

## Chapter One

### Hate at first sight

There was a truck parked in front of Dazai's flower shop.

He watched the street through the window. The truck parked at the door of the establishment for about thirty minutes and infinite boxes were being taken out of it. The street was quiet for the most part, so it was a rather unusual scene. That's why he was kinda curious to know what was going on outside.

There were many people he didn't know helping to unload boxes from the truck. They were all wearing black clothes. Their bodies were full of tattoos and piercings. Something strange in Dazai's eyes. The people were laughing and seemed to enjoy themselves while taking the boxes from inside the truck.

Dazai let out a loud, uncomfortable sigh.

Who do those people think they're to stand in front of his store and the entrance of customers? How rude! They didn't even ask him for *permission*.

More and more people were arriving and more boxes were placed in front of the flower shop. Not just boxes. Shelves, showcases, musical instruments. It was a mess. Dazai was starting to get annoyed and this was a very difficult thing to happen. But he wouldn't deny it, he was gnawing inside to know who all these people were and what they were doing there.

After long minutes of staring at them, he realized that there was no point in wasting his time with it and so he went back to his chores.

In the back of the store, he picked up some dahlias and hyacinth seedlings that needed to be planted that day. It didn't take long before he was engrossed in his work again. He prepared some pots of soil, carefully planted each seedling, and watered it.

If there was one thing that could soothe him and make him forget about the outside world, it was flowers. Dazai was never good at handicrafts and many people used to call him lazy — rightly so, by the way — but he didn't mind. It took years for him to find his true calling and it may seem a little silly, but he felt good taking care of the plants. Somehow, it seemed to understand him and didn't judge him, quite different from people.

For him, there was no better job than that. Working in the flower shop not only made him happy, but he also felt that he could *be* himself and truly express himself. It was something really important to Dazai and one he wouldn't trade for anything in this world.

However, unlike other days, when he could concentrate on the flowers and only them without worrying, on this particular day he just couldn't. As much as he tried, his mind always ended up being drawn to what was going on outside.

It was irritating.

He could see more people arriving and having fun outside. More and more boxes were being piled up in the street, right in front of the flower shop. Soon after, a noisy motorcycle in a horrible shade of magenta pulled up in front of the store's entrance door. For a moment, he even thought he might be a customer.

Although seeing a short red-haired man wearing a silly hat and his arm covered in tattoos, Dazai knew it wasn't someone interested in buying flowers, but someone else arriving to help with the boxes that were being taken from the truck.

He rolled his eyes.

It wasn't for lack of trying, but he couldn't get back to work. If he didn't have several bouquets to prepare later that afternoon, Dazai would have gone to spy on all that activity outside his shop. Nonetheless, he had work to do and he needed to finish it as soon as possible. They would soon be picking up orders for flowers for a wedding, and he needed to finish some arrangements.

Only it was almost impossible with all that noise disturbing the peace and tranquility of the neighborhood.

So he decided he needed to know what the whole mess meant. Dazai grabbed his cell phone from the counter and dialed the number of the coffee shop located across the street. People from all over the neighborhood stopped by all day, so if there was anyone who could tell what was going on, it was them.

The cell phone rang a few times, but it didn't take long for someone to pick it up.

"Hello?" The person said on the other end of the line. It was a boy's voice and he sounded confused since they didn't get many calls in the coffee shop.

Dazai opened a smile when he realized who had answered.

"Ah, Atsushi-kun! Just who I wanted to talk to," he said right away, in an excited voice. On the one hand, he was also relieved. If it had been Kunikida, the coffee shop owner, who answered the phone, his plan to acquire information would have gone down the drain.

He put Atsushi on the speakerphone so he could continue preparing the flowers to be placed in the bouquets. Dazai didn't have time to be distracted, orders had to be ready by three in the afternoon at least. But being the inquisitive person he was, finding out about neighborhood gossip was also his priority — not entirely, he just wanted to know who dared mess up his quiet work with that 90's rock 'n roll.

"How can I help you, Dazai-san?" Wanted to know the boy. He looked a little nervous talking on the phone and his voice sounded lower than usual. It was possible to notice that he was trying to disguise that he was on the phone while at work.

Dazai seemed to think for a while, not thinking of a very consistent plan, especially when his mind was being consumed by that loud music. Still, he wanted to find out more about what was going on next door and for that, he needed to convince Atsushi to come to the flower shop.

"I was thinking, could you get me some coffee?" It wasn't the best approach, but it was what he could think of in a short time.

It was a rather unusual question and he knew it since he *hated* coffee. Many people who knew him knew about this information, 'cause he never made a point of hiding it. One of them being Atsushi, who was at least intrigued by the request.

"Since when do you like coffee?" Atsushi knew better than to question customers like that, but it was Dazai, and knowing the man well, he found it a little odd. So he continued to say: "Last week you were disturbing Kunikida-san for opening a coffee shop, claiming that selling coffee was the worst decision of his life. He's still mad."

The florist almost laughed as he remembered what he had said. It had been mean, he admitted, but what could he do? It was very easy to make Kunikida angry and it ended up being something funny.

"Well, I'm trying new things, Atsushi-kun," he lied. Dazai tried to sound convincing, maybe even he started to believe his lie. "And I changed my mind about coffee."

Atsushi didn't distrust many people. Actually, he's been deceived many times for blindly believing what others say. However, he had known Dazai for a long time and knew that he used to get into trouble easily. Kunikida has already tried to fire him three times from the coffee shop because of Dazai. This time, he was a little bit suspicious of the man's words.

"You're not doing this to piss him off again, are you?" Asked the boy, he needed to be sure what he was getting into.

*Yes*, he wanted to say, but he couldn't. Dazai let out a small laugh. As much as he would love to piss off Kunikida that day, he had other plans and he would have to put that off for later.

"No," was an honest and at the same time mocking response. Well, something in between, it was hard to say. "Do you think *I* would do something like that?"

The boy was sure it was exactly something Dazai would do. That question needed no answer.

The lack of response on the other end of the line made Dazai say: "Rhetorical question, don't answer."

Then, everything was quiet. It was possible to hear Atsushi's thoughts over the phone. He was torn between accepting the request or refusing it. Dazai had even thought of other alternatives if he refused. *You wouldn't deny your senpai's request, ne Atsushi-kun?* It

seemed like a good thing to say. After all, who got Atsushi a job at the coffee shop was Dazai.

It wouldn't be appealing enough, but he was willing to gossip.

It took a while, but after a few indistinguishable murmurs and a long sigh from Atsushi, he said in reply:

"I'll get you a cappuccino, shall I?"

Ew, a cappuccino? Of all the drinks he sold at the coffee shop, this had to be the *worst* one, in Dazai's opinion, of course. But it didn't matter, it wasn't like he was actually going to drink. Anyway, it was take it or leave it. And having no other option, he thought it was better than nothing.

"Is perfect!" He said in response and then gave a little clap. "See you soon."

And then, the phone hung up. Now, it was only a matter of time before the boy arrived with the order.

The flower shop was strangely calm after the call, and Dazai realized the music had stopped playing. He silently thanked him before returning to his duties.

Some ladies came to buy flowers and he quickly prepared some bouquets of yellow tulips and hydrangeas.

The ladies said the bouquet would be for a friend of theirs who was sick at the hospital. So he decided to explain the meaning of the flowers that were chosen to be placed in the arrangement. Yellow tulips symbolize cheerful thoughts and hope. While hydrangeas symbolize perseverance, which is perfect for someone who is recovering. He added more plants used just for decoration and it was done.

Dazai handed the bouquet to the ladies with a smile on his face, they paid and left shortly thereafter.

A few more customers showed up. Some bought flower seedlings to plant in the garden at home, others decided to take some flower arrangements. There was a man who decided to buy a bunch of yellow carnations for his girlfriend. Dazai tried to warn him that those flowers had a terrible meaning, even though they were beautiful, but the man wouldn't listen. Unfortunately, someone was going to receive a bouquet that gave the idea of rejection, but there was nothing he could do.

An hour had passed and Atsushi was taking longer than expected. It was just coffee, for God's sake. Nevertheless, the florist tried to focus on the bouquets and flower arrangements only. It didn't help to contain his anxiety as much as he would have liked, but it was enough to make the time pass faster.

He was about to give up and go to the coffee shop himself, but at the same moment a gray-haired boy appeared at the door and he realized it was Atsushi.

*Finally, it was about time,* he thought.

When the boy entered the store, making the bell toll, two cats, who were lying somewhere below the shelves, came to meet him. They were Haruki, a Persian cat with light brown fur, and Momo, a snowy Bengal cat with marbled fur. For some reason, Atsushi seemed to attract the cats' attention every time he visited the flower shop, so he always brought them a treat.

The cats were still hanging around Atsushi's feet as he handed the coffee cup to Dazai.

"Here's the coffee you ordered, Dazai-san," he said with a smile on his lips.

For a moment, the boy was distracted playing with the cats and didn't even notice Dazai's grimaces as he sipped his coffee cup. He drank a little just so he didn't make a fuss — and of course, he wouldn't miss the opportunity to complain about the taste to Kunikida later.

"Thank you, Atsushi-kun," he thanked, even though he didn't like it.

The cats let out a meow, making both of them distracted. Atsushi sat on the floor beside them and started playing with them. As always, Momo was more excited than Haruki to receive the snacks. The boy even forgot that he needed to get back to work.

The same thing happened with Dazai, seeing Atsushi having fun with the cats completely distracted him from his train of thought. But as soon as he saw the bike still parked outside the flower shop, he remembered that Atsushi was only there to give him information — or *gossip*, but he would never use that word.

"Before you go, I would like to ask you something." Dazai leaned against the counter, still holding the hot cup of coffee in his hands. Atsushi looked in his direction with those heterochromatic eyes, the mixture of purple and yellow giving him a gentle gaze. The boy didn't say anything, he was waiting and there was curiosity on his face. Then the question escaped Dazai's lips: "What do all these boxes on the street and this truck standing at my door mean?"

Atsushi's gaze sought the boxes Dazai was referring to. He shouldn't have been paying attention when he arrived, but there were several objects piled up on the sidewalk of the flower shop. Some of the things even covered the sun that flowers used to receive.

For a moment, Atsushi seemed to ponder the question. He had overheard some people talking about the same subject in the coffee shop. It wasn't much, as he didn't like snooping around. There was something about the girls seeing several cute guys carrying the boxes and Naomi seemed interested in one of them. Tanizaki also reported seeing some guitars and drums, so they started to assume it might be a band or maybe a music store. It wasn't until Lucy arrived telling about being a tattoo parlor and new neighbors that everyone understood what it really was.

"Oh, it's the new neighbor," he finally said. "They're opening a tattoo parlor next door. You know, where Oda's bookstore used to be. Apparently, Ango sold the place."

Hearing Oda's name, a strange sensation ran down Dazai's spine, like a shiver. His legs trembled and he could feel his heart racing inside his chest. If he hadn't leaned against the counter, he might have fallen to the floor. He gripped the wood of the counter tightly and tried to keep his breathing at a steady pace. That subject still affected him more than he realized.

His hands went around his neck, which was covered with bandages. Bad memories flashed through his mind.

Dazai always knew it was a matter of time before Ango sold the old bookstore. After all, it was his responsibility after Oda's death. Even though they had a good time there, without him, there was no longer any point in keeping the place open. The best thing to do was sell. Also, it had been two years since it all happened, it was time to move on. That didn't stop him from feeling shaken.

One way or another, he would have to accept it. But maybe, he would have liked to have known sooner and not been caught off guard like that. Although it was to be expected, he had not been in contact with Ango for months now.

Still, he felt he should have done more and if he had expressed how he felt, maybe he and Ango would have made a deal together and the store wouldn't need to be sold like that. Like it or not, it mattered to the three of them. Dazai wished his friend had had a little more compassion before he made any rash decisions.

Now, it was too late.

He got a little scattered because of the confusing thoughts running through his mind. Dazai was overthinking, he used to do it once in a while and most of the time it was like being lost inside a maze he couldn't find his way out of.

There was a technique his psychologist taught him a few months ago. All he needed to do was take a deep breath and imagine a stop sign in front of him. At first, he thought it was bullshit because it didn't help at all. However, after a few tries, it started to get results and thoughts started to fade.

Luckily for Dazai, he managed to push his thoughts away that time. Not completely. The thoughts were still there, but gradually they were being kept in the back of his mind. As if they were distant memories that didn't deserve to be remembered.

"I imagined he would do it sooner or later," that's what he managed to say. His voice was sincere, but at the same time, you could hear an upset tone. Atsushi seemed to notice but said nothing, the subject was delicate and thought it was best not to bring it up.

Dazai was still puzzled to find out more about the tattoo parlor and then, decided to change the subject. "And did you meet the new neighbor?"

Haruki and Momo were now on Atsushi's lap as he leaned on the ground. There were no more snacks, so they snuggled between his legs and purred nonchalantly. Dazai shifted his attention to them for a split second. Cats had never done anything like that to him and he was the owner. The boy really had a way with animals, there was no denying it.

"Me? No, I just heard Lucy talking about it this morning," was Atsushi's response. He didn't even look at Dazai, he was too busy pampering the cats.

There was nothing more Atsushi could say. All information had been given. Dazai couldn't help but frown after hearing everything Atsushi said. He didn't look the least bit pleased by the mess outside. And the boy was right for him. After all, he knew that Kunikida would be making a lot less if it was the coffee shop, it was surprising that Dazai still hadn't done anything about the boxes blocking the store's entrance.

Not much time had passed while they were talking. But any minute less on Atsushi's work schedule would affect his salary and Kunikida was adamant about that. He stood up, causing the cats to get off. They both made an irritated noise and went back to hiding by the store shelves. He slapped at his clothes in an attempt to get rid of the nailed fur. Atsushi could never go back to the coffee shop with his dirty clothes, he had already received too many scoldings that month.

"Can I go now?" he asked, a little embarrassed. "Kunikida-san won't be happy if he knows I'm not working."

Dazai seemed a little off. He didn't pay much attention to what the boy said. His mind was brooding over all the new information he had just received. All he knew was that Atsushi had asked him a question, he would just agree to whatever it was. There were bigger problems to worry about that he planned to face later that day.

"Sure," was all he said in reply. As much as Atsushi hadn't revealed much, it was enough for Dazai, so there was no point in keeping the boy there. "And put this coffee on my tap. I'll pay at the end of the month."

They both knew how untrue that phrase was. Dazai had been asking for credit for months and never paid any bills on the date, all were late. This time it would be no different. He and Kunikida were friends. Both had moved to the neighborhood together and opened a business on that street virtually the same day. As much as Dazai liked to piss him off, they always advised one another on their respective investments. So, he knew Kunikida wouldn't mind adding something else to his tap.

Dazai waved to the boy, he opened the door making the bell ring again and in that way, Atsushi left the store.

It was around three o'clock in the afternoon when the florist finished the final arrangements for the order. Just in time for the customer to pick it up. After that, there wasn't much to do in the store. He organized some of the shelves, watered some plants that required water, and pruned some of the roses in the little garden on the sidewalk.

It was then that he realized that most of the boxes had already been taken into the neighboring store. The truck was no longer there either. There was no one outside and everything was too quiet.

He glanced at the entrance door to the tattoo parlor, it was open. Dazai continued to water the flowers, but his attention was always drawn to watching the door. He wouldn't deny it, he was actually considering stepping into the place. The man just didn't know if he dared to do it.

The florist walked slowly, getting closer to the place. He made sure no one was around and kept looking in through one of the windows. Apparently, there was no one inside either, which was weird. Most of the people who were helping them move must have left. But there was a motorcycle parked in front of the flower shop. The red-haired, tattooed man was probably there, inside the store.

He remained still for a while, his body was static as if he were a statue. The store's front had been completely renovated, something he hadn't noticed before, even though he passed the building every single day. And for some reason, he felt bad.

How could he not *<i>notice</i>* it?

That used to be one of his favorite places in the world. Not only because Oda sold the best books in the area, but also because whenever he felt sad or overwhelmed, he just had to run to the bookstore and there would always be someone to help him. Even when there was no one, Dazai still felt welcomed, books always had the power to take you away from that reality and were good to help him forget about the real world.

Everything had changed.

The walls were once painted a deep red and some bookcases were even distributed along the sidewalk. Now everything had been painted a rather dull shade of grey. Several stickers had been glued to the glass, most of them with symbols of rock bands. There was a sign reading "Arahabaki Tattoos and Piercing" above the front door.

It was uncomfortable to see the store that way. Dazai felt it was as if a part of Oda was gone forever and he didn't even see it happen. The air ran out of his lungs and he began to feel the anxiety coursing through his veins. It was much more than he could handle.

It had been a bad idea to have shown up in the store. The best would have been to wait until the next day, he would have more time to reflect and relax about the excess information that was being deposited in his brain.

Before Dazai could have time to go back to the flower shop, his body collided with someone else's. The plant watering can flew out of his hand, spilling water everywhere, and then finding a spot on the ground. On impact, both bodies fell to the ground as well. Dazai let out a pained noise as he felt his back hit the ground hard. His vision blurred and everything

around him seemed to spin. It took him a while to process what had just happened and the only thing he was sure of was that the fall hadn't been his fault.

"Hey! Are you out of your mind? Watch where you're going, dickhead!" A voice yelled at him, it was charged with rage.

Dazai blinked a few times trying to focus on the person lying in front of him.

The voice belonged to the man he had seen earlier that day, the owner of the motorcycle parked in front of the flower shop. The man was quite short compared to Dazai, he wore black clothes with a white shirt and a choker on his neck. He also had a piercing in his nose, as well as in his lips and eyebrow. He had a few tattoos all over his arms, but the one that drew the most attention was a red camellia that stretched from his right wrist to his shoulder.

Quickly the redhead got up. His clothes were soaked from the water that had leaked from the watering can, but he didn't seem to care. He realized that he had dropped the person he had run into. The man was still lying on the ground and seemed disoriented because of the bump.

Chuuuya noticed that the man's arms and neck were covered by bandages. He assumed that he was probably already hurt and felt even worse from the fall, afraid that he had hurt him further. And deep down he knew that the fall was his fault, the change left him distracted and he didn't even notice that someone was standing at the door of the store.

"Shit! I'm sorry," said the redhead, rubbing his neck. He was embarrassed for yelling at someone he didn't even know.

Then he reached out to Dazai, who was still slumped with his eyes riveted on the man in front of him. It took a while, but Dazai took his hand to get up. His back was aching from the fall, but it was bearable pain. He still looked a little off, but not like before. Somehow, the fall made him slowly return to normal and the discomfort was no longer a nuisance.

Instinctively, he slowly backed away from the redhead, giving a few more inches of distance between them. Dazai's body was still tense, he gripped both arms, hugging himself.

"Are you okay?" The redhead asked. His gaze checked Dazai thoroughly as if he was trying to make sure he hadn't been hurt or anything.

The brunette just nodded, the words seemed to be stuck in his throat, preventing him from saying anything in response.

"You must be Dazai," the redhead continued to say, and he gave Dazai a gentle smile.

Hearing his name made him shift position, now crossing his arms in front of him in a defensive posture. His eyes narrowed and his lips twitched into a thin line. Dazai didn't have many acquaintances, so he began to suspect this stranger who *knew* his name.

Then, the redhead seemed to notice his behavior and clarified: "Ango told me I might be meeting you around here."

"Who are you?" Dazai still looked a little brooding, but he managed to ask.

"I'm Chuuya," he introduced himself. "I'm the new owner of the shop," he pointed a finger at the tattoo parlor entrance and Dazai's eyes followed in the same direction. There was a proud smile on Chuuya's lips, he looked happy.

Looking at the storefront, Dazai could see that there was nothing that reminded him of Oda. After the renovation, everything seemed to scream that it belonged to Chuuya. The colors, the stickers, the name. It didn't seem obvious, Dazai was good at hiding his emotions, but he was shaken.

That's when he realized he wasn't prepared for a change like that. He was an adult and he would have to accept it, but it had been two long years of trying to accept what happened and looking for a way to move forward, but it wasn't that simple. It was selfish on Dazai's part, only he didn't want a new neighbor, let alone the store that belonged to his best friend.

Of course, he had no right to say what Chuuya could and couldn't do. The place didn't even belong to him. However, nothing stopped him from testing his new neighbor's patience. Maybe he'd give up trying to keep a tattoo parlor in a simple neighborhood like this and walk away.

It was a risky plan — and downright self-centered —, but Dazai couldn't care less.

Pissing people off was what he was best at, he would use it to his advantage.

"You? The new owner?" He asked in a fake surprised tone. "I thought you were a garden gnome who ran away from my shop," his words were full of mockery.

In a matter of seconds, the redhead's expression completely changed. The smile faded and his eyebrows pulled closer together. His cheeks blushed with irritation. Small veins pop out on his forehead. One of his fists closed at his side and the other grabbed Dazai by his bolo tie. The man's sapphire blue eyes were filled with fury. Adrenaline seemed to run through his entire body.

"What did you just say?" The redhead's voice was harsh, his words were filled with hate, and then his jaw was tense and jut forward slightly.

At no time did Dazai seem to mind the man's irritation. On the contrary, he smiled slyly. Chuuya realized he wasn't worth fighting with and released Dazai right away. Without realizing it, he pushed him back, causing the taller man to stagger a few times. He almost needs to lean on the wall to keep from falling again.

"Oh, what an angry chibi," he continued to mock.

All the pity and compassion he'd had for Dazai minutes before disappeared. The man was perhaps one of the most annoying people he had ever met in his life. After all, in a few minutes, he managed to get Chuuya mad.

He wanted to scream, but held back, in response, just said:

"Piss off, mackerel!"

*Mackerel*? What's that supposed to mean? Dazai assumed Chuuya was terrible at offense. He didn't want to brag, but he had already won that fight.

"Is this how you receive your customers?" He asked, pretending to be shocked by Chuuya's behavior.

Chuuya rested his eyes on him, looking surprised by the question. There was no way Dazai could be a possible client of the tattoo parlor. The redhead didn't like to judge someone by their appearance, but Dazai was far from having anything similar to his clients. The florist wore a white sweater, plaid pants, and a flowered headband - not to mention the pink apron.

"You're *not* my client," Chuuya stated and let out a short laugh.

Dazai crossed his arms in front of his chest. He stuck his tongue out at Chuuya, who just thought, *why is he acting like an annoying brat?*

"I could be," Dazai countered, but it was a lie. He would never get one of those exaggerated tattoos on his body. Still, he needed to continue the mockery, Chuuya didn't seem angry enough. "You'd be getting a bad review on Google right now."

Then Chuuya narrowed his eyes. Getting a bad review on Google could be a problem for businesses. Was Dazai threatening him? It seemed so.

He clenched his fists so hard he felt his nails sinking into his skin.

"Are you *threatening* me?"

Bold of him to assume that a bad review on Google *is* an actual threat.

No, Dazai wasn't threatening him. Joking? Maybe. He realized how easy it was to provoke Chuuya and would use it against him. He was going to be a bit of fun, for now, after all, he wanted to test the limits of this new neighbor and maybe he would be his new target for teasing — Kunikida was no longer fun to annoy as before.

"I don't know, am I?" Dazai's mockery continued.

"You tell me!"

The silence that hung in the air was awkward. Dazai said nothing in response. He just stayed there, looking at the sky. It was dusk, little by little the moon began to take shape and

light up the street. It was the end of the day, so there weren't many stores open anymore, everyone had already retired or gone home. It was still the end of winter, so the cold began to get more intense as night fell.

The only ones left were him and Chuuya.

Dazai took one last look at the store and gave a sad smile. Despite the restoration, he could still remember Oda and the good times they had lived there. Something that didn't last long, as a bad feeling seemed to take over his body.

Chuuya was looking at him intently as if trying to decipher a riddle that had no solution. He wanted to say something, after all, he knew what happened to the former owner of the store, but he thought that maybe it wasn't the right time. Even more, because he was still angry at Dazai's words.

"We'll see in the future," Dazai looked a little distant as he spoke. "I have to go now, see you tomorrow, *slug*."

Just like that, Dazai made his way back to the flower shop, leaving the mockery for later. It didn't look like it, but he was exhausted — physically and mentally.

In no time, he looked back, but he could feel Chuuya's eyes staring at him as he walked. He stopped. He considered apologizing to his new neighbor, knowing he hadn't acted decently. However, he was angry and frustrated. It wasn't Chuuya's fault and he was aware he made a bad first impression.

Not that he cared, Chuuya had also made a terrible impression on him. Maybe it was *hate* at first sight.

As soon as he heard the tattoo studio door close, Dazai continued walking. He left the plant watering can on the ground. It was empty and he was no longer interested in watering the beds on that frosty night to come.

He returned to the flower shop, Dazai locked the door behind him and let his body slide to the floor. He took his cell phone from his pocket and dialed Dr. Yosano's number. He needed to talk to someone. He just wanted to vent. It had been about eleven months since the last time he showed up for an appointment with the psychologist, he knew it. Although, if he called, no matter what time, she would answer.

The air lacked in his lungs, breathing had become a difficult task. Dazai's clothes were still wet from what happened earlier, he would probably be sick later, but he didn't give a shit about that.

The number glowed on his cell phone screen, he just needed to press the call button. Nevertheless, he didn't have the courage. Dazai threw the device away and hugged his knees. He was in no condition to return home in that state. So he just lay down on the floor, the cats appeared to keep him company and he let some tears run down his cheeks.

It had been a long time since he cried, it was a liberating feeling, but at the same time, it seemed to burn his skin. It *hurt*. Everything in his body seemed to hurt. Especially his chest. His heartbeat was so fast, he felt like he was having a heart attack. It seemed to char from the inside out.

Dazai lay on the floor for the rest of the night, unable to sleep, just letting the tears breakout and the bad memories tainted him with sorrow.