

Between Heaven and Earth

[Kaoru x Die] AU

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Kapitel 8: Chapter Eight

You like so far?

Chapter Eight

"We go to the beach," Kaoru announced with a triumphant grin.

"Really?" Within the split of a second Die was sitting in bed with eyes wide as plates and never been any more awake then now.

"Don't you want to?" The other man teased.

"I do, I do." Quickly he crawled out of the bed and nodded all along several times, before he literally stumbled forward and flung his arms around the smaller man's slim shoulders. "Thank you, thank you, thank you." He hugged him tightly, a merry grin almost breaking his face as he beamed in joy. "You're awesome, Kao!"

Hardly any breath inside of him left, Kaoru just nodded and sighed. "I know. But Die," he said and gently pushed the redhead off him, sending a rather disturbed glance at his naked frame. "Go and get dressed, will you?"

"Uuh, sure." It was impossible to wipe off that silly grin but Die did as he was told and quickly snatched some of his clothes, before he vanished inside the bathroom. He didn't take long though, making room for his friend who also liked to get a quick shower before he would prepare himself for a day out with Die. Mentally he was anything but certain if his decision was even close to wise but at least physically he got dressed in his usual neat style. Other than Die who had chosen his simple jeans and a plain white tee shirt before he made sure that his hair looked as 'messy' as he liked it to be.

Once they had eaten breakfast down in the hotel's restaurant, Kaoru had called a taxi for both of them to take them down to the beach. In awe Die was staring at the ocean right in front of his eyes, how the waves were crashing gently against the shore and the sun left a shiny glimmer on the water's surface. It was breath-taking.

"You like it?" Kaoru quirked an eyebrow at the mesmerized guy next to him. He had expected Die to like it but that he was gaping at the ocean with an open mouth was kind of silly, but still adorable.

The question made Die snap out of his temporary daze and he slowly nodded. "It's beautiful," he breathed before his hyper nature overtook him and he got rid of his shoes, sticking his toes into the warm sand underneath him. It tickled, was a little weird but he loved the feeling. Alive. He was alive. Maybe he would reconsider his choice of trying to make Kaoru and Toshiya fall for each other in order to gain back his access to Heaven. With his eyes closed and a huge smile upon his lips he stuck his nose up in the wind and enjoyed the warmth of the sun against his skin, before his eyelids fluttered open again and he turned to face Kaoru. "No, I was wrong. It's fucking fantastic!"

A small snort emitted from the lawyer as he chuckled and shook his head. But he was completely unprepared for Die's next move as the guy suddenly started to run right through the sand, stumbling here and there, but always managing to keep going, until he finally approached the water. He hesitated a little, slowly stepping into the cool wetness, his skin so totally unused to the new sensation. It felt natural though and Die loved it. Merrily he took some more steps into the open sea until he was standing knee-high in the water.

"Die, don't go out too far," Kaoru advised and watched the red-haired man attentively. There was so much euphoria in Die that the other man was afraid he'd jump right into the ocean and never come back.

"Why?" He called back and took a short glimpse backwards before he walked even deeper into the water and splashed some of it around with his hands, all along laughing in joy.

"Because," Kaoru sighed and reminded himself to shout, so Die would actually hear him. "Because I for sure can't help you if you drown."

"What?" For a moment he stopped all movement and shot an inquiring gaze at Kaoru. Would he really not even try to save him? Because Die certainly would the other way around. "Why wouldn't you help me?"

"I said that I couldn't, not that I wouldn't." Although he tried to speak loud enough for Die to hear him, Kaoru's words were nearly drowned out by the sound of the waves.

"Why can't you?" In Die's eyes everybody could if only they only wanted to.

Rolling his eyes upwards, Kaoru sat down in the sand and leant back, his weight supported by his hands. "Because I can't swim. That's why I can't help you."

"But I can't swim either!" The redhead called out back and shrugged. "I'd still go and try to save you. If I'd manage is another story though." He laughed and took some more steps into the open sea. He had been dead once and if he died again, then it should at least be for someone who was worth it. The fact alone made him brave but with his next step, he suddenly lost balance and fell backwards into the sea, until even his head was almost under water.

"Fuck!" Kaoru jumped when Die suddenly disappeared, his heart almost stopping to beat. Luckily the redhead quickly got back on his feet and even if he was dripping wet, he laughed. The other man just rolled his eyes, sat down again and tried not to look at Die. What he didn't see, couldn't make him worry. But it was hard to ignore someone as cheery as his red-haired companion and at last when he heard another fit of joyful laughter, Kaoru looked back up and was surprised to find Die only a few meters away, getting slowly closer. "Done bathing? It's much too cold and you'll probably get sick."

But Die just happily giggled and marched closer still, until he dropped down next to Kaoru. "Then you gotta make me well again." The taller man couldn't really be serious, thought of it as unlikely to happen that he'd become sick from a little bit of water, when the sun was shining so much that he could already feel how his skin was drying. With his grin still in place, he laid down in the sand, pillowing his head on Kaoru's lap. "You really made my day, Kao. It's amazing here."

There wasn't much that he could possibly reply, when his mind had run blank anyway because of Die's clingy move, so Kaoru just chuckled a little and took in some of his surroundings. If he hadn't been to a beach before, he would probably think the same but then again, Kaoru wasn't the type who went along beaches and admired the sea. Yet, he had to admit that it was a beautiful view. "Well, I'm glad." A thought crossed his mind, meant to tease. "When you've been angel, have you really never been to a beach? If I were an angel, I'd surely fly everywhere. Or didn't you have wings?"

"Oh, I did." Enthusiastically Die nodded but then grew a little sad, remembering that he was only supposed to use them for his missions. "I've flown back and forth between Heaven and Earth, passed by beaches as well, but I wasn't supposed to spend any time there, unless my target happened to be there. But as an angel I felt differently than as a human. If I had gone into the water, I wouldn't have become wet. I couldn't feel the sand underneath my feet or that the sun was actually warm against my skin. That kinda sucked."

"I see," Kaoru chuckled due to the obvious craziness Die's word held. But then it made sense, considering angels would truly exist. "But at least you could fly."

"True." Die smiled. "And if I had my wings still, I'd take you with me and fly around with you a bit."

The words made Kaoru smile in return. It would've surely been interesting to fly on the redhead's back. Crazy but interesting.

"You know, it's not true what Toshi's said." Die couldn't help it but right now he would

love to hug Kaoru to death. "You really are nice."

His gaze darkened a little when he shifted his look at the redhead and thought about his supposedly innocent remark. "Did he say that? That I'm not nice."

"Well, yes. He said many things, also that he likes you, which reminds me..." The other man babbled and didn't even realize that Kaoru had grown a tiny bit annoyed. "You sometimes are not nice like when you talk to Ken but then you are nice to me and that's what counts, right?"

"I guess," Kaoru responded a bit grumpily since his friend had played him down. But in a way he just knew that it was the truth and the fact that at least Die didn't think he wasn't nice, helped a lot to brighten his mood. "So you were talking to Toshiya about me? You could've asked me yourself if you wanted to know something."

"I'm sorry I didn't." Die fastened his gaze upon Kaoru's dark eyes that looked down on him. "I just happened to think about you when I was out with Toshi. So I asked."

"I can imagine." It was true. What Kaoru had learnt about the red-haired man spoke for itself since he always spoke his mind as it appeared. In a casual way the lawyer ran his fingers through Die's red hair, just to wipe away some of the bangs that fell into his face. "What else did he tell you?"

"How you've learnt to know each other and that you and he slept together once," he easily explained without to bat an eyelash. In contrast one of Kaoru's eyebrows rose while the other man went on. "Didn't you say that two people should only have sex together if they've fallen in love with each other?"

"What I said is that when you have sex with someone else for the first time, you should love the person. There's a difference, you see." Somehow Kaoru had the feeling that he wouldn't like where this conversation was heading to. Why would Toshiya tell Die an old and forgotten story like this was beyond his imagination.

"Ah, so you weren't in love with Toshi then?" It would've made things easier for Die if at least one of them had already some feelings for the other.

"No, and I will never be. He's a friend, Die. What are your questions about?" If the redhead wanted to make sure that Kaoru had no feelings for Toshiya besides friendship, then it would be a good sign. Then Die checked him out. But if not...

"I was just thinking that maybe you and Toshi," Die said but paused, just to raise his head a little and have a better look at Kaoru. "I was thinking you'd be a good match."

"What?" This was anything but good. Was Die trying to play match-maker? It angered the smaller man because obviously the redhead wouldn't even care if Toshiya and Kaoru were a couple. Therefore he did not have any tiny bit of a sexual interest in the lawyer. "Can't you for once forget your silly angel-shit? You're a human, Die. You're not supposed to make matches anymore! Stop that."

"I... I'm sorry." He really hadn't meant any offence. "I just..."

"You just what? Go around and ask my friend about me? And now you're playing the match-maker? I do not need anybody's help to get me a guy. Especially not Toshiya! If I had wanted him to be my boyfriend, I would already have him. That's a fact. So you better stop this bullshit." That he was pissed off was clear but part of him was just angry at himself for liking Die. He had saved that dimwit from his toilet-hideout, had given him a home, food and work, had kissed him, bathed with him and even considered himself to fall for him, but what did Die do? He suggested to get Toshiya for Kaoru's boyfriend. Die really must've come from another planet, or else he would've realized that this was absolutely ridiculous. At least his behavior didn't mean that Die held any interest in Toshiya either.

"Okay, I'm sorry. Really sorry. I didn't mean to make you mad. I won't mention anything like that again and I won't ask Toshi about you anymore." Inwardly Die shrank as he sat up and hugged his knees to his chest. He had truly meant no harm but it seemed as if he was just as worthless when it came to help people to fall in love as back in the time he had worked for Cupid. Besides, it felt damn crappy when Kaoru was angry with him. It hurt.

"You better not," Kaoru said and sighed. The guy next to him was so utterly naïve that he could strangle him for being just too lovely to be mad at. "C'mon, let's walk around a bit. Maybe we'll find some place to grab lunch."

With an uncertain smile Die nodded and got back on his feet. Maybe this idea about Kaoru and Toshi had really been a little too drastic. They knew each other for so long and if they hadn't fallen in love yet, then they were probably not meant for each other. But Die would keep his eyes open for somebody who could love his friend. And he would try not to make Kaoru mad at him again because it was a crappy feeling that he didn't like at all.

The time passed by faster than expected and after they had indeed gathered some sandwiches from a small fast food bistro, they headed back to the hotel to get their things, before the taxi would bring them back to the airport. Kaoru's thoughts had never stopped to run around in his mind. It was still probably the best if he never laid eyes on Die. Yet, he had become something close to a friend for him and the idea was disturbing because if this went on between them, Die's oblivious actions and Kaoru's suppressed want, then something had to be done about it. But so far there was still a chance for everything to happen.

Back at home Kaoru was faced with piles of work and he didn't waste too much time before he started to read and work through his papers. In the meantime Die read a few pages of another book, tried to cook some dinner for both of them and watched TV after he had brought Kaoru the meal. Gratefully, the lawyer had accepted it and was surprised that it was even edible. Not too late he went to bed though but found it strangely empty. It always was of course but tonight it somehow didn't feel right. It made him realize that he maybe really and for sure had a tad bit of a crush on Die, something he had never felt in the last ten years or so.

The redhead had gone to bed as well, looking forward to work again. His new job he liked a lot and he got surprised the next day when Kaoru announced that Mai would work somewhere else in the future, still in the office but for another person. Die had felt a little guilty, as if he had purposefully snatched away her working place, but Mai didn't seem to bother much. Obviously she hadn't liked Kaoru that much either but this time Die was left without a clue of why this was the case.

In the evenings Die sometimes went out with Toshiya because Kaoru often refused and excused himself for he had still work that couldn't wait to be done. Sometimes he came along though but he realized quickly that his best friend's witty mind had become suspicious, so he preferred not to join them too often. Besides, Toshiya and Die didn't go out every night and therefore, Kaoru could live with it quite well. One day Die had been unusually quiet though. He had been out with Toshi the evening before and ever since he seemed to ponder. But Kaoru was oblivious, had too much to do to really notice, more because Die was still his cheery self whenever he did speak.

At home Die suddenly couldn't take it any longer. He got up from his place on the couch and walked over to where Kaoru was working on his desk. "Kao? Can I ask you a favor?"

The lawyer looked up from his work, about to go on with it though. Nonetheless the question had made him curious. Die had never really ASKED for a favor before. "A favor? What kind of favor?"

"Would you kiss me again?" The former angel dropped the bomb with a pleading look.

At first it elicited a small smile on Kaoru's lips because he had been hoping for an interest coming from Die. But then he became suspicious though since the request came so out of the blue. True, Die didn't waste any thoughts on the right occasion, but then his mind was always questioning and Kaoru would bet his job that there was something behind this demand. He just hoped that it was what he wished for. "Why do you want me to?"

"Because," Die hesitated for a moment and leant against the desk, sighing thoughtfully. "I just wanna know again how it feels to kiss you 'cause you see, last night Toshiya kissed me and it did feel good as well but not like yours. It was so completely different and now I'd like you to kiss me again, so I can figure it out, you know?"

There hadn't even been the need to explain all that to Kaoru. His mind had already gone blank at the thought of his best friend kissing Die. Hadn't Kaoru asked Toshiya not to try anything? And Die was simply so natural about it, like he was judging about what kind of meal tasted better. It hurt Kaoru, even if he'd do anything but to admit it. "No," he replied monotonously with his voice cold, trying to ignore the clenching inside of his chest. "No, I won't kiss you again."

"Hm, thought so." His shoulders visibly sank as Die bowed his head down and nodded mildly. "Sorry for bothering you, Kao." He slowly pushed himself off the desk and walked back to sit on the sofa. He had taken the chance and asked Kaoru but he

wasn't mad at him for denying him the favor. He just didn't know how else to figure out the odd feelings inside of him. Last night, when Toshiya had just kissed him so unexpectedly, it had been gentle and nice but it hadn't effected the redhead even half as much as when Kaoru had kissed him. Maybe it was just because this had been his first kiss or maybe it meant something totally different. How was Die supposed to know when all he did know about feelings with worth nothing in the end? All the things Cupid had told him didn't matter since he had never felt them himself. It was frustrating.

Staring at the redhead's retreating figure, Kaoru's lips turned into a thin line. How could Die kiss another man and then he twisted the whole situation so that Kaoru was feeling bad for turning him down in the end? Also, the red-haired man was just too casual about it. Was he trying to make a fool out of Kaoru? Making him kiss Die and then after all he'd decide that Toshiya was better? The more the lawyer thought about it, the more he became angry. Angry at Die for knowing nothing, angry at Toshiya for acting without permission, but most of all angry at himself for falling for a stupid red-headed moron.

For the rest of the evening Kaoru's attempts to work were in vain. He shut his laptop after some time, closed all his files and books and got dressed for another walk. It didn't help though, just that his mind seemed to fill with the want to simply burst! It was Toshiya's fault. Why couldn't he listen? Why wouldn't he just do as Kaoru said? Die did so and if Kaoru wanted, he'd just need to tell him to get undressed and ready for a fuck. Then he could happily screw his brains out. But then he'd meet with Toshiya and do the same for him. Because it was Die and he didn't know any better. But Toshiya, Kaoru's supposed to be best buddy, should know better than this.

When the dark-haired male arrived back at home, he got a quick shower and went straight to bed. Seeing the look in his guest's eyes, the innocence and submissiveness, caused Kaoru only to be confirmed in his way of thinking. But he did not know any solution for his problem. He should probably just spend more time with Die and keep him away from Toshiya, but how when Kaoru's work occupied him too much? He couldn't even spend too many thoughts on such matters. There were more important things in his life. With a sigh of defeat he turned to lie on his belly and tried to suffocate himself by sticking his face into the pillow. With no such luck whatsoever.

The next day he just more or less tried to ignore it and went on with the usual task. Kaoru was very silent though and didn't talk too much with Die, only exchanging necessary words. The redhead couldn't explain this silence to himself but he figured that his friend might've problems that were none of his business. At least after he had asked him if something was wrong and Kaoru simply replied that everything was fine. Still, Die had a weird feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Nearly in the afternoon, when Die was about to get his things sorted and ready to remind Kaoru that he should take a break, Toshiya waltzed into the office and greeted the redhead with a cheery smile. "Hey lovely, what's up?"

"Up?" Die didn't know how to reply. "Nothing really."

"A pity," the other man grinned, not as oblivious as Die to the doubled meaning. He truly had grown a liking to the red-haired man but if it was more than that, he couldn't tell so far. Probably that had been why he had just kissed Die, without to think about it much. He had been happily surprised when Die had responded to his kiss but once they broke apart, there had been no sign from him of wanting more. Therefore Toshiya couldn't tell if they could ever be more than friends. "Where's the grumpy, sexy-assed lawyer?"

"You mean Kaoru?" Die's eyes widened a little at the perfectly chosen description of his boss. "He's in his office but I was just about to tell him to get a break. He's in there for hours now. Said he doesn't want to be disturbed."

"Oh well, I'll do that for you," Toshiya winked and marched off to have a look at his best friend. The redhead simply shrugged and stayed where he was, guessing that it was okay when Kaoru's friend reminded him as well.

His door burst open right when Kaoru had almost forgotten about the whole situation for once and as he looked up at the intruder, there was instantly annoyance speaking from his eyes. The fact that it was Toshiya who had obviously the guts to visit didn't make things better and the lawyer just simply glared at his friend with piercing eyes. "Heya Kao," Toshiya said and plopped down on a chair. "What's the news?"

"You tell me some," Kaoru slyly answered with a tad bit of bitterness to spice his words.

"Uh, I was just coming to see if you and Die wanted to get some coffee with me." He scratched his neck and bent forward to take a closer look at his friend. "You at least look like you could need one."

"Thanks for the kindness." He only showed a tiny but spiteful smirk.

Toshiya frowned. Usually he could handle the lawyer's grumpiness but he rarely became malicious, at least not when speaking to his friend. That's when Toshiya leant back and crossed his arms. "What's crawled up your ass?"

Kaoru shot a disapproving look at the other man, before he cast his eyes off him, annoyed. "Nothing," he crankily replied, trying to appear calm and reserved. "Had a nice evening last night?"

"Yes, why?" Although he could give a good guess where the question was supposed to head to, Toshiya played innocent. If Kaoru had a problem, he better said it directly. Besides, he couldn't know for sure whether Die had told him about the kiss or not.

"Then say, was it good to kiss Die?" Kaoru snapped, slowly but gradually losing it. He had no nerves left to talk about the bush.

For a short moment the other man hesitated before he replied, seemingly calm: "At least not bad. What's the problem about it?"

Clenching his teeth, Kaoru had a hard time to grasp that obviously his friend had lost his memory about the promise he had made. "Didn't I ask you to leave your fingers off him? There's a reason for this one favor I asked of you and I hardly ask you for something. Is it that hard to just do as I request this once?"

Taking a deep breath, Toshiya pouted and crossed his arms as well. "Yes, it's that hard 'cause I just don't get why. What is your reason, Kaoru?"

"I already told you." There was no need to repeat it, the lawyer decided.

"You don't even believe that bullshit yourself," Toshiya countered and leant forward again, inquiring his friend with his eyes. It was unlike Kaoru to keep something that trivial from the other man, unless it was anything but trivial and concerned the lawyer himself. "Now you tell me, Kao. Why are you so eager to keep Die away from anybody else? Do you have any interest in him?"

Kaoru didn't answer.

Unlike him; it was plainly unlike him to keep silent. He either wanted to get into a man's pants or not. That was how Toshiya knew the other guy and suddenly something dawned on him. "Are you in love with him? Have you fallen for Die? Just say so and I'll—"

He was cut off but his friend's fierce response. "No! Ridiculous. I am not in love with Die." As if he was trying to convince himself, Kaoru spoke the words clearly and definitively, narrowing his brows when he stared at Toshiya with stubborn eyes. "This has nothing to do with me. It's because of Die. He's just... Don't you see it? He doesn't really know anything and the last thing he needs is someone who's trying to romance him."

A disbelieving snort emitted from the other male. "About Die, hm? Bullshit. There would be nothing wrong if he'd find himself someone who truly cares about him."

"And you think you are that someone? C'mon, you don't even know him. Die's not even sane. Did he ever tell you what he thinks he is?" Maybe it was the wrong way to achieve his goal but Kaoru didn't know any other way right in the moment. He had already lost his cover and what he did was merely to limit the damages.

"That he's been an angel? Yes, Kaoru, he told me. And you know what? I don't care if he's sane or not, or if his story is true or he's just joking. I like him the way he is now. Why can't you grant your friends some love?" Until now he had never really taken Die seriously, had thought that he made jokes but still, even if he were crazy and completely out of his mind, Die was a good guy with a heart of gold and that was more important than anything else.

"I do grant you all the love in the world for God's sake," Kaoru voiced out almost exaggeratedly. "But why him? There are so many guys you could easily get; why Die? Maybe I just don't want you to end up heart-broken."

"Good because I won't." With a dreadful sigh Toshiya got up from the chair and stuck his hands in his pockets. "I never said that I've fallen for him but I might and if that happens, I don't want this to come between us, Kaoru. I just..." He ran a hand through his black hair and shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "I don't understand what would be so wrong about it."

It was hopeless and Kaoru couldn't come up with anything to say for once. He was not able to explain what would be wrong about it, just that he had feelings for Die that he didn't want to admit yet. His only problem was that the redhead had never gave any sign that he would like just one of them as much in return. "What about Die? Has he mentioned anything that makes you think he could love you back?"

Slowly Toshiya shook his head. "No, he hasn't. We're speculating here but I want this settled between us before Die actually might confess anything, you know? He's allowed to decide about his life, Kaoru, and you should accept that."

For some time the lawyer just looked at his friend, the realization about the truth in his words sinking only slowly into his brains. Die was a person, whatever he claimed to be before, and as such he was to decide about his life. Kaoru could make him work but he did not own him and that fact was hard to accept indeed. "Fine."

"Fine," Toshiya repeated and took a deep breath. "I'll go and get some coffee alone then." He wasn't disappointed or mad at his friend but he wanted him to think about it and therefore better left without any of them. Silently he turned and walked out of the office. When he passed by Die, he just told him that he needed to go again, wishing him a nice evening in the end.

Staring at his friend's retreating form, Die wondered though what had happened that had ripped the good mood off Toshi. After a few moments, the redhead decided to go and check on Kaoru, since it had been his intention in his first place before the other man appeared in the office. Cautiously he opened the door and took a glimpse inside only to find his friend sitting in his chair with his face hidden in his hands as he propped his arms on the desk. "Kao?"

The lawyer pulled away his hands and warily gazed back at the other guy. He did want him to himself but he didn't want to lose his best friend either. Thus far he couldn't even tell if Die wanted even either of them but the chance was high that one of them got him laid nevertheless. Before that would happen, there had to be something done and Kaoru needed to think of something. "Go home, Die."

"But—" He didn't know what to say, just that he'd rather stay and help the other man with whatever problem bugged his mind. The thing was just that he had never admitted that he was bothered by something.

"No buts, Die." The lawyer didn't want any senseless discussion about this. He wanted some time alone, some time to think. But he knew that his 'angel' cared too much to simply accept this request. "I'm fine. There's still something I must do here. Just go home, ok? I'll be coming later."

With hesitation the taller man nodded, submissively giving in. Of course he would do as Kaoru wished, even if he had a weird feeling about this. But he trusted Kaoru and therefore just showed a small smile, thinking ahead that he could prepare some meal at home for the two of them. "Okay, Kao. I'll be waiting at home then."

Nodding Kaoru gave a tiny smile. "You know how to get there?"

"Sure, I'll just call a taxi." Briefly Die nodded and closed the door, before he got ready to leave. To get himself a taxi was no problem at all. He had learnt that from Kaoru as well as Toshiya in the last few weeks and sooner than he would've expected he was back at home. He just hoped that he would find some food that he could use to make a meal for his host and himself.

In the meantime Kaoru was pondering madly. To make sure that the friendship between Toshiya and himself lasted, he couldn't do many things concerning his red-haired guest. There was only one option he could truly go for and it wasn't a pleasant one either. If he allowed his friends to do as they pleased, then at least he didn't want to be part of it. Die had an own life that he was in charge of and realizing that, Kaoru knew what he had to do. If only he hadn't already developed these feelings for him, then it would be easier for him beyond any doubt.

When he came home that evening, he was rewarded with a dinner Die had prepared. Nothing posh but just as lovely and simple as the man who had made it. Kaoru took a staggered breath when he sat down opposite Die, forcing a small but honest smile despite how he truly felt right now, before he pulled an envelope out of his pocket and handed it to the redhead. "Here. This is for you."

"What's this?" Die curiously asked and carefully opened the brown paper, taking a glimpse inside. "Money?"

"It's what you've earned in the last weeks," the lawyer stated and leant back. Considering the circumstances he really was not hungry but the effort Die had put into preparing it made Kaoru feel even worse for his twisting and refusing stomach.

"Wow." Impressed the taller man skimmed through the many notes with his thumb, before he closed the envelope again and looked at his boss with a smile. It really was an awful lot of money and Die for sure had never even had more than three notes at the same time thus far. "And how much do I owe you for your car? And the clothes and living here. And the food. Plus the drinks. And everything else." In his mind the list was endless but he only noticed it now.

"Nothing," Kaoru calmly replied and softly shook his head. "I already kept the amount you owe me." It was lie but it was necessary for the purpose it served and he had no doubts about Die trusting him and his story.

"Really?" His eyes widened as well as his smile and Die couldn't help but to take another look inside the envelope with his money. "It is quite a lot. And I did earn this all alone?" His question was answered with a nod. "Amazing. Hey, I should've invited you out for dinner then. Now I've only made this." He cast a rather pitying glance at

his poor rice balls, before he had another idea and his eyes visibly lit up. "But I wanna invite you for a drink! What do you say? Please Kao, let me buy you something in return!"

He'd love to but he couldn't. "I don't think it's a good idea. I still have something to work through until tomorrow," he lied but showed a little smile, really feeling like shit for once in his life, just because he couldn't tell the truth. Lying was his job, his life, and now? Die twisted everything upside down. "But you can go out though and enjoy a drink or two since the occasion basically demands it, no?"

"I guess," he sighed out but reminded himself that he could invite Kaoru another time. "I just wanna thank you somehow."

"There's no need, Die, really." The gratefulness the redhead showed wasn't making it any easier for Kaoru when he tried to form his next sentences, his original intention leading to somewhere completely different. "Do you remember when you've crossed my path? It's been weeks since then. You've worked a lot and you've worked hard but because you were in debts. That's why I've brought you here and gave you a job, right? Well, now these debts are not existent anymore and as a matter of fact... you're free, Die. There's no need to do as I say anymore."

"W...What do you mean?" He didn't get it at first but slowly his brain figured a vague guess.

Kaoru mustered up some more courage and calmly stated his next words, when in truth he'd rather much tell Die that he wanted to own him completely. "You should get an own apartment and get a real job, not serving me 24/7. You're a grown-up guy, despite what you've been before. It's time for you to get a life like other humans."

"You mean... I can't work for you any longer?" That he would get an own place to live in wasn't that much of a problem, even if he would miss living with Kaoru, it still was somehow an exciting thought. But the fact that he would work somewhere else, get another job, was more than disturbing. When would he see Kao then? "I'm... fired?"

Nodding slowly, Kaoru took another deep breath. "That's what I mean. We had a temporary deal and I think you need to find another working place." The words made his voice nearly break but he said them as calm and clear as he was able to, ignoring his want to make them unspoken.

"When?" His eyelids blinked up and down as Die hardly registered what the other man told him.

"From now on," Kaoru forced himself to say, hoping that he had made his point clear. "Of course you don't need to move out immediately. I'll help you find an apartment if you want me to. But you will no longer work for me."

Not a single word left Die's mouth as he gazed at his former boss and friend. Only after a few moments he nodded and cast his eyes downwards to the set table. Die knew that Kaoru spent most of his day at work and that it meant he wouldn't see him

anymore during that time but at least he could stay for some more time, that was until he had found another place to live in. His feelings overwhelmed him. There was fear of the new situation but most of all he was simply sad. But of course he would do as he was told. He just needed to get around and used to the thought since he had completely forgotten about their deal existing only for the time being. But he actually should've known it and just couldn't grasp why this made him feel so strangely abandoned.

Kaoru kept silent as well. There was nothing he could possibly add to make this situation less hard. In order to keep his friendship with Toshiya and his life as sorted as it had been before Die appeared in it, he would make this sacrifice and tell Die to go. Knowing the cheerful red-haired guy, he would quickly find new friends who would help him. It was the best for all of them. Of course Kaoru could imagine that the other man felt sad and disappointed but then, he would adjust to the new life he would soon lead. Die just liked everyone, hence was concerned by far, yet would recover without troubles. Nonetheless it hurt Kaoru as well and in an attempt to distract himself, he slowly got up, intending to occupy himself with work. "I'll be in my study."

With a short sigh the redhead looked up again and swallowed hard since his throat felt suddenly all too dry. "And the food?"

"I'm not really hungry, Die. But thanks." Kaoru forced another wary smile and turned to leave.

There he sat now, not knowing what to do with his life. No doubt he would miss Kaoru but he couldn't be mad at him. He had learnt so many things from the other man and if he hadn't helped Die, then he had surely died already. Starved maybe or frozen to death. It was just so sudden that he had to leave now that he liked this other human male so much. And there was still Toshiya. He would miss him as well and he didn't even know about the news so far. Die needed to talk to him. The sooner the better. Leaving everything behind he got up and called the other man, asking him to meet in a bar, before he told Kaoru that he would go out. A tiny part within Die was hoping that the only other friend he had knew a solution and could make things better.