

The sun was still high in the sky flanked by some low clouds as Ann walked down the sidewalk. Cars whizzed by, and she had an extra bounce in her step as she made her way home. Another long day of classes and trying to cram all that information in her head, with the same outcome as any other day. She'd remember it for the next hour, only to forget it when she'd have to really recall that information.

Sighing to herself, she checked her phone, opening the calendar. Any plans today? No, it didn't seem like it. Unless Ren suddenly called for a trip to Mementos, she'd be fine to do whatever she wanted for the day!

... But what to do? Tucking her phone under her arm, she stroked her cheek slowly, frowning to herself. Her finger shifted to play with her earring slightly, a nervous tick when she was trying to think. There were a couple of those talent shows she liked watching that were recorded... She had eaten all her ice cream the night before, so she'd have to go buy more...

A plan was already starting to form in her head as she turned down a street, humming to herself. Some TV, ice cream, maybe even order a pizza? Thanks to her 'extracurricular activities', she had some extra yen to throw around. Maybe do her nails, chat with Shiho...

Her alert tone went off, buzzing her phone suddenly against her underarm, making her jump suddenly. She was barely paying attention! Thank God she didn't accidentally walk into someone. She twirled her phone in her hand, unlocking it, and checked her messages.

"Strange... Don't recognize this number," Ann mumbled to herself as she got to her inbox. The number was definitely local, so maybe it was just sent to the wrong person? Tapping it, the message within only confused her further.

MEDJED HAS RETURNED. FOR YOUR MOCKING OF OUR DOWNFALL, WE'VE PUT A VIRUS ON YOUR PHONE. SPREAD THE WORD OF OUR RETURN TO 10 PEOPLE IN YOUR CONTACTS LIST IN THE NEXT 5 MINUTES. IF YOU DO NOT, YOU'LL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES. YOU'LL NEVER RETURN FROM WHAT WE DO-

Ann didn't even finish reading, laughing at how dumb this prank was.

"Cute," she noted, before sliding the message to delete it. *Plink!* And like that it was gone, Ann coughing a second later, like something was stuck in her throat. Ugh, stupid chain texts. No way Medjed was *actually* back after how publicly they were thrashed a couple months prior. Probably just some imposter trying to look cool with his friends or something.

Oh well. It didn't matter. Turning into the convenience store nearby, she made her way to the frozen goods section in the back, and went to find her prey. They sold small tubs of ice cream here, perfect for a single lady to finish in an hour, at a decent price too. Opening the door and checking them, she grabbed a tub of chocolate... and then paused. She only ever really got one, to avoid absolutely destroying her form, but... They had a sale if you bought two, so she might as well get some vanilla to go with it!

Smiling to herself, she started to walk to the checkout, only to stop again. She loved this brand, so she might as well just buy another two for the next night!

With a bag full of a rainbow assortment of ice creams, Ann left the store and continued her walk home. The air was a bit chilly, so she didn't have to sprint home before they melted. Even if they melted just a bit, that wouldn't be too bad.

A gust of wind blew in the air, a sharp cold one, making Ann cough a couple times again, holding her chest. Maybe she should've brought a scarf or something. She started tugging at parts of her outfit as she walked along. It felt like it was getting tighter... But it was most likely the cold just getting to her.

Her phone buzzed again, and she let out a quiet sigh as she tugged it out of her jacket pocket. Could she walk home in peace? She had plans! ... With herself, but still, plans!

"Hello?" She hummed, adjusting the grip on her bags in her off hand.

"Ann! Where are you?" Makoto asked, sounding more than a little annoyed.

"Eh? I'm heading home. Clath ith over," she responded with an oblivious shrug. Her tongue dragged against her teeth awkwardly. Felt like something was wrong with them... But she couldn't put a pin in it.

"... Uh. What about our study group?"

Ann paused, gasping before tilting her head back and letting out a loud groan.

"Oh, shoot! I forgot about the thtudy group..." She sighed, looking back towards the subway station, quite some ways away. "I'm already clothe to home, I can't turn around now..."

"Ann... You better not have just ditched us..." Makoto's voice was like that of a stern mother just about fed up with her child's behavior. "You know that this is meant to help you pass your finals..."

Ann rolled her eyes and snickered.

"Thankth, *mom*," Ann snorted with her little giggles, her hands not free to cover the loud noise. Some people glanced her way, but Ann didn't notice. "But I'll be fine! Thtudying ith thomething we can do anytime! Maybe we can jutht do it at LeBlanc thith weekend!"

Makoto took a moment to respond, making Ann wonder if the call dropped.

"Ann, are you feeling okay? You sound... different."

"Uhm...?" Was she different? Ann didn't notice anything different... Another wind blew, making her cough a couple times again. Oh, duh! "It'th kinda cold out, tho my lipth mutht be chapped, or thomething. Don't worry, I'll be fine to meet up tomorrow!"

"Mmm... Alright..." Makoto seemed satisfied enough with her answer to get off her case. "Just, try and get some rest tonight. If you try taking any more sick days, you'll get in trouble."

"Like I thaid, thankth mom. I will, I will! Let'th methage the otherth to thet up a meeting tomorrow!" Ann chuckled as she continued her walk.

They said their good-byes and Ann tucked her phone away. Makoto really was acting strange. Was she just upset that she skipped studying today? She was so uptight...

Just a couple blocks to her house now! How long had she even been walking? It felt like it was taking so much longer than it normally did. She just wanted to get home and unwind...

But the world had other plans for her. Something pushed against her back, making her stumble forward with a cry. In the next moment, she was flat on the ground, the sound of cloth tearing and heavy footsteps running away from her. As she pushed herself up, she realized something...

Her bags were gone!

"H-Hey! Thstop him! Thief! H-He thtole my thtuff!" She cried out, pointing forward towards the dark, shadowy figure that was running away. People mostly just looked her way, nobody helping as she pushed herself up onto her feet. In the next second, she was running after him.

It was just like chasing down Shadows in the Metaverse, but it felt so much slower without her powers. The figure was getting farther and farther away, while Ann felt her heart racing, chest pounding, so much sooner than she normally would have. That blow must've knocked the wind out of her...

Her sprint rapidly turned into a jog, to a stumble, before she was left hunched over at a corner, hand against the building to keep herself up while the other braced against her leg. Her chest was on fire... Her vision was fading... Where did all her stamina go?

"Excuse me, miss," a gentle masculine voice piped up, making her gasp, looking up slowly. Even though he seemed to be just mere inches away from her, she couldn't see his face! It was just a vague circle... "I believe these are yours."

The blobs of shadow that were most likely his arms moved, guiding some things into her arms...

"My thtuff!" She gasped, letting out a sigh of relief as she clutched them close to her fast-beating chest, unaware of just how much chub was spilling out over her hug. "Phew... Thank you... Thorry to inconvenienthe you..."

"Oh, don't think of it like that. It's an honor to help a lovely woman such as yourself."

Ann could feel her cheeks turning pink as she let out a flustered snort, bashfully hiding her face.

"Ohhh, thtop it, you flirt..." She giggled with more snorts slipping their way in.

"Hm... Oh, I think you dropped something back there," the man noted, putting a hand on her shoulder to try and get her to stay put, before he jogged back behind her. A few moments later, he returned, and she felt something plastic starting to be put against her face. "Here... Bet you're having a hard time seeing without these, huh?"

Ann was confused, but as the accessory was placed on her face, she realized she could see! Sure, it was still a bit blurry, but she was glad to finally have her glasses back!

... Wait. Her glasses? That seemed... strange. She didn't wear glasses, did she? Obviously, she needed them, or else they wouldn't help...

But as she tried figuring out the contradiction in her head, she realized something strange. Her hero was wearing... tall white boots, and a tight red outfit... Her eyes slowly trailed up, taking in each part of the

red costume this man wore... before she finally locked on his face, his mask. Red like the rest of him, with the visage bearing a striking resemblance to...!

"R-Red Hawk! F-F-From Phoenixth Ranger Featherman R!" She squealed, hands flailing at her sides like an excited child as she recognized her hero! "I'm thuch a huge fan! P-Pleathe, can I get a picture with you?!"

She kind of figured he was just a cosplayer, but he was still so *cool*! He seemed flattered by it too... at least, she thought so. It was hard to tell what he was emoting behind that mask, but from how he seemed to bounce with a laugh, he must've been at least amused.

He moved to stand next to Ann while she grabbed her phone, crouching down to better fit in the frame with the shorter, chubbier girl. Ann made sure the camera was steady, despite her still trembling hands, and flashed a peace sign and a wink as she grinned, her braces shining against the light...

"I need to get going now, but... Be safe! And uh, don't fear evil, for evil can never escape the Red Hawk's glare!" The man gave Ann a wave before he went back the way he came, but Ann didn't register it. She was staring at her phone, mind... muddled. It wasn't because she had her picture taken with her hero...

That wasn't her in the picture. At least, not the her she remembered! The Ann in the photo was... much shorter, her cheeks covered in freckles, and those dorky glasses... There was no way she was that fat either! It looked like her uniform was at least four sizes too small! She looked like a completely different person...

But it wasn't just some filter. Looking down, she saw herself as she really was; just a fat nerd! Makoto was right; something **WAS** wrong with her!

In a panic, she hugged her things close as she waddled down the sidewalk to her home, now hyper aware of how slow she was. Before, she could sprint with her long, slender legs without an issue, but now, even a hasty jog was making her lungs hurt, leaving her gasping for air. She had to take it slow... but she knew her clothes didn't fit. The cool fall breeze continued to blow, tickling the parts of her tubby legs that were spilling through her torn tights and up her skirt. Every few steps, she had to tug the cloth back down to hide her blobby rear that jiggled with each thunderous step, acutely aware of the eyes that were locked on her eye-catching frame.

Shuffling into her home, she slammed the door behind her and braced herself against it as she sighed. Phew. Safe. Safe... ish, at least. She had no idea what was going on at all, and it was really stressing her out...

Kicking her untied shoes off at the door, she went to her kitchen. She put two of the tubs of ice cream away and grabbed a spoon while carrying her school bag and the rest of her treats up with her. She was stressed and needed to think. Ice cream always helped her think. Food in general, really, but her body



was craving ice cream. Maybe pizza, too. Ugh, she should've bought some instant noodles and Pocky while she was out!

"Uuugh!" She held her head, grumbling as those thoughts dug in once more. It was like a song constantly stuck in the back of her mind. She had to keep reminding herself of things as she slowly, *slowly*, stepped up the stairs to her room. She wasn't into that nerdy stuff, and how did she know who Red Hawk was earlier...? She wasn't listening that close when Futaba was ranting about them...

Opening her door, Ann almost dropped her bags when she saw its contents.

"Th-Thith ithn't my room..." She mumbled, shaking her head as she took it all in.

Sure, her room was a little messy before, but this was ridiculous! Posters were haphazardly taped up on her wall, displaying things like anime movie posters, cute guys with their shirts half-raised, her favorite idol girl group... Her shelves, once dotted with little knick-knacks from around the world, were now filled with figurines. Cute, busty girls in less than average amounts of clothes in compromising positions, small chibi ones with interchangeable faces and hands, and action figures, like the ones Futaba had.

Ann was always jealous of Futaba's collection. She had the rarest ones that she never could find! Yeah sure, some were online for sale, but she wasn't going to pay a few hundred thousand yen for those! Her fanfics only made her a pittance online...

Her clothes were all over the ground too. Uniforms, skirts, sweatpants, sweatshirts... Where were the dresses she ordered? Those chic tops that she modeled last month? It was like someone renovated the place completely while she was out. But all the clothes there were familiar to her. She remembered buying these, wearing them...

Wait, no, no. This wasn't right. Setting her bags down, she walked over to her ultra-souped up computer, turning it on and watching all the lights begin to blink on. Nothing about this was right. She had models on her walls, and not NEARLY as many plush animals on her bed... Did she have a body pillow now, too?!

Piece by piece, she took off her uniform, lamenting at the ripped outfit as she set it down. These were so expensive to get in a 3XL size... It was gunna hurt her bank account buying new ones... Seeing her body mostly bare was a real wake up call, as well. She felt her curves, those thick areas of pure fat that jiggled as she stepped to her dresser. The air was hitting so much more of her exposed body as it once had before, sending chills down her spine. Even the strength she once had to open her drawers was reduced, needing a lot more strength to yank them open.

She needed comfort for the night. A large pair of black sweatpants with white kittens at the bottom and a baggy, slightly stained old shirt with a game logo emblazoned across her chest. The shirt was a few years old, so her tummy still hung out of the bottom, but she couldn't be asked to fix it. She was used to it.

No, she wasn't! She groaned loudly as she took a seat on her chair, the poor thing letting out an almost pained whine with her weight suddenly crushing the compressed air below. One of her fat hands grabbed a tub of ice cream and yanked the lid off, while she logged in and got to her screen.

“Let’th thee...” She mumbled, pushing her glasses up her nose before scooping some ice cream and shoving it in her mouth. Between scoops, she typed on the computer, to make the most efficient use of her time and not risk melting the ice cream.

Her search began. Her WPM had, fortunately, drastically increased due to her new changes, but it felt so natural. Ann didn’t even need to think about what she was typing before her fatty sausage fingers awkwardly danced across the keys.

‘Sudden onset weight gain’ didn’t give anything that fit her. All these illnesses seemed to be long-term things; not something that would flare up in an hour!

‘Lisps’ search was even worse. It was just explaining how lisps happened. They weren’t developed; it was a product of teeth issues or an accent... Ann’s fingers brushed against her braces as she read that. But where did the braces come from, then?!

Within ten minutes, numerous searches were already started and finished, as was her first tub of ice cream, with some of the treat staining the chest of her shirt and around her lips. She was starting to get a headache with the circles she was running in. It was like Metaverse magic here, with reality itself having come undone. But was that possible? It felt like she understood the cognition science a lot better now, but the intricacies still evaded her...

Her hands found themselves prying off the lid of her second tub of ice cream as she relaxed in her chair. This was way too stressful. After school, almost getting robbed, and... everything else, she just wanted to unwind. Her spoon dug into the soft treat and she began to eat, eyes closed as she let out a hum of delight.

“Wonder what’th new...” She mumbled into a mouthful of cookie dough as she opened her bookmarks. Her favorite anime should’ve gotten a new episode a couple days back, but because of her Phantom Thief business, she had to miss it! Now seemed like good time to just watch it...

She reclined in her seat, using her phone to dim the lights as the screen filled with the dazzling lights and the popping opening starting to blare from her speakers. It was like a ritual! Had to have her ice cream when watching Queen Taurus of the Zodiac!

When it finished, she grinned, licking her fingers clean, having used those to get all of the melted ice cream out of the container. Okay. That little diversion was done... but her mind was already going. She had to write a new fic. That episode gave her too many ideas! Queen Taurus was just such a strong character, and Ann shipped her *hard* with Lady Scorpio, despite being her eternal adversary...

Ann could already feel her freckled cheeks getting red as she snorted. Enemies falling in love and needing to figure out their emotions through their conflict is just soooo good... and the love triangle with Madame Leo makes it so hawt...~

As her mind raced to figure out where her little fanfiction would go, the thoughts of all this being *wrong* just... faded away, covered up like a stain on a coffee table by a punch of papers with much more enticing things to think about.

Pulling up her word processor, she scooted her chair close, listening to its soft creaks of pain the plastic furniture cried out as she got to work.

“The thun rothe thlowly upon the might empire of Queen Tauruth...” She began, her smile not waning as she adjusted her glasses up the bridge of her nose...

The lights of Leblanc shown dimly like mood lighting upon the study group. Most of them had already shown up, and Makoto made sure that they were prepared. Ryuji even brought snacks! Fatty stuff like little donuts and cupcakes and chips, but it's the thought that counted. Ren was getting to work whipping up coffee, with Haru watching by the counter.

“Is Ann really gunna flake?” Ryuji grumbled, balling up his empty bag of chips and tossing it at the trash can. It bounced off the rim, landing on the floor with a dull crinkle. The boy shrugged, by a scowl from Makoto was enough to get him to (begrudgingly) get up and toss it away proper.

“You did say she seemed odd when you called yesterday...” Haru sighed, resting against her hand, looking quite concerned. “She would've told us if she was sick, right?”

Makoto rubbed the back of her head as she checked her phone. They were supposed to start fifteen minutes ago... Her last few texts to Ann asking if she was coming and if she was feeling better, but they were all unread.

“I'd figured she'd at least tell us if she couldn't make it but...” she shook her head, tucking her phone away as Ren put the tray of coffee on the table where their snacks and study materials were all set out. “Let's get started. If she makes it, she makes it. If not, her funeral.”

There was a collective nod of resignation as they all moved to the booth to get to work, when a sudden shadow outside the door caught their attention as they jostled with the knob.

“Thorry I'm late, guyth!” Annie apologized the moment she stepped inside, all of her friends gasping when they saw her.

Despite all the changes, they knew it was Ann. Her face looked mostly the same, besides those buckteeth that were sticking out adorned with braces... She still wore her hair the same way! Though her form was completely... different! She was huge! None of them had seen someone their age that large; easily surpassing 300 pounds and then some! That hefty body of hers was straining those sweatpants to their limits, her flabby belly spilling out with quite the muffin top between those and her t-shirt emblazoned with a game controller.

It honestly seemed like an outfit Futaba would wear if she wasn't going out.

“I wath up thuper late writing, and I didn't thleep until like, three am!” Ann laughed with a snort as she set her bookbag down, nabbing her inhaler from her pocket and taking a deep breath from it. Poor girl jogged part of the way here!

She smiled at her friends, her braces sparkling as she idly kicked her converse shoe against her heel. Everyone's eyes were locked on her in stunned silence, mouths hung open... Annie could feel her cheeks go red. Was she just that beautiful~? ... Oh, did she forget her bra again?! Hastily, she groped at her own meaty udders just to make sure... only to sigh in relief. Phew. She wasn't going to make her gym class mistake twice!

“... Weeeeell, we can’t thpend all day gawking~” She hummed, wiggling her way into the booth with Ryuji, the brutish lad grunting in displeasure as her wide girth took up most of the bench, while her mammoth gut shoved the table aside slightly, almost tipping the cups of coffee over. “Let’t h get thtudying! I know Ryuji and Ren have been thlacking in doing their Calculuth, tho let’t h thtart there? It’t h thuper eathy for me, tho the three of uth can eathily teach them!”

There was an awkward silence as she got out her binder and calculator... But Makoto grinned a little, simply nodding as she dragged a stool over and took her seat at the end of the table.

“Yes, Calculus is a wonderful place to start,” Makoto agreed as she hummed, grabbing her book. “You heard her. Let’s begin.”

Everyone shared little looks as they slowly complied, much to Makoto’s satisfaction.

After all, if it got Ann to take her studies seriously, it couldn’t be all that bad...