

Good - Better - Best

ByaRen/RenBya

Von whatever

Kapitel 1: Good

Today had been the worst day ever.

First, there was this wagonload of paperwork to do. Well, that was normal, since his taichou had taken over the job of looking after the 3rd division, but every few minutes there would be someone to interrupt him. Every single one of them thought they were more important than all of those reports he had to write. So of course he hadn't finished when the next problem arose: an attack from Hueco Mundo. To be truthful, there had only been some Hollows and not even Menos Grande, but they just had to send Renji to defend Seireitei. In the end, the incredibly weak Hollows were defeated and to top it all off, he had to work late into the night to make up for the lost time. His captain really was unforgiving when it came to work.

As soon as he finished the last annoying document, he sprinted out of the office and into the nightlife. He was supposed to meet Rukia at their normal meeting point – a plain café/bar in the middle of Rukongai – and he was late as hell. It seemed to be something important because Rukia had appeared rather nervous when she told him to meet her there that night. Deep down Renji was hoping Rukia would tell him how she felt, even if it would mean rejection. But he wanted to know if she could, perhaps, sometime in the future reciprocate his feelings. He'd had this crush on her since they were little, always hoping she'd confess to him one day.

Sometimes he tried to remember when he had begun to really like Rukia and there was always this little scene which came to his mind. There had been an argument in their little home because one kid had stolen the sweets of another. Of course they didn't need to eat, but they had been little kids and little kids love to eat sweets. The kid whose sweets were stolen was really sad and had cried like there was no tomorrow and so Rukia had given him her share. Renji believed this was the time when he'd begun to truly like Rukia. So hopefully she was still there, waiting for him and drinking a cup of water (not sake, no, Rukia definitely couldn't hold the smallest cup of alcohol and she knew it. The one time where she tried to drink a bit had been hilarious and she had been so embarrassed the morning after. Renji had liked that cute little red on her cheeks.).

Once he was near the café, Renji sped up a little more. Fortunately Rukia was still sitting at their normal table and was not only drinking (tea, he noticed), but eating, too. Her food smelled delicious and he felt his mouth water. He came to a stop in front of the table and sat down, panting heavily.

"Sorry I'm late, your dearest brother made me work overtime again." Rukia was silent

as she stared at him. Renji felt uncomfortable. "Uhm, hey, I'm really sorry, okay? So don't be mad, alright? I hate it when you're mad at me." He grinned a bit awkwardly. Rukia stayed silent, but motioned for him to order something, so he did. Only after his order was delivered, Rukia spoke up.

"Renji, I've got to tell you something."

"Yes?" Eager to hear her confession of love for him, he leaned forward. Rukia shifted slightly nervous.

"You know, I had to stay for a while at Kurosaki's, right?" Renji nodded, feeling slightly unsure. "Well, the problem is... I know you like me, Renji, but... Damn, this is so frustrating!" Rukia let her head fall on the table, sighing deeply. He sure as hell wasn't a woman, but he wasn't stupid, either. This definitely didn't sound like the beginning of a confession. His hopes came crashing down.

"Why don't you just spit it out, I won't hate you, you know?" Renji told her, not letting his feelings show. Rukia lifted her head and smiled thankfully at him. His heart skipped a beat.

"You're my best friend, Renji, so I wanted to tell you first, even before I told Nii-sama." Renji nodded encouragingly, feeling honoured to at least be the first one to know. "Well, the case is... while I was staying at Kurosaki's, something more than friendship developed between us, and now we're... sort of... you know... together. I'll be staying in the real world for a while longer now, so I probably won't see you again soon. I hope you're not mad at me." Rukia stared at Renji pleadingly, begging for forgiveness. She had known about his feelings for quite a bit now, so she felt terrible for telling him something like this. But maybe that could help him forget her and move on with his life, move on to someone who fit him better. But according to the look on Renji's face that would take some time.

Renji felt stupid. Kurosaki... The one who had been so desperate to save Rukia, who had done everything in his power to stop her from being executed... He should have seen it coming. He should have realized that there was something more than pure friendship which motivated him. The only thing which overpowered this feeling of stupidity was sadness. Well, of course he did realize after her first few sentences that she didn't reciprocate his feelings, but to hear it from her just made it sound more real. First it had been suspicion, now it was a fact. And that fact hurt. A lot.

"Oh, so, erm, congrats, hope you're happy," Renji finally spoke, forcing himself to smile. Rukia saw that and felt miserable. "Renji, I..." "So, sorry, but I need to go back to the office, I didn't manage to finish all the reports I need to write. Thank you for telling me! Later!" Renji stormed off, leaving Rukia behind. What he had told Rukia had been a lie: he did finish all reports, but he needed an excuse for leaving. And now, although it had been just an excuse, he went back to the office.

He arrived after a few minutes, hoping everyone else had gone home a long time ago. Fortunately, he couldn't detect anyone's reiatsu. *At least I've got a little luck today.* He stepped into the office, closing the door behind him. He decided to not turn the lights on in case someone came by.

Opening a drawer he retrieved a bottle of sake. That was what he needed right now: to get drunk, forgetting everything that had happened today. He put the bottle to his lips, taking a big sip from it. He continued to drink one bottle after another, getting more drunk with every sip he took. Although he had been drinking much, it wasn't midnight yet. And soon, steps could be heard, steps which were coming nearer and nearer by the second. But Renji did not hear for he was far too drunk to notice anything besides the sake he was holding in his hand. He didn't even really notice the

not-so-tall figure stepping into the office.

"I see. Rukia told you about her relationship." Tiredly, Renji turned his head in the direction of his captain's voice. "Uh-huh. Wanna drink, too?" he asked, waving the bottle. Byakuya followed the invitation, taking a bottle of his own. "Cheers," Renji muttered and took yet another sip. "Cheers," Byakuya agreed and followed Renji's example. Soon, both men were drunk because unlike Renji, Byakuya couldn't hold his alcohol very well. He even let his stoic façade fall and behaved like any normal drunkard would. The two of them were sitting really close, drinking in silent understanding. The more sips they took, the closer they were sitting until...

"Renji, what are you doing? Forgot all about our party? Just get up and...oh, good evening, Kuchiki-taichou." The intruder formally bowed and straightened again. He shot them a curious look. "So, uhm, what about it?"

"Yeah, yeah, don't rush me, 'm coming already." After a lot of staggering, cursing and some help of his desk, Renji finally managed to be standing. He eyed his taichou questioningly. "You coming, too? Whole division's partying, wouldn't be fun with you missing."

"Guess I should," Byakuya muttered and tried to get up. Unfortunately, he couldn't decide which two of his four – or was it six? – legs were working and why were there suddenly three Renjis wanting to help him? He reached for his head, confused as he was, but couldn't find it. "Seems like I'm drunk," he stated as matter-of-factly as a drunkard could.

"You're not the only one here," Renji replied as he tried to grab for his taichou's hand and utterly failed. He cursed. "Come on, don't just stand there, help!" Biting back his sniggering, the member of their division stepped into the office and helped his taichou to get on his feet.

"Can you walk?" he asked grinning.

"Course I can, who d'you think I am, eh?" Renji answered annoyed. The other raised his hands defensively.

"Hey now, don't get mad, it was just a simple question." Renji grumbled, then snaked his arm around his captain's waist in an attempt to support him. At first, Byakuya resisted, but after almost tumbling to the floor he gave in. With the mysterious member of their division leading the way and Renji supporting his captain, they arrived at their destination a short while after. The party had already started and everyone was drinking and enjoying themselves. Their guide hurried away as soon as he saw his friends and Renji seated his captain on a mat not too far away. Then he himself plopped down next to him, too. Renji grabbed a cup of sake and the bottle standing next to it, waving them in his taichou's face. With a short nod of his head, Byakuya affirmed that yes, he wanted another cup. Right after nodding, he reached for his head. "Bad idea," he mumbled.

"You sure you want 'nother one?" Renji asked, hesitating after seeing his captain reaching for his head. This time, Byakuya refrained from nodding. He simply held his own cup under Renji's nose – at least he hoped it was the right one – and waited. Renji sighed and complied. Miraculously he managed to fill the cup without spilling much. It was Byakuya who spilled most of the sake while guiding the cup to his mouth. Although Renji was quite drunk himself, he was sober enough to realise his captain had had enough for the night. Unfortunately that realisation didn't stop him from drinking more sake himself. In the end, they were both too drunk to even sit straight. Some way or another though, both of them managed to get home. Renji's home, that is. Along the way they more or less decided that Byakuya's home was far too far away

for him to reach it safely and because Renji was his fukutaichou, it was his duty to let Byakuya sleep over. And, through some strange twist of fate, they ended up kissing each other. Again. And again. Until no more clothes were left to strip and bodies were tangled and panting mingled with moaning was heard. And even through all of this, they couldn't stop kissing. Somewhere in the back of their mind, they knew something was off, simultaneously blaming the sake for whatever it was. Or they simply didn't care.

The next morning, Byakuya woke up because someone pounded on his door. He grumbled, swearing to whatever god was listening he would let the servant pay for this rude method of waking him up. Then he opened his eyes, just to close them again. Had the sun always been this bright, bright enough to hurt his eyes and head? And there it was again, this rude servant pounding on his door. And to make matters worse, he even started yelling.

"Renji! Wake up! Taichou's missing! Renji!"

Wait a... Renji?

Byakuya turned his head slightly to the right, where he sensed another reiatsu beside his own which was so familiar he hadn't been aware of it a moment ago. And it really was Renji, in the process of waking up. Stupefied, Byakuya watched Renji sitting up, eyes still closed, blanket sliding down revealing tanned skin, taut muscles and... hickeys. And while his mind was struggling to remember what had happened last night, Renji opened his eyes and let his gaze fall on his taichou. Perplexed, he blinked. "Eh? What are you doing here, taichou?"

"I don't know." He saw another hickey on his fukutaichou's neck. A pretty bad one, too. "To be honest, I don't want to know, either." Renji just blinked with his eyes again. The pounding started anew.

"Renji! Come on up, you sleepyhead! Want me to break into your room?"

"Wait a sec, I'm coming already!" Grumbling, Renji stood up and grabbed his shihakusho.

"You should teach your underlings some manners."

"Eh?" Another eloquent response from Renji. Today, he seemed to be even more idiotic than any other day. Byakuya sighed.

"You are their fukutaichou and they should address you as such."

"Oh this." Renji scratched his head. "I don't really care, 'cause they're my buddies. Rank doesn't really matter when you're friends with someone else." He shrugged and finally opened the door.

"What's the matter so early in the morning?"

"Early in the morning? It's nearly noon! And taichou still isn't in his office! Do you have any idea, where... oh." Renji's friend noticed the missing taichou sitting on Renji's futon, glaring as annoyed and cold as always. His gaze shifted to Renji, or rather to Renji's neck where the hickey was presenting itself to the whole world. "Oh." He shifted nervously from one foot to the other. "I guess I'll see you in the office, then?"

"Probably, yes." With a last nervous smile Renji's friend hurried away. Confused, Renji stared after the retreating man. "What was up with him?"

"He probably came to a most unpleasant conclusion."

"Conclusion?" Another sigh escaped Byakuya. He pointed at Renji's neck. "What's wrong with my neck?" Sometimes, Renji's slowness was even worse than Zarak and Yachiru's sense of direction combined.

"Love bite." Byakuya simply answered. At first, Renji clearly didn't understand. But then he noticed his taichou's state of clothing, or better lack thereof. And finally

comprehension could be seen on his face.

"Y-you mean he... thinks we..." Renji stuttered.

"We most probably did."

"Most probably?"

"I do not remember. But as both you and me are in a state of undress and those marks on your body are a clear sign, I am of the opinion that we did indulge in the act called intercourse."

"Pardon me?" And yet another sigh escaped Byakuya's lips. Renji's cheeks reddened at the thought that those lips were – probably – responsible for the hickeys on his body.

"There is a high probability that we had sex," Byakuya stated.

"We as in you and me?" Could this get any worse?

"Yes, we as in you and me," Byakuya replied clearly annoyed. Now the redness of Renji's cheeks definitely competed with the redness of his hair. He didn't know if he could live through the day.

Fortunately – or unfortunately, depending on your point of view – Byakuya decided to drop the topic and get up, letting the blanket slide down his body. Renji couldn't help but stare at his taichou while he was getting ready to go to his office. The way those muscles moved somehow fascinated Renji very much and the heat of his cheeks was beginning to spread all over his body, warming him up quite well.

"I do hope you plan to get up and accompany me to the division. There will be a high amount of work to do as we slept in today." Renji startled, a confused look on his face, then hurried to get properly dressed as well. Some minutes later, they were quietly working in their joint office, hurrying to finish the paperwork which was occupying their desks. Luck seemed to be on their side, because no one bothered them even once and they were able to finish their work by dusk. Their silence continued even as they walked home. Suddenly Renji realized that his taichou was taking the same way as he was, although it was in the opposite direction of the Kuchiki manor. The question clearly written all over his face, he turned to look his taichou in the eyes. Quite untypical for him, Byakuya avoided Renji's stare. After a few seconds, he gave up and let out a sigh. Now Renji was starting to worry.

"Although this does not concern you in any way, I do not wish to return..." He paused for a millisecond, carefully schooling his face. "...home, not yet at least."

"As you wish," Renji replied, shrugging his shoulders. And so they resumed their way to Renji's, where he set up a cup of tea and offered his taichou some sweets he had only just bought the day before in lunch break. And although Byakuya didn't like sweets very much (at least not those – they were too cheap for his standards.) he gladly took them. While they were eating and drinking, they began talking and they didn't stop for a long time. It was near midnight when Byakuya sighed.

"Renji," he interrupted his fukutaichou who immediately stopped saying whatever it was he was saying. It wasn't so important anyway, not when his taichou sounded so... defeated. Why was that? "It is late, I need to go back." Byakuya's gaze locked with Renji's who felt lost somehow. What was his taichou expecting him to say? Why was there a small ray of hope in these cold, grey eyes?

"Oh. Alright. Shall I accompany you?" Byakuya's shoulders seemed to slump a little, but that was impossible, right?

Byakuya shook his head. "It will not be necessary." He got to his feet, nodded in Renji's direction and turned towards the door. Renji felt horrible seeing his taichou heading for the door. And in the few seconds he had before Byakuya could reach the exit, he made a decision.

"Stay," he said, still sitting where he had been all evening long. Surprised, Byakuya turned around, confusion clearly written all over his face. "I know it's late and you need to go back and stuff, but please stay. I have a feeling I cannot be alone tonight." Slowly, Renji got up and went to stand in front of Byakuya. His hand moved to cup Byakuya's cheek. "So I beg of you: Stay." And instead of reprimanding Renji for overstepping his boundaries, Byakuya closed his eyes and leant into the touch. Something inside Renji snapped when he saw his taichou so trusting and he pressed his lips to Byakuya's, expecting rejection. But almost immediately those lips answered his with the same fervour and need. While Renji carefully tried to remove the kenseikan, Byakuya opened the tie which held Renji's mane in check. It fell around them like a curtain, tickling Byakuya's cheeks. Byakuya grabbed Renji by the neck, pulling him closer while opening his mouth. Renji happily followed the invitation and started exploring the hot, moist cavern which was Byakuya's mouth. He groaned as contentment washed through him. His taichou tasted so unbelievably *good* he could barely contain himself from not just ravishing the mouth, but also the body before him. It got even harder to resist when Byakuya decided to stop being passive and playfully challenged Renji's tongue with his own. And as soon as the noble slipped his hands inside Renji's shihakushou, caressing the muscular chest, he couldn't control himself any longer. A feral growl left his throat, causing Byakuya to moan. In no time at all, clothes lay scattered across the floor, the table was turned upside down and the sitting mats were used as a makeshift bed. Byakuya helplessly held on to Renji's hair as his fukutaichou hungrily devoured him. Never had he felt this powerless before and never had he thought it would feel this *good*. He moaned out loud as Renji began suckling his already sensitive left nipple while teasing the other, not caring whether he could be heard. Heck, he couldn't even remember there were other people living somewhere in Soul Society besides Renji and him. His mind completely shut down as Renji continued his ministrations *elsewhere* and his baser instincts took over.

This time they woke up in time and quickly made their way to the office, having silently agreed to talk about this thing later. Although later normally meant after work in the evening and not during lunch break. But normally, you wouldn't expect a stoic, seemingly cold taichou to start a conversation like this, either. Lately, Renji's life had been full of surprises.

"Explain," ordered Byakuya as soon as they were sitting in the gardens with their lunch. Renji knew immediately what his taichou was asking about, but he didn't know an answer, at least not one that would satisfy his taichou. So he sighed and set his chopsticks down.

"I don't know," he murmured. "I truly don't know." At least he was being honest and he hoped his taichou would appreciate it. But the only thing he got for an answer was "Hm." And then silence reigned once again. Renji gathered his courage and took a deep breath before asking: "What...what do you think?" He didn't receive an answer straight away, but when it came, it greatly surprised him. "I...don't know, either."
"Oh."

At least he was not the only one who didn't have an answer, but Byakuya admitting to something he didn't know was reason to worry. Renji watched Byakuya closely, noticing little changes in his posture which so did not fit the noble. His eyes looked almost haunted and he seemed tired enough to let go of his rigid posture if even for a bit. And instead of reprimanding Renji, which he did more often than not, for his lack of manners or his not-so-perfect-anymore dressing state (he always unconsciously

scratched all over his body, a bad habit of his), his taichou was watching silently the sky. Renji was sure something was wrong, terribly so.

"Taichou? Is... is everything alright?"

"Yes, Renji, everything is fine," Byakuya answered monotone. Although this wasn't something abnormal in itself – Byakuya did that often enough – it was the sort of monotony that troubled Renji. This monotony had been purely lifeless.

"I am sorry, taichou, but I can't believe you." Shocked, Byakuya looked up, directly into the determined eyes of his subordinate. "Your behaviour is so unlike your usual self, it's totally worrying. I mean, I know I'm not the most intelligent person there is, but I am your lieutenant and you can trust me. So..." Suddenly having lost the courage to speak any further, Renji stopped mid-sentence. Byakuya regarded him silently.

"Renji?"

"Yes?" Only now did he realize that his taichou had started calling him by his given name for a while now. His confusion doubled.

"Let's continue."

"Continue?"

"Yes, continue. It appears we both need to... relief stress from time to time." He hesitated shortly, letting his gaze wander for a few seconds. "Except you do not wish to do so, of course."

This time, Renji understood what Byakuya meant. He thought about Rukia and Ichigo, how it hurt to have lost his long-lasting love. He was about to accept, but felt a pang of guilt. Wouldn't this be like using his captain? Said captain was starting to believe he had been rejected. He slowly stood up and wiped invisible dust of his shihakusho.

"In this case, let us pretend this has never happened. Now come, break is over."

"Wait, taichou, I accept! I mean, I wish to! But are you sure you want this? I mean, I don't want to somehow take advantage of you or something..."

"I was the one who suggested this. Why do you think you would hurt me by accepting my proposal?"

Feeling like a complete idiot, Renji just kept silent and stared at the ground. His cheeks felt warm; was he blushing?

As he heard his captain walking back to the office, he hurried to follow him.

All afternoon long he couldn't stop worrying about taking advantage of Byakuya. He felt guilty for accepting, but couldn't shake off the feeling that maybe the noble himself was in a way taking advantage of him. Somehow, that thought calmed Renji just the slightest bit, and they could always stop when one of them wouldn't feel up to it anymore, right?