her hair tickle my neck. It’s amazing how something so simple can remind me of how much I love Sayori. Thoughts race through my head of all the things I want to say, but I decide that it’s better to just let things happen.

“Sayori?” I say after a while.

“Uh-Huh?” she asks quietly

“Nothing. Just making sure you’re awake.”

“Oh.” she says and slowly lays her head back on my shoulder.

“We should probably get a move on.” I say.

“Okay.” Sayori says. I can tell she’s disappointed that we have to get up.

We continue walking back and get home just as the moon peeks its face above the trees. The moonlight gleams off of Sayori’s face, making it seem as if it’s casting an almost ghostly presence.

“So I’ll see you tomorrow?” Sayori asks.

“I wouldn’t miss it.” I say.

She smiles sweetly as she gives me a hug. Her fingertips are freezing cold, but the warmth of her heart makes it worth it.

“I’m glad you're feeling better.” she says before walking away.

“Bye, Sayori. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

As I walk inside my house, I can’t help but smile from ear to ear. She’s just a few blocks away and yet I miss her so much already. My cheeks burn a bright red as I lay down on the couch, thinking of what joys tomorrow will bring. I can’t wait.

# Chapter Three

I wake up once again to a bright and shiny morning sky bursting through my window. Usually I'd be irritated to see the sunlight making its presence known to me by blinding me, but for some reason, today feels different. Seeing the sun rise again fills me with a certain euphoria that I haven't felt before.

I happily make myself some toast and pour myself some chocolate milk. After I finish eating, I carry out the rest of my normal routine, pack up my stuff, and head out the door.

I notice Sayori standing by our usual meeting spot to walk to school.

"You're here early! Well, technically you're on time, but that's considered early for you." I chuckle.

"I was excited to walk to school today." Sayori beams, casually ignoring my tease.

"Why's that?" I ask.

"I want to see my friends, dummy!" she said.

"Oh, right. That makes sense."

"And I wanted to see you..." she mutters under her breath with her index fingers making a triangle shape while twisting her heel back and forth on the sidewalk.

"What was that?" I ask her with a mocking grin.

"Nothing." she smirks mischievously.

We continue walking down the street, talking about what we're going to tell everybody when we get back.

"No one will believe us if we say we were both sick at the same time for the exact same amount of time."

"I don't think they'll care, Sayori. What do they have to be suspicious about? And besides, it's not totally out of the question. It's not like people don't ever get sick at the same time."

"I guess." Sayori says.

"You're too worried about what people think of you, Sayori."

"Like you're one to talk. You constantly act weird around other people." she snaps back.

"Well...that's just the girls."

Sayori elbows me.

"Ow! What was that for?"

"Nothing." Sayori sarcastically grins at me, answering without any hesitation.

We walk into the school and wave goodbye to each other as we head off to our separate classes.

I take a seat at my desk when I see Ms. Aoki looking at me strangely. She looks concerned for some reason. She notices me looking back and decides to walk over to me.

"Are you alright?" she asks.

"Yeah. I'm fine. Why?"

Ms. Aoki sighs.

"You don't wanna talk about it. I understand. I just wanted to let you know, you don't have to worry about the homework we've done. We can figure something out later."

"Um...okay." I say nervously.

I have no idea what I did, but if I can get out of doing homework, then I'm not gonna say anything about it.

Other than that, the rest of class proceeds as normal. At lunch I notice a group of kids whispering and pointing at me. Normally that's not out of the ordinary, especially for a kid like me, but for some reason they didn't snicker to themselves or anything. They just looked...disturbed. And not like...in a disgusted way. It was more like a freaked out way. It was weird to say the least.

I ignored it and went on with the rest of my day as normal. Once the final bell rang, I practically jumped out of my seat and headed for the literature club. I walked through the doors to see the other three girls look up from their books and look at me.

Yuri was the first to speak up.

"Michael! You're back!"

"Um...yep! I'm back!" I say.

They all rush over to me.

"Are you okay? I heard about what happened! Is everything alright?"

Their voices all jumbled together as they all spoke. I had no idea who or what was saying which way and how.

"Guys, I'm fine." I say loud enough for all of them to hear.

"Sorry." Monika says, "We were just...worried about you."

"Sheesh. I wasn't gone for that long." I think to myself.

Once the three girls calm down, I notice that there's some new people in the club room. I look at Monika and point towards them.

"Who are they?" I ask.

"Oh, right! Well, we got a couple new students to join our club after the festival on Monday." Monika explained.

"Oh right. I forgot about that. I'm sorry I missed it."

"It's not a problem." Monika smiled, "C'mon, I'll introduce you."

Monika walks over to a boy with black hair reading quietly to himself.

"This is Riku." Monika says to me.

"Greetings!" Riku says upon seeing me approach his desk.

"This is Michael." Monika says, "He wasn't here for a couple days. But he's back now!"

"Well, I hope we can get to know each other better very soon!" he says to me.

"Me too!" I reply back, "So...what are you reading?"

"It's a book about carnivorous plants. I always found it so odd that some plants have animalistic qualities. It really makes you rethink about being vegan."

I laugh at Riku's statement and he returns a chuckle as well.

Monika smiles at us and promptly takes me over to a redhead girl reading a sci-fi novel about life on other planets. The cover has an eerie industrial-looking spacecraft looming over a planet with people screaming and running away from it. She looks up from her book allowing me to see the rest of her face.

She has jet-black rectangular glasses, lime green eyes, freckled covered cheeks, and a warm smile. She seems like she's very awkward around people, but I can tell she's trying to remain collected.

"Hi! I'm Akari." she says with a forced confidence.

"Michael." I reply.

"Nice to meet you." she says.

"And you as well."

Just then, I notice Sayori walking into the room and I greet her with a cheerful smile from across the room.

"Talk later?" I ask.

"Sure!" Akari replies as she looks back down at her book.

I take a seat next to Sayori's desk as she pulls her book out of her backpack.

"Do you mind if I read with you? I forgot my book." I say.

Sayori grins as she lays the book flat out on the desk.

"Do you want me to start back at the beginning?" she asks.

"No, no. That's alright. I'll just follow along."

"Okay, I guess." she says.

Monika stares at me reading Sayori's book and frowns. She looks down at her desk for a moment before going back to her own book.

"Huh. Weird." I thought to myself before going back to my own book as well, but I had already lost my spot.

I just let Sayori go at her own pace instead of trying to keep up. Plus, I didn't wanna slow down her reading anyway, so I just read what I could and let her do her own thing.

Sayori noticed I wasn't really reading and frowned at me.

"You aren't even actually reading are you?" she asked.

"No..." I say shamefully.

"For shame." she says.

"Okay, okay. You caught me. So sue me."

"Maybe I will." she snickers.

"We'll see about that." I say back.

We both giggle to ourselves.

"What are we gonna do with you Michael? It's time to go."

"What?" I ask in confusion.

"Michael. Michael. Hey Michael. Get up. Earth to Michael. Everybody's left. It's time to go. Wake up, Michael." Sayori says.

I suddenly wake back up and return to the real world. Monika was standing over me and shaking me by my left shoulder. When I opened my eyes, I saw that everyone had left except Monika and I. I looked up at the clock and realized it was past 5 o'clock.

"Rise and shine, sleepyhead." she smiled softly.

I blushed.

"Oh. Hey, Monika. Sorry about that." I say.

"It's fine, Michael. I can't leave you in the school though. I hope you enjoyed your nap." she said with a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

"You didn't try to wake me up before?" I asked.

"You...you looked like you needed it." she said rather timidly.

"Where's Sayori?" I ask.

"She's gone, Michael." Monika responds.

I grab Sayori's book and put it in my backpack.

"Okay, well I'll see you tomorrow." I say.

Monika smiles slightly at me, but it seems forced. Almost...fake.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Michael."

I walk down the hallway, down the stairwell, and head out the school doors. I decide to head to my house and shower before I walk over to Sayori and give her back her book, but when I get to my house I see Sayori sitting on my couch.

"Hello, stranger." I say in surprise, "What's the occasion?"

"Nothing. Just wanted to check up on you. You fell asleep."

"I noticed. How come you didn't wake me up?"

"You looked so peaceful. I couldn't bring myself to wake you up. I decided to just let you have it. You really needed it."

"What did you do afterwards? I was sort of using your book as a pillow." I said.

"Well, I just wrote poems until it was time to go."

"Why didn't you wake me up when you left?"

"I left a little early and I asked Monika to wake you up."

"Why'd you leave early?"

"I got bored of writing poems and decided to just go home. I didn't wanna disrupt your catnap, though. Come on. Enough questions! Come sit down with me." she said as she patted the couch cushion."

"Oh! Thank you for inviting me to sit down on my own couch." I said sarcastically.

Sayori giggled.

"You sure laugh a lot." I say playfully.

"Well if you'd stop being so funny." she grinned gleefully.

"Maybe I will. I'll do it right now." I say as I attempt to make the most serious face I can possibly make.

"Ehehe. You look silly." she says.

"Alright, alright. So I'm not that great at being serious." I reply, "But I am the best at tickling!"

"Ehehe! No!" she screams as she tosses a throw pillow at me.

"Hey! Come on now!" I say.

Sayori's eyes widen as she comes to a realization.

"Oh yeah! I almost forgot!"

Sayori grabs a sheet of paper off the coffee table and hands it to me.

"What do you think?" she asks.

I take the sheet of paper from her and proceed to read it to myself.

## Beautiful Skies

The sunlight gleams through my window casting a beautiful display on my bedroom floor. Everything was so shiny and bright and I knew that everything would be okay.

But then the sunrise soon turns to sunset. The clouds reflect the last bit of light left until the sun disappears into the night sky, leaving just a dark gloomy haze in the pitch black sky before the moon makes itself known.

It's like even when the sun isn't there, it's still trying to shine its line down on me to make sure I'm safe and sound.



When it's day, the sun shines down for everyone. But when the moon's spotlight is just on me, it makes me feel special. I wish it could be like that all the time. I still miss him when he's gone, but if the sun was never gone, then it wouldn't be as special when he was here.

I want to appreciate every bit of light I can get. Even when you know exactly when you'll see him again, it feels like an unpredictable eternity. But I know he'll be back. He always is.

"I hate it." I say.

Sayori shoves me.

"Meanie." she says.

I laugh, which makes her laugh too.

"Is it about the sunset we saw yesterday?" I ask her.

"Mm-Hmm." she nods after a moment.

"Your poems are very easy to read, but not too simple like Natsuki's. Yuri's are very... subtle. I can never tell what they're about. It's a nice balance." I comment.

Sayori smiles.

"So...what now?" she asks.

"You wanna watch a movie?" I ask.

"Sure." she says.

I grab the TV remote and lay back down on the couch. Sayori snuggles beside me as I flip through my different streaming services to find something to watch.

"Do you have any popcorn?" she asks.

"Yeah, I have some. Why don't you search for something while I go heat it up."

"Sounds good." she says as I walk to the kitchen.

When I come back out I find her sound asleep on the couch. I smile and carefully lay back down beside her. As soon as I sit down though, she wakes up.

"Hey, sleepy butt. It's time for school." I say.

"No it's not! I smelled the popcorn..." she said with her pouty face.

"Hehe. I knew it." I laughed.

Sayori reached into the bowl, took a handful, and immediately shoved it into her mouth.

"Alright, come on! Save some for me, why don't you?" I say.

"Ehehe. Sorry." she gulped.

"So, what movie did you pick?" I asked as I turned towards the TV, "Wall-E, huh?"

"It was the first thing I thought of. I loved it as a kid." she smiled.

"You still are a kid." I smirk.

"Nuh-Uh. I'm a woman for your information." she said defensively.

"I see. And would this 'woman' like some apple juice?" I ask.

"Hey! Apple juice is for people of all ages, meanie! And another thing!" Sayori paused for a moment, "You have apple juice?"

"Um...yeah." I say nervously.

"I thought you didn't like apple juice?" Sayori asks with a smirk.

"I never said I didn't like it! I'm just not the biggest fan of it." I correct her.

“So then why do you have it in your fridge?” she asks.

“Um...well....you see...I...uh...” I stutter.

Sayori kisses me on the cheek. I can't help but blush. I try to hide it, but how can I when the moment is so tense and we're right next to each other like this? Sayori giggles.

“Aww. You're blushing.”

“What did you expect? You just kissed me!” I say, flabbergasted.

“You blush a lot.” Sayori says.

“I do?” I ask.

“Yeah. I just never tell you 'cause I don't wanna embarrass you. But I think it's sweet, you know?”

“Yeah...” I say.

We stare at each other for a while.

“Do you wanna watch the movie now?”

“Yeah. Let's do it.” she smiles.

I pour Sayori some apple juice before we cuddle up together and watch the movie as we chow down on some popcorn. We get through about half of the movie before I hear Sayori's soft snoring. I go to get up and go to my room, when suddenly I feel Sayori's arm pull me back.

“Stay.” she says without opening her eyes.

I crawl back underneath the blanket as Sayori lifts it for me. I lay down next to her and she turns around to put her face into my chest. I adjust myself to make her comfortable and wrap my arms around her neck to scratch her hair. I see her smile grow as soon as she feels my fingertips run through her hair.

We both smile peacefully as I finally close my eyelids and drift off to sleep. Tomorrow's gonna be awesome.

## Chapter Four

I wake Sayori up and I find myself smiling as I see her yawn. She rubs her eyes and slowly sits up on my couch. She smiles back at me with drowsy eyes staring at me in adoration. Seeing her cute face in the morning feels so amazing and I couldn't help but blush. Her infamous loose pink shirt and light blue shorts barely hid anything as she lifted the blanket off herself. I handed her a plate of fluffy pancakes with syrup and butter on top and it only made my smile even wider when I saw her face light up the entire room.

"Aww! You made my favorite!" Sayori beamed.

She immediately takes the plate and gobbles it up. I can't help but laugh.

"You're welcome." I chuckle.

"Thonk Yumph." she says while trying not to laugh as she attempts to chew through a thick layer of pancake mush that filled the entirety of her mouth.

I couldn't help but laugh back. I sat down next to her and took a forkful of pancake. When we were done eating our meal, we both brushed our teeth together, got dressed, and headed out the door.

Just as we were leaving, I felt Sayori's arms wrap around me from behind.

"Thanks for making me breakfast!" she said cheerfully.

It was a short hug. It wasn't supposed to be anything special. Just a quick show of love and appreciation. I'm not really sure why, but that was all it took for me to break down.

"Michael!? What's wrong? Did I do something wrong?" she said in a panic as I began to cry uncontrollably.

I latched onto her in a warm embrace and continued to sob like a baby. My tears fell down like a faucet onto Sayori's shoulder as she stood there, stunned.

"Michael...?"

"Sayori." I said, my lips trembling.

"Yes, Michael?"

"I...I love you. So damn much. And I just...I just want you to know that...That..."

"That what?" she asked.

"That I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Sorry for what?"

"For not being there for you. I wasn't there all that time during middle school and those first years of high school and I feel like such an idiot. I abandoned my best friend. I...I'm really sorry." I cried.

"Michael...It's okay. We were both going through some stuff. I get it. I forgive you. That was a long time ago. Don't worry about it. It's all in the past now, right?"

"I guess."

"If you want others to forgive you, you have to learn to forgive yourself first." Sayori said.

"Who knew you were so wise."

"I've always been wise. I just save it for when I need it most." she smiled.

"Sayori The Wise." I chuckled.

Sayori giggled back and began to walk down the porch steps. She gently grabbed the palm of my hand and led me down the stairs.

Almost as soon as we left, a light drizzle began to pour on us. Sayori grinned just like I knew she would. She always loved rain. I never understood why. When we were kids, she would always prance around, splash her feet into the puddles, and giggle happily to herself.

I, on the other hand, was the complete opposite. I disliked rain because it made me all wet and sad. One day when we were playing at the park together, it started to rain and I cried because my new shirt got wet.

I laugh as I begin to remember what happened. Sayori sat down and comforted me. She taught me how to see the world through her eyes. About how the world was happy, you just had to know how to look at it in order to be able to see it.

She told me that the rain makes her feel safe and calm when it makes a beautiful melody as it comes sprinkling down on her bedroom window. She would tell me about how even though she liked the sun, the rain gave her a rest for a moment to just let her collect her thoughts. It was a nice break from all the hustle and bustle of life. She told me that the rain makes the plants grow and all sorts of other nonsensical points.

But nevertheless, it did cheer me up. Not because of what she said, but because she was the one who said it. I don't think it's physically possible to be sad around Sayori. Her bright and cheery attitude makes everyone smile even when she's not even trying.

I continue to laugh as I watch Sayori twirl around as the rain begins really coming down on us. Before long, it was pouring down like a pile of bricks.

I grabbed Sayori's hand and we made a mad dash to the school, laughing to each other all the way there. When we finally burst through the school doors, we were sopping wet and our clothes were completely drenched. Sayori and I both looked at each other and began laughing again. Everyone around us was judging us. I could tell. But I didn't care.

Sayori continued giggling as I lifted up a strand of her hair that was covering her face and pushed it behind her ear. The rainwater only highlighted her beauty even more. Her soft blue eyes gazed up at me and I immediately felt nervous, and I could tell that she could tell she had made me nervous because she started blushing back.

Everyone around just looked at us strangely as we walked up the stairs to head to class. It's moments like these where you realize that nobody else matters. Sayori means the world to me, and if people don't like that, well then that sucks for them. The only Hell I know is without her, and I wouldn't trade even the smallest interaction between us for the world.

We head off to our classes and simply smile back at each other as we walk away.

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The school day was pretty uneventful compared to Sayori. After class, I couldn't help but immediately try to find her. I want to see her so badly, and not seeing her for just a few hours feels like an eternity now. Love sure can drive a man mad.

I see Sayori smile at me as she heads down the hallway towards me. She instinctively wraps her arms around my waist and hugs me. I embrace her back and we both smile like a couple of idiots.

"I missed you." Sayori smiled sweetly.

"Me too." I reply back.

Sayori blushes at the thought of me missing her.

"You're so cute." Yuri casually comments with a cheerful smile as she walks past us.

“Yuri!” I say, blushing.

I see Yuri pick the pace after hearing me call after her like she was embarrassed by her comment or something.

“She’s not wrong.” Sayori replies as she puts her hand on my cheek.

“I suppose.” I smile.

She leans up towards me and leans in for a kiss.

“Um...I didn’t take a breath mint or anything, so...” I say, interrupting the moment.

“I don’t care.” she says as she pulls me towards her lips and passionately kisses me.

“Sayori!” I say in surprise.

“I’m sorry...I don’t know what came over me! I just...” Sayori apologized.

I interrupt her again, but this time with another kiss.

She embraces my kiss and kisses me back. It’s a good thing most of the kids have either left or gone into a classroom by now, because otherwise I would be super embarrassed.

We both head towards the literature club and I see Yuri sitting at her desk, nervously biting her nails. Upon noticing me, she blushes and turns to face me.

“Sorry about my comment. That was totally inappropriate.” she said timidly.

“It’s fine, Yuri. I don’t mind.” I reassure her, “You just caught me off guard, that’s all.”

Yuri blushes again upon hearing that, but this time it’s returned with a smile.

“Oh. I see. Well that’s good I suppose.” she replies.

Me and Sayori sit next to each other again and continue smiling at each other. When Monika walks into the classroom, she immediately motions her finger at me to come over to her.

I stand up from my desk and walk over to the front of the classroom.

“What’s up?” I ask.

“Um...Michael? Are you feeling alright? I understand if you don’t want to come to the literature club anymore. No one is forcing you to come here. You can talk off all the time you need.”

“What are you talking about? I’m fine.” I tell her.

“Well...you just seem...off. Like you’re almost...too happy.” She mutters.

“Too happy?” I ask in confusion, “Is this about the incident? I’m fine, Monika. Really. You don’t need to worry about me.”

Monika sighs.

“Fine. If you say so. But if you ever wanna talk, please know that I’m right here for you, okay?” she says in a serious tone.

“Okay, Monika.” I say.

Sayori’s eyes follow me as I walk back to my desk.

“What was that all about?” she asks.

“I’m not sure. I guess she’s just worried about my fainting incident or whatever. I don’t know why she’s acting so weird about it though. I keep telling her it’s not a big deal.”

“I think she’s just looking out for you.” Sayori suggests.

“Maybe you’re right.” I say.

“Of course I am. Now, do you wanna get back to reading that book?” she asks politely.

“Hmm. Nah. I say we do some poem writing.” I propose.

“Okay!” Sayori says with excitement.

We begin writing poems about each other. We work on them for pretty much all of class before we hand them to each other to read.

## The cloud and the flower

The flower weeps as it withers away.  
Her petals get lost in the wind to her dismay.  
But just when she's about to decay,  
A helping hand saves the day.

The raindrops fall and make her grow.  
Her health is restored and she lets him know.

"Thank you cloud.  
You've made me strong and you've made me proud."

The cloud smiled at her for his good deed,  
But the flower wanted more and wallowed in her greed.  
"He could never love me, I'm just a little old weed.  
I wish he would, oh how I wish he would, but he could never do such a thing."

"He's far too good to like someone like me.  
For I am too unlovable, you see.  
I love him so much, but I'm afraid it's just not meant to be."

But just when all hope seemed lost, and her faith started to crack,  
The wind picked up speed and the thunder crashed!  
The lightning struck and with a bright flash,  
It was revealed to the flower that the cloud had come back!

She was so happy, she burst with joy!  
And the cloud said  
"Now you don't have to be sad anymore."

"Don't leave me again!" the flower said with a look that was mad.  
"I wouldn't even dream of it." the cloud laughed.  
It rained and rained and made the flower feel safe,  
Knowing that she would never be hurt again.

"Wow...that was...beautiful, Sayori." I said in utter astonishment.

“Oh come on. It wasn’t that good.” she said.

“Are you kidding? You deserve a Nobel prize.” I say.

Sayori laughs.

“For a poem?” she smirks.

“I don’t know what to tell you. It’s just that good.”

“You’re overselling it. What did you really think?” she asks.

“It’s really good, Sayori. I like the storytelling aspect of it. Usually your poems just have feelings written down in them rather than having an actual plot structure, but this was a nice change of pace. I really enjoyed it.”

“I’m glad you like it.” Sayori blushed, “Now let me read yours!”

“Okay...I guess I have to. It’s not that good, though.”

“Hmph. I’ll be the judge of that.” Sayori says.

But before she can even start reading, Monika stands up and announces that literature club is officially over and that we can go home. Before I get out the door, Monika calls out after me.

“Hey, Michael!” she says.

“Yeah?”

“Whatcha got there?”

“Huh? Oh! Nothing...”

“Doesn’t look like nothing to me.” she smirks, “You mind if I read it?”

“Oh...yeah sure. That’s okay. Just give it back to me tomorrow, alright?” I tell her.

“Of course!” she says.

I wave goodbye to her and she proceeds to read the poem I wrote for Sayori. I sneak a quick peek inside the clubroom to see what her reaction is when I notice that she’s sobbing.

“That must’ve been a pretty good poem you wrote for me, huh?” Sayori comments.

“Apparently.” I reply.

“C’mon, let’s go!” she calls after me as she heads down the hall towards the stairwell.

I decide to ignore Monika and continue walking with Sayori.

When we make our way outside, there’s still a light drizzle, but nothing too horrible. We continue on our way as normal when suddenly I hear a familiar voice call after me.

“Michael, wait!” Monika says as she bursts through the school doors.

I see tears streaming down her cheeks being blown away as she rushes towards me. Her eyes have a slightly pinkish hue and her cheeks are wet with sweat, tears, and rain that glint off of her cheeks like christmas lights from the little bit of sunlight that’s just barely peeking above the silver lining of the clouds.

“Michael...I...I...”

“You what?”

Monika pauses before proceeding to read my poem aloud.

*Smile*

*I push the thoughts outside of my head.*

*But they always come burrowing their way back into my brain.*

*It seems they are eternally embedded..*

*They are here. And they are here to stay*

*The damage is done, but the pain still stings.*

*The happiness is far off in the distance, but the joy is still in my face.*

*I have nightmares of such terrible things.*

*But sometimes that is my happy place.*

*I try to hide my emotions.*

*I try to frown.*

*But when it comes to a smile*

*I just can't seem to get my lips to stay down.*

*The cheeks turn red and rise up like a flame.*

*I want to be sad that I must say goodbye, but the pleasure still lingers in my brain.*

*So I sit here and ponder as I smile bashfully.*

*I let my mind wander and daydream of us living together happily.*

*I know that one day it will all end abruptly.*

*But I'm tired of letting that stop me.*

*I have nothing but your sweet smile on my mind.*

*Didn't know it could be like this.*

*You're a hard one to find.*

*Laugh a little.*

*It's easy, you see.*

*Just try a little more.*

*And you'll smile just like me.*



Monika began to cry even more as she read my own words aloud to herself once again. She rubbed underneath her eyes with her sleeve and took a deep breath to stop her lips from quivering.

“It’s all been hard on us, Michael. I hope you feel better soon. It seems like you are, but I know these things are difficult.” Monika says through dry tears.

“Stop! Just stop it, would you! I don’t need your comfort! I’m fine! I’m great! Fantastic, even! Okay? So just leave me alone!” I cry.

“Michael...” she says softly.

“Please...just...leave me alone...” I say rather quietly.

I continue walking as Monika helplessly stares back at me with sad eyes.

“That was beautiful, Michael. I really liked it.” Sayori says comfortingly.

“Not now, Sayori.” I reply angrily.

Sayori gets quiet and we stay in silence the entire rest of the walk home.

## Chapter Five

Me and Sayori walk into the house and plop down on the couch in total silence. I rub my forehead and head into my room.

“Michael? Are you...are you feeling alright?” Sayori asks in a concerned tone of voice.

“Please. Please just stop.”

“Stop what?”

“Leave me alone. I thought I could live in denial like this, but I can’t do it anymore. You’re not real. None of this is. You’re just a figment of my imagination and you know it.”

Sayori’s lip begins to quiver and her eyes immediately well up with tears.

“I thought that maybe I could just pretend that everything was fine. That everything was normal. But I can’t. Without you, I’m nothing. And it took me too long to see that. I was too late and I feel like garbage for not being there for you when you needed me most. I should’ve been there and I wasn’t and it haunts me every single waking moment. This hallucination has been nice, but it’s not the real you. I can’t make up for what I did to someone that isn’t real. I’m living a lie. It’s not real and I can’t keep pretending that it ever will be either. I want you, Sayori. But this isn’t it.” I say as I shove my face into a pillow and bawl my eyes out.

Sayori stands there staring at me with a sad look in her eyes. Images of bloody ropes fill my head with thoughts of suicide, causing me to cry even harder. Sayori sits down on the bed next to me and puts her hand on my shoulder, but I smack it away.

“Stop it! I told you to leave me the hell alone!”

“You can’t do everything alone, Michael.” she says.

“Well I can do it without you.” I say through tears.

I get out of bed and put on my coat.

“Where are you going?” she asks.

“Out.” I reply with attitude as I grab my umbrella off the hook and head out the door.

I walk into the cemetery and wander around aimlessly until I see what I’m looking for. A headstone with the words “*Sayori Aimoto 1999-2017*” engraved on it. I stare at it for a long, long time as I sit there on the ground and shed another tear.

“Why’d you do it, Sayori?” I ask.

“I-” she starts.

“Not you.” I snap, “I mean the real you.”

“I’m sorry.” she replies sorrowfully.

“Don’t be. Please don’t be.” I cry as I firmly grip both sides of the gravestone with my hands, “This is all my fault.”

“Michael, this isn’t-”

“No. It is my fault. I did this. I failed you. You looked up to me. You showed me nothing but kindness and love. And I ignored you. I pushed you away. I treated you like you were a nuisance.”

I fell to my knees and began to cry harder than I ever had before. My tears were washed away by the rain as they were absorbed into the ground.

“Michael-”

“Get out of my head!” I scream.

“I just-”

[illegible]

There's a long moment of complete silence.

“Okay.” she says as she gradually fades into thin air.

Despite being the one who asked her to leave in the first place, her disappearance only makes me more frustrated. I hug the gravestone and continue to sob uncontrollably. I pound the ground in anger.

“Why?” I scream out.

There's another brief moment of sobless silence.

"Why?" I say in a barely audible tone of voice, "It wasn't supposed to be this way."

The light drizzling washes away more of my tears as I continue to endlessly cry my eyeballs out.

“This is all your fault. You killed her. You’re a terrible friend. You deserve to die.” I muttered angrily to myself.

I stood up and pulled a swiss army knife out of my pocket and held it horizontally up against my throat so that I could just barely feel the steel blade mere millimeters from plunging into my neck.

“I’m coming for you, Sayori. I’m coming.” I say with sorrowful determination in my voice.

A shot of adrenaline kicks in my bloodstream right before I feel my body go limp and fall to the ground.