

I Want To Touch His Hair That Way **by debbiechan**

for Neha

Disclaimer: Kubo Tite invented Ishida Uryuu and Bleach. I make no money from fanfic; I am but a humble poet who is hard gay for all three proper nouns in the first sentence of this disclaimer.

Description: Shounen-ai. Yaoi. Gay. R. Ishida POV. Part of my RenIshi series that started with "Satisfaction" (<http://community.livejournal.com/bleachness/68718.html>), this ficlet contains a snippet of a happening retold from Vesperh's lovely RenIshi "Someone" (<http://community.livejournal.com/bleachness/127728.html>)

Ever since Kubo-sensei introduced us to Shinji's stereo and its "jazz from the Living World" in the Turn Back the Pendulum arc, I've been listening to ragtime and random jazz stuff and 1960s smoky café music and writing Bleach fic. Yeah. Wrote this ficlet listening to Nina Simone reinventing songs in a way that made my insides hurt and understand.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNtEUtdUA3Y> "Good Bait"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U8PfVL0JnY> "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4uFh0KxQTY> "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair"

Oh and this ficlet is dedicated to Nehalena because she loves poems, RenIshi, and writing long-ass intros to fics.

1.

"I'm just a no-good dog."

Abarai said shit like that all the time, and early in the evening when the neighborhood dogs were being walked, their barking reminded Ishida of what a lonely world this was.

The Akita two houses down yapped at everything and nothing.

Wiping his hands with a towel, Ishida stood at the kitchen sink. Listening for a human voice and not hearing it. The dishes were done. His homework was done. Three weekends now and Abarai hadn't come.

Answering the Akita in the streets with long, ridiculous yodels was a small dog who belonged to the upstairs neighbor. Another dog Ishida didn't know soon joined the carousing. And another, a happy barker, and another, a soulful howler from many streets away.

Ishida found himself walking to the front window.

Dreary twilight made it hard to see. Or maybe he needed a new prescription. Ishida took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes, reaching out with his other senses to feel for the Living and the Dead. So many lonely people walked the sidewalks. So many lonely spirits hovered above them.

Alone had not always meant the same thing as *lonely*.

How could something as simple and biological as having sex make the difference?

It was just succumbing to a need. *Stupid sex*. A challenge with another person that was like a fight. The rising urge, fingers clenching, the instinctual following-through.

It's not like I'm in love or anything.

Just thinking the words doomed him; Ishida knew that.

Oh fuck. Anything but in love.

The first time with Abarai Renji had been a shock partly because of how un-traumatized Ishida felt afterwards. It had been sex with a *guy*; it had been sex with *Abarai* of all people; and still the whole ordeal, emotionally at least, had felt like more like *hate-making* than love-making. Even the give and take of pleasure had felt like a passionate exchange of insults with the usual result--Ishida's feeling triumphant because he'd proved himself the smarter one.

Ishida still wasn't quite sure how he'd come out a winner, especially since Abarai was the one who started it all, and surely it had been some feat to break down Ishida's resistance. Quincy composure wasn't kissed into submission by just anyone. Ishida had felt proud, though, for surviving--and for having taken some of the wind out the Shinigami in the process.

The physical aftermath had been nothing but strangeness--lying there in damp exhaustion while Abarai, with only the balls of his fingers, and the gentlest, not-quite-ticklish touch, had petted Ishida's forearms, shoulders, chin and lips.

He had lifted strands of Ishida's hair with cupped hands then opened his fingers and let the strands fall.

Yet Ishida had been unmoved. Not a changed person. Still a virgin somehow, even though his ass bled and his innocence felt like it was evaporating right off his soul the way cold sweat left his naked body.

“*Do you feel satisfied?*” Abarai had asked.

“*What do you mean by satisfied?*”

Abarai had snorted in frustration. “*Listen, I’m not going to get all philosophical and all. What I meant was ... are you ready for some more now? Or do you want to take a rest or something? Are you satisfied?*”

“*Hell, no.*”

And every time after, Ishida had meant to prove that his human body could keep up with a vice captain of the Gotei 13’s, that he, Quincy archer, could take the reiatsu exertion like a man, that he could learn to lick cock the way Abarai did without gagging and hold off coming because he did that more easily than Abarai anyway and needed to show off. The struggle for the first fuck was like a game in a dojo and the competition mattered for the honing of skills rather than the winning of the game, and it was just sex, a personal and exciting secret, but *just sex*.

And falling asleep naked in somebody’s arms? Just something that happens, a natural thing like morning or night. All that affectionate pawing Abarai liked to do, all that stroking Ishida’s forearms and slobbering on his neck, showed that the Shinigami was a big, friendly dog--it didn’t mean anything special. Abarai was a touchy-feely, un-analytical and hands-on person. He didn’t really care for a *human* in any special way. No, he didn’t. *No, he didn’t.*

In fact, during one weekend’s furlough from Soul Society, Abarai had told Ishida that he loved his childhood friend from Soul Society. That was no surprise to Ishida. He’d guessed as much from the pair’s interactions, how they acted liked familiar ages-old buddies but Abarai looked at her with something bordering on reverence.

Abarai had been in one of his self-deprecating *I’m-just-a-no-good-dog* moods, dangling his arm off the side of the bed like he was trying to catch something that wasn’t there. He’d been listing his losses--from the lowest kidou scores in his Shinigami graduating class to how he’d failed to be the guy to win Kuchiki Rukia’s heart. “*You wouldn’t understand,*” he had said, “*You don’t know what it’s like to be in love with a woman who’s in love with Ichigo of all the useless bastards.*”

And Ishida had gone red-hot, his shame exposed because he’d been lying there with no clothes or blanket.

“*What? Tell me! Who do you--?*”

In the end, Abarai had guessed, because even a dolt like him would have guessed Inoue-san eventually.

And it had bothered Ishida that Abarai was shocked to discover that Ishida was interested in girls at all.

“So I figured you for one-hundred-percent fancy boy—that’s not an insult. It’s this world of the Living that has weird beliefs about fancy boys. Where I come from there’s nothing to say you can’t be girly like Yumichika and still not be ... well, you know ... a fighter and a real man.”

Ishida snapped shut the blinds and drew the shades. He could still hear the neighborhood dogs barking and sense the neighborhood Living and Dead ambling through the twilight.

The next apartment over smelled like teriyaki over-cooking and the television was turned to an opera channel. Something German yet romantic ... Strauss? Abarai hated symphonic music.

Ishida missed the surprising subjects the Shinigami could bring up at 3 a.m. That conversation about Inoue-san and “fancy boys” and what it meant to be a man had been the stupidest, most confusing conversation Ishida had ever had, but the fact that he could have it at all seemed miraculous in retrospect. Could anyone else have gotten Ishida to admit his own ambivalence about his sexual orientation? Maybe Inoue-san. She had a way of disarming people with her goofy honesty that wasn’t much different from Renji’s forwardness.

“I don’t know. I am a Quincy but beyond that, I don’t know who I am and what I want,” Ishida had said that night, trying to cover up more of his nude body with the blanket as he revealed more about his secret self. *“I might like to have a wife and children someday. I’m not the type, though. I’m too selfish.”*

Ishida laid his glasses on the windowsill and dropped his body into the sofa. His brain felt over-full and he pinched the bridge of his nose.

We’re friends. All of us. Kuchiki-san, Inoue-san, me, Sado-kun, Kurosaki, Abarai. Things should’ve stayed simple.

Abarai had come to the Living World whenever he could, whenever he had official leave and sometimes when he didn’t, for one reason alone apparently. From the moment he showed at Ishida’s window and stepped inside, he didn’t step outside until it was time to return to Soul Society. He came to see Ishida.

He hadn’t come for weeks now.

“I don’t want to do this anymore,” Ishida had said one morning, anticipating that Abarai would want to argue about the matter.

“Yeah?” A look of disappointment like when he couldn’t watch the futsal* world championships because Ishida didn’t own a television. “I didn’t think this was your style anyway and you’ve got a human life.”

“*It’s not like that--*” But Ishida hadn’t gotten a chance to explain because Abarai looped his leg over Ishida’s hip and brought the two bottom halves of their bodies smashing together. At the time, Ishida had thought the gesture and its fervent follow-through to be Abarai’s way of saying *no* to Ishida’s *I don’t want to do this anymore*.

But that had been the last time, and when Ishida remembered it, Abarai’s goodbye kiss had been especially hard and deep.

The front door to the apartment building creaked open, and Ishida could hear his upstairs neighbor jingling a chain and being followed by four long-nailed feet up the staircase. “Honey,” the man called it although Ishida wasn’t sure that was its proper name. The man was American and given to endearments like *honey* and *precious*. “Are you tired, hon? Let’s have a big bowl of water. My honey is getting along in years. Yes, Old Lady? We’ll go for a shorter walk tomorrow evening.”

Something smarted in the space between Ishida’s eyes, something frowning didn’t help.

This feeling wasn’t new, was it?

If there had ever been a time when Ishida didn’t know loneliness, he didn’t remember it; as a child he didn’t have a name for the feeling. And then there had been times when he liked being by himself. *Alone, lonely, alone*, what was the difference?

This was an oppressive feeling that sat on his bones and weighed on his muscles. This feeling stung behind his eyes and ached in his skull. The longing for sex might be relieved with a shower (and a hand that now seemed way too slight and only reminded Ishida of Abarai’s broad palm and giant knuckles), but there still would be a physical pain left. The ache of longing for something that wasn’t *just sex*.

Yes, a shower was necessary. Ishida began to undress. More drastic measures, however, were necessary to alleviate this loneliness. *In love, whatever. I can fix this*. Ishida had not anticipated the severity of the loneliness when he decided to push Abarai away. And why had he done that exactly? Everything had been going fine.

Ishida turned on the showerhead and leaned into the stream with his mouth open. *I can be so shortsighted sometimes*. He’d been confused, that’s all. It made no sense to try to figure out things by himself. Maybe he needed a dolt like Abarai to help him figure things out.

No use suffering for no reason. Ishida was not a fool. Struggling alone made less sense than struggling with someone else, even if that someone was a Shinigami, a ghost from

another world, a being who didn't belong in the Living World but maybe belonged in Ishida's life.

Water ran past the creases of a smile. Deciding to act felt a little bit like winning already.

2.

“You!”

The look on the face of Ayasegawa Yumichika said that he knew who Ishida was to Abarai. It hadn't occurred to Ishida before that Abarai talked about his visits to the Living World. Abarai had friends. Lots of them. Maybe all Soul Society knew.

“Ishida Uryuu,” said Madarame Ikkaku. His eyes were round with surprise.

“Congratulations on having correctly identified me.”

“How the hell did you get permission to come here?” Madarame wanted to know. “You're not dead, right? Since when does Soul Society let in humans just to--”

“Maybe he isn't here to see Abarai-kun,” said the Shinigami with the feathers on his face. “As the sole representative of the Quincy from Earth, he could have official business with the new Central 46 or ... a sewing mission?” The feather eyelid winked. “You don't have to tell us.”

Ishida was trying hard not to blush and failing. “Urahara-san invited me.”

It was the truth. Demanding passage through a spirit converter, Ishida had sent a message to the newly re-installed captain of the twelfth division via Kurosaki Ichigo (a relentless Quincy glare had finally shut up Kurosaki's questions), and Ishida's request had been granted with a box of taiyaki and a note that read “Would you like to be my guest in the Seireitei, Ishida Uryuu? Eat a sweet.”

One bite of a custard-filled carp cookie and Ishida had been transported to the doorstep of what appeared to be the shared residence of Madarame-san and Ayasegawa-san.

The bald Shinigami sniffed and crossed his arms. “Captain Urahara is a weird one. Why did he send you to us?”

“What's in the package?” The other Shinigami bounced his feathered brow and pointed at the box in Ishida's hands. “A gift for us? Or for Abarai?”

“Neither.” Ishida pressed the box of taiyaki to his chest. Who knew where the rest of the little fish could transport him? He didn’t want to visit with these two, no matter what Urahara’s intentions may have been. He reached out with his senses for Abarai’s reiatsu.

Ayasegawa pointed to a place behind Ishida’s head this time. “Abarai-kun lives--”

“I know,” Ishida said with irritation, only noting after his hirenkyaku whisked him from the scene that he’d confirmed his reason for coming to Soul Society.

Abarai Renji. A reason to risk looking like a fool.

Ishida looked for a window--it would be appropriate to appear at Abarai’s window since Ishida’s third story windowsill was where the Shinigami always showed up, but Abarai’s house was one of many small, traditional windowless homes on a rocky bluff. Nice places, obviously officers’ or seated Shinigami dwellings, and because it was twilight, there were smells of cooking in the air and a few people were outside to watch the sun set.

It mattered what the neighbors thought. Here, unlike Abarai in the Living World, Ishida could be seen. He stared dead ahead and swore he wouldn’t answer if anyone said hello. He was going to walk to Abarai’s front door but passed the house and turned around it.

Ishida had wanted to make a discreet appearance at the back shoji screen, but it was wide open and Abarai was already standing there, barefoot, wearing a thin red and white kimono, his hair braided over one shoulder, a complacent look on his face.

“How the hell did you get here?”

“Urahara-san.”

“What’s this?” Abarai had grabbed the box, opened it and was already eating a sweet fish before Ishida could speak. “Mmm, my favorite? Did I ever tell you that? Did Captain Urahara? What’s his deal--is he playing matchmaker?”

It was too late to stop Abarai--he swallowed several of the sweets. Ishida gasped. “Those taiyaki!”

But Abarai didn’t disappear into another dimension, and Ishida wondered how he was ever going to leave Soul Society when he had to. He guessed he’d really have to visit Urahara for the answer.

Abarai turned and walked to place the box of mysterious fish on a low table and Ishida followed him. Ishida had expected Abarai to be more joyful upon seeing the Prodigal Quincy who had tossed him away. *What’s the deal? He doesn’t even look surprised.*

Ishida hadn't counted on being beaten this early. Well, maybe he wasn't beaten but part of the plan had been to disarm Abarai with the element of surprise. It wasn't like Ishida had expected to conquer all the mysteries of this relationship right away but he hadn't planned on being thrown into total confusion so soon.

"I was about to call it an early night," Abarai said in the most ordinary and casual of tones. "I'm no good with the entertaining thing but you can help yourself to whatever you want around here or" With a slap of his palm, Abarai knocked down a bundle from against the wall. "You can come join me." He kicked the bundle and a futon rolled open.

"But--I--" Ishida made some sputtering sounds of indignation but couldn't speak yet.

"What's the matter? You didn't come here for any other reason but to get laid." Abarai sounded a little angry now, petulant almost. "Tell me different."

"I--" Ishida felt his very scalp burn. He tugged at his collar. He didn't want to argue but that was just part of being around Abarai, wasn't it?

Abarai grinned. "Look at you in your Quincy duds. Haven't seen those for a while. But dressing up like that was just to make it look like you were here on some official business, right?"

"I--" Ishida really needed to pull himself together and speak. His clothes were a matter of pride for him. "Of course I'm representing the Quincy whenever I leave Earth. Before going through a spirit converter, one must--"

"Eh? You're a spirit now?"

Abarai was standing over Ishida suddenly. He was a head taller when they were this close. Ishida had forgotten the height difference because they'd so often been horizontal in the Living World, and maybe Abarai held himself taller here. Ishida remembered Abarai scrunched in his window, lounging on the sofa, looking awkward and large in Ishida's desk chair.

Abarai set his palm on Ishida's shoulder and ran his hand up the nape of Ishida's neck, into his hair. "You feel the same," Abarai said. "I haven't had you in spirit form before." He leaned over to brush his lips over Ishida's lips.

"Aba-Aba-rai." It wasn't a proper kiss; it was an excuse to breathe on Ishida's face and make him more confused. Both of Abarai's large hands were on either side of Ishida's face now, lifting strands of hair between fingers, letting the hair fall.

I want to touch his hair that way.

Whether Ishida had always wanted to and stopped himself or whether the urge was new, he didn't know. All he knew was that the speeches he'd planned weren't going to work. He didn't want to argue with Abarai; he really *did* want to get laid.

But it was more than that.

Ishida caught the tip of Abarai's bright red braid with two fingers and began undoing the strands.

"May I call you Renji?" The braid required fingers to unravel until Ishida came to the middle, and then the hair spilled apart in waves and waves over Ishida's hand. A softness familiar to Ishida but he'd never focused on this one feature before.

Abarai's breath had hitched. It was irregular now and falling in warm patches over Ishida's face. "You *asked*," he said. "I always thought you'd start calling me Renji one day." A kiss on Ishida's forehead. "You don't have to ask."

"Of course I have to ask." Ishida was embarrassed despite the tender proximity of a lover's face. "I wasn't brought up to make presumptions about familiarity."

"I presume stuff all the time," Abarai--no, *Renji* said. *Renji* put both hands firm on Ishida's shoulders, *Renji* pressed his fingers into Ishida's cape and his mouth against Ishida's mouth.

His tongue presumed its way inside Ishida's cheek.

I had more things to say. I need to be certain of a few more things.

A taste like the cream custard inside the taiyaki. A thorough kiss, a welcome home. As always, Ishida was aware of the strangeness of the situation. His spirit body kissed another spirit body in a land far from the Living World but it was still as warm as home, warmer than home. It was comfortable here, near a dense, sultry presence that was *Renji*.

But I need to talk first--

Renji wasn't a talker, but his kisses said a lot. They always had. These kisses spoke of relief and joy, an end to his own loneliness. They also said that he was impatient with bending over so much and that the futon was only steps away. Ishida felt the pressure of spread palms against his lower back and realized that he was about to be lifted like a girl and carried off somewhere for lovemaking.

"Wait." It was awkward to interrupt, but Ishida felt such things were his duty. "Aren't we going to talk first?"

"Sure, *Uryuuuuuu*," Renji breathed into his ear. "I want to hear you say *Renji*. I want you to say it over and over."

A simple shove against Renji's waist knocked him over on his ass, and Ishida was straddling him. There. That solved the problem of being whisked away bridal style before he could catch his composure.

Ishida's hands were combing through waves of unbound hair. "You didn't ask permission to call me Uryuu."

"I didn't need to." Renji kissed him again, not so dominantly this time. "I want to hear you say my name. You still haven't called me Renji. Say it. Say *Renji*."

He sounded like he was teasing, but he was serious. Ishida knew this.

It felt good to be challenged again. The confusion was still there but the helpless feeling was gone. The sluggish, lonely feeling was gone.

"Say Renji. C'mon, you can do it."

"Make me."

And the challenges met one another like mouths, open to all possibilities. Renji fell back on the floor and his hair fanned against the tatami matting, and Ishida ran his fingers through that hair, through as much of the softness and warmth as he could grasp.

End

* According to Kubo Tite's "top secret information" about Abarai Renji in the Official Bootleg, "(Renji) *likes futsal, and spends quite a bit of effort to assemble a team in the 6th division.*"