Soulmate AU: You are born with a shared tattoo that represents both personnel in the relationship

Weather report: Overcast and threatening to pour at any moment. If Nene was given any say in how her day went, she'd have chosen to stay at home and boot up a shooter. But of course, her idiot of a troupe leader decided that "Wonderlands x Showtime will always practice unless it is absolutely unnecessary!" Which was exactly why Nene *hated* Tenma Tsukasa at certain times.

The only thing that made said practices bearable was Emu's pure enthusiasm. Every session wasn't complete without Nene being dragged into one mock-play that ended with the two girls laughing to the point of tears. It was during one of those plays when Nene paused mid-laughter, her brain supplying a thought that could very well ruin the troupe's entire dynamic.

I'm in love with Emu.

She couldn't be! Sure, her heart *did* beat faster whenever Emu offered her a beaming smile and yes to the fact that Nene wasn't resistant to those pink eyes stretched in a look that was almost puppy-like, but that didn't mean anything in the slightest!

"You're hopeless." Rui said bluntly. From where Nene paced, she could see that he was half-finished packing up the robots from their previous show but had abandoned the activity in favor of judging her on (apparently) how doomed she was.

"*I'm* bad?" She retorted, refusing to accept the sheer hypocriticism. "You should've seen how dense you and Tsukasa were when Emu and I had to forcefully shove you two into a relationship!"

"Well, why don't you try and get yourself into one then?"

Nene slammed her head on a table nearby, muttering under her breath. "It's easier when it's another person…"

A snort came from where Rui was huddled over the now-clean corner. "You'd be right about that." He confirmed, giving Nene a pat on the back as consolation. "Why not see if she's your soulmate? Then you'll know."

"No."

A deep sigh. "Okay. C'mon, the stage is clean now."

Nene nodded and stood back up, her hand brushing against something soft as she did so. The thing she touched was a hand-knitted rabbit plush, likely owned by Emu.

"Oh, right. She did leave that back here a while ago. Could you drop it off, please? I'm busy."

“Yeah, I guess.” Picking up the rabbit, Nene stared at its shiny black eyes. They seemed to sparkle mischievously when she tucked it under her arm and were cold when she touched a finger to the black beads. Expecting a response, she looked up only to find that Rui had escaped from backstage and left her alone with nothing except the duffel bag that she’d brought from Kamikou.

Scowling, Nene turned away from the empty corner and marched out of Phoenix Wonderland after ensuring that the Wonder Stage was properly closed. It was too late to go over to Emu’s, so the only option left was to take the rabbit back to her home and hope that she could drop it off at the other’s tomorrow.

The walk back to Nene’s home was peaceful. The pinkish sky painted everything with a slight cherry hue, enveloping her in colors as if she’d turned on LED lights. *Emu always loves when this happens,* she thought. *If she was here, I’m sure she’d say something like “Nene-chan! Nene-chan, look! Everything’s so pretty!”*

Emu always occupied a space in Nene’s thoughts to the point where she would catch herself tracing her tattoo, wondering—hoping—that maybe she’d magically find out one day that the pink-haired girl was the one.

Her tattoo was a taiyaki treat molded into the shape of a canary. It was ridiculously charming, and it was (un)luckily situated on her shoulder, where someone would only see it if she desired them to. The canary referred to her, a pretty and detailed picture with its beak open in song. The taiyaki, she didn’t know. Sure, Emu particularly loved the red bean-filled pastry but that could just be a delusion of her lovesick mind.

That same mind was still churning out arguments when Nene pushed her home’s door open. No one was inside, leaving the building completely quiet. Nene crossed over to the pantry where a sticky note was pasted with her mom’s delicate handwriting scrawled across it.

“Sorry for not telling you earlier, but your dad decided to surprise me with a date as soon as he came home. There’s food in the fridge!”

Said food was soba stuffed inside a plastic container and grapefruit slices lying next to it. Well, at least it wasn’t anything minty.

Nene lifted the noodles out from the fridge, dumping it onto a plate she grabbed from the cupboard. A ping from her phone interrupted her while she ate, the phone screen lighting up with a message from Emu. Her eyes scanned the words while she took another bite of soba.

Emu:
Nene-chan!!!
I left Chiissai-chan at the Wonder Stage ｡ﾟ(ﾟ´Д`ﾟ)ﾟ｡

Nene:
It's alright
I have her

Emu:
Can you bring her back tomorrow??
Please (＞人＜;)

Nene:
Yeah sure
Was planning to bring it over already

Emu:
Thank you Nene-chan!!! ╰(*´﹀`*)╯♡

She pretended her heart didn't skip a beat when Emu sent that cute kaomoji, instead replying with a quick heart of her own. "I'm so pathetic…" Nene stuffed her face into a pillow. "She probably didn't even mean anything by that! It's just a heart!"

The bed was too warm to leave, so Nene rolled over and booted up one of the new, popular mobile games to take her thoughts away from the cheery pink-haired girl. She flushed red as soon as she entered the game. The exact first character that appeared on her screen was pink, bubbly, and did not help the fact that she was trying to get away from a certain someone.

She played through a bit more story and immersed herself within the unique plot rather than focusing on the characters like she usually would. To her surprise, it was actually pretty easy to get lost within the story and she found herself completing the first world in only an hour.

Nene yawned and snuck a glance at the digital clock on her desk. The blinking green numbers displayed 10:38 that changed to 10:39 after a few seconds passed, at which she decided to get out a few homework pages and complete them before spending a couple more hours on her new game. Scribbling down answers to a few questions, Nene scratched her pencil across the paper to create doodles as her mind wandered away from her English work in favor of judging the practice that happened earlier.

That one line… "Affection is the heavy reality that weighs on one's mind, and it follows me wherever I go" in All-Save Challenge could definitely be a lot better. She mused, shoving her homework papers in a pile and instead hugging a nearby pillow to her chest. *That show also has Emu and I as the two main leads, so maybe I could work something out with her when I drop off her plush.*

Gnawing on her fingernails, Nene curled into her desk chair and stared blankly at the wall. Boredom had now decided that it was going to absolutely ruin her day. She groaned and crept

down from her chair before she flopped face-first into a bean bag. Well, if she didn't have anything else to do then she could always practice lines.

Nene grabbed the thick binder filled with the script. The space where the title would be was blank, due to Tsukasa having a bit of a crisis over the name.

(A bit was a heavy understatement, the boy had screamed his head off and buried himself in the script for the next hour of practice.)

She pursed her lips and scanned the inked words, little notes scattered here and there on how to deliver the lines. Clearing her throat, Nene stood up and recited the sentence that marked her appearance in the story.

"It's such a nice day, don't you think so?"

After saying that, she would turn to face the audience and sing a snippet of Coral before being interrupted by Emu's character. Opening her mouth again, Nene continued to speak.

"A-Ah! Who are you?!"

She imagined the lines that Emu would say.

"Hello, Miss Stranger! Your singing was very pretty!"

"Um… Thank you?"

At that, Nene was supposed to blush and shy away from Emu. The basics.

"Do you mind singing more for me?"

"What…?"

"Y-know, more of that melody!"

"I… I suppose."

Then both of them would leave the stage for Rui to continue narrating the tragic love story. The next act would have Tsukasa making his appearance as Nene's suitor that refused to give up after being rejected *3 times*. Honestly, who even tried that?

…Back to the script.

"AHAHA! Surely, this time I shall succeed in winning her over!"

Nene grimaced at the thought of the loud laugh that Tsukasa would surely take pleasure in saying before she read on.

“I’m sure that my fair maiden will not be able to resist me this time!”

Rui’s narration would continue to provide information on Tsukasa’s character just after the other was supposed to march offscreen as well as set up the following scene featuring both Nene and Tsukasa.

“Not you again…”

“Why, I never would’ve expected to find you here!”

“What do you want this time?”

“Your hand in marriage, of course!”

The poor noble lady named Nishioka Yumiko that Nene played was scripted to be forced into a relationship with the flamboyant and stubborn prince (Shibata Hisamitsu) quite violently, pushed by her family to accept and neglect the sweet merchant that loved her so much more than the prince.

“What?! I don’t want—”

“Listen, young lady! What you want isn’t important! Do your family one favor and accept his proposal!”

“I… I…”

“Go find that prince, and don’t come back until you do.”

Thus began a half-hearted courting— at least, on her character’s side. The prince launched himself within the relationship with full passion, even sending Nene’s character overdecorated bouquets and sugary sweet letters. Tired out of her mind, the noble lady looked for the merchant— whose name she still hadn’t been given— for company.

“Hello, Yumiko-chan!”

“Greetings.”

“How’s it going?”

“The courtship?”

“Yeah! That one!”

“Not the best. I really don’t enjoy his company.”

“I wish I could help you, Yumiko-chan…”

“I wish you could too, but we’re both helpless.”

“Still, it’s depressing listening to this…”

“I know. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to let this out though.”

“You’re welcome! By the way, you should call me Ayumu-chan!”

“Fine with me. Good-bye, Ayumu-chan.”

When Nene finished reading that last line, she spared a glance at the clock. Then another one.

“I spent 3 hours on this?!”

…

Harsh sunlight beamed on Nene’s face, causing her vision to be bright white for a few seconds before she rolled away and groggily opened her eyes. Her gaze slid sideways before she yelped and flailed her arms to stop herself from falling headfirst onto her floor.

She carefully slid out of her bed and headed to her bathroom to wash up. In the mirror, her lavender eyes stared at her as Nene brushed her teeth and wrestled her hair into its normal hairstyle. “I need to drop off Emu’s rabbit today.” Nene muttered.

A sharp ringing sound buzzed from her drawer. Scrambling, Nene lunged for her phone and answered the incoming call from Emu. “Good morning, Nene-chan!!” A loud voice erupted from her phone, way too cheery for the time.

“Good morning, Emu…”

“Oh, am I too loud? I’m sorry…”

“No, no! It’s fine, I’m fine!”

“O-kay… So, do you remember Chiisai-chan?”

“Yeah, I’ll bring her over today.”

“Thank you, Nene-chan!!!”

A beep that signified the end of the call sounded before Nene could respond with some form of “Don’t thank me.” She sighed and pocketed the phone, heading downstairs with a call of good morning towards her mom.

Swirling a spoon around in her morning tea, Nene yawned and sipped from the glass cup while scrolling on her phone. “Hey, are we out of anything?” She yelled. “I’m heading out to go over to a friend’s.”

Her mom replied with a “We’re good, but you can stop by the corner store to buy whatever you want.”

Nene flashed her mom a thumbs-up and ducked out of the house with nothing except Emu’s bunny and her phone. Tapping away at her screen, she replied to Rui’s and Tsukasa’s texts about various subjects like the performance speedily approaching while she walked along the sidewalk that led to Emu’s house.

Immediately she was greeted by the black-suited man that always said hello whenever she or the other Wonderlands x Showtime members paid a visit to the Otoris’ mansion. Theories had been exchanged between the troupe members before Emu had just flat-out told them that he was a bodyguard.

Every time Nene went over to the Otoris’ home, it never failed to both take away her breath and make her cringe from the sheer wealth that dripped from it.

Ringing their doorbell, Nene was greeted by Hinata. On her way up, she admired Hinata’s soulmate tattoo on her neck— a needle halfway through sewing a teddy bear. She wondered how it felt to be able to display it so freely and not feel self-conscious about everyone seeing the permanent, sacred art on your body. Certainly, it would be something that some people would view as taboo.

Nene watched as Hinata opened the door to Emu’s room and smiled at her before traipsing back downstairs after closing the door. As soon as she took one step into the colorful space, Emu sprang up from where she sat on a chair and tackled Nene in a tight hug.

“Hey, Emu,” She smiled, speaking in a gentle voice as she squeezed Emu back in return. “I brought her, don’t worry.”

“Oh, yaaay! Thank you, Nene-chan!”

“No problem.”

“Hey, wait! Could you stay here a bit longer?”

Nene froze. Nodding hesitantly, she sank into one of the floor cushions at Emu's table and was joined by said girl in a few seconds.

"I'll get right to the point, Nene-chan." Emu's voice was notably softer than her usual tone as she spoke to Nene.

"Could you show me your soulmate mark?"

Like a deer in headlights, Nene stared at Emu with terror. Her mouth opened and closed like a goldfish before she managed to squeak out "Wh… Why?"

"Nene-chan, I'm sorry if you feel really bad about this. I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable, but I need to know because of *this*."

Emu pulled up her sleeve and revealed that her own tattoo was located on the exact same spot where Nene's was, as well as having an identical design.

"Ta-daaa!"

"You— You're—?"

"Yep! I'm your soulmate, and vice versa!" The cheery voice returned with a sheepish grin on Emu's face.

"How did you, um, figure this out?"

"Well, I accidentally found it out two months ago…"

"T-Two MONTHS?!"

"Um, I think so. But! I didn't get to ask my question yet!"

"Question?"

"Nene-chan!" Emu pulled Nene up to her feet then clasped their hands together tightly. "Nene-chan, I love you! I want to be your girlfriend! I want to hug you when you're at your worst and I want to kiss you when you need me! Please, believe me when I tell you that I really really want to be with you!"

Nene stood speechless before she flushed red and sank to her knees, hugging Emu tightly as she did so. "I believe you." She whispered, eyes tightly closed. "And I want you to be my girlfriend too."

Something soft pressed against Nene's lips. Without opening her eyes, Nene knew it was Emu's mouth meeting hers in a kiss. She returned the kiss gently and reached her hand out to tightly clasp the other's.

They broke the kiss smiling, Nene fondly looking at Emu with a silly smile. Before either of them could say something, Hinata's voice floated upstairs.

"Emu, there's taiyaki on the table if you want it!"

Nene flopped onto the floor as Emu responded quickly, breathing out a giggle that was way louder than she expected it to be. She crawled over and poked the girl's shoulder.

"Hey. I wanna know, how did you find out that we were soulmates without me telling you?"

"I saw it on accident when we were changing out of our costumes backstage…" Emu sheepishly mumbled.

"Why didn't you tell me about it earlier?"

"I wanted to wait for you, Nene-chan! I wanted to actually give you a confession instead of just telling you that I saw your soulmate mark and that I've liked you for—"

The chatter cut off abruptly.

"How long?"

"Um…"

"*How long?*"

"A year…"

Nene threw her arms around Emu and squeezed the other tightly. "That just makes me even sadder that I didn't know about my feelings for you earlier." She whispered. A worried noise came from Emu's mouth as Nene started to cry silently. "I love you so much, Emu."

Now they were both sobbing. They stood there, hugging each other before Emu wiped the teardrops from her face and sniffed loudly. "Come downstairs, Nene-chan. The taiyaki's still there for both of us, and Onee-chan will want to know that you're my girlfriend now."

"So… we're official?"

"Yeah, if you want!"

“There’s nothing more that I wish for than to be yours.”

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“What do you think you’re doing here, Shibata?!”

“I questioned the servants of your whereabouts, and I came to find you, Nishioka-chan! And what do I see but my dear lady being unfaithful to me!”

Tsukasa pointed his comically large prop sword at Emu while Nene faced him. “Who is this young lady?”

“No one that you need to know!” Nene yelled. Her hands bunched up in front of her chest as she projected her voice to make sure she was heard by the audience. “I was *never* unfaithful to *you!* I only accepted your courting out of pressure from my family!”

“You’ve still continued to see her! That, my lady, is able to be punished by execution!”

A gasp rose from the audience as Tsukasa spoke. Clenching her jaw, Nene looked over at Emu expectantly.

“Royal knight Shibata Hisamitsu, am I correct?”

Emu plowed on without giving Tsukasa’s character a chance to respond.

“You’ve been harassing this poor noble lady for years now, haven’t you? And that in turn is justifiable by *prison.*”

“What?”

“It seems you don’t understand, Shibata.”

The lower timbre of Emu’s voice made the threat ever-so-slightly more eerie.

“I could have you sent to prison. Leave her and I alone and call off your courtship.”

This is off-script…! Nene thought, careful not to let her panic show on her face. *Emu was supposed to be scared off, and Tsukasa is meant to take me back to marry him! What’s this change?*

A tug on her dress sleeve caught her attention. When she looked over at Emu, the pink-haired girl winked at her and walked behind the stage curtains. Nene hurried backstage and immediately turned to Emu with a confused expression on her face. “What was that?” She hissed. “That wasn’t the script!”

“We changed the script last-minute, Nene-chan.” Rui spoke up from where he sat on a stool. “If you excuse me, I’ll be heading out to do my narrator duties and wrap up this show.”

Without another word, Rui exited backstage. Moments later, Tsukasa entered through the opposite curtains and made his way over to the two girls.

“Sorry, Nene!!! Emu wanted to change the story and I failed to warn my fellow actor!!” Tsukasa bowed his apologies to Nene before he headed over to wait for Rui. Still slightly confused, Nene stared at Emu.

“I wanted the script to be more happy, Nene-chan! Also, it was meant to be a surprise!” Emu giggled and clasped Nene’s hands together. “Once Rui-kun is done, we’ll be heading out to celebrate!”

Nene sighed, brushing a kiss onto Emu’s cheek. “You should’ve told me.” She muttered.

“Then it wouldn’t be a surprise!” Emu pouted.

“Let’s not talk about this anymore…”

“Okay, Nene-chan!”

A harried Rui poked his head around the curtains and gestured towards both of them for the final bow. “Hurry!” He hissed, disappearing again.

Emu and Nene exchanged a glance before they marched off, hand-in-hand and matching soulmate marks fully displayed for all to see.

…

Fireworks showered the troupe on stage, creating silhouettes out of pink, green, purple, and yellow. They bowed once, twice, before walking backstage silently.

An ending to a changed story.