

hold back the river

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hold back the river

by [wondernoise](#)

Summary

When the world spins so fast Ranpo can't keep up, Poe meets him where he is. (Title from the James Bay song of the same name.)

Notes

*hold back the river, so i
can stop for a minute and be by your side*

Autistic Ranpo is the only valid characterization of Ranpo there is.

Thanks to [Megan](#) for betaing!

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

Poe's house is always quiet.

Ranpo doesn't know exactly why, and Poe has never offered an explanation. Assumedly, the aversion to sound arose somewhere within a home in which any noise either attracted or warned violence, within a life's work built between the gravestones of Guild enemies and a single little girl away at boarding school. But, again, Poe has never offered to explain, and Shachou says that deducing people's entire lives to their faces without permission is rude, and Ranpo would rather keep Poe's company than figure out exactly who it was that frightened him into silence, so.

But Poe flinches away from noise in the same way Ranpo does and not at all like Ranpo does, like pain will follow the noise instead of being caused by it, like every sound around him is a threat and a surprise and an attack—

The point is—

Ranpo is having a bad day.

The latest gifted attack on the city has left police resources stretched, and a particularly inconvenient series of murders suddenly had Ranpo solving three different cases in three different areas of the city. The last case was near some sort of outdoor concert playing loud music the entire time he was investigating, and he could barely *think* long enough to solve the case. Ranpo doesn't do well with "suddenly" unless it's a severe threat to the Agency, and it was so loud, and he didn't get to go back for lunch or any of his snacks, and then the candy shop he usually visits for emergency sweets was closed for some sort of family incident, and then at the café where he did finally stop they gave him a milkshake mixed with *coffee* which is *bitter* and he couldn't get the taste out of his mouth for hours, and then and then and then...

And then by the time they reached the train station, it was shoving-past-each-other-to-pack-into-a-car crowded and so full of noise and voices that the announcements were inaudible (not that Ranpo ever understands them anyway), and even if Ranpo did understand how to navigate the train system he wouldn't have been able to get home anyway, would have just sat down right there next to the ticket machines and covered his ears and waited for the crowds to die down even if it meant the last trains of the day had already gone—

The point is—

Poe doesn't like phone calls.

Neither does Ranpo, because it's difficult to figure out what people are thinking from tone of voice alone, and Ranpo is so used to having all of the information that the shift borders on unbearable. They make Poe anxious, give Ranpo the sort of feeling that makes him pull out his DS for three hours and avoid all his work instead until someone gets frustrated enough with his laziness to just make the call for him. Even if Ranpo didn't despise phone calls, talking right now feels like trying to breathe with someone choking him, so he just texts Poe instead.

He asks if he can come over, using a six-emoji code that would be basically indecipherable to anyone who didn't know Ranpo personally and/or match him in intellect even a little. Poe fulfills both of those qualifications, so he (after two minutes of typing and deleting and rethinking and worrying) agrees, naturally. Now it's just a matter of figuring out how to get there—

The point is—

The point is that Ranpo is in a comfortable armchair under a mountain of blankets. His entire face is buried in wiry raccoon fur, listening to the quick patter of Karl's heartbeat while scratching him methodically behind the ears to keep him in place. Poe sits on the other side of the living room, reading a book while curled up against one arm of the couch, never taking up quite enough space.

It's completely silent, and it's the most comfortable Ranpo has ever been.

Eventually, when contact with people goes from Too-Much to Warm-and-Secure, he'll pick up Karl and his hoarded blankets and go plop down next to Poe, for whom touch has always been a harbinger of pain but who is slowly and subtly opening to the idea of cuddling with Ranpo. When Ranpo feels like talking again, he'll follow Poe into the kitchen and get hot chocolate with extra marshmallows (Poe takes his with a peppermint stick, which Ranpo thinks is gross, but no boyfriend is perfect), and maybe he'll complain about all the failures of other people he was subjected to today, or maybe he won't. Poe won't mind either way. He'll just bring Ranpo back to the sitting room and play classical music from a CD and drink his hot chocolate until one or both of them fall asleep.

The point is that with Poe there doesn't have to be a point, a conclusion, something that Ranpo is trying to *do*. He just *is*, and Poe just *is*, and they're allowed to just *be* together in the warmth of Poe's big quiet house.

The point is that it's enough, and Ranpo curls tighter in the blankets.

End Notes

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