

Bad Habits

Von Kita

Matsuda still remembered the surprise he had felt, when he had first seen Hagiwara with a cigarette.

They had been 16, maybe 17, and his father's workshop had gone bankrupt just a month ago.

"What are you doing?" he had asked him, staring at the smouldering stick between his lips.

Hagiwara had just smiled crookedly and blown a ring of smoke into his direction.

Back then, Matsuda hadn't understood, why Hagiwara would do this to himself. It was unhealthy, expensive, and disgusting on top.

"Girls don't like smokers" he had tried to argue. "They won't kiss you like this."

"I guess I won't be kissing any girls then" Hagiwara had replied. Another thing Matsuda didn't understand until some years later.

And years later, Hagiwara had already been hooked on nicotine, too much to just stop for Matsuda. And Matsuda had just given in to his fate of being in a relationship with a smoker.

"I won't kiss you like this!" His hand on Hagiwara's face didn't much to hide the smile from him. "I hate the taste!"

But Hagiwara just smiled and kissed the palm of his hand.

Eventually, Matsuda would stop complaining. He got used to the bitter taste over time and it became a part of Hagiwara.

He still tried to get him to stop. "This will kill you one day, you know?"

But just like back then, Hagiwara had just smiled at him. "I think if I die from smoking, I lived a good life." After all, they had just graduated from the police academy, and both of them already had a reputation within the bomb squat.

"Shut up." Matsuda had nothing to argue against that.

No, Matsuda had never understood Hagiwara's need to smoke.

But when he returned that day into their empty apartment, finding himself surrounded by silence and darkness, when the tears didn't stop running down his face, and he just wanted to scream in despair, he found himself lighting one of Hagiwara's cigarettes.

He didn't smoke it, just let it burn down in the ash tray like an incense stick, the bitter scent filling the room and engulfing him, until he fell asleep on the couch.

It helped, a little. Helped chasing away the loneliness and silence with the low crackling of burning paper and tobacco. Sometimes he even thought he could hear Hagiwara exhale and he almost saw the rings of smoke vanishing into thin air.

On the first anniversary, he lit his first cigarette. Just burning it down hadn't been enough to soothe the pain and chase away the tears and the saltiness on his lips.

He coughed when the smoke burnt his mouth and lungs, leaving a bitter taste on his tongue. Despite the pain, it felt good. Or maybe it was because of the pain.

It gave him a reason to cry, as he realised that it didn't taste like kissing Hagiwara at all.

By the time the fourth anniversary came closer, Matsuda was already more addicted to these coffin nails than Hagiwara ever was. And by now he could understand why Hagiwara had started this bad habit to begin with.

The way the smoke burnt in his throat, how the bitter taste made his eyes water, it felt good. It was pain he had control over.

Paired with the effects of the nicotine, and the memories the scent and taste brought to him, he couldn't blame Hagiwara anymore.

He smiled when his eyes found the No Smoking sign. "Just a last one, okay? Just let me indulge myself in this bad habit once more." He doubted there were cigarettes in the afterlife.

It felt warm for the first time in four years.

"Jinpei-chan... didn't you say it's bad for my health?"

"Well, you were right after all, weren't you? It wasn't the cigarettes that killed me."