

Ocean Avenue

Von Makikolgami

Kapitel 1: Back Home

It had been almost exactly 20 years that Youichi Hiruma had last set a foot into Narita airport. He stretched and yawned, feeling his joints crack from sleeping much too long – over 6 hours, longer than he usually slept – in a position that was not exactly healthy, although those seats in the first class were definitely better than anything business class could offer. Sometimes it came in handy that he did not have to concern himself with financial matters.

Shouldering his bag that hardly passed as hand luggage, he made his way down the stairs that led him to the passport control, frowning as he read the sign above. "Welcome home!" was written in big Hiragana letters, obviously directed at all Japanese citizens who returned to their home country after a long and tedious travel to the rest of the world. Somehow, the English "Welcome to Japan!" did not sound as warm as the native version.

Hiruma ignored the sign though, wondering what had led him back to his home country when all it held for him were memories, most of them tinted in a painful emotion called regret and envy. Not that he would ever admit he felt something like envy to the ones he envied, but it was true that he felt it nevertheless.

Checking his watch, he readjusted it to Japanese Standard time, and walked into the queue of the passport control. As expected, it went quicker than that of the foreigners, still Hiruma knew that it would take a little longer with him.

"Your passport please," the officer said mechanically, glancing quickly into it, staring at the picture for a heartbeat longer than he did with the person before he looked up, the frown prominent on his forehead. Hiruma gave him the most innocent look he could muster, blowing a bubble that popped just when the officer closed his passport and handed it back to him.

'Must have been the eyebrows,' Hiruma pondered, 'or the hair? Well, it could also have been the ears...'

"Please renew your passport as soon as you can. It's been expired for over ten years..."

For a moment, Hiruma was caught off-guard, but it only took him half a heartbeat to

cover it up. "I will see to it as soon as possible."

"Very well," the officer said and handed him back his passport. "You may pass. Welcome home."

Hiruma snorted, already too far away to really shout back an answer. As fast as he could he went to the vast place where one could reclaim his luggage. As soon as his other bag arrived, he shouldered it on his other shoulder and made his way over to the customs, where he first wanted to take the green route – meaning, he had nothing declare – but as he saw a vaguely familiar face waiting at an empty queue, he changed his plans quickly.

"Do you have anything to declare?" the man asked as he put down his bag with a considerable clunking sound.

Hiruma grinned. Of course the officer would not care to look up at him, none of these idiots ever did. Why should they? They would never see the person again afterwards, so why over-exercise their brains by memorizing the face in front of them?

"I have weapons of mass destruction," he admitted openly, sounding like an average person.

"I see," the man mumbled and opened the zipper of the blond's bag. Then he frowned, obviously recognizing something about the other's voice, just to look up with wide eyes into an even wider grin.

"Hi-Hiruma-san?" the officer gasped, making the blond laugh throatily.

"Yeah, it's me," he grinned. "Don't look all surprised, even I have to go through customs."

"Yes, well, but... You see... I thought..." Tatsuo Ishimaru stammered, making Hiruma's ears twitch in curiosity.

"What did you think?" he asked, content with seeing the other twitch.

"Well, when you... when you disappeared, we thought... well, we didn't think you went abroad..."

Hiruma shrugged, looking away with a poker face. "I never disappeared. I just went to study abroad."

"But, you never told anyone, not even-"

"Not even who?"

"Well, you know... We've all been worried that something might have happened to you. But when we didn't hear anything about your whereabouts we just-"

"-assumed I was alright? 'che, it's funny how easy to predict all of you are," Hiruma snorted. "So, do I have to declare anything now or what?"

"Ah, um," Ishimaru said, looking down at the numerous rifles and guns inside the smaller bag, "well, in a case like this I, um, have to call my superior, but well..."

"Well...?" Hiruma repeated, his eyebrows rising up high.

Resolutely, Ishimaru closed the bag and handed it back to the former Quarterback with a crooked smile. "Welcome home."

Taking the bag from the other's hands, Hiruma smiled back. "Thank you."

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The first thing he did after he bought his tickets for the express train was to sit down and check his stuff on his laptop. His eyes flickered over an old folder that had made it onto each and every computer he had used over the past twenty years, a folder filled with old memories, memories that would trigger emotions he would rather not feel, so he left it where it was and skimmed through his messages.

He wrote a few short messages afterwards, slightly bored because nothing had really happened. He didn't bother changing the system time, he just looked at the date.

April first.

He grinned.

Nobody would believe Ishimaru if he told anybody that he had met somebody from the past. All of them though think that it was just an April Fool's joke.

On the other hand, it meant that it was *his* birthday the next day. No matter how much he tried to forget it, he always remembered *his* birthday, even in the last minute. He ground his teeth because he remembered it again this year, but did what he always did when he remembered this particular day: He opened that folder filled with emotions.

While the previews loaded though, he decided that he did not need pictures and videos anymore. He shut down his laptop without taking the time to close that folder again and decided to take a slightly different route than he had initially planned. So, he did not change trains in Tokyo Main Station, but got off a few stations before and changed trains so that he was taken to a place that he had loved 25 years ago and hoped that it still existed.

Maybe he could get over what had happened 20 years there, too...

~*~FLASHBACK~*~

"...Why Anezaki?" Hiruma asked, his mask so thick that Musashi knew he was pouting.

Snorting in mild amusement, the older looking young man tried to explain it the best way he knew. "Well, it did not work out between the two of you, you know? She said you just... didn't match."

"Yeah sure, it doesn't look good on her reputation that she dated the guy she loathed most during her first two High School years in her last year and when she entered university," the blond muttered bitterly, still nursing his hurt pride for being dumped by that girl all these years ago.

"That and... you know. You two are just too different," Musashi added, wishing he had not said that when an ice-cold digger hit him through Hiruma's eyes.

"But you two match? Is that what you want to say?"

"Well, um, that is what she says..." Musashi admitted sheepishly. He was still puzzled himself that this thing he and Mamori had went so well, even over years now.

"You know, when I first heard you were dating her, I shot the person and told them that it was a bad idea lying to me, but he claimed to be telling the truth..."

Musashi sighed. The time Hiruma had found out about that was worse when he had left High School to help out in his father's business. They had not talked for months, let alone looked at each other until he had finally enough and punched Hiruma in the face. The fact that Mamori had yelled at him for letting his best friend become a complete wreck had helped a lot to harden his resolve and his fist. Afterwards, there had been this silent hostility from the blond to the girl, but things had gotten back to a relative normality.

Until today.

When Hiruma learned that Musashi would be marrying Anezaki in June.

As soon as those words had left the carpenter's mouth, Hiruma had put on a poker face so indistinguishable that he thought that not even a hammer with a diamond tip would be able to get through.

"And now you're telling me you're going to marry her?" Hiruma snorted. "Tell me it's an early April Fool's day joke."

"I hardly ever tell jokes around you. You don't like if somebody makes a joke on your costs, remember?"

There was the pout again.

"Besides, it's not like I could have you the way you want it-

"Bullshit!" Hiruma burst out, "You could have had me all the way you wanted if you really and truly *wanted* me."

Musashi sighed. He had expected that outburst. But he also knew that Hiruma knew that this was not true. "You know it's not like that. I have plans for my father's business and you know—"

"Fuck it, you're sprouting so much bullshit these days," Hiruma laughed and – most surprisingly – it did not sound cold or harsh, but warm and gentle, like he was talking to a child that did not understand the ways of grown-ups. "It's not your father's business anymore; it's your fucking business now. And it's been like that for the past fucking 3 years, ever since you father died."

Musashi stiffened. Hiruma had always been good at pointing out the obvious. Nevertheless, it stung.

"And it could be so much *more* already, if you just—"

"What?" Musashi interrupted, his own voice stern, reprimanding Hiruma like he always did when he thought that the blond went to far. "Are you telling me what could have been if you helped me? I'm doing a fine job myself, I think, thank you very much."

Hiruma stared at him, eyes shooting daggers at the carpenter. Reading between the lines, he knew that Musashi told him not to press farther, he had done that before and he had not moved either. His will was just as strong as that of the blond and when he said something could not be done, the blond had to live with it. That was his power over the blond.

"...Fine," Hiruma said, taking a sip from his coffee.

Musashi sighed, glad that the discussion seemed to have ended with that. It still felt a bit strange that Hiruma gave in so quickly, so he tried to clear things up a bit more.

"You... know how I feel. About you," he said, not able to say the words he wanted to say though, "it's just that the society we live in, that I want to be successful in, is not ready... to acknowledge what you want."

Hiruma snorted, setting his mug down so loudly that he broke off the handle as he pushed himself up to a stand. "Too bad for you."

With no further word, he left the table and the café, not caring that Musashi had to pick up the tab for him, too. That bastard deserved it, for being an insensitive ass.

~*~END FLASHBACK~*~

The blond remembered the conversation with a frown, getting off the train at Deimon Station, where he did not take the familiar steps towards his old High School, but into the other direction. His steps led him quickly to that old café where almost all his most sacred memories came from, where everything had happened that had been a milestone in his life. The only place where they brewed coffee that he liked.

Almost fondly he looked out at the old, worn-out sign that said: "Ocean Avenue."

Time to start things over.