

Styx

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Summary

“I’m...” Brows furrowed as he tried to remember, not very surprised when it was hard to do so. “Aki, I think my name is Aki.”

Notes

This was originally tagged as AU/Abstract, and I think it's a rather good description really. One of the weirdest pieces I've ever written, but also one I'm exceptionally proud of (which is not often you'll hear me say). Musicalmimicry betad the original version, and also more or less forced me to finish it when many times over it screwed with my mind so bad I was ready to give up.

Chriss, yet again, found the perfect title.

He had no idea how long he'd been walking when he saw him, the other man, the beautiful man he knew he should remember. Or at least he felt like he should remember him. It was hard to remember anything beyond the colourless park with its leafless trees, yellow dried grass and cloudy grey sky. It never rained in this interminable park, but the sun never broke through the consistent clouds either. There never blew a wind to make scarce leaves and twigs rustle, the only birds ever seen or heard were lonesome jackdaws or crows. It was a boring place really, the kind of place you lost yourself in, to the point where you forgot about boredom itself.

It took a long time for the other man to discover him, see him the way he saw the other, time measured solely in distances walked. The other man looked oddly at home in this place, slowly wandering, looking, touching, poking. Sometimes he looked happy, a barely there smile gracing lips breathtakingly. Other times, more often really, he looked sad, lonely, and loneliness didn't suit him.

Maybe that was what caused him to follow the other, trail behind but never getting closer, distances stretching out between them so sometimes he felt further away from the other man the faster he walked. The longer he followed him the more he felt he *had* to catch up, needed to see the other man up close, to keep him company. And still, the day he did catch up he was stunned silent, too shocked to move anymore and left staring stupidly at the man on the bench, hunched over with that sad look in his eyes.

He never could've imagined eyes like them either, intense black and accusing in a way he almost recognised as they looked up and met his. The small man slowly sat up straight and he tried to remember what was so familiar yet not at all.

"Who are you?" a deep deep voice asked, words floating on the air like smoke. "Why are you following me?"

"I'm..." Brows furrowed as he tried to remember, not very surprised when it was hard to do so. "Aki, I think my name is Aki."

"Think?" The questioning word was accompanied by a raised eyebrow, a spark of interest brightening lonely eyes.

He could *feel* the pout on his own lips and it obviously pleased the other man, if his chuckle was anything to go by. "What is your name?"

"I don't know," the man shrugged, seemingly not upset he couldn't remember. "Haven't used it in a long time."

Without thinking Aki moved to sit down next to the other, the bench suddenly stretching out along the road almost as far as the eye could see. "Was this bench really this long a moment ago?"

"Does it matter?" the other asked even as he turned to look down the length of the white stone seat.

"I...guess not," Aki said, words making sense and confusing him all at once. He'd been following the other for so long, intent on catching up and now he didn't know what to say or do once he had. "Have you been here long?"

The tips of brown hair brushed against the white leather collar as the man turned his attention back to him, a look of near confusion crossing his eyes before remembrance sparked again. "Oh, right. Yeah, I think I have. I...can't remember anything else. Was there something else?"

Aki couldn't quite pinpoint the tone of voice used, maybe it was hope, but it might just as likely have been fear. Why would this pretty man fear what used to be?"

"Yes," he said, more confident than he'd imagined he'd be. "There was something before this, I can't really remember what, but it wasn't this."

There was a distinct memory of colour in Aki's mind, even if he couldn't quite picture them now he knew the world had not been as pale and candescent as this one was. And of noise beyond the whistling of wind through twigs and the cawing of crows. People, he was pretty sure there had been a lot of people, but it was hard to picture anything but an empty world anymore.

"I can't remember anything," the man sad and the sad look on his face was back, worse than ever now that Aki could see it up front. "Feels like I've been here forever..."

"No you haven't," Aki said without hesitation, not sure how or why but only that he was certain of it. He hoped the other wouldn't ask about it, because he couldn't explain his determination even to himself, but the man only tilted his head to the side slightly, nodded, accepted.

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He woke up to strange sensations, hardness beneath his back and something warm against his neck, as if the fact he'd slept wasn't shocking all on its own. Aki knew he'd slept, remembered what sleep was and had a feeling it'd been important once, but he didn't know when he last slept. For all the long distances he'd followed the small man he hadn't slept once, never felt the dusty drag of sleep pulling at his senses.

Thinking of the other man, the small lonesome figure he'd been following for...however long it'd been, had him waking up properly. Trying to sit he realised, for the first time, what the warm breeze against his neck was. The nameless man was lying on top of him, snuffly breaths puffing out against Aki's skin as he too slept. The movement startled him awake however and Aki was left wondering what he would've looked like in sleep before his mind had the chance to memorised it.

"Who are you?" the rough voice asked, tinged by sleep and more confusion than fear. Aki wondered if perhaps he should've been sad the other man couldn't remember him, but he wasn't even surprised. Not here in this place of fleeting memories.

"I'm Aki," he answered and steadied the small body as he did sit up, the bench vaguely familiar from the day before, or however long they had slept. As far as Aki could remember

it'd never been night in the park anyway, so perhaps it didn't matter how long.

Straight brows furrowed in confusion. "Who am I?"

He looked like a small boy lost in a too big world as black eyes tilted up to meet Aki's, completely abandoned, afraid and vulnerable. The plea for unknown answers was as heartbreaking as the rare evanescent smiles were beautiful and Aki wanted desperately to wipe it away.

"I don't know," he admitted sadly and pulled the small body close. "I don't remember."

The other allowed himself to be hugged, cuddled closer in a search for comfort. "But you know me?"

Words got stuck on his tongue, perhaps from the shock of realising he actually meant to say them, naturally and obviously. "Yes, I know you. I just...can't remember."

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They stayed there, cuddled up close on the bench, for a long time and a mere moment, Aki couldn't tell and it didn't matter. He didn't feel alone or empty or numb like he had so often, if anything he felt good in a nonsensical kind of way, like a memory of a feeling. The other man fit perfectly against his body though and when he finally moved Aki was reluctant to let him go.

"I don't want to be alone again." The words tumbled out of his mouth before the other had even stood up properly. Chocolatey hair fell out of black eyes as the man tipped his head to the side.

"Walk with me then," he said simply, the most natural thing in the world.

And Aki did. They walked together until the neverending stone seat dissolved into mist leading into a forest, naked trees bending over them threateningly. Crows cawed hollowly, eyes gleaming as they stared down at the two intruding humans. But the small man just kept walking, tilted his head up and met their dark gazes with eyes that were at least as black, and Aki found strength in him. He was certain he would've felt uneasy had he been alone, but the other man showed no fear so why would he?

As if fearing him instead, the crows took off, allowing branches to straighten up and light to almost shine through. Aki looked at the other man, thinking him younger all of a sudden and wondering if the notion was correct or not. He knew it shouldn't matter more than anything did, because the only thing that seemed vital in the park was moving, walking on and on without lingering in one place for too long. He didn't know why it was important, not exactly, but Aki felt like he might forget *everything*, his very existence, if he did.

If they did stop it was usually to watch something. The ever changing view from a hilltop, the slow slow fall of a resistant dead tree refusing to give in to gravity, two birds circling high up above. They always stayed close, touching for the comfort of knowing the other was still there and not drifting away. The few times they slept, unexplainably and as surprising every

time they woke up, it was with the nameless man on top of Aki, though how they ended up in such positions they never remembered. It didn't matter yet it did, in ways Aki couldn't pinpoint or explain. But he liked holding the younger, and he knew without knowing how that the other man *was* younger than him. Liked waking up with warm breath against his neck and soft hair tickling his nose on every inhale, holding hands while walking and snuggle up close for no apparent reason. It was comfortable and if it was comfortable then it was right, even when right and wrong hardly even mattered, not anymore.

"Why do you think we're here?" the younger asked one of those times, curled up in Aki's arms as the older leaned against a dead tree.

"Huh?" Aki looked down at the other in mild shock. "It's not like you to question things."

Small shoulders lifted and sunk in a slow shrug. He didn't question their situation much, hardly even spoke unless pointing something out. Mostly he just stayed silent, walked and showed what he wanted with body language and gestures.

"Figured you'd have a better chance of knowing," he murmured and tucked his head back underneath Aki's chin.

"Me? Why?" he asked, confused for real even as he hugged the small body closer.

"You haven't been here as long," the other answered simply.

The objection died on his lips as Aki realised he believed the other, agreed when he still couldn't say why. "What makes you say that?" he asked, not as hesitating as he would've imagined.

"You still have colour," came the reply, words spoken pretty much against his jaw as the younger tipped his head back slightly.

"I have... What?"

Black eyes just continued to stare at him and finally Aki let his eyes wander. Over pale skin, bleaching hair, washed out clothes. Glanced up at the black fringe falling in his own eyes, the darker colours of his clothes, assumed his skin was still tanned, because Aki had a distinct feeling his skin had always been tanned. Hesitantly, more so than he'd been in a long time around the other, he brought his hand up, pulled his thumb softly against a prominent cheekbone.

"Your eyes have colour," he said lowly, barely heard over the hoarse cry of a raven nearby. And yet it wasn't entirely true, because wasn't black in reality the absence of colour? Still, it was by far the darkest feature on the younger man. Where his hair and clothes, the very skin he walked around in, seemed to be loosing their colours, his eyes remained bottomless depths of inky black. "They're pretty."

He meant it, perhaps that was why the other's reaction scared him so much; "What's pretty?"

Aki gulped down the suddenly bitter taste in his mouth, not sure what it was or where it came from, though the fact he didn't quite know the answer was probably a good hint. "Your eyes are."

"That makes no sense," the smaller man mumbled and broke eye contact, cuddled closer again with a soft sigh.

He was probably right but Aki didn't know how to explain it, neither his confession of sorts nor what pretty meant. What was pretty, what did it mean for something to be it? The younger man was pretty, Aki definitely knew that, but almost as confident as he was in saying that he was in the knowledge the other didn't agree. Subconsciously he tightened his arms around the smaller body, the other merely cuddled closer and accepted the affections.

"You know," he mumbled into Aki's collarbone. "Sometimes I think this is Heaven and we just haven't realised it yet."

Sharp brows furrowed as his sluggish mind tried to put meaning to the word, the danger of staying still proving itself once more as the significance stayed just out of reach. "Heaven? Do you remember what that is?"

"No," the other confessed. "But it was something desirable."

As if to prove his point a rare gust of wind swept a bunch of leaves into the air, made them dance around in a mimicry of life. Two sets of eyes watched them flutter and twirl until one realised what they were watching.

"Butterflies!" Aki said, smile evident in his voice as he sat up slightly. And as he said it the leaves took on different shapes, fluttering movements of gossamer wings rather than twirly twitching movements of sharp edges, grey melding into the faintest trace of blue, yellow, red.

"Butterflies?" the younger echoed, less certain but equally intrigued, obviously searching for meaning and substance to the word. Black eyes followed the soundless play in the air and Aki saw that rare smile tease at the corners of bitten lips. "Yes, butterflies... They're pretty, right?"

For the first time in longer than he could remember Aki laughed and he absentmindedly hugged the smaller body before standing up. "Yes, they're pretty," he said happily, a genuine warmth teasing inside his veins. "Come, let's go look."

The younger took the offered hand and allowed himself to be pulled to his feet. They walked closer, followed the trail of flickering life floating above and around them, moved once more.

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