

Alchemy of Hearts chapter 2

Chapter 2: Naoki's bride

As the cool evening breeze spread in the environment, Daisuke kept urging his horse to go faster by kicking it with his feet.

The black horse sensing his owner's exigency groaned and galloped ahead causing the rise of the 'clip-clop' sound from its hooves.

It was only when they got close to the castle, did they slow down and finally come to a halt near the entrance.

Daisuke removed both feet out of the stirrups and grasped both reins in his left hand, and in one swift move, he jumped.

Landing steadily on his feet, he pulled the small basket he had in his possession from over his shoulders after fastening the reins of the horse near the tree.

And in quick steps, he made his way into the castle to deliver the flower his master had requested.

Stepping inside the dimly-lit house he was used to, he first went to the sitting area to search for his master.

Being aware of Sato Naoki's fondness for peace and quiet, he held his tongue from making his presence known.

'That's right! He requested for flowers he should be in his Rabo.' Daisuke guessed and quickly turned around towards the hallway.

When he got to the familiar door Sato Naoki frequented, he pushed it open, and knowing the secret door to the Rabo, he did the usual ritual, and the door opened for him.

The path was already lighted, which made it easy for him to find his footing.

"Master is really here!" He mumbled to himself as he took quick steps while descending the stairs.

At the entrance, he called for him while looking at the empty room in surprise. "Milord?"

Daisuke's brows creased slightly in a frown. 'Where did he go?'

The sound of his boots was audible as it made contact against the tatami floor. Marching forward towards the desk, he saw no one in sight.

“Milord... I brought the daisies you ordered!” His voice rang out urgently this time around.

Glancing at the work table that held so many items, he frowned and put down the basket before stepping away.

He sensed glanced at the wooden shelf in front of him and sensed something out of place as his brows furrowed. 1

Slowly, his gaze trailed from the top of the shelf to the bottom. There on the floor, he noticed a wet patch and a few pieces of broken ceramics and his frown deepened.

He hurriedly took a step closer to the shelf as his sight followed the trail of broken ceramics.

Right at that moment, he saw a hand sprawled on the floor and stepped back in fright. “Master?” He was not sure of what his eyes made up but braced himself.

Turning fully to his left side, his eyes caught sight of the full body of his master sprawled on the floor beside his work table.

“Sa-Sato-s-sama!” He stammered, and the next second, he dashed over to kneel beside the unconscious body and quickly brought two fingers to his nose to feel his breath, but there was none.

His fingers trembled slightly as he tried to feel his breath again. Unfortunately, the result remained the same.

“Is he dead?! No! this can’t be! What happened to him?!”

As he asked those questions aloud while hoping for an answer from who knows where, his gaze quickly darted around the other parts of his body to see what happened.

Apart from the shards of ceramic glasses and a wet patch beside him, there was a clean piece of rag in his hand.

One conclusion came to Daisuke’s mind, and that was the fact that his master’s condition had to do with the potion he was working on.

From the traces on the floor and the clean piece of cloth in his hand, he must have accidentally knocked over the ceramic jar, causing it to break, and the liquid to spill.

But none of this was his concern at the moment. His master was laying on the floor stiffly on his side, and his breath couldn’t be felt.

“Sato-sama!” He called out again in worry and tried to take the rag from his clutches by forcefully prying his hand open before snatching it away at long last.

Keeping the piece of cloth aside, he brought his hands to the stiff body and rolled him over, so that his back was now against the floor, before placing his palms on his chest to apply pressure on it when suddenly he stilled.

He looked stunned as his hands paused midway.

As if trying to be sure of what he felt before, he put his hands on the chest again and applied the same amount of pressure as the first time, and got the same result.

Daisuke had this unbelievable expression on his face as he announced to himself, “He is not dead!”¹

A sigh of relief escaped his lips. There was no longer worry on his face, but soon there was a cause for it to return.

A bolt of sizzling electrifying lightning zipped across the sky, which was followed by a heavy rumbling sound coming from the same direction.

Daisuke’s brows furrowed in a frown as he gazed at the late evening sky through the open shoji.

“Master, why did you have to be in this state on the day your bride is to be born?”

His tone was laced with sadness as he shifted his gaze back to the unconscious body of his master.

Here came the special day he and his master has been waiting for, for centuries, but... he really didn’t want to think about that now.

Since it looked like his master would miss the birth of his bride, he would go over to watch things on his behalf.

With that thought in mind, he gently put his master’s body on the floor before slowly rising. He made his way to the shoji and shut the cold breeze off, before returning to his master’s side.

Daisuke released a deep breath before lifting his master’s heavy body in his arms, as a groan escaped from his lips.

This was his first time ever needing to lift his master.

By the time he was done laying his body on the futon and covered him with a thick duvet in his bedroom, the rain had already begun to patter against the tightly shut sliding window.

Taking one last look at his master, he left his side and went out into the rain.

Outside, he loosened the reins of his horse and pulled it with him till they were outside the common picket wood fencing.

Turning to face the castle, he let go of the reins and closed his eyes, slowly bringing his palms together in front of his face to chant a few words.

Next, he moved his right foot a step backward before slowly spreading his palms to face the castle and opening his black eyes which were sharp in the stormy night.

Daisuke's hands moved in a circular motion at full speed, and with full force, he pushed the mirror-like energy that gathered around his hands towards the castle.

Immediately, the castle which looked full of life appeared to be one, wrecked, and abandoned.

"Milord, I will be back," Daisuke promised with his gaze at the castle before climbing his horse and urging it to ride faster in the rain.

In one dark room which was brightly illuminated with the help of oil-filled lamps, the deafening sounds of cries, wailing, panting, and metallic scent filled the air.

Rushed footsteps were heard, and the sound of wringing water from a piece of cloth to a basin was heard from time after time.

Each time the water in the basin became too bloodied, it would be taken away, and a fresh one would be brought over.

"Milady, I can see the head of the baby, we are almost there!" 1

The urgent cries of the midwife came when she looked in-between Ito Hana's legs and saw the black hair that belonged to the child, about to step her foot into the world.

Ito Hana, the woman in labor, squeezed her eyes shut from the pain. Her fingers tightened around the futon she was laying on while panting heavily.

When the time came for her to push again, she screamed and pushed with all her might.

In this storm, her neighbors living in the next thatched roof wooden house could hardly be disturbed, as the blinding sounds from the sky, were already loud enough.

The sliding door shielded the life-threatening scene from a young boy who stood beside an older man and watched two women come out of the room with bloodied water and return less than a minute later, with a clean one.

“Father, will mother be fine?” His worried voice asked as he looked up at his father.

Ito Hana’s husband looked down at the young boy and tried to mask the worry on his own face. “Your mother will be fine, and so will your sister!” His reassuring voice said.

DICTIONARY

Rabo – Laboratory.

Tatami – is a traditional Japanese wood flooring.

Futon – A traditional Japanese bedding.