

HeartSpace

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A fic I did for school, so thats why the swear words are mostly bleeped out. lol. Its an AU about Bankotsu and Jakotsu! Please read it!

Edit: 04/28/07 -Omg, this is sooo old! I'll leave it up since a few people seemed to enjoy it, but wow...old..

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Chapter 1 - HeartSpace

2

1 - HeartSpace

HeartSpace

I stare at the blank wall above the receding hairline of the counselor's head. This is only my second day of "counseling," but I'm already sick of it. Why am I here anyway? I only got in a fight with some other senior, none of us got really hurt, so why am I stuck wasting my time in this stupid boring room with these stupid boring posters on the stupid boring walls and this stupid boring old man of a counselor?! The other person just got a referral. I got two weeks of counseling – until Winter Break. Why was I treated differently than him? What's so different about me-? Of course, the moment I thought that, I knew the answer. Because I loved another guy.

Adults always seem to have a way of finding out things, no matter how hard you try to keep them from knowing. I have no friends so there is no one I would have told that. I can't wait to be eighteen; maybe then I'll know stuff too. It's kind of like when people were little kids and their moms always knew when they did something bad. They said they had "eyes in the back of their head. I fight the urge to shake my head, what kind of an idiot thinks about stuff like that?

I don't move, not to glance at my watch or push a strand of hair out of my eyes. Whatever I do, they write it down, so I don't move. They can't help me; I don't need help! The bell rings and I jump from the chair. I grab my binder and get out of that room. Just my luck, I bump into some junior girl, knocking her books out of her arms.

"Oh, sorry- I'll help you pick 'em up!"

" Don't touch me, you queer freak!"

What? "H-how did you know? – Don't tell anyone please! I – I'll pay you!"

The girl took the twenty I held out and started to walk off.

" My friend overheard some teachers talking in the staff room, the whole school will know by now!" She called over her shoulder, emitting one of those high-pitched giggles.

I could've killed her. The school now knows that I am gay AND she took my money! I reach my locker and throw my binder on the floor. I open the door and push papers around, fishing for my history textbook. I hear another stupid giggle behind me. I turn around to find some senior girl who I'd never heard of before look at the inside of my locker door.

"Ha! I'm surprised you don't have a picture of your boyfriend in there. Or did you break up, gay wad?!"

She turns on her heel to leave and some jocks start laughing. Fuming, I grab the textbook and slam the locker shut. I run down the hallway to class, my face flaming. Usually I kind of like history, but today I can't stay focused. I doesn't help that I keep hearing whispers and muffled giggles behind me.

I want to die. I have a pounding headache, and lots of homework because counseling uses my study hall time. I can feel the blackness before me, it's pulling me in, and I don't try to fight it. This is where I belong. I-

The bell rings, jarring me out of my dark pool of thoughts. I grab my junk and stomp out of the classroom. It was the end of the last period. School is over. I shove my books and binder in my backpack and sling it over my shoulder. I walk out the door of the school as a wad of paper bounces off my head. I don't understand why people treat me differently; I'm not really that different from them!

I turn the corner onto the street that leads to the apartment complex I live in. I stomp up the central outside stairs, their cold metal ringing coldly, loudly echoing hollowly in my ears. I reach the door to my apartment and fumble in my cargo pocket for the key. I jam it into the door and step into the room. I can smell miso soup cooking on the stove.

"Tadaima!" I say. Only after I said it, I realize how edgy my voice sounded.

"O' kaeri nasai!" the warm, bubbly voice I know so well answers back.

My...boyfriend...Jakotsu is cooking miso. As usual he is wearing a frilly pink apron. I couldn't help smiling slightly, seeing Jakotsu always cheers me up.

"Are you hungry Bankotsu?"

"Uh...no, not really..."

He puts down the spoon he was stirring the soup with and walks towards me. He bends down to be at eyelevel with me, his usually happy face now etched with concern.

"You look like you had a bad day...is there anything you want to talk about?"

I turn away "Really, I'm fine...really!"

Jakotsu shakes his head and turns back to the kitchen. I dump my backpack on the floor and pull out my Calculus book. I turn to the page and try solving the first problem. I can't. I know I got it in second hour, when the teacher was explaining it to us. I had done a few problems myself and I got them too. I can't do them now. My mind keeps slipping back to school. How could I go back there tomorrow?! I can't face all those people again! Those crowds of people surrounding me, with hatred, a burning fire in their eyes. They hate me for what I am. I can't go back.

I begin thinking of ways to get out of going to school. I could pretend to be sick and stay home, but then Jakotsu would probably insist on staying home too, and then he would have to take off work and if he does that, we won't be able to pay the rent. I give up and return to the math problems still staring unsolved at me from the blank paper I am supposed to be doing them on.

"Bankotsu, would you like some dinner...?": Jakotsu called tentatively.

"Uh, sure...thanks Jakotsu."

I leave my homework on the floor and walk over to kitchen. Jakotsu had removed the apron but, due to his cross-dressing tendencies, is wearing a knee-length baby-blue skirt and form-fitting black T-shirt. Flared black legwarmers and a wrist cuff compliment the outfit. Even though we moved to the US three years ago, Jakotsu still follows the dress code of Japanese girls. We moved to America because both of us were trying to leave our bad memories in Japan. Jakotsu still partially blames himself for what happened, although I often told him he had nothing to do with it. Back then I was only fourteen, I thought I could learn to forget my past, but now I know it's not that easy. A place has the power to bring back memories, but leaving it won't take them away.

I grew up with a good family who cared about me. My mom and Jakotsu's mom had been friends since elementary school, so of course he and I grew up playing together from the time we were little kids. We had been happy kids, doing everything we possibly could together even though he is three years older than me. I remember my family having a party for him when he got into his choice junior high. Three years later, his family threw one for me too.

Back in Japan, the school year sort-of ends in the early spring. I was over at Jakotsu's house playing his new video game that we had both been waiting to play for a long time. It had been his seventeenth birthday recently and I would be fifteen in just over four months. It had snowed a lot a few days ago, which was why I didn't see Jakotsu on his actual birthday. The snow had finally melted just enough for me to convince my parents to drive me over. It was 4:30, the time when they were supposed to pick me up. Then it was 4:45, then 5:02. The phone rang. Downstairs in the front room, Jakotsu's mom answered it. After a few minutes, we could hear soft sobbing and her calling us to get on the line too. Jakotsu picked it up and listened for a while. He mumbled something into the receiver and passed it to me, a

mixture of horror and shock easily readable on his honest face. I tried to stay calm, but my voice wavered when I answered the phone. A policeman said some stuff I don't remember and then he told me my parents were dead. Their car had skid on the ice and collided with another slipping car and rolled into a ditch. They were both killed.

I remember dropping the phone. I remember being too shocked to do anything, and then it sank it. I was all alone now. My parents were dead, I have no living relatives and Jakotsu had already graduated from high school. I had never told my parents how much I cared about them or thanking them for taking time off their day to do things for me, and now they were gone. I sank to my knees. I wasn't perfect, but what did I do to deserve this?! I can't remember ever crying before that time, but I did then. Jakotsu moved over to me and put his arms around my shoulders.

"I'm so sorry..." he whispered in my ear.

I glanced up and saw that his eyes were wet to. They glistened with unshed tears. I can't recall much of what happened after that. I think I was in some sort of a daze.

The funeral was large. All of the people both my parents had ever known seemed to be there. They kept coming by me, patting me on the head like I was some kind of dog or something, and saying some sort of well-meaning thing to me. After the service was over Jakotsu quietly pulled me outside.

"Listen, do you want to get way from here? Away, away?"

I nodded.

" My parents were going to pay for my college tuition, but I don't really want to go to college. I wouldn't be able to see you very often if I went and...I want to...stay with you."

"I..." I wasn't sure if I was supposed to say something or not. There had been something unreadable in Jakotsu's eyes that confused me.

" They said they would give me the money they were going to pay for my college in cash. If you want...er, well, that is...I have enough money to pay for us both to fly to the US. We could share an apartment, that's all I can afford, if you wouldn't mind and you could go to a good high school there and maybe I could...could see you...smile again."

That moment I knew what I had been trying to say earlier. I had known that my best friend was gay but I never thought I was until that time. I knew I had to be with him. Jakotsu kept talking.

"You... you always treated me like a real person, even when hardly anyone else did because I like guys. I don't know how you feel about me, but you are very special to me. I think of you as more than a friend, but if you don't, then I hope we can just be-

I had cut him off, "I- I feel the same way about you, I realize that no-

Then he cut me off. In one swift movement, his arms were wrapped around me. I could feel his lips pressing against mine. A warmth ran through me, but as suddenly as it started, it stopped. Jakotsu pulled away from and looked at me inquisitively. I could feel my face getting red and I turned away so I would have to see whatever Jakotsu was thinking written on his face.

"Sumimasen, Bankotsu... I- I shouldn't have done that..."

I kept my eyes on the ground when I replied; sure I was still blushing furiously. "Umm...its okay really."

What happened next was all a blur. People were trying to help me pack my things, settling my parent's affairs, and all that kind of stuff, but in a week we were on the plane here. We both had known English pretty well, so Jakotsu had no problem getting a job. Some law office hired him as a secretary. Because in Japan middle school is three years, I started high school as a sophomore.

That brings me back to the present. I blink and, finding myself holding a pair of chopsticks, pick at my bowl of rice. I don't feel so good. My head hurts and I still have lots of homework to do. I really don't feel like eating, but Jakotsu went through the trouble of cooking, so I try to eat it. He IS a good cook after all and I don't want to make him feel bad. I finish the miso soup and eat some of the rice and pork. I bring my dishes to the sink and start running water over them when Jakotsu stops me.

"You still have homework, right. I'll do these...don't worry about it."

"Eh, right. Thanks..."

I leave the kitchen and stretch out on the floor by my open Calculus book. I work halfway through the first problem and give up. I drag my hand down my face.

"Ugh. Watashi wa concentreti no arimasen! Chikusho!" without realizing it, I had lapsed back into Japanese.

Jakotsu comes in from the kitchen.

"Something must be bothering you. Are you sure you don't want to tell me about it?"

I give in and tell him everything. I feel like I am being weak by dumping my problems on him, but I can't stop the words tumbling out of my mouth. When I am done, there is a long pause.

"Bankotsu, I've been openly gay from the time I was ten. Did you think I didn't get that crap too?"

I blink. I've never heard Jakotsu speak with this bitterness in his voice.

He goes on, " I still do, practically every day. People are afraid of what they don't understand and they express that fear through hate."

Jakotsu places his hands on my shoulders and bends down to be at eye level with me. He speaks with a more gentle tone now, the edge in his voice growing softer until it's almost back to normal.

"If you can learn to accept yourself for who you are, then other people can see past your being "different" too. And if they can't, then why bother wasting your time by caring what those losers think of you?"

"But, *BLEEP* I- I know that, but I can't go back there! I just can't!" The words come out, but as soon as I say them I instantly regret it."

Jakotsu bit his carefully colored lip, which he does when he is trying to think extra hard. "You are in your senior year. You don't have that much school left. But if you really feel that way, will you at least graduate...for me?"

I open my mouth to say something, but no words come out. I can't think of anything to say. I just sit there and stare blankly, trying to think of something to say that isn't too stupid or corny to say. Jakotsu sighs softly and straightens up, heading off to finish the dishes. Now I feel like I really should say something.

"Thank you for talking to me. I'll won't like it, I'll probably hate every minute of it, but I- I guess I'll graduate for you. Arigatou gozaimasu, Jakotsu." I can feel my ears turning red. That sounded so dumb! Jakotsu turns around, his well lipsticked mouth slowly spreading into a smile. "You don't know how happy it makes me to hear you say that. I'm always here for you."

With a clear mind, I finish all my homework, even though it means staying up late into the night. By the time it is all done I am so tired, I can't even brush my teeth.

I wake up to Jakotsu practically pushing me out of bed. He says I need to hurry up and get ready for school or I will be late. I glance at the clock and jump out of my bed. Jakotsu leaves and I hear him pouring a bowl up cereal in the kitchen. I pull on my favorite pair of baggy jeans and a black T-shirt with a dragon. In the mirror, I can see that my hair is still looking neat in its long braid, so I don't bother to comb it.

Rushing into the kitchen where Jakotsu is sitting at the table eating some toast. Before stuffing my face with the cereal he poured for me, I notice for the first time how nice he also looks in the business suit he has to wear to work. He is without his lipstick, but I have reason to suspect he has a tube of "Mary Kay" in that briefcase of his. I chuckle silently to myself and shove my breakfast down my throat. I grab my hoodie and backpack, Jakotsu picks up the briefcase and we dash down the stairs. He hops in his car and I run down the street that leads my school.

I get to school with only enough time to stop at my locker to get my Spanish textbook. The Spanish room isn't too far from my locker, but I barely manage to get there before the bell rings. The laughter is obvious as I enter the room, but the rest of the morning passes pretty uneventfully until lunchtime. I don't

have very much money anymore since that girl took my twenty yesterday, so I have to buy food from the cafeteria. I like to eat outside under a tree where I can be away from people, so I carry my piece of pizza outside. On the way to the door I pass a group of jocks. As usual, they are all a lot taller than me.

"Hey gay dude, don't start hitting on me now, ya hear?!"

All of his jock friends laugh, because that must have been really funny or something. How could I have missed the humor?

"Since apparently your formerly non-existent brain has managed to find out that I am gay, you must already know that means I already have boyfriend, so you don't have to worry. Besides, why would I hit on a *BLEEP* guy like you anyway?! So cut the crap!"

I guess they weren't expecting me to have a comeback, because I don't hear any sniggering behind my back as I walk outside. I start to chew on the pizza, while I think about the schedule for the rest of the day. Like what I have picked up about other high schools, mine has a block schedule. Today I have Home Ec., and then Chem. I sip my Pepsi, feeling the moist coolness of the can against the palm of my hand. That's one of the things I miss about Japan, the pop. The soda here is all the same and it pretty much impossible to get Pocari Sweat, my favorite, in America.

The bell rings, so I dump my paper plate and napkin in a trashcan and toss the Pepsi can into a recycling receptacle. I push into the building and head towards my locker. I ignore that insults thrown my way. Pulling out my binder, I stand up and walk to the Home Economics room.

The Home Ec. Room is obnoxious as usual. The floor has ugly white tiles with old bleach stains covering it like ugly floor rugs. The counters have disgusting red-orange tops with matching cupboards. Oven are scattered among the room and the bright white, hospital-like walls have those distastefully teacher posters in random places. Every time I'm in here I find myself staring at the stupid "5-a-day" poster or that *BLEEP* food pyramid.

The bell rings for the start of class and the teacher passes out a worksheet. She says we have to work with the person next to us and use the paper to budget meals for a month. Great. WE just changed seats last class and I don't even know the guy who sits next me. I'm sure he knows all about me though. I groan inwardly at the thought.

"Ok, then...lets get his over with."

I do a double take. I wasn't expecting the other person to start the conversation, and certainly not to say something that wasn't derisive to me. I push the lead advance on my mechanical pencil and start working. While we are working, I notice that the guy is trying to sneak looks at my face, like I was something interesting to study. *BLEEP*-it! Just because I'm gay doesn't mean I'm some kind of freak show exhibit! I become colder to and stay that way for the rest of the period.

The bell rings again and we all turn in our papers before heading out the door. Just one more class, I can make it through. I can do this. I will do this, for you, Jakotsu. Guess I'm getting used to the jeering and funny I'm getting from people in hallway because they don't bother me so much anymore. I stop at my locker and find, to my annoyance, that someone has taken the trouble to stick a wad of ABC gum to bottom of the handle. I manage to pry most of it off with a pen, but the handle is still sticky when I lift it up. I grab the Chemistry book and dead off to the lab.

I sit down at my desk and look up at the whiteboard. Oh crap! Today we are having the assessment on using characteristic properties to figure out components of mixtures and I completely forgot how! My mind is racing. The bell rings and the teacher tells us to go get out equipment. I see what other people are getting, so I pick the same things. Pushing my bangs away from my eyes I fervently try to set it all up before the teacher comes by passing out the mixture in a test tube and lighting everyone's alcohol burners. The pale blue flames flick in a slow, unpredictable dance. Now I know I must be losing my brain to think about junk like that.

I can feel a headache coming on as a feverishly take measurements every thirty seconds. Before I

realize it, its ten minutes 'till school is out and many people are already finished. I found the three different boiling points but when I looked them up, none of them matched that of any of the chemical options! I think I did this wrong. Two minutes before the end of the day. I guess the chemicals closest to what I wrote down and put away the tools. I hand in my test paper just as the bell rings. Its over for another day! I get my stuff from my locker and walk out the front door of the building. I keep my head down to avoid attracting any more attention, and almost start turning onto the street to go home when I hear a familiar voice calling my name.

"Oi, Bankotsu!!"

I look up to see a purple Volkswagen Beetle waiting in for me. Most of the other students look up too. It's Jakotsu. Everyone is staring, but I smile as I open the door on the passenger side and slid in. I noted that Jakotsu had indeed put in his lipstick. He tosses me a burger.

" I got off early today, so I thought I'd come get you, but then I passed a McDonalds...I couldn't resist." I laugh. "You really do love their fries don't you?!"

Epilogue

At my locker before first period, the same jock I mouthed off to yesterday, walks up to me. I tense slightly, waiting for him to hit me. I'm not scared of him though; I know I can beat him up with the martial arts I learned in Japan. My eyes open wide as he starts to speak.

"Who was that hot chick in the purple bug yesterday? Is she your sister? How about you introducing me, huh?"

I clutch at the wall, trying to stop myself from falling over laughing.

"Ha...! He's my boyfriend!"