

unpolished work 1

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by [our--beginning_\(p_3a\)](#), [p_3a](#)

Summary

- > It's December.
- > Adachi-san asked you to meet him inside the TV world...
- > **Go**
- > Don't go

Notes

this is the first in a series of unpolished and largely unedited short stories that have been languishing in my drafts for varying amounts of time. this one was almost completed in November 2019 then abandoned completely. i finished it and then posted it pretty much immediately.

comments welcome* - if a piece receives a positive reception i may expand on it later during nanowrimo :)

*(though as usual please refrain from concrit; i have trusted betas to consult if i want it)

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

"He's definitely in there," Marie said. She chewed the inside of her cheek. "...that bad guy is, too."

Yosuke's head prickled. "You mean Adachi, yeah?"

Marie looked at the TV. It was dark inside Junes save for the plain white glare from the disconnected TV sets; it reflected onto her skin, casting her features in a strange relief. She chewed her cheek some more before she answered, her gaze downcast. "...yeah. Him. He's definitely in there too."

Yosuke held in a swear word. "He really did escape there after we chased him through the hospital... and what the hell, Souji! What happened to *let's not go in alone*?! Or is it one rule for us and another for you?!"

"He can't hear you..."

"I know." Yosuke sighed. "Sorry, Marie-chan. I'm probably not making you feel any better, huh... I'm sure he'll be fine. He's really strong."

She didn't look convinced, but he maintained his forced pep. "He's an idiot, but he's *our* idiot... it's not supposed to get foggy for another few days, so even if he gets hurt, I can go in there and patch him right up again."

"But it was foggy on our way over here..."

"Sh-- Shhh! Don't say stuff like that! I may be tough, but I still get scared, y'know..."

"Especially about Souji-kun," she deadpanned.

Yosuke felt himself tense. "W-Well, I'd be worried if any of our friends were in there with a freakin' serial killer... He may be tough, but... th-that guy's the one that killed Saki. O-Of course I'm worried about him being near Souji."

"Because you have a crush on Souji-kun too."

"N-No! Marie-chan, guys can't have crushes on guys!"

"Why not?" She made eye contact. "You're both human. It makes more sense than Teddie having a crush on Yukiko-chan."

"Y-You seriously say the weirdest stuff sometimes... and look, just because Ted says he's a bear doesn't mean he really is one! He just has middle-schooler syndrome, okay?"

"He is one though." She stared blankly at him.

"Jeez, you're as bad as him sometimes." Yosuke laughed awkwardly. "L-Look... let's talk about something else. If it passes midnight and he still isn't out, I'll call the others and we'll go in after him. So until then, I guess we'll talk about... hey, Marie-chan, do you like music?"

She shrugged. "I've only ever heard the weird songs that lady sings. They're kinda boring. And Rise-chan's music."

Yosuke grinned. "Give this a try, then!" He took his headphones off from around his neck and handed them to her. "I think you'll like it a lot."

"Is it like Rise-chan's music...?"

"Kinda. You'll see."

They sat on the lino floor for 45 minutes listening to Nickelback. Yosuke got more and more anxious the closer it got to midnight. "This is bad, right?" he asked Marie, as the last track on

the album played out through the headphones he'd placed on the ground between them and bumped to max volume.

"It's okay, actually. It's good. I like it."

"Th-- The situation, not the music. Jeez..."

She laughed a bit, but it was reserved. They were both on edge.

As the music came to a stop, something caught his ear. He frowned. "Is that...?"

A shiver went down his spine as he realised the sound he could hear was raindrops on the Junes tin roof.

"Rain," Marie confirmed.

"Oh, jeez... that means..."

Yosuke's digital watch pipped midnight. All of the screens flickered on - a sickly yellow.

They weren't exactly surprised to see Souji's face on the screen, but they were both shocked all the same. And what *did* surprise Yosuke was that he looked like he'd been... crying.

He looked up and down the bank of TVs of different sizes and brands. Souji's face was on every single one - but each screen showed a subtly different angle, and, as Yosuke really looked, they seemed to have different expressions too. Some seemed to be smirking a little; others looked the way Souji had on that awful day at the hospital, just subtly broken inside. But they were all different, they all looked like they'd been crying, and they were all looking at Yosuke.

Yosuke glanced anxiously at Marie. She was simply watching the screen in front of her.

I didn't want to be alone...

Yosuke tensed, looking into the eyes of the closest Souji.

I just wanted to live a life full of friends. I couldn't stand to lose one... even if he is the killer, he's one of my friends... I have to try... I have to... I'm sorry everyone... I can't be that perfect leader you wanted. I never was. I just want a life where I'm not on my own any more...

The broadcast winked out.

Yosuke was almost angry it was so short, but he held his temper.

He opened his mouth to start explaining to Marie, but before he could, the screen in front of him began to distort. "Oh-- shit!" He flung an arm in front of Marie just in case, just in case--

Out of it came Souji. And thankfully, he was alone.

Yosuke put his hand in his pocket as casually as he could. "Hey," he said, surprising himself with how calm he was able to be.

"Yosuke," Souji said.

He sounded defeated. Guilty. Small. It was weird hearing that tone come out of Souji's mouth.

Yosuke wanted to sweep it all away somehow. Instead, he shrugged one shoulder. "You're back safe," he said. "That's what matters. You scared me when you ran off like that. Marie-chan too."

He heard her step up beside him.

"We don't want to lose you," Yosuke went on. "So next time... take us with you. We're all your friends, after all."

"...I'm sorry," Souji said. But he still just looked like a kicked puppy. Yosuke hated it. "Aibou," Yosuke sighed. He wasn't annoyed, more like... frustrated. "Let's just go home for now, okay? You can tell me about what happened later if you want. Or not. You don't have to tell me."

"Okay," Souji acquiesced.

"You wanna stay with me?"

"I'll go home with Marie," he said.

Yosuke raised his eyebrows. "You know where she lives?"

"Yeah." He moved past Yosuke and started heading for the exit. Marie blinked, looked at Yosuke, then moved to follow Souji.

Yosuke caught Souji's sleeve. "Aibou," he says.

Souji tugged once, then gave up, standing in place and waiting to be spoken to. The hairs on the back of Yosuke's neck stood up. He didn't know why.

"...I want my Junes key back, please."

Yosuke had known where Souji would be tonight the second he saw the key for Junes' back entrance was missing from his keyring. He had no idea when Souji had pickpocketed it. But if what he was going to use it for was self-destructive solo TV world expeditions, then Yosuke wasn't going to enable that.

Souji dug in his pocket for a moment, then placed the key into Yosuke's waiting palm. His hand lingered for a moment. Then broke contact. He swept out of the store; leaving Yosuke behind, with only the electronic whine of the disconnected televisions keeping him company.

End Notes

p.s. sorry tag wranglers for the british english. but not sorry enough to stop. sorry

p.p.s. this is as well as horos, not instead. I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOU LOYAL HOROS READERS i love you all deeply and abidingly and i am so nearly ready to pub the next chapter.

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