

“Would you jump with me?”

It was like this: sakura flowers always in my peripheral, shrines and temples on the hills of green and purple. There was something about their glamor, their power, their serenity. The days were a constant sunshine of orange and yellow rays. I used to think there was nothing better than this happiness, this place full of surprises and magic hidden behind the ravines, the secret gardens, the mountains. But that was before, now I was the one who knew better.

I looked at the rushing water below me. Flashes of gold sparkled as the moonfish swam against the current, fighting for what they knew and what they wanted.

I could be like that.

Kename was crouching down beside me, his face scrunched up half in thought and half in a land of daydreams and nightmares. When he found me, I thought he would be in an unspoken fury. I thought he would tell me I was being selfish and ignorant, bring me down and pull me into the fiercest embrace until I forgot about everything but the smell of his skin, his hair, *himhimhim* everywhere.

But he didn't. All he did was pick up a fallen sakura petal and twirl it in between his thumb and index fingers. I watched him study it, his eyes intent, dark and strange. Then with one single breath, he blew on it. The single blossom flowed in and out, in and out of space, until it broke up into tiny pieces and sprinkled the bridge with pink diamonds.

Kename looked up at me with a hidden smile that could melt gold. He patted his black pants and strolled over to me, leaving behind a trail of sparkling petal dust.

He leaned his arms on the railing I sat on. For a while, there was nothing but the hum of the river below us, the songs of the birds above us.

“No, I wouldn't,” Kename said. “I love the magic. Why don't you?”

“I do love the magic.”

“Not enough if you want to jump.”

“I do love the magic.”

Kename sighed in admiration. “There's nothing better than the magic.”

He closed his eyes and I studied him once more, like I didn't know him enough. The sides of his head were shaved and what remained of hair was dyed blonde. He would push it back constantly and I thought it was the most handsome thing a boy could do. Kename was of charisma and charm, wit and intelligence. He was a sinner in a body of an angel. I could

count the number of scars he's had on his back, recall what he had to do to stay alive in the Wild. And here I was, giving up my life away when he fought so hard to live. I felt like a selfish monster.

Kename took one deep breath. The wind pushed into a gentle breeze and then the petals came showering over us. It was all at once. The wind turned into something powerful and harsh and in a heartbeat, I was in a dance of pink and white petals, inside this whirlwind of beauty. In this blizzard, I saw the magic that Kename loved. It was us, together, forever. It was my mother telling me to keep being going forward. It was Uchiha telling me to keep believing and that peace would be kept forever if I wanted it to.

As Kename opened his eyes, the magic of it all disappeared. "I can't make you live," he said, "But I don't want you to leave this behind."

But I didn't want to end up in a wasteland. I didn't want to lose this place to those cold machines.

He whispered, "Stay with me."

The two poles tugged at my heart. I wanted to go. I wanted to stay. I was battling with the ghouls and demons inside my head. While I fought them, Kename practiced his magic and made the petals in the wind dance around us once more. In my heart, I could feel the energy and love Kename had for our souls, how alive we were, how desperate he wanted my inner fire to burn alongside with his.

But when the moon rose to its peak, I closed my eyes. When I opened them again, I realized I was free.