

## Sail away with me honey – day 4 E

Grrrrr... rumble.... for the fifth time in the past couple of minutes your stomach was talking to you again. “Come on Ami, I’m getting hungry” you think to yourself quickly you give your stomach a rub, be still my pet you’ll get fed soon. Looking at your watch it had been over an hour since the officers had left you two it wasn’t far off 1.30pm now, what was it with women and window-shopping you never did understand how they stand to look at the same rubbish over and over again? Still she had her moments for someone that lived her life in jeans or jump suite to a point where you could say that she had shares with the manufacturer Ami could pick out some stunning clothing for both her and you if there was ever an occasion to dress up, quickly you look at her from behind, strange I’ve not notice Ami’s dress being so short before? Normally she picked out some  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  length skirts, this dress was edging more towards the  $\frac{1}{4}$  length boarding on the mini skirt length had she being taking to Tomoko about what to wear without you noticing? Somehow you couldn’t see that happening especially after the way that Tomoko hit out against Kotomi a few weeks ago, but the resemblances was startling, still Ami hadn’t asked you to drive her to anywhere resonantly and for the past couple of weeks you both been stuck in the library or at either of your two homes most nights after school just trying to catch up in time for the finals which were this coming week, could she have borrowed it from Kotomi? Again you look Ami up and down... no she couldn’t have, it fitted to well to something of Kotomi, besides Ami was a little taller and not so busty her clothing just wouldn’t fit. Could she have just worn it before and I you just hadn’t noticed? Again you glance up and down her body, yes she defiantly did look better when she dressed more feminine than her usual tomboy look, if she only just would grow here hair a little bit more she would look amazing. In the corner of your eye you catch Ami’s reflection in the window, looking back up you notice Ami staring at you, a wisp full smile spreading across her face. Dang busted... still she didn’t seem to have minded at all, Smiling you playfully turn away as if you hadn’t noticed, pausing for a second you mentally give a count of five then turn back again.

Gazing at your own reflection you couldn’t help but chuckle to yourself. There was no way that you were going to wear this builders shirt to where ever Ami was taking you, besides apart from looking like the extra from a lumber yard, you were sure that it still had the blood or sweat from its previous owner still on it. You didn’t object for a second earlier when Ami jokingly offered to pick something else out for you to wear, When it come to fashion you couldn’t tell the difference between a trendy shirt to something that your grandparents would wear, personally you didn’t care as long as it felt comfortable and was functional hey why bother there’s no such thing as bad taste is there? What one person may call a fashion accident could easily be the next fashion craze right? For a moment you dwell on what you were just thinking about, dragging old memories up from your past. Again you chuckle to yourself, yes you may not be the worst dresser on the planet but there had been numerous times in your life you had almost created road wrecks with some of the clothing that you had worn. You chuckle to yourself, the times that you had been the brunt of endless jokes from Ami and your old friends.

Old Friends.... that thought echoed in your mind, again the years flash past your eyes, each moment bubbling to the surface with every blink of an eye.... joy, laughter, fun. Then there were the other moments, the sadness, the tears, the pain, the anger.... the heartache, some you wished you would never again remember, each a ghost rising from your past.

In all your years that you had been in this world, only Ami was the one that you still spoke to from your childhood, regardless of all the tantrums and arguments that you both had gotten into over the years, the stunts that you had pulled.... the heartache and tears that you had created... she was still here.... she had never given up on you like so many others had before.... “What?” Ami asks breaking your train of thought. “Sorry what was that Ami?” you ask, turning around to face her she was staring right at you. “You were thinking about something.... Is something troubling you? .... I could tell by the expression on your face” she asks her voice slipping from someone concerned back in to teacher mode, not today Ami your not getting me that easily you wanted to play games I can

too. "Was I making a face sorry I didn't realist" you comment without any hint of emotion in your voice. "Come on, what gives... I've never seen you like that before, what was it.... Come on.... talk to me.... did you want to say something? .... You know.... you can always.... talk to me about anything" she asks, her words say one thing yet you could tell from her body language and emotion in her voice that underneath she was acting like a small child playing on ice for the first time, each step testing the surface, trying not to press too hard and break through to what could lay underneath, instead she skilfully managed each syllable, artfully sliding along and in-between the shifts in emotion trying to uncover the truth which lay on the other side.

Again you think back as some distant memory of you two together in the sand pit when you were a lot younger the taste of sand instantly filling your mouth. Everything was so simple back then, everything was black and white, right and wrong, somehow in the past 14 years not everything was so clear cut anymore, closing your eyes you smile at the thought of sand between your fingers and toes and the look on Ami's face back then, how you wished everything could be that simple again. Normally when Ami spoke to you about something like this, you would make her play the same game that she was currently making you play with Aki, making her squirm her way through 20 questions trying to find the truth, yet somehow at this moment it didn't feel right, there was something different in her voice, no longer did Ami sound like she was trying to state what you should, or poke fun at your feelings regardless of what you may have said in the past to her, as a trusted friend you had always valued Ami's options from a certain point of view, yet over the past few months she was no longer a person that you could just dismiss if you didn't agree with her, now she had become the voice of calm and reason in your head without it you wouldn't be the same. Right now if she had asked you about anything different then you would have told her without hesitation. But this wasn't the time for games.... as always your emotions about Ami were not clear, she was a friend but not just a friend, your closest friend, to the point where you would trust her with anything and do anything for her, but whatever was happening here between you and Ami you didn't have a clue, if you were wrong as what you were usually were when it came to you two then you don't want put any pressure on her, and ever make her feel uncomfortable around you. This friendship had lasted the better part of your life and you were not prepared to risk it all on your over active hormones for a second. Someday maybe if we were a little closer then I would until then.... Lets just take it a day at a time.... I hate to be a jerk lets just see how today goes first. Bewildered Ami didn't know what to say, as much as she wanted to she couldn't bring her self to make the first move, in a flash a thousand different emotions start played through her mind, Does he know how I feel about him? O my just heart won't stop pounding.... He wants to say something but what could it be? O god he doesn't like me. Please don't let him say that he doesn't love me, I don't know what I'll do if he says that he loves Kotomi instead.... Please I don't want him to see me cry.... He's waiting for me to say something.... I don't know what to say to him, I don't want to be rejected not now.... my god I'm sweating.... I can't think straight... please say something first, just smile at him Ami, yes let him think everything is ok yes that's what I'll do.

Clearly Ami wanted you to continue, but there must have been something in your expression stopping her from saying anything, she looks a bit hot and puzzled then as you watch her face she slips back into her usual wide smile, stepping forward you take her hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze (O god this is it, he's going to break up with me I know it, did he have any idea on how happy he made me the other day? and I thought that he was asking me to be his boyfriend... what am I talking about we are not even a couple yet... then why do I feel so torn up inside.) Twisting your head slightly you start to smile back at her with your usual grin "I'll tell you some other time.... almost finished" you ask trying to change the subject. (O thank merciful god) "Yes, I think I know where to go for your shirt, then we're grab something to eat, but first can we get a drink, I don't know about you but I'm getting very thirsty" Ami counters, still intensely studying your face, to the point where you didn't know what she was thinking about. "Great news... any longer and I'll have to start eating these fingers, (gently you pull one of Ami's fingers) just add a little bit of ketchup, bit of black pepper and who knows it may appear in the next good food guide" you say

wiry. As you watch Ami's expression changes again back to her usual smile "sorry can't let you do that... but if your real good I'll let you suck them for a while" she says playfully

Letting go of her hand you reach into your back pocket and pull out your wallet, taking out a few thousand credits you place them into Ami hand "here you pick out the shirt for me I'll grab the drinks, any thing will do as long as its not in pink or string like ok" quickly you look down and pull the shirt away from your body slightly "and defiantly make sure it doesn't make me look like I'm an extra to the Y.M.C.A" you say trying to suppress a smile for a second, giggling slightly Ami says "and I thought that you would look great in leather and studs...." again she giggles madly, rolling your eyes you can't help but give her a twisted grin. "Can you get me anything still to drink please, a can of Qoo® any flavor will do or a bottle of Pineapple Calpis® please" Ami asks, "OK get going, I'm getting hungry.... I'll be just over their by that tree don't go anywhere" you say with a smile on your face. Quickly Ami give you a peck on the cheek. "I won't be long I promise" turning you watch her enter the store, giving a quick count to ten you turn around and head to the nearest drinks vendor picking out a couple of drinks from the ice cabinet. As much as your stomach growled and your taste buds watered you resisted the sweets and snacks on the shop sides as you walked up to the checkout. Quickly you smell your own breath, Hmm not good must be the acid forming in my stomach, quickly you pick up a packet of mint dis-solvable gum you Paying the old lady behind the counter, clearly she was amused by your actions as she flashed you a big yellow stained grin as you handed her the cash, yuck.... That's nasty you think to yourself didn't she know the meaning of toothpaste? Suppressing your convictions to her appearance you Smile back at her as you take your changed from her weathered hands and head back to the meeting point that you told Ami to meet you at a few minutes earlier.

Dam it was getting hot, quickly you look into the sky searching the heavens for any sign of a cloud none about boy was it going to be hot again today quickly you seek out the shade from a Japanese willow sitting down you look at your watch again, 1.55pm not good at this rate Ami we'll be eating at the local sushi bar not that it would be your first choice by a mile but Ami always did like that stuff, maybe I should offer to drive we can't be that far away from wherever she wanted to go anyway. Leaning against the tree put pay to the idea of driving in an instance, whether by blind luck or someone up there didn't like you but either a twig or part of the bark somehow found its way to stick right into one of your bandaged marks on your back, jumping forward you turn around cursing whatever it was you hit, looking around you instead decide to rest against a small wall.

Dam it was hot, looking around again you search each the shop front for Ami just in case she had ducked into another store on the quick, nothing. Placing Ami's drink on the floor between your legs you roll the side of your can against back of your neck, ice cold condensation dripped off the can and rolled down your back, quickly you take a gasp of breath, you can't help but arch your head backwards and shivering at the sensation. Opening your eyes again you spot Ami outside the shop that you were with her a few minutes earlier, to your surprise she was talking to someone. At first you don't think anything of it, he must be asking for directions to somewhere or something, but instead they carry on talking. Inside your mind a little voice starts to scream, who was this guy? He must have been at least a couple of years older, and at least six feet tall... the way he was dressed he looked like a typical art student complete with longish hair, Ami didn't look worried at all, in fact the way that she was talking to him it was as if she knew him from somewhere, funny I don't recognized him... and I thought I knew all of Ami's friends... what the.... Was he was trying it on? For a couple of minutes you watch from the distance somewhere deep inside it felt like a bomb had just gone off. I can't watch this... getting up you finally make eye contact with Ami quickly you give her a wave hoping that you won't have to go over there and demand where this guy thinks he can get off. As you watch Ami turns and gives you a wave, great she's spotted me, following her line of sight the man turns and looks at you, smiling you give him sarcastic wave as well, yes she's is with someone don't even think about trying anything, giving a nod in acknowledgment he turns back to face Ami, Ami however was still watching you. Could she tell that you didn't like him or

the way that he was taking to her? Suddenly he put his hand on her shoulder, distracted she turns to face him, again the pressure builds inside you, smart move asshole... that's two I owe you, carefully you sitting back down again, its not as if you had anything to worry about this was Ami after all and not Tomoko, Ami wouldn't leave you standing just because she got a better offer heck its not that every guy in town would sell there soul just to spend five minutes alone with her, but here you were... watching from the sidelines as someone else tried to take her away from you. All the time that voice in your mind was getting louder and louder, restlessly you move about in your seat, somehow you manage to restrain yourself, you were determined not to make a scene. Ami wasn't saying much yet you could tell that she was listening to word that was being said, her hands were link together hanging from them was her bag and another carrier gently swing from side to side although she wasn't making direct eye contact there was no hiding the fact that she enjoyed being around him, occasionally she would look up and give a brief smile then playfully look away, watching your heart pounds within your chest as you see Ami's posture change, arching backward slightly she swings her hands behind linking her fingers, again she laughs at something he was saying. Was she flirting with him?

This continued for a few more minutes, every now and again she would give a little giggle, all the time that feeling inside sank that bit lower with every passing second, the voice within your head was no longer shouting alone. As every second passes a new voice joined in the streaming chorus running through your mind, the pressure of a thousand silent voices hitting you in waves, blocking out the sounds from your surroundings. Inside your mouth, stomach acid to rises burning the back of our throat. Again as you watch for the second time the man rested his hand on her shoulder, quickly he steps forward half a pace, Ami didn't resist, gently he brushed the side of her face, Ami started to blush moving closer again he gave her a kiss on the cheek. Inside the voices converge into one loud "NO" piercing your chest and crushing your heart. Stunned you couldn't believe what you were seeing, Ami how could you? The corner of your eyes swells, a single tear trickles down your left cheek. For a second you didn't know what to do, its not as if we were seeing each other... then why do I feel so bad? In the space of a heartbeat anger and adrenalin filled your system taking over from the shock, this time you couldn't control your temper. Getting back up you grab Ami's drink ready to hit the guy with it, menacingly you start marching across the courtyard, your face a picture of pure rage, hurriedly two other passers by scurry out of your way. The distance between you couldn't have been more than 150 feet separating the three of you, yet it felt like miles what's wrong with me? It feels like I've got half of fukyama football squad on my legs. Barely half way across the man steps away from Ami, reaching up Ami gives a brief wave. For some reason you stop in mid stride, your clenched fists shaking with rage, suddenly he turns towards where you once were sitting, a look of surprised appears on his face finding you were no longer their, quickly he scans the crowd for your face and where you were going. Instantly he spots you moving towards him and the anger etched into your face, quickly he gives you another nod then walks off in the other direction. Not moving your eyes track him along the road. That's it keep walking if you know what's good for you.

Watching him go for a second Ami turns and starts to walk over to you, she seemed to be in a daze, clearly she was lost in thought has she didn't even notice the passers by avoiding you. Not looking where she was going Ami manages to trip over a loose stone slab in the floor. Quickly she does a quick couple of steps forward. Regaining her balance she stands still and straightens her dress, looking up she smiles broadly at you expecting you to pull a quick one liner, but you didn't care anymore. Spotting that you weren't looking at her she carries on walking over to you. "Is that for me?" Ami asks, ignoring her you still keep on tracking the guy walking down the road, "(says your name)... I said is that for me?" Ami repeats. Not saying anything you raise your hand containing the bottle yet you keep all of your attention on the man walking away. Quickly Ami gives the bottle a tug, yet she cannot release it from your grip, again she gives it a pull with both hands thinking that you were having a joke with her again she fails to move it from your grip. "hey let go of it will you" at the same time she jabs you in the ribs with her fingers, releasing the bottle you turn and face Ami,

she didn't seem to have a care in the world, did she have any idea on what she had just put me through? Finally she notices your face "Hey what's with you?" Ami asks with a puzzled look on her face, quickly she takes a mouthful of her drink then focuses her attention back on you, for a second you didn't know what to say, so great was your rage inside. "(Says your name) did you here me, I said what's wrong with you... you look so serious" Ami asks again, again the silence lingers in the air the only sound coming from the passers by and the birds flying overhead, again the words "Ami how could you" echo through your mind again you tighten your grip with your right hand sending your knuckles white, ignoring the pain from your nails digging into the palm of your hand there was no way that you were willing to talk to her at the moment, all you wanted to do was get into your car and drive. Turning away from her you start to walk back to your car "Hey I'm talking to you" Ami says running up besides you, again you can't find the words to speak without wanting to scream in her face. Stopping for a second you take a drop of your drink, the can bending and twisted in your hand as you drank. Somehow you manage to get a few words out "come on lets go" you say quietly, "so that's it your hungry? Why didn't you just say so come on we may just make it" Ami says getting hold of the wrong end of the stick, she didn't have a clue about how you were feeling. "Here take these bags for a second" she says passing them to you, at first you hesitate not wanting to take them, again Ami pushes them towards you, reluctantly you grab the bags as you didn't want to make matters any worse than they were. "Right race you to the car first one there drives" Ami says playfully trying to get some sort of reaction from you, reaching into your back pocket you toss her the keys "I'm not in the mood" you say bluntly. "Spoilsport...you know you can be a right grouch when you're hungry.... must be all that junk you eat" Ami says sarcastically. Even though Ami was joking clearly she thought that your bad tempter was down to the fact that you hadn't eaten at all today and was punishing her for taking so long, she didn't have a clue. For a second you can't help but smile at what she just said yet the feeling of betrayal permeates through your mind how could she? What am I feeling so hurt for? A week ago you were on cloud nine when you asked Ami to the prom and you thought Ami has the same sort of feeling about it as well, clearly after this you didn't know how she felt about you anymore. Heck after what you just witnessed a moment ago you weren't sure that you still wanted to go with her anymore. Did she know that you had feelings for her? Or was her actions this morning just her being playful? Had you made a mistake asking her in the first place?

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Eventually you both finally get back to the car, somehow the distance felt longer this time round, dropping the bags into the back seat you don't bother opening the door, instead you just jump in. "Show off" Ami says wiry again you don't comment, adjusting the seat Ami starts the car, lost in thought you keep your eyes locked on the world around ignoring Ami completely. Exiting from the mall Ami turned back onto the main road, slowly the minutes pass, this drive seemed to be taking forever turn after turn, side street after side street, if Ami was trying to fool and believe that she was just throwing you off the destination you were no longer buying it, it was almost as if she was trying to retrace a child's mad squiggle draw onto a road map it felt like you were just driving in circles in a moment you were sure that you were going to go past the car wash again. Not that it seemed to Ami to be bothering her at all, muttering just above her breath she starts to sing a tune that was playing on your radio in your room this morning. Eventually you both finally find it back onto the freeway again, making your way back over the harbor bridge you make a right, god her humming was getting to you. Ever since you both got back into the car you hadn't said one word to her, the tension between you two was getting a little uneasy, not that it mattered to you right now you still didn't feel like talking, to break the agonizing silence Ami turns on the Radio tuning the station into the latest hits. Again she start to hum out the tune playing on the radio was she doing it to get some reaction from you? Well if it was, you weren't playing. Reaching out you turn up the volume drowning out her humming and ending all chance of conversation between you. Quickly Ami throws you a puzzled look from your actions, noticing that you weren't looking She starts to

drum the steering wheel.

Slowly the buildings start to thin around you. The air somehow smelt and felt different cleaner somehow, was it you? It had been a while since you had had the roof down on the car so you couldn't be sure. Again you sniff to make sure, yes defiantly different somehow, with all the turns you didn't know where we were anymore but by the lack of traffic now on the road it felt like the road to nowhere clearly we were heading for somewhere in the countryside but where? Again the minutes pass Finally Ami pauses outside a signpost stating "beach bay harbour" turning right into a deserted dust road Ami finally comes to a stop at a barrier about a mile down the road. "Come on were here;" Ami shouts out trying to over come the voice on the radio simultaneously turning down it down with her left hand. Quickly you look around, there was nothing about, no cars, no people, heck not even the sound of birds chirping, all the were, was a few dune banks blocking your view further down the beach, the odd patch of grass and plants that grew around this area, the odd tidal pool that caught between the sand banks and rocks and a short jetty running out to sea. Is this what she was planning all along, a romantic meal for alone just for two? Somehow after the way she acted earlier you weren't going to be good company.

Again your stomach growls in hunger "Sorry Ami but I think we forgot the food to have a picnic on the beach" you say with a look of destine across your face, Ami didn't notice however she had fished out her bag from behind you and was busy rummaging around inside it to notice, suddenly she swears (what the) that's not like Ami you think to yourself. "Pass me your phone a sec I think mines still in the alley... now where did that card go?" she says a bit flustered. Thinking back to the alley you couldn't remember whether or not you still had the phone, quickly you pad down your jacket checking your side pockets then moving up towards your inner pocket finding an impression you stick your hand in and pull out the phone "here take it" you say handing it to her. "Aw... you found it... you little sweetie... thank you" she says taking it from you. "Some how Ami I think that we are a bit far of the beaten track to expect a delivery from a Yo-sushi or fukyama pizza delivery." you say trying desperately hard to keep your voice neutral. Typing in a number on her phone in one hand she still had her gaze transfixed on your face, Ami was clearly amused at your comments for some reason, twisting her face she tries to pull off your typical grin, failing miserably she sticks out her tongue instead. Suddenly there was a voice at the other end of the phone; startled Ami quickly brings the phone up to her ear "Moshi, Moshi"

Leaving her to talk you pull away opening the car door with your left hand and start to clime out. Where were we anyway, sure it was a beach somehow it looked familiar why you didn't know why. Sure each beach look like but there was something about this place it was just like an old pair of shoes that you hadn't warn for a while, you may not recognize them but when you put them on you knew instantly that they were yours, it was the same sort of feeling that you were getting now with this place, slowly you walk away from Ami who was engrossed in a conversation with someone and head for the surf, quickly you slip off your shoes, stepping in to the water you scrunch your toes together feeling the soft sand slip between the grooves of your feet instantly the memories of playing in the sand box when you were younger comes back to you. Damm that felt good, closing your eyes for a second you tilt your head back toward the sun listening to the sound of the surf pounding against the shore, slowly your mind builds a 3-d image of your surroundings as the sound echoing off the different sorts of terrain and bounced back to the sea again. Right now you didn't want to move all your aches and pains disappear in the waves, breathing in you hold it for a second then let it out slowly easing the tension from your body, this was the most relaxing thing you had done in almost a month. Suddenly there was a new sound from behind it almost sounded like a bags of rice being dropped somehow in the distance yet they were getting closer, opening your eyes again you turn toward the odd sound, Their hopping madly from one foot to the other Ami was bounding towards you "ouch, ouch.... How do you stand this heat of the sand it's baking hot," she shouts out. Funny you didn't even notice. Reaching the shore Ami quickly sticks her feet into the water "ooooo lovely.... well it shouldn't be long now" Ami says playfully grabbing your arm to steady her self, quickly you pull your arm away from her, over compensating Ami almost stumbles

into the sea “hey.... don’t be like that” she says giving you a push. Quickly you take a few more steps forward, stopping you turn and kick out toward at the sea sending a spray of water up catching the suns rays for a second to form a mini rainbow. Again you start to walk towards the jetty yet your gaze remains fixed out on the horizon, in the distance you could make out the outlines of a mixture boats and sail craft. You always did like the sea ever since you were young. Memories of your first year school trip at fukyama juniors bounce about in your mind, two weeks of learning the ropes and sailing your own laser and catamaran you were top of your class by a mile even the instructor has said that you were a natural everything was so simple, no worries... just you, the boat, and the sea... all working seamlessly together. God you missed it, ever since the yachting club closed on the river a few years ago it had been harder and harder to get to the coast and get out on the waves, still since then you had taken to swimming with a passion after all water was water regardless of whether it was fresh or salty but right now at this moment you would give anything to be out there and lost on and between the waves.

In no time at all you were standing a couple of feet away from the jetty, sea weed had collected around the steps and bases of the support beams, carefully you inspect the steps, they looked well rotted from the exposure to the elements carefully you place your left foot on the first step, pressing down slightly you hesitate for a second as the wood bends beneath your toes carefully you try to estimate whether it would support your weight, but before you could make any sort of decision about it the local wildlife makes up your mind for you barely inches away a couple of very large crabs emerge from underneath the steps and seaweed clearly looking annoyed at nearly being squashed, one of them scurries towards your feet furiously pinching its claws at your toes, Quickly you take a jump backwards trying to avoid being nipped by the little critter but end up running straight into Ami in the process, the impact knocks you both off your feet, dropping your shoes you quickly turn around catching Ami in one of your arms as you fall, pulling her closer you reach out with your other arm trying to cushion the impact.... Thump...ouch you think to yourself. Your arm buckles with the combined weight of both you, Ami gives out a short whimper from the impact, quickly you spread your legs around her body, straining against the combined weight you lift Ami and yourself away from the damp sand. Her hands spread across your back as if holding on for dear life.

“Sorry about that” you say through clenched teeth, a wave breaks sending a ripple of water underneath both of you, as it retracts your hand and feet sank a little lower into the sand. “be a bit more careful next time ok that hurt” Ami says whispering into your ear, again another wave breaks beneath you, your hand completely was now covered in sand, unintentionally you find yourself sniffing her hair, the smell of citrus fruit again fills your head and lungs... it was captivating. By now your arm had started to tremble through the strain but you didn’t care Unfortunately the sea brings reality back to the foreground as another wave this time crashes over your wrist. The tide must be coming in as every passing wave seemed to be getting high and higher, if you both stayed like this any much longer one of you or both were lightly to get drenched. Twisting slightly you try to move but because of the way that Ami was holding you, you can’t get up “Ami can you loosen up your grip a little I can’t get up” you say jokingly. Letting go of you Ami places an arm behind her to steady herself, getting up you pull Ami to her feet just as another large wave breaks sending water rushing over your now buried ankles, carefully you pull yourself free hoping not to sink again before you reached the jetty. Again another powerful wave powers up the beach, without warning Ami was once more swept off her feet again. Stumbling into your chest you catch her from falling into the water, quickly Ami grabs one of your arms to steady herself, looking up at you she smiles widely at you “thank you” she says again you pull her to her feet letting go of her Ami still continues to hold your arm, silently you throw a What? Look at her puzzled Ami looks at your face not understanding; slowly you look down to your arm flexing your wrist mussels as if they had pins and needles, instantly Ami lets go looking back up she had a sheepish look on her face. Quickly she scratches the back of her head, was she blushing? Suddenly she starts to giggle a little “Sorry” she says, again you throw her a puzzled look holding it for a few seconds your turn away and head a bit

further up the sand to somewhere where you could easily jump up onto the jetty. Carefully you step around the seaweed hoping to avoid anymore hidden crabs; quickly you take a few running steps forward then jumping up onto the jetty. "Hey what about me?" Ami shouts turning round she had both her hands planted firmly on her hips with a disapproving look on her face just like every morning when she found you still in bed 20 minutes before school started. Great just what I need now you say to yourself. Taking hold of a support strut you hold out your other free hand grabbing hold with both hands you pull Ami up

"Thank you", she says straightening her dress, suddenly she pauses "Aren't you going to change that now?" looking down you notice that you were still wearing the old shirt the officer had given you earlier. Quickly you pad down your pockets looking for the car keys "here I have them" Ami says reaching into her bag. Quickly you take the keys from her "thanks, be back soon" you say, quickly she flashes you a smile then turns and walks down to the end of the jetty, for a moment you just stand there what's with her anyway, Ami was just adding well weird and the longer that you were away from her the better you think to yourself slowly you make your way along the sand again back towards the car, reaching into the back you pull the bag that Ami had brought from under the seat, let's see what she had got... at first you didn't know what to make of it, it was just a blue shirt with a bit of embroidery on the collar, well the colour was ok but you weren't sure that it was you, but that wasn't what had your attention, fishing it out of the bag a small piece of paper falls to the floor, quickly you pick it up hmm must be the bill, carefully you inspect it praying that Ami hadn't spent all the money that you had given her on it because right now you were sure that you didn't like it. The second you start to read your blood turns icy cold, No it wasn't the bill instead it was a hand scribbled note: would love to see you again without the escort present maybe we could mix up a bit of darkroom magic ☐, call me: 0311 3767774 - K. Somehow or another that asshole that she was talking to earlier had managed to slip a note into the bag without you seeing. Looking back up you stare at Ami at the end of the jetty, a flood of anger fills your head again. Scrunching up the note you throw the note into the bushes if he was here right now you would have certainly have decked him, throwing the bag and shirt back into the car you find yourself kicking the car door closed turning you find yourself leaning against the front bonnet, resting a heel against the front metal fender, what ever she had said to lead him on like that you didn't know but right now you were not in the forgiving mood. Ami didn't give a damn for your feelings for her after today you have no intention of making them known either.

Getting up off the bonnet you quickly run around to the drivers door, jamming the key into the lock you undo the door swinging it open wildly the front wing crunching slightly through the force of the impact, jumping into the drivers seat you slam the door closed behind you. Your heart was racing, you just didn't know what to do, you needed space and time to think and this wasn't the place to do it, quickly you jam the key into the ignition you go to turn it on but something stops you, for a second you remain motionless, slowly you take your hand off the ignition, resting both your hands and head against the rim of the steering wheel, right now there was just one thing going through your mind, gotta get away from here, just go.... But that would leave Ami in the middle of wherever you were and it would end all chance of ever getting an explanation from her about what had happened in the last couple of hours and who that guy was, thinking about it though where exactly would I go to? You're in the middle of nowhere as it was already. For the next few minutes you just sit there, your mind just wrestling back and forth, "what should I do go or stay?" you say to yourself. Sitting back up you thump the steering wheel in anger, instantly regretting it as pain starts to shoot up your arms from your knuckles and wrists, throwing your head back you lean against the headrest taking a hand off the steering wheel you hold the bridge of your nose finding yourself shaking your head slightly back and forth, slowly you let out a deep breath of air that you didn't realise that you were holding. What was wrong with you anyway you shouldn't be this upset over a note, taking your hand away from your face you look out of the windscreen at Ami in the distance, each moment you stared at her the feeling of losing her was getting stronger and stronger, finally you come to a decision if something was going to be said today and Ami wasn't going to volunteer

that information then you were going to have to persuade her to tell you.

Getting out the car you reach into the back of the vehicle quickly you put on the new shirt still not entirely sure that it was your style. For a moment you stand there looking out over to the sea taking a deep breath “well lets get this over with” you say to yourself, slowly you walk down towards the jetty again, each step feeling heavier than the last, pausing for a second again you look out to the sea, in the distance you could make out a boat at first it seemed to resemble a trawler yet as it drew closer it was apparent that it was a different kind of craft all together, kind of like a launch for a much bigger ship in fact, as you watched the boat started to turn slightly and started to heading in your direction. Could they have engine trouble? Listening to the engine burble in the distance It didn't seem to have any sort of mechanical problem, could we be at its dock? Instantly you discount that idea, as there's nothing around here that could be described as a port of any kind. Either way by the looks of things you were going to find out, and by all appearances it was going to be soon. Quickening your pace you finally make your it to the end of the jetty with a couple of minutes to spare, Ami looks at you pulling a funny face “its not quite you is it” she says trying not to giggle ignoring her you look out onto the sea again at the approaching ship “I wonder what they want” you say out loud, looking down Ami had a strange expression on her face, you could tell that she knew yet she wasn't going to let on. At this moment you weren't in the mood to play any of Ami's guessing games instead you keep on watching the approaching ship slowly it comes along side, its Engines revs one last time in defiance before they die, quickly one of the ships hands throws you the mooring rope, securing it to one of the support posts another hand jumps onto the jetty securing the other end of the ship, what you originally thought was a launch vessel couldn't have been further from the truth and boy was she impressive, a top of the line power boat, easy 45 feet long and must have been at least three decks coming up behind you Ami slides an arm around your waist “come on get onboard this is for us” she says in her typical teachers voice, quickly you throw her a look of disgust “hey don't be like that, I was only playing, its a little bit better than a taxi don't you think” she says defensively, slowly your face softens a bit.. Letting go of you, you watch Ami board, hanging back for a second you try to keep your distance from her, you didn't want to get into an argument now, looking around you spot a few other people on board that were not the crew, as you watch Ami joins another woman who appeared to be traveling alone, she couldn't have been older than 25 that or she looked older than she actually was, straight away Ami gets into a conversation with her, stepping on board you make a beeline for the bridge and wheelhouse instead of joining her, besides she looked happy enough, leaving her for the next few minutes you keep chatting to the crew. Suddenly you hit a big wave, the boat lifts and thunders down the breakwater grabbing for the nearest fixed object quickly you look back up at Ami, she seemed ok, smiling reassuring at you she then turns to face the woman she was talking to a moment earlier, For a moment you find yourself staring at her wondering what was she thinking? Did she know how I was feeling? And where were we going exactly? Feeling like a loose end you leave the wheel house, hesitating for a moment you mentally flip a coin on whether or not to join her, looking at Ami again she seemed quite happy for the moment talking to the other woman, yet your blood was still boiling from reading that note in your bag, right now the best course of action would be just to find somewhere quite for a moment and think about what to do next. Leaving the second deck you head up to the front of the boat finding somewhere stable to sit for a moment you just look out to the sea and take in the rays.

As you leave Ami looks up again, slowly she watches (your name) leave without saying anything, surprised by your departure Ami wanted to get up and follow but the person that she was with responds first “what's with him?” Turning again Ami faces the woman that she was talking to a few seconds ago, pausing for a moment Ami wasn't sure exactly what to say, something wasn't right but she couldn't work out what, and with out (your name) taking at the moment she felt like she was left trying to put the puzzle together without knowing what the finished image actually was. Turning around again to watch (your name) leave she finally responds. “I don't know exactly

Lucy.... He's been acting strange all afternoon he was so worried about me in the alleyway earlier.... I thought.... I really thought we connected.... I was sure that he was going to tell me how he felt about me.... yet for some reason over the past couple of hours he's been acting like a right jerk" the confusion creeping into Ami's voice as she spoke. Turning to look at the man that accompanied Ami on board Lucy watched as he disappeared out of sight "come on girl you've got it real bad... what's with you anyway... you always seem to go for the complicated characters". Lucy replies thoughtfully. For a moment Ami thought about it for a moment at first she was going to deny it, but this was Lucy she was speaking to, this girl had a talent at dissecting the other staffs minds at your dads restaurant, and as crude as she could be sometimes in the end Lucy had always been proven right, there was no point in denying it but then again there was no point in confirming her suspicions either, saying nothing Lucy continues "Funny to think that he's the same person that I used to serve shakes to in your dads restaurant. Still I can see what you like about him... he's still got a cute butt," she says jokingly. Shocked Ami didn't know what to say at first "LUCY.... I can't believe you just said that your shameless," laughing at you Lucy didn't say anything finally though a fit of giggles she manages to catch her breath "see I was right, I'm always right about these things... anyway enough about lover boy over their tell me what's it like at work and is that gorgeous Hiro still work there...."

\* \* \* \* \*

Time seemed to pass so slowly yet in reality you had only been on board for about 20 minutes. The shoreline was barely on the horizon now as you look back, normally you would be enjoying powering through the waves yet your mind was filled with thoughts about Ami and the shopping mall earlier, each moment tormenting you, whether it was trying to find her in the Alley or her talking to that man outside... why did I just sit there? Why didn't I just go over there and knock his lights out? Right now though no matter what or who you tried to think about is still came back to that moment when he kissed Ami. Either way between the rocking up and down along the waves it was making you feel sick, getting up you lean over the side just in case you threw up.

Right now you needed to talk to someone... anyone... you just need to get your mind of Ami, getting out your phone you try calling Karen yet for some reason she didn't pick up, quickly you look at your watch, hmmm she could be at the gym or fight club I suppose. Ending the call you start to text "hope that your feeling better and the bruising has gone down, have a spare pair of glasses for tomorrow if you need them ☐ give me a call (your initials) xxx."

Just as you finishing your phone goes off in your hand, jumping your nearly drop it into the water, fumbling still you bring it up to your ear not looking at who's calling "Hello" you say brightly. "Is that all you can say to me?" it was Tomoko giggling madly "sorry Tomoko I wasn't expecting the phone to ring this far out, I nearly dropped it into the sea answering it... anyway how's it going?" in the background you can hear someone give a wolf whistle, Sighing deeply you could hear Tomoko ruffle something in the background, "just great.." her voice was betraying her words "sure sounds like it" you say playfully "still not long now to go I suppose just think of all that cash" you add. "Right now I'll settle for a hot bath, the next time someone asks me whether or not I would like to make a quick buck remind me of this day will you" Tomoko says frankly again in the background someone honks there horn and gives out a long wolf whistle, covering up the microphone you hear Tomoko throw out a string of curses finally she comes back to the phone "I tell you if I get one more person honk there horn, or tries to soak me with there window screen wipers at me I'm going to introduce them to my water bucket." Picturing it in your mind you could just see it now Tomoko introducing someone to their wiper blades you couldn't help but laugh "I sorry it's just the thought of you filling up someone's car while they go and pay...." Quickly Tomoko butts in "don't give me any ideas I'm in enough trouble as it is, o great the boss is coming over" "just tell him that your on the phone to another hot brunet that may be interested in helping" you say playfully. Giggling madly Tomoko covers the handset again as someone else starts talking

to her, for a minute you stand there straining your ears whilst you try to listen what was being said at the other end of the line. By the tone in both their voices you could tell that Tomoko wasn't happy finally her hand releases from the receiver "... I'm on my break I can do what ever I want and I'm not taking that crap any longer..." lowering her voice you hear Tomoko add "shit-head ... .." letting out a screech of aggression Tomoko finally brings the handset back to her face, "sorry about that, this guys a real jerk I've just been told that I have to get off the phone and help as apparently we're too busy at the moment... my ass we are there's only four cars here at the moment I swear he's watching me... pervert" pausing for a second you finally manage to get a word in "well if he's playing hardball tell him that a hot brunet will be down to have a word with him if he doesn't back off maybe I could show him the 1001 uses of an air hose, or even better give him the number of Brenda in the lunchroom she's got to be around 685 hmm it'll be the most action they've both seen in about 30 years, one trying to catch the other that is, then again I'll feel sorry from Brenda" in the background you hear someone else give a wolf whistle, cringing at the sound you let out a sigh "OK you distract him I'll fill the car with water."

Giggling madly Tomoko finally manages to catch her breath to speak "don't tempt me ... look the way things are going right now I don't think that we will be finished by five anymore can you come and get me instead at about six thirty instead" she asks yet there was something in her voice that led you believing that there was something else that Tomoko wanted to ask. "Sure no problem, now what was it you wanted to ask me" you say reassuringly, "What how did you know I was going to ask something... am I that transparent..." she asks with a mixture of humour and puzzlement in her voice. "No not at all it's just that I think I know what your thinking sometimes that all" you respond "I'll let you test that theory then tonight" Tomoko says playfully "right psychic, Sana's boyfriend can't come and pick her up tonight can you drop her off on the way home tonight, I know that she lives in the opposite direction to me and all..." so the walking advert for steroids abuse can't make it, pity ... not... quickly you butt in "what are you kidding two hot women in the car with me with and the roof down, wearing nothing but swim suits whilst we cruise through the heart of town are you kidding me I think I would have died and gone to heaven" you reply eagerly again Tomoko gives let out a giggle, "I thought that you would see it that way, don't worry I'll make it up to you" she replies tempting your mind with a thousand different images to her meaning. For a second silent hangs in the air finally Tomoko starts to speak again "look I've got to go, I love you, see you about six." "I love you too bye" you say making a kissing sound down the phone. With that Tomoko hangs up.

For a moment you just stand there the phone in your hand finally you tuck it back into your trouser pocket, maybe things were starting to look up after all. For the first time in over two hours you start to smile again. "Penny for your thoughts" someone says from behind you, startled you give a little jump. Turning around Ami was standing there a few feet away from you, how long had she been standing there anyway? Did she hear any of that? Quickly your expression changes again to a slightly chiseled look "sorry no takers... where are we going anyway I couldn't get anything out of the crew earlier." Ami starts to giggle madly, quickly you throw her a look of puzzlement, without saying anything Ami raises her hand and points to something behind you, turning you couldn't believe what you were seeing, somehow in the past few minutes the boat had approached a ocean liner without you noticing, and boy what a ship she was too, an old design must be earlier 20's, easy 700 feet long, jet black hull, brilliant white with two pin stripe red lines running down the length of the upper decks "who-ya ... what the heck... where did that come from" you say completely flabbergasted, quickly you search for the ship's name, yet you were still too far around the bow of the ship to read it, come on, come on turn finally you get to a point where you could read it "Pretempkin" instantly the name rings a bell, "Isn't that the floating restaurant that goes up and down the coast that's on all the poster boards in town?" you say out loud. Turning to face Ami again she was nodding her head in acknowledgment. Slowly you let out a long whistle, you had read something about this ship, she was a true classic in every sense of the word, built around 1930 she sailed the seas in search of the ultimate holiday destinations, reserved for the exclusive clientèle

for over 50 years, now she just cruised the local waters as a floating 5 star restaurant and weekend get away, how Ami managed to get a seat on this you didn't know, the waiting list was supposedly about six months long, to jump ahead you either had to know someone or be a big film star or celebrity star of something, neither of which you could ever lay claim to.

Slowly the boat pulls alongside the larger vessel to a docking ramp, as you disembark one of the smaller ships crew hands both you and Ami a boarding ticket "here you will need this to get back to the main land where you originally boarded, enjoy your stay. The restaurant is on the top deck. Just follow the signs" Smiling at him Ami takes both the tickets passing one of them to you as she steps onto the first metal step to head up to the ship. Slowly you drift along the promenade following all the signs, at first Ami tried to link arms with you but you resisted pushing her hand away from you, quickly you make out that your trying to find something buried deep with your back pocket, eventually you take out your wallet and quickly stuffing the ticket deep within one of the compartments. Replacing it Ami again tries to link arms, for a moment you keep moving your arm yet she still persists, relenting Ami finally grabs hold of your hand, letting it drop to your side you gently let your arm rock back and forth as you walk. It was a beautiful day, apart from the sea breeze it had turned out to be a right scorcher, and right now both of you wanted to enjoy every moment of it. Finally you reach the entrance to the external restaurant, joining the queue you patiently wait for your turn at the reception desk, there standing in front you was the woman from the boat, smiling broadly at you "Finally you're here I thought that you both would never arrive, I've already set out a table for you both outside" she says ecstatically "Great thank you Lucy, I owe you one" Ami comments as Lucy shows you to your table. Waving her hand Lucy shakes her head "No chance this help make up the thousands of times you've covered for me, now I'll leave you two alone your Waiter will be along shortly" quickly you take your seat opposite Ami quickly Lucy whispers something in Ami's ear inaudible from where you were, but Ami's expression said it all, her eyes opened widely dropping her mouth open with shock and she started to blush, quickly Ami slaps Lucy on the arm "I can't believe you said that" Ami exclaims, with that Lucy still smiling steps away "Bye you two, enjoy" she says beaming madly at the both of you.

For the moment, you just kept staring at Ami wondering exactly what she was thinking, the way that she was acting right now as if nothing had happened earlier, and you didn't have a clue what it was she and Lucy were talking about, being around her right now was getting confusing, if she didn't start to talk soon then you would say have to say something first, but how, it was a strange feeling, normally you wouldn't have a problem talking to Ami yet right now if you say anything right now the way you felt like you would likely explode. No best to stay quite right now let see how the rest of the meal goes maybe then you'll start talking.

Out the corner of your eye someone approaches the table "Sir and Ma'dam, allow me to introduce myself, my name is Claude and I will be your waiter today" carefully he hands you both a menu. The special of the day is foie gras and Ginny fowl bake served on a bed of sliced new potatoes and light Mediterranean salad. The soup of the day Zucchini and Swiss cheese, if you have any questions about the menu then please ask"

"Thank you" Ami says taking the menu, again Claude continues as he hands you a copy of the menu as well "now would either of you like something to drink?" Looking at Ami again he waits for a reply "water please" Ami responds quickly, turning towards you Claude asks the same again. "Can you made that a jug of water," you add, quickly he jots it down and walks away, Ami was looking around the tables "very posh" she comments under her breath. Within a minute the waiter returns with your drinks, placing them down he turns to leave giving you a few more minutes to decide that that it was going to help much anyway glance at the menu again your mind does a somersault, what the heck, what sort of food was this anyway, slowly your eyes flow down both sides, soupe a l oignon gratiné, vichyssoise, magret de canard, lapin aux pruneaux, conquilles St Jacques et bouquets a la fleur de sel, risotto del canard aux truffes et aux petites pois.... what was this stuff puzzled you look at Ami. Clearly she was as baffled as you were with it "read the

ingredients a bit it helps” again you study the menu, hoping to find something that would resemble a burger and fries. No such luck, you were now regretting dropping your introduction to a foreign language earlier in the year, from the highlights provided none of it really appealed to you, why did I not just grab something in the shop earlier other than gum?

I’ll have the Salade Nicoise to start with and for the main course I’ll have the poulet au citron au mile et au thym please.” Turning the page over in his order book the Claude throws gaze on your direction “And for sir what will you be having to start” again you search the menu trying to find anything that you would find appealing, besides the way that you were feeling right now you had seemed to have lost your appetite.

“No starter for me please, but can I have the Medaillons De Dinde au Miel for my main meal instead”. Puzzled Ami throws you a silent question ignoring her you carry on. “Can I also have a pitcher of mineral iced water please.” Nodding in both your directions the waiter walks away from the table, still puzzled Ami waits until the waiter is out of earshot. “What’s with you? Earlier you could have eaten the car seat, now don’t give me that your not hungry” she asks inquisitively. Slowly you play with your napkin, you still didn’t want to talk about what was bothering you, not looking up you respond, “I seem to have lost my appetite that’s all,” as you look up again Ami was studying your face she could tell that there was something else “as if, I know that you haven’t had anything since yesterday afternoon” she says concerned, quickly you throw down your napkin onto your plate, quickly you flash a look of anger at her, yet quickly get it under control again “sorry” you say, yet Ami was still studying your face, she still didn’t by it but for the moment she was willing to keep quite.

For the next ten or so minutes you say nothing to each other, every so often either one of you would catch the other looking, smiling awkwardly at each other but still the silence continued, now it was getting uncomfortable, but neither of you really knew what to say, everything that came to mind you wanted to bring up earlier. Something just didn’t add up and that note was still bugging the hell out of you, finally breaking the silence your meals arrive. Carefully and with precision the plates were unloaded As soon as it was delivered the waiter left you two again. Filling the water glasses you slowly take a few sips, still holding the glass to your face keep watching Ami eat, hoping that it would ease this twisting and confusion, but being with her still wouldn’t stop the feeling of betrayal, o god I can’t keep this up for much longer the anxiety inside was eating away at you, you couldn’t take it anymore, slowly you take a deep breath of air stop this well it was as good a time as any I suppose

“Who was that Man Ami” you say trying to keep your voice neutral “what the waiter?” she asks taking a bite of her salad “no at the mall earlier” you reply trying to keep your voice even. For a second Ami didn’t say anything as if she was contemplating something, finally she says something “What Ken’ichi” she asks taking another mouthful. So that was the asshole’s name. “And where do you know him from” you demand, Ami studies your face for a second as if trying to analyze a science paper “so that’s what been eat you all day, and I thought that you were just ratty from not eating,” she says with a giggle. In an instant as if someone had just turned a switch inside you a bomb goes off in your mind, this wasn’t funny for an instant you were being serious here and all she could do was laugh at you, well you weren’t going to take that for a second, taking a deep breath you let it fly. “How dare you laugh at me, I want to know where do you know him from” the buzz from the surrounding tables suddenly quietened, stunned by your outburst Ami doesn’t say nothing, again you shout across the table “I said where do you know that asshole from” out of the corner of your eye the head waiter hurries across to your table, bending down he whispers into your ear “Sir if you please, your disturbing the other diners, can you please keep your voice down” quickly you move your chair away slightly and turn to face him, a picture of pure rage fills your face “Go away” you say to him so menacingly that the waiter takes a few steps backwards and ends up walking into another table, turning back to Ami she still looked stunned by your actions “WHO

WAS HE” you shout. Finally Ami finds the words to respond she was trying to be calm yet you could tell that something inside was building, “don’t be like that he’s only doing his job” butting in you weren’t letting Ami change the subject “Who was he” you say so forcefully it made Ami sit up “I’ve know Ken’ichi for a few years, we worked together” she protests, again you butt in. “I haven’t seen him waiter tables at your fathers restaurant, your lying.”

“I’m not lying about anything, Ken’ichi used to edit the school paper, being a senior at the time he was in charge I used to work on the weeks news articles with him” Ami protests “what’s with you?” again another bomb goes off inside you “WHAT’S WRONG WITH ME, Senior my ass HE MUST HAVE BEEN AT LEAST 20... AND THAT WASN’T JUST FRIENDLY BANTER...” stopping for a second you try to catch your breath yet Ami gets there first “I can’t believe it your jealous... it was just old friends catching up” she replies defensively “you call that catching up, like hell it was, I was their all the time watching Ami, that wasn’t just two people talking you were flirting with him, I felt like I was like watching Tomoko at work in the dance club, you didn’t even give me a second thought all the time he was talking to you” quickly Ami butts in “ he paid me a complement on how I looked today... what was I supposed to do just walk away? He’s a friend just like you or Kotomi, I don’t care what you thought was happening I was with you, as if you had even bothered to noticed... if you had given me as half the amount of attention today like what Ken’ichi did then you wouldn’t have to be worried, the most that I’ve got out of you today was Whoa...” Her voice started to quiver with emotion “ for the past couple of hours all you’ve done is just ignored me.” Stunned, you couldn’t believe at what you where hearing, how could she think that after all that you both had been through today, incensed you quickly push your plate away from you knocking your glass filled with water flying. “Go to HELL Ami, I can’t believe that you think that I don’t give a dam about you, for Christ sake, I searched high and low for you when you didn’t pick up the phone, I didn’t know whether you were alive or dead. Then when I finally catch up I nearly get killed trying to protect you. THEN HOW DO YOU TREAT ME? BY KISSING THAT JERK RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME... Do you have any idea how I felt?”

Your words vertebrate in both your ears, around you all the tables had gone completely silent. For a second Ami doesn’t say anything her whole body was trembling with emotion, your outbursts had taken their toll on her both mentally and physically. She looked so drained that it brought a lump to your throat, you didn’t enjoy seeing her like this but the way that she had made you feel today you just couldn’t keep it to yourself anymore. You could tell that her mind was in conflict with what her hart was telling her, for what felt like an eternity in silence Ami finally finds the words to speak. “He asked me whether or not I had a date to the prom,” she said slowly, in a heartbeat you knew that already, why else would Ami act like the way she did. Still knowing the truth felt like you had been shot again. Without thinking you find yourself Clenching one of your fists, bringing your right hand up you quickly rub your face and eyes, pausing you clench the bridge of your nose, gently you find your self shaking your head in disbelief. Reaching forward Ami rests a hand on top of your closed fist, looking up find yourself staring deeply into her eyes. As you watch Ami continues “But I told him that I was going with you.”

Startled by Ami’s revival you didn’t know what to say, could you trust her again after what had happened today, unsure what to do next you pull away from her grasp, raising both arms you clasp your face loosely in your hands yet as much as you wanted it to be true that feeling of hurt wouldn’t fade, would it be best to just cut your loses and just walk away?

Watching you Ami was puzzled, she just couldn’t understand why you was so rattled by you talking to Ken’ichi today didn’t he see that you weren’t interested in anyone else anymore, Ken’ichi was a nice guy and all but he wasn’t your type at all, in fact you didn’t know exactly what your type was exactly all she knew was that you were the one that she had always loved. Surly he must have some feelings for you otherwise he wouldn’t be hurting. Not that you had done it intentionally in the first place but he just wasn’t listening to what you were saying, should I just tell him how I feel about

him? No why should I when he's acting like a real jerk, still its now or never I suppose, resting your hand on his you tell him that you still want to go with him to the prom, slowly he looks up at you, man he's really hurting... he looks so sad... did he want to say something to you?

Resisting the urge to talk again Ami gently caresses the side of your hand waiting for him to respond. Instead (your name) pulls away from her slowly shaking his head. In a second Ami's worst fears come to the front, he doesn't love me at all, why would he pull away from me when I'm trying to tell him how I feel? The feeling of loss fills Ami's mind, god I feel like I want to cry, please not now, I'm not going to give him the satisfaction, withdrawing from him Ami takes a deep breath then lets it rip setting free all that bottled emotion. "WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU.... Some days I can't even get you to speak to me anymore, you talk about me as if my conversation with Ken'ichi was wrong. Yet just take a good look at yourself instead, your always busy trying to chat someone else up. I've seen you around Tomoko, Kotomi and Karen what give you the right to say that I did it on purpose. How do you think I felt when you started dating my girl friend, yes I know all about that.... don't you think that my best friend wouldn't talk to me about it and ask me how I would feel about it?"

"Karen was right, you have changed.... I didn't want to believe her but now after the way that you have treated me today is clear that you have your no longer the person that I grew up with" Ami's eyes started to swell, her whole body was starting to shake where she was getting so agitated. "Now you're just a jerk... just like Ryuji ... you don't give a dam about me or anyone around you anymore" startled you didn't know what to say, how could Ami compare you against Ryuji? Your mind just goes blank, but before you could say anything Ami continues "... Am I nothing to you," a single tear start to roll down Ami's face, reaching into her bag she pulls out her journal, quickly she opens it to the back pulling out Ryuji's little black book from a plastic holdall. "Here take it... this is all you care about anymore," she says with all the venom she could muster, getting up she tosses it at your face cutting your lip in the process. By now the tears were streaming down her cheeks, "I thought you cared about me... now I see you don't care about anyone other than yourself." Taking a few steps away from the table Ami turns to face you again. She was so upset now she was sobbing uncontrollably stopping for a second Ami speaks again the pain that she was feeling bursting out "forget about me being your date to the prom... I'm.... going with Ken'ichi instead.... In fact... don't ever speak to me again" again she bursts into tears.

"Ami stop...wait" you say standing up but it was to little.... to late, turning away from you Ami runs away from the table, watching her she exits the dining area and heads to the stern of the ship towards the launches. Stunned you didn't know what to do, your mind was abuzz with different emotions, slumping back down into your chair you push away your plate further, resting your arms in the space you just cleared you bring your hands up towards your face, rubbing it for a second you lean forwards slightly bringing your hands up the side of your head, sliding them backwards linking your fingers at the base of your head, the pressure of a thousand voices fills your mind again, from one of the tables behind you someone mutters aloud the word "Jerk" turning around you scan the other tables with a look of disgust quickly a few people make a grab for another mouthful acting as if they were not interested in what had just happened again you rub your face, you can't think with all these faces starring at you, what would they know anyway they didn't even know half the story. Standing up you reach into your back pocket taking out your wallet, removing a few notes you drop them on the table quickly putting your empty wine glass on top to stop the breeze taking them. Not looking up you exit the restaurant on to the promenade, the voices in your head were just a jumble of noise, yet they were growing louder and louder. For a moment you just stand there, what do I do now? You couldn't leave it like that with Ami, but right now you were in no mood for a second round. Besides.... she wouldn't want anything to do with you at the moment and if she felt pressured it could lead to something being said in the heat of the moment that you were sure that neither of you were not quite ready to accept. Straightening up you slowly walk along the promenade out on to the decking to the bow of the ship

stopping you slump over the boats guardrail and stare out into the sea, at this moment it felt like the weight of the world was on your shoulders. How could Ami compare you against Ryuji you didn't know sure you were a bit of a jerk today but that was only because of her right? The taste of blood fills your mouth quickly you brush your lip with the back of your hand. Wiping away the excess blood that was now trickling down the side of your mouth. No it was more than that it had to be quickly you think back to everything that had happened today, the girls talking in the alleyway together, the anger that you had shown Ken'ichi, the way that you had buffed every chance to talk in the car, or the way that you had treated her at the beach an hour ago. Right up to the point when you were hit with the book. Looking back even Karen thought that you were a jerk when you had come home that evening after helping Akira. Your heart sinks a peg lower, they were right both of them... boy did you feel ashamed of yourself. What was happening to you? If it weren't for Ami stopping you earlier you would have almost killed that thug in the alleyway, looking down you could still feel the impact of his jaw and cheek bones on your fingers... it was the first time that Ami was had ever been afraid of you.

"Ami.... Ami...." At first you thought your mind was playing tricks with you, dismissing it for a second you try to regain some control of your thoughts "Ami.... Ami" again you here that voice, turning around your eyes focus on a well dressed middle aged man easily in his mid thirty calling from the edge of the promenade quickly you do a double take on the decking No Ami wasn't here yet he seemed to be walking this way still again you check the little groups of people that had appeared whilst your back was turned, all of them appeared to of the same age group as the man or even older, not that it surprised you not many 18 year olds could afford a meal in a place like this. Watching the man walk past you he momentarily throwing a gaze in your direction, quickly you nod in acknowledgment, where was he going anyway slowly your eyes follow him to a group of people his age. "Sorry I'm late dear" he says to a woman in the group. Hmm what was the lightly hood of having to Ami's on same boat, jokingly she pushes him away, laughing they say there goodbyes to the group that she was with, hand in hand they slowly walk back to the promenade, talking all the time, pausing for a second they embrace each other.

Turning again you look back out onto the waves, somehow looking at the two of them brought back memories of you and Ami together over the years, the laughter and jokes that you both pulled on each other, the way that you both used to talk... the thought of Aki and Ami together earlier springs to your mind and how they both ganged up on you, silently you chuckle to yourself, looking down at your arm you still had the impression of Ami's nails in your arm from the alleyway, until now you hadn't even felt them, yet just by looking at them brought back the memory of when they were inflicted, quickly you give them a rub the feeling of pins and needles creeping along your arm, what WAS Ami trying to tell me when she dug her nails in you? For a few moments you ponder on it and what you had said earlier. You were an idiot, you shouldn't have said all that, if only you could turn back time you would change everything that had happened over the past couple of hours. But you couldn't What Ami did and with who shouldn't matter to you but it did, the more that you thought about it the more you had the feeling that it was a little bit more than just being jealous, the way that she made you feel when you were around her even when you were being a right jerk until today she had stood besides you through even the worst of it, what was it she said? I've changed, your not the person that I grew up with... that got to you hard.... Everyone changes yet for someone to say that you had got to the point that they no longer thought that they knew you anymore hurt especially coming from Ami. Sure there was no denying that you had altered ever since Karen had shot you, not that you remembered much from that day but still you felt stronger, and were more confident around the girls even though you did still get tongue tied every so often, but with that you had also in-deliberately pushed the people that knew you the most out of your life, after today that would change.

What was it with Ami today anyway heck she had been acting funny around you for the past couple of weeks, and why did she bring up Kotomi for anyway? You were sure that Ami was behind getting the two of you to go out together ever since the start of term, but something had stuck in

your mind ever since that study date one lunch time about two months ago before the second exam, you were talking more than actually studying not that Ami had minded and everything seemed to be going well then until Kotomi had shown up. Whilst Ami went to get something for you both to eat you just started chatting to Kotomi to pass the time away, in the end Kotomi brought them over as Ami had forgot that she need to be somewhere else at that time. You can still remember her face from classes that afternoon, you where sure that she had been crying yet she didn't want to admit it in fact she had forced you to change the subject. But there had been other things that she had did since that you just couldn't work out, in a blink of an eye your mind switches from memory to the other, each more intense than the other from when you were discovered by Ami at Ryuji's locker and the way that she didn't even resist being pulled into the cubical instead of being caught talking to you in there, or the way that she had jumped at the chance at helping you yesterday morning in the Bronx, she just came over and watched you sleep for a couple of hours but it wasn't just that she had seen how sleepy you were, there was something the way she had looked at you... Even this morning when you were both mucking about with the water bottles... the way she held on to you in the alley or the way that she was looking at you in the shop window.

A lump forms in your throat, for a moment you just stand there looking out at the horizon and waves trying to make sense of all what you had seen and heard each time the pain of feeling of lost and heartache growing with every passing memory suddenly it all came clear, quickly you think back to your argument in the restaurant a few moments ago, she asked the question Am I nothing to you she said the pain in her voice so clear, she wasn't angry, she was hurt and in pain, in all that Ami had done to get close to you over the past couple of weeks, you had just rebuffed all her advances and rejected her... she loved you and you had been so mad at her you just hadn't seen it, now she was gone a tear forms and rolls slowly down your cheek.

Reaching into your pocket you pull out your wallet again to retrieve your boarding pass, giving it a pull it wouldn't come out of your wallet. Opening it wider, you lift your identity card out the way. Their beneath a protective cover was a picture of you and Ami together in a picture booth, arm in arm laughing in the moment, you both couldn't have been older than 12 at the time. The thought of laughter that day floods back. It was there in that booth that moment after the bulb flashed that you received your first kiss. In that instance the voices in your mind converge in to a single thought making your heart sink. No more would you hold hands together, laugh at one another or be there for one another... You loved Ami, and you were sure that she loved you... O god what have I just done... I've just pushed the best thing that could have happened to me away, panicking you turn and sprint along the decking I have to find her before its to late.

Searching the promenade you didn't find any trace of her, could she have gone back to the restaurant? Breathing deeply you sprint as quick as you could back the front desk, ignoring the desk clerk you quickly look around "sir you can't stay here, this is for customers only" the clerk protests, turning around again you look at the clerk "where IS THE OTHER ONE" you demand "sorry sir can you be a bit more specific" the clerk responds a little taken back, taking a deep breath you try to calm yourself down a bit "the other one, err Lucy I think her name was, I need to see her, PLEASE" you say pleading with her "please take a seat over there I'll see if I can track her down" getting on to the phone you anxiously take a seat. "Excuse me... Lucy will be up in a moment." The clerk says looking back up you throw her a weak smile in thanks, for a few minutes you just sit there finally getting back up again you start to pace the floor impatiently, wondering why you had come back here in the first place when there could be a number of other places that she could be still Ami seemed to know Lucy so theirs a good chance that she may know at least something, suddenly from behind you here someone draws in a deep breath of air "Not you, no way" quickly you turn around to face Lucy her eyes were lit like fire, "Please stop, wait, do you know where she is?" you plead, yet Lucy wasn't giving an inch, "What makes you think that I'm going to help you after the way that you treated Ami, do you have any idea what state you left her in" collapsing down into the chair again you let your arms fall towards the ground "Please if you have any idea where she is now

PLEASE tell me” you plead, relinquishing Lucy comes and sits besides you, “you know you’re a right jerk” she says slumping in her seat, “tell me about it, I’ve been a complete idiot” replying looking at the floor, “well at least you admit it, maybe theirs hope for you still” looking back up at her a single tear rolls down your right cheek, “aw man your really hurting aren’t you... you must really care for her?” gently she rests her hand on your shoulder “yes” you reply looking down again, pausing for a second you take a deep breath of air “I just didn’t realise what Ami meant to me... now I may never get the chance to tell her” for a few moments the silence hangs between the two of you, finally Lucy speaks “aw alright. But you owe me one, but break her heart once more and it won’t be just me that you have to deal with GOT IT...” quickly you nod in acknowledgment, “aw man I can’t believe that I’m doing this, Ami’s going to kill me I know it” again Lucy draws in a deep breath of air, “she should still be by the stern boarding ramp, the boat isn’t due back for at least a couple more minutes yet if you hurry you may just make it” getting back up to your feet in a flash you turn around to face Lucy once more “thank you” you say trying to bring a smile to your face once more, “that’s alright, now get going” Lucy replies getting back up, glancing one last time at her you run for all your worth down towards the rear deck.

Every so often clipping someone else as you walked quickly apologizing you carry on sprinting to the back decking, quickly you try to grasp for breath whilst scouting the open area desperately searching for any sign of her, suddenly there on the far side looking out was Ami, still breathing deeply you do a half jog towards her, slowly Ami turns around at the sound of heavy foot falls, instantly you stop when her gaze hits you, your legs start feeling like lumps of lead. She looked so sad, her eyes looked puffy from where she had been crying, a lump forms in your throat, “Ami” you call your voice creaking ware it you were coarse through running, turning away from you Ami starts to walk off, your worst fear had come true she didn’t want to speak to me any more, “Ami... Ami please stop” you shout out, ignoring you Ami carries on walking, “Ami please” hesitates for a second as if she was unsure what to do, yet by the count of two Ami sets off again at a quicker place, “Ami stop.” Again she hesitates what to do finally she speaks “GO AWAY.... I don’t want to speak to you... Please just leave me a lone,” she asks. Quickly you take a few more steps forward “Ami stop please” quickly you grab hold of her shoulder, stopping her from moving away any further, “let go” she demands her voice sounded broken and Alien. “Not yet, not until I tell you something.” You plead. Without warning Ami spins around with her hand raises, slapping you square across the face. Stunned you take a step back but don’t let go, tears were streaming down her face. “Haven’t you hurts me enough today” she sobs, “please just a few minutes” you plead releasing your grip you take half a step backwards. Again Ami swings hitting you again across the face. “What could you possibly say to me that would make me what to give a damm about what you after the way that you’ve treated me.” Ami screams again she takes a swing at you; quickly you catch her hand inches from your face. “I’m sorry ... you were right.... you’ve always been right... I was jealous” again Ami swings with her other hand hitting you square across the face, quickly you catch that hand as well, for a second Ami struggles against your grip, but you were unwilling to let go until you had finished “I was so mad at you and the world didn’t see what I was loosing right in front of me” slowly you release your grip of Ami’s hand. Ami drops her hands to her side. “Ami when I saw you with Ken’ichi earlier I thought that you didn’t care about be anymore” quickly Ami butts in “THAT’S RIDICULOUS” holding up your hand you stop her in mid sentence “the way that you were talking to him, but when he kissed you my blood started to boil, then I found that note in my bag asking you to give him a call so may be you two could meet again in the dark room” again Ami interrupts “BUT WE’VE NEVER BEEN LIKE THAT TOGETHER, I TOLD YOU THE TRUTH but you didn’t want to listen to me” again Ami tries to move away, quickly you rest an arm on her shoulder.

“Well I’m listening now, Ami I don’t want to loose you like this, your more that just a friend to me, you’ve always been more that a friend its just that I didn’t see it, how can I stand by watching you from the balcony anymore after this weekend, Ami I want to be a part of you life,” for a moment Ami just stood there blanked faced, her heart was starting to beat within her chest “What are you

trying to tell me?" Ami asks.

"Ami everything that we do together whether its been playing in the sand when we were kids to a first days in school mean so much to me, you keep telling me that "you love me... only kidding" all the time at school, well Ami I'm not kidding... I love you. I've always loved you, I didn't ask you to be my date to the prom because you were my friend, I asked you because I couldn't think of anyone else that I would rather spend that special night with," reaching into your back pocket you remove the picture of the two of you together in the picture booth and hand it to Ami "Ami I've carried this picture of the two of us together for several years until a few minutes ago I didn't realize what you mean to me, nothing in this life just wouldn't be the same without you, we've been dancing around each other for the past six months whether its been over lunch at school or working with you on the time machine, the way you and Kotomi were talking in the spar a couple of weeks ago or the feel of your touch when I woke up yesterday morning, I didn't come to your aid in the alleyway because you were threatened, I came because I didn't know what I would do without you, your everything to me and I would give anything in this life just to be with you for one minute more.... Tell me you don't feel the same, tell me that all that we've been through you don't have feelings for me."

Listening to everything you said Ami's didn't know how to respond, her hands were all sweaty and her mind was a mixture of emotions how could she believe anything (your name) said after the way that he treated you earlier, but here he was trying to make up for it, bearing his soul for you to see, O god I don't know what to do, I'm so confused. What do I do? I'm so afraid. What is my heart telling me? Slowly the tears started to trickle down her face again.

Unconsciously Ami took a step backwards, misreading this complete (your name) took this as a sign that Ami didn't care about you the way you cared about her.

"Well I'll leave you alone then... Here take the car keys I'll find my own way back ... I'm sorry that I ever hurt you... hmm Ami... no matter what you may believe has happened to me, I'm still the same person you grew up with... whether is just talking between friends or seeing you in the street... I will still dream of the one I'll always loved... and the moments we shared... nothing will ever change that." Stepping forward again you wipe one of Ami's cheeks and kiss her briefly on it. "That's all I wanted to say, goodbye," you say the feeling of rejection and hurt creeping into your voice, stepping around Ami you carry on walking back to the boarding ram.

Stunned Ami's heart kept missing a beat, my god he loves me, he really does, he's laid it all on the line and I didn't say a thing, after 14 years together this was the moment that she had been waiting for, turning around Ami start to run toward (your name) calling out "(call your name)" spinning around again Ami jumps into your arms "I love you so much, don't ever do that to me again" she exclaims the tears of happiness flowing freely down her face, tilting her head back you both kiss each other passionately, finally Ami pulls away from you, she looked dazzled. "Wow if this is what your like now I can't wait to see what you kiss like once you have something inside you, shall we try again" nodding in agreement you both link hands and head back toward the restaurant "I can't wait to tell Lucy, she's going to be so jealous that your cute butt is all mine" Ami says playfully, looking deeply into her eyes you pull Ami closer towards you "well maybe later we can find out who's looks better" you say giving a wink, again you both kiss. slowly you part away from each other yet only one thing going through your mind, Well maybe today didn't turn out so bad after all.