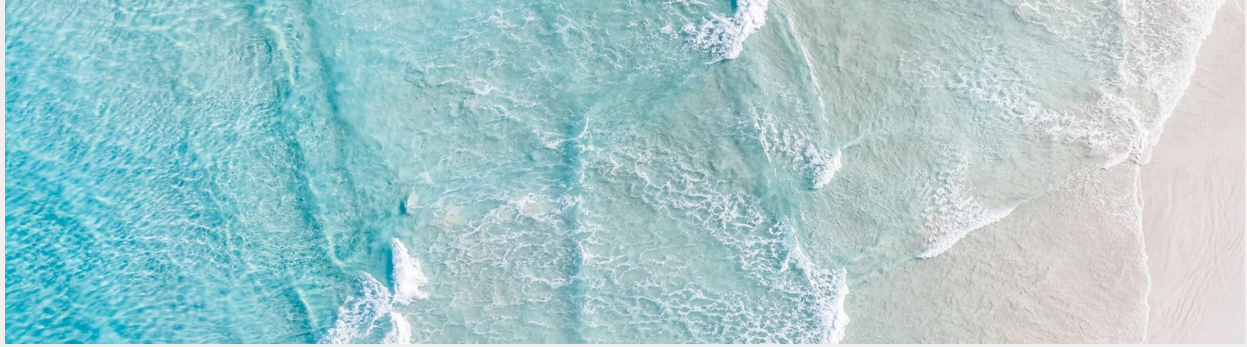




"What did you think?"

You turn to me, lazily turning your head and tilting it to the side. In a private movie theatre rented out for the night, where it's just the two of us, I felt my heart waver a little as your eyes meet mine. This happens sometimes, when something happens to capture your attention, you trap them in your gaze. Whether it's an object, an animal, a camera, everything stops and remains grounded in your sights. When it's a person... perhaps they'd lose themselves to infatuation. I remember the time you glanced at a girl while we went out, and she flushed and looked away quickly, whispering to her friends of who knows what – though I'm sure, because it was you, it was nothing but good things. Maybe they realize that there is one person who is only looking at them... you're a person with an over-whelming presence, someone who might as well have been blessed from birth. How could they not freeze in place? No, maybe it's because you demand their attention, to make sure they know your sole attention is on them. That's why they become like a deer-in-headlights. I've witnessed it far too many times to think otherwise at this point.

There are a few times I manage to catch your attention. For one, you're not one to look others in the eyes when you talk with them. It's not because you're shy. It's because your mind wanders. Like you're constantly searching for something interesting, something I don't have. But when you look at me properly, I must look at you properly. I can't avoid your gaze. It's like a staring contest, one I can't afford to lose, or I feel like I'll be sunk into the depths of whatever is behind your intentions.

Maybe it was thanks to my patience that we were able to remain friends, sitting side-by-side together like this, in a theater filled with dozens of seats.

But today would be the last. In a few days time, we would never see each other again.

"It was better than I expected. It's the first time I've heard of this director, and the plot wasn't something I'm usually interested in, but... it was really nice. I liked the scene where the protagonist and the captain reunite. The soundtrack there was great and the angles they used really set the mood."

At least, I could not guarantee that fact, but I would be praying for it to come true.

"You really think so? I'm glad. I liked that scene too. The lighting was pretty good too, with that mellow kind-of feel. The build-up was nice, makes you think that it's a happy-ending."

"You thought it was a happy ending? I thought it was kind of bittersweet."

"For me, it was. Maybe for not everyone, as a whole, but for the characters as individuals, they all ended up moving on, going their separate ways and living their lives. I think that was the best for them."

"I guess that's one way of seeing it."

"You don't think so?"

"Mmm. Because, we don't know what will go on after the credits roll, right? I just didn't get the feeling that the captain was the type of character who wanted a happy ending for himself."

You hum, putting your elbow on my arm-rest and resting your chin on your hand. I feel my stomach churn when looking at your face and my palms get sweaty. I can't look away, not like this.

"You sure are twisted. Didn't you say you were happy when they met again? Now you're saying he won't be happy... haha. But that's what I like about you."

*Stop it.*

"What? That was just my opinion on him... it's a happy scene, so of course I like it. It's something hopeful."

*Not anymore than this.*

"Haha. You've always liked things I like that. I'm glad I invited you. I actually had another film I wanted to show you by this director, what do you think? We could go see it next time."

"Did you forget? There won't be a next time after this."

I wanted to be a little mean to you. Things like poking my finger into your sides, stepping on your toes, playing footsies under the table, something childish that kept us both on our respective sides of the line we had drawn. Sure, we'd step on the border, but we'd retreat back and kept walking at the same pace, never to touch more than that. I selfishly wanted to keep that distance. So it'd be easier for me.

But when you make a face like that, as if you naturally thought our relationship would continue beyond tomorrow, I feel a cold sweat run down my back. I wanted to say something to comfort you, but the words were stifled in my throat. They die a quiet death. What was I even thinking?

You look away, as if you lost interest, your fingers tapping on the arm-rest out of boredom. I see your chest rise and fall, and a sigh escapes your lips. I want to capture every second of it and burn it into my memory. And then, when it's all over, I'll set it on fire, and then spread the ashes over the park I'll pass by on my way home. That's how I'll settle this. Maybe you've finally gotten tired of whatever held your attention, long enough for us to be together like this. Like eating too much of your favourite food, or when they make your regular coffee order a little different from how you usually like it. The after-taste of displeasure. How does it taste to you? I feel nauseous. This wasn't how it was supposed to go.

"Looks like I got too used to this. It just slipped out, my bad. Just hard to believe you're leaving so soon, that's all."

"Well, I can't say I don't think the same. It's convenient, though, since I can stay with my uncle while I'm there... and chances like this don't come often. It's with a studio I admire, too. I was lucky and I'd be stupid to not take it. "

"Yeah, I know. It's just that... I thought you'd always be there, somehow. Something like, when I look beside me, you're naturally be there. You have my back and I have yours, that kind of thing."

"Haha. I guess it is a surprising turn of events. Honestly, I thought you'd always be the one to leave, if it came down to it."

I feel your gaze lingering on me again. I don't want to turn my head. I don't want to lose before I've even started, so I won't acknowledge it. I stare at the black screen straight ahead of me, the lights having long come on. Am I still smiling? No, I should look calm. I shouldn't lose face, at least.

"What? Why would you think that?"

"What do you mean? That's just the kind of person you are. Don't you know how fickle you are? You're always complaining to me that you're bored, or that you don't have anything to do."

*I shouldn't say anything more. Hold it in. Just get up and leave.*

"That doesn't mean I'd just leave you. Is that what you're saying? That'd I just toss you away once I'm done with you? I wouldn't do that. We're friends."

We're friends.

*Ahh. I've seriously had enough of this.*

"You know, how you lose interest easily doesn't just extend to hobbies and trends. You tend to treat other people like they're expendable, like, you can find someone else in the world who is

just like me tomorrow. The truth is, you take things as they are. Every encounter you had may have been a single moment to you, but could've been an eternity to someone else. You don't understand what effect you have on people. You can do anything you want. You can have anything you want. So you can find a replacement, can't you? It's not like it ever had to be me."

I was shocked at my words that held more venom than expected, and how easily my true feelings leaked out. I had held it in all this time and I just had to break the dam like this. *Shit*. Without thinking, I stood up and looked at you and felt my blood run cold. *What is that?* What is that face? Stop it. Stop looking at me like that, like I mean something to you. This wasn't how it was supposed to go. We were supposed to watch the movie, have a good laugh and then say our goodbyes, and I'd go home and get on a flight tomorrow. Your life was supposed to go on without me. This was supposed to be a good, final memory for the both of us and maybe we'd be able to look back at it fondly. So, why are you making a face like it's all over? Do I look the same to you?

I tear my eyes away from you. It felt visceral, like something's burning into my head, at the back of my throat, in the pits of my stomach.

"Sorry. Just forget that happened. I didn't mean it. Thanks for the movie and everything, I know it wasn't easy to get all of this together. I have to get ready to go tomorrow, so I'm gonna go first. Sorry. Let's get dinner next time, or something, I don't know—"

I didn't even know what I was saying. I grabbed my things and hurriedly spilled apologies and a rushed goodbye out of my mouth.

I walked past you, hurriedly out through the doors of the theatre. I could hear your footsteps behind me. Stop it. Just let it end like this. It's all over. Don't chase after me.

*And I beg you, please, don't grab my hand.*

watching kaine finish minakami's route had me feel like writing something so we're here now.

i think that the two nameless/faceless yaoi figures will end up separating, and then perhaps meeting again in the distant future. because, despite not wanting to meet again, A's secretly holding out hope that they will. A likes reunions. A likes encounters and scenes full of hope, like he has something to look forward to. and when that happens, by that time, maybe he'll be able to properly say he loves B.

what happens right after the ending? well... if i had thought of something, i wouldn't have ended it there. because if i didn't, they would've ended up talking. so let's just say that whether B caught up to A or not, their relationship could no longer return to what it was before the movie had started playing on the screen.

it's a love that makes A hate himself. he thinks it's destined to end and it should've been better if they had never met in the first place. so, he tries to think of reasons why he hates B and ends up trying to focus on those, to bury his feelings. i came up with their personalities on the fly, but clearly, A is kind of twisted. his perspective influences how B is perceived, because that's how he (wants to) sees him. wouldn't it better if he was an popular sleazebag, who is capable of anything, who plays with people as if their toys and throws them away once he's bored? but B is kinder than that. and that's why A loves him.

by the end, the tone changes and it's representative of how A is normally more level-headed. he's honest, but doesn't speak his mind. he wants to conduct himself in a certain manner. so by the end, when he loses control of himself, i tried to reflect that. A isn't really people-savvy either.

i thought of this while writing, but B is in audio design. he also contributed to the audio design in the film they watched so he was happy when A praised the part he contributed to. i didn't really think about what A is doing, but he's probably working with an animation/film studio or an acting troupe. they probably met through some film studies class.