


## if it wasn't for you

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/24959362) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/24959362>.

Rating:	<a href="#">General Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Haikyuu!!</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Hinata Shouyou/Kageyama Tobio</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Hinata Shouyou</a> , <a href="#">Kageyama Tobio</a> , <a href="#">Yamaguchi Tadashi</a> , <a href="#">Tsukishima Kei</a> , <a href="#">Kozume Kenma</a> , <a href="#">MSBY Black Jackals</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Future Fic</a> , <a href="#">Post-Time Skip</a> , <a href="#">Introspection</a> , <a href="#">Feelings Realization</a> , <a href="#">Getting Together</a>
Language:	English
Collections:	<a href="#">absolute gems i keep coming back to</a> , <a href="#">absolute favourites</a> , <a href="#">KageHina</a> , <a href="#">Haikyuu!! Post-Canon/Post-Time Skip Fics!!</a>  , <a href="#">Fics That Make Me Feel Good</a> , <a href="#">like the stars above</a> , <a href="#">Favorite Kagehina Fics</a> , <a href="#">kagehina fics that you should NEVER EVER miss</a> , <a href="#">Top 1 Percent</a> , <a href="#">High Quality Haikyuu</a> , <a href="#">shobio sacred texts</a> , <a href="#">Haikyuu fics that I want to tattoo on my forehead</a> , <a href="#">Ripon's Fanfic Recs</a> , <a href="#">haikyuu-timeskip fics</a>
Stats:	Published: 2020-06-28 Words: 13,189 Chapters: 1/1

# if it wasn't for you

by [halfbloom \(diphylleias\)](#)

## Summary

A long moment passes between them, and Hinata watches, starstruck, as Heitor's eyes linger on Nice's silhouette from across the venue. His voice is deep, rich, all encompassing. "Some people change your life just by being in it, and you don't want to let that go."

*Huh*, Hinata thinks grandly.

## Notes

update: [playlist](#) <3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: [如果不是因为你](#) by [Orangiri](#)

Hinata closes his eyes, and takes a deep breath in.

When he exhales, his senses flood with heat, humidity, sticky-sweet against his skin and clinging tight to his body. The air here is thick with passion, with a foreign language that sits clunky and heavy on his tongue. But it's lighter, too—less formality, less tradition, more room to fly, perhaps.

Brazil. Brazil breaks him down, tears at his skin, builds him up for a split second, and then utterly shatters him all at once. Beach volleyball is nothing and everything he expected it to be, pushing him to his limits, letting him make a fool of himself, exciting and foreign like the food, the people, the customs around him.

“Gwah!” Hinata squeaks embarrassingly, when his footing fails and he goes careening face-first into an expanse of sand.

Spluttering indignantly, half at the loud laughter Oikawa is aiming at him, and half to get the grains out his mouth, he manages to get most of the sand cleared from his taste buds before hopping up in determination and widening his stance, a fire thrumming under his blood.

A set and a failed spike later, Oikawa stumbles backwards and falls so hard a cloud of sand forms around him on impact.

Hinata laughs his butt off. It's the whole-body shaking, tummy-clutching, tear-jerking kind of laughter that hasn't graced his small frame since he watched Kageyama walk into a tree during their graduation ceremony rehearsal ten months ago. Oikawa's fall isn't even *that* funny, but Hinata finds himself shaking nevertheless. Maybe it reminds him of something, someone.

Oikawa glares at him. “Shut it, chibi-chan,” he snaps. There's still sand in his hair. “We're both new to this.”

He's right. Beach volleyball is nothing and everything he expected it to be. It makes him reconsider everything he's learned, while also drawing out the depths of his knowledge. He hears Ukai's voice, firm and clear, and he uses the familiarity to ground himself in the sand, adjusting his techniques and fixing his stumbles as he struggles to keep up with the kind, middle-aged man who plays around with the ball like it's putty. Barely a trace of tension in his body, compared to him and Oikawa.

In a way, Brazil grabs him by the front of his shirt and shakes him around until his head spins and his heart rattles in his ribcage, and it screams in his face, *what have you been doing for the past three years?*

It echoes the same words thrown at him what feels like a century ago, punching him in the gut. And all the same, it leaves Hinata feeling restless, flighty, and wanting more, more—always more.

Things pick up.

He bonds with Pedro. He befriends more of the locals. He starts practicing with Heitor. He laughs more, trains harder, runs faster. The slippery, foreign feel of Portuguese on his tongue starts to grip tighter, grow more familiar, as does the warm sand beneath his feet and the brush of wind against his skin as the volleyball slaps his arms.

People call him *ninja Shouyou* now, and it leaves him feeling warm and tingly and just a little off. He's not *Karasuno's Number Ten*, or—in his third year—*Karasuno's Number Five*. He's not a *middle blocker*? *With that height*? He's not one half of *that crazy second-year duo*! *And they take the first set against—*

He's just him. Shouyou. Stripped of a position, of a school, of a team, stripped of a moody, dark-haired, grumpy setter. It's liberating, and it's terrifying, all at once. He feels alone, but *free*, but different, but *better*, too. He isn't sure what to make of it.

"If we win the next match," Heitor says casually. "I'm gonna propose to Nice."

Hinata practically squawks in surprise. Heitor laughs his typical warm, rumbling laugh, brushing it off as more of a reason to push himself, but Hinata's nerves still crackle with electricity under his skin, thrumming with the knowledge that there's something tangible riding on the game.

They lose, but then Nice proposes, and then Heitor says yes, and Hinata gets invited to the wedding, and a cousin of Heitor's even offers to *lend* him a suit—*lend*, for *free*—and it's funny, Hinata thinks stupidly, how a defeat goes hand in hand with so much victory.

Hinata has never been to a wedding before. He claps his hands so much they turn red, sings along with the crowd until his voice is hoarse, and ends up dancing with so many people who've heard about *ninja Shouyou* that he's breaking a sweat by the end of it all, feet just slightly sore.

The state of disarray is eerily similar to the end of a volleyball match, and the thought ignites something warm in his chest that shoots down to his feet and makes his toes curl.

Nice corners him towards the end of the wedding, cheeks flushed with alcohol. "Shouyou," she says—demands, really. She reminds him of Saeko-neesan. Loud and firm and reassuring, and beautiful in that tall, intimidating way. "So when are *you* gonna get married? Do you have a girlfriend back home? You should invite us all!"

Hinata's mind blanks. "No!" He splutters, hands waving out in front of him. "No girlfriend! No marriage!" He flusters, words spilling out all over the place.

Nice just laughs at him, long eyelashes fluttering dark and bold against her skin, long used to his clumsy language when he gets embarrassed. “C’mon!” She slaps him heartily on the back. “There’s got to be someone.”

Hinata shakes his head fervently, a blush inexplicably painting his cheeks. “No one!” He thinks to the only girls he had really talked to all through high school—Kiyoko, and then to Yachi, even, but he steers that thought away violently, a sense of unease catching in his stomach. “Really.”

God must hear his silent plea for help, because a distant relative of Nice’s calls her over, and she leaves him with a playful click of the tongue and a shake of a head and Hinata watches helplessly as she walks away, her back arching gracefully in her dress.

Heitor finds him a few moments later, looking rather run-down himself. He offers a slight, weary smile, before plopping down next to him with a sigh. “Was she asking you about a girlfriend?” He asks, a playful gleam dancing in his eyes.

Hinata nods his head dumbly, and Heitor laughs. The sound slips comfortingly under his skin, easing his nerves a little, before Heitor says, “So you really don’t have one?”

With a groan, Hinata drops his face into his hands. He doesn’t *really* want to explain that all his time had been devoted to volleyball and, well, volleyball, and that he hasn’t even held someone’s hand in *that* way, or had his first kiss.

A dangerous train of thought. Hinata slaps his palms hard against his cheeks and Heitor jumps, blinking at him, before he laughs gently. “I’m sure you’ll find someone,” he says, almost wistful. “Who comes along and changes your life.”

Hinata stares at him.

Heitor’s eyes slides towards his, amused. “Nice was a storm, you know. Took me by surprise. Really changed my life, helped me out of the gutter when I was in a bad place, and before I knew it,” he pauses, shrugging. “I was in love.”

*Storm*, Hinata thinks. *Surprise, changed*, and then inexplicably—*Kageyama*.

His eyes bug out of his head. “Wait, wait,” he splutters, looking up at Heitor. “It’s—t—that’s —” he bites down on his tongue. “Huh?” He manages.

Heitor laughs at him again, louder this time, but seems to understand despite the lack of clarity. “Well,” he admits, “It’s not like you’re going to fall in love with everyone who changes your life. Some people change your life once, and you move on and become a different person. Some people change your life once, and then, for some strange reason, you want them to *keep* changing your life, you know? You want them to keep catching you by surprise, to keep you on your toes, to keep pushing you.”

A long moment passes between them, and Hinata watches, starstruck, as Heitor’s eyes linger on Nice’s silhouette from across the venue. His voice is deep, rich, all encompassing. “Some people change your life just by being in it, and you don’t want to let that go.”

*Huh*, Hinata thinks grandly.

Needless to say, sleep that night is an ordeal.

He lays awake staring blankly at the ceiling, mind running over the grooves and dips of Heitor's voice, trying to grasp onto words that are floating beyond the limits of his understanding.

Welcoming Natsu into the world has changed his life. Seeing the Little Giant play on TV had changed his life. Starting volleyball had changed his life. And meeting Kageyama, playing with him, spiking his sets, practicing with him—

Hinata gnaws on the inside of his cheek angrily. Mad at—something. Himself, maybe. Kageyama, for being such a stupidly good setter. For coming to Karasuno. For being all broody and dumb and talented and awkward and *as long as I'm here, you're invincible*.

*Shoot*, he thinks grumpily. Kageyama definitely changed his life.

He turns over restlessly on his bed, cheeks flaring in heat. Love? *Kageyama*? The same person who failed Japanese literature and who pulls his hair and kicks his shins? Doesn't-really-know-how-to-smile-yama? The idea is so strange it sits odd and wrong on his body, like the first breath of Brazil air at the airport, stuffy and weird and unrecognizable.

Then, because his mind doesn't know how to shut up, another question strikes into his brain and this one is far heavier, far more important, he thinks, because his back goes ramrod straight and the buzzing in his head narrows down to the single question—did *I* change Kageyama's life?

Hinata blinks once, twice at the ceiling. Kageyama could've set to anyone, someone else, at a different school. Made them a good player, yell at them, bring the team to nationals, probably pull off the same quick attack. His mind flits briefly to Hoshiumi, and he wonders if *they* could pull the same thing off.

His stomach feels all squishy, all of a sudden. Unpleasantly tight, soppy, weird.

Hinata grabs his phone impulsively, the bright *12:02 am* flashing in his eyes like a warning. He ignores it, of course he does, and opens his Line chat from three days ago, muscles moving before he can think like he's diving desperately for a receive.

*hey*, he texts Kageyama. *did i change ur life*

His stomach is doing that weird, squishy thing again. Hinata looks at the words on his screen, and the foreign feeling of what must be regret seeps into his blood.

He slams the phone down on the side of his bed and pulls the covers up higher, heart thudding in his chest. *Sleep*, he chants. *Sleep sleep sleep sleep sleep*—

His phone pings. Hinata smushes his face into the pillow.

*What?* is all Kageyama responds with. Because he's boring and stupid and bad at texting.

Hinata stares at his phone for a long while, heart stuttering uncertainly in his chest as the question stares back at him. It was his fault for getting the ball up in the air in the first place, and now Kageyama has set it to him.

Is he supposed to spike?

Hinata squints at the screen for a moment. Nothing makes sense anymore. This isn't a match, it isn't a game. Kageyama isn't Shiratorizawa, or Inarizaki, or Dateko, or even Karasuno, anymore. He's just Kageyama. Hinata doesn't know how to win this one.

So instead, he swallows down his skyrocketing pulse and browses through his sticker library to find the cute collection of dancing bird stickers he likes and Kageyama hates and spams ten of them in a row, before he turns his phone off and slams it again, more forcefully, face-down.

Stupidyama, he thinks. Uselessyama.

He knows Kageyama is playing in the Olympics in Rio, wonders briefly how far away from each they are—before he shuts down the train of thought harshly.

He drifts off eventually, telling himself it'll pass and that he'll probably forget about it tomorrow, and that his Portuguese isn't even *that* good, and maybe he misheard Heitor or something. Sleep whisks him away, into a pleasant dream about flying volleyballs and dancing pork buns and comfort and ease.

Because with Hinata, bursts of emotion and fiery, split-second thoughts are far too common. And so, with enough sunburn, spiking, running until his feet ache and sand wedges deep between his toes—the fledgling idea follows the tide at the beach and rolls away with the water, kissing the coast goodbye and sinking back into the depths of the ocean, forgotten.

+

A year and a half later, the MSBY Black Jackals defeat the Schweiden Adlers in one of the most anticipated matches of 2018.

It takes place at home, in Miyagi, in a grand big stadium that makes Hinata's head spin and his heart swell with pride, but it's still hard to wrap his mind around the setting because Miyagi has always been small, comfortable, warm—not big with flashing lights and screaming spectators.

Miyagi is the smell of his mom's cooking and Natsu's exasperated *nii-chan*, *shut up*. It's the city of seeing someone fly on TV and it's the city where he first spread his wings, and Miyagi

is the race to school, the rattle of his bike, and Miyagi is irrevocably, unforgettably: Kageyama.

“*YEAHH!!*” Bokuto cheers loudly, as he and Inunaki hoist Hinata and parade him around like a trophy. Hinata just laughs and yells and screams until his voice is hoarse.

He shakes Kageyama’s hand under the net again, and when he raises his eyes to hold a familiar gaze, his blood frazzles with electricity.

He’s sure it won’t be the last time they play each other, and somehow the prospect of playing again fills his body with so much adrenaline the feeling almost trumps the victory itself. As if the real prize isn’t beating Kageyama, but being able to play again and again, infinite and limitless, like afterschool practice that doesn’t end when the sun goes down and the air frosts and Daichi yells at them to *please* go home.

“You made it,” Kageyama says, voice all serious and deep and brooding but the corners of his lips are lifted, and now, *now* it feels like Miyagi again.

"Yeah." Hinata tightens his grip, and grins back. “I’m here now.”

The words taste like a promise.

He gets swept away by the rest of his team, hair ruffles and slaps on the back and promises to go out for dinner later, and Hinata is thrown into impromptu interviews. Flashing lights. The warm, welcoming arms of his teammates.

Kageyama’s not as sharp, not as prickly, anymore. Like Hinata’s worn-out eraser used over and over again on their English homework, rounded and softer around the edges. With less angry exclamation marks, more slight smiles, a cluster of punctuation that Hinata can’t quite put a name to.

And it’s only later, hours after the match, as he lays in bed in his apartment, that Hinata traces the edge of his fingers, traces the seams of his memory, and wonder why Atsumu’s fist bumps and Bokuto’s high fives and Meian’s slaps on the back all feel good, yes, but not *right*. Hands a bit too smooth, fingers just slightly short, too hot, too cold.

Hands he’s unused to, and hands he’ll never forget.

+

“Don’t forget about us!” Hinata chirps loudly, raising his voice to be heard among the frenzy of people.

“More important,” Yamaguchi cuts in, exasperated. “Don’t forget your gate number.”

“Oh, he definitely will.”

Kageyama bristles. “Shut up. I won’t.”

He and Tsukishima glare at each other for a short moment, and Hinata feels an odd, silly smile make its way onto his face at the sight. Yamaguchi just sighs in response, and hustles them along, moving past the crowd of people near the airport entrance and towards the check-in kiosks.

Tsukishima’s voice snakes up again. “I still can’t believe the king is going to *America* when he barely passed English third year.”

“Oi,” Kageyama snaps, tapping the screen of the kiosk rather aggressively. “My English is great.”

Hinata snickers at that, bouncing back and forth on the balls of his feet as he watches Kageyama’s boarding pass print out of the machine.

“You shouldn’t be laughing,” Tsukishima says drily. “You’re not much better.”

Hinata splutters immediately. “I got better!! Yachi-san helped me!!”

“I think the two of you overworked her.”

“*What?*” Hinata pauses, ice and dread spiking into his veins. He turns towards Kageyama cautiously. “No we didn’t. Kageyama, we didn’t right?”

There’s a long pause, as Kageyama stops in folding his boarding pass and furrows his brow, looking deep in thought. “No?”

“You’re not helpful at all,” Hinata mutters.

He dodges when Kageyama tries to swipe at his head, ignoring the familiar tinkling sound of Tsukishima snickering. Hinata jumps behind Yamaguchi, clinging onto his soft winter coat and sticking his tongue out at Kageyama. Childish. Warm.

“You know,” Yamaguchi starts forlornly. “I was gonna say it’s so nice to see everyone again, but I take it back.”

“Ah!” Comes a small, tinny voice. “It’s Kageyama-san!!”

The four of them turn in unison to a small boy, no more than ten years old, looking up at Kageyama like he’s holding the world on his shoulders. He flounders a bit at the sudden attention, but his eyes sparkle in determination and he bows profusely, before holding out a piece of hastily torn notebook paper. “C-can I get an autograph! Kageyama-san!!”

Kageyama stares at the child, back at them, then at the child, and back at them again, eyes uncertain as if he doesn’t know how to proceed.

Tsukishima is very visibly holding back laughter. “Kageyama,” Yamaguchi whispers. “I think you’re scaring him.”

“Oh,” Kageyama says stiffly. He bends down awkwardly and takes the pen and paper from the child’s hand. “Yes. I can sign this.”

Hinata does his best not to giggle, exchanging amused glances with Yamaguchi as they watch the little boy brighten in response and practically sparkle, small hands clenched in excitement as Kageyama patiently signs the scrap of paper on his thigh.

“Do,” Kageyama’s voice is painfully strained. “Do you want to play volleyball too?”

Tsukishima *wheezes*.

“Yeah!!” The boy exclaims, holding his freshly signed souvenir like it’s gold. “I play with my grandpa everyday and once I get to junior high I’m gonna join a team and I’m going to play volleyball forever and ever!!”

Kageyama seems to freeze in place, bent down on one knee in the middle of the day in the Tokyo International Airport, and a slow moment passes before he raises his hand and presses it awkwardly on the boy’s head, patting it twice before drawing his hand back like he’s been burned.

“Practice hard,” he says, quietly.

The boy lights up. “I will!!” He answers happily, hand going into a little salute. “Thank you, Kageyama-san!!” And then he’s off, running back into the crowd of people, an already fading memory.

Hinata gapes.

When Kageyama pushes himself back up on his feet and turns to face the three of them again, the calm, relaxed wash of his face immediately tightens and his brows draw together. “*What*,” he snaps loudly.

“I never knew Kageyama could even *talk* to kids,” Yamaguchi whispers dramatically, far too staged.

Kageyama flushes angrily, and then the three of them are bursting out into laughter, snickering and giggling uncontrollably and ignoring Kageyama’s grumpy *shut up’s* and *be quiet’s*. Warmth curls in Hinata’s stomach, the same shape of Kageyama’s uncharacteristically encouraging voice, his hand in a little boy’s hair.

“Hey, hey,” Hinata chimes in, still holding back laughter. “Kageyama-san, can I get your autograph? Pleeaaase? Kageyama-saaaaan, Kageyama, Ka—”

He dodges another attack, shuffling to place himself behind Yamaguchi again, shaking with giggles as Kageyama fumes at them, and glares at Hinata with the familiar angled brows, downturned lips, his expression dark and murderous and not scary in the slightest.

“You two haven’t changed at all,” Tsukishima mutters, voice flat as they walk towards the security entrance.

Hinata hides a smile as he trails behind Yamaguchi, the four of them attracting a bit of attention courtesy of Tsukishima and Kageyama’s heights as they make their way over to the jumble of scanners and officers and passengers fumbling with their shoes. And it’s only when Kageyama comes to a stop right in front of the entrance line, lips pressed tight together in the awkward tell Hinata has grown so used to, that it hits him that Kageyama is flying to *America*, for a *year*, to go train with some fancy schmancy foreign league miles away.

They all pause.

Yamaguchi laughs quietly, the first to break the silence. “Send us pictures, Kageyama. None of us have been to America before.” He shoots Hinata a grin. “You’ll have to top Hinata’s Rio pictures.”

“You can’t beat those,” Hinata brags. “They’re the coolest.”

“I’ll beat them,” Kageyama mutters immediately.

Tsukishima’s sigh likely travels all the way to the other side of the airport. “They’re *pictures*.”

Hinata just joins Kageyama in shooting a glare at him, because the four of them don’t do awkward goodbyes or sentimental farewells; they just exist, as usual, with the scatterings of a laugh and the playful lilt of a teasing voice and they ebb—slow, gentle, constant with whatever life presents to them.

“Thanks,” Kageyama grunts finally. He hesitates for a moment, before his eyes drop downwards and he mutters, so quiet Hinata has to strain his ears, “For... sending me off.”

“Holy shit,” Yamaguchi murmurs. “I’m dreaming.”

They dissolve into laughter again, loud snickers blanketing their little spot in the airport and Kageyama’s red face a blazing emblem before them. With another grumble, Kageyama just turns around and makes his way over to the security entrance, nothing else to be said.

Hinata’s entire body feels like it’s vibrating. Hands itching to reach out, throat attempting to force words out. He stares at Kageyama’s back and something doesn’t quite feel right—doesn’t feel complete. His fingers twitch.

“Hey,” Hinata says loudly, bounding forward to catch up with him. His fingers slip into his bag, and before his mind syncs up with his arm he’s already spiked the ball, and he’s pushing his hands into Kageyama’s, buzzing with something akin to comfort at the feel of familiar callouses, fading heat. “Here.”

Kageyama stares down at their hands, then blinks back at him, expression flat. “Why the hell are you giving me sunscreen?”

Hinata pulls his hands away abruptly, skin sunburnt by the heat of Kageyama's words. "I bought too much sunscreen in Rio," he explains. "So I had extra." He swallows his pulse, straightening up and looking Kageyama square in the eye. "You'll probably need it, Kageyama. I bet you forgot!"

Kageyama looks at him blankly for a moment, blinking a few times. Hinata's heart swims in the waves of blue and his footing feels a little off, and he's about to add in another playful tease before Kageyama just mutters, "Thanks," and turns back around again.

Maybe Yamaguchi's right. Maybe they really *are* dreaming.

He walks back over to where Yamaguchi and Tsukishima are standing, ignoring Tsukishima's raised brows and Yamaguchi's incredulous *sunscreen? Really?* and just watches as Kageyama shuffles through the mostly empty security line.

It feels incomplete, somehow, the send-off. Like clumsy, awkward Portuguese on the tip of his tongue. Like too many bottles of sunscreen. Like victory slipping between his fingertips, so close, and infinitely far away.

"I'll be surprised if he doesn't get lost on the first day," Tsukishima says wryly, dragging Hinata out of his thoughts.

"Oh no," Yamaguchi groans all of a sudden. "You think he knows his gate number?"

They laugh again, soft and familiar and Hinata lets the sound wash under his skin and over his strange, fizzling nerves as they head out of the Tokyo Airport together, stepping into the comfortable heat of the afternoon sun with one less person in tow.

+

"So how's Tobio-kun been doin', lately?"

Hinata blinks up at Atsumu, the older coming to sit down next to him with loud sigh, kicking his legs out as he grabs a towel to wipe away the sweat rolling down his neck. Atsumu tilts his head, and Hinata stares sightlessly at the setter for a moment, mind still stuck on the last dig he had missed before the words register in his mind and he sits up a little straighter. "Kageyama?"

Atsumu grins at him. "Yeah, ain't he in some bigshot American league, now?"

Hinata pulls a face despite himself, and Atsumu laughs. "I guess," Hinata just mumbles sullenly. He flips through his memories and texts and perks up a bit. "Oh, I think he said their

new jerseys are pretty cool!”

Atsumu grimaces, before slapping Hinata firm on the back. “Tell ‘im ours are cooler!”

“I did,” Hinata says earnestly, nodding his head up and down. Atsumu bobs his head along with him, looking immensely satisfied, before another loud voice joins them.

“Ours are the coolest!!” Bokuto declares, plopping down on the bench with a flourish. “No one can ever beat ours.”

“Bokkun,” Atsumu says drily, “Yesterday all we heard was yer complaining about how ya wanted a different number.”

Hinata giggles a little at the memory, while Bokuto just shoots the two of them a betrayed look, bottom lip sticking out in a comical pout. “It’s not a *bad* number,” the man mumbles, sulking. “It’s just, you know, it would’ve been cooler if—”

“Shouyou-kun,” Atsumu cuts in, turning to look at him curiously. “Did’ja stay number ten yer third year too?”

Hinata blinks, memories washing in waves over his mind. “Oh, I was number five my third year.” He puffs his chest out proudly.

“I was number four!” Bokuto chimes, but the statement goes ignored.

“Hmm,” Atsumu tilts his head back, taking another sip of water. “And what ‘bout Tobio-kun?”

“Number two,” Hinata answers immediately, feeling a little confused.

“Mmm,” Atsumu just hums. He shoots Hinata a grin. “So yer always behind him, huh?”

Hinata blinks at him, lips parting in surprise.

Nine and ten, two and five. Twenty with the Adlers, twenty-one with the Black Jackals. Hinata’s face pinches up as he registers Atsumu’s words, before his lips pull into a pout and he curses Kageyama from miles away. “We beat him, though!”

“Kiddin’, kiddin’,” Atsumu sings, and Hinata flusters in response.

“Hmmmm,” comes Bokuto’s voice. Hinata turns to him in surprise, watching as the older squints his eyes and strokes his chin with what appears to be immense concentration. “Doesn’t it depend on which way you count, though?”

He shoots Hinata a wide smile. “Technically, you’re like, *greater* than him, ya know!” Bokuto shrugs before giving a signature double-thumbs-up. “Also, your numbers are always near each other, so isn’t it like you guys are partners? That’s so cool!”

Hinata stares at him in stunned silence for a moment, the words seeping into his senses.

“Bokuto-san...” he starts in awe.

“*Bokuto*,” comes another scratchy, low voice from afar. Bokuto jumps.

“Eep,” he says, and hops off the bench immediately, already bounding back towards where Sakusa is shooting him a murderous glare. “Sorry, Omi-san!”

Hinata blinks down at his hands, red from practice, and mulls over Bokuto’s words in his head. The sound of shoes squeaking gets drowned out for a quiet moment, as his eyes trace the faraway curve of a number 10 on the back of a shirt a lifetime ago, of slowly broadening shoulders, of Kageyama standing beside him, bowing his head to receive their medal.

All of a sudden, sticky-sweet contentment whirls beneath his skin, thin and wispy and cotton-candy plush, and the thought of Kageyama by his side, despite being miles away, pumps an odd, renewed energy straight into his blood.

“Shouyou-kun,” Atsumu whispers next to him. “I think Bokkun failed math, don’t’cha think?”

Hinata startles, and blinks up at him, uncomprehending.

“Ne’er mind,” the setter sighs. “Ya probably failed math too.”

“You two!” Comes Meian’s loud, booming voice. “Breaktime’s over!”

Hinata squeaks, jumping to his feet immediately, while Atsumu just laughs next to him.

“Cominggg,” Atsumu sings lazily, and the two of them step back onto the court, thrown back into tosses and spikes and dig after dig. And as they lose themselves in the tresses of practice again, Hinata’s eyes linger a little too long on the numbers on his teammates’ practice jerseys—remembering, wondering, thinking.

He *didn’t* fail math, he realizes later. And neither did Kageyama.

+

“Hinata!” Yamaguchi yells loudly, waving his arm vigorously up and down.

Hinata breaks out into a wide grin, energy bouncing in his feet as he zips down the sidewalk towards the smiling, freckle-faced boy.

“*Yaaaamaguchi!*” he shouts, voice bouncing around the night air. A few people turn their heads but he ignores them, opting to jump up into the air and tackle Yamaguchi to the ground.

“*Hinata!*” Yamaguchi wheezes from under him, chest shaking with laughter. “You’re crazy.”

Hinata grins down at him, the two of them tangled in a pile of limbs outside the izakaya and attracting a few disgruntled looks. Yamaguchi just laughs again, the sound bright and clear and achingly familiar, before he shoves Hinata off lightly and pushes himself up, holding out a hand.

Hinata takes his hand easily, springing up with a flourish and landing square on his feet again. He follows Yamaguchi into the izakaya, nose already perking with interest as he takes in the warm, hazy scent of freshly fried chicken. He gulps down an instinctive drool.

“I think you got a little heavier,” Yamaguchi says absentmindedly, as they take their seats at the bar.

Puffing out his chest, Hinata straightens up immediately. “I changed my diet! Bokuto-san gave me some tips.”

Yamaguchi scrunches up his nose, squinting at him a little as he scans Hinata up and down. “Getting fat,” he declares loudly, lips pulling upwards.

“Am *not!*” Hinata protests, jabbing his fingers into Yamaguchi’s side. The other shrieks in response, the two of them make a ruckus again, laughing and giggling like they’re fifteen again, before one of the chefs shoots them an unamused look and they shut up.

Hinata’s hands creep up again silently, as he mentally runs through the successful tickle attacks he had pulled on Yamaguchi in third year, before Yamaguchi hums and says, “I’ll treat.”

Hinata drops his hands and cheers a little, grabbing a menu to see the options.

They order a lot—well, *Hinata* orders a lot: tofu and chicken and yakisoba and even sashimi, and he grins cheerfully at Yamaguchi as the other stares mournfully at his wallet sitting to the side.

The stretch of three months crumbles to dust between them as they talk, eat, laugh, talk some more, make a *lot* of noise—the usual. It feels strange to take a day off from practice, though their coach had practically yelled at him to, so Hinata channels the restless energy into his words, into the conversation, waving his hands around animatedly and chattering nonstop.

“Have you talked to Kageyama recently?” Yamaguchi asks him eventually, eyes curious.

Hinata pulls a face and Yamaguchi laughs immediately. Hinata huffs. “Yesterday I told him to get me a cool souvenir and all he replied with was *no*. Period.”

The fondness is palpable in Yamaguchi’s voice. “He still reads all the messages in the group chat, though. He’s surprisingly good at responding.”

“Yeah,” Hinata mutters, “But they’re not *good* responses.”

Yamaguchi snorts at that, likely unable to disagree, and Hinata swipes another piece of tofu off of his plate. He watches as the other tilts his head a little, blinking a few times like an idea has crossed his mind.

"You know," Yamaguchi starts thoughtfully, eyes bright. "Even though you guys are on different teams now, maybe you should try it again."

Hinata chews on his rice, so caught up in the warmth and comfort of the taste that he barely registers Yamaguchi's words. It takes a blank stare and the tap of wood against a bowl to bring his focus back to the statement and he manages to let out a confused "Huh?"

Yamaguchi stretches an arm over to pick up a piece of chicken with his chopsticks, lips twitching like he's trying not to laugh. "Spiking one of Kageyama's sets. Doing the quick again."

The rice in his mouth slips a little, and sits soggy, damp, not quite right on his tongue.

"No," he blurts out before he can think, tiny bits of food spewing out in front of him. Yamaguchi dodges immediately, but a mother and her daughter nearby send him a barely-disguised look of disgust and he flushes, off-balance and scattered like the grains of rice splayed out on the table.

Hinata opens his mouth again, heart stirring in his chest, but Yamaguchi beats him to speaking with a bewildered, "What? Why not?"

The words of protest die abruptly in his throat. "Um," he tries. "Hm."

Yamaguchi squints at him. "Is this one of your guys' weird fights again? Like when you got mad at him for not wanting to be captain?"

Hinata stares steadfastly down at the table as he wipes the rice away. The memory has his stomach squeezing in all the wrong ways. "Kageyama's stupid," he mumbles finally, scowling at the napkin in his hands. His head whips up. "And it wasn't weird!"

"Uh-huh," Yamaguchi says, snickering. He takes a sip of water. "And you're not short."

Hinata wilts dramatically in his seat. "Yaaamaguchi! Mean! I'm tall now!"

“Average,” The other says, eyes twinkling.

They smile at each other for a moment, identical grins stretched across their faces. The moment suspends pleasantly in time, comfort and familiarity bleeding warm into the air before Yamaguchi breaks it with a huff and another reach to snatch an egg off Hinata's plate.

"So," Yamaguchi says again, slowly, and Hinata's whole body tenses before the words even break the air. "Why not?"

Hinata blinks. Looks down at his plate. Something lodges itself in his throat, like unspoken sentiment, unswallowed food.

“Dunno,” he replies, shrugging. “Just don’t think we should.”

Yamaguchi goes quiet for a moment. The chatter of people around them presses down omnipresent against his skin, abruptly heavy, immeasurably loud.

“Wonder what Kageyama would say,” Yamaguchi wonders aloud.

“Don’t care!” Hinata declares immediately, though curiosity burns red hot in the back of his throat. He stuffs a piece of tofu in his mouth, before mumbling noisily around his food, “Did’a know Kenma goh a noo ‘ame?”

“Really?” Yamaguchi perks up, interested. “A new game? What is it?”

Hinata swallows, and launches into a vivid retelling as he tries to remember all the details Kenma had thrown at him, head bobbing as he recounts fishing and animals and villagers. Yamaguchi nods along, asking questions and smiling and teasing him occasionally, and Hinata lets his mind float purposefully, maybe for the first time, away from volleyball. Away from a set and a spike, away from Kageyama, away from foreign, uncharted sea that rattles his heart and tries to swallow it whole.

Familiar territory is Yamaguchi’s cheerful smile, food warm in his stomach, mind not caught in the thorns of old memories.

Familiar territory is hugging Yamaguchi so hard the other boy starts to wheeze and slap him half-heartedly on the back, until Hinata pulls back with a grin and Yamaguchi promises to drag Tsukishima out with him next time, though Hinata just scoffs airily in response and ignores the fond little edges of Yamaguchi’s smile.

They part with another hug and Yamaguchi ruffles his hair like they’re sixteen again, and Hinata smiles, soaking up the sun and throwing it back at his friend with all he has to offer and resolutely keeps his thoughts from slipping into something foreign.

He’s already done Brazil. That’s enough travelling for a while.

+

Hinata wrinkles his nose.

The familiar, overplayed, *ridiculous* ad of Kageyama eating curry has popped up again, and it's just slightly ironic that the ad has showed up on Kenma's video, of all places. Hinata bites back a smile despite himself.

He flops back on his couch, limbs buzzing with the strain of a good day's worth of practice and high fives and slaps on the back as he burrows into his sweater and lets his legs dangle over the armrest. There's a small flame of pride that burns through his blood, however silly, that he can take up the space of his whole couch.

He exits the video and taps into his last conversation with Kageyama, some argument over which flavor of Miya onigiri is the best.

Tuna, *obviously*, he thinks in annoyance.

Hinata stares at the little phone icon next to Kageyama's name, and then, inexplicably, presses down on it.

The loud, tinkling melody of an outgoing call makes him jump, squeaking slightly in surprise at the volume of his ringer, and his thoughts are bouncing around in his brain at a mile a minute, fingers scrambling to lower the sound and cancel the call because he doesn't even know what time it is there, doesn't know where Kageyama is, doesn't know why he even called in the first—

"*Huh?*" Comes Kageyama's voice, clear and loud. Plainly annoyed and aching, painfully, familiar. "*What do you want?*"

Defensiveness and a sliver of irritation rise to his throat, before he realizes it's almost 7 p.m. on a Friday night and he's just called Kageyama for the first time since that one instance in second year where the team had thought they'd lost him.

"Hi," Hinata says dumbly, stupidly.

There's a pause. "*What,*" Kageyama grumbles, and Hinata can almost see his brows draw together, his lips pull down into a frown. "*Why did you—*"

"Bored," Hinata answers immediately, heart stuttering. "What are you doing? Did I wake you up? Are you training with all the cool American players?"

There's a grunt at the other end, and Hinata grins instinctively.

"*I was working out,*" Kageyama mutters. "*It's almost noon here.*" There's another grunt, and then, haughtily. "*I got some of their autographs.*"

"What," Hinata demands, lips twitching. "Really?"

"*Yeah,*" Kageyama brags back. A slight stretch of silence, and then, a confused, "*Why did you call?*"

"Because," Hinata says, stretching the word out and letting it fray, worn and thin like his nerves, "That's what normal people do, Kageyama-kun! Don't you ever call your parents? I

call Kenma all the time!"

He's rambling, he realizes, biting down on his tongue in embarrassment.

"*Right,*" Kageyama just says stiffly, quietly. Hinata swallows with some difficulty.

"I met up with Yamaguchi last week," he says, even though Kageyama already knows, and *wait, wait* his brain is yelling, but his mouth is already moving. "And he said—"

The words tangle in his throat, suddenly, running fire hot down his lungs and scorching his chest.

"*Said what?*"

"He said," Hinata exhales slowly. "That we should try doing the quick again."

There's a length of silence, suspended in broken, watered-down time, and then—

"*No,*" Kageyama says quickly, so loud and sharp it makes Hinata jump.

"That's what I said too!" Hinata chirps, and he waits for the relief, the satisfaction, for the affirmation that his own response hadn't been *strange* to settle in, but it doesn't, not at all. When he takes a breath in again the air wraps around his ribs and cages his heart in place. "Also," he says, trying to ignore the strain in his chest "You suck at texting."

"*No I don't,*" Kageyama snaps, and his voice goes right into Hinata's ear.

This is safe, Hinata thinks. "Yeah you do," he argues back.

"*Do not.*"

"Do too."

But instead of a *do not*, a foreign silence greets him, and panic flares abruptly in his stomach, like it never has around Kageyama.

"What?" Hinata says defensively into the void of quiet. "You totally suck."

"*What did,*" Kageyama starts, almost awkwardly. "*What did that one message mean?*"

His voice folds oddly around the word *message*, like he's never said it aloud before, and Hinata loses himself in the rough dips of Kageyama's voice for a moment before he blinks and says, "What message?"

"*You asked... if you changed my life.*"

The air knocks out of his lungs abruptly. Kageyama's voice wrenches him off his feet and hurdles him back to sleepy, too-hot nights in Brazil, pulse restless under his skin and Heitor's words, distorted and faded and a lifetime away.

"Um," he says elegantly, as the memory dumps over him like a bucket of ice water.  
"Nothing."

And then, because Kageyama is truly, honestly, unchangeably stupid, he replies, "*Oh. Okay.*"

A silence settles over them. Hinata listens to the steady ins and outs of Kageyama's breath, the whirl of what must be a fan nearby, and takes a quiet breath in.

The air tastes like Brazil. He breaks.

"Okay," Hinata says, too fast, too loud. "I lied. It's not nothing."

"*Hah?*" comes Kageyama's annoyed voice. Hinata doesn't even feel his lips quirk in amusement because his stomach is too busy tying and untying itself.

"Why do you even remember that?" He groans out. "That was like, forever ago." Kageyama makes a noise like he's about to respond but Hinata pushes forward, rambling. "I just meant, like, um—one of my friends there was talking about how—well—"

He pauses. Kageyama stays silent.

"Uh," he tries again. "I was just thinking that—that you changed my life," he says, voice ripe with embarrassment, hopelessly glad Kageyama can't see his face. "I mean, I think you already know that, but then I was like, did *I* change Kageyama's life, you know? Because, you were like—I mean you're like—" he hesitates, "An amazing setter, so you probably could've, done just as well at like, another school, or, like, with someone else. And you probably would've still ended up playing pro."

"Or something," he finishes lamely.

The silence is terrifying. It feels—for a shaky, unsteady moment—like the ball is going to be blocked and slammed back in his face.

Except there's no ball, and no net, and no blockers, and it's just Kageyama over the phone, miles away, quiet.

"*You did,*" Kageyama mutters.

Hinata blinks. "Huh?"

"*You did,*" Kageyama repeats, voice almost snapping. "*Change m-my—*" His tone goes clumsy, muted, awkward. "*My life.*"

"Right," Hinata parrots, brain short-circuiting. "Okay. Cool."

His heart is beating out his chest. *How*, he wants to ask. *How, how, tell me how. You're lying.*

"Well!" He announces, bright and fake. "You can go back to your stupid exer—"

*"My grandpa,"* Kageyama says suddenly, cutting him off. *"Died in my last year of junior high."*

Hinata's mouth snaps shut and he stills, hands gripping tight against his phone. "Oh," he murmurs quietly. "I'm sorry, Kageyama-kun." He tries to tamp down the bewilderment because it's sad, it *is*, even if he has no idea why Kageyama is telling him.

*"I lived with my sister,"* Kageyama adds on stiffly.

Hinata's heart drops into his stomach. And abruptly, all at once, a tidal wave of realization floods into his senses, crashing harsh against his skin, as he registers—everything. The unspoken *no parents*, the muted twist of Kageyama's voice, stilted and choppy like the words are foreign on his tongue, the flickering image of Kageyama at fifteen, face morphing into something ridiculous in an effort to smile.

Hinata's legs feel wobbly. "What," he manages. "What the *hell*."

Kageyama's voice turns angry immediately *"What the fuck do you mean—"*

"Why didn't you tell me?!" He demands angrily. His vision is blurring. "What the h— Kageyama, why didn't you tell any of us?!" Hinata's hands are shaking so bad he almost drops his phone. "You—I didn't—" He swallows thickly. "We could've hung out more, or, or you could've slept over sometimes, you know Natsu likes you, or, we—"

"Why didn't you tell me?" Hinata mumbles, energy deflating.

*"Are you crying?"* Kageyama asks incredulously, sounding confused and angry and exactly how Hinata feels.

*"Maybe,"* Hinata snaps back loudly into the phone. He wipes at his eyes gracelessly, uncaring of way it soaks into the sleeves of his sleep shirt, the way he snuffles straight into the receiver. His heart stretches over his skin and tears apart, bit by bit. "Why didn't you tell me, stupid?" He bites on the inside of his cheek. "Why are you telling me, now, and over the *freaking phone*?"

*"Huh? You called me, though."*

Hinata stops himself from throwing his phone across the room. "That's not what I meant!" He screeches. "Why are you—this feels like—like something you should say in person," he finishes dumbly. "I don't know. Why didn't you tell me?" He tries again. "Why are you telling me now?"

*"I didn't want anyone to pity me,"* Kageyama says stiffly.

"No one would've pitied you," Hinata mutters immediately, angry. At Kageyama, at himself, at the world. "No one would've looked down on you, *idiot*. We could've—"

*"It's fine."* Kageyama cuts in, voice going awkward and stilted again, like he's trying to compliment someone for the first time. *"There was volleyball."* A pause. *"And—"*

He stops.

Did *I* change Kageyama's life? Hinata remembers wondering, reckless and curious and nervous, chest tight with the image of Heitor's lingering, fond gaze directed at Nice burned into his skin.

His heart is doing that weird, squishy thing again. Twisting and puddling and rolling around like putty, somewhere undefinable between solid and liquid. Emotion spikes fire hot in his blood, on his skin, in his face, everywhere.

"Kageyama," he says, before he can think. "Turn your video on."

"*Huh?*"

"Turn your video on, dumbass," Hinata repeats, louder. His heart cuts into his skin, and he bleeds memories—of Kageyama's face, hair, eyes, like a worn photograph, fading at the edges.

A pause. "*Why? How do I do that?*" Kageyama asks, bewildered. His voice sounds further away, as if he's pulled his phone away to stare at the screen in confusion, at the options. He definitely has.

Hinata groans. "You're so stupid. You just click on the little—"

"*I'm not—oh,*" Kageyama says. There are noises on the other end. "*I have to leave.*"

"Oh, okay," Hinata mumbles. Quiet trickles over them, soaking the line between, drenching it in unnamed emotion. "Thanks for telling me," he adds on, voice tiny.

"*Yeah,*" Kageyama just answers, after a moment.

The line cuts out.

Hinata pulls the phone away from his ear and stares numbly at the screen for a long moment, eyes glued to the tiny *call ended* on their chat and heart hammering in his chest. His mind races and his chest tightens as words spill over in his throat and he wants to *tell* someone, wants to rant to Kenma or Yamaguchi or Yachi or even Bokuto about how much of an absolute fucking *idiot* Kageyama is—

But he can't.

Because despite what Kageyama (and Tsukishima) like to claim, Hinata is, in fact, not *entirely* an idiot. Because the moment Kageyama's voice, pulled threadbare and thin with raw honesty, filtered through the phone and wove into his ears, he knew the words weren't something to share, maybe not ever.

The knowledge makes him restless, makes him want to go out on the court and spike and hit and receive and run until his hands are stinging and his legs are aching and his muscles are worked to the point of over-exhaustion and he collapses in a painful, hopeless fever.

He bounces up on the balls of his feet, over and out to his small, not very well-cleaned balcony, and utterly fails to justify to himself why he bothered to call Kageyama in the first place. His mouth opens, his diaphragm swells.

“AAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!” Hinata yells out into the city of Tokyo.

He listens to the sound bounce around a little, chest heaving with exertion.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!!” Someone bellows back.

“SORRY!” Hinata throws back loudly, before shutting up immediately.

He looks back down at his phone, screen still open to his chat with Kageyama. Robotically, he opens his sticker library and scrolls through, looking for something, anything.

He settles on some animated cat stickers that Kenma sends him sometimes.

*There was volleyball*, he hears Kageyama say, nothing but dizzy, fumbling truth. *And—*

Hinata pushes down on the warmth bubbling up in his chest, pushes down on the screen instead, and proceeds to spam Kageyama with twenty-one cat stickers in a row.

+

“*Hinata*,” Bokuto is chortling. “Your face is soooo red!”

Hinata squawks, and feels himself color as their entire table promptly bursts into laughter, the abrupt weight of countless eyes on him prickling into his skin. “Bokuto-san!”

Atsumu leans over and peers at him, a grin breaking out over his expression. “Yer a lightweight?”

“No!” He protests immediately, and then pauses. “Maybe, I don’t know.” When Atsumu stares at him blankly, Hinata presses his lips together and mumbles, “I’ve never really drunken before.”

Atsumu’s expression falls slack. “*Never?*” He asks, incredulous, before mischief twinkles all over his eyes and his lips twitch. “Not even once, Shouyou-kun?”

Bokuto makes a noise that sounds somewhere between a shout and a hoot, and he declares loudly, “Let’s get ‘im drunk, Tsum-Tsum!!”

Meian chuckles heartily next to him, and offers Hinata a warm pat on the back. “Good luck, Hinata-kun. These two are crazy.”

Hinata makes a noise of protest, head already buzzing oddly with the slightest sip of alcohol he had taken in, but curiosity manages to grab a hold of his senses again, and he blinks up at his captain. “Meian-senpai, are you not going to drink?”

Meian laughs quietly. “Ah, no. I don’t really drink much, and my wife doesn’t like it when I do, either.”

Atsumu pauses abruptly in trying to wheedle Sakusa into drinking an unidentifiable cocktail, jaw dropping. “Mei-san, yer married?”

Bokuto pushes himself into their space, eyes bright. “Woah, woah, really?”

Inunaki grins, clearing his throat. “Oh, you guys should have seen him last year, when he was planning the proposal.”

Meian rolls his eyes. “Shion.”

Inunaki just smiles, eyes twinkling. Meian looks away from their libero and instead fiddles with something around his neck, before fingers grasp onto a thin chain and he pulls out a necklace from under his shirt, a silver ring dangling from it. “I don’t usually wear it because it gets in the way of practice,” he just explains, shrugging, and Hinata joins Atsumu and Bokuto in gaping openly at their captain.

“Woah,” Bokuto whispers loudly into Hinata’s ear, making him giggle reflexively. “Meian-san is so cool.”

Meian’s lips twitch. “Don’t look at me like that, you guys. A lot of people your age are starting to get married, too.”

Atsumu makes a scandalized noise, raising a hand to place dramatically over his heart. “Me? Never.”

“Yeah!” Bokuto cheers, though he seems far too gone. He downs another drink. “Never!!”

Hinata nods stalwartly, mind hazy. “Never,” he echoes thoughtlessly.

Bokuto pushes something towards him, an unidentifiable blend of clear liquids in a cup, and Hinata gulps as he stares down at it, the unfamiliar scent uprooting his mind. Atsumu grins and tips the cup towards him invitingly, as Hinata just squirms away.

Inunaki laughs, loud across the table. “They’re a bit young, Meian-san. And I think girls tend to fawn over the Adlers more than us, anyways.” He shoots a wide grin at Atsumu. “Especially after Atsumu fell on his butt during that fan meeting.”

“Stop!” Atsumu cries dramatically, wilting in his seat and stretching a hand out. “We don’t speak of that!”

Hinata laughs along with the rest of the team, having long heard the stories and watched the videos, and a warm, fuzzy feeling of contentment trickles into his veins at the comfort, the familiarity of having a team again, of being able to go out to eat, to laugh, to play around.

“The Adlers!” Bokuto exclaims, pumping his fists. “We’ll beat Ushiwaka next time!”

“They’re not more popular than us, Naki-san.” Atsumu’s mouth pulls into something close to a pout. “Have ya seen Tobio-kun’s ads? They’re stupid!” Hinata holds back a giggle.

“Tobio-kun?” Meian asks curiously. He pauses, eyes ticking upwards. “Ah, the Adlers’ setter, right? I do tend to see him in a lot of commercials.”

And then, eerily, the entire table’s attention seems to swivel around to focus on Hinata, sitting sandwiched between the captain and the wall. The full force of his whole team’s eyes on him makes him blink.

“Huh?” Hinata says blankly, mind still muddled.

“There’s no way Tobio-kun has a girlfriend, right?” Atsumu prods, peering over at him.

Hinata shakes his head fervently, the idea of Kageyama and a *girlfriend* so ridiculous he almost laughs. “No way,” he declares honestly.

But then he pauses, closes his mouth, remembers that Kageyama is off in America a billion miles away and they don’t exactly talk about things like *dating* and *girls*. “Um,” Hinata tacks on weakly. “At least I don’t think so.”

“He doesn’t really seem like the type,” Meian says absentmindedly. “Ah, sorry Hinata-kun,” he does a slight bow that has Hinata scrambling and waving his hands. “You know him much better than me, I’m just guessing based off of what I’ve seen, but he seems very focused on volleyball.”

Atsumu barks out a laugh. “True that! I’ll bet in high school, all he did was volleyball, volleyball, volleyball, huh, Shouyou-kun?”

“Whats wrong with that?” Bokuto pipes up, tilting his head. “That’s how I was like, too!”

“Yer still like that,” Atsumu grumbles. He leans over to stare at Hinata. “Actually, I bet you were like that too!”

“I like volleyball,” Hinata says defensively, feeling oddly off-balance, and the whole table promptly bursts into laughter. He flushes.

“Yeah!” Bokuto cheers, holding out a hand. “Volleyball!!” Hinata high-fives him and grins.

Inunaki chuckles. “I don’t think those two thought about things like dating at all.”

Meian offers a small smile, and reaches over to ruffle Hinata’s hair. “It’s not like it’s a bad thing,” he says to Inunaki, shrugging before he turns back to look at Hinata. “That just means

they were determined kids. High school was probably just volleyball and Kageyama for you, huh?”

Atsumu huffs, eyes sparkling in amusement. “And it was prolly just volleyball and Shouyou for him, too.”

The words of his teammates dig into his skin and pull at the seams of a memory, of Kageyama’s voice, of acknowledgement and raw, unfiltered honesty, and Hinata squirms in his seat at the attention on him as his mind is suddenly wrenched back into a fifteen-year-old frenzy, into the feeling of spiking a ball with his eyes closed, into taking off and flying.

“I guess,” Hinata finally mumbles, embarrassment flowing thick and heavy into his blood and voice coming out small.

“Hey, Tsum-Tsum, what’s in here?” Bokuto asks, pointing to another suspicious mixture of liquids.

And like that, the table erupts into chaos again, and Hinata gets swept into trying *tequila* while Atsumu howls in laughter, and Inunaki just shakes his head in response.

But despite the alcohol pulling at his mind, the haze that settles over him, Hinata’s thoughts drift towards dark hair and blue eyes, towards the ring worn around Meian’s neck, towards Heitor’s soft, slow gaze on Nice’s back, and he wonders why—even though Meian and Atsumu’s teasing words had *basically* been true—why the words sit funny in his stomach and taste just barely, ever-so-slightly bitter on the tip of his tongue.

+

“Shouyou,” Kenma murmurs. “You look like you’re thinking about something.”

The statement pulls him back down to earth, and Hinata feels his mouth twist into a frown. “You’re not even looking at me!”

Kenma pointedly does not look up from his console, seemingly deeply invested in the game as his fingers press steadfast against the buttons, tone never wavering. “You look like you’re thinking about something,” he repeats, voice low.

Hinata bends over to stare at the screen, watching as Kenma somehow manages to be *good* at even Animal Crossing, going around and shaking little virtual trees and collecting little pixelated peaches. He looks on sightlessly for a long moment, tempted to settle his chin on Kenma’s shoulder before remembering the last time he did, he had gotten a scathing look in response. He sighs.

Kenma's face turns, ever so slightly, and their eyes lock.

"Oh," he just says, and then returns to the game.

Hinata squints. "Wha—*Kenma*, what do you mean, *oh*? I didn't even say anything."

Kenma leans away from him a little, as if to escape the possibly of a shoulder on his chin, and says placidly, "Kageyama."

Hinata stares at him blankly, gaping a little.

A ghost of a smile flickers over Kenma's lips, lightning fast, before it drops immediately back into a flat line. Quiet trickles down over them, peaceful and ebbing gently like it always does, but Hinata battles with the rush of blood in his ears as he continues to blink rapidly at his friend, mind static.

"Buh?" He manages.

"Don't," Kenma starts, almost awkwardly. "Don't ask me for advice. You know I'm not good at that kind of stuff."

"What kind of stuff," Hinata says robotically. "Huh."

Kenma just goes silent again, the gentle push of his fingers the only sound in the room along with the whirl of his computers. "You're thinking about Kageyama," he says quietly. His nose scrunches. "Or, well, something relating to him."

"Am I?" Hinata asks dumbly.

Kenma graces him with an unimpressed stare, and Hinata withers immediately.

"Okay," he admits glumly. "Maybe I kinda was."

When Kenma doesn't bother responding, Hinata pushes forward, unease tipping over in his lungs. "I just think it's weird, you know? That everyone always asks me about him. Like, Meian-san, and Atsumu-san..." He trails off, lips pursed. "I mean, it's not like we're in high school, anymore." He puffs out his chest. "We're not attached. I don't need him to play volleyball."

Kenma shrugs. "No one thinks you need him. They probably ask because they think you're best friends."

Hinata frowns, and leans over to stare at him. "Kenma, you're my best friend, though."

"You can have more than one best friend, Shouyou."

"Hmm."

Hinata lays his head back against the couch, staring up at the high rise of Kenma's ceiling and grappling with the storm in his stomach. "I'm not best friends with Kageyama," he

declares aloud.

The statement rings out into the air, and hooks onto the silence of the room in all the wrong ways. Instantly, Hinata's skin crawls, because he's not *lying*, but maybe he's not telling the truth either, and his brows furrow together as he tries to make sense of the jumble of memories, emotions, thoughts, tangling in his stomach.

"*Huh*," he wonders. "Kenma, are me and Kageyama best friends?"

Kenma doesn't respond immediately, which isn't unusual, so Hinata waits and kicks his legs restlessly up in the air as he tries to rid his body of the weird, tingling feeling snaking up his skin. Odd, because he'd already had practice today. He wiggles his fingers, pretends to hit a few imaginary spikes.

The silence drags on for too long.

"Kenma," Hinata says loudly. "Kenma, *Kenma*, my bestest-estest friend forever in the whole wide world."

"Shouyou," Kenma just mutters, face impassive but lips drawn tight in what Hinata smartly categorizes as the intersection between exasperation and fondness. "Shut up."

Hinata watches as he returns to his game, and tries not to press him or egg him on, even as his nerves crackle under his skin and he inexplicably feels like bouncing up and down and all across the walls of Kenma's house.

"You're thinking too hard," Kenma says quietly, at last.

"Woah," Hinata whispers. "No one's *ever* said that to me before."

Kenma lets out a snort at that, one of his small, genuine laughs, and Hinata beams a little at the curve of his friend's mouth.

"You're thinking too hard," Kenma just repeats. He places his console down to the side, twists up to look at him, and *oh*, that means he's being really, very, a hundred percent serious and focused on the conversation, directing all of his focus onto a singular point, like when he plays setter, like when he's figuring out how to clear the next boss, like when he's setting up a stream.

"Really?" Hinata asks back in response, trying not to squirm under his gaze.

"Yeah," Kenma says, shrugging. "You don't have to try so hard to define your relationship. He means something to you. That's all."

Hinata stares at him, unblinking. Kenma holds his gaze for a moment before ducking his head and picking up his console again, and now Hinata is left with nothing to focus on except the fuzzy edges of Kageyama's smile, the glint of his eyes, the familiar, determined expression—unchanged from fifteen to eighteen to twenty-one.

Hinata calls his parents when he gets sick of failed dinners and sad little bowls of cup noodles. He calls Natsu when he sees a little girl running around recklessly at the mall, brave and unbothered by the world around her. He calls Kenma when he sees long lines outside a store as teenagers chatter excitedly about how they plan to beat the game.

Hinata calls people when he misses them dearly, and he had called Kageyama Tobio six days ago at 7 p.m. on a Friday night after seeing his stupid little curry ad.

“Oh,” Hinata just says, dumbly.

“I’m not good at this kind of stuff,” Kenma mutters, replaying his words from earlier.

Hinata doesn’t exactly know what kind of *stuff* Kenma is talking about, but he can’t bring himself to ask, because a fledgling idea is already taking root in his mind and his stomach churns and his head buzzes and he hears Heitor’s voice, rich and ripe and too-sweet, *some people change your life just by being in it—*

“Shouyou,” Kenma murmurs, eyes glued to his screen. “Don’t think too hard. Just do what you always do.”

“What do I always do?” Hinata manages to force out, breathless.

Kenma shrugs. “Something interesting.”

*—and you don’t want to let that go.*

+

Hinata stares at the door in front of him, heart flying around in his chest.

“Right,” he says aloud. “Yeah. I’m *so* cool. This is fine. I’m Hinata Shouyou! I’m cool and I’m awesome and I’m a wing spiker for the MSBY Bla—

The door swings open abruptly.

“The hell?” Kageyama says loudly, face scrunched up. “I can hear your stupid voice from inside, dumbass.”

Hinata blinks up at him, and his mind turns to static.

Because Kageyama is so real and solid before him, eyes so much bluer than any picture, and voice so much more irritated, familiar, rough, than any phone call could ever do him justice.

Jaw sharp, lips relaxed. Tall. He's real and he's solid and he's standing in front of Hinata in the doorway of his apartment in Chiba, wearing a loose cotton shirt and sweats with his hair still damp, and Hinata wants to lean in and do something incredibly, terrifyingly stupid, like never let go.

"Woah," he mumbles under his breath, heart jumping into his throat and heat splashing into his veins. "Nevermind. Not cool."

Kageyama pauses, brows drawing together. "Huh?"

"Kageyama-kuuun!" Hinata chirps instead, squishing down the puddle of mush in his brain. The air between them drips slow like honey, a year melting away in the distance. "Did you miss me?"

"No," Kageyama just says shortly, before turning around.

Hinata grins and accepts the silent invitation, toeing his shoes off and following Kageyama into the apartment. His eyes flit around rapidly, taking in, digesting, making sense of his surroundings, as he clings onto tiny details with dear life: the Adlers jacket draped over the back of a chair, the lack of decorations, the unlivid atmosphere.

"Your place is kinda ugly," he says elegantly.

"Shut it."

"Mean, Yamayama-kun, *mean*."

Kageyama bristles, turning around briefly, and Hinata prepares himself to dodge a hair grab, a swipe, a kick, but instead Kageyama seems to reconsider, just blinking at him a few times before turning his back to him again, walking further into his apartment. "Don't call me that," he mutters grumpily.

*Right*, Hinata thinks, and tries not to miss the phantom touch of Kageyama's hand in his hair.

"Ooh," he whispers instead. "You have a balcony, too."

Kageyama's eyes slant towards the sliding door. "I don't use it."

Hinata balks. "What! Really? Kageyama, that's such a waste!"

He thinks Kageyama turns to glare at him, but Hinata is already bouncing over to the stream of afternoon sunlight, prying the door open and stepping outside, uncaring of his bare feet as he faces the city and pretends his heart isn't seconds away from spilling all over Kageyama's clean hardwood floor. He closes his eyes for a short moment, breathes in, lets the heat wash over his nerves.

The door slides shut behind him, and he feels Kageyama's presence like the sun.

The silence between them is comfortable, oven-hot but baked in familiarity—and yet the rush of blood in his own ears grows deafening and Hinata caves, letting his eyes slide open,

soaking in the sight of Kageyama standing next to him, comfortable.

*How was America*, he thinks. Except that's so *bland*, so dry, so dull and utterly, completely unlike them. Saying that would be like a toss thrown too short, too low.

"Are you and Ushiwaka friends, now?" He prods instead.

Kageyama blinks, mouth does something funny. "No," he says stiffly.

Hinata laughs, and lets the familiar action swallow up the steady, rising rate of his pulse.

"You just don't want to admit it. What about Hoshiumi-san?"

There's a long pause, quiet oozing between them, and Hinata is looking out at the tiny outline of cars stuck on the highway, trapped and unmoving, when Kageyama mutters, "I guess so."

Hinata stares blankly at the cars, tiny little dots miles away. "Oh," he just says, breath kicked out of his lungs and chest so tight the fine lines of his heart feel as if they're about to snap. Somehow, he thinks, he would have rather heard Kageyama say he thought *Ushijima* was a friend, rather than Hoshiumi, and a dark, ugly poison trickles into his blood because this isn't *right*, he likes Hoshiumi, admires him, even.

"Wh—

"I *mean*!" Hinata says loudly, turning around to smile at Kageyama. "That's so cool. Hoshiumi-san is really cool."

"Yeah," Kageyama just answers, after a moment.

Silence again. Hinata scrambles for something to say, even though he knows he doesn't *need* to, really. But they can't just bring out a volleyball and fill the gap, the distance, between them with practice—they can't.

"Adriah-san is getting married next week," he blurts out. "And he invited all of us. It's going to be in Hokkaido, isn't that cool?"

Kageyama blinks, turns to look at him, and Hinata holds his gaze. "Who is Adriah-san?" He asks, perplexed.

Hinata bites back a laugh. "One of the Black Jackals' middle blockers. You played against him! Do you even pay attention at all?"

"I don't need to remember their names to play against them," Kageyama grumbles.

Hinata rests an elbow against the balcony ledge, sets his cheek against his palm, and stares at Kageyama. He doesn't look away, just stares back as if in challenge, and Hinata grins, eyes running over the furrow in Kageyama's brow and the curve of his mouth. "You never change, Kageyama-kun."

Kageyama blinks again at that, lips parting, and Hinata looks away immediately.

His heart clenches. “Did you ever get lonely?” He asks abruptly, the words out of his mouth before he can take them back. Diving off and into the deep end. “Living alone with your sister?”

He feels Kageyama stiffen hard and fast beside him. “I already told you,” Kageyama snaps, voice pinched and strained and diluted into clean, angry lines. “I don’t need people to pity—”

“But you were okay, right?” Hinata cuts in, pushing straight ahead with reckless abandon. “Because you had volleyball.”

A long pause. “Yeah.”

“And,” Hinata adds on, staring sightlessly out at the view from Kageyama’s apartment. “You had me.”

The moment of silence stretches longer this time, elastic, and it snaps back to strike him clean across the face when Kageyama says quietly, “Yeah.”

*Strongest opponent*, he hears in Suga’s voice. *Strongest ally*.

There are no more objective, justifiable reasons for Hinata to want to reach out and take Kageyama’s hand. They aren’t teammates, Hinata raising his palms to teach Kageyama what a double high-five is. They aren’t opponents, at least not right *now*, Hinata grabbing Kageyama’s hand to shake it steady and firm under the net before a math.

Right now, Kageyama isn’t an opponent he wants to defeat, nor an ally he wants to work with. Right now, he doesn’t *need* Kageyama, to set a ball to him, to make him feel powerful, invincible. Right now, the only reason his fingers itch to grab Kageyama’s hand and his palms burn with the desire to slip under his shirt is because Kageyama is just *Kageyama*, and Hinata *wants*—plain and simple.

Hinata takes a quiet breath in. “Kageyama. If I do something stupid are you gonna kill me?”

Kageyama stares at him, unimpressed. “You’re always stupid.”

“Shut up,” he says reflexively, then swallows down the burning nerves, molten lava under his skin, hot Brazil air. “You have something on your eyelash.”

Kageyama squints at him for a moment, before raising his hand towards his eye. “Where—”

Hinata slaps his arm away, heart thundering. “I’ll do it. It’s in a weird place. Close your eyes.”

There’s a pause, where Kageyama just frowns at him, but Hinata keeps his best serious expression on, mouth relaxed and eyes blinking unmovingly as he stares straight back at Kageyama, innocent and relaxed and fighting the fear spiking in his chest.

Kageyama’s arm falls back down to his side, and he closes his eyes.

Hinata lets himself stare for a split second, before adrenaline and want and Kenma's calm, knowing voice tips him over the edge and he pushes himself up on his tiptoes and leans in to kiss Kageyama square on the mouth on his cramped Chiba balcony in the middle of the day.

He barely presses his lips against the taller before Kageyama jolts under him, mouth stiff, and Hinata pulls back so fast he swears his brain knocks against the back of his skull.

"Okay," Hinata squeaks, looking away. He turns and grabs the handle on the sliding door, heart dropping fast and hard and painful and *oh*, there's no one to receive it in time. "I'm gonna—"

Kageyama's reflexes are better, *of course* they are, and he grabs Hinata firmly by the arm, forcing Hinata's attention back on him. "Wh..." He trails off, eyes wide. A swallow. "What?"

Hinata forces himself to not look away. "Sorry," he says, mouth dry, voice quiet. "It's fine if you don't like me back. I was just, uh," He pauses, gathers himself. "We can just pretend—"

"You—" Kageyama starts, hand still warm on Hinata's arm. He stares at Hinata in bleak surprise, lips parted. "You like me."

"Yeah," Hinata sighs, shoulders finally sagging in defeat. His ears feel hot. "I do."

And then abruptly, Kageyama's entire face goes bright red. Mouth opening and closing like a fish, and Hinata goes dizzy with embarrassment, with nerves, with the tiniest, choking sliver of hope, and he tears his eyes away to stare resolutely at the skyline and not at Kageyama.

Silence is thrown over them, and now it's undeniably tense, awkward, hanging by a thread, before Kageyama clears his throat and says, voice hoarse, "Do that again."

Hinata stills. "Do what again," he snaps, tone frayed with shame.

Kageyama lets go of him, and Hinata's arm falls uselessly to his side. "Kiss," Kageyama just mumbles, like the words don't fit in his mouth.

"*What*," Hinata demands angrily, heat flaring in his blood. "Do you even—" He falters, voice edging into quiet, childish embarrassment. "Do you even like me," he says finally, voice tiny.

They stand in silence, and Hinata stares blankly out at the city of Chiba, missing the safety of Miyagi, missing the feel of a ball against his hand, missing the person standing in front of him.

"We shouldn't," Kageyama finally says.

Hinata's heart plummets, but he forces himself to look up at Kageyama anyways, because he refuses to walk away feeling like he's lost. "Right," he answers. "I—"

"We shouldn't try to do the quick again," Kageyama cuts him off, face unreadable. The heat has faded from his cheeks, and all that's left is an odd, familiar shine of certainty in his eyes,

that Hinata has only ever seen on the court, that looks out of place. “Because as we are now, we’d be unstoppable together.”

The breath knocks out of Hinata’s lungs.

“But you’re an opponent now,” Kageyama continues, brows furrowing and lips drawing tight together as if conflicted. His eyes flit back to Hinata’s. “You—it—” He pauses. “So we shouldn’t.”

Hinata stares at him, pulse skyrocketing, and then slams his own head against the sliding door, *hard*.

“Oh my god,” he mutters. “Oh my *god*.”

“*What*,” Kageyama snaps, voice rising over the midday heat. “Why the hell are you—”

Hinata whips his head back up to glare at Kageyama. “You can’t just *say* that, that was so—so—” His voice cuts off in frustration.

Kageyama stares back at him blankly. “*Huh?*”

Hinata throws his hands in the air, hysterical. “You always say the most embarrassing stuff. In high school you were all *if I’m here, you’re invincible*, and now, *now* you’re, like, *we’re unstoppable*—”

“It was *true*,” Kageyama says back angrily, blustering heat rising to his cheeks again. “And you thought it was cool!”

“IT *WAS* COOL!” Hinata yells back, before deflating. “It is. It’s really cool.” He swallows, eyes tracing the edge of Kageyama’s eyes, the curve of his mouth. “And also embarrassing. You’re so embarrassing, Kageyama.”

“Shut up,” Kageyama mutters. “You’re so loud and annoying.”

They stare at each other for a moment, breaths loud and filling up the space between them, and Hinata’s heart tumbles around stupidly in his chest, floundering like it’s never learned to walk, never learned to stand.

*Clumsy*, he suddenly remembers Tsukishima teaching him, back in first year when he had struggled with English. *Awkward in movement or action; without skill or grace*.

That’s a little how his heart feels, right now.

“Hey,” Hinata whispers. “There’s something on your eyelash.”

“No there isn’t,” Kageyama shoots back immediately. His voice is hoarse, his ears pink.

“Stupidyama,” Hinata says, swallowing. “Close your eyes.”

This time, when Hinata leans up and presses his lips against Kageyama's, he kisses back, hesitantly, their mouths moving slow and uncertain like they both don't know what they're doing—and maybe they *don't*, really—but it doesn't make it any less thrilling, any less blood-pumping, and when Hinata pulls back his heart is rattling so hard against his chest it bumps a smile onto his face.

"You're so red," he says, grinning.

Kageyama's cheeks color even more, before he grumbles out, "So are you."

"Hey," Hinata exhales. And then his mind slides dangerously towards a name he's heard before, sly and teasing and dripping off someone else's tongue, and he fumbles with the taste of something foreign in his mouth. "Tobio-kun."

Kageyama's face *flames*.

"Tobio-kun," Hinata repeats, grin stretching infinitely wide across his warm cheeks. "Hey, hey, Tobio-kun. Tobio-chan. To—"

"Shut up," Kageyama snaps.

"You're sooo red, Tobio-kun."

"Shut *up*," Kageyama grumbles angrily. Hinata beams at him, then watches curiously as Kageyama clears his throat and says, stiffly, "Ash."

Hinata stares at him. "Ash?" He asks incredulously. "What the heck is—"

"Lash," Kageyama mutters, staring at his mouth. "There's something on your eyelash."

Hinata's heart jumps into his throat and he swallows, hard.

"Liar," he says, voice barely a whisper.

He closes his eyes anyways.

And when Kageyama leans in and presses his mouth warm against his, Hinata's heart slams against his chest, silly and giddy and *clumsy*, tumbling and bouncing around with the restless energy of a fifteen-year-old boy wanting to play volleyball all over again.

Karasuno never won nationals, but they beat Shiratorizawa when no one thought they could. Hinata lost to Kageyama in the third year of junior high, and then beat him after six years in a professional, Division 1 match. His first day of high school was marked by an angry voice and a reluctant rival-turned-teammate, and now *this*, he thinks—Kageyama's lips locked on his, hands hovering awkwardly around Hinata's waist, the warmth of a friend, of a teammate, of a rival, of an unforgettable *as long as I'm here, you're—*

This, he thinks, feels like victory.

Hinata pulls away quickly, lips wet, and absolutely does not go dizzy at the sight of Kageyama staring at him, blinking in confusion with an infuriatingly endearing frown of disappointment stretched across his face.

"Hey," Hinata announces loudly, voice at odds with the heat on his face. "I'm gonna beat you again. You better not go easy on me."

Kageyama's expression scrunches up. "Huh? Why the hell would I do that?" He scowls. "And you're not going to beat me."

Hinata grins. "Uh-huh." And then he pokes Kageyama's cheek like they're fifteen again but holds tight onto Kageyama's hand because they're *not* fifteen, anymore, and he says, haughtily, "Just checking your brain still works."

Kageyama glares at him.

Hinata jabs him in the side, eliciting a grunt of pain, before taking off running through the apartment, laughing loud and free as Kageyama's angry footsteps thunder behind him.

"Race you!" He calls out brightly.

And it starts the way everything with them starts—racing and pushing and shrieking and huffing, out of breath and dizzy with exertion. But they're not running down the worn road to school, they're not standing on the same side of the net, or the opposite, there are no crazy receives or thunderous spikes or looming walls to break through. No kneepads, no jerseys, no shoes.

Instead, Hinata runs barefoot in Kageyama's apartment, hardwood floor cold against his skin and warmth pooling liquid-gold in his stomach and he never, *ever* wants this match to end.

"That wasn't even a race, dumbass," Kageyama mutters, when they both hit the end of his kitchen in a matter of seconds.

"Let's do it again," Hinata says immediately, unbothered.

Kageyama blinks, stares down, cheeks still flushed with embarrassment, effort, something sweet and foreign, and Hinata runs his eyes over the image, wrapping it away and hiding it close to his heart.

"Do what again?" Kageyama asks roughly, voice hesitant.

Hinata grins, bright and wide and infinite. "All of it, stupid."



## End Notes

hello..... this is essentially my love letter to the entire series lmao i love these boys so so much and i hope u enjoyed the dumbassery and copious volleyball metaphors and my humble attempt to do their relationship justice. as always, comments will make me love u forever <3 (edit: let's pretend kags went to america and not italy hush)

title from [in and out of love](#) by oh wonder

find me on [twitter](#). mwah!

## Works inspired by this one

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!