

WHEN THE CLOUDS PASS

-a DDLC zine-





Two Slim Chances

Written by Arty

MC felt nothing but regret as he walked through the crowded fair by himself. The entire time, he saw smiling children and happy families enjoying their time together, and it made him feel even worse. After having a fight with Sayori, he chose to walk away without apologizing. At that moment, he thought it was the best way to end it without things getting worse. He realized too late that he should have done better. Just thinking about Sayori's sad face made his eyes sting. A part of him wanted to go back and apologize right then and there, but another part believed that it was too late for that. He continued to walk with his head hung low.

He would occasionally lift his head, his attention easily captured by the bright signs promoting games to play, the racks lined with prizes tempting him further. Perhaps playing something could help him feel better. MC scanned the stands and booths, trying to decide on which game to play. Eventually, his eyes landed on a cow plush, one with black limbs, a white body, and a black spot on one of its eyes.

Sayori would like that.

The plush had to be won from a ring toss game. A big sign displaying a rather simple win condition caught MC's eye. All he had to do was toss a ring, have it land around the neck of a glass bottle, and he'd win the plush. He knew that, despite how easy it sounded, these games were far more difficult than they promoted themselves to be.

Judging by the prize rack still being lined with prizes, this game in particular was probably one of, if not the hardest, to win. Yet it managed to have a decent amount of people surrounding the array of bottles, throwing rings either one or multiple at a time. The sound of hard plastic colliding with glass could be heard frequently and inconsistently.

He approached the carny in charge, causing them to perform a routine greeting. MC was quick to ask, "How much to play?" immediately and bluntly after they finished talking.
"Twelve tickets," the carny answered enthusiastically.

Reaching into his pocket, MC pulled out the tickets he had left. He counted them up, having exactly twelve tickets. Playing the game was a big risk. If he played this game and didn't win anything, he couldn't buy more tickets. His parents could only give him so much money for an allowance. MC pondered if it was even worth trying to play.

There were already a few people playing, and any one of them could win and take the plush for themselves.

But his friendship with Sayori was on the line. He needed to win the plush for her. He had never seen Sayori so sad in his life. In his mind, a mere apology was not enough to make up for making her that unhappy.

He handed the carny the tickets. In exchange, he was handed a bucket full of small, red rings, barely wider than the bottlenecks. As he predicted, this game was going to be very difficult. But Sayori deserved that plush, he was going to win it for her if it took him all day.

Without hesitation, MC lightly tossed the very first ring.

Clang
Thud

Watching the ring bounce on the bottle and fall on the floor had set the tone of the game for MC. However, he had more than enough opportunities to try and get the ring to land around the necks of any of the bottles. He grabbed another ring and threw it. Just like the first ring, it bounced around before falling on the ground. A grunt of frustration passed his lips as he grabbed a third ring and tossed it without thought.

Ring after ring, MC watched as they would bounce, only to fall on the ground or in between the bottles. Sometimes, they'd land on the ring but bounce up and out. At first, it was frustrating. Now, it was demotivating. He slowly started to lose confidence as he mindlessly threw rings one at a time, watching them land everywhere but around a bottle's neck. The bucket was half-empty. His chances were growing slimmer with each ring thrown.

Some part of MC was beginning to tell him to stop. It tried convincing him to give up because of how slim the chances of winning were. But, as his eyes shifted over to the cow plush, he reminded himself of who he was doing this for. This was for Sayori. He had to win this. Their friendship was on the line. If he couldn't win this, he would have failed as Sayori's friend. Still throwing rings, he thought back to their argument. It all seemed like a distant memory, but the way he ended it was what he remembered the most, viscerally so:

"You're being so annoying! Just leave me alone."

Replaying the memory, especially the conclusion, was painful. If Sayori decided she didn't want to be his friend anymore, he would have felt like it was deserved. But, if there was even a slim chance that she could forgive him for his attitude, for what he said, he'd take it the same way he took this slim chance of winning the cow plush.

When MC reached into the bucket, he realized that it was empty. He had been throwing these rings while in his own head. He should have taken the time to figure out the best way to throw the rings. Instead, he was carelessly tossing them toward the bottles. Looking inside, a single ring remained, a single opportunity to win something that Sayori deserved from him. The ring, now being fiddled with between his index and thumb, meant the whole world to him at that moment.

MC's amber eyes stared at the ring for a few moments, and it felt like that gaze was being reciprocated. The lights from the game booth reflected off the red plastic. Multiple eyes looked at MC, unblinking, intimidating, taunting him to take his best shot. He almost shivered. With one last look at the dozens of bottles, he tossed the ring like a disc.

It bounced from one bottle, gaining less than a second of airtime before landing on its neighbor. It spun around the neck, slowly lowering before finally resting on the shoulder. A short gasp escaped MC's lips. His eyes widened. His mouth was agape in shock. He did it. Other spectating eyes looked at the only ring around a bottle, and they traced their way to MC.

The carny, having watched his final ring toss, approached him in surprise. "Our very first winner of the night, everyone!" The other players started to clap for MC in celebration, leaving him more than a little confused.

MC immediately pointed at the cow plush, prompting the carny to take it from the rack and hand it to him. He nodded to them in thanks before taking a few seconds to stare at the cow in disbelief. A small smile appeared on his face as he walked away from the booth. He really did it. He won the plush. Now it was time to find Sayori.

He attempted to backtrack to where he parted ways with her. The sun was already beginning to set, the horizon a bright gold while the rest of the sky was becoming a

stunning pink. He was running out of time. His parents said they'd be here to pick them both up at sundown. If he couldn't find her now, everything would take a turn for the worse.

In a panic, MC began to go in random directions, taking random turns, ending up even more lost than before. Suddenly, he spotted coral pink hair and a red bow left askew. He knew without a doubt it was Sayori. His pace increased, attempting to catch up to her before she walked any further. "Sayori!"

She turned her head when her name was called, spotting MC running towards her. Even from his distance, and as he got closer, he could see a defined frown on her face. "MC... hi!"

From the tone of her voice, combined with her expression, it was clear that she was still very sad, and it was definitely because of their argument.

Her eyes caught the cow plush in MC's arms, and her irises almost sparkled. "Wow... that cow... it's so cute. Where did you win it?" she asked, attempting to sound happy for him.

"I played a ring toss game. It was really hard," he explained, out of breath from running. His gaze alternated between the cow plush and Sayori.

"Ah... well, at least you won it. Congrats." Sayori smiled sadly, keeping her eyes on the plush.

MC didn't like seeing her attempt to be happy for his sake. He firmly shook his head. "Actually," his head turned away to hide the embarrassed look on his face. "I won it for you."

Sayori's expression changed immediately upon hearing his words. In disbelief, she let out a near-silence, "What?" A hand covered her mouth, while the other rested on her chest. "For me? But... why?"

Giving the plush to her was already embarrassing enough, but now he had to explain why he won it in the first place? This was harder than he thought it'd be.

"I saw it, and I thought you'd really like it. I was playing that game the entire time after I walked away," he explained, his head turned away.

The setting sun could be seen in the cow's black eyes, like golden irises staring at Sayori. She wanted to take it and never let it go, but a part of her was hesitating. She couldn't quite understand why MC would go out of his way to win this prize for her.

Their eyes met. "I'm sorry about what happened earlier, Sayori. I didn't mean anything I said," he told her firmly. "The cow is an apology gift. I thought if I won it for you, then you would forgive me."

Sayori's eyes felt watery. She couldn't believe that MC would spend all his time playing a game just to win a prize for her. "Aww, MC." Without hesitation, she threw her arms around him, hugging him tightly, squishing the cow plush between their bodies. "I forgive you!"

With his hands occupied by the plush, he had no opportunity to return the embrace. As soon as she let go, he bashfully looked away again. "Please don't make it that big of a deal. Just take it," he begged, almost becoming frustrated.

"I just can't believe you'd win something for me!" Sayori took the plush from his hands, holding it in the air before hugging it tightly. "I'm going to cherish it for the rest of my life!"

To see Sayori so happy over a simple plush made MC happy as well. His mouth curled up into a small smile as he watched her play around with it from the corner of his eye.

"So, are you gonna name it?"

Without hesitation, Sayori answered, "His name is Mr. Cow!"

MC let out a small laugh. He expected her to give it a name as simple as that. It was such a Sayori answer. Watching her play with Mr. Cow caused his smile to widen before looking at the sunset. Although pretty, it was a gentle reminder of the time they had left. "My mom said she'd be here about now to pick us up. We should get going."

"Okay!" Sayori replied, giving Mr. Cow a final squeeze before starting to walk with MC to the fair's exit.

Both of them had wide smiles on their faces.



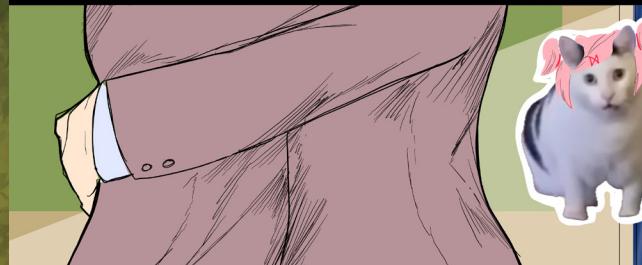












Clouded Sunshine

Written by Eva

I am terrible at expressing my own emotions. That is something that my friends know. For the longest time, I've kept my own personal feelings, thoughts, and worries under a veil of kindness, a veil of peace. A smile that never falters and a demeanor that I never expected to change.

However, "With time and with change, good things are bound to come your way. Until then, you have to try your best," is what Monika told me late in the afternoon one day when I had found comfort and the courage to tell her about my issues. That sentence sparked a question in me. What qualifies as 'my best'? That and a lot of other questions always led to the same destination. Stress and anxiety. How could I do my best if I didn't know what my best was?

This thought process clouded up my days even before joining the literature club. It didn't matter how bright the sun shone outside or how hard the rain hit against the pavement. All my days were cloudy. Even this one. And yet-

"Hey. Sayori? You, okay?" Even on cloudy days, the sky remains illuminated.

MC's question took me by surprise. I was so lost gazing out the window, I hadn't even noticed him sit down beside me. "Uh... Yeah! I think."

"So not really then?"

"I just didn't sleep well last night. Don't worry about it." He looked at me with quite a disappointed expression. I was bad at lying, I know.

"It seems like it is going to rain later."

"You didn't bring an umbrella, did you?"

"Nope..." My fault for not checking the weather forecast an-

"Yeah, me neither." Oh.

"I guess we just hope it won't start raining on our way home then."

"I don't really mind it."

"Well, I do. It's cold. The best place to be during rain is nowhere near the outside." He chuckled at my remark, yet he will never be able to change my mind on this. I dislike the rain. I dislike the clouds. Yet they do not dictate how I shall feel for the rest of the day. Be it thundering storms or beautiful sunrises, my days begin with disinterest and exhaustion. It's always been like that. MC would often motivate me to get out of bed, of course. Ever since I gave him a spare key of mine, he has made sure I wake up on time. I never got around to thanking him for it.

"Well, if worst comes to worst, we can always wait it out."

"Sure." I look behind at the front of the class and spot Monika chatting with Yuri and Natsuki. She spares me a quick glance. It comes with an expression I can't quite make out. Maybe it is merely a faint smile.

"Sayori. What's wrong?" MC's voice grabs my attention.

"N-nothing, I was just looking at—"

"That's not what I mean. What's wrong today?"

"..." don't know. That's always what it is. I never know why I'm sad or exhausted. It just comes so naturally to me. But that answer wouldn't satisfy MC's curiosity. Right?

"...I am not sure."

"I see."

That's it.

There's nothing else he adds. He just understands.

"So... uh... I thought your poem today was pretty great."

"Huh?"

"And you uh... managed to button up your blazer finally." Oh, I see.

"Are you trying to make me feel better?" MC looks at me, slightly annoyed. Oops.

"Can you blame me, Sayori? Of course I would."

"Well... that's sweet... but I don't think simple compliments will get you far with this mess." I point at myself, smiling. That was an awful thing to say.

MC clicks his tongue, grabs my wrist, and puts it back down onto the desk. "Don't say that. Please."

"Sorry..."

"Are you two, okay?" Monika joined me and MC at the desk. Even she looks worried. I should've smiled more.

"Sayori is feeling a bit down."

"It's no big issue! I'm telling you." But obviously Monika wouldn't believe that. Just like MC. Monika held that kind of compassion for everyone in the literature club. Ever since the festival, she had kept a keen eye out for me, making sure I felt appreciated.

"Rough day, I'm guessing?"

"Could be better..."

"Well, today's club time ends in about~" Monika checks her watch "-15 minutes. We don't have much to do anymore, so if you wish to leave early, I won't mind."

"Well, I~" I look at MC. Staying here or leaving early doesn't really mean anything to me. If I feel miserable in the club and outside of it, it matters not where, whether I am here or at home. What does matter is my routine. And that consists of me walking home with MC. A routine I do not wish to break.

It seems Monika catches on to this subtle detail, however, as she sweetly smiles at us both. "And if it makes you feel any better, you could walk her home, MC."

"I-I mean, I guess. If that's okay?"

"I just said so, didn't I?"

"Yeah. You did..."

"Well then, you two. Take your time. Otherwise I'll see you next week." And with a lingering smile, she returns to the front desk. MC turns to look at me and shrugs.

"Well... Do you want to?" I hesitate at first, but eventually nod since it really didn't matter.

"Alright then... I'll wait for you in the hallway." I watch as MC grabs his bag and steps out into the hallway. I sloppily shove my own belongings into my bag and quickly join him, but not before waving goodbye to the other club members. Monika smiles at me again. The same one as before.

Our walk to the front entrance was silent. As we exited the building, MC gazed up at the sky again. "I... don't remember what time the forecast said it was going to rain... Let's just hope we stay dry."

"I will blame this on you if we get soaked."

"Well, sorry. I don't control the weather... anymore." I chuckle at his joke, which seems to please him as well.

"What do you mean anymore??"

"Secret."

"Alright. You keep your secrets."

The path home was filled with laughter, jokes, and smiles. As long as he is happy, I am happy.

Right?

"I like your laugh. You know that, right?"

"You do like to remind me."

"Do I?"

"Yeah. It's something you tell me quite often..."

"Well. You can't blame me. It's something that I always enjoyed hearing, you know? Ever since the first time we met." I can't help but giggle.

"H-hush, weather boy!"

"W-Weather boy?!"

"Well, yeah! Since you said you can control the weather."

"I told you 'not anymore' remember?" But just as he finished speaking, something landed on my nose. Wet and fast. Alas, it has started to rain. I look at MC, disappointed.

"Are you sure?"

"Pure coincidence."

"Sure it is." I chuckle before looking around.

"We should hurry though... Or maybe find a spot to stand under."

MC runs a hand through his hair. "There's a bus stop not far from here. We could take shelter there."

He leads us down the road and under the bus stop that stood there. The rain was starting to ramp up as droplets transformed the pavement into a river. The sound of water hitting stone was dominating the area. "I really regret not bringing an umbrella."

"Same..." We stood there for quite a while. MC checked his phone on the regular, trying to figure out when the rain would come to a stop. While I stood by his side... also staring at his phone. Standing like this, I began to daydream again. I mean, can you blame me? It's moments like these that remind me of the past. Similar experiences, similar situations. Ever since we were kids, MC and I had the same dynamic. The same fondness for each other... yet... never the same feelings. Because recently... mine began to change.

...

It was very recent when I began to embrace these new feelings of mine. On the day of the festival, the day I vowed to let my heart never burden him again, it was he who reached out and hoisted it on his shoulders. He stole my heart and does not even know of it. I sighed a long, deep sigh.

"Comfortable?" MC looks down at me. I hadn't even noticed I was leaning against his shoulders...
But if he wasn't protesting then...
"Mhm..."

"Forecast is saying the rain will last another hour or so..." Great... I was wrong. It didn't matter where I was miserable. At least at home, I would be warm.

"Sayori?"
"Hm?"
"You're shivering."
"O-oh..." I try to calm myself. No success there.
"We should get you home before you catch a cold."

"But... I don't want to get wet..." MC looks at me and then sighs before unbuttoning his blazer.
"I'm not waiting here for you to get a cold so just stay close to me." Unsure of what to say,
I simply stayed quiet and hurried to his side. We rushed through the rain at a rapid pace.
Thankfully, MC wasn't as small as I, so his blazer had more than enough volume to protect us both
from the onslaught of vicious raindrops.

"Huff... puff... can we maybe w-walk a bit slower!"
"We're not even going that fast~" MC looks at my face and sighs once more. I should start counting
how many times he sighs in one day because of me. Thankfully, though, he slows down and scoffs
. .
"Slow enough for you?"
"Alright, sir Longlegs. You'd be breathless too if you were in my shoes."
"Yeah, right."

Perhaps slowing down wasn't just because I was losing my breath, though... Because the cold that
envelops my sides was drowned out by the warmth MC provided.
"This situation feels familiar."
"It does?"
"Yeah. I remember us once in a similar situation. Except that time we did have an umbrella. We
were practically fighting for it, though."
"Yeah, because you kept hogging all of the space for yourself!"

"Well, now look at me being a gentleman and everything."
"Mhm. Sure."

It didn't take long for us to arrive at the intersection between our two homes. MC walks me to my
front door and shakes out his blazer, which was now practically soaked. "You go inside, warm your-
self up, and then relax. Okay?"

"You got it, boss." I shot him with finger guns.

He turns around to walk away, but as he steps out onto the sidewalk, ready to give me the usual 'see
you tomorrow,' a question sprouts in my head.

"MC?"
"Yeah?"
"I have to ask. Those 'familiar scenes'... do you think about them a lot?" MC stands there in the rain.
Even I am starting to get worried if he'll get a cold. After a while, he replies.
"Yeah. Often really."
"I see..."
"Do you?"
"...Yeah. Too much." Silence fills the space between us as I feel embarrassment fill my body. I turn
around and mutter. "W-Well, I just wanted to know, thanks for walking me home, MC."

"When do you think about them?... If you don't mind me asking, of course." My hand stays in my
pocket, unable to move. At this point, I have to answer, don't I?

"Sometimes when I zone out in class or daydream when there's nothing to do, I look back on the
times we spent together. Is that weird?"
"I don't think it is. If you ask me... It's kind of sweet." I chuckle at the remark.
"Alright, sure. Now go home, or you'll catch a cold before I do." MC replies with a laugh and nods,
but as he turns to leave and I reach into my pocket for my keys... I find nothing. I left my keys inside.
"Something wrong?"
"I... locked myself out."
"Seriously?"
"Don't look at me like that!" He grins from ear to ear as he comes back up to me.

"If you really want to go inside, just come over until we find the spare one you gave me, okay?" That idea... doesn't sound bad.

"Fine..."

"Alright, stay close." Once again, he covers me with his blazer, yet his already soaked shirt kind of defeats its whole purpose.

"Now it doesn't matter whether I stay under here with you or out there in the rain, I'm getting soaked either way!"

"Well, which do you prefer?"

"Hmm..." No reason to lie.

"Staying under here with you." I smiled at him. One that felt truly genuine for the first time today. He returns a smile just as sweet.

"Well then, let's keep it in mind next time there's a rainstorm like this."

"Let's hope there won't be another rainstorm like this..."

"That's true as well."

Alas, when we got into his home, he let me rest on the sofa for a while. I must've fallen asleep as I found myself alone lying in his bed. The rain still hitting against the window, the wind outside, and the stillness of everything in his house felt comforting.

As I tread downstairs and lay down by his side on the sofa where he had taken the spot I had rested on hours ago, I felt thankful... His mere presence calmed my mind and dreams, and even as I fell asleep next to him, I cherished him for what he was.

He was the spark that lit my candle, the water that brought my buds to bloom.

He was my ray of sunshine on an otherwise cloudy day.

Clouded Sunshine.

Has a nice ring to it...

Perhaps a title for my next poem...





Cloud Spotting

Written by Arty

At a park, MC and Sayori rested on a blanket, eyes aimed skyward. White, polka-dot clouds decorated the atmosphere, drifting along with the wind. The pair watched these clouds, immersed in the sight. At some point, Sayori broke out of her trance, shifting her gaze to MC. She gently tapped his shoulder, breaking him out of his spell and getting him to look at her.

"So, are you feeling inspired yet~?" she teased, her question accompanied by a sly smile.

MC's usual blank stare became one of confusion as he raised an eyebrow. "What are you talking about?"

Now, Sayori began to look confused, and almost concerned. "We came here because you wanted to find some inspiration for a poem! Don't tell me you're starting to lose your memory."

"Oh... right." MC looked back at the clouds, mainly to avoid eye contact. "These clouds... they're... nice," he said, a mediocre comment made only to get Sayori off his back. When he moved his gaze back to her, he noticed a rather adorable scowl on her face. She wasn't buying it. "What? I'm not lying. They look nice."

The scowl remained on Sayori's face as she looked at the clouds again. Almost instantly, her expression lit up. MC was not wrong. They were very nice clouds. "They're really nice. Especially that one."

She pointed to one of the clouds, dark gray in color with long, jagged edges. It was a total contrast from the small, round cells that were in near-perfect parallel rows. MC chuckled in disbelief. "That gray one?" he looked at Sayori, who had a smile on her face as she stared at the cloud.

"Mhm! I like it! I think it's my favorite."

MC was in total bewilderment. He couldn't believe that Sayori would pick that gray cloud over the dozens of far nicer-looking clouds in the sky as her favorite. His brows furrowed, trying to figure out a possible reason. Coming up short, he had no choice but to ask, "Why?"

Sayori looked at MC with an open-mouthed expression for a few seconds before her gaze returned to the sky, eyes latched onto the gray cloud. Her smile reappeared as she answered, "I don't really know. It's just my favorite."

It was such a Sayori answer. MC wasn't sure why it surprised him in any way. Having no reason for liking something had been an occurrence for Sayori since they were kids. Usually, he would brush it off, but this time it irked him. He started to stare at the cloud in contempt. This is such a beautiful sky, and the gray cloud is ruining it. Why would Sayori choose that cloud as her favorite? How did she find beauty in something so dour?

The longer he spent his time with the literature club, the more he noticed that Sayori was fond of the bittersweet. Her poems always had a gloomy theme masked by a bright subject. MC would have to read those poems multiple times just to understand what they were really saying. It made him wonder what it was like to see the world through her eyes. Eventually, he realized that he had to look at the world through her lens when writing his poems. His own sense of the world was dull, while Sayori gave it life and meaning. Perhaps now was one of those times to try and see the world in her lens.

In an array of white clouds, a dark gray cloud stuck out in both color and shape. A rain cloud, something that Sayori once used as a metaphor for her depression. He recalled the day she left the club early. She didn't feel well that day. She said it was just a little rain cloud in her head, and she left without explaining it further. The problem turned out to be something more than just a bad thought. Shortly after, MC learned it was depression, and he had no idea.

MC did his own research afterward, but he ended up with a single conclusion: He would never be able to fully understand Sayori's condition. It was an experience unique to her, and no amount of research or explanation could paint a complete picture for him. The rain cloud metaphor was the best way for him to understand her depression.

With these memories in mind, he began to notice other details about the gray cloud. He paid close attention to its movement, which was slower compared to the white clouds. It must have been because of all the rain it had inside of it. Despite how slow it was moving, the cloud kept going. It didn't stop for a second, just continued moving with the rest of the clouds.

His thoughts on the gray cloud began to change. What he first saw as a distraction now became a depiction of Sayori herself. Like the cloud, she was weighed down, not by rain, but by her depression, an endless battle that went on in her head. Despite that

constant war, which caused her to question whether it was even worth getting out of bed, she would get herself up and make it to school, even if she was late. Just like the gray cloud, she moved forward, even if it was at a slower pace than most.

MC looked to the sun. It was bright and warm, shining on all the clouds. Even the gray cloud was made a little more vibrant thanks to the sun's light. He thought about the day Sayori confessed her love for him. He realized at that moment that she was the most important person to him, that he would be there for her no matter what troubled her. He promised that he would always be by her side and get her through those burdens. That was when their bond blossomed into something romantic.

His eyes were glued to the sight of the sun, peering out from behind the gray cloud. All the white clouds were practically glowing from the sun's light, but MC only had eyes for the gray cloud.

At some point, that cloud will rain. It won't be able to hold in all of that water forever. But once it rains, the sun will be there throughout it all, ready to shine when it finishes.

Even if Sayori was having a bad day, he would be there for her, waiting for those rain clouds in her head to dissipate, waiting for her to smile. That was what he promised her.

"...MC? Earth to MC..."

He blinked and shook his head, finally getting back to the real world. "What happened?"

"You were deep in thought. You started to hold my hand at some point~."

"Did I—" MC's eyes quickly darted to their hands. Their fingers were interlocked, held in a snug grip. He just as quickly looked away from their hands, trying to hide the blush that splashed his cheeks.

Eventually, the two let go of each other's hands, beginning to stand up and stretch after lying down for so long. Without saying a word, they started to pack up their things, then fold the blanket Sayori brought for them to lie on, tastefully decorated with rain clouds.

When everything was packed, MC looked at Sayori, who was checking her bag one last time, making sure she didn't forget anything. As soon as she stood up, he stepped a little closer to her.

"Alright, I think I got every—oh... MC?"

He held her in a hug, one that was eventually reciprocated. When he felt Sayori's arms wrap around him, he tightened his hold, which caused her to do the same.

"Uh... MC? Are you okay? Why the sudden hug?" she asked, puzzled at the sudden affection.

There were hundreds, thousands of reasons why MC decided to hug her. If he had the time, he would have gone through each one in detail. Instead, he quietly said, "I don't really know," before letting go of her. "I just wanted to."

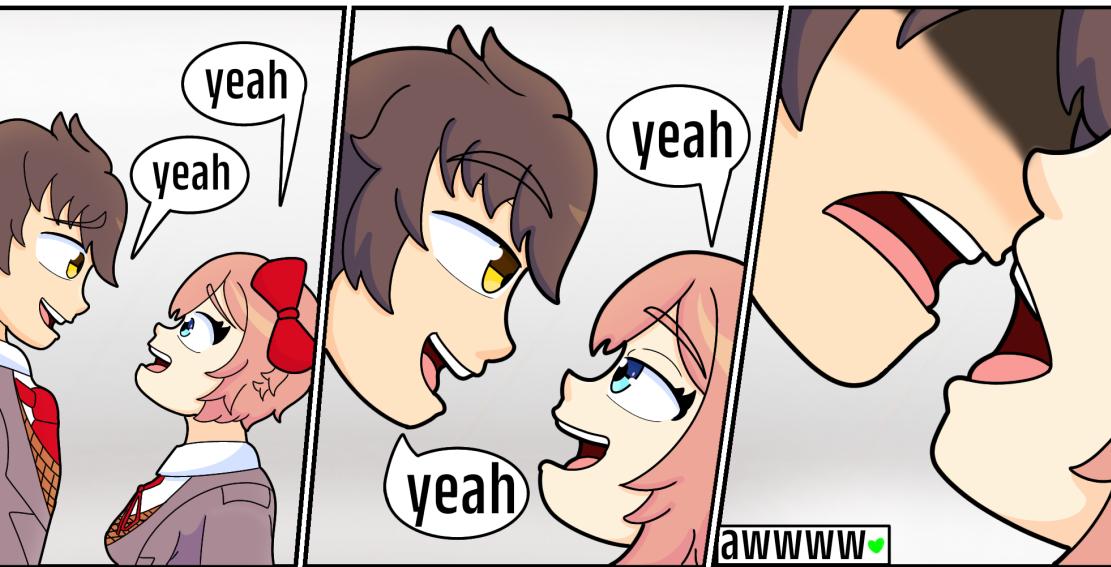
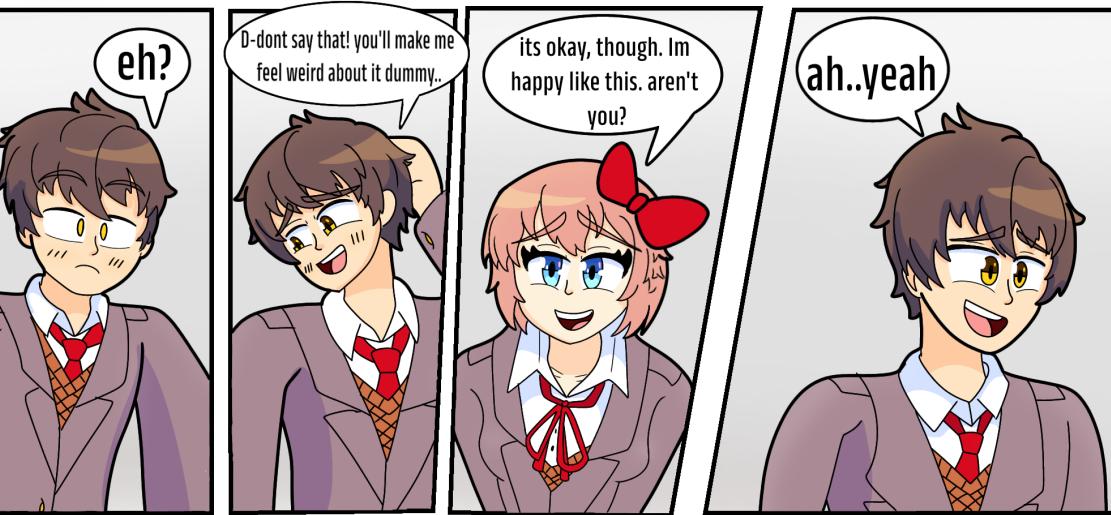
They smiled at each other before grabbing their things and beginning the quick journey home. Taking one last look at the sky, the clouds had moved into the horizon, leaving the sun alone in the empty blue.

While they walked, Sayori looked at MC. "Thanks for taking me on this date, MC. I'd love to do this again!" she said with her typical cheery smile.

Right. This was a date. All that nonsense about finding inspiration for a poem was just an excuse for MC to have an outing with Sayori. Just the two of them. Alone. Now, he was comfortable with being honest about his intentions. They went on a date, and they both enjoyed themselves. He looked down at their hands, clasped together, fingers interlocked.

"Me too," he said with a smile.









Cooking Catastrophe

Written by Mouse Potato

Sayori and MC are sitting on a park bench, getting some well-deserved rest after the stress of waiting for exam results.

MC: "I still can't believe I passed all my exams, Sayori."

Sayori: "Well, that makes one of us, MC!"

MC: "Hey, I only passed because you and Monika helped me study!"

Sayori: "Remember what Monika said? You had it in you all along, we just helped you realise it."

MC: "Oh yeah, how did you do?"

Sayori: "Monika has all full scores, of course - a perfect *shū* student. As for me..."

Sayori leans closer to MC, whispering in English:

Sayori: "I'm just glad I got *yu~*"

MC blushes a little before responding with

"That's still a pretty good grade, I'd be proud too if I~"

Sayori: (gently shoves MC) "You know what I mean!"

MC: "Hehe~ Of course I do, Bun. And I'm glad to have you too, my future rocket surgeon President."
(They sit around for a while.)

Sayori: "Hey... do you have any plans for the future, MC?"

MC: "Hmmm... for now, I might get a summer job at Chekhov's Pizza."

MC: "After that... who knows? Maybe I'll be your househusband so you can focus on rocket science, surgery, or politics."

Sayori: "Well then, ~Mr. Househusband~ ... will you cook something for me tomorrow?"

MC: "Actually, we should try cooking something together."

(Sayori gets a bit unsure of herself)

Sayori: "...Are you sure? Last time I tried to cook, they had to send two fire trucks and a therapist."

MC: "Remember playing Dark Souls?"

Sayori: "Yeah, but~"

MC: "And how it took you forever to get past Evil John Darksoul?"

Sayori: "Yeah, but I did eventually do it!"

MC: "Exactly. Being bad at something repeatedly is the price of being good at anything."

Sayori: "...Okay, I'll give it a try, MC. But~"

MC: "Not to worry - I'll be there with a fire extinguisher and a first aid kit for wh-"

(MC catches himself mid-sentence.)

MC: "If anything goes wrong. So you don't have to worry about it."

(Sayori is unsure for a moment, and then a happy grin shines on her face.)

Sayori: "It's a date, then!"

???: "Heyyyyy!"

MC hears a voice he would recognise anywhere.

Annoying, airheaded, and absolutely oblivious to the attention she's bringing to herself...

...just the way he loved her.

She was the kind of friend he-

MC: "Are you done monologuing, or are we going to have a case of Act 1 syndrome on our hands?"

Whoops. Sorry, MC.

MC: "Sayori, you should tone it down a little. Now all of China knows we're here."

Sayori: "But we're not in China, silly!"

MC: "Exactly."

Sayori: "... You're a meanie!~"

MC: "Perhaps..."

(MC takes hold of Sayori's hands.)

MC: "... But I'm your_meanie~"

...

Sayori: "So, MC, about the cooking lesson..."

MC: "We still need to get a few ingredients from the convenience store."

Sayori: "But MC, it's Sunday! The convenience store is closed!"

MC: "...oh, crap. Looks like we'll have to go to the inconvenience store."

Sayori: "What do you mean, the -"

(abrupt time skip)

Vendor: "Welcome to The Inconvenience Store! We have what you need, but not the way you'd like it!"

Sayori: "But MC, how is this -"

MC: "We need two eggs, 340 grams of icing sugar, and some milk."

Vendor: "One moment."

(The vendor goes in the back and returns with two unpacked eggs, a 10-kilogram pack of icing sugar, and an entire milk can.)

Vendor: "Here, I'll put this in a minecart for you.

We accept doubloons and Bitcoin."

MC pulls out a sack of gold coins from his backpack.

...

The Sunday afternoon was quiet and serene.

Or at least it would be if wasn't for two high school graduates and a surprisingly functional minecart.

Sayori: "Wheeeeeee!"

MC: "Heh. At least something fun came out of my procrastination."

???: "Meowwww..."

Sayori: "Wait, there's a cat there!"

MC: "Sayori, this is the fifth cat we stopped to pet already, and we're not even halfway home."

Sayori: "...Please?"

MC: "..."

Twelve cats later...

MC: "Finally."

An orange tabby cat jumps out of the minecart and goes on its merry way.

Sayori: "Bye, MeowC!"

MC: "Since we're giving names, I'm going to call you Jesse..."

Sayori: "Huh? Why?"

MC: "Because today, we cook."

...

MC: "Sugar?"

Sayori: "Check."

MC: "Flour?"

Sayori: "Check."

MC: "Soda?"

Sayori: "Check."

MC: "Fire extinguisher?"

Sayori: "Che- hey!"

MC: "Better safe than Sayorry."

Sayori: "Hmph. I'm taking an extra cupcake from your share as payment for that pun."

MC: "Fair enough. Vanilla extract?"

Sayori: "Check."

MC: "Milk?"

Sayori: "Check."

MC: "Eggs?"

Sayori: "Here, two eggs. Eggsactly the amount we need!"

MC: "...and now we're even. Chocolate?"

Sayori: "...check."

MC: "Okay, let's start by mixing the base. Just make sure to set it to -"

(An ingredient blizzard fills the kitchen.)

MC: "...low."

Sayori: "...Whoops."

MC: "Maybe it's best if I handle the mixing for now."

...

MC: "Okay, the cupcakes are in the oven. Time to handle the filling."

Sayori: "Got it!"

MC: "And I think you can try mixing again."

Sayori: "Are you sure? You still have flour in your hair from my first attempt..."

MC: "Being bad at something is the first step towards being good at something, as long as you learn from it."

Sayori: "Okay. First, I check that the mixer is set on low."

MC: "Good. Now, slow and steady..."

...

MC: "...Aaaannd, it's done."

Sayori: "Yay!"

MC: "Well done, Bun. I knew you could do it."

Sayori sets the mixer down, and MC lets go of the bowl. They take hold of each other's hands instead, pull themselves closer together, and close their eyes as their lips close in for a-

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

Sayori: "Uh... MC?"

MC: "Uh..."

(The oven seems to have switched itself to smoke machine mode.)

MC prepares the fire extinguisher, but the only thing extinguished today was the hope of eating homemade cupcakes."

Sayori: "...maybe this is still edible?"

MC: "...I wouldn't risk it."

Sayori: "Did I... do something wrong again?"

MC: "Actually, no. I think this was my fault."

(MC pulls out the recipe on his phone.)

MC: "The website I got this recipe from is American... they had the oven temperature in Fahrenheit."

Sayori: "Hehehe..."

MC: "What's funny?"

Sayori: "Looks like I'm not the only one who needs to take steps towards being good at something~"

MC: "...I guess so?"

Sayori: "Anyway, now that cupcakes are out of the question... can we order pizza?"

(The doorbell rings.)

MC: "Way ahead of you."

Sayori: "You ordered pizza in advance, counting on me messing up?"

MC: "...maybe?"

Sayori: "Heh. Well looks like it's not my failure this pizza is for now~"

"Chekhov's Pizza, delivered at the most plot-convenient time or your money back!"

MC: "Well, you've certainly earned your five-star review."

Sayori: "Oh! Should we leave a tip?"

"Thanks, but we have a strict no-tip policy.

As the boss says, "It's my job to make sure the staff gets paid well, not the customers."

Enjoy your pizza!"

Sayori: "Thanks, you t~"

MC: "-ake care on your way back!"

"Will do, thank you! Bye!"

MC & Sayo: "Bye!"

...

Sayori: "Whew, that was close."

MC: "Yeah... how about we take this inside?"

...

Sayori: "Finally..."

Sayori: "I have you all to myself!"

Sayori: "And no one and nothing is going to get between the two of us..."

Sayori: "Mmmmmmm..."

(Sayori eats the last slice of pizza.)

Sayori: "I'm so glad we messed up that reshape."

MC: "At least finish the slice first."

Sayori: "Shorry."

...

(Sayori finishes the slice and stands up.)

Sayori: "I'm so glad we messed up that recipe temperature."

MC: "Aren't you disappointed you didn't get to finish the recipe?"

Sayori: "It's okay! That was still one more step towards getting good at cooking. And we got to eat pizza this way!"

MC: "I'm glad you see it that way. I'll go throw the pizza box away."

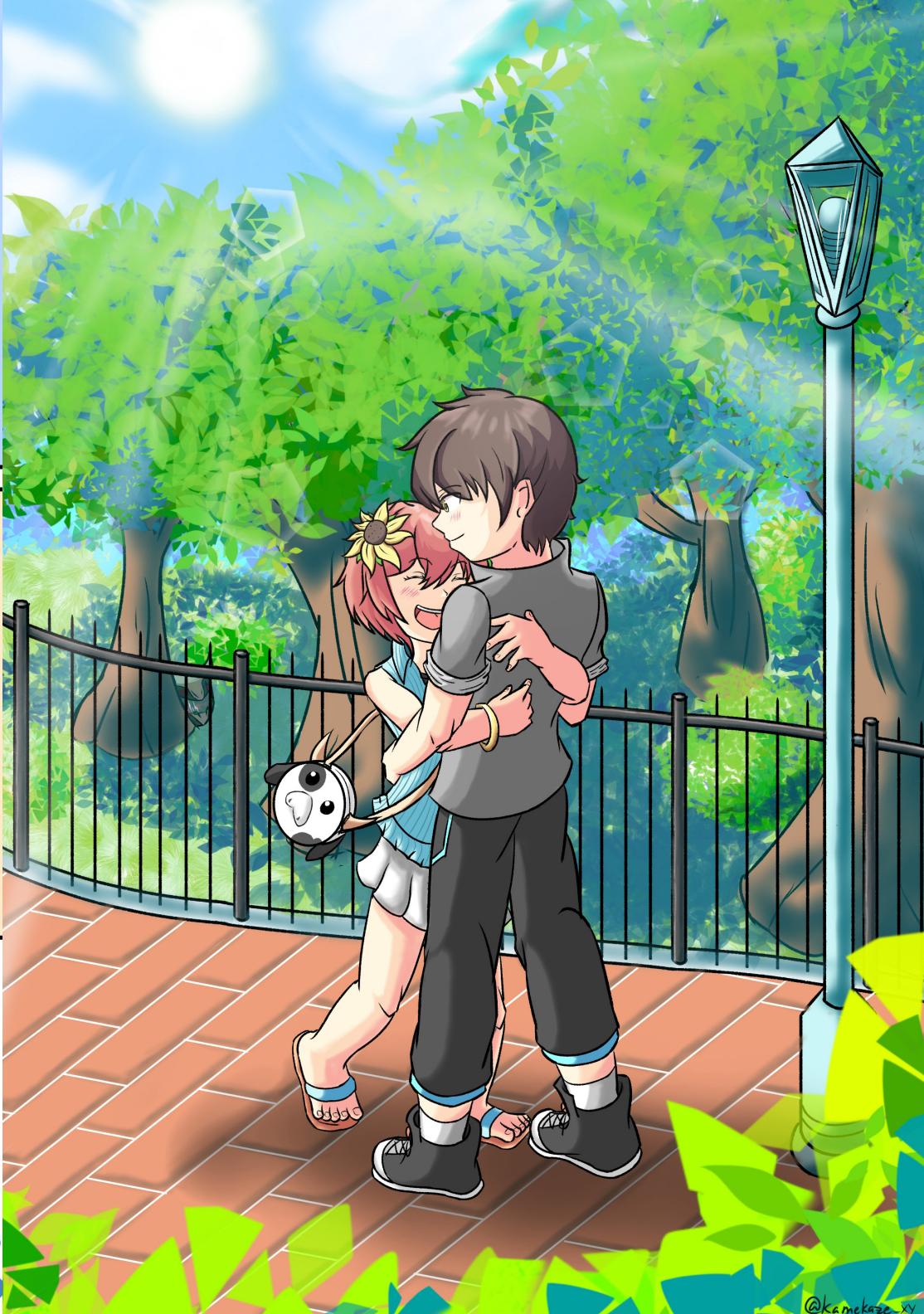
(MC stands up, too.)

MC: "...wait. Didn't my mess-up interrupt us in something else, too?"

Sayori: "Well, you do owe me a romantic kiss..."

(Sayori takes hold of MC's hands and pulls him towards her.)

Sayori: "...and I'm taking it with interest~"











Because You're Here

Written by Elle

Through the Literature Club's windows, the late afternoon sun glistened in molten gold on every surface. Dust motes danced lazily in the amber beams, drifting between the familiar sounds of their daily routine—Yuri's precise movements as she poured tea into delicate porcelain cups, the rapid flutter of manga pages as Natsuki speed-read with furrowed concentration, and the steady rhythm of Monika's typing as she worked on club documentation. But today, an electric current of anticipation charged the ordinary atmosphere. Sayori occupied her usual desk, though “occupied” hardly captured the restless energy radiating from her small frame.

In a frantic rhythm, her feet drummed against the floor, while her hands fiddled with everything within reach—her pen, scraps of paper, the hem of her uniform skirt. She kept sneaking glances at MC, then at the others, her smile expanding progressively like a balloon slowly inflating under mounting pressure. MC could see Sayori's excitement growing, recognizing the telltale signs it was coming.

A certain gleam in her eyes, the way she vibrated with barely contained energy, the unconscious bouncing in her seat—all unmistakable indicators that something was coming. Suddenly, Sayori jumped up to the plate with such sudden enthusiasm that her chair slapped against the ground. The harsh sound startled Yuri, almost causing her carefully balanced teacup to spill.

“Sleepover!” Sayori announced, the single word bursting from her like a champagne cork. “This weekend! My house! All of us!” Her declaration hung in the air, met with a spectrum of reactions that perfectly encapsulated each girl’s personality. Monika’s interest was genuine, Yuri was nostalgic, Natsuki was cautious but intrigued, and Sayori was bursting with excitement, her eyes sparkling with the thrill of the upcoming event. The anticipation for the sleepover was palpable, and each member’s excitement added to the collective thrill, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Monika was the first to respond, setting down her pen with a gentle click as she considered the proposal. Her green eyes lit up with genuine interest, and she tilted her head thoughtfully. “That sounds like it could be fun,” she said, her voice carrying the warmth of someone who’s already planning out the details. As she set down her teacup with deliberate care, Yuri whispered, “It’s been ages since I’ve had a proper sleepover. We could watch movies, play games...” The teacup clinked softly against its saucer, the anticipation in the air palpable.

While she spoke in her characteristic measured tone, her purple hair fell forward, partially obscuring her face. She fidgeted with the edge of her sleeve, betraying her nervousness despite her agreement. “I... I’d enjoy it, actually. Though I hope you don’t mind if I bring a book or two. Sometimes I have trouble sleeping in unfamiliar places.”

She was intrigued by the idea, even if big social gatherings made her anxious. Natsuki's reaction was more complicated, oscillating between skepticism, consideration, and carefully hidden excitement. She closed her manga with a sharp snap, trying to appear nonchalant even as her eyes betrayed her interest.

"I guess it wouldn't be totally lame," Natsuki said, her voice carrying her signature tone when she sounded indifferent about something she actually cared about. "But I'm not doing any of that weird sleepover stuff like painting my nails or talking about boys all night." She paused, then added without being defensive, "Though I suppose I could watch a movie as long as it's not romance garbage." Her unique blend of skepticism and interest, her refusal to conform to stereotypes, added a layer of complexity to the group's dynamics, showcasing the depth of her character and making the audience appreciate her individuality.

With every confirmation, Sayori's smile grew brighter. Her whole being vibrated with joy as her friends approved of her plan. MC's heart tightened as she looked at her, her bright coral eyes scanning his face with intensity. "You'll come, won't you, MC?" she asked, her voice softer and more personal than it had been earlier.

As the question hung in the air, loaded with meaning beyond a mere social invitation, the room's collective attention focused on MC. The seconds passed without his reply, and Sayori's smile began to falter. Uncertainty crept into her expression. But then, his nod came quickly and decisively. The radiant joy that bloomed across her face made him feel a warm, protective glow —a testament to the depth of their relationship and the care he felt for her.

The rest of the club meeting passed in a whirlwind of excited planning. Sayori, her hands clasped together in pride, delved into elaborate plans involving blanket forts, movie marathons, and snacks for a small army. She was like a party planner already orchestrating a royal wedding, consulting with each member to discuss their preferences.

The anticipation for the upcoming sleepover was palpable, and each member's excitement added to the collective thrill, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere that made the audience feel connected and part of the club's vibrant energy.

As the golden afternoon light faded into the softer hues of early evening, the club members packed up their belongings with unusual reluctance to leave. When Sayori had infected them with anticipation, MC and Sayori walked out of the school building together, discussing sleeping arrangements and whether they should make a blanket fort in her bedroom or the living room. In a flash, she spun around and walked backwards in front of him, her schoolbag swinging along with her. While he worried about her walking backwards on the street, MC couldn't help but smile at her enthusiasm. "I was thinking we could do an animal theme!"

He asked, "Animal theme, huh? What did you have in mind?"

"Well," she said, turning around to stand beside him, "I was thinking that maybe I could be a cow and you could be a bull? You know, a matching set, right?"

"And then everyone could pick the animals they wanted." She said it casually, but with a blush on her cheeks—a matching set. The implications weren't lost on him, and he agreed before he'd fully processed the request.

Honestly, that sounds like fun," he said, surprised at how genuine his enthusiasm was. "Really?" Her face lit up. "Oh, this is going to be the best sleepover ever!" She texted the group chat constantly with updates—she'd found the perfect fairy lights, found a new cookie recipe that she wanted to try, and rearranged her living room furniture three times so she could make blanket forts.

Even Natsuki suggested movie snacks, and Yuri shared links to calming tea blends. MC looked forward to the weekend with intense anticipation. Sayori's eyes sparkled when she talked about matching onesies, and that was why MC looked forward to the weekend so much. She asked him carefully if he'd come, which gave the impression that this was not just a casual hangout for her.

On Friday evening, MC went to the store, ostensibly for last-minute supplies but really to get Sayori's favorite chocolate chip cookies. Over the past few months, he'd spent more time perfecting the recipe than he cared to admit. He knew exactly how she liked them—lightly undercooked so they stayed chewy, with just a hint of sea salt to balance the sweetness. In his kitchen, he measured the flour and vanilla extract, telling himself he'd be a good friend.

His heart raced when he imagined her reaction to the homemade treat. MC cleaned his room, double-checked his bag, and tried to concentrate on homework assignments that felt impossibly mundane in comparison to what was ahead. Saturday crawled by at molasses pace. With anticipation, his pulse quickened every time his phone buzzed with another message from the group chat. As the sun descended toward the horizon, painting the autumn sky with purple and amber watercolor washes, MC picked up the carefully wrapped box of cookies.

As he walked to Sayori's house, it felt endless and too short at the same time. He wanted to go right away, but he also enjoyed the anticipation, the promise of whatever magic the evening might hold. Before his knuckles touched the wood, Sayori emerged in all her bovine glory.

Her cow onesie was a masterpiece of absurdity, black and white spotted fabric that hung loose on her petite frame, complete with a pink fabric udder that swayed as she bounced excitedly on her toes.

The hood was pulled up, framing her face with tiny horns that poked out endearingly. A tail attached to her lower back swung with every movement. As she stared at his matching bull onesie, the chocolate brown fabric with its own set of horns and tail, her eyes widened.

They stared at each other for a moment, their matching costumes creating a bubble of shared humor that burst into laughter simultaneously.

"You actually wore it," she gasped between giggles, her hands covering her mouth.

"You said something about symbolism," MC replied, adjusting his hood self-consciously.

"Powerful barnyard love," she declared with mock solemnity, then immediately dissolved into fresh peals of laughter that made his heart skip.

Each surface in the living room had been covered with blankets and pillows, creating a cozy landscape of soft textures. The walls were draped in a warm, magical glow, making the ordinary space seem like something from a fairy tale with string lights draped along them. The coffee table groaned under the weight of an impressive array of snacks, and several stacks of movies teetered precariously on the entertainment center. Each Literature Club member had already arrived and was settling into their own corner of the makeshift fort, looking equally ridiculous in their animal costumes. Despite wearing the deer onesie, Monika managed to maintain her natural elegance. The soft, brown fabric with white spots complemented her auburn hair as she organized movies, just as she always did. The small antlers protruding from her hood caught the string lights, creating interesting shadows on the wall behind her.

With her snow owl onesie, Yuri looked like a wise guardian of literature, taking up a corner by the bookshelf. Her feathers suited her perfectly, but while trying to hold a steaming mug of hot chocolate and a book, she seemed to have trouble with the wing sleeves. She looked as though she was actually trying to take flight when the fabric caught on every turn of the page.

Natsuki sprawled on her stomach in front of the television, her grey tabby cat onesie with its distinctive striped pattern making her appear even smaller than usual. The hood kept sliding forward over her eyes, forcing her to push it back repeatedly as she wrestled with the remote control. Her movements were sharp and irritated, like an actual cat frustrated by an uncooperative toy, and she muttered under her breath about the inadequacy of streaming service horror selections.

MC's attention kept drifting back to Sayori, who moved through the space like a comet trailing joy. From person to person, she adjusted pillows that didn't need adjustments, offered snacks everyone already had, and kept a constant stream of cheerful commentary that filled the room with energy and warmth.

Every time she passed close to MC, she'd touch his hand—brief, gentle touches that jolted him awake. It seemed casual, accidental, but it was intentional. The way she brushed her fingers against his arm, and the way her shoulder bumped his as she rearranged cushions, made his pulse quicken.

When they finally settled in to watch the evening's first movie, a romantic comedy that Monika diplomatically picked. Sayori sat directly next to him on the main expanse of blankets. As she arranged the fabric carefully and deliberately to create a shared cocoon of warmth, she drew a large throw over them both.

The shared space beneath the blanket felt intimate and electric. As the opening credits rolled, Sayori slowly shifted closer, the movement so subtle it seemed almost unconscious. As their shoulders touched, she leaned a little closer to him and eventually curled up like a contented cat.

While the movie played on, MC found himself more aware of Sayori than of the unfolding plot. When she laughed, he felt the vibration travel through her body. When she tensed during emotional scenes, her hand would unconsciously find his arm, her fingers warm even through the fabric of his onesie. Her breathing created a gentle rhythm that somehow synchronized with his own, creating a peaceful bubble within the larger group dynamic.

As the evening progressed, the combination of warmth, comfort, and the late hour began to take its toll on the other members. Natsuki fell asleep in the middle of a complaint about the movie's unrealistic portrayal of relationships. In her relaxed state, she looked really feline as she curled up in her corner.

As exhaustion overtook her scholarly dedication, Yuri lost her book. She dozed off in her chair, her owl hood keeping watch even as she slept. In her deer onesie, Monika looked like a woodland spirit at rest as she dimmed the leading lights and adjusted the volume quietly. But Sayori remained awake, her breathing steady and calm against MC's side. A forgotten movie played on the muted soundtrack while the fairy lights cast dancing shadows on the walls. A dreamlike quality had taken over the room, suspended between waking and sleeping.

In the gentle glow of the string lights, Sayori tilted her head up to meet his gaze. They stared at each other for a moment, the weight of unspoken feelings hanging between them like a bridge waiting to be crossed, her coral eyes soft and vulnerable, reflecting the warm light like captured stars.

In a single gesture, she reached out her hand and placed it over his. It was warm and slightly trembling, and MC felt the rapid flutter of her pulse where their skin touched. "I used to imagine nights like this," she whispered, barely audible over the movie's soft dialogue. "When everything felt dark and impossible."

The quiet admission clenched MC's heart. He held out his hand, palm up, threading their fingers together gently, offering comfort through touch when words couldn't bridge the gap.

"I never thought I'd actually get them," she said softly. "Not really. Not with someone who mattered."

"You have one now," he replied, his voice equally quiet in the intimate space they'd created.

"But only because you're here," she murmured, and the tremor in her voice made his heart hurt.

Instead of responding with words that might shatter the delicate moment, MC leaned his forehead against hers. This gesture was subtle, intimate, and spoke volumes that words could not. She caught her breath and flitted her eyes closed as she took in the simple miracle of being loved.

They stayed like that for countless minutes, breathing the same air, existing in the same small space carved out from the rest of the world. As the fairy lights danced, the movie played its forgotten soundtrack, and the sleeping friends slept peacefully.

As Sayori's breathing started to slow and deepen, the tension in her shoulders began to loosen up, and her head landed over his heart with a soft sigh of contentment. Even as her grip relaxed into a loose clasp of sleep, her hand stayed intertwined with his.

MC remained perfectly still, one arm wrapped gently around her shoulders, acutely aware of the precious trust she'd placed in him. Even in sleep, her smile lingered, turning her features into something radiant and peaceful. It looked like she found precisely what she'd been looking for—security, warmth, and the simple joy of being loved.

The fairy lights eventually dimmed to their lowest setting, casting a faint glow in the room. Outside, the autumn wind stirred the leaves gently with a gentle susurru that seemed to bless the quiet scene inside. In the peaceful darkness, Sayori trusted MC as her anchor, and he remained awake long after the others had fallen asleep. This evening had created something precious between them—something fragile and beautiful that deserved to be nurtured and protected.

In the darkness that enveloped them, he began to believe that perhaps this was just the beginning of something great, something real, something worth all the uncertainty that brought them here. As MC held Sayori close, surrounded by the gentle breathing of their sleeping friends, he let himself believe in happiness—both theirs and hers.







The Perfect Date

Written by Storyteller

Tonight is going to be the perfect date, MC thought to himself as he climbed into his car. His junker sputtered to life as he turned the key. Phew, he thought. It sounds like it's almost dying rather than completely dead. But MC didn't have time or money to think about car repairs. Dressed in a fancy rental tuxedo, he was prepared to take Sayori to the school dance.



As he drove he tried to drown out the sound of the obnoxious car engine by humming their song on the radio. I can't believe it's been six months since we started dating. This dance is all she ever talks about. I need to make sure it's perfect. And it was going to be. He had already ordered Sayori a beautiful corsage and reserved dinner at the classiest restaurant he could find. To top it off, they would spend the evening dancing together with their classmates. He was going to make sure it was unforgettable for her.

MC was on cloud nine when he waltzed into the flower shop. After giving his name the lady at the counter handed him a pristine bundle of white and lavender flowers intricately laced together. It was the perfect corsage for the perfect date. As he reached his old clunker, his phone rang. It was Sayori! Heart fluttering, he answered quickly while setting the flower down on his seat. She let him know she was waiting for him and excited for their evening together. MC let her know he would be there soon, and with a happy sigh sat down...right on the corsage!

Crunch!



Dread washed through MC's soul as he realized what he had done. How could I have been this stupid! There was no time left to order another flower. He'd need to find something else, and fast. Off to the side of the road he noticed some pretty yellow wildflowers growing. "These will have to do..." he muttered to himself as he gathered them up.

Sayori opened the door to find MC standing on her porch, head shyly looking to the side while holding some freshly picked wildflowers. "For me?" she said as she took them and planted a kiss on MC's cheek. He blushed and nodded, still feeling ashamed for his mishap with the corsage. Arm in arm he led her to his car and opened the door for her. "I feel like quite the princess today MC; you always know how to treat a lady!"

Well, at least we have the restaurant to look forward to, MC thought to himself. He had made the reservation months ago. It was supposed to be one of the fanciest in town. He'd been saving everything he could to make this special. The car coughed a thick cloud of black smoke as they pulled into the parking lot, seeming quite out of place among the more luxurious vehicles around them. Still though, MC, trying to act as posh as possible, opened Sayori's door, took her by the hand, and led her to the restaurant.



"I'm sorry sir but it doesn't seem like we have a reservation under that name," the hostess at the front said looking over her book.

"Are you sure? I booked it quite a while ago. It's a table for two right before the school dance."

The lady tapped at her computer while MC felt the same feeling of dread tickle at the back of his neck. "Oh, there it is," she said, and MC felt relief wash over him. "It's for tomorrow night. I think you picked the wrong day. I'm sorry but tonight's a full house, and there's nothing we can do."

"Hey MC, don't worry about it! You know, I like fries more anyway!" They had decided to stop at a local burger place to eat instead. Sayori, positive as ever, was trying her best to cheer MC up, but he couldn't get rid of that sinking feeling of everything going wrong.

"I'm sorry Sayori. You just look so beautiful to be here in a fast food restaurant. You deserve the best, and I've already screwed things up." Sayori looked up at him with a fry hanging out of her mouth and a smile on her face. "But don't worry, we've still got the dance, and I want to make you feel like a princess. This still can be the perfect date."



After they finished their meal, they clambered into the car and headed towards the dance. MC was feeling glad that despite all of the setbacks, Sayori seemed to be happy, and now they could spend the evening dancing together with their friends. It was still going to be the perfect date.

And then, with a sputter, clank, and a wheeze, his car lurched to a stop.

MC stared down under the open hood of his car, the rising smoke a reflection of the state of his dreams for a perfect date. There was no way they were going to make it to the dance now. They were in the middle of nowhere without phone service and didn't know when someone might pass by.

His head bowed, MC let out an exasperated sigh. "Oh Sayori. I'm so sorry. I just wanted this date to be perfect. But everything I've done has just been one failure after another. You deserve so much better. I wish I could have given you the evening you deserve."

Sayori touched him on the shoulder and looked up into his eyes. Oh but she was beautiful. He had been lost in those eyes more times than he could count. He looked to see sadness or frustration, but all he saw looking back at him was beautiful, sincere love.

"MC, this night has been perfect! I got a bundle of my very favorite flowers! Oh! And I also got to eat some of my favorite food! And..." she reached into the car and flipped the radio on. "I have some music, the light of the full moon, and you!" She grabbed his arm and put it around her back. "And to me, MC, that is perfect. I couldn't have asked for a better evening."

MC smiled as he felt the sincerity of her words touch his heart. As he held her close, their song began to play on the radio. They danced together, lost in each other's eyes, dancing in the moonlight. I suppose she's right, MC thought to himself as she rested her head on his chest. This really was the perfect date.

The End



The Sun and the Moon

I've always looked up to the sun,
the only star who shines for
everybody but herself.

I've always wondered, who will ever
shine for her? Does she even
deserve to be loved?

In the midst of uncertainty, I met
the moon.

He is the one who carries her light
when the night falls, a gentle
burden in the name of love.

As if the sun deserved a little rest,
the moon guards her heart through
the night.

There are millions of other stars in
the sky but nobody shines through
the dark like the moon. It's him
who loves her the most.

So let the moonlight be our
mirrorball tonight. I want to dance
to the beat of our hearts, your
laugh is my favorite song.

A flower in my hair picked by you
is worth more than any crown in
my head picked by a thousand
people. Even if we danced in an
empty field, let the flowers be our
witness of our balldance for two.

I wonder if the sun loves the moon
the same way I love you.









TOMORROW

Written by Anon

The sky is still glowing with the soft orange haze of sunset. We lay on the grass just outside the school. I watch the clouds drift lazily above us, trying to ignore the storm that still sometimes rolls in my head.

"Hey, MC."

He doesn't respond, as I expect. But I pester him anyway.

"Emmmmm Ceeeeee..."

"You know, Sayo, when someone closes their eyes, it's usually a sign that they are trying to go to sleep."

"I just wanna ask you something."

"Sure. Shoot."

"Just something I was thinking about, before we graduate and everything."

"The rest of our lives begin tomorrow."

"Would you... Would you be there with me?"

"Yeah. Of course."

"I mean, we kinda have to. Graduation ceremonies work like that."

"Stop it! This is for real meanie..."

"I know, I know." He chuckles to himself.

"My answer is yes. Of course."

"Okay..."

A cold breeze sweeps over us. I watch MC as he keeps his eyes closed, wondering if he truly means what he says. I wish I didn't have to always wonder, but I'm trying my best. I haven't been able to imagine a future for myself in a very long time, probably since I was a little girl. Imagining I'd be some famous artist or author. I used to always write about the sun. How warm it'd make me feel. Or how lame it can be in the summer sometimes. Or when I drew a picture. I always made sure to include the sun. With a cute little smiley face.

MC suddenly sighs, keeping his eyes closed.

"I suck." He mutters.

"What?" I ask, completely confused.

"I suck."

"Yeah I heard you! But... What?!"

"I just do."

"Where's all this coming from? You do not suck!"

"It's just something I'm realizing right now, honestly. I screwed up our date. I screwed up my project. I screwed up the simplest things even when I tried my best."

"So?"

"What do you mean?"

His eyes opened for the first time since we laid down.

"I gave it my all, Sayori. I put my heart and soul into that project. And yet, it wasn't enough. I still messed it up somehow."

His voice cracks, telling me this isn't something he'd try to joke away.

"So what if you screwed up? What's the worst that can happen?"

He pauses for a moment before shrugging his shoulders.

"Dunno."

"You know, it doesn't really matter how much you screw up. You're still you."

He smirks.

"Another way of saying that is 'All I do is fail, so I'm a failure, and that's all I am.'"

Hmph. He thinks he got me with that one, doesn't he?!

"Okay. I'll rephrase... When you screw up, you still manage to pick yourself back up. I've seen you do it! I'm not saying that moment when you know you messed up doesn't hurt like crazy. It's absolutely the worst! But you always bounce back."

"Haha. So cliché."

"I'm serious! You spend so much time looking for all these imperfections in yourself, when me or anybody else would just say... Yep! That's you, alright! You aren't defined by some little mistakes you made here and there."

"Right. But like... What if 'me' isn't good enough for anybody?"

"Hm... Well, sounds to me like you shouldn't try to be!"

"Huh?"

"I mean think about it. We can probably spend our whole lives chasing that feeling of being good enough, when there isn't anybody stopping us from deciding when to feel it."

I sit up and point to myself.

"Look at me. I get lost in my thoughts, trip over my own two feet, and these... rainclouds still stick around. But it's still me. Imperfections and all!"

I pause for a second and look down at the ground.

"And... I'm not saying I'm okay with myself now. I'm still working on things. I want to do better. To be better. I want to stop hating myself for even trying. The same goes for you."

He sighs and stays quiet for a moment.

"It's really not easy, is it?"

"It isn't. But I think it's worth trying to understand our flaws and accepting them as part of ourselves, instead of trying to erase them."

"Hm. Small steps, yeah?"

"Of course~ And I'll always give you a hand, just like you promised me."

He only keeps his eyes closed and sighs. He reaches over and takes my hand. Just like that. No words. Just the warmth of his fingers against mine. I can only smile at him, knowing very well that's a sign that my words reached him.

It wasn't too long ago that he saved my life. And I guess now, there's a part of me that wants to return the favor. It's easy for me to forget sometimes. Depression makes it easy. I spent so much time imagining how much better the world would be without me around. But these days... I begin to realize the world is just going to keep on spinning the exact same way it did today, tomorrow, and forever. The sun will shine the same, storms will roll in the same way.

He would get up, and go to school the same way.

But it would be without me.

Still wishing I existed.

Monika would handle the club on her own. Wishing I was around to help her.

Natsuki would have to bake fewer cupcakes. We absolutely CANNOT have that.

Yuri wouldn't have a partner to share her books or poems with.

It's so easy for me to forget... No matter how I feel about myself. No matter what I do.

I matter to people.

Stubborn 'ol me is going to have to be okay with that.

But I think I'll manage.

"Hey, Sayori. It's getting a little late. We should head home now."

"Ooh. Right! Just give me a minute. I get dizzy when I get up too fast."

"You made sure to eat lunch, right?"

"Ehehe~ Of course."

After all, his sunrises wouldn't feel the same without me here.

And for the first time in a while...

I'd like to see tomorrow's.



You're free after school tomorrow, right?

I've got something
for you!

Yeah, I'm free.

Funny thing—I have
something for you too.



When Rainclouds Pass

Written by Storyteller

"Heeeeeeeeyyy!!"

MC heard a familiar voice calling out to him. What may have sounded like an annoying girl to him a couple weeks ago now made his heart jump for joy. He looked over to see his old childhood friend waving her arms in the air, completely oblivious to any attention she might draw to herself. I guess I shouldn't just think of her as my childhood friend anymore, he thought to himself. He smiled and hurried over to give his girlfriend a hug.

Sayori nuzzled her head in his chest, then looked up with a grin. "You weren't going to head home without me were you?" Every week students were assigned certain extra curricular tasks, and Sayori was working in the school's garden. MC had been saddened at the news; one of the best parts of his day was walking home with her after school.

"What?" MC said defensively. "I didn't know how long you were going to take, and I have a ton of homework I need to finish!"

Sayori scrunched up her face in a show of annoyance. "Meanie," she pouted. MC let out a sigh.

"Fine, I suppose I can help you out a bit," he said. "But I really need to get home as soon as we finish." Sayori's eyes lit up and a smile spread across her face. She was so unbelievably beautiful. How had he not noticed all these years?

"Great! Take these!" she said as she pushed a watering can and a gardening shears into his hands. MC was slightly taken aback. Did she just use her charming smile to get what she wanted from him? Well, it wouldn't be the first time, he thought and he followed her with all the gear in tow.

The garden was rather large for a school with beautiful trimmed hedges surrounding the plot. Lilies, tulips, and daffodils sprung up in neatly packed garden boxes. The air smelled of freshly tilled earth, and a slight breeze rustled the rosebushes. MC breathed it all in. It was going to take a while, but every moment he got to spend with Sayori was a blessing.

They went about their tasks, pulling weeds, trimming dead leaves, and watering the flowers. MC would often find his eyes wandering over to Sayori rather than helping. Whenever she would catch him, she'd laugh, call him a silly name, and then go back to work, her smile just a little bigger. Her smile made his heart race, and at the same time made his stomach drop.

Sayori had been suffering for longer than he liked to imagine. Looking back at her poems now felt like a slap in the face. How did he not notice sooner? It wasn't that he had been ignoring her, they had just drifted apart over the years. That was common with childhood friendships, right? He felt a knot of rock hard guilt in his heart when she opened up to him. He wasn't always the best at knowing what to say, but he promised himself he would always be there for her. And from the smiles she showed him, he realized that she knew it too.

As they approached the end of the garden, Sayori stopped by the sunflowers. Kneeling down, she took her shears and clipped some of the bigger ones. Gathering them into a bouquet, she mused "these are my favorite ones! They remind me of the sunshine."

MC knelt down next to her. He didn't care that his school uniform might get dirty; he wanted Sayori to know he was there for her. "There used to be days that I would forget about the sun," she said. "Days that the rainclouds darkened my mind so badly I just wanted to fade away into nothingness."

A tear ran down her cheek as she turned to look at MC. "But then, you came back into my life. All it took was me chasing you down and inviting you to the Literature Club. That one decision; it changed everything." Sayori beamed at him, then cocked her head to the side as if an idea had occurred. "You know, you're kind of like the moon, MC!"

MC was taken aback. "The moon? How?"

Sayori let out a giggle. "Well the moon doesn't have its own light you know? It reflects the light from the sun!"

MC shrugged. "I suppose. So are you calling me dim?"

"No!" Sayori pouted. "Hey I'm serious! I wanted to say how you make me feel, dummy!"

MC chuckled and placed a hand behind his head. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, go ahead."

Sayori huffed, then continued. "What I mean to say is that before we started dating, the darkness felt overwhelming at times. I would even wonder if I'd ever see the sunshine again..." She ran her fingers over the petals of the flowers, appearing mesmerised by their striking yellow color. "But now, I have you! You are the light in my darkness, a sign that even when I can't see it, the sunlight is still there. And that, MC, gives me the strength to wait until the rainclouds pass."

MC leaned over and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Sayori giggles. "Ehe, you probably shouldn't kiss me too much or you'll get tired of it!"

MC laughs to himself. "I'll never get tired of kissing you." A sound like a loud snort echoed out from behind the couple.

"Did you hear that?" MC asked, turning around to see if someone was watching them.

"Eh, it was probably just a bird or something," Sayori replies, standing up and dusting off her skirt. "Come on, we can head home now!"

Hand in hand they walk home together, Sayori bouncing with a skip in her step and MC walking in steady confidence. "You know," Sayori says. "Monika was assigned to help me with the gardening assignment today. I wonder why she never showed up."

MC shrugged. "Oh you know how busy she can be. She probably had something she had to do for the Literature Club."

"Yeah, you're probably right," Sayori replied while squeezing MC's hand tightly. "You know, I'm so happy she created the Literature Club. If she hadn't, we wouldn't have gotten together. I'll always be grateful for Monika for that. Because of her, I have you!"















My Hope and Healing Rain

Written by Jaredev

"We are gathered here today for a very special occasion, the union of two hearts; two souls becoming one," the priest proclaims to the plethora of guests perched in the pews. A look of nervous excitement is written all over Sayori's face as her heart nearly bursts out of her chest. This was it. The day she waited so long for – her wedding day. A quick look behind her brings a momentary calm, seeing the faces of her dear friends: Yuri, Natsuki, and Monika, all smiling and cheering on the bride with warm smiles. A deep breath snaps her back to reality, and her eyes meet those of MC, her bridegroom.

MC returns his love's gaze with a blush on his cheeks. A tomorrow that was once promised now, finally, turns into today. He adjusts his white tie, clearing his throat as the priest continues in his adage, "Love is patient and kind. It does not envy, nor boast, nor is proud. It is not self-seeking, nor does it keep a record of wrongs. It always trusts, always hopes, always endures."

An enduring love... MC thinks to himself. That was the promise he made when he proposed to Sayori on that day. His nerves subside, and he squeezes his fists with determination.

"And now, the couple will share their vows. MC," the priest calls to him with a gentle invitation, "do you have your vows ready?"

"Right here," MC proclaims, pulling out a small, brown notebook from his tuxedo's inner pocket.

Sayori's eyes widen at the sight of the thing. That's the one he used to bring to the literature club, she thinks to herself, a wistful smile forming at the corner of her cheeks.

"You know, it's funny. Usually whenever I think of you, writing comes so naturally to me. This time, however... I felt the words were never enough." MC waves around the notebook to Sayori, revealing pages of crossed-out lines full of unfinished thoughts. "But that isn't to say I couldn't think of anything. Quite the opposite, in fact." With another flip of the pages, MC turns his notebook to a long list of words and phrases that all make up his bride-to-be. It's a technique he had used many times before when writing poems, but this time it carried a lot more significance. His eyes scan through the list, remembering every word he wrote, even some that never made it to the page, only to see one phrase circled in crimson ink – "my hope."

"When I was younger, I never gave much thought about what the future held. What was right in front of me was more than enough, each day passing me by. I didn't feel the need to put in the extra effort knowing that people just expected the bare minimum from me... except for you, that is." MC looked into Sayori's eyes as he said that last part. "You always pushed me to better myself, despite my bemoaning objections. To be honest, I think a lot of the stuff I did was to make you happy. Looking back now though... I'm thankful that you pushed me in those directions. You really helped me avoid becoming a... a NEET, was it?" The happy couple share a laugh under the sunlit canopy of this special day, the mood lightening the weight of each other's mutual nervousness. "I guess that's what best friends do, right? They help each other out. You never gave up on me, and I always wanted to do the same in return. In a sense, you became my hope. My hope that I could be more than what I thought I was... and my hope of what the world could be."

MC looks up toward the heavens, closing his eyes for a moment to take a breath. Sure, he had been vulnerable with Sayori before, but opening up like this, in front of so many people, was something he had never done. But, as if to reassure and give MC strength, Sayori cups the back of his hands with her own. The silken fabric of her gloves gives him a sense of comfort and relief. MC then looks Sayori directly in the eyes, telling himself All that matters is what you say to her, as he closes his notebook and pockets it. With a grateful smile, MC holds Sayori's in turn, sharing the vows that he could never write in a notebook but were always in his heart.

"Sayori, you are my dearest friend; the one I want to walk through this life with. When you're by my side, each day is an adventure that I never want to end. Whether it's looking up at the sky and spotting clouds or having a movie night as we laugh and cry, every little moment is precious to me because I'm with you. I promise to never take you for granted, to always do my best to understand how you're feeling and what you need. Your happiness is my happiness, and I promise to give you the best life I can. We will go through hardships, as life often brings, but no matter what happens, I will face it with you. You are my hope, my joy, my confidence, and just as I hold your hand now, I want to continue holding it for the rest of my life."

His words were simple and honest, yet he spoke them with such conviction that everyone couldn't help but be drawn into a reverent silence. "Those were quite the beautiful words, my boy," the priest assures. "Your sincerity and commitment will do you well in the years to come." He then turns his attention from the groom to the bride. "Now, Sayori, do you have your vows ready?"

"O-oh! Yes," she responds as Monika hands her two small pieces of paper, folded thrice. Corner by corner, the first paper is opened, and Sayori's silky gloves tighten their grip on the paper. With a gentle exhale, her lips curl upward as she begins to read off the words with a smile bigger than any she had given before.

"Hello, My moonlight~"

"Hello~" MC returns the simple greeting with a chuckle.

"Ahaha... The reason I started calling you that is because... I truly think that's what you are to me." The edges of the paper slightly crumple as Sayori's grip tightens harder, her voice betraying her eyes with the tiniest crack as she continues. "For so long, every day felt like... going through the motions, like my cloudy skies were going to stay... forever. Every day felt like night, and every night felt like an eternity. What could I even do?" Darting her eyes away from the page, Sayori looks down at her feet, continuing on. "I never thought anyone would find value in a girl like me. That I didn't deserve to be happy, that these dark thoughts were all I was worth...."

The audience looks around at one another with confused smiles, surprised by the honesty of the bride's very words. Yuri turns to them all with a motherly gaze, and a single finger touches her lips, quelling the congregation into silence.

Everyone's attention focuses back on Sayori, who carries on without missing a beat. "And yet you showed me just how much I am cherished and loved. That even someone like me deserves happiness. That even the heaviest storm would pass. And what did I see in my darkest night? You, my moonlight. I saw you! And..." Sayori also gleefully turns her head to her dear bridesmaids, "that was when I realized that I don't have to fight my battles alone. That it was okay to trust my friends, too." The girls return gentle smiles to Sayori, and Natsuki adds a small nod of affirmation, You can tell us anything, anytime you need, she says without a single word.

Reading ahead on her page, Sayori's cheeks redden as her eyes shift left and right, and a nervous giggle escapes her lips. "This is where the actual vows are,ahaha... Ahem! MC, I promise to always be loyal to you and you alone. Even since we were children, I always wanted to be by your side, yet I didn't fully understand what that meant until we came together. You taught me what it means to be happy, and I want to give you that same happiness in return. I look at you now and can't help but smile. My tears are not of sorrow, but of a newfound joy thanks to you.

I've thought of our future, our dreams, and I realize they're going to be one now. The love we have will be complete and whole and beautiful. And, for the first time, I feel excited about living!"

As Sayori's eyes reach the end of the page, she looks up to her lover's eyes and holds out her hand as she caresses his cheek before realizing to herself what she's doing. Her hand gently withdraws, and the blush on her face deepens more than before. "Those may be the end of my vows, but it's not the end of heart." Sayori then folds the first page up before handing it back to Monika with a simple "thank you" under her breath, turning back to the second page she was given. "I think about how many things had to have happened that led to this moment. If I didn't chase you down on that fateful day in high school and bribe you with Natsuki's cupcakes to join the literature club, would you have ever known about what I struggle with? Would you have always seen me as just your childhood friend?" The bride's eyes turn downcast, only for an instant, before she looks back at MC. This time, when she does, everything around her fades into the background, as if a light of brilliant white surrounds only the bride and groom.

"If it weren't for the literature club...for my friends...for you... I wouldn't even be here... And, so, I wrote a special poem with my heart's pen. I've been rehearsing it for God knows how long. Let's hope I don't mess it up now..." With a deep, heartfelt sigh, Sayori's vision focuses on MC and MC alone. The butterflies in her stomach rest for this single moment, and the metaphorical flower she's been nurturing comes into full bloom.

I look above. The sky is grey.
That's right, there's rain today.
My heart wrests silently on this stormy night.
I feel water hit my face, these droplets of blight.
Drip, drip, drip
How long has the rain gone on now? One decade? Two?
I wished for a sun that I didn't think could last.
Can somebody, anybody, make these clouds pass?
Drip, drip, drip
My heart feels empty; my bottles are cracked.
A flood of emotions, all turned to ash.
I want a sign but need a miracle.
That's when the clouds part, and the sun is now visible.
Drip, drip, drip

The sun, it's come back! It's made itself known.
My hope is now seen at the end of a rainbow.
"Where did you go? How can this be?"
"I was always behind the clouds, waiting to be seen."
Drip, drip, drip

"But why, Mr. Sun? Why is the rain still here?"
He stares at me gently,
"A sunshower, dear."
"It's when the rain falls, yet I still appear."
Drip, drip, drip

"Then what can I do? What can I say?
Am I meant to endure these long, cloudy days?"
"The fact that I'm here is a sign of your strength.
And when I am gone, the moon will remain."
Drip, drip, drip

And then came the moon, through my darkest night
Grabbing my hand and holding it tight.
The light of your eyes was the sun that I sought
The warmth of your heart won the war that I fought
Drip... d r i p... d r i p . . .

The storm now feels different, gone is the pain.
With my moonlight here, it's become healing rain.
You asked me to stay, and I happily agreed.
Thank you, my moonlight, for choosing me, and only me.

"Back then, I told you that I loved you so much that I wanted to die, but today... I love you so much that I want to live with you for the rest of my life..." With the final words of her vows now complete, Sayori wipes away the tears from her eyes, and replaces them with a heartfelt smile.

"Wow..." is all the priest manages to say at first. He takes a moment to clear his throat, as well as dry his eyes, before speaking again. "Thank you, my dear, for all you have shared. Everything about that speech was beautiful. The love you share is evident not only in the words you have shared but how they have been expressed. This expression will be fully realized with the exchanging of the rings."

Picking up the golden bands from the altar, the opposite rings are given to MC and Sayori. "These rings symbolize an unbreakable bond. The gold, refined through fire to achieve its sparkling shine, and the circle representing eternity. MC, as you place the ring on Sayori's hand, please repeat after me. This ring I give as a symbol of my love."

"This ring I give as a symbol of my love."
"To cherish you now and forever."
"To cherish you now and forever."

MC slips the ring onto Sayori's finger, his face unable to contain the overflowing joy within him. The priest then asks Sayori to do the same. "This ring I give as a symbol of my love."

"This ring I give as a symbol of my love."
"To cherish you now and forever."
"To cherish you now and forever."

The happy couple now complement each other in body, mind, soul, and promise. All that's left is the final step.

"By the power invested in me, I now pronounce you man and wife! You may kiss the-"

Before the priest can even finish his pronouncement, Sayori pulls MC toward her, and the two meet with a kiss. Unlike the many others they have shared before, this one is different. Special. It signifies the end of an old chapter and the start of something entirely new. The rain has stopped, the clouds have passed, and the two now walk together, hand in hand.





CHILDHOOD

SCHOOL

MARRIAGE





Credits

10jishi
AdhitE
Aqua
Arty
Augux
Ayacchi
BelowAverageBreather
BigJ
Bluekapo
Borjjie
Brownie
Bryson
CyberStar
DailyMCSayo
Dawn
Elle
erionaut
Feels
Haruna
Heinzy
HelpAme
Heq
Hinaten
Jaredev
Kame
Kami
KGalazy
Lemon
Lovender
Luna

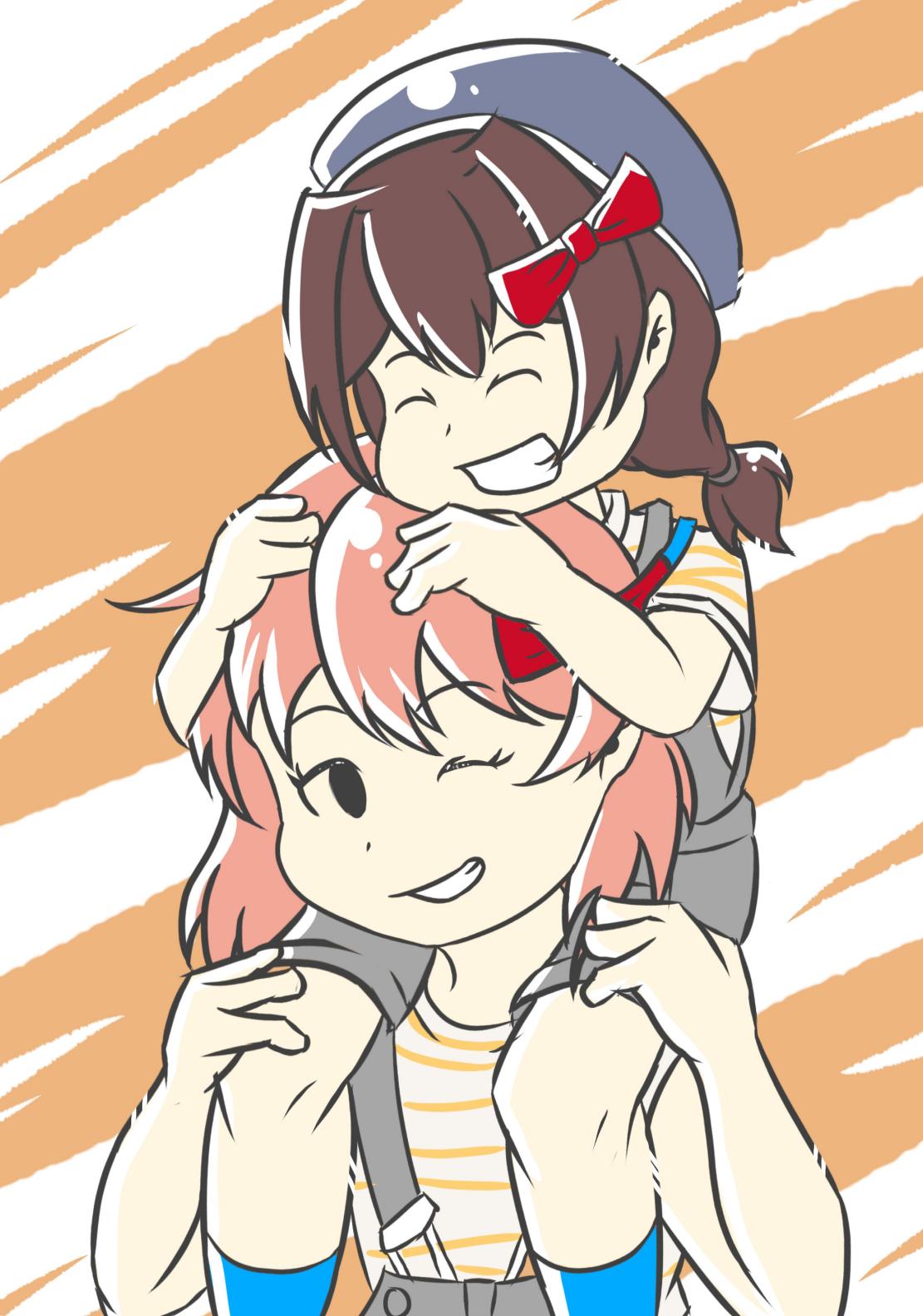
@totokijitsu
@AdhitEO430
@AquaBlueArt
@yabooiarty
@Augux168
@ayacchi_corner
@EpicOxygenUser
@TheBigJ
@bluekapo_art
@Borjjie
@SillyBrownieeee
@DoodleOne
@CyberstarCT
@DailyMCSayo
@DwanableArt
@Writer_Elle
myeireon.bsky.social
@fill_feels
@game_hrn
@heinzycookie
@Daily_Monker
@Hequipl
@kinokotenpura
@JaredevTG
@kamekaze_xy
@KamisatoYuu
@KGalaxysFruity
@LemonsSorrow
@Lovender_purple
@Luna_Ch22

Mary
Menundrum
Mikavey
Mikester
Mint
Neruru
Onyx
Paddy
PastaOnFloor
Pixels
Quacker
Ramen/Widvhak
Reces
Rom/RoMaGi
Satchely
Shammy
Shinobu
Shiroo/Sadroo
Shrymp
Sora/rkgkefr
Storyteller
Sushi
Tuatha
Wens
WillianSX
Wormy
Yoka
Zestou
三色猫/ezioyer

@sumalyart
@menundrum
@mikavvi
@MikasEidukas
@freshasmint_
@Yananeruu
@OnyxVoyd
@Butterflan01
@PastaOnFloor
@Pixels_1080
@bluequacker
w/widvhak
@RecesPro
@RomThetton
 @_Satchely
 @sonoranshark
 @ViperShinib
 @shiro_burro
 @ShrympSoup
 @rkgkefr
 @Storyteller_x3
 @sushimassacre
 @tuatha_
 @Wensday_Illus
 @SxWillian
 @wormygums
 @ashitanoyoka
 zhadly_ded
 @ezi0YSTER133







"You're not supposed to
draw in the book, Hiyori!"



A Poem is Never Actually Finished

Written by Jaredev

"Hmmm..." Akari stares into the blank piece of paper and frowns, furrowing her brow while clutching her blue crayon. The past few minutes have felt like hours as nothing comes to mind. With a small shout, she lifts her little hands up in surrender before folding her arms and slinking into her chair.

"What's wrong, Sis?" Hiyori asks as she pokes her head into Akari's room.

"Nee-nee!" Akari cries out to her sister, "I've been thinking here for hours! I don't know what to do!"

"Well, what are you working on?"

"Ms. Monika asked us to try and write a short poem to bring to class tomorrow, but I just can't think of anything!"

"Ah, I see," Hiyori rubs her sister's back in reassurance, "did you write a poem in class for practice?"

"Just a little one, but I spent so long just trying to do that poem! I don't know if I can do another..." Akari says with a small whine.

The first response Hiyori gives to her sister is a gentle smile, "I can help you, if you want."

With a momentary silence, the younger sister presses the tips of her fingers together, fiddling with them as she says, "I have to write this by myself..."

A dejected "Oh..." is all the older girl responds with.

"B-but you can make a poem, too," Akari interjects!

Perking up at the offer, Hiyori grabs the small plastic chair across from Akari and brings it right next to her. "I figured we could write together~" She plucks a piece of paper and another blue crayon from the plastic cup at the center of the table. The older child brandishes her drawing utensil like a pen and begins to write down her poem.

The sounds of swipes and bumps are all that fill the room, and yet Akari is still stuck on where to even start. "How are you doing that?"

"Doing what?" Hiyori responds inquisitively.

"Thinking up something so fast!"

"Oh, well... I just went with the first thing that came to mind."

"O-oh..." is all Akari says in return. "What if I..." The little girl strokes her red crayon against the page, and a small twinkle forms in her eyes. A small yet audible gasp escapes her breath, a flash of inspiration bursting forth.

"It was that easy, huh?" Hiyori gives an awkward smile at the revelation, but continues to write alongside her sister.

The girls scribble their poems down, the room illuminating a brilliant evening glow as they do so. First, one minute passes, then another, yet the time they felt in the moment could have lasted forever. Eventually, the words they wish to say end, and they both place their crayons down simultaneously.

"Girls," their mother says as she walks into the room, "dinner's ready."

"I just helped your mother finish setting the table," their dad interjects.

"Come on, Nee-nee! Let's go wash up!" Akari says as she grabs her sister by the hand.

"H-hey! Not so fast, Akari," the older sister says as they run!

"Hahaha! They're just like us, aren't they?" Sayori chuckles to herself.

"Really? I don't remember being like that." MC says while feigning ignorance.



"Hm? What's this?" Sayori and MC both pick up their daughters' papers, reading them over before looking at each other with a smile.

My-ku Haiku by Akari

I wanted to say
Writing a poem is hard
But haiku was not

"Ahahaha! Oh..." Sayori giggles at the sweet, little poem of her youngest. "She's just like you," she reminisces to her husband."

"Hmph..." MC responds with a scoff, "Better, actually." As he looks at his other daughter's poem, a sense of warmth begins to fill his cheeks.

My sunshine by Hiyori

The golden light of life glows long
Beyond the everlasting pond.
I want to protect your smile, dear,
It's one of the things that keeps me here.

With mom and dad to lead and guide
We'll walk through life, side by side.
So don't be afraid, my little sunshine
I'll be here with you, 'til the end of time.

There are no words MC can say. All he does is smile as he places down the page. But in his heart, he sees the truth. She'll be strong for her, just like I am for you. Because a poem is never actually finished.

It just becomes a new one.





MC and Sayori's Children



Akari

5



Hiyori

9

