

„Sun Yellow“ (tw: gagging, minor mention of blood)

“Chris, come here! I got something to tell you!” someone shouted from the living room. Chris was slowly waking up, his face laying on his little notebook. A little disoriented he raised and rubbed his eyes.

Chris yawned and stretched, trying to get the tingling sensation from his neck and shoulders. He looked at his phone, sighing when he found out that he had fallen asleep on his desk about four hours ago. Now his sleep schedule was truly ruined, although for something to be ruined it had to be right in the first place.

“Did you hear me?” his roommate shouted again. Chris just mumbled and got up from his seat. He had to steady himself on the chair for a moment, seeing stars.

“Yeah, I heard you. I’m on my way, give me a second,” he shouted back. Chris yawned again before exiting his room. The mirror in the hallway showed him with messy hair and the clothes he wore yesterday. He would change them later, he thought. Finally, he entered the kitchen which was connected to the living room. He poured himself some coffee, cringing at the taste. He forced himself to drink some every day, regretting it every time. But energy drinks just weren’t for him and Chris needed to be awake right now.

He walked into the living room, seeing his roommate sitting on the couch with another boy. They were holding hands. His eyebrows furrowed.

“Here I am, what’s up?” he asked and leaned against the doorframe. Felix, his roommate, smiled widely. “I want to introduce you to my boyfriend, Kevin” Chris choked on his coffee, coughing loudly.

“Excuse me, what? Since when? I mean you never told me about him.” Felix laughs nervously.

“Yes that is true, I’m sorry. We have been going out for a few weeks. I wasn’t sure if this would work out, so I didn’t tell you. But now we are officially together and you are the first to know.” Chris stared at the couple in front of him, the gears in his head turning.

“Ah okay,” he answered after a few moments, a weird feeling bubbling up his throat. “That is nice for you, for you two.” He turned around the feeling still there and not really knowing how to identify it.

“I will be in my room again, I still have some stuff to do.”

“Don’t work too much Chris, you haven’t slept properly and I don’t want to repeat...” his roommate hesitated, but Chris knew what he meant by that. Once his insomnia was torturing him more than normal and he had so much work to do, he broke down in front of Felix. The other male had helped him out of his clothes into something comfortable and then tucked him

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in. In the morning, they had a talk about self-care and Chris had to promise to come to Felix if it gets worse again. But Chris was sure he had everything under control. He had to anyway. Before he left the couple alone, his eyes lingered a bit too long on the intertwined hands. And he started to think about the way Felix held his hand and how he helped him to his bed. He shook his head, banning the image out of his thoughts. On his way to the bathroom, to freshen up and take a shower, he grabbed some clothing from his room.

The young man suddenly choked as he walked out of his room, coughing violently. When he got into the bathroom he took a few sips of water from the sink to soothe his throat, but the choking sensation only grew. “What the hell...” he spit out gagging and suddenly feeling something coming up his throat. He kneeled down, his knuckles gripping the edge of the toilet seat so tight they turned white. He gagged again, this time something came up. His eyes screwed shut as he threw up for minutes, only taking a break to breathe.

Exhausted, he leaned his back against the tiles of the bathroom wall. His vision was clouded, beads of sweat on his forehead were prominent and his hands were shaking. He hadn't felt sick before, he didn't know what was happening. He took a deep breath and reached out to flush the toilet, as he saw that there was something entirely different in the bowl than he expected. Marigolds were splattered all over, some had landed next to the toilet. Horrified, Chris picked one of them up. He knew what throwing up flowers meant, he knew, but he couldn't believe it.

Hanahaki was a known disease, although few cases had been studied. You had to have a certain gene which meant people who got the flower sickness knew it was in the family. But Chris had never heard of someone of his family suffering from this gene. Maybe no one had experienced unrequited love before. The disease caused flowers to grow inside the victim's lungs, making the victim choke and in the end... die of the lack of oxygen. Chris knew little about the treatments he could get, having no connection to any victims until now. Slowly, he got up, flushed the toilet, and closed the door. Now he really needed a shower.

Like the water, his thoughts were also running and he knew he was in big trouble. The only person that could have caused this was Felix, his roommate, who was of course now in a relationship and surely not interested in him in that way.

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Chris was sitting at the table in the living room, his laptop in front of him and peppermint tea next to him. His throat hurt since the day he found out about his sickness. It had been a few days and Felix hadn't found out yet. Chris was quite proud of that fact, seeing that he was constantly trying to clear his throat and hiding the petals he coughed up regularly now. Today,

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he was alone in the apartment so he did minimal effort to keep the flower petals at bay. An old bowl, where his breakfast had been in before was used to dispose of them. Chris found that way easier than walking to the toilet every time, especially when he was alone at home. He was working on a project for his classical music class and was fully immersed in his work when the door was opened and his roommate stepped in.

Chris, who froze and looked around to find a place to hide the petals, just let out a rushed greeting when his roommate shouted a “Hi Chris, are you home?”

“Yes, I’m here!” He quickly grabbed the bowl and rushed into the kitchen to throw it into the bin. He started to cough again, barely being able to throw the traitorous petals away before Felix walked into the kitchen.

“You good, bro?” he heard the concerned voice of his roommate. Chris held himself up at the kitchen counter, a hand pressing onto his mouth to stop anything from falling onto the ground.

“Give me a hot second,” he croaked. After a minute he calmed down again and Felix already offered him a glass of water. Discreetly, Chris emptied his hand into his pocket. Chris thanked him and took a big gulp, before sighing and looking up into Felix’s face.

“Are you getting sick? I heard you last night, coughing. I thought it was just a cold but that sounded serious.” Felix’s hand felt Chris’ forehead, his own wrinkled in concern. Chris closed his eyes, trying not to enjoy the touch of his roommate’s hand too much. He had been avoiding physical contact in the last days, trying not to make his feelings worse, but now he started to regret it. Felix mumbled something and then his arms were holding Chris, hugging him tightly. Chris got goose bumps all over his body, a fluttering feeling in his stomach.

“How long have you been working today? Let’s bring you to bed.” Chris protested but Felix wouldn’t listen and just pulled him into his room.

“This is not my room, Lix...” Chris stated confused as they walked into Felix’s room.

“I know but I want to keep an eye on you and I still need to write an essay, so you are staying here.” The younger of the two folded back the blanket and Chris reluctantly crawled into his roommate’s bed. The moment he was covered, he fell asleep. Felix had said something about him going to work and that he would cook something for them afterward, but Chris barely understood it.

He awoke because of a loud bang which made him sit up too fast. After looking around he saw Felix collecting a few books from the ground, spitting out a row of curse words. “Watch your language,” Chris yawned and Felix looked up with an apologetic smile.

„Sun Yellow“ (tw: gagging, minor mention of blood)

“I am so sorry, I was about to order my stuff after I finished my essay when I accidentally hit the books on the ground with my foot. Ah, you were sleeping so soundly, I hate that I woke you up.” Chris dismissed Felix with a wave of his hand. “Don’t worry, I shouldn’t be sleeping anyway, it’s the middle of the day.” Felix walked towards him and placed himself on the edge of the bed. “Are you hungry? I could make it up to you by making lunch?” Chris smiled and he felt warm all over. The way Felix was looking at him made him think there was something else than friendship. The love and admiration, he wished it wasn’t just the role of an older brother that had earned him these feelings from the other. “I’m not that hungry. Also, there is nothing to eat in the kitchen. Let’s order some pizza or so.” He suggested and Felix crossed his arms, pouting playfully.

“Are you implying that my cooking is bad?” Chris laughed and grabbed his roommate by the shoulder to drag him fully into the bed. “I would never say such a thing, Sunshine!” He poked the younger in the side who laughed loudly. Chris watched like a fool. He knew nothing he saw right now could belong to him. The only thing he could do is watch and soak in every moment with Felix like one would the sun on a cold day.

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The coughing got worse with each day and the petals got larger until whole flowers were falling from Chris’ lips. Puking them up was becoming his daily ritual. When Felix and his boyfriend were hanging out at their place the coughing fits would hold on longer and would leave him breathless and shaking for at least an hour after. He had been to the doctors but the news they gave him weren’t very promising. There was a surgery he could have but this would only cause the flowers to retract a little. There was no cure. The only thing that could heal him is requited love or falling out of love but both options were completely strange to Chris. Either of those options was out of the question.

The music student was on his bed, browsing through the internet when Felix knocked on his half-closed door. “Kevin is here, we’ll be in my room. We are going out tonight to this fancy Italian restaurant we saw last time when we were in the mall. Should I take something for you home?” Chris gave him a small smile. It was nice of his roommate to ask and that is what friends do of course but he couldn’t ignore the bitter taste in his mouth when Felix mentioned that they were going on a date. Of course, that was completely normal for couples and it shouldn’t be a problem but Chris could already imagine how miserable he would be when they went out of the door, leaving him and his feelings behind.

“I’m gonna make myself some soup from yesterday, thank you for the offer though,” Chris answered and Felix gave him a thumbs up before excusing himself to answer the front door.

„Sun Yellow“ (tw: gagging, minor mention of blood)

Chris listened to the voices in the hallway. Kevin was a nice guy, Chris got to know him better when they made a movie night a day after they had met. He was funny and made sure Felix was taken care of. But exactly this made Chris furious. There was nothing wrong with this guy, he was perfect for Felix and it just made Chris realize more how small and non-existent his chances were.

“Hey, Chris!” a voice called out and Chris looked up from his laptop to see Kevin waving from the doorframe, greeting him with a smile. “Lix mentioned you were sick so I thought I would ask how you are doing?” Chris cursed this man and his kindness.

“I’m doing okay, the cough won’t go away though.” Kevin nodded in understanding: “I see, well I hope you will get better soon, man!” Chris mumbled a thank you and Kevin was dragged by Felix to his room.

All those lies he has been telling were catching up to him. He wasn’t getting any better and Felix started to notice. It was just the way his coughs took longer to subside or how he took longer in the bathroom, looking like he had cried the whole night. He knew he had to talk to Felix at some point, but imagining Felix saying out loud that he wasn’t interested in Chris made him shiver. It was too real, too threatening. He could ruin their friendship, the trust they built up for years. He did not even notice what he was looking up on his laptop. Instagram was slowly becoming a blur, his mind too far away to realize what he was looking at.

Then he heard something from the other room. It was quiet at first but then it got louder. He couldn’t believe his ears. His body froze. It was moaning.

He tried to stay calm, even put his headphones on to ignore the sounds of the couple but he could still hear them. Maybe it was just him imagining it but he even heard them through his loudest music. His body reacted with coughing and gagging. He could barely hold himself up as flowers and petals came out of his mouth. He barely noticed his wet cheeks and trembling hands and the music was so loud he didn’t hear himself cry. Chris didn’t know what to do, the panic was evident in his eyes. The fog in his mind made it hard to think of anything else but Felix and his boyfriend in the other room.

It took at least half an hour for him to calm down. His hands were full of yellow petals and on top of them there was something red. Chris held them closer to his face, he was exhausted and could barely see anything, but he knew that it was blood. His arm softened again and fell to the ground. He wasn’t motivated to move or clean up for that matter. His playlist had long stopped playing and he was now indulged in silence. And while he sat there, he waited for something to happen. He thought, maybe the yellow of the flowers stood in line with his only sunshine, Felix.