

**Title:** Transient Paradise

**Author:** me

**Prompt:** from cues, makeup challenge. *"The opposite of war isn't peace.... It's creation."*—Rent. In an hour and a half or 1000 words.

**Notes:** it's post Sophie/Daniel (that is to say, post- *life @ 23*), but not exactly them. And it stole a scene from a universe of astaria51's from way way back. I wrote something in it, but it never came to anything. And I wrote it on my Virginia Beach trip last week, so it's a little crazy. No warnings...

*It's a dream wafting through the smoke and trash-strewn back alley where he sells himself. It mingles with the ashes of the cigs he bums off passing Normals who find him intriguing, but not to their tastes. It's a dream that's been torn, taped, wrinkled and folded, edges burning with too much touching.*

*He ripped it from an old magazine he found in the Green Zone; that forbidden area between the X barrio and the red light district where they all made an existence.*

She sighs and closes her notebook again. She's tired and he's tired. At 7:30 in the morning, at 37,000 feet, at odds with one another, they're tired. He's staring out of the window watching the channel tunnels veer off between Virginia and Maryland. She's staring at a fragmented story.

It took three days for them to argue. The first two days were just like a honeymoon. Sex whenever, sleeping in late, no worries and no responsibilities. And then the phone rang. And he set up his laptop. And he devoted 18 hours to a job that could (and had) run successfully without him. And told her in no uncertain terms to "fuck off" when she finally spoke. And suddenly it was just like home again. It was yelling and threats and locking themselves away from each other.

She couldn't take it when he woke up at 4 in the morning and was back at work and ordering her to meet his whims without a sound out of her. She spent the rest of the day on the beach. And the next day. And when it rained their last day there, she went to buy little trinkets and saw two movies and generally stayed away.

She looks at him again now and sighs. As she'd packed, she took off the shirt she was wearing and grimaced at the flexing of her sunburn. How forgetful not to pack or wear sun block. She nearly screamed when she felt the first touch of his gel-slick fingers, soothing her skin with aloe vera. Without a word between them, they'd finished packing and lay down for the not, not able to sleep for the unspoken words so thick between them.

At 37,000 feet in the air, she's ready to drop, but she gathers enough energy to link their fingers together on the armrest between them. A moment passes with no reaction where she panics and wonders if it's ever alright with them. A moment, and he squeezes her fingers back and leans himself into her. No apologies, no clarification. Just acceptance and moving on. Another fault to build on at another time.

She opens her notebook and begins again where she left off.

*No one was ever seen there, not after the War. But Junichi knew where it was safe. It was a place he could find a paper paradise.*