



# A Christmas Promise (Tokyo MPD Mysteries)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Its Christmas and Teruo plans to make it one to remember. Decorating the Christmas tree, romantic walks through the beautiful winter lights, and lots of fun underneath the sheets are bound to make Teruo and Shinji's first Christmas together magical.

But it's also Shinji's birthday and Teruo has one more surprise up his sleeve: a homemade strawberry shortcake to make Shinji's birthday unforgettable.

Join them in this sweet and spicy short story.

The story takes place between books 1 and 2. Consider reading this story after finishing *The Red Collar*. It will make more sense. There are no murder or paranormal mysteries in this short story.

**Total Pages (Source):** 4

# Page 1

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Teruo

As soon as December rolled around, Shinji became excited about getting a Christmas tree. Teruo had never bothered with decorations in the past, but this was their first Christmas together and he wanted it to be special. Magical. Since there wasn't enough space in Shinji's apartment for a tree, they had decided to decorate it at Teruo's house, and spend time together until after New Year's.

Because of work piling up, they postponed getting a tree until today, on Christmas Eve, when they finally bought an artificial tree, packed it up in the trunk, then headed home.

Teruo parked the car and looked at Shinji. On the road back, Shinji had dozed off, and now Teruo leaned over him, almost feeling sorry to wake him up. He gently cupped Shinji's chin and placed a kiss on his cheek, then another of his lips.

"We're home," Teruo said.

Shinji opened his eyes and smiled before kissing Teruo back. "I fell asleep?" He unbuckled the seatbelt and stretched, his mouth opening with a huge yawn.

"Do you want to leave the tree for tomorrow?" Teruo asked with concern.

Shinji had been running from the TMPD to his jurisdiction in Musashino and back a lot these days in order to take care of ghosts. He had to be exhausted, but one thing Teruo learned was that Shinji rarely complained about it.

“Nope! I’m awake!” Shinji slapped his own cheeks, then hissed in pain. “Let’s decorate the tree.”

He stood and helped Teruo pull out the bag, then both carried it to the living room, setting it down by the windows where there was more space. After changing out of their suits and into comfortable t-shirts and sweatpants, they returned to the living room, where Mochi and Dango were sniffing the bag.

The branches stretched as they released the tree from the confines of the plastic bag, and Shinji settled the stand on the floor. They grabbed the first section, placed it into the stand, and fixed it in place before adding the next sections.

“I don’t think this tree will survive,” Teruo said, eyeing it up its length.

“Why not?”

“Uh...” Teruo pointed at Mochi and Dango. “Cats.” He pointed back to the tree. “Christmas tree.”

Shinji waved his hand. “Don’t worry. It’s why I bought this sturdy stand.” He tapped it with the tip of his slippers. “They won’t knock it off.”

“Have you seen the size of my cats?” Teruo raised a brow.

“Okay, if it falls, we’ll leave it there. Horizontal Christmas tree.”

“Right.”

Shinji had already started spreading out the compressed branches and fluffing up the tree, so Teruo mirrored him, still skeptical about the cats. Dango was rather disinterested, but Mochi was staring at the tree in a way that heavily suggested she

was concocting a plan to climb it. She walked to it and pawed one branch, testing it out.

“Don’t even think about it,” Teruo warned.

Mochi looked up at him with her big round yellow eyes, and she was the cutest thing, but also the naughtiest, so Teruo wouldn’t fall for her charm. He kept a close watch on her as her long, bushy tail swept left and right on the floor while her gaze went up the tree’s length.

Then her body coiled as she readied herself to take the leap, and before Teruo had time to react, Mochi jumped straight into the middle of the tree, claws sinking into the trunk. The tree wobbled, and Shinji gasped, then burst into laughter, but continued to arrange the branches, not minding the adorable intruder.

“You’re a little monkey.” Shinji booped her nose before Mochi climbed further up. “Oh, look at her go. She’s a natural.”

Mochi made her way up the tree trunk until she perched herself on top, like the queen that she was.

“Oi, Mochi!” Teruo said. “Get your fluffy butt down from there, young lady.” He sighed as Mochi completely ignored him. “Of course she doesn’t give a fuck. She’s in paradise.”

Her eyes glinted with mischief while the tree tilted dangerously, but didn’t fall. The stand and the trunk of the tree were the real heroes, surviving under these harsh conditions.

“Come on, Mochi,” Teruo pleaded, though he couldn’t help but smile at how adorable she was. He pulled out his phone and took a few photos. Shinji saw the

camera and stood closer, posing with her, beaming with happiness, and Teruo captured it all.

Of course, Dango realized she couldn't possibly let her sister take all the attention and rose onto her hind legs, then climbed the tree.

"Not you, too..." Teruo chuckled and took pictures of her as well.

"It's okay," Shinji said. "Look, the tree is fine."

"Not sure 'fine' is the right word. Under stress, but surviving? I think we're gonna hear a crash in a few hours."

Shinji snaked his hands around the branches to give Dango a few well-deserved chin rubs and then to Mochi as well. Teruo took more pictures because Shinji's smile as he pet the cats was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen.

The tree wiggling left and right pulled Teruo out of his thoughts. "Okay, we'll have to get the monkeys down." He reached for Mochi and gently grabbed her. She let out a long, guttural meow of complaint. "Yes, I know, daddy is a party-pooper. But we need the tree to stay upright."

"Do we?" Shinji said. "We can place the decorations even if it's on the floor."

Teruo shook his head. "You just like to watch the world burn, don't you?"

"Yes." He grinned.

Teruo tried to pull Mochi away, but she held onto the trunk with an attitude like 'you'll pry this tree only from my cold, dead paws'. "Give me a hand, please."

Shinji unclasped Mochi's claws from the trunk, but then she grabbed onto the branches, so he carefully unclasped them from there as well. Finally, Teruo put her down on the floor, and trailed his hands through her silky fur.

"Don't you dare climb again," he warned before focusing on Dango, who had reached the top. The tree swayed, but stood its ground. "This is a brave Christmas tree." Teruo took a hold of Dango, who was easier to pull away simply because she decided to climb Teruo's shoulder instead. She made herself comfortable in his arms.

"She's such a daddy's girl," Shinji said, petting her back. "Loves it when you hold her."

"She was terrified when I first brought her home from the shelter, so I'd hold her in my arms and walk around the house to soothe her. I guess she remembers." Teruo caressed Dango's fur, and she tilted back until Teruo held her like a baby. He kissed the top of her head and scratched her underneath her chin.

Mochi rose on her hind legs, pawing at Shinji's legs, and he picked her up. "Had some street cats in my neighborhood in Hiroshima, but they were small. You barely fit in my arms," he told Mochi. "You're long." She stretched as if to prove him right, and Shinji chuckled. "Cute."

"Shall we decorate the tree?" Teruo said.

"Yes, let's."

They put the cats back down and Teruo brought the bag containing ornaments. They started with the lights first, a simple string of golden lights which they wrapped around the branches, arranging them to cover the entire tree. Teruo had no clue about ornaments, so Shinji had chosen shiny red and silver globes, made of sturdy plastic, just in case the tree met its demise on the ground. They topped it with a few red and

green bows, and the tree was done.

Shinji plugged the lights in, turned them on, and they both stepped back to check their work. “It looks great!” Shinji beamed with excitement toward Teruo. “Isn’t it great?”

“It is, yes,” Teruo said, feeling warmth spread through him that had nothing to do with the twinkling lights.

This wasn’t just any Christmas tree—it was their first Christmas tree together. Teruo’s gaze lingered on Shinji, mesmerized by how gorgeous and happy he was. The lights of the tree made his eyes glint and there was a little bit of spiritual energy trailing from his body, shimmering and giving him that otherworldly look that always left Teruo in awe.

They settled on the sofa, Mochi and Dango sprawled around them, and relaxed, watching the tree twinkle in the living room’s dim lights. Shinji leaned back, resting against Teruo’s chest, and Teruo wrapped an arm around him, placing a kiss on his cheek. The smile Shinji gave him melted his heart.

“By the way, my request for our free days was approved,” Teruo said. “We can enjoy ourselves until the twenty-seventh.” The goal was to spend these days pampering Shinji, and the twenty-seventh—which was Shinji’s birthday—baking a cake for him.

But the smile fell from Shinji’s face, and he stared ahead with a blank gaze, wrangling his hands together like he didn’t know what to do with them. When he noticed Teruo’s concerned look, he put on a strained smile, so different from his earlier one.

“So…” Shinji started. “You’re not planning something for the twenty-seventh, are you?”

Ah, he's nervous about his birthday. Teruo went for a light-hearted joke. "Don't even know what's on the twenty-seventh."

"Oh, be serious," Shinji huffed. "It's my birthday and you've been tiptoeing around me and asking strange questions for the past three weeks. You're planning something." He shifted on the sofa to face Teruo. "I hope it's not a surprise party with people. I am not fond of those."

"When you say people, do you refer strictly to living people or—"

"Teruo." The tone of Shinji's voice shifted to a serious one and Teruo chastised himself for not realizing earlier that Shinji was feeling uncomfortable.

He cupped Shinji's cheeks and pressed a soft kiss to his lips. "No surprise party with living or dead people. I'm horrible at planning parties."

"Good."

"But," Teruo said, running his palms over Shinji's back, "I do have something in store for the next few days and I think you'll like it."

Shinji looked at him, unconvinced. "You really didn't need to put any effort in. I'm easy to please. Even a half-hearted hand job makes me happy."

"I would never give you a half-hearted hand job!" Teruo protested.

Shinji laughed. "I appreciate that." His lips met Teruo's again, and he slipped his tongue inside Teruo's mouth, teasing slowly. He tasted of sweet snacks and a soda he drank earlier.

"So, what are you planning?" Shinji asked as he pulled away.



“You’ll see.” Teruo peppered Shinji’s jaw and neck with little kisses. “It’ll ruin the surprise if I tell you.”

“Give me a teaser.” Shinji’s hands squeezed his hips. “Surprises make me a bit anxious.”

Teruo’s eyes widened, and he felt a wave of worry wash over him. Shinji was carefully prodding Teruo for answers, and it seemed the reason he had avoided all those discussions about his birthday was because he felt anxious about it. And yet, Teruo had gone ahead and planned things without consulting him.

“I’m so sorry,” Teruo said. “If I crossed a line—”

“You didn’t.” Shinji leaned sideways into Teruo’s arms. “Just a little spoiler is good, so I know what to expect.”

“Well, I wanted to take you out. The winter lights are beautiful. Very romantic.” Teruo’s cheeks reddened a bit as he said it. “We’ll relax and eat fried chicken. And on the twenty-seventh, I want to bake you a birthday cake...” He trailed off, waiting for Shinji to reply.

Shinji was quiet for a few moments, his finger circling Teruo’s chest absentmindedly. “You really thought this through.” He swallowed hard, his gaze darting across the room before returning to Teruo. “I never had cake for my birthday,” he spoke in a low voice, but then he did a complete switch. “I look forward to it!” His lips stretched into the gorgeous smile that Teruo adored, and he placed a kiss on Teruo’s cheek.

Teruo hesitated, a little taken aback by Shinji’s reaction, then asked, “Never?”

“Nope. There was no reason to,” Shinji said, serenely.

That was a strange statement. He wondered if Shinji's family couldn't afford a cake. He wanted to inquire, but didn't want to risk opening a discussion that could be too intrusive or awaken bad memories. However, Shinji was thirty, so that meant he never bothered celebrating or buying any cake, even as an adult.

"I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," Teruo said.

"You didn't, don't worry." Shinji waved his hands. "I just don't really celebrate my birthday. I'll tell you the sob story about why another time. We finally have some free time together. I don't want it to be gloomy."

Teruo let out a sad chuckle. "Sob story... don't say that." He took Shinji's hands in his own, squeezing. "If you want to talk, I'm here for you."

"I know," Shinji said, and gave Teruo another long kiss on the lips that made him moan with pleasure. "How about you take me to the bedroom right now and show me a good time?"

Teruo felt a surge of desire fire through him at Shinji's words. He took Shinji's hand and led him to the bedroom, the anticipation building with each step they took. As they entered the room, Teruo left the lights dim, and pulled Shinji into another long kiss that left them breathless. Their clothes came off until they were both naked and hard with need. They tumbled into bed, pressing against each other, and Teruo moaned at the feel of Shinji's skin.

Their hands roamed over each other, feeling every muscle and curve, not rushing, but taking the time to enjoy one another. Teruo kissed his way down Shinji's body, to his abdomen, the side of Shinji's hard cock brushing by his cheek. He pressed his lips to the tip of the head and down its length before nipping a little at the juncture of Shinji's thigh, where he had a sensitive spot.

Shinji gasped, his hand rummaging through the nightstand's drawer, probably to search for the lube. Instead of that, he pulled out a bottle of massage oil, and shook it curiously at Teruo, his mouth curved into a grin.

“My, my, chief. Did you buy it for an erotic massage? How scandalous.” Shinji wiggled his eyebrows.

Teruo's cheeks flushed, and he bit his lip. “I bought it for you because you're always working so much. I thought I'd give you a massage to relax you.”

“Well then, let's not let it go to waste, yes? How about you give me that massage now?” Shinji passed Teruo the bottle, then settled on his belly. “Make it a full-body massage,” he added while raising his ass in the air a little, shaking it in a tantalizing way.

Teruo's cock throbbed, and he barely held himself from pouncing on Shinji and fucking him into the mattress. But right now, he wanted to feel Shinji's skin under his palms, to massage every muscle and make Shinji moan his name.

Rearing back on his knees, Teruo let his gaze roam over Shinji's naked body, over the roll of his shoulders, the toned muscles of his back and the tight ass Teruo liked to lose himself into. He leaned down and placed a kiss on a buttock, then bit into the soft skin.

“Ah...” Shinji moaned, pushing his ass up for more.

Teruo bit the other buttock, then kissed his way up Shinji's back until he reached the shoulders. He straddled Shinji's legs and poured oil on his palms, just enough for his hands to slide nicely over Shinji's skin.

Beginning at the base of Shinji's neck, Teruo's hands rubbed and kneaded, coaxing

out the knots hidden beneath. Shinji's muscles flexed, then relaxed, his breath coming slower and deeper with each pass. An occasional moan fell from Shinji's lips, and Teruo savored it, loving the way Shinji responded to his touch.

"That's so good," Shinji murmured. "I don't remember the last time I had a massage."

Teruo smiled. "I'll do this more often then."

He worked his way down Shinji's back, concentrating on the tight muscles of his shoulder blades, and then lower to the small of Shinji's back. He kneaded slowly, running his thumbs in circles, and Shinji arched, shivering with pleasure. Teruo's hands glided over the warm skin, and Shinji's breath hitched when his palms caressed the curve of Shinji's ass.

A low growl escaped Teruo as he took in the sight before him, every inch of Shinji's skin glistening in the low light. When he felt Shinji thoroughly relaxed under him, Teruo settled his palms on Shinji's buttocks, groping the muscles, and spreading his cheeks apart. As his gaze lingered on the enticing sight of Shinji's tight entrance, longing to be inside him, but wanting to take his time.

"Like what you're seeing?" Shinji raised his ass a little.

"Oh, you have no idea." Teruo let the pad of his thumb brush over the puckered skin of Shinji's hole, getting a long sultry moan in return.

"You're teasing," Shinji breathed. "Give me more."

"That will be my pleasure," Teruo said.

He poured more oil on his thumb and ran it over the rim in circles, pushing the pad of

his finger just a little inside before retreating. Shinji arched up from the bed, pushing his ass up in a silent demand to be filled. Teruo stroked around one more time before switching fingers and putting the tip of his middle one inside, deliberately slow.

Shinji gasped and the ring of muscles tightened for a moment before he relaxed, groaning in pleasure. Teruo stroked in and out, pressing further inside as he did, and Shinji let out a soft whimper, his whole body quivering in anticipation. The way Shinji reacted to his touches was hot and delightful, and it filled Teruo with so much desire to give Shinji more pleasure.

He worked his finger deeper into Shinji's tight channel, probing, exploring. feeling Shinji flex and clench around him. When he reached that sweet spot, Shinji sucked in a sharp breath and he let out a throaty moan.

"Oh, fuck, yes. There!"

Teruo grinned in satisfaction and curled his digit, gliding in and out with a steady rhythm, relishing the sound of Shinji's whimpers and soft words of begging for more that filled the air. He twisted his finger a little, and pressed, massaging with firm movements, and waves of pleasure coursed through Shinji's whole body, his hips bucking against the sensation.

Pushing up on his elbows, Shinji raised his ass more, moving in sync with Teruo's fingers. "Oh god, this is amazing," Shinji mumbled. "Please, don't stop."

"I don't intend to," Teruo said, his voice low and husky with lust. His dick was painfully hard from the visual stimulation of watching his finger dive inside Shinji and hearing Shinji's sweet moans growing louder by the second.

But Teruo wasn't done, and he used his free hand to pour just a little more oil on it before he ran it down Shinji's cock, squeezing the head. Shinji gasped again, his toes

curling into the sheets, and his whole body trembling as Teruo slipped a second finger inside, stretching him further.

“You’re so beautiful,” Teruo whispered, his voice thick with desire. “I want to touch you everywhere.”

Shinji looked at him over his shoulder, his eyes glazed, then he turned over onto his back, and spread his thighs, Teruo’s fingers still inside him. “Come here and touch me,” Shinji said with a sly smile, eyeing Teruo’s erection, which had been craving attention this entire time.

Teruo couldn’t resist anymore and slicked himself with oil before taking his fingers out and sliding his length inside Shinji. It went in smoothly and Teruo groaned as Shinji’s tight ass wrapped around his cock. His palms skimmed over Shinji’s thighs toward his hips, enjoying the feel of taut muscles. Teruo held on as he started to thrust, struggling not to come too early.

Shinji panted and writhed under him, being already overstimulated from the massage, and Teruo knew he was likely on the precipice of an orgasm. He leaned over Shinji, capturing his lips in an open-mouthed kiss. His hips kept an easy rhythm, and he ran one hand down Shinji’s chest, his fingers tracing over the ribs, until he reached between them. He grasped Shinji’s erection in his fist and stroked it in sync with their thrusts.

It only took a few more pumps to send Shinji over the edge. His body tensed before he cried out in pleasure as the waves of his climax washed over him, his release pouring out in Teruo’s hand. Teruo watched in satisfaction as Shinji shuddered beneath him before letting himself come, too. Another short round of thrusts and Teruo shot his load with a low groan, then let his body fall on top of Shinji, who wrapped his arms around him.

“That... was a great massage,” Shinji breathed, his palms caressing Teruo’s back.  
“We gotta do that again.”

Teruo chuckled and raised his head, placing kisses from Shinji’s sternum to his neck, then his cheek. “Oh, we will.” He topped it with a smack on the lips.

The bright and cheeky smile Shinji gave him made Teruo’s stomach flutter, and he held Shinji tight in his arms. Just when he was about to reach for another kiss, a loud noise of something crashing in the living room reached them. They stared-wide eyed at each other.

“That was the tree,” Shinji said.

“Yep. Definitely the tree.”

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:22 am*

Shinji

Next day in the evening, Shinji rummaged the wardrobe for something to wear on their date. He didn't want another shirt—he wore enough of those at work. And he didn't want a sweater either because, even though December had its chill, it wasn't biting. It was just the right amount of cold to make him feel comfortable.

He settled on a simple charcoal gray t-shirt, fitted across his chest and shoulders, and a pair of jeans, both of which were sure to catch Teruo's attention.

Glancing sideways, he caught Teruo standing in the doorway, arms crossed, leaning casually against the frame. He'd put on a soft beige sweater since he didn't have Shinji's tolerance to the cold.

Teruo's lips curved in a warm smile, his gaze tracing over Shinji in that way, which made him blush and want to get naked.

“You sure you don't want to wear something thicker?” Teruo asked.

“Nah, I'll start feeling suffocated under so many layers.”

Teruo chuckled. “So many? You mean two: sweater and jacket.”

“That's one too many layers for me.” Shinji shrugged.

Teruo pushed away from the door frame and stepped closer, his hand caressing the nape of Shinji's neck. It sent a warm and pleasant thrill down his spine, and Shinji



leaned back into the touch, tilting his head to meet Teruo's lips in a firm kiss. Shinji's heart raced as their kiss deepened, their tongues entwining and their bodies pressing close together. The sensation of Teruo's touch made Shinji's body tingle with desire.

They reluctantly pulled apart, breathless and flushed.

Teruo threaded his fingers through Shinji's hair. "Ready for our date?"

"Definitely." Shinji grinned, beyond excited to spend a night out with Teruo.

Shinji put on his brown jacket with a faux fur collar while Teruo settled on a long black coat and a scarf tightly wrapped around his neck. They took the train and exited at Harajuku Station in Shibuya.

"So, what are we going to see?" Shinji asked.

"Illuminations."

"Okay," Shinji laughed, "but which ones?"

"I'm not spoiling this surprise. You'll love them, trust me."

During their train ride here, darkness had settled, and the streets shone with beautiful lights. But Teruo walked full of purpose, so the surprise was likely further ahead. There were other groups of people going the same way and, as they turned one last corner, the destination became apparent.

"That's the Blue Cave, isn't it?" Shinji exclaimed, full of excitement.

"Yes." Teruo smiled, looking a little smug. "Worth the wait, wasn't it?"

“Definitely!”

The Shibuya Blue Cave was a tunnel of lined zelkova trees, wrapped in striking, electric-blue lights, from the trunk to the highest branches. The lights cast an amazing and intense glow over the pathway and the people walking it, giving the sensation they were under the ocean.

Shinji stopped for a moment, his breath catching as he took it all in. The path stretched ahead in a perfect line, an endless corridor of blue light that seemed to glow in a way which reminded him of the water kitsune’s spiritual energy, which he’d sometimes see at the Onmyōryū. It was the same mesmerizing blue, although not as strong as the lights surrounding the trees.

Teruo moved closer beside him, his hand lightly brushing Shinji’s, and they shared a smile, both caught in the magic of the scene. The illumination reflected in Teruo’s eyes, a soft glimmer that made him look so handsome, and it took all of Shinji’s willpower not to cup his cheeks and kiss him in public.

“I knew it would be beautiful,” Shinji said, “but this is fantastic.”

“It is. Shall we?”

They began walking down the path and the air felt almost thick with the color, bathing the slow-moving stream of people in a blue haze. It was quite busy, with lots of couples and tourists, but not too crowded. There were occasional supernaturals among them, their purple, green and golden spiritual energies trailing behind them, the colors nearly obscured by the strong lights of the illuminations.

Shinji tilted his head back to look upward at the trees. “Thank you for bringing me here,” he said softly. “I knew about the Blue Cave, but with everything going on at work, I’d forgotten about it.”

“I think today’s the last day it’s shown, so I wanted us to see it. I’m happy you like it.” Teruo wrapped an arm around his shoulder, surprising Shinji because he almost never did that in public.

Shinji’s cheeks warmed, joy spreading through him, and he leaned into Teruo, letting himself get lost in the moment, the blue light engulfing them like a blanket. Their faces were so close together that it would only take a second to close the gap. Shinji glanced around him. Everybody was preoccupied with the beautiful trees and no one was taking pictures in their proximity, so he pulled Teruo’s scarf as a cover, then placed a quick kiss on Teruo’s lips.

For a moment, he thought Teruo would panic, but instead his smile widened and his cheeks flushed. Shinji’s heart fluttered, and they stood like that for a moment, surrounded by the quiet hum of people passing by and the brilliance of the lights. Shinji let himself feel it all—Teruo’s arms around him, the softness in his eyes, the blue glow of the trees surrounding them. It was perfect.

“Sorry I was so reluctant yesterday,” Shinji said. Now he felt rather silly for pestering Teruo about the surprise he planned.

“There’s nothing to apologize for.” Teruo squeezed his shoulder.

They continued down the path, their steps slow, the ground underneath them sparkling from scattered reflections, making it look like a flowing river. It felt warmer inside the blue tunnel from all the lights and the people strolling about.

“Want to take a picture?” Teruo pulled his phone out.

Shinji tilted his head. “I thought you didn’t like being photographed.”

“Yeah, by pesky journalists who shove their cameras in my face.”

His mouth quirked in a chuckle. “Got it.” He leaned toward Teruo and they snapped a few pictures. “Ha! Our faces look very blue.” They took a few more, repositing to catch the trees behind them.

Shinji felt giddy with excitement as he scrolled through the pictures after Teruo sent them. He couldn’t help but grin with each swipe, and paused on one in particular where they looked at each other in such a sweet way, it almost felt unreal. He set it as his screen wallpaper. He’d have to change it when they were back at work, but he’d keep it for now.

Wanting Teruo close to him, Shinji looped his arm through Teruo’s as they continued their stroll. There was a shop near the exit and they got one steaming cup of hot chocolate with marshmallows and cinnamon.

They huddled together to share it, and Teruo took a sip. “This thing is very sweet.”

“You don’t say. It’s hot chocolate.” Foggy air escaped his mouth as he laughed. “Don’t worry, I can take care of it if you don’t want it.”

Teruo pulled the cup away. “Claws off,” he joked. “I want another sip. It warms me.” After another gulp, he passed the cup to Shinji.

“Well, now that I have it, it’ll be gone in a second.” Shinji grinned and popped a marshmallow in his mouth, then drank, enjoying the flavor of strong chocolate.

“Don’t you dare,” Teruo laughed.

“You’re awfully possessive of this cup for a guy who whines that it’s too sweet.”

“Well, I’m used to sweet things. I’ve got you, don’t I?” Teruo smiled. “You’re the sweetest.”

Shinji's heart skipped a beat. "You're even sweeter." He snuggled against Teruo, as much as he could, since there was quite a big crowd around them. "I kinda wish we were alone..."

"I've got an idea, but let's finish the hot chocolate first."

They passed it to each other until they emptied it, then Teruo led the way out of the Blue Cave and into the street. Shinji threw a last look at the beautiful arrangement of lights, then followed.

"Where are we off to?"

"Omotesand?. It's within walking distance, and it's nicely decorated, too. But I thought we'd take a different route. Fewer lights, but less crowded as well since everybody's taking the main road."

"Gotcha," Shinji said. "You know what we forgot to do? Buy fried chicken."

Teruo's lips curved in a huge grin. "I already reserved fried chicken for us. I was planning on picking it up later, after we finish our date."

Shinji gasped in awe and wrapped both his arms around Teruo. "You thought about everything! I'm this close to jumping your bones right here, right now."

"Sounds tempting," Teruo laughed. "But let's not get arrested for exhibitionism."

"Totally worth it. I don't know if the cops will be able to pry me off you enough to arrest me, though."

Another raucous laughter escaped Teruo and Shinji smirked smugly.

“You’re trouble,” Teruo said.

“You’re into that,” Shinji whispered.

“I am.” Teruo pointed beyond the crosswalk. “Let’s make a left there. It’s quieter and you’ll get to have your way with me.” He gave Shinji a flirty wink.

“I like the sound of that.”

They turned left at the glass-fronted clothing shop Teruo had pointed to and entered a narrow lane, flanked by tall buildings on either side, and a short pedestrian guardrail in the middle, splitting the street in two. There weren’t any people around besides the silhouette of a person far away.

“Oh, it’s deserted. Do you plan to kidnap me?” Shinji joked.

“Maybe.” Teruo snaked an arm around his waist and drew him close. “How much ransom money should I ask for?”

“Hard to say.” Shinji’s lips upturned in a sly smile. “I’m priceless.”

Teruo shook his head, amused. “Cheeky.”

Draping his arms over Teruo’s shoulders, Shinji pushed him against the rough brick wall of an apartment building, and claimed Teruo’s mouth in a kiss that stole his breath away. With no prying eyes around, Shinji took his time savoring Teruo’s lips, their taste addictive and heady, leaving Shinji wanting more. Teruo responded with equal fervor, his hands grasping at Shinji’s hips with desperate need, holding him tight. As their tongues entwined, and slid against one another in a sweet dance, Shinji’s heart raced with excitement, every nerve in his body tingling.

It was a moment of pure bliss, from which they reluctantly pulled away, their breaths mingling in the cool air.

“We gotta go before I do something crazy,” Teruo said, “like pull your pants down in public.”

“Do it!” Shinji gave him a mischievous grin.

“Don’t encourage me, you horny brat. Come on.”

Shinji pouted. “But I was looking forward to a public blowjob.”

“Perv.” Teruo nudged him, laughing.

Taking advantage of the emptiness of the streets, they intertwined their fingers and continued on toward Omotesand?. The alley narrowed more as they passed through a residential neighborhood and, after a few more minutes, they reached the main avenue.

The street was lined with zelkova trees draped in millions of tiny golden lights, each branch sparkling like a constellation. Their warm glow reflected on the glassy surfaces of the high-end buildings, and the occasional luxury jewelry shops’ products shimmered brilliantly, gathering a large crowd who looked inside through the windows.

“Let’s stroll up to the station and then go get our fried chicken, yeah?” Teruo asked.

“Yes!”

“Excited about that chicken?”

“Yes!” Shinji answered with even more fervor.

Teruo erupted into laughter once again, making a few people stare at them. It made Shinji’s heart swell with happiness because it had been a while since Teruo laughed this much and was so relaxed. He was tightly wound at work, his patience stretched thin by the cases. They certainly needed time off to unwind.

Teruo pointed at the shops. “If you want to stop and look, let me know.”

“Eh, I don’t know. Not really my style, but if there’s anything that catches your eye, I can get it as a present.”

Teruo shook his head. “I’m not into luxurious brands. I can count on one hand the number of expensive objects that I own.” He gave Shinji a warm smile. “Making memories together is the best gift.”

Shinji bit his lip, feeling all fuzzy inside. “I like that. I feel the same.”

Omotesand? was plenty busy at night, but right now it was teeming with people, almost walking shoulder-to-shoulder. The air grew chillier and the sky above them was velvety black, making the cascade of lights look even more beautiful.

They took their time walking toward the station, and just before they reached it, Shinji saw something hilarious in a shop’s window.

“Okay, we have to buy these.” He dragged Teruo inside with him and went straight for his targets.

“Oh... You want them?”

They were a Santa hat and a reindeer headband, both large enough for adults. The hat



had a nice, soft brim, made of a plush material and the headband had ears and long antlers.

“They’re funny and adorable. You’ll look good as a reindeer.” He picked up the pair that was left out to be tried on and put it on Teruo’s head. He posed a little and looked terribly cute.

“Try on the hat,” Teruo said.

Shinji put the Santa hat on and offered Teruo a smoldering look. “What do you say?”

His cheeks turned red. “Yep, we’re buying them!”

Shinji grabbed a packed Santa hat and a reindeer headband from the stacks on the shelf and settled in the queue. The shop assistant put the items in beautiful, festive bags, and once done, they resumed their walk toward the station.

“I pre-ordered the fried chicken at a restaurant closer to home,” Teruo said as they got on the train, “so the food wouldn’t get cold by the time we arrive.”

“Can’t wait to eat it. Last year I forgot and then I was too lazy to search for a place to get it.”

“I don’t usually bother with it, but I figured you’d want a fried chicken feast.”

Shinji wiggled his brows. “You know me so well!”

They took the train toward Suginami and stopped at Ogikubo station to pick up the chicken, then took a bus to reach Teruo’s house. The moment they were inside, Shinji couldn’t wait and unpacked the Santa hat, then put it on.

Teruo looked at him for a second before closing the gap between them and giving him a big kiss. Even after so long in the cold, Teruo's lips were warm and delicious. Shinji held onto him as Teruo tilted him back a little as he kissed him silly. He trailed his lips across Shinji's jaw and neck before raising his head.

"You look gorgeous." Teruo placed another kiss on his lips.

Shinji smiled and put the reindeer antlers on Teruo's head. "So do you."

"Want me to bring out the kotatsu table? I have an old one upstairs."

"Definitely! Let's get it."

The table was deposited in the unused guest room along with the blankets. They brought it downstairs, and Shinji set the first blanket on the floor next to the Christmas tree, then Teruo settled the table on top. He turned it on and waited for a bit to see if it still worked. The heater started warming and Shinji placed the second blanket over it, then the table top. They dimmed the living room lights and turned on the Christmas tree's lights.

The soft glow created a cozy atmosphere and Teruo brought two legless floor chairs from the kitchen. Shinji grabbed the bags with fried chicken.

"Wait," Teruo said, as he hurried back to the kitchen. "Let me bring plates, so we don't stain the table."

"But the chicken is in a bag..."

By the time Shinji finished his sentence, two plates were already in front of them. "Well, yes," Teruo added, "but the bag has grease marks and I don't want stains on my perfectly preserved table. It will seep through the wood and ruin it."

Shinji pulled out his phone. “Can you say that again while I record you? I want to put it as my ringtone.”

Teruo raised a brow. “No...”

“Too bad. Would’ve been a great ringtone. Imagine we’re in the middle of an investigation and my ringtone goes off: The bag has grease marks and I don’t want stains on my perfectly —”

“Ha ha, you’re hilarious.” Teruo gave his ass a playful smack. “Sit down and eat your chicken.”

“Yes, sir!” Shinji crossed his legs and settled underneath the blanket. “Oh...!” The warmth immediately enveloped him. “I might never get out of here.”

“Didn’t you say you hate feeling too hot?”

Shinji put a finger to Teruo’s lips. “Shhh... The kotatsu warmth is the exception. It’s always the exception. There’s no bigger pleasure in winter than a kotatsu .”

Mochi and Dango approached them, evidently sensing the heat of the table and the smell of chicken. Mochi was less focused on the food and more on the kotatsu . She dug underneath the blanket and Shinji felt her soft fur tickling his ankles. She curled at his feet and immediately started purring. Dango sniffed the chicken, but Teruo gently stopped her from pawing any. Since she couldn’t get chicken, she went to sleep next to Teruo, half under the blanket and half outside.

“Let’s dig in,” Shinji said, dropping his pieces onto the plate. He took a bite, the chicken soft and the crust crunchy. “So good! Not as good as your food, but still good.”

Teruo chuckled. “It’s okay, my ego can take it.” He took a bite, too, though he seemed rather skeptical. “Huh, it’s actually nice.”

“Your expectations were pretty low, weren’t they?”

Teruo shrugged. “A bit, but it’s tasty. The crunchiness is top-notch. Really well done.”

Shinji nodded and wolfed down the piece of chicken in his hand. He looked at Teruo, whose eyes reflected the twinkling lights. He was stunning and adorable with the reindeer antlers on his head. “Thank you for tonight. It was amazing.”

“I’ve got more stuff planned for tomorrow.”

Shinji sighed, staring at the tree. “I feel terrible that I didn’t prepare anything.”

“Hey...” Teruo wiped his hands and placed a palm on Shinji’s wrist, his thumb moving in soothing circles. “Don’t feel terrible. These days are about us enjoying each other. You being here with me is already an amazing gift.”

Shinji felt his cheeks turn red. “I’m thrilled to be here with you.” He picked up one of the chicken pieces and fed it to Teruo, laughing when Teruo pretended to bite his fingers.

They finished stuffing themselves with chicken and, after cleaning up, they settled under the kotatsu , wrapped in each other’s arms. Shinji nearly melted into a mushy puddle as he lay against Teruo’s chest. It was perfect.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:22 am*

Teruo

Teruo woke up feeling Shinji's body pressed firmly against him, hands lazily roaming over his abdomen and the exposed side of his hip. The softness of Shinji's lips touched the skin at the nape of his neck, and Teruo shivered in pleasure as Shinji continued to kiss his upper back and shoulder.

"Mornin'," Teruo said, turning his head to meet Shinji's lips in a gentle, lingering kiss.

Shinji mumbled something that resembled 'good morning' in a voice still thick with sleep, then buried his head in the crook of Teruo's neck and held him tight. "You're so warm." He curled up, tangling his legs through Teruo's, his body molding into Teruo's back.

He winced a little because Shinji's feet were cold, but he liked that, even though Shinji complained about everything else being too hot, he always sought Teruo's body for warmth. Soft strands of Shinji's tousled hair tickled his cheek and Teruo shifted enough to kiss the top of his head.

"Mind if I turn around?" Teruo asked.

"Please do," Shinji murmured. He unclasped his arms, waiting until Teruo shifted so that they faced each other before pressing himself against Teruo again. "Even better. Now I can see you." He rested his forehead against Teruo's, fingers brushing over the stubble on Teruo's jaw. "You don't have a date planned for this morning, do you?"

“I know you hate mornings, so I planned it all for the afternoon.”

Shinji’s heavy-lidded eyes opened wider, and he smiled. “Aw, you’re sweet.”

“I think we could both benefit from sleeping in.”

“Oh, yeah...” Shinji nodded grimly.

Teruo leaned in, nuzzling Shinji’s nose, then kissed the tip, then his lips, then he peppered kisses across Shinji’s jaw and the length of his beautiful neck. He cupped Shinji’s face in his hand, tracing his thumb over his skin, and taking in every part of him; the adorable bed hair, his high cheekbones, the contour of his delicious mouth.

His eyes met Shinji’s, who seemed to be staring, too., and they both broke into mischievous grins.

“Are we thinking the same thing?” Shinji wiggled his brows.

“I was thinking you’re gorgeous.”

“I was thinking you’re hot and I’m horny.”

Teruo laughed. “Works for me.”

Shinji rolled them over, covering Teruo with his body. The solid length of his erection ground against Teruo’s through the fabric, and he liked the way Shinji was so hard for him, but neither wanted to hurry this moment. Shinji cradled Teruo’s face, the brush of his lips feather-light, and a shiver ran through Teruo. He angled his head and their mouths pressed together, fitting like two perfect pieces of a puzzle.

A low rumble escaped Teruo’s throat as Shinji caught his lip gently between his teeth

and playfully tugged. Teruo lost himself in the pure pleasure of enjoying Shinji's lovely mouth, and the way he took his time kissing Teruo, thoroughly devouring him.

Shinji's hands slithered underneath Teruo's t-shirt, skimming his palms along the ribs and up to his chest, brushing his thumbs over the hard nubs of his nipples, and making Teruo writhe underneath. A soft chuckle escaped Shinji, and he broke away to pull Teruo's t-shirt off, quickly followed by his own, before lying down again.

His palms spread across Teruo's torso, long fingers mapping every part of Teruo's body while he kissed the stubble on Teruo's jaw, then moved down his throat, along his collarbone. Teruo rippled with arousal as he looked at Shinji's beautiful lips, swollen from the kissing, pressing little pecks all over his chest. He gasped when Shinji rolled his tongue over his nipple, then captured it between his teeth and sucked.

"Don't stop," Teruo mumbled.

He let out a long moan as Shinji tugged at the sensitive nub with his teeth. Glancing at Teruo, Shinji smiled, then kissed his way down the side of Teruo's abdomen, occasionally biting and smirking when Teruo gasped again. Hooking his fingers on the waistband, Shinji pulled off Teruo's pants, and settled between his legs, his palms caressing Teruo's inner thighs.

"I want to eat you whole," Shinji breathed.

"Please, do it," Teruo pleaded, painfully hard just from seeing Shinji looking at him full of hunger.

A low growl escaped Teruo when Shinji wrapped his lips around his sac, and rolled his tongue, teasing. Shinji's fingers caressed the curve of Teruo's hips, sending electric shivers down to Teruo's core as his mouth sucked and squeezed in all the ways that Teruo liked.

Shinji's warm breath fanned over Teruo's erection as he kissed up the shaft, then flicked his tongue over the head. Teruo moaned and moved his hands from the sheets to Shinji's shoulders.

"Shall I continue?" Shinji asked as he teasingly placed another wet kiss on Teruo's cock.

"Yes...!" Teruo groaned.

Shinji grinned smugly because he knew he was driving Teruo crazy with arousal and was enjoying it. And Teruo loved this little game and the anticipation. His head hit the pillow when Shinji leaned down and swallowed half of his cock in one go. His fingers wrapped around the base and he bobbed his head, sucking and diving Teruo's cock deeper into his mouth.

Teruo's hands held onto Shinji's soft hair, tugging lightly as his hips started thrusting into Shinji's warm and inviting mouth. The sounds of pleasure filled the room, and Teruo lowered his gaze to see the way Shinji's lips stretched around his cock. Every suck and swirl of Shinji's tongue ignited every nerve in Teruo's body and he struggled not to thrust harder and accidentally choke Shinji. But it seemed Shinji craved more, urging him on with a tap on the thigh, and Teruo quickened the rhythm of his hips, pushing more of his length into Shinji's mouth. It was all pure ecstasy, the kind that only Shinji could give him.

Shinji sucked and licked at each thrust, Teruo's slick cock diving in and out of his mouth. Teruo felt the climax building up within him, the tingling sensation spreading throughout his body like fire.

"I'm close..." Teruo moaned, his fingers tightening in Shinji's hair. His whole body coiled and he burst with pleasure, unloading down Shinji's throat. He sucked Teruo through his orgasm and made a show of licking his lips.



Teruo let out a breathy chuckle. “You look terribly pleased with yourself.”

“Well, I gave you an earth-shattering orgasm, haven’t I?” Shinji winked.

“Yes, you did...” Teruo said, still catching his breath.

Shinji pushed himself up, straddling Teruo’s waist, and looking at Teruo with a smug grin on his lush lips, wet and rosy from sucking Teruo’s cock. It was incredibly hot.

Teruo let his palms roam over Shinji’s chest and stomach, across the diagonal scar Shinji didn’t speak about, then up over his shoulders, and his biceps. He dropped his hands to Shinji’s pajama pants, still on him, hiding his hard dick.

“Take them off,” Teruo said. “I want to taste you, too.”

Shinji shucked his pants and Teruo couldn’t stop looking at his cock, jutting out like an offering.

“Come up here.” Teruo motioned.

“You mean sit on top of you?”

“Yeah.”

Shinji grinned and crawled until his knees were on either side of Teruo. His cock hung just above Teruo, brushing against his mouth, rock hard and smooth. Shinji didn’t let his weight down, instead propped his feet so he would hover atop Teruo’s chest. Teruo wrapped his fist around the root of Shinji’s dick and cupped the cockhead between his lips, trailing the tip of his tongue slowly over the slit.

It prompted the most delicious moan from Shinji, whose fingers gripped the

headboard for support. With his free hand, Teruo grasped Shinji's ass, pushing him forward as far down his throat as he could in this position. Shinji gasped, his thighs trembling with pleasure, and Teruo loved the view.

A small ray of light filtered through the curtains, accentuating every muscle and curve of his beautiful body. The little white tendrils of energy that emanated from within him made the sweat on his skin glisten. Shinji's chest rose and fell as Teruo worked him with his mouth and tongue. His eyes locked with Teruo's, and they were dark and intense, while his lips were slightly parted as he drew in uneven breaths.

Shinji tangled his fingers into Teruo's hair and held him in place as he thrust deeper down his throat. Teruo relished the way Shinji's cock filled his mouth, the way it pulsed and throbbed. The salty taste of Shinji's skin and pre-cum were addictive. Teruo sucked and teased and licked all of him, savoring the wanton moans Shinji made.

Teruo moved faster, creating a perfect suction around Shinji's cock until Shinji exploded in his mouth, his hips jerking against Teruo, and his cum slipping down Teruo's throat. He swallowed everything Shinji gave him, then gently pulled him away.

Shinji moved back and plopped himself on top of Teruo with a groan. "You are so good..." he muttered, pressing a kiss on Teruo's jaw.

"You are even better." Teruo hugged him tightly.

"I'd go back to sleep, but my stomach will complain in three... two... one..." As if on cue, Shinji's stomach let out a long growl that made Teruo burst into laughter.

"Did you train your stomach to do that?"

“The bastard has a mind of its own.” Shinji raised his head a little. “Five more minutes.” Then he dropped it back onto the pillow.

“I think you need to tell that to your stomach rather than me.”

Shinji mumbled something unintelligible, his lips pressed to the skin underneath Teruo’s ear, kissing lightly, and spreading a warm thrill through Teruo. He closed his eyes, letting himself enjoy the weight of Shinji on top of him and the feel of his beautiful, naked body. His fingers trailed through Shinji’s soft hair and down his back, tracing the contour of his muscles. They remained wrapped in each other’s arms for a while longer, just because they could, because these days were about them.

Over an hour later, they relaxed on the sofa, their hunger satiated by a plentiful breakfast. Shinji had put the Santa hat on and he looked stunningly adorable. Teruo stretched an arm over his shoulders, and leaned closer, pressing a kiss to his cheek.

“Where are we going today?” Shinji asked, giving him a kiss on the lips.

“Shibuya Sky.”

Shinji gasped, eyes sparkling with excitement. “Awesome. Can’t wait.” He ran his hands over Mochi’s fur as she stretched lazily in his lap. “But are you sure? It’s colder today. You’ll be freezing up there.”

“I’ll be fine. Got my thick winter jacket ready.”

Shinji opened his mouth to speak, but only an “ouch!” came out when Mochi suddenly stood, then jumped off him, kicking him with her legs. She walked behind the sofa and stopped, staring at the wall.

Teruo rose to his feet to see her better. “What do you see, sweetie? A fly?” She

usually made a chirping sound whenever a fly made its way into the house before engaging in a full-blown attack that turned the entire house upside down. But this time she stood frozen in place, staring.

“It’s not a fly. It’s a ghost,” Shinji said, casually.

“A ghost?!” Teruo exclaimed, making both Shinji and the cats jolt. Now Dango seemed preoccupied with the new guest and settled next to Mochi, both staring quietly into thin air. A gust of cold air drifted toward Teruo, raising the hairs on his arms.

“Easy,” Shinji said, rubbing his palm across Teruo’s back. “It’s okay. He won’t hurt you.”

Teruo’s heart rammed harder as he looked at Shinji. “Am I haunted?” he whispered.

“You’re not, don’t worry. He probably got lost and wandered in here.” Shinji pulled his phone and seemed to tap a text to someone. “I don’t know whose jurisdiction this is, but I reported the spirit and he’ll be taken care of—”

“Who cares about jurisdiction? We were attacked by ghosts just over a month ago. What if he does the same?”

“Those were being controlled. And I can sense it when a ghost becomes dangerous, and this one is harmless, so don’t worry.”

Teruo trusted Shinji. If he said the ghost was harmless, then he was harmless. Even so, Teruo preferred if the ghost wasn’t in the living room, staring at them. “Can you kick him out? I’ve seen you using your energy to push ghosts away.”

Shinji’s gaze switched between Teruo and the empty spot, and he winced at whatever

he was seeing. His voice lowered. "I think you made him sad."

"Does it matter?" Teruo said, impatiently. "Aren't ghosts always sad? They're dead."

Shinji gasped and gave him a light smack over his shoulder. "That's not a nice thing to say."

Teruo huffed, folding his arms. "Well, since I'm a rude asshole anyway, I might as well be one for both the living and the dead."

"How egalitarian of you." Shinji shook his head, but he was smiling. "Don't worry. I'll help him go outside."

"Tell him I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be inconsiderate of...uh...you know."

"He heard you," Shinji said.

Shinji walked to the ghost and his white energy poured out of his body in shimmering tendrils, curling around his arms like sleeves. One step at a time, he headed toward the opposite wall until he reached it. His energy pulsed, slipping through the wall like mist, guiding the ghost out of the house. Although Teruo couldn't see, the draft of cold air disappeared.

"Done," Shinji said, turning on his heel.

Teruo let out a sigh of relief and fell back down on the sofa. He didn't necessarily mind spirits, but a stranger's ghost watching them made him uncomfortable. "Thanks." He ran a hand through his hair, then nodded toward the cats. "How come Mochi and Dango can see the ghost and I can't?"

"From what I know, most animals see ghosts." Shinji returned to the sofa by Teruo's

side, the energy gone. “Cats are especially sensitive. Have you seen those funny cat videos from the internet where cats just stare at nothing and people joke that they’re seeing ghosts?”

Teruo tensed. “Don’t tell me...they’re looking at ghosts, aren’t they?”

“Yep. Well, cats are a little weird, so most of the time it’s nothing, but sometimes it’s a ghost.”

A shiver ran through Teruo. “Shit. So, if it was a ghost this time, it could’ve been a ghost other times in the past?”

Shinji shrugged. “Could’ve been, yeah. Cats are curious animals and the ghostly aura isn’t threatening to them. It would’ve been a problem if you had a dog. Dogs hate ghosts and bark at them.”

“I see.” Teruo looked behind him as if he could tell whether a spirit was there or not. He couldn’t, and it freaked him out. “Should I expect creepy screeches or furniture being thrown around tonight?”

Shinji held his palms up, shaking them in dismissal. “No way. I wouldn’t have been so chill if the ghost was that violent. Would’ve shoved it out and far away in a second.”

“Ah! So, you do kick them out. I’m not an asshole.”

Shinji laughed. “Well, yes, if they’re angry.”

“Okay.” Teruo stared out the window. “Ghost don’t feel coldness, do they?”

“No. Why?”

“I insulted him enough by calling him a sad ghost. I don’t want him to be a sad, cold ghost.”

Shinji erupted into laughter and draped his arms around Teruo’s neck, kissing his cheek. “You somehow manage to be rude and sweet at the same time.”

A smug smile made Teruo’s lips curve. “I’m a walking contradiction.”

“You are.” Shinji pulled him closer and peppered a flurry of kisses across his jaw and down his neck. Then he raised his head again and gave Teruo a big smooch on the lips that made his heart flutter.

Shinji’s eyes were full of mischief, and he dragged Teruo down on the sofa. Teruo settled carefully on top of him and met Shinji’s lips in another sweet and unhurried kiss. Shinji’s hands ran slowly across Teruo’s back, stopping at his shoulder blades and remaining wrapped around him. He relaxed against Shinji, his face buried in the crook of Shinji’s neck, the fluffy pom of the Santa hat tickling his cheek.

With the ghost gone, Mochi and Dango hopped back up on the sofa, snuggling up to them, or in Mochi’s case, stretching right on top of Teruo.

“I hope we’re not too heavy,” Teruo said, since Shinji was now squished underneath.

“I’ll survive. You’re both too sweet for me to move.”

Teruo smiled, kissed his lips, and they remained wrapped up in each other’s arms.

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With two hours left until sunset, it was time to head toward Shibuya Sky. Teruo zipped up his black padded jacket and glanced over his shoulder at Shinji, who

stepped down the stairs. He'd put on a sweater at Teruo's suggestion, but still went for the thinnest jacket he owned.

"Not that one," Teruo said. "Get one with a hood. Trust me."

Shinji scratched his head. "The problem is, I don't have one with a hood."

"I'll give you one of mine. I've got plenty." Teruo passed him a dark gray similarly padded jacket in a with a hood. "It'll be easier to brave the wind if your head's covered with something that can't be blown away."

Shinji put on his jacket and it fit him perfectly. "How do I look?"

"Incredibly handsome."

Shinji gave him a smug grin. "Well, it's impossible for me to be anything but handsome."

His charming cheekiness was the most adorable thing and Teruo kissed Shinji's beautiful lips, then wrapped Shinji tightly in his arms because he couldn't get enough of him. He was glad to spend these days getting his fill of Shinji with nothing else keeping them occupied.

They left the warmth of the house and walked out into the crisp air. It was sunny and cloudless, but the wind bit at Teruo's skin. Shinji, on the other hand, seemed to be in his element, his tousled hair swept back by the wind.

Minutes later, they arrived in Shibuya and walked toward the entrance of the Shibuya Scramble Square skyscraper. The building's shimmering glass facade reflected the blue sky and the sun's rays. All around them, the streets bustled with people, and some crowds were heading in the same direction as them.



They wove through the people and took the elevator that led up to the Sky Gate, then from there they stepped inside the transition pod. Above, on the pod's ceiling, the screen displayed star-burst patterns and more explosions of lights. Before they knew it, the elevator arrived, and the doors opened into a corridor with sleek black walls adorned with glowing lines of light that sliced through the darkness.

“Oh! This is very cool,” Shinji whispered.

“Builds suspense, doesn't it?” Teruo said, as they walked to the escalator.

“Yes!”

Shinji's excited voice made Teruo incredibly happy and glad he'd planned this. As the escalator went up, more natural light appeared at the end of it and they ascended toward the Sky Gallery, which was enclosed with glass windows from the floor to the ceiling. The vast sprawl of the capital was already unfolding before them, stretching endlessly.

“Whoa!” Shinji exclaimed. “Never been to one of these observation decks.”

“I think we can get some drinks if you want to stay inside here.”

“Maybe afterwards? I want to go to the rooftop.”

Teruo smiled. “Let's go.”

The wind already picked up when they exited the enclosed gallery and went out toward the elevator that led to the Sky Stage, the rooftop of the building. By the time they were fully outside on the roof, the wind blasted right into their faces.

“Shit,” Shinji muttered under his breath. “It's stronger than I expected.” He put the

hood over his head and drew the strings to secure it.

Several other people were just as surprised by the gust of wind and quickly zipped up their jackets. The view was already extraordinary, with planes crossing over the blue sky above them, and below, the busy Shibuya crossing was crawling with people.

“Wow, you can see so much,” Shinji said. “I mean, obviously, it’s to be expected, but...”

“It’s breathtaking, isn’t it?”

“Yeah...” He trailed off, gazing into the distance.

The rooftop had a 360-degrees view, and they started walking, huddled next to each other. Everybody was too preoccupied with the amazing sight to look at them, so Teruo looped their arms together for warmth. But who needed a thick jacket when Shinji’s gorgeous smile was making Teruo’s whole body buzz with warmth.

“There’s the Sky Tree.” Shinji pointed.

The Tokyo Tower was visible, too, and seeing them from this perspective made the buildings seem closer to each other than they actually were.

“Let’s see if Mount Fuji is visible,” Teruo said as they walked. “There it is.”

Thanks to the very clear sky, the white peak could be seen through the buildings in all its beauty.

“Amazing!” Shinji exclaimed. “We’re lucky the weather’s good.”

“Yep.” Teruo drew him a bit closer. “Do you like it?”

“So much!” His lips curved in a mischievous grin. “I had no idea you’re such an expert on Christmas dates. I’m discovering a new side of you, chief.” He playfully bumped Teruo’s hip.

Teruo chuckled, but shook his head. “Nope. It’s my first time doing all of this, too.”

“Really? I wouldn’t have guessed with the way you planned everything.”

“Well, you see...” Teruo paused, hesitating a bit because he didn’t want to put a damper on their fun. But Shinji seemed to be keenly listening, so he continued, “Last year, I was single, so I was depressed. The year before that, I was also single, so I was depressed. Three years ago, I was freshly ghosted by my ex, so I was even more depressed.”

“Oh...” Shinji rubbed a soothing hand over his back. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry, I’m over it. The reason I went all out this year is because I’m excited about you. About us.” Teruo entwined his fingers with Shinji’s, stroking his knuckles as they kept on walking the deck.

“I’m excited about us, too.” Shinji smiled, squeezing his hand. “I’m happy we’re making great memories together.” He beamed as he spoke, his eyes sparkling, and Teruo struggled to keep himself from claiming Shinji’s lips.

“I’m gonna kiss you crazy when we get home,” Teruo whispered.

“You better.” Shinji winked.

Wide grins spread across their faces, and Teruo could barely contain the joy spilling out of him. They continued on, looking over Yoyogi Park with its trees painted in green, orange, and rusty red, over all the buildings, skyscrapers, small houses lining

the streets. The cars rushed on the roads and the busy streets were packed with people.

After taking a few pictures together, they sat down to watch as the sun slowly descended, like an orb of molten gold, coloring the sky in hues of fiery lavender and orange. In the distance, Mount Fuji became a dark gray silhouette, towering above everything else. The conversations around them became softer as people watched or took photos of the view. Shadows stretched long and thin across the deck as light faded and darkness settled.

Shinji rested his head against Teruo, holding Teruo's hand between his, their bodies nestled together. Teruo's heart fluttered, and he wished time would stop so they could enjoy this moment for a while longer because it was perfect and he'd never forget it.

As the sun completely disappeared, the city below became alive as the lights turned on one by one, the ones in the distance looking like a shimmering sea of fireflies from their spot. Teruo and Shinji stood up and walked to the glass panels, looking down at the city pulsing with life. Digital billboards and neon signs lit up everything with their vibrant colors and the roads looked like golden rivers cutting through the buildings. In the distance, Yoyogi Park was a huge dark spot in between bright buildings.

The air was heavy with the hum of energy from the people around, taking pictures and occasionally letting out an "oh!" at the view. But Teruo let the voices disperse into the background and looked at Shinji, who stood beside him, his forehead glued to the glass as he looked down below. The sight was fantastic, but seeing Shinji so happy was even better. His eyes sparkled brilliantly, and he was focused on something below them, his lower lip caught between his teeth.

Teruo didn't want to interrupt, so he just gazed at Shinji, holding his arm wrapped around his shoulders. Shinji noticed him staring and his mouth curved in his usual sly

smirk.

“Stunning view, isn’t it?” Shinji said, waving his hand at himself.

“Absolutely!” Teruo grinned.

“The whole ‘burned dumpling’ look really sells it.” He pointed to the creased charcoal hood that was tightly wrapped around his head and half his face.

Teruo broke into laughter. “Well, you’re one handsome burned dumpling.”

Shinji cupped Teruo’s cheeks in his palm, his thumbs tracing across Teruo’s jaw. He sneaked a look behind his shoulder, then quickly pressed a kiss on Teruo’s lips. There was a faint blush on his face and a playful glint in his eyes, like he’d done something naughty but was totally proud of it.

Then Shinji’s face turned more serious. “How did I get so lucky to have you in my life?”

Teruo nearly melted into a puddle. “I think I’m the lucky one.”

Shinji beamed, then leaned into Teruo, tucking himself in Teruo’s arms. “Can we stay a while longer?” Shinji asked.

Teruo held him tight. “Of course.”

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:22 am*

Shinji

Shinji woke up with a familiar weight in his chest, the kind that always came on his birthday. He stared at the ceiling, trying not to let the feeling settle in. Winter was his favorite season, but his birthday? That was something else. Too many bad memories clung to it, making the day feel more like a chore than a celebration.

This year, though, it was different because he was spending it with Teruo. For once, all that dread didn't feel as suffocating as opposed to other years when it would stick to Shinji like glue for the entire week. Teruo had put so much effort into making these days feel incredibly special.

Speaking of Teruo...

Shinji looked at the empty spot beside him. The sheets were wrinkled and pulled toward the edges where their hands had clutched them in the heat of last night's sex. His lips curved in a big smile and he reached for Teruo's pillow, his fingertips brushing the fabric. His mind drifted to their date at Shibuya Sky, to the warmth of Teruo's hands, to his handsome face full of joy, the way his eyes lit up when he smiled, and how easy it felt to forget everything else when they were together.

A dreamy sigh escaped Shinji, and he closed his eyes for a moment, laying his head on Teruo's pillow. These days were the happiest he'd been in a long while. Shinji's chest tightened, thinking back at all the times no one cared—not even himself—and realized he was lucky to be with Teruo.

A faint noise echoed from downstairs, and Shinji patted the bed to find his pajama

pants. He plucked them from underneath the duvet and put them on, then slid out of bed. He made his way downstairs, the sound of clinking dishes and soft movement drawing him toward the kitchen. He rubbed at his eyes, still groggy from sleep, but the smile on his face hadn't faded. He saw the Santa hat on the backseat of the sofa and he put it on his head, then picked up the reindeer headband, too, grinning to himself.

As he reached the kitchen doorway, he froze, his breath catching at the sight. Teruo was at the counter, in a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt, a dishcloth thrown onto his back, and his hair shining under the light filtering through the window, a few locks falling on his forehead. He was hunched sideways, his brows furrowed in concentration as he carefully spread whipped cream over what could only be a shortcake. A mixing bowl sat nearby, along with the ingredients, and another bowl full of strawberries was next to the sink.

Teruo straightened, grunted something to himself as he eyed the cake, then neatly corrected whatever imperfections he had noticed. But there were no imperfections because everything about this was beyond perfect.

Shinji leaned against the doorway, taking in the whole picture, his heart thumping in his chest. Teruo had already done so much and now was making a birthday cake simply because he wanted to.

Just then, Teruo glanced over his shoulder and his eyes widened before his mouth softened into a smile. "Ah, you woke up too early," he said. "I was planning for it to be a surprise." He gestured to the unfinished cake. "Happy birthday!"

Shinji shook his head, his throat tight as he stepped into the kitchen. "You didn't have to..." He remembered Teruo said he'd bake a cake, but Shinji didn't think he'd actually do it.

Teruo turned fully and wiped his hands on the dishcloth. "You just turned thirty. You

deserve to celebrate.”

Shinji swallowed hard, words failing him for a moment as he looked at Teruo, at the cake, then back at Teruo. Finally, he stepped closer, reaching out to wrap Teruo in his arms and hold him tight.

“Thank you,” Shinji said, his voice barely a whisper. He couldn’t say more, otherwise he’d probably choke on his own words and make a fool of himself.

Teruo pressed a kiss on Shinji’s neck. “It also doubles as a late Christmas cake,” Teruo added, “since I didn’t order one.”

Shinji’s lips quirked. “What a hard-working cake!” He leaned in and kissed Teruo’s mouth. “It’s perfect. Thank you for making this day special.” Maybe he could let himself enjoy his birthday for once, let Teruo pamper him. Maybe he could learn to celebrate his birthday again after thirty years of avoiding it.

His hands found their way to Teruo’s hips, and he gently steered him toward the table to sit on the edge. The headband still hung awkwardly in his hand, so Shinji placed it on the table, then wrapped Teruo back in his arms. Teruo rested his head against Shinji’s chest, his cheek warm, and his rough stubble sending a shiver down Shinji’s spine. His fingers threaded through Teruo’s hair, and he gently caressed it. A soft moan escaped Teruo, his palms skimming over Shinji’s bare skin, from his lower back and up toward his shoulder blades.

They stayed like this for a long time, just enjoying each other’s presence. Shinji realized that nothing else mattered. Only this moment, right here, right now. He let himself get lost in the sensation of holding Teruo—his warmth, his strong body, the cake’s sugary scent clinging to him, the steady breath ghosting Shinji’s skin. Teruo was single-handedly healing many years of bitterness.

Teruo shifted his head and pressed a kiss to Shinji’s sternum, then looked up, his face



bright and smiling. Shinji looked at him, drinking in the sight. He pressed a gentle thumb on the little creases between Teruo's brows, etched by the near-constant scowling at work. Shinji let out a quiet laugh and Teruo looked at him curiously.

"Do I have something on my face?" Teruo asked.

"On the contrary, you don't. That's why it's funny."

Teruo narrowed his eyes, looking more confused. "What don't I have?"

"Your usual scowl. You've been in a very bright mood. Once in a while, you should come to work smiling like this. You'll keep everybody on their toes because they won't know what's going on with you."

Teruo broke into laughter. "They'll think I'm a clone and the real me was kidnapped. Don't think the superintendent will send anyone to save me. He'll be celebrating."

Shinji snorted, then pressed a kiss to Teruo's mouth, soft and lingering, tugging on his lower lip. "Well, I like that I get to see this side of you. And so often, too."

"This house is my comfort zone," Teruo said. "It's where I can be myself without worrying about judgment. But the one thing that was missing for me was sharing that feeling with someone who accepted me, scowling and all." He settled his palm against Shinji's chest. "You're that someone. That's why I'm in such a good mood."

Shinji smiled, his heart beating fast. "You're a romantic."

"I have my moments." Teruo grinned. "Now give me another one of your sweet kisses."

With no hesitation, Shinji leaned in, his lips finding Teruo's in a soft kiss. The slight roughness of Teruo's stubble made him moan, and he tilted his head, his tongue

sliding against Teruo's. His breath caught as Teruo's hands tightened on his hips, pulling him closer, and alternating between kissing Shinji harder and tugging slowly at his lips. It was incredibly tender and hot at the same time.

When they drew back, both had huge smiles on their faces.

"Wanna decorate the cake?" Teruo asked.

"Yes! But I hope you bought enough strawberries because I'm going to steal a few."

Teruo placed a kiss on his cheek. "I bought an extra box because I know you're a strawberry thief."

Shinji grinned, reaching for the bowl of strawberries. "Guilty as charged." He plucked one from the pile, holding it up triumphantly, then took a slow bite, enjoying the way Teruo stared at his lips. "Delicious," Shinji said.

"Oh yeah..." Teruo agreed, still looking at Shinji's mouth.

Getting another strawberry, Shinji held it up to Teruo, and he ate it out of Shinji's hand, letting his lips brush by Shinji's fingers. Then he kissed the tip of Shinji's finger and sucked on it, making Shinji shiver and blush. He pulled Shinji's digit out of his mouth with a pop and grinned, then gave the Santa hat's pom a flick and it wobbled back and forth, softly brushing by Shinji's cheek.

"You're a gorgeous Santa," Teruo said, playing with the pom.

Shinji picked up the reindeer headband that he'd abandoned on the table and put it on Teruo's head. "And you're a gorgeous reindeer." He fixed Teruo's hair around the headband and gave him another kiss.

They reluctantly pulled from each other because the cake was still waiting to be

decorated. Teruo took a piping bag, placed whipped cream inside and made swirls along the top of the cake. Shinji chose strawberries that were roughly the same size and arranged them in a circle in the middle.

“I want a little bit of powdered sugar on them,” Shinji said.

“Sure.” Teruo found the packet of sugar and spread it gently through a sieve. Afterwards, he added sugar pearls inside the circle of strawberries and made another whipped cream swirl. He finished it with a chocolate topper and a little artificial holly. “Do you like it?” Teruo stared at Shinji, slightly alarmed, like he was about to be graded for his skills.

“It’s amazing.” Shinji smiled, wrapping his arms around Teruo’s waist. “Thank you. I almost feel bad to eat it. Almost.” He licked his lips.

“Well, we’ll leave it in the fridge for a little while, and eat breakfast instead.”

“Aren’t we gonna be rebellious and eat cake for breakfast?”

“If you want, but it might be better to eat it after an actual breakfast.”

Shinji grabbed a spoon and ate a mouthful of leftover whipped cream. “I don’t care. The dessert police can arrest me.”

Teruo gave his ass a playful spank. “Don’t tempt me.” He grabbed Shinji’s hips, pulled him close, and tilted him back slightly as he captured Shinji’s lips in an open-mouthed kiss.

Shinji moaned, his hands gripping Teruo’s t-shirt, and he parted his lips, feeling a rush of heat as Teruo’s tongue teased him. The sweetness of strawberries lingered on Teruo’s mouth and Shinji held him tighter, melting into his embrace. Teruo’s palms splayed across Shinji’s back, anchoring him as Teruo tilted him further and deepened

the kiss. Their breaths mingled, ragged and warm, and Teruo's lips traveled down Shinji's throat and Teruo kissed along his collarbone before pulling away, and giving him one final smooch.

Shinji clung to him as he straightened himself. "Give me a second," Shinji murmured. "I need to recover from that kiss."

A smug grin stretched on Teruo's face and he ran his palms across the bare skin of Shinji's back, sending a warm thrill down his spine.

"So, cake for breakfast or...?" Teruo trailed off, waiting.

"I wish, but my stomach's a traitor." Shinji patted his belly. "I guess I'll make a sacrifice and eat a normal breakfast, then the cake."

"Quite the sacrifice." Teruo chuckled.

Once the cake was refrigerated and breakfast cooked, they took the plates to set them up on the kotatsu table. Just as they stepped out of the kitchen, Mochi jumped from the Christmas tree, bringing it down with her. She ran up to the wall shelves and settled there, pretending like she hadn't done anything.

"Ah, second time today," Teruo said. "What do you have against the tree?" he scolded Mochi, but all she gave back was an innocent look.

He placed the plates atop the table and pushed the tree back up, some globes falling out and rolling on the floor. Dango quickly grabbed one and pawed it, sending it to the other side of the living room.

"We might have to pack it up," Teruo said. "Otherwise, we'll be cleaning ornaments until summer."

“I want to keep it for a little longer.” Shinji stared at the tree. Even if Christmas had passed, he wasn’t sure he was ready to pack it up just yet. “Let me search the internet for some ways to protect it.”

“Doubtful that’s possible against Mochi.” Teruo shook his head as he started eating. “She’s half as tall as the tree.”

Shinji put the phone on the table, scrolling with one hand, and eating with the other. “How about cat repellent? You spray it on the tree and because they hate the smell—”

“Doesn’t work. Already tried it on some decorations I placed around the house when I first moved here. They still kicked everything down, no fucks given.”

Shinji went back to the list. “What about a cage? Not sure from where we’re gonna get one, though.”

Teruo’s brows furrowed. “I don’t want to put a cage around it. It ruins the aesthetic.”

Shinji grinned. “You gotta let me record you and then play it out to people without context.”

“You are naughty.” A little snicker left Teruo’s lips, then he nodded down toward the phone. “Anything else besides the cage?”

“Yes. Do you have any heavy things in the house? Besides the ‘sturdy’ stand we bought.”

“Well...” He chewed the inside of his cheek, thinking for a bit. “We could use the bags of sand I bought a long time ago for some repairs, which I never did.” Then he glanced up at Mochi, who was perched on the shelf, her fluffy tail hanging down, swaying slightly. “What do you say, Mochi?”

She tilted her head, her yellow eyes staring at them.

“I think she’ll take it as a challenge,” Shinji said.

“She takes everything as a challenge.” Teruo shook his head.

After breakfast, they carried the incredibly heavy sand bags and placed them on top of the tree stand, molding them around it. Mochi jumped down from her spot and approached, pawing gently at the bags and sniffing. She decided she wasn’t in the mood for a challenge right now and lied down, her back to one bag, and stretched.

“Typical,” Teruo said.

“I think she’ll make more attempts.”

“Oh, she will. She’s just waiting for us to leave the room and then will enter destruction-mode.” Teruo crouched and smiled at her. “You are naughty, but very cute.”

Shinji bit his lip and quietly watched while Teruo caressed Mochi with one hand and Dango with the other. When he first met Teruo, he wouldn’t have guessed Teruo was a big softie under all that grumpiness. Although Teruo vehemently denied it, under his gruff exterior, he was incredibly gentle.

“Everything okay?” Teruo asked, and Shinji realized he’d been staring.

“I was enjoying the view.”

A blush spread on Teruo’s cheeks and he stood, pressing a kiss on Shinji’s cheek. “Wanna devour that cake?” Teruo asked.

“Yes!” Shinji rushed to the kitchen, Teruo trailing behind him, laughing softly.

While Teruo brought out plates and cutlery, Shinji pulled the cake out and he couldn't help but smile wide again, his chest swelling with happiness. They returned to the kotatsu which had been taken over by Mochi and Dango, who were curled underneath, leaving only one part empty, so Shinji and Teruo huddled together. It was even better like this, the blanket over their legs, their knees brushing and the warmth of the kotatsu spreading through them.

Shinji picked up the knife and carefully cut two neat slices, revealing the layers of strawberry hidden underneath. He placed a slice on Teruo's plate, and one on his own, then quickly took the first bite because he was too excited to wait anymore.

"This is incredible," Shinji mumbled with his mouth full. It was soft and sweet, the cream melting on his tongue, and the juicy taste of the strawberries balanced everything perfectly. He mumbled again, but the words were unclear as he shoved another bite in his mouth.

Teruo let out a quiet laugh. "I'm glad you like it."

"Mmh." Was all Shinji could say back.

He scooped up another piece and held it out to Teruo, who leaned in, his lips closing around the offered bite. He gave a nod of approval, smiling. Then he mirrored Shinji and lifted a piece of cake to Shinji's mouth, which he ate greedily. His eyes lingered on Teruo and he reached for Teruo's hand where it rested on the table and squeezed it.

When he finished chewing, he leaned forward, closing the distance between them, his lips brushing against Teruo's in a soft kiss. Teruo kissed him back, the trace of strawberries and cream still clinging to him.

"You taste good," Shinji said.

“So do you.” Teruo cupped the nape of his neck, his thumb gently tracing over Shinji’s cheek. “Happy birthday. I wanted it to be special.” His voice was low and warm.

“It’s more than special. It’s perfect,” Shinji said, his voice thick. “Thank you for doing all of this for me.”

Teruo flushed, his lips curving into a smile. “I hope I didn’t overwhelm you. I know you—”

“I was wrong,” Shinji said. “I’m just not used to celebrating, that’s all. This is the best birthday I’ve ever had. If... if you don’t mind, can we do this again next year?”

“We’ll do it every year. This and more.” Teruo kissed him again. “I promise.”

After second helpings of cake, they managed to make space underneath the kotatsu to stretch their legs and lie down underneath the blanket, cocooned in its warmth. Shinji rested on his side against Teruo, an arm draped across Teruo’s chest. He felt Teruo’s lips pressing a kiss on top of his head and the stroke of Teruo’s fingers combing through his hair.

A quiet sigh of contentment escaped Shinji as he nestled even closer. In Teruo’s arms, Shinji felt whole in a way he never had before and he hadn’t even realized how broken his heart was until Teruo gently put every piece back together. It was a feeling Shinji never wanted to let go of.