

# Ocean Avenue

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## Kapitel 3: Anywhere But Here

Youichi Hiruma ordered his sixth coffee in a row, typing away on his laptop, too busy to notice the world around him. If he would though, he might have noticed the pair of big brown eyes from the new-arrival that stared at him in utter disbelief from the entrance of the café.

Soon, he felt the little hairs on the back of his neck stand on edge though and, disturbed by that, he looked up with a frown, just to meet these two incredulous eyes. As a result, his own two eyes became big as saucers.

It was the one person he least wanted to see from all the people in Japan at that very moment.

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Gen Takekura tried to go through his day with the same patience as every day, but with all the calls of people that wished him a Happy Birthday, the myriads of presents that arrived at his office and the various invitations to go out and eat with business partners, it was near impossible. At 14:00, he decided that he would get nothing done and devoted himself completely to answering the phone that would not stop ringing.

Around half an hour later, when even his mother had called him at work even though he had told her that she should call him in the evening, when he was home again, he decided to call it a day.

To celebrate his birthday though, he decided to reward himself with a coffee and a snack before he went home to his family. Sometimes, he needed a break from all of them, no matter how much he loved them all. They, and especially his oldest son, reminded him just how different his life would have been had he listened to his heart over 20 years ago. It would have been a lot more difficult than it had been the way he chose in the end.

Maybe he was a masochist, but he returned at least once a week to the place where his life had a crucial turning point. He always told himself that it was just for the coffee, but that was not completely true. The real reason why he returned to the café

that he used to go to during his School time thanks to Hiruma, were the memories that seemed to get alive at this place. But they still made the best coffee Gen had ever tasted, even after so many years, therefore that was also a reason.

Thus, after a rather long ride with a few public trains, Gen stood in front of the café that held almost as much memories for him as the twenty years of living with his family did. For a moment, he hesitated to step inside, having a funny feeling in his stomach, but then he shrugged it off and opened the door, looking around the familiar furniture and decoration, just to let his eyes fall upon a too familiar mop of spiky blond hair...

For a moment, he thought that he was imagining things. However, the picture stayed the same, even when he blinked. Then he tried to think that it was just some weird cosplayer, who dressed up as one of these Visual-K-musicians that all looked the same to him. Some of them even more, but when that person looked up from his laptop, he was sure that he did not imagine things.

"Hiruma," he breathed as he saw the other's shocked expression. Obviously, the blond had recognized him as well.

Slowly, as if in slow motion, he walked over to the blond's table where he asked if he could take a seat.

"It's not like I can stop if you do," Hiruma grumbled, taking off a delicate looking pair of glasses. Obviously, he needed them when he worked on the computer for a longer time, because now seemed to be shutting his laptop down. From close on, Gen was able to see that Hiruma did not change much. His hair was still blond, maybe a little shorter than he remembered it, but it stood up anyways, his eyes were still green, even though he suspected him to be wearing contacts most of the time. The ears were still big and pointed, two loops in each of them and his mouth was still as big as it used to be. Hiruma looked matured though, older, but what else would you expect from somebody who was Gen's age? He had some wrinkles in the middle of his brows, around his mouth and mostly on his forehead.

Still, it was unmistakably the Hiruma Gen knew since his Junior High School days in all his glory grumpiness. The man's heart skipped at least a beat or two.

"It's been a very long time," he said softly, ignoring the hostility he felt from Hiruma.

"Obviously not long enough for I still remember your face," the blond grumbled, looking outside a nearby window and thus avoiding Gen's eyes.

The man snorted. "Well, it's a good thing then that your face will always stick out in the crowd. Makes it easier for me to find you."

"Hey, you were the one who broke up, now *don't* try any of this romantic shit, understood? It won't work with me."

But Gen knew that it did. Hiruma was talking in more than one sentence to him, which

was a good start. He should play Hiruma's game though to regain a bit of their old trust.

"I know," he mumbled with a smile, pausing as the waitress put down his order in front of him. "How long has it been now?"

~\*~FLASHBACK~\*~

"We're going to marry."

"What? Because she's pregnant? You know how easy it is to get rid of the child-"

"We're too old for that. Besides, it doesn't make a lot of a difference. I just... I don't want the child to be born without their parents being married."

"Che. You're a hopeless romantic. Ever was, ever be."

"You never complained before."

~\*~END FLASHBACK~\*~

"It's been 19 years, 363 days, 23 hours and-" Hiruma said in a bored tone after he took a look at his watch.

Gen frowned. He did not keep track of the dates just like Hiruma did, but he remembered that day as clearly as if it had been yesterday. And something about the blond's calculation was a little off.

"Wait, what day do you think we have today?" he asked, receiving a lifted eyebrow.

"What's so important about it? It's not like today's a special day or something-"

"No, it is important. Because we've seen each other-"

"-on your 25th birthday. Yeah," Hiruma finished the sentence for him. "And your birthday is tomorrow. So, nothing special, unless you think that April Fools' is a special day... What?"

"You're wrong... it's not the first today. It's already the second," Gen explained.

"...Wait, that would mean that..."

"Yes, it's my birthday today."

"..."

"..."

"That's a joke, right?"

Gen shook his head, "I wish it was, but, no. It's the truth. April Fools' was yesterday."

Hiruma suddenly looked like he wanted to bang his head against the table. "Shit."

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The moment Musashi had entered the café, Hiruma knew exactly what he wanted to do, but he was more than sure that the other man would not agree to "Hey, let's skip the entire talking and just go to the next love hotel, if you know what I mean." Unfortunately.

Contrary to what he had said, it had been such a long time that he had forgotten the effect Musashi had on him. First there came this hunger, where he wanted to tip off the clothes of the stronger-looking man and then there was the calm. Not that he was not calm before on the outside, it was just that Musashi's proximity seemed to give him an inner calm that he was never able to get when he was alone. Primarily, his hunger had to be satisfied and when he was denied that little bit, he could never reach the calm.

The fact that he had lost an entire day by crossing the International Date Line without him noticing made things even worse. Because now he had to deal with Musashi on his freaking birthday and while he did not care about these kinds of days at all, it meant that it had been indeed exactly 20 years since they last saw each other.

Hiruma gritted his teeth and suppressed a sigh. Really, it would be so much easier to just leave this place without saying another word and go to the nearest love hotel. However, from the look on Musashi's face that was really no option. The man looked like he was bursting with things he wanted to tell him, all the stuff that had happened during the past 20 years. And those were the last things Hiruma wanted to hear.

He suppressed another sigh and forced out a "Happy Birthday, then," taking a moment to take in the other's features. Surprisingly, Musashi had not changed much over the years; he still looked like the old man he looked like when he was 17. A few more wrinkles maybe, mostly around his eyes and mouth, indicating that he smiled a lot, but also a few on his forehead, meaning that he had to deal with a lot of crap that gave him a headache or two on an almost regular basis. His hair was still black, although a few grey hairs were showing now that Hiruma looked closer. Nothing like Musashi's father though, who had been completely white at 45.

"Thank you," Musashi smiled as he took a sip from his coffee.

Inwardly Hiruma calculated how fast he could leave the café if he really wanted to.

"So, how have you been? I didn't hear you take over the world so I guessed that something was not happening the way you wanted it to be."

At least two minutes. Too long to make it without any explanation. But the way this conversation was leading made a quick departure necessary.

"Look, I have to check into my hotel until 17:00 and that's in less than an hour and I have to go through half of Tokyo to-" Hiruma explained lazily, not in the mood to make up a better excuse. Musashi would have been able to look through it anyways.

"You didn't look like you wanted to leave soon when I came here," the man said matter-of-factly as he took a bite from his sandwich.

"...So what? I looked at the clock now and-"

"But if you booked your room from the first, and you didn't come yesterday, they have probably given away your room to somebody else," Musashi argued, looking like he had a plan.

Hiruma frowned and shot a glare into his direction. Why did he have to make this mistake in the first place?

"That's none of your concern," he growled. "I can find a room anywhere if I want to."

"So you still have no problem getting money? That's nice to hear," Musashi said softly, before he looked up from his plate. "Look, we have a guest room at our house and I know that Mamori would love to see you and-"

"So, you two are still married?" Hiruma interrupted him, wanting to confirm that fact.

Musashi blinked, slightly taken aback by the suddenness of these words. Then he nodded. "Yes, we still are. Somehow we... we seem to work well."

"So you don't love her?" Hiruma prodded further, his eyes cold as ice.

"...It's not like that," Musashi mumbled, staring down at his half-finished sandwich. Why did he have such problems explaining his relationship to Hiruma? To everybody else he knew it was easy, he loved his wife and his children and that was it. Deep in his heart though, he knew that he could never love anybody as much as he loved Hiruma. "You should know that love is not that easily explained-"

"Kekeke, you're still sprouting as much bullshit as you did 20 years ago," Hiruma cackled, feeling his mood rising somehow at these words. He could not quite explain it, but somehow the option of dragging Musashi to the next love hotel did not seem as unlikely as it did before. In addition, he was glad that his long absence had not been in vain. "It's an easy yes or no question; even a fucking old man like you should be able to answer that."

Musashi frowned. Somehow, he had not expected to hear that nickname ever again. "Well, I love her. I love my kids, my family, if that's what you want to hear. I love my job too, I love-"

"It's alright, it's alright, you don't need to tell me your favorite color," Hiruma cackled some more. "Fine, I'll come home with you for the evening, but if I don't want to stay the night you help me find a hotel and carry all my luggage for me, understood?"

Musashi snorted. "Fine with me."

"Are you really sure? You don't know how heavy my stuff is," Hiruma teased, snatching a stripe of ham from the other's plate.

"If you can carry it, I can carry it, too," Musashi smirked. "Don't forget that I'm still a carpenter, no matter the suit."

"But you have gotten old, fucking geezer," Hiruma grinned. "Be careful not to break your bones."

"Well, you're not 17 anymore as well. And what do you say about wine? The older the better, right?" the other man shot back, suddenly looking at least 10 years younger with that certain twinkle in his eyes. Somehow, it felt as if nothing had happened all these years ago, but Hiruma reminded him that it was otherwise.

Else, Musashi would not be taking him home to his wife and kids.