

*Apathy Syndrome motive. Ren discovers Yu was affected.*

*Order is Ren, then Yu.*

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With some of the “famous” Leblanc curry in hand, made by yours truly, Ren set out to see Yu once more, dread pooling in his gut.

He had tried. Tried to stop them from picking Nanako, and failed. He knew that Yu had to of known about this by now, but that wasn’t why he was going there.

He wasn’t heading to give information. He was heading to ask a question.

He wanted permission to end a life to save the one of someone he cared for.

It would also push him closer to the final plan. To freedom for the innocent.

Taking one step inside the bookstore, Ren felt something was amiss. That dreadful feeling grew, eyes briefly surveying the area before spotting a head of silver hair.

Relief burst through his chest. A smile on his face.

Yu was safe. Thank god.

Ren walked over to him, placing the food beside him, then sitting on the other side of Yu before beginning to speak.

“...You might know this already, but Nanako... she’s sick. She’ll... die if someone doesn’t kill. And I know you care about her. Care about her a lot. So, I wanted to know...”

He paused, looking at him as he prepared to finish his words.

The words that never left him as the expression upon Yu’s face told him all he needed to know.

That warmth wasn’t there. That tired weariness, that slight happiness upon seeing him. Not even a hint of curiosity.

No.

“...Are you..?”

Did they get him too?

Yu hadn't needed to go outside much- and he didn't want to risk his injuries worsening, lest Ren had to use his Persona again- so for the most part, he'd stayed inside.

And when he was in the middle of doodling clouds on a spare piece of paper, something very strange happened. Or maybe it didn't. He couldn't bring himself to care.

The pen and paper slipped out of his limp hands as he lost the will to move.

At some point, someone came in. Or maybe they didn't. He couldn't care less. He heard someone sitting down next to him, but he lacked the will to turn his head at whoever they were.

His eyes held no joy upon hearing their arrival, or even the usual tired look that he usually had. They were completely empty. Lifeless. If not for the rise and fall of his chest, he could well have been dead.

"Nanako," he repeated, voice flat. "Nanako...?"

She would die. He didn't have the will to care.

'Are you'? Was he? He didn't have the will to care, only staring at the wall ahead of him.

"Yu, please—"

Not even the prior mention of Nanako's name broke through this stupor. He was stuck in this trance. This apathetic trance.

Yu had the apathy syndrome. He would die if nobody killed.

The thought alone panicked Ren.

Without a second thought, he grabbed Yu's chin and forced him to look at him, searching his face for anything, anything at all—

But there was nothing. Nothing, nothing...

"...Yu..."

It felt like he was losing someone he cared for all over again. And he would lose him.

Ren reached over him and picked up the curry. For certain, he hadn't eaten in quite a while, and now he seemed to have no motivation to do so.

Still. He had to eat. Would Ren have to force feed him it?

Shame. He made this because... Well, he was hoping. Hoping they could spark a conversation. Hoping it would bring a bit of joy back to him.

But now... now Yu's dying. Dying and it's his fault for leading them all to him.

Tears stung his eyes, but he forced them back. Now isn't the time. Not when Yu is sick. Not when he's...

...

"You should eat this. Please."

He can't just leave him like this.

Even as the person forced Yu to look at him, all they'd see was an unfocused, distant gaze, no emotion in his eyes whatsoever. There was no recognition as he looked, and no panic when he realised that he didn't care whether he knew this boy or not.

He'd lost the will to recall memories. His apathy was getting worse.

"Yu," he repeated mindlessly, tone of voice still borderline robotic. Maybe that was his name. Or the boy's name. Or just a word. He didn't care.

It seemed that the stranger was changing tactics now, picking up the plate of... whatever it was. Yu didn't care enough to turn his head to see. He hadn't lost the will to see or think quite yet, but it was soon to come.

"No." It was the closest he'd gotten so far to actually replying to him, but it was only to say that he'd lost the will to eat. He wasn't even sure if he remembered why he needed to eat, or how long he'd gone without food.

He saw tears in the boy's eyes. He didn't-

...

Automatically, as if the action required no conscious thought, he reached out an arm and wiped away a tear. And then, as soon as it happened, his arm flopped back down to his side.

A momentary break in the apathy. He wasn't completely gone yet.

The immediate and monotonous rejection forced a tear out of him.

So he was infected. The disease was eating away at him. It would kill him.

By the last looks of the people there, nobody was going to kill. Nobody would know of the boy in the fog. Nobody would care.

Nobody but him.

He opened his mouth to say something, but fell short. Words failed him as the tears were easily wiped away before Yu went back to sitting as if nothing occurred. Back to being a husk.

He hadn't lost him quite yet. Ren still had time. Still had a chance.

He knew what had to be done.

But first thing was first. He carefully lifted a spoon of curry before forcing Yu's mouth open, silently force feeding him about half of the dish before placing back down the spoon.

What had to be done...

"...I'm sorry."

This could possibly be goodbye, right? If he was caught.

"I'll... Be back when you're better."

No reason to prolong this, right? Moving nigh autonomously, he slipped into a standing position.

...Time to go.

It wasn't until the curry was practically forced into his mouth that Yu realised that he could still chew. Pleasantly spicy, but as he continued eating, he gradually tasted less and less of the food until it tasted like nothing at all.

The other boy seemed to understand, and gave up halfway through. That still made Yu feel sadness, if that was the sensation that struck him in the chest all of a sudden.

But it didn't matter, because he found that he couldn't speak anymore. While he'd been able to mutter single words ten minutes ago, he remained deathly silent, his face becoming paler than it already was. It was even affecting his organs now, as slight as the effects were- his heartbeat wasn't so regular, and his breaths came quick and shallow.

'Sorry', he'd said. He was apologising. Yu couldn't understand why.

By the time he heard his next sentence, they fell on deaf ears that had lost the will to process sound.

He didn't move to reach out to him, because he wasn't physically able to- instead, for a reason unknown to him, he used some of his remaining strength to offer a weak, soft smile. It was more unnerving than reassuring to see it paired with his blank stare, but it was there.

His expression soon faded back into one of total emptiness as he gazed at the wall ahead of him, losing the will to even keep his eyes open.

He hesitated before leaving. Not that he didn't want to, of course, but it was how Yu looked that made him stop entirely.

He looked like death itself. The boy was far more pale than he was when Ren first entered, the sickness had to be progressing much faster in him over the rest of the "cast" inside the building.

So he had to act quickly. Not for them, of course, but for him.

Ren knelt on one knee in front of him, watching the weakest smile he had ever seen fade away, leaving just the dead stare behind. It might've looked odd, but it meant he was still there.

Yu was still there.

His hand raised, cupping his cheek in a gentle way upon his eyes slipping shut. His fingers moved to his neck.

Still a pulse, but it was unstable.

It hurt. Seeing him like this tore him up inside.

"I'll save you,"

Ren whispered aloud to a boy who didn't acknowledge him, to someone who couldn't even hear him. He leaned in a bit closer, resting his forehead against his.

"I promise. Yu, I..."

He never did finish that sentence, instead moving his head slightly to press his lips to his, a light, gentle kiss that barely lasted even a few seconds.

Ren then moved back and stood up once more. That sorrowful feeling rushed through his body again. He felt the urge to cry.

But there was no reason to.

With that final thought and action, Amamiya finally left the building.

“Arsene.”

He knew what had to be done.