



# **The Cat Lover's Circumstances**

## **Chapter 1** *Transcript*

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Directed by Rebecca Scoble  
Illustrations by Aiwa and © Chromatic Press

### **Cast:**

Misaki: Tara Burke  
Aina: Elissa Park  
Nishida: Anthony Sardinha  
Ayukawa: Sarite Harris  
Rina: Courtney Lunn

### **Special Thanks**

Alex O'Shea  
Leena Soussi  
Jesse Hodson  
Ramsey Soussi  
Babette Hodis  
Jennie Fiddes

*Note: Due to last-minute changes, transcript may not match final audio exactly.*





[Open in a city at night in the summer (sound of crickets).]

[Fade in on Misaki running.]

MISAKI: Hey! Waaaaait!

[Paws, a tiny collar bell, a meow: she's chasing a cat.]

MISAKI: Come on, please!

[Misaki runs past a bus stop. An older office worker exits a bus, with the sound of the bus driving away.]

OFFICE WORKER (talking to self): [sighs] What a day...

[Misaki runs into office worker.]

MISAKI: Oof!

OFFICE WORKER: [Quickly.] Whoa, watch out.

MISAKI: Oh! I-I'm so sorry!

OFFICE WORKER: It's okay.

VOICES (OFFICE WORKER) (exhausted, drawn-out and despairing): *Arrrrgh!*

[Meowing in the distance.]

MISAKI (surprised, in a rush): Um... F-feel better!

OFFICE WORKER: Huh?

[Misaki continues running.]

OFFICE WORKER (confused): ...Thanks.

[Misaki's running slows down to a walk, and then stops.]

MISAKI: [Deep breath. Sighs.]

[Misaki's narration begins.]

NARRATION (Misaki): *I love cats. I can't get enough of them.*

NARRATION: *I don't need to hang out with **real people**--I have Twitter. Boyfriend? Only in 2-D,*

*thank you... But cats are awesome! All you have to do is feed them, pet them... Or, more like they **let** you pet them. (a little sad) Cats don't ask for much. And they won't mess up your life.*

[The cat purrs. Bell and paws.]

MISAKI: Ha, found you! Come here, you little...

[Scooter horn beeps.]

MISAKI: (surprised) Ahh! [embarrassed as she gets out of the way] I'm so so so so sorry!

[Scooter drives away.]

MISAKI: Shoot.

[The familiar collar bell rings. Paws on the ground.]

[Misaki gives chase across the street: running girl, running cat.]

MISAKI: Hey! Come on, just come back! [Mutters to herself.] They should hire me at the pound...

[Misaki finally stops in a quieter, narrow spot. In the foreground, the cat scratches itself, making its collar bell ring. Cat purrs.]

MISAKI: (breathing hard) You're going to kill me, Sebastian.

[Silence. Misaki is catching her breath. Sebastian is purring, licking his fur, doing nothing special.]

MISAKI: Are you just gonna sit there now?

(pause)

MISAKI (speaks in a deep, faux-masculine voice; the lines in quotation marks are all in "Sebastian's" voice): "Ha ha... Oh, Misaki. I run when I want to run, I sit when I want to sit. I live free."

(pause)

MISAKI: But I was going to give you a nice bath.

[Sebastian purrs.]

MISAKI: "Cats? Bathe? That's ridiculous."

MISAKI: That's not true--sometimes it's good for you! (sing-songy) If you come here, Sebastian, I'll give you some canned fish. Mmmm, fish in a can, so tasty!

MISAKI: "Hah! You think you can control me with *food*?"

MISAKI: Why, no! I would never!

MISAKI: "Hmph. What *kind* of fish?"

MISAKI: Only the best for you, your lordship!

[The door of a convenience store chimes as Misaki keeps talking. The sound of a sliding door, footsteps, a plastic bag being carried. Enter Aina.]

AINA (speaking over Misaki's roleplay, interrupting her): Oh. Hey.

MISAKI (shocked): Gahh! ...Um! I!

[Sebastian runs away, meowing. Paws, bell, getting fainter.]

MISAKI: Oh no, wait...! (despair) Ah... great. [sigh]

AINA (genuinely curious): What were you doing?

MISAKI: Me? N-nothing!

AINA: Um... You're Tanabe, right? Misaki Tanabe?

MISAKI: (shyly, not at all like she was with Sebastian): Yeah. Hi... You're Aina Ueda?

AINA: Hey, you know my name.

MISAKI: Well, you're kind of famous. I saw it on the news last year... High school wrestling champion, right?

AINA (uncomfortable, a little resentful): Oh... Right. That.

MISAKI: Um, how'd you know who *I* am?

AINA: It's on your door. Misaki Tanabe.

MISAKI: Oh.

AINA: I saw you on move-in day. But... not really since then.

MISAKI (awkward and rambling, which turns into quiet muttering): Well, um. Right... That's

me! I know I don't, uh, come out of my room a lot, but I guess I'm just...mysterious? But not in a weird way! I just like the things in my room more than... I mean, I just like to keep to myself when, uh...

[Fade out to silence, which interrupts Misaki's rambling, for narration.]

NARRATION: *Like I was saying: I love cats. People, though? [pause] ...I don't really like people. They're difficult. It's...hard to explain.*

[Return to the scene. Sebastian is still there: The collar bell rings, a little far away.]

AINA: Hey, that cat's got a collar... [pause] Hm?

MISAKI (mumbling): He's mine.

AINA: Really?

MISAKI: Yeah. That's my cat. Look, I-I know I'm not supposed to have a pet, but...

[Aina's emotional voices appear. They're ethereal and overlapping, clearly not something she's saying out loud. The voices begin as Misaki is saying the lines above, and they gradually become louder.]

VOICES (AINA): (kinda sing-song) *Ha ha, squee! Happy, happy...happyhappyhappy.* (very quiet compared to the other voices, slower): *Worried, worried...scared.*

MISAKI (muttering to herself): Ugh! No! Block it out!

[The voices abruptly stop.]

AINA: Huh?

MISAKI: Ah. No, it's nothing.

[Sebastian meows.]

AINA: Can I give him some food? I got...

[Aina digs into a plastic bag, opens a plastic lid. Sound of container being put on the ground.]

AINA: Here. [makes clicking, beckoning noises]

MISAKI: Sushi bento? Wasn't that for you?

AINA: It's okay. I'm not that hungry. [continues clicking and scratching the ground]

[Sebastian comes over. Meows, begins eating the food.]

AINA (quietly pleased): Good kitty.

[The voices rise again, as before. They get cut off again, suddenly, when Aina speaks next.]

VOICES (AINA): *Yay! Happy. Accomplished, accomplished.* (quieter) *Worried worried. Hopeful?*

AINA (cutting off the voices): Better put that leash on now.

MISAKI (distracted): Oh. Um, yeah. Okay.

[Leash clicks.]

MISAKI: You're really good with animals!

AINA: I guess. Can I...?

MISAKI: ...Sure. You can pet him. He runs a lot, but when you actually hold him, he's really docile.

AINA: [Aina starts petting the cat. Speaks shyly, after a moment of silence.] It's... not all animals.

MISAKI: Hm?

AINA: I'm not good with all animals. I just like cats.

[Cat purrs happily.]

MISAKI: Me, too. [pause] Um... Please don't tell the landlady I have a pet?

AINA: I won't. No one's gonna notice anyway. [pause as she awkwardly grasps for further conversation] Uh, actually, you... You hear about the senior who moved into a closet?

MISAKI: No, I haven't.

AINA: It was... a girl in our dorm. They found out she was living behind the walls of someone's room. She was trying to get out of paying rent.

VOICES (AINA): [sigh] *Lonely. Lonely, loooonely...hopeful?*

MISAKI (distracted): Ah, um, really?

AINA: Yeah. She snuck in and slept on the floor during the day. I don't remember how they caught her. But if someone can get away with that... [pause] Um, anyway... I was wondering.



I know you don't go to parties in the dorm, but...

VOICES (AINA): (nervous) *Oh, worried! Embarrassed. Worried worried **lonely**. Embarrassed. Lonely...*

MISAKI: Uh... uh-huh.

AINA: (hesitant, but talking a little faster): Actually. The thing is. The kickboxing club, the club I'm in... They're coming. Um, tonight. The other members, and our manager. We're going to have drinks. [plastic bag rustles] I bought a bunch of sweets, too. So, what I mean is. If you'd like to... If you'd like to stop by for a bit...

MISAKI (distracted by the voices; it's distressing her): Uh... well...

AINA: If you don't want to, that's fine. I understand. You must study a lot. I don't want to bother you. It's just... [pause] I thought maybe you might want to.

[The voices, which have continued to rise in intensity at each interval, at this point are loud. And through the noise, the loudest parts are reduced to single, powerful words.]

VOICES (AINA): *Lonely! Hopeful! Scared! LONELY!*

MISAKI: Okay! Okay! Yes!

[Voices suddenly stop again. City sounds return.]

AINA: Oh. [pause] Okay. Great.

[footsteps as Misaki and Aina walk together]

AINA: Um, you can just call me Aina.

MISAKI: Okay.

AINA: ...Yep.

VOICES (AINA): *Worried. Hopeful. Scared.*

MISAKI: [coughs] You can just call me Misaki, too.

AINA: Okay.

VOICES (AINA): *Hopeful. Hopeful, hopeful... (shyly) Happy?*

(pause)

VOICES (AINA): [small laugh, still kinda shy] *Happy, happy!*

AINA: So...what's your major?

MISAKI: Don't have one yet.

NARRATION: *When I said I don't like people? This is the reason why. I'm psychic. I get other people's feelings in my head. (sheepishly) It's kind of a problem.*

[Sebastian meows and purrs pleasantly. Walking sounds fade out.]

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NARRATION: *My name is Misaki Tanabe. I'm three months into my first year of college! And so far... (tiredly) It's a lot like my life was at home.*

[Fade in on a hermit's bedroom: computer running full blast, oscillating fan.]

NARRATION: *It's not like I don't have any friends. I've got tons of friends online! I'm even married... in an online video game. [pause] That stuff is easy. It's just **real life** that's hard for me.*

[Sound of door opening and closing. Misaki sets Sebastian on the floor: The sound of the bell, cat purring. Misaki sits down heavily in an office chair. She turns on her monitor.]

MISAKI: [long sigh and groan] Ugggghhh. Save me, Internet!

[mouse clicking]

MISAKI: Ooh, hey, my MMO buddy's online. (pause) Now *be good*, kitty. I don't know how you keep getting out, ugh.

[Sebastian meows and scratches the chair.]

MISAKI: No, you *just* got fed. With tuna! What am I gonna do if you don't eat your regular food, hmm?

[Sebastian meows again.]

MISAKI (speaking as Sebastian): "A great cat like myself will only accept the best."

MISAKI: I'm afraid your lordship lives with a poor girl in her dorm room! What a disgrace! (back to normal) Whoops, hang on.

[Misaki types on her computer, clicks on a mouse.]

MISAKI: Let's see what we got today. [pause, suddenly excited] Ohh. An ultra-rare item

drop! Cool! Okay, wait a sec, opening chat window...

[Excited typing.]

MISAKI (talking out what she's typing): Hello, partner! Did you see today's drop? I think that rare armor would look *super cool* on you. [pause, more excited typing.] Yeah. Let's get it tonight! I'm all equipped and...

[knocking at the door]

AINA (muffled, from outside): Hey, are you coming?

MISAKI (distracted): Oh. Yeah! I'll be there in a minute!

AINA: All right.

[Aina walks away.]

MISAKI: [Clicking the mouse, talking to herself. She's anxious, talking too fast.] Shoot. Wait... Okay, okay. I need a minute to think... This is like a game, right? I just have to look at my stats and make a choice....

[Begin fantasy sequence with a swell of music: Otome game, visual novel, a little bit arcade game. A peppy, cheerful, showman announcer speaks.]

ALL CHARACTERS (in unison): College Life Plus!

ANNOUNCER: Please select your character!

[Digital menu button sound.]

CHARACTER 1 (AINA) (cheerful): I'm sporty and fun!

[Button.]

CHARACTER 2 (AYUKAWA) (smooth and confident): I'm a cool genius!

[Button.]

MISAKI (hoarse and desperate): I-I really like cats!

[Final selection sound.]

ANNOUNCER: You chose Desperate Cat Lady! [pause] You are twenty years old with no life experience. Homeschooled for grades seven through twelve. You failed entrance exams twice before getting into college, but now you're there and ready to have a happy college life!

Ready? Let's go!

[Music changes. An average college cafeteria setting, with appropriate background noise.]

ANNOUNCER: Stage one, cafeteria, start!

MALE STUDENT: Hi. You're in my literature class, right?

[Button selection sounds.]

MISAKI: Uh... [She moves between selections. She chooses one, speaking in a panicky voice.]  
Don't talk! Walk away quickly!

[Misaki shuffles away.]

MALE STUDENT: Hey, wait a sec!

[Sad "game over" music.]

ANNOUNCER: You fail! [pause] Try again?

[Selection sound: Restart.]

[Back to college: This time outside.]

ANNOUNCER: Stage one, outdoors, start!

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Hey! That's a really cute bag! Do you like Isabelle?

MISAKI: Um... [She moves between selections again. She chooses one, speaking shyly and quietly.] Yeah.

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Me, too! She's my favorite character!

[Positive, bell-like sound effect.]

ANNOUNCER: Friendship level up!

MISAKI (to herself): Yes! I got this!

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Hey, do you wanna join our gaming club?

MISAKI: Huh? [Begins to panic. Button selection sounds.] Uh, uh. Wait, I...

FEMALE STUDENT 1: It's really fun! You'll meet a ton of people. Look. [She calls out to some folks.] Hey guys, come over here and say hi! (to Misaki) What was your name again?

MISAKI: [More selection sounds. Misaki is uncertain.] Um, wait, my name...

FEMALE STUDENT 2: Hey there! Welcome to our school.

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Check it out! This is my friend, she's the VP and I'm the president, and we're doing a recruitment drive right now. What do you think? I have a feeling you'll really like our club!

MISAKI: Uh, uhhh...

[Ping: The male student from before comes over.]

FEMALE STUDENT 1: And this is the treasurer.

MALE STUDENT: Oh hey, I remember you!

FEMALE STUDENT 1: You guys met before?

MALE STUDENT: Yeah, in the cafeteria! I'm sorry, I don't think I got your name...

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Right, what *is* your name?

[Misaki chooses one selection.]

MISAKI (fast, awkward, desperate): My... My name is Blathers!

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Huh?

FEMALE STUDENT 2 (amused): Oh, I get it. That's from Animal Crossing...

MISAKI (speaking over Female Student 2's last words): Umm, sorry, I really have to go!

[Misaki runs away, making fearful noises. As she runs, the gaming club students talk in the background, as if from farther and farther away.]

FEMALE STUDENT 1: Hey, hold on! Aw...

FEMALE STUDENT 2: You totally scared her off, senpai.

MALE STUDENT: You can't be so pushy.

FEMALE STUDENT 1: I'm not!

[Sad "game over" music.]

ANNOUNCER: You fail!

[Music ends. Silence.]



MISAKI: ...Don't I get to try again?

ANNOUNCER (still peppy): No!

MISAKI: Wait! But, but I just started! What about my college life? I wanted to make friends and...

ANNOUNCER: Prepare to spend the rest of your life alone!

MISAKI: *Huh?*

[Loud buzzing sound.]

ANNOUNCER: Game over!

[Before she finishes speaking, a trap door opens with a heavy thunk. Misaki falls into an endless abyss.]

MISAKI (screaming): Noooooooooo!

[End fantasy sequence. The ambient sounds of Misaki's room return. Sebastian meows and swats Misaki.]

MISAKI: [snaps out of her daydream.] Wha--!

[Sebastian purrs.]

[Misaki stretches, rubbing her face.]

MISAKI: God... Fine.

[She clicks and types something.]

MISAKI: Sorry, partner. We'll have to get that armor later.

[pinging noise]

MISAKI (reading aloud): "What's important... is that you have a lovely time." Aw, you're too nice to me... [types] AFK.

[Misaki gets up from her chair.]

MISAKI: Okay. I'll be okay.

[Misaki opens door and steps out. Slippers on a creaky wood floor as she walks down hallway.]

MISAKI: I just have to relax. Relax, relax, relax...

[Fluttering insect sound, moth wings.]

MISAKI: Waugh! Moths again? This dorm...

NARRATION: *I live in the Risho East Dormitory for Women. The rent's cheap, but this place is...a dump. A dump full of weirdos.*

NARRATION: *There's a rumor that one of the dorm's first alumni was a famous woman bank robber. The landlady's supposed to be her descendant...and they say she has a real shotgun in her closet.*

NARRATION: *And there's another story that this used to be a class building, but that it got burned down in a fire when the teachers were cooking curry. Now, every other Thursday at the dorm is "ghost curry" day. What's ghost curry? Judging by the smell, it changes every other Thursday.*

NARRATION: *But...everyone at Risho is a little strange. People expect it. And as long as you keep to yourself and don't cause any trouble, nobody bothers you. That's why I moved in.*

NARRATION: *See, these are my rules: stay away from people, don't let them in. That's the only way to have a happy life... But when you've got ESP, everyone forces their way in anyway.*

[Misaki stops in hallway. Light cheering from behind a door, like somebody just won a video game.]

MISAKI (muttering): Sheesh. Aren't *you* guys having fun. Let's see, Common Room 2... This one. Nn... Okay.

[Misaki opens a sliding wooden door to a lively room full of women. People are eating and drinking, playing video games.]

CLUB MEMBER 1 (politely, but hesitantly): Hello?

VOICES (CLUB MEMBER 1): *Surprised. Confused. Confused.*

MISAKI: Gah. Um, you don't know me, actually. I'm...Misaki Tanabe.

VOICES (CLUB MEMBER 1): *Ugh, annoyed annoyed.*

CLUB MEMBER 1: Are you... interested in joining the kickboxing club?

CLUB MEMBER 2 (bluntly, a little rude): Hey, Chisaki, who's that?

VOICES (CLUB MEMBER 2): *Tired. Bored. Drunk.*

CLUB MEMBER 1: I'm not sure...

MISAKI: [laughs nervously] Sorry, I guess I got the wrong room, I'll be going...!

AINA: Guys, I'm back... Oh, hey Misaki.

MISAKI (relieved): Aina!

VOICES (AINA): *Happy! Happy happy, RELIEVED! Nervous...*

AINA: Sorry. I had to get some ice.

CLUB MEMBER 2: Is she a friend of yours, Aina?

AINA: This is Misaki Tanabe. She lives here too. Misaki, these are my clubmates.

CLUB MEMBER 2: Yo.

CLUB MEMBER 1 (politely): It's nice to meet you.

VOICES (CLUB MEMBER 1): *Annoyed. Uncomfortable.*

MISAKI (awkwardly): Nice to meet you, too...

AINA: I'll get you a drink.

VOICES (CLUB MEMBER 1 and 2, intermingled): *Annoyed. Annoyed annoyed annoyed. / Druuuuuuunk.*

MISAKI: Wait, I'll come with you!

[They cross the room together. A few more voices snippets that Misaki hears as intrusive, overlapping echoes.]

(excited and loud) *"Excited! Happy! Entertained!"*

(low and slow, a little whiny) *"Sad, sad, distracted, sad."*

(manic) *"Craving nicotine, craving nicotine, **craving nicotine!!**"*

AINA: Are you okay?

MISAKI: Y-yes! One hundred percent good. I feel fantastic. Who wouldn't be, surrounded by people and all these voices... Um, you said I could have a drink, right?

AINA: Yep.

MISAKI (still quickly, like she's talking to reassure herself): Oh good, that's great, because I would *love* a drink. Maybe two.

AINA: All right... Oh, I should introduce you.

MISAKI: To who?

AINA: To...

[Before she can finish, enter Ayukawa, with a jangle of bracelets and cell phone charms. She's cheerful and outgoing right from the get-go.]

AYUKAWA: Hello!

[Ayukawa's emotional voices, compared to the other girls at the party, sound *exceptionally* hostile. It comes like a tidal wave.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Angry. Frustrated. Stress, stresssssss. Judging, Frustrated, argh! Angry, angry, angry, CLAUSTROPHOBIC!*

MISAKI (quietly, like somebody who realized that they just swallowed poison): Oh god.

AINA: This is Ayukawa. We're in the same history class. Ayukawa, this is...

AYUKAWA: Wait! Don't tell me, I know I saw you on move-in day... You're Misaki Tanabe, right?

MISAKI: ... Yes?

AYUKAWA: Great! You know, I've been *wondering* about you.

MISAKI (wary): You have?

AYUKAWA: Yes! My gosh. You're so mysterious, no one ever sees you come out. It's like the Phantom of the Opera.

MISAKI: Phantom of the...

AYUKAWA: [Interrupting.] So when Aina said she was bringing you by tonight, I thought, "Now I *really* have to come!" It's unheard of to catch you in the wild!

MISAKI (still a little confused): Like a Pokemon...?

AYUKAWA: Heh. You're kinda funny, huh? Well, it's nice to finally meet you!

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Stressed, tired, irritated. Annoyed, ugh!*

MISAKI: Same... here...

AINA: Let's sit.

AYUKAWA: Good idea! Come on, over here.

NARRATION: *With my ability, sometimes I'll meet people who really creep me out. They might look happy and friendly on the outside, but inside...they're **dark** and angry. [pause] But this girl smells so good! And she's so **pretty**. People like her are a totally different species from me.*

[Aina is mixing drinks.]

AYUKAWA: Hey, Misa! Do you mind if I call you that?

MISAKI: Okay, um...

AYUKAWA: Ah, my full name's Kiki Ayukawa. (cheerful yet slightly menacing) But call me by my first name and you'll regret it, ha ha!

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Irritated! Ugh! PISSED!*

MISAKI (nervously): Oh, uh... okay.

AYUKAWA: Aw, I'm just joking. You don't have to be so shy! I don't bite!

MISAKI (mumbling): Really?

AINA: Here you go. Drinks.

AYUKAWA (pleased): Oh my gosh, Aina, what is this?

AINA: Orange sherbet...and lots of shochu.

AYUKAWA: Sounds *amazing*. You've got a real gift for this.

AINA (shyly): Aw. I dunno about that.

AYUKAWA: Let's have a toast! To... hmm. Let's say to new friendships! On three, one, two, three...

AYUKAWA (energetic): Cheers!

AINA (subdued as usual, but trying a little harder): Cheers!

MISAKI (exhausted): Cheers...

AYUKAWA: Mmm! Aina, this drink is deadly!

AINA: It is?



AYUKAWA: This much alcohol would be two or three drinks at a bar.

AINA: Oh. (making awkward conversation) Do you... like going to bars?

AYUKAWA: I go with friends, usually. Actually, let me check something... [Opens a flip cell phone.] Yep, right now they're all drinking without me~! I knew it. [closes phone]

AINA: You're really popular.

AYUKAWA: Oh please, not at all. The music department's just terrible. We're all horrible, lonely alcoholics. [laughs]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Annoyed, stressed, annoyed, stressed.*

AYUKAWA: I actually wanted an excuse to stay here for once! Everything at Risho looks so fun, but I'm always practicing... Misa, you're so quiet!

MISAKI: [slurps her drink] Um...

AYUKAWA: Why don't you talk a little?

MISAKI: Me? [pause] Oh, that's right. Ayukawa. You won a scholarship, right?

AYUKAWA: Hm?

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Argh! PISSED!*

MISAKI (nervously, rambling): I mean, I just remembered, because I remembered hearing your name before, and then I realized, right, the full music scholarship, that's kind of a big deal, but maybe it was another Kiki Ayukawa? Ha... ha ha.

AYUKAWA (politely): No, you've got the right one.

AINA: Wow. You got a full ride?

AYUKAWA: [laughs lightly] Um, yes? But I don't like to draw attention to it... Lots of people think I'm some kind of genius, just because I got picked out of the whole orchestra.

AINA: But it means you've got skill.

AYUKAWA: Still, every day's a battle! So... Bottoms up, ladies!

[The sounds of the party transition to a cacophony of Aina and Ayukawa's inner voices, which are now intermingling.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Irritated. Annoyed! Distracted, distracted...annoyed. FOCUSED!*

VOICES (AINA): *Ha ha, happy! Happy happy happy...nervous, happy.*

AINA (breaking through the noise): Misaki? You okay?

MISAKI: Uh, yeah. Sorry, the drink's hitting me fast.

AYUKAWA: Is this your first time drinking?

MISAKI: Y-yes.

AINA (awkwardly) Me, too! I've actually never done anything like this, even with my teammates, so.

AYUKAWA: Aww, you guys are adorable!

AINA: It's 'cause I'm always training and stuff. It gets busy.

AYUKAWA: Hmmm. I'd be at practice, too, if I had boys fetching me fresh towels when I'm sweating. (conspiratorial) Do they help wipe you down, too?

AINA: Huh? Oh, n-no, that's not...

AYUKAWA: I'm just teasing, ha ha! Anyway, this is a cool party and all, but staying on campus all the time must get boring for you guys, too. Try to mix it up. You should come out to the festival this weekend!

AINA: Festival? Um...

AYUKAWA: Yeah, it's gonna be a big one! Fireworks and live music... And I know a place that rents yukatas in Teramachi, so we can get you all dressed up...

AINA: Dressing up. Wow. I don't know.

AYUKAWA: You'll look awesome! It'll be fun, I promise. Misa, how about it? You too?

MISAKI (distracted): Huh? Y-Yeah. All right.

AYUKAWA: Yes? Perfect!

AINA (hopeful) Okay.

[The voices (Aina and Ayukawa's, as above), music, and sounds overlap and become overwhelming.]

MISAKI: Ah, sorry. Excuse me for a second.

AYUKAWA: Yeah, sure sure!

AINA: S-sure sure.

[Misaki walks out of the room, marches quickly through the hallway and goes outside. Night sounds.]

NARRATION: *I knew I'd heard about her before... Ayukawa, the clarinet player.*

NARRATION: *Our school has music scholarships. She got one last year. People say there were actually **two** scholarship students in the beginning, but the other one suddenly disappeared. She was being stalked and harassed for months, by someone anonymous... And now, Ayukawa is the only scholarship student left.*

NARRATION: *I don't know if Ayukawa had anything to do with that, but...it doesn't look good. And she's so **angry** inside. Now she wants to be friends? With me and Aina?*

[Misaki walking on gravel.]

MISAKI (like a pep talk): It's okay. Come on, don't be scared. Don't be scared. Keep it together. This isn't high school...or middle school... Please, please don't be like middle school... I can't see anything. Where are my glasses?

[Misaki puts on her glasses with a clink.]

MISAKI: [long sigh] My first ever girls' night... What a total failure. I wanna go home.

[Cat collar bell rings. Sebastian runs right past Misaki's legs.]

MISAKI: Huh?

[Meowing. Paws, running away on gravel.]

MISAKI: Sebastian? How did you... Hey, wait!

[Misaki runs after her cat.]

MISAKI: You! Come back! Jeez, I *just* did this...

[Footsteps stop.]

MISAKI: [gasps]

[Sound of two cats meowing. Bells jingling.]

MISAKI: What? I can't believe you! You're...cheating on me with other cats! How could you?

[Meowing. It sounds different from Sebastian's.]

MISAKI: Wow, what a pretty cat. You have a collar; are you lost? So white and fluffy... [snaps out of it] Argh, no! What... (puts on her roleplaying princess voice) What do you have to say for yourself, Sebastian?

[Purring.]

MISAKI (as Sebastian): "It seems I've been caught."

MISAKI: Yes, you certainly have! So this is your long-lost bride, my lord?

[Someone is walking up to Misaki, but she hasn't noticed.]

MISAKI: "You're so naïve, Misaki. I have more lovers than there are stars in the sky..."

MISAKI: You're supposed to be *my* cat! Come back, my lordship! My love, my one and only sweetheart!

NISHIDA: Um, excuse...

MISAKI (surprised): Wah!

NISHIDA: ...me. I'm looking for the kickboxing club. There's a party... (pause) What were you doing just now?

MISAKI: Nothing, haha! I wasn't doing anything!

NISHIDA: It looked like you were talking to those cats.

MISAKI: [gasps, then mutters irritably] Then why did you ask what I was doing...

NISHIDA: What?

MISAKI: Y-You, 'what!' You pop out of nowhere, dressed all fancy... G-g-guys are forbidden from the ladies' dorms after sunset!

NISHIDA: Maybe thirty years ago! I'm sure that's not true now. Besides, I was invited.  
[pause] That was, ah. Pretty creative, just now. All the voices and stuff. You could be a voice actress.

MISAKI: Oh god.

NISHIDA: Don't worry, it's not a big deal. It's actually pretty funny...

MISAKI (mumbling over Nishida): Just bury the body and walk away, oh, but then they'll catch me and I'll go to jail, right? They'll call me "Man-Killer Misaki." Or "The Black Widow." Jeez, that makes me sound tougher than I am...

NISHIDA (interrupting curiously) Hey.

MISAKI: What?

[Footsteps.]

NISHIDA: You actually look familiar. Have we met?

MISAKI (nervous): I-I-I'm quite sure you are mistaken, sir! (to herself, rambling mode) Am I being hit on? Is he hitting on me? This super-handsome guy? Why? Oh gosh. Call the cops.

NISHIDA: What was that?

MISAKI (suspicious): Wait...

NISHIDA: What?

MISAKI: I can't...hear you.

NISHIDA: Really?

MISAKI (to herself, rambling mode): No! It doesn't make any sense. I can *always* hear people when they're this close. Those feelings just *come* to me. But I'm not getting anything now...

NISHIDA: Seems like you can hear me fine, though...

MISAKI: Oh, *shhh!*

NISHIDA: Okay! Jeez.

MISAKI (to herself): What's going on? Has this ever happened before? I don't get it. (to Nishida) Who *are* you?

[pause]

NISHIDA: Wait. Misaki?

MISAKI: Huh?

NISHIDA: Yeah. [walking sounds] Track jacket, those glasses... The *exact same* glasses. It's



you!

MISAKI: Stop staring at me! You...you *villain*!

NISHIDA: Hey, that hurts.

MISAKI: Who are you? [pause] (slowly, horrified) No...

[Longer pause.]

NISHIDA: Remember now?

MISAKI: Oh, no, no, no.

[Various sounds and snippets of dialogue in flashback:

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 1: "She's such a freak."

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 2: "Why is SHE here?"

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOY 1: "Gross, Misaki's here."

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOY 2: "I can't finish my lunch."

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 3 (SANA): "Misaki, you traitor. I hate you!"

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOY 3 (NISHIDA, friendly): "Misaki!"

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOY 3 (NISHIDA again, irritated and quietly angry): "Misaki..."]

NISHIDA (fading in): ...saki. Earth to Misaki! Hey!

MISAKI: Go away!

[Sound of running on gravel.]

NISHIDA: Hey, wait, come on.

MISAKI: This can't be happening. This can't be happening. I moved away, I thought I escaped...

NISHIDA: Just hang on a second!

MISAKI: No! I don't want to talk to you!

NISHIDA: Whoa wait, watch where you're —

MISAKI: Ngh!

[Sound of hitting something hard. A body falling to gravel.]

NISHIDA: Misaki? Misaki?! (fades out)

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[Fade into Misaki's room. Voices are fuzzy but become clear as Misaki regains consciousness.]

AINA: Do you think we should call an ambulance? Shouldn't she be waking up by now?

NISHIDA: Let's give it a minute. We don't want to freak everyone out with a false alarm.

AINA: I don't know--it seems serious.

NISHIDA: Wait, did she move? I think she might be coming around. Hang on.

AINA: (intense and a little freaked out) Misaki! Misaki, wake up! You think she'll be okay?

MISAKI: Ugghhugghuh.

NISHIDA (fake-serious tone): I'm afraid we've lost her.

AINA: Nishida-senpai, please!

NISHIDA: I'm just kidding. I really think she's fine.

[sound of blankets rustling quickly]

MISAKI: Nishida! Waaugh! [She sits up too fast.] Ow!

AINA: Whoa! Settle down, it's okay. You're in your room.

MISAKI: Ai...na?

AINA (gentle): Hey. You hit your head really hard. Running into...?

NISHIDA: The wall. She just ran--pow. Right into the wall, knocked herself out.

AINA: A-ah... Right.

[The emotional chorus fades in. Aina speaks over her own emotional voices.]

VOICES (AINA): *Worried, worried, worried.*

AINA: Are you dizzy? How many fingers am I holding up?

MISAKI: Huh? Um... two.

AINA (horrified): Oh no, Misaki...

MISAKI: Ahh, waitwaitwait. [Takes out glasses from her pocket, puts them on with a clink.] Okay, *four*. Wow, really?

AINA: You wear glasses?

MISAKI: Sometimes. Only when I have to count fingers! Heh.

NISHIDA: Hey, you're well enough to make lame jokes. That's a good sign.

[The chorus of Aina's feelings suddenly changes after Nishida talks. The worry gets swiftly overtaken by...]

VOICES (AINA): *Worried, worried...relieved. Happy. Nervous. Excited...crushing, crushing.*  
[giggles girlishly]

MISAKI: Oh god.

AINA: You okay, Misaki?

[The voices continue, even more cheerful and lovestruck.]

VOICES (AINA): *Happy happy, nervous. In love. Turned on...*

MISAKI: I think I'm going to throw up.

AINA: We need a bucket!

NISHIDA: Just like at practice, huh?

MISAKI: You're friends with Aina?

AINA: Huh? What do you mean? Nishida-senpai's our manager at the kickboxing club.  
[pause] How do *you* know each other?

MISAKI and NISHIDA [in unison] :Uhhh, well...

[Nishida and Misaki start talking over each other.]

NISHIDA: We're childhood friends.

MISAKI: Just classmates.

NISHIDA: No, since we were kids, basically.

MISAKI: You hush! Just--

NISHIDA: It's been, jeez, years.

MISAKI: *Former* classmates.

NISHIDA: Something like that.

MISAKI: Fine.

NISHIDA: Right.

MISAKI: Right.

[pause]

AINA: ... Oh.

VOICES (AINA): *Confused? Nervous...jealous, **jealous**. Ack, scared! Nervous, uncomfortable...*

MISAKI (muttering): Ugh... *puppy love*.

NISHIDA: Hm? You say something?

MISAKI (desperate): *Help*.

AINA: You look really nauseous... [Calling out.] Hey, where's the-

[footsteps: slippers on wood]

AYUKAWA (rushed, but still bright and cheery): Hey, sorry about that! I'm here, got the bucket! How's our patient?

AINA: She looks okay... Senpai?

[The chorus, which up until now has been Aina, gets suddenly cut off by Nishida's feelings, loud and echoing.]

VOICES (NISHIDA): **HATE**.

[pause]

NISHIDA (flatly): Yeah, she'll be fine.

AYUKAWA: Well that's good! Ah... [tone drops] Ah. It's you.

NISHIDA: Long time no see, Ayukawa.

[pause]

AYUKAWA: ...Yeah.

NISHIDA: I like the hair.

AYUKAWA: You're looking nice yourself. Trying out a new face?

NISHIDA (annoyed) You-- [short breath] (calmly) Seems like you're doing well.

AYUKAWA (fake approximation of her usual cheerful voice, but ice-cold): Oh, you bet! I'm just *swimming* in fame and fortune, thanks to you.

NISHIDA (fake-charming): Well that's fantastic! I'd say you really earned it.

[Ayukawa's emotional chorus mingles with Nishida's. Her usual irritation escalates and matches Nishida's tone, creating a very hostile atmosphere.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Irritated, disgusted, hate, hate, hate.*

VOICES (NISHIDA): *Angry, hate, HATE!*

MISAKI: Uh... blugh?

AINA (worried): M-Misa? Are you gonna blow?

NISHIDA (concerned): Misaki, you want us out of here?

AYUKAWA (to herself, quietly): Did he just say "Misaki"? (to Nishida) You guys know each other?

AINA: They, um, go way back.

NISHIDA (back to his regular voice): Nah, Ueda, that was a joke. Misaki's really nothing to me.

[The voices rise in volume and intensity--Aina's confusion, Ayukawa's hatred.]

VOICES (AINA): *Confused, nervous. Confused...scared, nervous. Hopeful? Nn, confused, scared!*

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Furious, ugh! Hateful, angry, frustrated! Angry! DISGUSTED!*

MISAKI: Um... Can you guys go?

NISHIDA: All right. Let's get going.



AINA: Yeah... Okay.

AYUKAWA: Call us if you need anything!

[steps, door sliding closed]

[Misaki sticks her head into the bucket.]

MISAKI: [echoing sigh into the bucket] What the heck...

[Sebastian purrs and walks around Misaki.]

MISAKI: Sebastian? How did you get back? Were you hiding? Good kitty.

MISAKI (to her cat): Nishida's feelings. They disappeared again. And they were so hard to read, like he's cut them off. Maybe he's guarding them? It's the same as that time in middle school... I don't get it.

[Sebastian meows. Misaki crawls out of bed.]

MISAKI: What's happened to you, Nishida? I never expected you to feel so...angry. You're like a completely different person. And...

[Flashback, NISHIDA: "Misaki's really nothing to me."]

MISAKI (hurt): Why'd you have to say that again?

[Misaki claps her hands against her face.]

MISAKI: Nope! Not thinking about it anymore! Stupid boy.

[Sounds of fast clicking and typing.]

NARRATION: *The rules are simple. Stay away from people. Don't let them in. That's the only way to live a happy life. If you don't follow those rules, there's nothing waiting for you but pain. I learned my lesson when I was young.*

[Flashback:

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 1: Hey, are you friends with that girl?

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOY (NISHIDA): Who?

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 2: You know, that weird psychic girl. Greasy hair, always saying such creepy stuff...

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 1: Is she your girlfriend? Do you have psychic powers too, Nishida?

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL 2: Sana told us all about it. You guys are dating, right?

NISHIDA: No... She's really nothing to me.]

[Fade out.]

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[Open on Misaki's room, present day. Faint festival sounds outside.]

MISAKI: Here we are, the night of the festival. And here I am, playing games. [sigh] [clicking]  
At least I don't have to wear headphones tonight.

MISAKI: Where *are* you tonight, partner? You've been gone for days. Did you go out? Don't tell me *you* have a real life, too...? I hope you aren't mad because we didn't play the other night. (to herself): But he said it was okay...

[Sebastian meows.]

MISAKI (sulking): Come back already. I hate playing with random people.

[sound of blinds being pulled back]

MISAKI: Jeez. Those "social" people are all the same... (imitating a vapid girl's voice): "Yay, it's the perfect college life! Let's party and hang around dumb boys all day--yeah, that sounds great, then we can get curry and talk about clothes or whatever normal people do! Yeah, awesome!"

MISAKI: Pff. Don't have time for that.

[pause]

MISAKI: It's dumb. I don't need them, Sebastian! I really don't. Aina can chase after Nishida all she wants. I have my Twitter buddies, and my games, and you, and it's all, all perfect...  
Hm?

[Misaki returns to blinds. Sebastian moves out of the way, purring.]

MISAKI: Oh, look, and there's Ayukawa standing in the corner. Pretty Miss Fashion Girl, going out all dressed up. Please. I know you're just faking it when you're so *friendly*. Hah, if people knew what went on in *your* head... Speaking of which, you're all alone. What's with that? Where's all your drinking buddies?

[pause]

MISAKI (dismissive): Whatever, have fun.

[pause]

MISAKI: Huh?... Wait. Is that...

[sound of blinds again]

MISAKI: ...Nishida? Behind the telephone pole? No. [pause] Yeah. That's totally him. In the sunglasses. (amused) Hah, Nishida, you dork! Sunglasses at night? So much for "Nishida the Prince." What are you even looking at?

[Pause. Misaki's voice from here becomes increasingly concerned.]

MISAKI: ...What? No, hey. Hey, Fashion Girl, turn around. Turn. Around!

[Sebastian meows as Misaki continues talking to herself.]

MISAKI (alarmed, talking faster and louder): Oh my god. Ayukawa! He's walking behind you! Ayukawa! ...Hey! Nishida is *following* you! And he's carrying... (horrified) Is that a stick? A baton? What is that? Oh no. Wait, hey! I can't see you if you walk away! Don't...go...!

[Sound of getting up from chair. Cat purring.]

MISAKI (hyperventilating): What was that. *What was that*. Oh no. Oh no. Oh no no no no no... I can't ignore last night...

[Flashback, Ayukawa talking and Nishida's echoing inner voice: "Hey, sorry! How's our patient?" "HATE."]

MISAKI: ...Oh no, oh no. Okay, focus, come on, Misaki, you dummy, *focus*... When people have feelings like that, it means, the last time that happened to me was, it was...

[Flashback to middle school:

SANA: "Misaki, you traitor, I hate you!"]

[pause]

MISAKI: That's right. I remember.

[Sebastian meows inquisitively.]

MISAKI: ...What if Nishida's going to do something? I know Ayukawa isn't the greatest person in the world, but his anger last night was so intense, and scary. I really feel like he might do something bad... Sebastian, what do I do?

MISAKI: What *can* I do? This is real life, right? It's not a game. So I can't just...or can I?

[Begin fantasy sequence: 16-Bit video game music, associated sounds--dark, urgent.]

NISHIDA (in an overwrought villain voice, like Snidely Whiplash: Nyaaahahaha!

AYUKAWA (high-pitched and cartoony): Help! Help! Somebody save me!

NISHIDA: No one will come to your rescue! I will DESTROY you!

MISAKI (in a big hero voice): Not so fast! I'll save you, Princess!

AYUKAWA: Oh, help! Help!

NISHIDA: No! Curses!

MISAKI: Hoo, hah! Take that!

[battle blast]

NISHIDA: Noooooo!

[victory music]

AYUKAWA: Oh, thank you! Mwah!

[End fantasy sequence; back to ambient computer room noise.]

MISAKI: Okay. I...I have to save her.

[Sebastian meows.]

MISAKI: Sebastian, I know it's crazy, but I have to do it! But that means...

MISAKI: Going out there. Right now.

[Sounds of the city, mingling with Misaki's monologue, which becomes increasingly anxious as the sounds become harsher.]

MISAKI: It's okay... It's okay. It's just like going to the convenience store at night, I do it all the time... Except, you know, totally not. It's a festival, a freakin' *festival*. What do you even do there? There will be tons of people... And I look like garbage. Everyone's going to look at me and judge me, and I'm going to feel all of it. All those people out there, their emotions are going to eat me alive...

[Misaki goes to the computer, types quickly.]

MISAKI (frantic, hopeful): Hey, partner, come on. Are you there? I could really, really use some advice! Please!

[silence]

MISAKI: [sighs] (sadly) No, of course you're not there. Not when I need you... Nobody's ever there.

MISAKI: God... I can't do it. I can't do it. I...

[Sebastian purrs.]

MISAKI: Why can't you really talk to me, Sebastian? I could use some help... What should I even do? [pause] What's *Nishida* trying to do? And what made him so *angry* since I knew him...

[Flashback, Ayukawa's echoing voice: "You're Misaki Tanabe, right?... I've been *wondering* about you... Let's have a toast! ... To new friendships."]

MISAKI (bitterly): I know she didn't mean it. That's just her outward persona. It's stupid...

[more purring, sound of the collar bell.]

MISAKI: Heheh. You're all soft. (quietly): Sebastian... You're not gonna hurt me, right? You're a good kitty.

[Misaki petting the cat, a quiet moment.]

NARRATION: *People... I really don't like people. They're so complicated. They make you unhappy. And the memories stay with you forever, no matter how much you want to forget... People rip you apart. And then they act like **you're** the crazy one. I'm so sick of it...*

[Flashback, Ayukawa again: "Misa!"]

[Ayukawa from the fantasy sequence, softer and more echoing: "Help! Help! Somebody save me!"]

MISAKI (low and rising in intensity, like she's revving up): Nnnnnnnnnn....

[Cat meows.]

NARRATION: *Maybe it's dumb to think I could ever be heroic--I can barely even get through a conversation, how could I save someone? But...maybe I just have to stop thinking...and go.*

[Misaki continues revving for a second or two longer, louder and louder.]

NARRATION (determined): *Screw it.*

MISAKI: Nnnnnaaahhh I'm going! I'm going! Ahhhh!

[Door opening and closing. Door opening again.]

MISAKI: Be good, Sebastian! I'll be right back!

[Door closing again. Sebastian meows, and his bell rings.]

**To be continued in Chapter 2.**