

A Genius's Confusion

Murasaki x Nice

Von Nitschieh

Nice has never been in love.

He's lusted after long legs, big boobs and full lips, but he's well aware that that's not love.

So, when one day after everything is over—Art is back to his old self (mostly), Hajime is back to ordering seconds several times and Birthday is completely healed—Murasaki steps out of the bathroom after a shower with nothing on but a towel around his hips and Nice's heart skips a beat, he doesn't think anything of it.

He turns back towards the TV screen where a beauty is leaning forward much more than she needs to and the whole thing is forgotten.

That is, until a few days later, when Murasaki leans over the back of the couch Nice is sitting on once again to grab a magazine lying on the table. His arms are just a few centimetres too short but he tries again anyway and his hair tickles Nice's cheek.

Nice feels as if the temperature in the room rises a few degrees which only seems to get worse when he can smell the peach-y shampoo his partner always uses. He completely misses it when Murasaki first asks him, "Oi, Nice, mind giving me a hand?" He has to force himself out of his trance-like state and when he leans forward to grab the magazine Murasaki was reaching for—a cooking magazine—he can almost feel a wave of relief wash over him as his skin cools down again.

The older shuffles through the pages and seems to decide on what to cook for dinner cause he retreats to the kitchen and by the time they're eating Nice has once again forgotten about it.

The next day is a Sunday, so they can sleep in; and they do. Around noon, though, Murasaki shakes him awake and Nice slowly opens his eyes. He sees his partner—still in his ridiculously cute pyjamas with the bunny heads—and his stomach flutters a little.

"I made breakfast," Murasaki says next and Nice can actually smell the bacon now. His

stomach growls in response and he blames the fluttering on his hunger.

They eat together in silence but even by the time Murasaki starts washing the dishes the strange feeling in Nice's tummy doesn't cease. In contrast, it worsens when he takes a bite of delicious and perfectly prepared bacon and then again when he stands next to his partner to dry their plates.

After Murasaki's outburst at the "final showdown against Art"—as Nice likes to call it jokingly—they agreed to compromise. Since then they wash the dishes together—Murasaki cleaning them and Nice then drying them and putting them back on their respective shelves.

They talk casually as they do the chore. Murasaki asks him if Hajime said something about coming over again soon or he if is planning to meet up with Art or any of their other friends later. Nice silently listens to Murasaki's voice before he swipes over the fork in his hand and answers—Art wanting to go visit Skill's and Gasuke's graves, Hajime being on a girls-only outing with Koneko and Honey, Ratio having to work—when suddenly their arms brush and Nice's face feels hot.

Only when he hears the clang of metal against floor does Nice realise that he dropped the fork. Murasaki looks at him with worry in his eyes. He wipes his hand on his apron and reaches out to him while asking, "Are you okay? Do you have a fever?"

He doesn't know why but before Murasaki can touch him Nice flinches back. He covers it up by kneeling down to pick up the piece of cutlery. While still looking down he laughs and says, "Of course! Just fumbled a bit when you bumped into me."

To look less suspicious and more like he's actually teasing he gently shoves Murasaki with his shoulder while he lets the fork slide back into the sink to have his partner clean it again.

Nice is distracted by how his heart skips a beat and almost misses Murasaki's huffed, "You're the one who came closer and bumped into me." The flush on his cheeks gets darker but even if his partner notices he doesn't comment on it.

They continue washing and drying the dishes in silence. Afterwards, Nice finds himself staring at Murasaki as the older takes off his apron—for some reason the way the muscles in his upper arms and shoulders flex just mesmerise him. For a second, Nice even thinks he's safe but then Murasaki eyes him with the same degree of concern as before. He steps closer and Nice almost forgets to breathe.

Murasaki is still closing the distance between them when he slowly asks, "Are you sure you're alright? You're still kind of red..."

Their words tumble over one another as they speak simultaneously—Nice trying to reassure that he is indeed fine while Murasaki reminds him that getting sick will be very inconvenient for their job. Only when Murasaki eventually lays his hand on his forehead does Nice stop. He shocks himself, but as soon as their skin touches his throat closes, his heart speeds up and he feels hot again.

With both hands he grabs his partner's arm and pulls it off himself. Then he mumbles in the general direction of Murasaki's slippers, "I think I might need a doctor after all..."

He takes a few steps back before he turns around and walks over to their door. He slips into his shoes, grabs his vest and takes off, shouting behind him, "I'm gonna go see Ratio."

The door falls closed with a loud thud and leaves Murasaki eyeing it with a crease forming between his eyebrows.

Too late Nice realises he didn't bring any money with him—not that they have much to begin with—and has to walk all the way to the hospital. Usually Murasaki would drive him but it's not like that's an option right now.

His head and heart are completely calm again by the time he gets there almost an hour later. He lets Ratio's assistant know that he's here and even though he's the only left and therefore next patient it takes way too long in his opinion.

Ratio raises his eyebrows when Nice enters the doctor's room but he doesn't say anything. He just watches him expectantly until Nice starts talking.

"I need you to make a thorough check-up."

Ratio gets serious in a second. He pulls out Nice's file and skims it before he asks:

"Are the side-effects back? Hajime's Minimum shouldn't be active..."

Nice quickly shakes his head.

"That's not it! At least I don't think so... It's different."

Ratio lets out a relieved sigh, puts the file down on his desk and turns to his computer to take notes.

"Then tell me, what brought this up?"

Nice hesitates.

"Well, for a few days my body has been kinda weird..."

Ratio looks back at him and for a second Nice thinks it would be funny to put the patient's chair from the doctor's left to his right and see him cope with it and his eye patch. He quickly shakes it off when Ratio demands, "Weird? What are your symptoms?"

"Uhm, I've been kind of suffering from heat waves, my face felt like it was on fire and it feels as if my heart skipped a few beats."

Ratio's aggressively typing fingers stop but Nice goes on.

"It's definitely not a cold or something like that either."

The doctor takes a few deep breaths before he asks with a professional voice, "Nice, is there a certain person present whenever this happens? Hajime, for example?"

Nice thinks hard and eventually does a combination of a shake of his head, a shrug and a nod.

"Not Hajime-chan but I think Murasaki was around the whole time. I really don't think this has anything to do with Hajime-chan's Minimum..."

Ratio draws his eyebrows together before his features soften.

"Murasaki, huh?"

Nice nods once.

"Yeah. You think it's got anything to do with him?"

"Hm, I wonder..."

When Nice seems to become impatient Ratio turns fully back to him—face all serious again—and asks, "Have you ever been in love?"

"Huh?"

Nice eyes him with suspicion.

"What the fuck kinda question is that? What's that got to do with this?"

Ratio smiles gently and huffs.

"I'll take that as a no."

It's Nice's turn to huff and Ratio once again focuses on the paperwork.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with you but I'm gonna check you nonetheless. It's almost time for your routine check-up anyway."

Twenty minutes later Nice puts his shirt and vest back on and before he opens the door to leave, Ratio calls behind him, "Maybe talk to Birthday about this... But don't let him put any weird ideas in your head."

Nice mumbles, "Yeah, whatever. See ya," and nonchalantly shuts the door behind him.

Outside the hospital Nice pulls a folded sheet a paper out of his pocket. He glares at it

as if the whole thing is its fault. Like Ratio had predicted everything was alright with him, medically.

He thinks about calling Murasaki to pick him up but before he can even remember his somewhat embarrassing leaving earlier his fingers are already speed-dialling Birthday. He isn't sure whether it's the question about an involved person or him being in love or both together, but for some reason Nice feels like talking to the other might actually help him.

Birthday picks up after the fourth ring and sounds very much half-asleep when he mumbles, "Ratiocchi?" into the speaker.

Nice grins and greets him back cheerfully.

"Yo, Birthday! Good morning!"

Nice is sure he can hear the rustling of sheets and the other one sit up straight.

"Huh, Nice? What is it?"

It's harder than he thinks to keep the glee off his voice now.

"Can't I call my good friend Birthday without having ulterior motives?"

He fails. Birthday only responds with a growl and Nice continues.

"Actually, I wanted to ask if you've got some time. To talk..."

"Talk?"

Birthday seems to consider Nice's words until he teases—sounding much more awake now:

"This is about a woman, right?"

Nice tries to protest but Birthday shakes him off with, "I'm at home, so just drop by whenever you want," and hangs up.

With a sigh Nice pockets his phone and starts moving—the walk to Birthday's apartment will take another thirty minutes at least.

Nice gets there, at last, and rings the door bell three times before Birthday opens. The apartment is a mess.

"Ah, sorry 'bout that," Birthday says over his shoulder as he guides Nice into the living room—not that he doesn't know the way.

"Ratio hasn't been around in a while and I just can't bring myself to tidy up..."

Nice hums to show he's been listening but doesn't say anything else. He looks at a pile of clothes next to the couch and tries to remember how he used to live before Murasaki showed up. It's been less than two years but he can't imagine it anymore.

Birthday makes some space on the living room table—shuffling around some magazines—and puts down a bottle of coke.

Nice sits down, opens the bottle, takes a sip and waits. Meanwhile, Birthday goes to the kitchen and returns with a beer can in his hand. He sits down opposite of Nice and watches him.

For a while they just sit there, seemingly waiting for the other to start talking. When minutes pass and Nice's bottle is almost empty Birthday finally sighs.

"So, what is it you wanted to talk about? It's gotta be about a woman, right?"

Nice stares at the cola for a while longer before he finally looks up and at Birthday.

"To be honest, I'm not entirely sure. But Ratio said you might be able to help me so here I am."

Birthday hums and disappointedly says, "I guess it's not about a woman after all..."

Before Nice can snap at him and say, "I told you so," Birthday continues, "But since Ratio told you to come to me there's gotta be some story to tell, right? Lemme hear!"

Nice takes one more sip of coke before he puts the now empty bottle down on the table and starts talking.

"Well, for a few days now my body's been doing some weird shit. Stuff like burning up for no reason and my heart speeding up, but it's not like I'm ill or something. And then Ratio went ahead asking me stuff like if there's been a certain person present or if I've ever been in lo-"

He's interrupted by Birthday laughing out loud.

The blond doesn't calm down for at least a minute and Nice watches with irritation how he even slaps his knee twice and the table once. Only when he starts gasping for air does Birthday wipe off some tears and exclaims:

"Dude, Nice, I didn't know you could be so cute!"

Nice thinks about just leaving right at that moment but then he remembers that he actually came here for a purpose, so he waits.

He waits a few more minutes until Birthday seems composed enough to have a conversation without bursting into laughter once more—hopefully. And then he waits some more for Birthday to pick up from where they left off.

"So, who is the lucky person who's been present all the time?"

There still is a chuckle in his voice and to Nice's further confusion he mumbles, "So it is about a woman after all..." under his breath.

But then Nice utters a simple, "Murasaki," and for a split second Birthday's face gets serious before he's quickly back to his grin.

"Murasaki, huh?"

Nice doesn't even try to hide his annoyance anymore when he nods and repeats, "Yeah, Murasaki."

Birthday takes a deep breath and ruffles his own hair as if trying to find the best way to say the words that follow.

"Geez, I thought you were supposed to some kind of genius. Anyway, I hate to break it to you but you've got a serious crush going on there."

Nice's mouth drops open but Birthday is busy still messing up his hair—with both hands now and accompanied by a cussed, "Why did Ratio think I could handle this?"

"A crush?"

Nice's words sound hollow and Birthday actually feels a bit sorry for him.

"But... but he's a guy. There's no boobs or curves..."

The older puts his hand on Nice's in what he hopes is a calming gesture and the boy looks at him expectantly. After a few seconds Birthday still hasn't said anything. Finally, he pulls his hand back and leans back against his chair.

"Damn that Ratio! What am I supposed to tell you? Listen, you're how old now?"

"17. But almost 18."

Birthday nods.

"You're at the prime of your life. Having a crush is much healthier than whatever you've been doing up till now. It's good that you're acting like an actual teenager for once."

Nice lets the words sink in and deems them acceptable.

"But why Murasaki? Why not Honey, for example? She's got big boobs..."

Birthday seems to think about that for a few seconds before he grins.

"First of all, if you made a move on Honey she and Three would kill you."

The grin softens to a smile.

"And anyway, it's not that odd, really. You spend most of your time with Murasaki, you rely on him, you've saved each other's lives several times before and, hell, you guys live together! Plus, he's not a bad-looking fellow."

For some reason unbeknownst to him Nice blushes at that statement. Birthday just smirks again.

"See, that's what I'm talking about. Allow yourself to be a teenager from time to time instead of a world-saving genius idiot."

He leans forward to affectionately ruffle Nice's hair—who groans in response—and stands up to throw away the empty can and bottle from the table and to give the other some time to think.

When he comes back he can hear Nice talking to someone. One quick look in the living room reveals that he's on the phone.

"So, basically, I'm at Birthday's and need you to pick me up. ... I know it's getting late, is why I'm calling you. ... Alright, see you in ten!"

As soon as Nice hangs up Birthday walks up to him. The genuine grin is back on both of their faces.

"You made up your mind already?"

"I still don't actually believe you, so I'll just act like I always do. And I didn't bring any money to take the train back."

Birthday laughs and they talk about a new idol that seems in the making until the doorbell rings. On his way out Nice casually says, "By the way, I'm taking my DVDs back," before he shuts the door behind him.

A few days later Art invites Nice to a cup of coffee at Café Nowhere which the younger one of course doesn't decline. They haven't even properly sat down before Nice starts whining, "Aart..."

Nice lets out a deep sigh and slumps on the table.

"I might have a problem."

Art looks at him with expectant eyes and puts a sugar cube in his coffee.

"What problem?"

Nice mumbles something unintelligible while Art picks up the next cube.

"Hm?"

"I said," Nice makes an exaggerated gesture with his hand, "there's a possibility that I might maybe, perhaps be in love..."

Art almost drops the sugar but lets it gently slide in his cup in the last second.

"In love? You?"

Art doesn't hide his amusement and Nice groans, covering his face behind his arms.

"With whom?"

Art picks up a third cube of sugar and waits for Nice to answer. The younger takes a deep breath.

"Murasaki..."

This time it does drop and sends splatters of coffee all over the table. Quickly, Art takes a paper tissue to wipe the stains off and takes that time to think Nice's words over. When he sits back down Nice asks:

"Are you shocked?"

Art weighs the words in his mouth before he speaks, letting Nice ramble on about how, 'I was shocked'. When he finally answers his voice is as gentle as always.

"I wouldn't say shocked, but I can't say I saw it coming, either."

From the counter comes a high-pitched, shrieked, "I didn't either," and Nice is reminded that they aren't alone—not that he cares much anyway. When he concentrates back on Art the former inspector is already sipping on his coffee.

"Either way, you started this topic cause you want to talk about it, right?"

With a smile Art adds, "Well then, talk."

Nice looks up from where his head is pillowed on his arms and starts talking loud and fast.

"You see, about a week ago my body suddenly started reacting to Murasaki—you know, like unintentionally heating up and that shit."

From the counter Master mumbles, "Please watch your language," but Nice ignores him.

"And then I talked to Ratio and Birthday and they said I might have a crush on him, but I didn't believe them. So, anyways, when he picked me up that day I couldn't stop thinking about it and even though I said I'd act the way I always do I just couldn't do it

cause he's just always there. Do you know how often he casually touches me?"

At this point Art grabs Nice's elbow and interrupts him.

"First of all, I'm a little offended you're only telling me about this now. Secondly, slow down, Nice. Take a deep breath and then continue."

Nice does just that—takes a deep breath and continues.

"Basically, he touches me a lot. And I don't understand how I never noticed, but then I started thinking that maybe he could like me? And then I wondered why I would even consider that.

"And you know how it's getting warmer? Apparently that's reason enough for him to stay shirtless for a while after a shower. Those muscles should be illegal! Art, please, you've still got connections, right? Please find me a way to make them illegal.

"And then his stupid pyjamas! Have you ever seen his pyjamas? There's little bunnies on them, Art! Bunnies! How can a man with those muscles wear bunny pyjamas?"

He ends his tirade with a whine and buries his face back in his arms. Art gently pats his head, though Nice can't tell if it's genuine or to tease him.

"Murasaki does that all the time. Patting my head, I mean."

Art ruffles his hair and chuckles.

"You've really got it bad, hm?"

Nice just lets another whine and the older goes back to drinking his coffee—to hide his grin.

For a while the only thing that can be heard is the sound of dishes clinging against each other and Master grinding whatever it is he grinds all the time.

When Art puts his cup down the next time he asks, "So, is that a general thing for you now? Crushing, I mean? Do you find me attractive?"

Even though the teasing tone in Art's voice is as obvious as it can get Nice shoots up in his chair and looks almost offended.

"Ew, Art, gross! You're like my brother!"

Art laughs at him—genuinely laughs—and out of the corner of his eye he can see Master grin.

"I know, I know. I was joking. But for real; does that mean you consider yourself—what—bisexual?"

Nice leans back against his chair.

"I don't know. For now I can't imagine myself having the same kind of feelings I have for Murasaki for anyone else... But why, would it be weird?"

"Nice, you've done far more irritating things than fall in love with a man."

Nice tries to look offended, but he knows very well he's failing.

"I guess you're right..."

"Anyway, shouldn't you be more worried about what Hajime is gonna think?"

Nice grins.

"Nah, she loves his cooking. If anything she's probably gonna be happy if we get together."

Art considers his next words while playing with the handle of his coffee cup.

"So, you plan on confessing to him?"

Nice sits up straight again at that, sputtering words that make no sense before he settles for a simple, "No way!" This time Master joins in on Art's laughter.

"So you can be cute after all."

Nice glares at them both before he buries his face in his folded arms once more. Art calms his chuckling and asks, "What do you think would happen?"

"Do you really have to ask that?"

The question is muffled.

"Well, yes..."

Nice—never having been one to sit still for long—sits back up again.

"For starters, he could be disgusted and kick me out. I don't wanna live on the street. Or he could just not reciprocate my feelings and I'd still have to live with him and his stupid muscles and ridiculously cute pyjamas."

"What makes you so sure he's not going to reciprocate?"

Nice looks as if Art just said something awfully offensive.

"Of course he's gonna say no! I mean, I'm already mostly just a nuisance to him, right?"

Art hums.

"Hm, I'm not really sure about that..."

Nice's eyes get bigger.

"What?"

"I mean, you've said so yourself—he touches you a lot, right? Everyone can see that you guys are very close and care for each other a lot. And if you were a nuisance to him don't you think he would've kicked you out already by now? He loves complaining about you but you're still living together, aren't you?"

The trademark gentle smile is back on Art's lips and he watches Nice intently as the younger considers the words.

"So, you think I should give it a shot?"

Art rests his chin on his hand.

"You're both idiots, I'm sure it'll work out."

Nice is so invested in his thoughts that he doesn't even take offense.

They stay at Nowhere for a while longer—chit-chatting different things like Art's plans to open his own pastries café—before Nice excuses himself and strolls home.

When Nice gets home the words, "I'm home," get stuck in his throat as soon as he sees the two men talking to Murasaki—the latter sitting on the coach facing the front door, Birthday and Ratio on the one opposite. That's why even when Murasaki's face falls the doctor finishes his sentence.

"-just saying, you might wanna consider talking about it."

The clang of keys against the bowl by the door drowns out Murasaki's hushed, "Nice..."

The other two turn around to him and Birthday immediately flashes Nice a wide grin. Then he stands up, pulling Ratio up with him and declares, "Yo, Nice! Sorry, but we're just about to leave."

Nice watches them with horror as they make their way past him to put on their shoes. He angrily whispers to Birthday, "What the hell did you do?" but the older just keeps grinning at him and whispers back, "Don't worry, we're just trying to help."

A few seconds later they're out the door and the room is quiet. The silence is only interrupted when Murasaki gets up to put the three cups he and the other two used from the table in the sink. Nice watches him turn back around but when their eyes meet they both turn away.

The atmosphere around them feels very awkward and Nice soon can't stand it anymore so he blurts out the first thing he can think of.

"So, what were you guys talking about?"

Murasaki almost drops the cup he's about to clean and Nice mentally facepalms and congratulates himself on making things even worse.

When Murasaki's grip on the cup is firm again he says, "Nothing," but he doesn't turn around to face Nice. The younger is almost thankful for the lie because it saves them both any further embarrassment so he just sits down on the couch and turns on the TV. He remembers that Murasaki sat there just a few moments ago. The sounds of explosions and cups floating against the sink mingle together until Murasaki is finished.

Nice can hear the dish water pouring down the drain and not long after the cushion next to him dips a little. They both focus on the movie playing on the screen for a while but during ads Murasaki can't keep quiet any longer.

He takes the remote to mute the TV and that's when Nice finally looks at him. The protest he's about to voice dies on his lips when he sees the other's flushed cheeks. His throat goes dry and he feels the need to gulp several times.

Murasaki looks like he desperately wants to say something but doesn't yet know how to phrase it. Nice drops his gaze to his lap—not being able to cope with his partner looking at him for so long—and out of the corner of his eyes he can see Murasaki's hands fidgeting. His heart speeds up.

"So, uhm..."

Nice's head snaps back up and Murasaki immediately avoids his eyes. That, combined with the older's still reddened cheeks, cause his breathing to go faster, too, and he has to force himself to stop hoping.

"So, with Ratio and Birthday... We, uhm, we..."

Murasaki trails off again but then he takes a deep breath which makes Nice's heart speed up even more if possible and this time it's not just out of excitement. The horror of the duo possibly having told Murasaki about their conversations dawns on him again.

"We kind of talked about us. You and I, I mean."

Nice takes a sharp breath. So they had really done it... He makes a mental note to hit them both the next time he'd see them while he concentrates on keeping his full-body blush under control—he fails.

His breathing is ragged and he turns back towards the TV screen and if Murasaki notices his red ears he's got enough tact to not mention it. Instead, he changes the

subject.

"Anyway, you were out with Art earlier, right? Is he alright? Did he say anything important?"

Nice actually stops breathing for a second and he feels like he's falling. He's so busy freaking out over why Murasaki had to ask that exact question and how he should answer it—and trying not to let it show—that he completely misses the other's follow-up question, "How are the plans for his café going?"

His thoughts are tumbling all over one another until only one of them is left—he's never been one to give up easily. It may be Murasaki's Ego to never give up but that doesn't mean that Nice is any different in that aspect.

The thought calms him and with a deep breath—similar to his partner's from a few minutes ago—he finally says to an almost concerned-looking Murasaki, "Since you already know about it anyway... I told him about my feelings for you and whether I should confess to you or not."

Murasaki's eyes widen almost comically.

"You what?"

Both their faces immediately match Murasaki's coat in colour and it's only then that Nice realises his mistake.

"Oh my god, they didn't--"

He sputters excuses of "I'm sorry! Nevermind! Just forget what I said," before he storms off the coach in the direction of the door.

The escape attempt almost succeeds but then Nice's movements are too hectic and too uncoordinated and he stumbles over his own feet. With a loud thump he collides with the floor. In a second Murasaki is next to him, looking a little panicked and asking if he's alright.

Nice ignores his partner's offered hand and curls up on his side when he decides it can't get any worse.

Murasaki seems to have stopped moving as well because the room is completely quiet now. Into the silence Nice mumbles,

"I really thought that's what you were talking about cause you were acting all awkward..."

Murasaki clears his throat, further adding to Nice's suspicion.

"Well, not exactly."

Shuffling behind him and a sudden, warm hand on his head make Nice know that his partner knelt down next to him. The hand starts moving—ruffling his hair and patting his head—and Nice unconsciously leans into the touch. Murasaki knows about his feelings now, so it should be okay, right? Nice lets out a content sigh before he speaks again.

"Then what did you guys talk about? You said it involved about us, so I definitely deserve to know."

A soft chuckle leaves Murasaki's lips and Nice feels both mocked and oddly at ease.

"I guess you really do. But I'll need you to turn around for that, please."

At first Nice curls up a little more but then he quickly obeys because of course he's simply curious but also Murasaki's voice has that effect on him recently.

When he rolls over, Murasaki's face is much closer than he expected.

Nice barely has a second to process what is happening when suddenly Murasaki's lips are on his—they're gone just as fast. Murasaki pulls back—covering his face with his hands—but Nice can still see the blush creep up his partner's ears. His own breathing and heartbeat are at high-speed and his hands are shaking as they come up to take Murasaki's off his face. The other still avoids his gaze when he explains, "I like you, too, Nice. I actually have for a while now and a few weeks ago Birthday found out. He's been giving me surprisingly good advice since then and today he told me to actually give a confession a try."

They're still holding hands when Murasaki turns to him with a shy smile on his lips.

"Now I know why."

Nice's breath hitches and he just thinks about how he'll have to thank Birthday after a still-deserved punch when their lips meet again almost magically.

It's a sweet kiss, just lips moving together. They're not in a rush and when they part after a while Nice lets out a shaky breath and mumbles, "I guess Art was right when he said things would work out with two idiots like us."

He yelps when Murasaki's fingertips dig between his ribs.

"Oj, don't put me on one level with yourself."

The words lose their bite, though, as he helps Nice into a sitting position and pulls him into his lap. Nice's giggling from the short tickle bubbles into genuine laughter in which Murasaki joins him.

When they calm down again Nice finds that at some point he slung his arms around his partner's neck because when they lean in for another quick kiss it's just so easy and perfect. Neither wants to let go after and Murasaki's strong arms on his back pull Nice

into a tight hug.

They just sit there on the floor for a while, holding each other with no intention to change anything for the time being until suddenly the front door flies open and Birthday storms in, announcing he forgot his shades. He only stops short for a second when he sees the position the other two are in. Then he grabs his glasses, winks at them, shows them a thumbs up and leaves again.

The two of them look at the door dumbfounded and can hear a muffled, "Ouch!" through it and what sounds like Ratio's voice scolding, "I told you to at least knock."

The atmosphere around them lightens and with a chuckle and one last peck Murasaki get up from the floor—casually picking Nice up with him but putting him back down on his feet right after—and says, "How about I make some fried rice for dinner?"

Nice nods eagerly.