**MC Kun – Start**

Silence.

A silence that stretches out to infinity, only to be broken when I drop my bags onto the floor.

The thump reverberates off the colorless walls, and dust motes stir from the impact. Their minuscule forms are highlighted by the rays of the noontime sun that spilled through bare windows. It was a Spartan arrangement, a one-person dorm devoid of anything other than the essentials. A table, a lamp, and a chair. A kitchen, a shower room, and a living room.

It was luxurious, compared to what I’ve heard of university housing.

“A thousand a month though…”

A thousand a month for freedom and responsibility. I liked that deal then, but now, looking at the empty, cream-colored walls and a future that has never been so unclear…

I laugh.

And laugh and laugh and laugh, until my face is flushed and my vision is blurred.

“Ah, shit, what do I even do now?”

There was a party for the first years that I saw on Facebook. I could go familiarize myself with the campus. I could go visit the library and get a card. I could go out to the park and exercise. I could start checking out the town to map out cheap places to eat. I could go to that festival they had going down by the docks.

I could be doing so many things.

The possibilities were endless.

And because of that nerve-wracking infinity, I sat down on the chair, took out my textbooks, and began pre-reading.

“Guess I should find a hobby or something…”

**Hobo Bro – Unknown**

The clock keeps ticking.

The hands move in my mind as I count down the seconds until the cup of instant noodles were ready for eating. It was seafood flavor this week, and as the mental time reaches zero, I feel my stomach reacting in the most pleasant of ways. The precipitation dripping off the rim of the aluminum cover was tantalizing enough, and the aromatic steam simply enhanced the beauty of it all.

It was just cup noodles, but one really learned the value of hot food during cold nights out.

I spin the disposable chopsticks in my hand, flip open the lid, and get to work eating away my lifespan with junk food.

It was delicious, gloriously flavorful food, and, tucked away inside an alleyway, it was the final piece of my disguise.

Well, no, it wouldn’t be a disguise if it was reality, would it?

The men that entered the alleyway took no notice of a dirty, scraggly hobo desperately drinking down his instant noodles.

They took no notice of him as they discussed confidential secrets, even as they glanced behind their shoulders, looking out for anyone who may have followed them.

They spill their hearts out to an unseen observer, oblivious to the danger of assumptions.

And it all made for very, very nice entertainment.

I drain the last bits of soup out of the cardboard cup, toss it into the adjacent dumpster and clap my hands together.

“Thank you for the meal.”

Invisible to the eyes of professionals, I leave.

There were people to call, money to earn.

Like I say, a homeless person was a busy one.

**Mr. President – Dash**

My breath falls evenly in a one-two beat as the sounds of nature whisper into my ears. The wind is fresh, the birds are singing, and my heart feels like its boiling. Boiling with enough power to pull me through another day, enough power to entertain me for another night.

Even though track and field, with its fixed distances and competitive nature, wasn’t my thing, running, by itself, was. It’s the greatest expression of freedom, to see how far your own two feet could carry you, to challenge your own limits and successively shatter your own records.

A laugh is rumbling in my chest as I pick up my pace, leaping down three steps at a time on the cobblestone steps. I almost fall over once my feet hit the soft sand, but I instinctively dive, bringing my hands onto the gritty surface and cartwheeling myself upright.

This time, I laugh for real, racing by the salty waters against myself. My shoes are getting soaked, and the splashes of water made with each step made my pants wet as well, but did I care?

Nope!

Who would do something that they didn’t enjoy?

An idiot!

And I’m not an idiot!

Another slip, another flawless recovery, and another barking laugh, startling the white gulls plodding about before me. They scatter in my prescence, a flurry of feathers and beaks that blind me, before opening up to a new, gorgeous sight.

The sun crested over the waves as day broke, the azure of dawn giving way to the cerulean of day.

For a moment, I allow myself to slow down, to take it all in.

And then, I dash off once more, footsteps washed away by the brine of the ocean.

“Today is going to be a good fucking day!”

**Childhood Friend – I don’t even**

Yeah, drawing a blank for her.

**Student Council President – Heroism**

A sword.

That is what I strive to be, and that is what she was.

A peerless, beautiful sword, sharpened to a pure edge that could split the night sky.

I breathe in the smell of incense as I sat kneeling before a small shrine. It’s too small for someone as great as her, but she was never one for needless decoration. Even during birthdays or celebrations or whatever else, she had always worn simple, plain clothes. A yukata of a single color, a white, sleeved dress. Hair that was never dyed or styled. A single-minded devotion to doing good that was never swayed.

I take in another breath, and this time, I smell her blood, an iron stench that causes me to look at my hands. If I was a better person, if I was more like her, the both of us could have survived. But, like the self-sacrificing person she was, she placed herself below me, even though she would do more than I ever could.

A hero’s curse, her grandfather called it.

A curse that inspired one to do great, honorable things, even as it destroyed them on the inside. A trait that would ensure that they would never back down from any challenge, that they would never be distracted in their path for righteousness.

Regret tumbled from my brain to my stomach, killing my hunger.

Regret filled my stomach, giving my limbs strength.

And, holding onto that regret, I vow once again.

“I will save the world in your stead, my friend.”

**Stalker Chan – Megalomania**

It feels good, having the world in the palm of your hand, its radiant glow never dimming unless you wish it to. My fingers race through the mechanical keyboard, click-clacking away as I assemble and reassemble information. My field agent was good at the ‘gathering’ part, but when it comes to that homeless ‘adult student’ actually assembling information into a readable format?

It was definitely somewhat painful.

Dancing from one monitor to the next, I fill out a few more mind-numbingly pointless multiple choice questions for my online ‘quiz’, before getting back to my real work. A client had requested something annoying along the lines of the location of a drug-growing business, but it was going to be a pain in the ass, covering my tracks.

I chew a piece of gum, tossing around ideas at each other within my mind, constructing a mental spiderweb. Snippets of interesting conversations, gatherings of suspicious individuals, suites with no one living inside them, and then…

A break in my train of thought, as I realize I went off-topic again.

Falling onto my back, I laugh. That ‘other side’ really was attractive, wasn’t it? The one that I had no concrete facts on, outside of its existence, outside of the urban legends that surface because of it.

Ah, I wanted to see it so bad.

To hold all that knowledge in my head, to be able to hold it above all those uneducated plebians, to be able to taunt others over the fact that they would never be able to get what I have, and to laugh at the ignorance of those of the other side, who will continue on with their secret lives, unaware that I knew them, but they did not know me.

I smile at that fantasy.

Then a ‘beep’ sounds from one of the monitors and I look up.

The time limit for the quiz had been reached, and sent my answers in, incomplete.

“Shit!”

A pillow hit the monitor, bouncing off harmlessly.