Absence makes the heart

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Absence makes the heart

by FallLover

Summary

When Aresh rushes back from the purification expedition, he finds a collapsed and ailing Seiichirou in the arms of another man. And that simply will not do.

Set principally during Light Novel Volume 2, [Chapter Five]: Collapsed Again, Manga Volume 6, Chapter 33, and Anime Episode 11: I Got Hospitalized.

Notes

This was originally published on Archive of Our Own.

See the end of the work for more notes

Hunts and expeditions had never been so stressful for Aresh, at least not in the same way. He got letters from home on occasion, but never expected them, nor was he impatient for letters to arrive, or frustrated at the repeated negative on that front.

All the letters I've sent him, Aresh thought far too often in his rare free moments, *and nothing? Really?* And he wondered if his questions had *bothered* Seiichirou. Aresh wanted to know more about him, after all, but he didn't know where the line for overstepping lay. They lived together, they belonged to each other, shouldn't they be open about such things?

Assuming he read the letters, Aresh thought, dismally. He would imagine Seiichirou spending too little time at the house, leaving for work too early, coming home late, maybe even forgetting Aresh existed… It was silly, considering Seiichirou lived in Aresh's *home*, but… the thought needled at him. Even as he knew Seiichirou's safety was ever more at risk as time passed and Aresh couldn't refresh the otherworlder's barrier.

Worry about such things made him push Diana, his trusty mare, even harder on the trip home, despite the fact that she was one of the few creatures he truly cared for. He wasn't overly cruel, but he was not at his kindest. Diana, at least, had been with him through much of her life, and supported his desire to go faster.

Despite how exhausted Aresh was, despite how the tonics barely kept him going, despite how close he was to falling apart, every gallop closer to home made his heart race even faster. He *needed* to see Seiichirou. See that he was well. That he was eating and sleeping and not ill. And he *needed* to refresh Seiichirou's barrier. It had been too long.

The magical explosion at the church nearly destroyed his last ounce of patience. And when he'd finally made it to the damn prayer room – because of *course* Seiichirou was in the most dangerous place of all – and heard Siegvold offer to perform *Aresh's* duties for Seiichirou, well… Aresh was too tired, too strung up, too miserable, too crossed with the worry that Seiichirou was hurt but also *at least alive.*.. to stand on ceremony.

Perhaps he was too brusque with Siegvold, and would likely face consequences for it, but he didn't care. He got through the door, getting everyone's attention – or at least the dent he made in the door did. And when Siegvold refused to relinquish Seiichirou, trying Aresh's patience, that didn't help matters.

Seiichirou looked so fragile in the priest's harms. He was sweating, too pale, and clearly in pain, likely dying, and the damn priest was in Aresh's way… Aresh was ready to yank Seiichirou from Siegvold's arms! No matter how tired he was, no matter how much he was flagging, he didn't want to waste time on this!

"Aresh-sama…" Seiichirou's weak voice said.

Aresh perked up and reached for Seiichirou immediately, ignoring everything else. "Seiichirou?!" His hands brushed that soft scalp, and the older man's familiar, dark hair. He smelled faintly of Aresh's body wash. Aresh remembered the last time he'd held Seiichirou in his arms, as he left home for the expedition. It felt like lifetimes ago.

Seiichirou smiled up at him then, for some reason, through his pain, and said, “I’m so glad… you’re safe…” It was like the sun had come out with his smile.

Aresh felt his heart nearly stop. He was already reaching out to half cradle Seiichirou in his arms, helped by Siegvold being so confused by what happened, he wasn’t being so tight on his grip.

“Ah, Siegvold…” Prince Yurius said behind Aresh. “Aresh has been caring for Kondou’s health on a regular basis. You can hand him over. He’s safe with Aresh.”

Aresh had a somewhat neutral opinion on the prince, but the man’s words managed to get Siegvold to fully surrender Seiichirou over at last. Aresh wrapped Seiichirou in his arms and bore him out of the church, away from all the virtual poison in the air.

With Ciro out of the sickroom, Aresh stood at the door briefly and felt his vision wobble. He would be fine for a while: the tonic would get him through this. He could put off crashing for a while longer, even as his body groaned at him.

“I’ll be waiting for your safe return,” Seiichirou had said with those stubborn eyes as he gazed up at Aresh and clutched at his cloak. “Please be careful not to injure yourself.”

Who should be careful here? Aresh thought bitterly as he turned to Seiichirou, who was bundled up on the bed and hadn’t moved since Aresh put him down.

Seiichirou was breathing heavily and sweating still, as his body worked in overdrive trying to fix itself. His glasses were set aside, and he wasn’t fully unconscious, but Aresh could tell his current state was worse even than when he’d overdosed on tonics…

Aresh moved back to the bed and started undoing and removing their clothes, knowing they didn’t have a lot of time. Not for what he needed to do and how long he could stay upright and how long Seiichirou had to be saved.

He was glad Ciro was on standby.

Seiichirou’s clothes were complicated, but Aresh was practiced in getting them out of the way, and he wiped some of the sweat off Seiichirou’s body with a spare, clean towel, trying to help a little. He had another vial of liquid in a pouch that he used to relieve himself at night sometimes, and used it this time to wet his fingers and quickly press between Seiichirou’s legs. Seiichirou’s body was hot and sweaty, but Aresh easily found the man’s entrance and pushed his fingers inside. He thrust at a measured rather than pleasurable pace in the tightness. Aresh didn’t want to hurt him even more: healing him from it would cost them both.

But they didn’t have a lot of time, and Aresh was already working on the magic to help, too.

Seiichirou groaned and his eyes partially opened, but Aresh wasn’t sure how aware he was of anything. He’d been *happy* Aresh had returned. He trusted Aresh. Needed Aresh to save him.

Aresh cursed himself for nearly arriving so late. If he'd waited moments longer, and *Siegvold* stepped in… What if Seiichirou had *died* from the wrong kind of magic?

Aresh pulled his fingers out and had to breath quickly to stop shaking so much in anger. He moved closer to Seiichirou's body, reassured by the familiarity of Seiichirou's scent, his warmth… When he pressed his cock inside that familiar space, it felt more like coming home than anything.

But it felt a little lonely, with Seiichirou only half-aware. He wanted to catch up, to talk, to ask if Seiichirou had even *read* his letters. But he shook his head, warding off his foolish, distracted thoughts: he had to concentrate on the magic, on not overdoing it. On not losing himself in weariness and lust. It was hard, with Seiichirou so close and not a phantom brought on by the want of his journey. By the pain of the silence between them.

Seiichirou was just too quiet, not fully cognizant, and it was maddening.

Silent then and silent now, Aresh thought, sadly. His own body's movements were quick and methodic, more to get the job done than anything else. They'd have other times to be together.

"A-Aresh…?" Seiichirou's eyelids fluttered open.

Aresh looked up at Seiichirou, pressed back against the heavy pillow in the flimsy bed, his sweaty hair pressed against the sheets, his eyes still a bit too muggy, and the bags under his eyes far too dark.

He worked too much while I was gone and unable to watch over him, Aresh thought in frustration. But Aresh was also too happy Seiichirou was awake to still be fully angry. He reached down to cup Seiichirou's right cheek with his hand. "You're finally awake… Thank goodness…" He thrust deeper, listening to the sound of Seiichirou's breathing. *He's going to make it. He'll be okay.*

Seiichirou groaned around him, and his hands went to Aresh's back. They were too thin, too weak, but familiar and comforting, all the same. Aresh had wanted them there for so long.

But they still had problems to deal with.

"This is going to take a while yet, you reckless fool…" Despite his happiness that Seiichirou was really with him now, he was still frustrated at nearly losing the man, *again*.

"Ah… Aresh!" Seiichirou cried out as the magic swelled inside him.

Aresh breathed in heavily and had a bout of dizziness, but pushed on. He couldn't collapse yet. Seiichirou still needed him. He blinked, realized a few moments had passed and Seiichirou had possibly asked him a question, and then asked, "What?"

"Ngh…" Seiichirou grumbled. "When did you… get back?"

"This morning," Aresh replied, hearing the bed creak under them with his movements. The bed truly wasn't as good as the one back home. "I returned, heard you were at the church, ran

straight there… And still barely made it in time." With Seiichirou more able to respond, he slowed down a bit, focusing on a rhythm he knew Seiichirou enjoyed from their past times together, rare enough as they were. Spots he knew the older man liked. It was their reunion after all.

Did he really miss me? Aresh thought, looking at how tired the other man was. He frowned and said, "You really… don't listen. And you don't value your own body. Look what happens when I take my eyes off you for just a second." He didn't even realize he was thrusting a bit harder, grinding deep inside Seiichirou's body.

"Ahh!" Seiichirou cried out, and it sounded a bit pained.

Aresh's own climax was close, but he refused to surrender to it, and tried to slow down, to make things more pleasurable, allowing his frustration out in words rather than his body. If he voiced the poison, maybe he could keep it out of the magic, out of Seiichirou's body. "And then, you… you don't even send me a single letter… and to top it all off, you go and collapse, so another man nearly has to sleep with you!" He had to stop moving in the end, his feeling was so strong, though he was still buried inside Seiichirou.

He didn't realize he was shaking. He wouldn't help Seiichirou this way.

"I truly…" Aresh finally said, leaning over Seiichirou's chest, feeling his face burn in shame and jealousy and frustration. "Might not have forgiven you for that." His eyes burned, and he knew he was truly shameful. He'd have to apologize for this, too. And for prolonging Seiichirou's pain with his own weakness.

Gentle hands reached up to caress and hold Aresh's head, and Aresh flinched in surprise, looking up at the quiet, "Aresh-sama…"

Seiichirou smiled brightly up at him, and there were tears in his eyes. From pain or joy or both, Aresh didn't know. But he looked happy. Content. "Welcome home."

Something cracked inside Aresh's chest.

"I mean it," Seiichirou said as he caressed Aresh's face before reaching up to wrap his arms around Aresh's neck and pulling him close, pressing Aresh's face into Seiichirou's neck. "Welcome home." He sounded so desperate and sad, like he *too* had really missed Aresh. As deep as the longing Aresh had written into all his letters.

Aresh swallowed, wondering how they could both be so foolish. He knew Seiichirou often had difficulty communicating properly with him, and Aresh allowed his own bullheadedness to get in his way. But at least they had each other. He reached out and buried his right hand in Seiichirou's hair, cradling his head. After a while, he pulled back and pressed his forehead to Seiichirou's, basking in the warmth of the man he loved. "I'm home."

Seiichirou made a contented sound.

Aresh reached down to take hold of Seiichirou's cock, pumping it in time with his movements, and kissed Seiichirou's soft lips, devouring what he could of the man. It was

easy to fall into familiar patterns, healing what he could. The magic responded to him easily, wrapping around them both.

Now they'd definitely have more time when they were home properly, together.

The bed creaked louder beneath them, and Seiichirou moaned Aresh's name and tightened his fingers against Aresh's back. He spilled in Aresh's hand, but Aresh didn't let go of him.

When Aresh came, he pressed deep inside Seiichirou, and pressed his mouth to Seiichirou's left shoulder, mouthing hard at the skin there, wanting to print the taste of Seiichirou's skin into his memories.

Seiichirou groaned beneath him, squeezing around Aresh's cock. His hands lightly clawed at Aresh's back, pulling him closer.

Aresh stayed still for a while, murmuring spells, checking his work, feeling Seiichirou's gasping and shaking. Everything should be okay, but he'd need Ciro to double-check before he left.

Seiichirou reached up to leave a small kiss on Aresh's left cheek, like a little peck. It was sweet and tender, and Aresh wanted nothing more than to curl around Seiichirou and stay there forever. But Seiichirou would be better off tended to by Ciro while Aresh went to recover alone.

Aresh pulled Seiichirou close still for a while, relishing in the warmth. It had been a long trip, and he didn't want to leave.

Seiichirou hummed contentedly against him.

Aresh smiled, so glad to be back.

End Notes

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