



Mixed Feelings

Glass shattered as mechanical palms reached out to grasp something. A container—and there was a silhouette inside. It's a painful thing to relive. It happened in the cold vacuum of space, so there shouldn't have been any sound to remember, but it sticks in Kamille's mind either way. It sounded exactly the way you think it would. Like clumsily fumbling with a cup you got from the kitchen, until it falls onto the hardwood floor. Or, it's how you'd imagine a heart breaking to sound like. That's how it felt, too.

After that, there was something else. A normal suit, and someone in it desperately trying to fling themselves through space by waving their arms. It looks as if they're swimming. It's a fruitless attempt.

A red mobile suit sparks with unstable electricity behind them—and then explodes. The shockwave pushes whoever it is far, far away. Beyond where they intended to go, and beyond where any other eyes could track them.

There's a red, burning sensation on his cheeks. He can't tell if it's from the warm tears that have failed to be held down, or from a rage that has somehow manifested and spread out across his face.

That rage—it was directed at his parents. Those people he had resented so deeply for their neglect, and their association with the Titans. Or maybe it was the other way around. His hatred for the Titans existed because his parents collaborated with them.

Even now, it's difficult to properly put into words what he actually felt towards either of them. More so his mother. For some reason, it stands out to him that after the incidents, there were some aboard the Argama that insisted his parents were good to him when he declared the opposite.

That outburst he had—it's hard to ascertain now whether it was justified. At the time, it felt that way. He was so frustrated at who they were, and how he felt robbed. Robbed of what other children had without any struggle.

Attention. Affection. Parents that weren't so silently disillusioned with each other. Is that really asking for too much?

What kind of example does that set for what love should look like?

No wonder he's failed to have any significant connection with anyone else for so long. It's possible he's just scared of having a relationship that mirrors his parents'. Who wouldn't be?

Having to walk on eggshells around his own home, pretending he knew nothing at all. Avoiding a topic that reflected in the corners of their eyes. It lingered in the air, hung over their heads.

Stood on the tips of their tongues.

It was like living in a house made of cards. One wrong breath, and it all comes down, and he'd be the one to suffer for it.

It felt terrible.

Being told he was wrong for thinking his parents didn't fulfill their role might've felt even worse. Who were they to say that? How could they ever understand him?

They didn't have any empathy at all, and it was impossible to figure out why.

Was it because they didn't see him as an adult?

Maybe that's why he keeps trying to act mature.

What child doesn't want praise from the adults around them?

It's hard to understand why adults do what they do and say what they say when you're not in their shoes. The same goes for adults trying to understand children. His parents never quite got why he acted like he was trying to find as much trouble as he could. From his perspective, it was an obvious cry for someone to look at him. They both were forced to pay attention if he did something bad. Even if it got him in hot water temporarily, at least he was being addressed. It didn't appease his desire to be loved, but at least it satisfied something else.

And maybe he was too cruel. Not towards his father, though. That man deserved every bit of vitriol Kamille spat at him. A cheating bastard until the very end, and his death still made Kamille cry. One last slap to the face.

But maybe his anger towards his mother was misguided. It's possible he found a way to cope with her death by focusing on everything he hated about her.

She was part of the problem, too. Burying her head in work when she had the ability to say what Kamille couldn't.

Why would someone be upset about their parents dying if they were an unloved child in the first place? That's the line of thinking he tried to use to feel better.

It didn't work.

Ugh. Kamille accidentally applies too much pressure on the pencil he writes with, and it snaps in his hand. The graphite end is swung downward and draws a wavy line across the entire

page. Meanwhile, the top half splinters into his thumb. It hurts, and the smallest drop of blood falls onto the words he had written down.

Damn.

In a way that is painfully him, Kamille closes the journal and doesn't bother trying to clean his finger with soap and water. That would be too simple.

No, he takes his teeth and bites down onto the splinter. He winces. Some people can't seem to help themselves.

Kamille braces and jerks his head to the side. The splinter's out.

Ptoo. It's spat into the trash can—and what's left of the pencil isn't far behind.

He didn't need to write this down, anyway. He was almost done. You can only think about something for so long before it starts to drive you crazy.

The thumb is brought back up to his lips and he rests it there. The blood will stop draining out eventually, and it's not worth getting a bandaid.

His chest compresses with a deep breath in. Why's he always thinking about memories, even if they're bad ones? What's to be found in obsessing over what's gone?

The breath is let out.

Maybe he's scared of letting them go.

That sense of normalcy, as distorted as it may've been, is still more desirable than the chaos he lives in now. He won't admit it, but the thought of turning back time and living out the days he never got to—...

...Sheesh. That makes him sound like Fa. She's always acting like nothing's changed. Like they're not in the middle of a war. Not de facto soldiers.

He has the opposite problem. He's acting like he's adjusted when he's really just the same as her. A mask of toughness that only occasionally slips.

Half-lidded eyes stare at the door to his room. After a few moments of serene quiet, they close.

At least she's the one who popped into his head. A sight for sore eyes, he thinks.

That memory of being tackled by her, floating in circles—...

'Kamille!'

It comes rushing to the forefront of his mind.

It's a miracle he wasn't feeling aggravated and embarrassed. There's a timeline out there where he pushed her away and said she was being clingy. That hostile, prickly exterior of his

is far too common. It's like trying to feign being an adult (or, his idea of an adult, anyway). Thankfully, he had enough sense to let it be. It had been too long since they last saw each other.

He wouldn't say it aloud, but he was worried, too.

It felt good to be enveloped by a familiar heat after being surrounded by colder, more emotionally distant individuals. That's probably what allowed him to embrace it. It was something that reminded him of how things used to be.

Why can't he write about this kind of stuff instead of about what causes him grief...?

...Oh.

Right.

Because Fa actually lives on the ship. With how she is, what are the chances of her finding that journal and opening it up just because? Considering how she seems to act like she knows what's best for him, she probably would! Sometimes, it's like she's trying to push his buttons...!

Kamille's eye twitches.

No. Thoughts about Fa are never going in that damn notebook. In fact, it's pretty convenient that the pencil broke. If it didn't, he'd be rambling about her now.

Or maybe he could make his handwriting really messy if he did write about her. That'd be funny. Everything's legible except the part she'd be most curious about.

FacantreadthisbutIcanandIthinkitsfunny. Trysnoopingnow!

Like that.

A smile graces his expression, even behind his thumb.

What was he thinking about before this...?

It probably didn't matter.