

Mayuri's 16th B-Day

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About a girl at her party... and something will change when she blows out the candles... um, just read it, 'k?

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Mayuri, your friends are here! called Moegi Totekama. I dashed out of my room and down the stairs. Thanks, neechan! I called to Moegi. She nodded and smiled. I didn't mind calling her neechan today. Her friends were already here, in the basement.

Tonight's our big night! she shouted. Whatever. My friends were finally here. I ran to the door and opened it just as Rishi was about to knock again. Thanks for coming, guys! I said, letting in Rishi, Takumi, Takuto, Tsubasa and Jisu. They all carried their backpacks with them, some of them looking like they were staying more than one night. The only one missing was...

Is Asuka here yet? Takumi asked hopefully.

No, your girlfriend hasn't arrived yet, I replied, laughing.

Takumi flushed. She isn't my girlfriend! he muttered. The rest of us all laughed, and Rishi jabbed his elbow into Takuto's side.

Sure, not yet, anyway, he laughed. Everyone knew how much Takumi liked Asuka. Except Asuka. She's kinda dense sometimes. Okay, more often than sometimes.

And everyone knew how much Rishi liked Jisu. Jisu knew, but couldn't care less. In fact, Tsubasa liked Jisu as well. I was pretty sure that Jisu liked him back. But she wouldn't date him because she knew that I liked him. Wow, we were confusing.

Hey, look who's here already, I said, looking out the window. It was Asuka's mom's car pulling up. Takumi jumped to the window. We laughed at him. He ignored us and opened the door for Asuka. She was carrying all her sleep-over gear (which wasn't just a bag, pillow and pajamas for Asuka), which caused her to trip and fall to the floor. Tsubasa, Jisu, and Rishi laughed. Takumi and I helped her up. Asuka's mother was in the doorway now. Have fun, Su-chan! she said, about to leave. Then she saw the boys. More specifically, she saw the boys' backpacks.

What do they here she put and emphasis need backpacks for? she asked suspiciously. I was about to tell her that they were sleeping over as well, when Asuka stepped on my foot.

They've just got some movies, games, and snacks, Kaa-chan. See you tomorrow! she said as she pushed her mother out the door. We made sure to be extremely quiet until we saw the car pull out of the driveway. Then we started laughing.

Nice, Asuka-chan! She actually believed you! said Takumi.

Yeah, I had hoped to get here a little later, when you guys would have your stuff in the rec. room. I prepared that lie anyway, though, she laughed. Are Moegi's friends here, too? she asked.

Not the one you're hoping for. Shirai-san couldn't come tonight, I replied. Shirai Suguwara was only the cutest boy in our entire school and my stupid sister was friends with him. But he was on a date tonight. I couldn't tell Asuka. Maybe there's *another* guy that actually *likes* you that you could go out with, Rishi pointed out. Everyone but Asuka and Takumi either kicked or jabbed him. Asuka wasn't paying attention (lost in dreams of Shirai), and Takumi was too embarrassed to move.

Come on, let's set up downstairs, I said, grabbing some of the numerous backpacks and bags. All seven of us stomped downstairs, past Moegi and co, to the rec. room.

I can't believe that your parents are actually letting *us* stay overnight, Tsubasa said as he tossed his bag to the floor.

Yeah, tell me about it, I muttered to myself. Then, louder, So, what do you crazy people want to do?

The others are watching some horror movie anyone here who wants to watch it?

I knew that I was being unfair to some of them, but Tsubasa liked horror movies. I didn't even like horror movies.

Jisu, Rishi, Tsubasa and Takuto raised their hands. I wasn't surprised. I was, surprised, however, that Asuka hadn't raised her hand. She was into any kind of movie, last time I'd checked.

Uh, never mind. I think the movie's almost over, anyway. And we're having dinner soon. Let's just figure out sleeping arrangements, shall we? I was just dodging the movie. Now that I had thought about it, it was a pretty scary movie. Ringu. Euck.

Well, I bet I know who *Takumi* wants to be next to, said Tsubasa. Jisu, Rishi and Takuto laughed. I didn't. Asuka was confused. Obviously, Takumi was blushing again.

I don't get it, Asuka said, scratching her head pretending to be a monkey.

Well, Tsubasa started. I flashed a look at Jisu, who in turn kicked Tsubasa in the shin. He stopped.

Boys on one side and girls on the other. I turned to the doorway to see Otou-san. If you don't like it, you can walk home. A few of my friends laughed quietly, but I knew that he was being dead serious.

We can handle it, Papa, I said, shooing him with my hand. He grimaced in Rishi's direction and walked away. He was still upset that Rishi had broken up with me. He didn't like teenage boys. It had taken a long time to convince him to let the boys sleep over.

Okay, you guys just do whatever, but I'm with Mayuri-chan, Jisu said, trying to kill me with a hug.

I'll be on the other side! chimed in Asuka. My bed was already set up, so Jisu and Asuka put theirs on either side of mine. I looked to see what the boys were doing. I saw that Tsubasa's stuff was next to Jisu's. Wonderful. I saw that Takuto had put his brother's stuff next to Asuka. Takuto's stuff was next to Tsubasa. On his other side was Rishi.

You better hope my dad doesn't see this, I said quietly. Just then, Moegi walked in.

Ooh. You better hope Papa doesn't see that, she said, pointing at the sleeping bag arrangement. I rolled my eyes. Oh, yeah. I came in here to tell you that dinner's been postponed cause Mama burnt the pizza. *Burnt it!* How is that possible? She's been in the kitchen the whole time! She kept on going. Blah, blah, blah. I had stopped listening. Everyone else had, too.

Moegi was still blabbing on when I started taking charge. So, who wants to play Truth or Dare? I asked. Everyone but Takumi stuck their hands up. Takuto fixed that. He snatched his brother's hand and held it up. Great, I said, ignoring the two of them, now bickering. Sit in a circle, people, I said. We sat down on the sleeping bags in a pickle shape. Jeez, people are so stupid.

Right. I'll go first, I said, ignoring the obvious non-circle. Oh. Rules. Only one chicken each and you can't repeat a dare. Jisu, Truth, Dare, Double Dare, or Promise to Repeat? I asked.

Dare, of course! she replied. I sighed. Go figure. I had wanted her to say Truth, so I could ask about Tsubasa.

Right, um, go... Go cut off a piece of Moegi's hair! I whispered. Jisu stared.

Are you joking? she asked, horrified. She'll skin me alive!

It was true. At first, the only reason Moegi had dyed her hair was so that people could tell us apart.

Neither of us has had our ears pierced, and we weren't about to now. We both have this irrational fear of needles. Actually, just about any sharp object will do.

So, anyway, a little while before the party, Mama had dropped us off at the hair stylist's to get our hair cut. She left to go do some grocery shopping. While she was gone, Moegi and I had a not-so-pleasant conversation about how everyone thinks it's cute, how we always look exactly the same looks. I mean it.

Mama always had us get the same haircuts and everything. At least we were allowed to pick out our own clothes after we turned ten, that is.

Anyway, imagine these two very annoyed twelve-soon-to-be-thirteen-year-olds sitting in the chairs at the barber shop. They're both extremely angry fed up. They look exactly the same, except one is frowning.

more (me). They start talking about how much they hate being twins. One (me) starts ranting about how she hates having to call the other neechan just cause she s five minutes older. The older one gets an idea.

Let s get our hair dyed, she says in a maniacal way. The other twin gets scared, but agrees. The older one will get blue, the younger purple.

But, just as the hairdresser is about to start on the purple-wanting twin, the mother comes back. Need I explain from there?

So, that s how Moegi got her blue hair (I still kinda wish I d gotten to dye mine, but Mama said that if we ever tried to pull a stunt like that again, she d make sure we d be social rejects for the rest of our lives). Moegi thinks of her vibrant hair as a symbol of ... standing apart from the rest. At least, that s what she says. I think it s a symbol of how much she can t stand Mama.

Before I get into a big rant about Moegi and Mama s relationship, let s get back to the party. Specifically, the dangerous dare of cutting off a piece of Moegi s hair.

I fished out a pair of scissors from the drawer under the rec. room TV and handed them to Jisu. She held them a moment, then said, Can I just cut my own hair off? she asked meekly. Meek. That wasn t exactly a word to describe Jisu most of the time.

No! the rest of us (excluding Takumi, of course) shouted. One of Moegi s friends from the next room looked in, confused. I waved her away.

O Okay, Jisu said, standing up. If I don t come back, my stuff can be split between you guys... except you, Mayuri! she said. We all laughed. She laughed too. Then she ran out the door toward the other partiers. The rest of us followed her to the door, where we hid and watched.

Jisu pretended to walk casually around the room, saying hello to both people she knew and didn t. She sat down next to one, Kirisa, who was seated almost directly behind Moegi. In fact, Kirisa was braiding Moegi s hair. Jisu started making small talk with them, slowly reaching up with the scissors to a piece of unbraided hair. Neither noticed as she clipped off a piece.

Well, see you guys later, she said hurrying all too fast out of the room. When she got back to us, we closed the door behind her and burst out laughing. Jisu held up the hair proudly.

Okay, let s get back to the game! she said excitedly. We sat back down in our circle and Jisu looked at us all carefully. Alright... Rishi! Truth or Dare ... blah blah blah?? she asked.

Dare, he replied. Jisu smiled evilly.

Wonderful. Take this piece of hair, she started, holding up the now seemingly large lock. Rishi paled. And go tell Moegi-kun that *you* cut it off of her.

Um, Jisu-kun, that s a little bit harsh... I said, but she shooed me with her hand. As we started arguing about the safety of the dare, Rishi stood.

Wish me luck, he said walking toward the others room again.

Good or bad? Takuto laughed. He didn t know the wrath of Moegi. He didn t understand what she could do to a girl never mind a boy. It didn t matter anyway. Rishi was already gone. We all hurried to the door again, watching.

Um, Moegi...-san? he said, kneeling down at her side.

What do you want? she asked, irritated.

I cut off a piece of your hair and I thought you might want it back, he replied.

At first, it appeared as if nothing had happened. But I knew Moegi. That was just the first stage of her anger. Then she would... yes, she stood up. Suddenly, she took him by the wrist and snatched the hair away. How considerate of you, she said. She proceeded to go into the *ikkyo* technique from jujitsu, pinning him to the floor. Now everyone else was watching, too. She was sitting on his back with the hair just about to go into Rishi s mouth when it happened. Mama walked in.

Moegi-chan! she cried. What are you doing?

shoot, Moegi muttered. She rolled off of Rishi and stood, arms crossed. This little weakling cut off a piece of my hair. Since he wanted it so much, I thought I'd make it a more permanent part of him, she said.

Moegi!

Fine. I'm sorry, freak.

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have cut the hair. Sorry. Rishi was scared. Both of Moegi and our mother. Ten minutes of apologizing later, we were back in the circle. Jeez, we were stupid.

My turn, Rishi said. Let's go back to the person who started this all, he said, glaring at Jisu. Rishi was good at holding a grudge. Truth or Dare, Mayuri? he asked, whipping around to me. I jumped. Crap. Truth or Dare? I didn't want to look like a chicken and choose Truth, but what if the Dare was really dangerous? Dare, I said. The others oohed at my courage. Except Rishi. His arms were crossed, and so was he.

Alright, he said. Kiss.... I stared at him in horror. He was going to say... Takuto-kun. I almost had a heart attack. He didn't know about Tsubasa! Still... Takuto? Yes, he was my friend... yes, I'd known him for a year... yes, he was pretty decent looking... but Takuto?

You only get one chicken, Rishi reminded me.

Yeah, yeah, I know, I said. I sat down in front of Takuto. I thought about kissing his hand, because Rishi didn't specify *where* to kiss him, but that would be cowardly. And square.

I leaned over and kissed him. Wow, that was easy. Immediately afterward, both of us spat on the floor in front of Rishi, just to spite him. He grinned evilly. Liked that, didn't you? he asked. It looked like he was talking to Takuto, but I stood up and slapped him.

Alright, calm down, guys, Asuka said. It was the first time anyone had spoken in a while.

Asuka, I said, sitting back down. Truth or Dare?

Um, Truth, she replied. I nodded without breaking my emotionless expression.

Who out of these losers would you rather go out with? I knew I was being unfair to Takumi. And Asuka. But I couldn't help it.

Um, I don't know... she started. Does it have to be out of *them*? she asked, gesturing to the four boys. Yes.

Um, well, Tsubasa's just a jerk and he's ugly, she started. Tsubasa gasped in mock surprise. And... Takuto obviously isn't a good kisser, she teased. And Rishi's my best friend. So ... Takumi? she joked. We all laughed.

Is that your final answer? I asked, pretending to be a game show host.

Yep! she replied. We all laughed again. Takumi pretended to laugh. But he wasn't really. It was obvious.

Alright, your turn, I conceded.

Truth or Dare, Takumi? she asked.

Promise to Repeat, he replied. Chicken.

Okay. Say I-sofa-king-we-Todd-did, she said. Five times fast. Ooh, that was a mean one. Poor Takumi didn't get it. IsofakingweTodddid, he started. Isofakingretaded he said again.

Isofrackingretarded, he said. Then it finally clicked. Hey! he said. Asuka laughed.

I-sofa-king-we-Todd-did. I sofa king we Todd did.

Cheater! Asuka yelled. The party was loosening up again.

Okay! Tsubasa, Truth or Dare? Takumi asked. He had almost forgotten about Asuka's Truth.

Whaddya think? Tsubasa asked, pretending to be hurt. Dare!

Okay... you have to kiss Jisu! Takumi said. I swear my heart actually skipped a beat.

Nooooo!! Jisu said, backing away, pretending to be scared.

You're out, if you don't let him, Takuto said.

Jisu stopped. I looked away for a second. When I looked back, Tsubasa was still kissing Jisu. She wasn't letting go.

When they did finally break apart, they were smiling. I felt like I was going to cry. I felt... broken. I didn't hear the next person being dared. Or the next. I just sat in a numb, soundless, surreal world. A few minutes later, I finally got the strength to stand. I'll go check on Mama, I said.

When I came back down, everyone was still playing. Dinner's ready, I said quietly. Everyone jumped up and