

Eternal Melody 17 I will stand by yourside

Sumire woke up to somebody shaking her shoulders. She slowly opened her eyes and found Yuhi looking at her with a troubled expression.

"You know if you don't want to share a bed with me. I can sleep on the couch." Yuhi said awkwardly. "I intended to anyway, but you wouldn't let me go. I figured you would be cold, too.."

A stream of excuses passed his lips, and Sumire held back her laughter. 'What an unusual person.' A year or so has passed since she last met him, but nothing seems to have changed. He is unusually kind to her, though. The Yuhi she remembered is colder. Then again, he said to her he had a girlfriend.

Dating changes people; the best example would be her.

"Is there something on your mind?" Yuhi asked.

"There is." Sumire trailed off. But she quickly stopped herself. Since she got here, she has caused him far too many headaches. Now that she thought it through, she felt very embarrassed.

Even after a year of personal growth, being around Terashima Yuhi reverted her to a babbling idiot. Sumire wondered what Yuhi thought of her. She took a deep breath, 'it should be okay to say it now. I have nothing to lose.'

"The past year, why didn't you contact me?" Sumire questioned. "I know it was awkward after that thing you did. But, are you crazy? Last time I saw you, you were bleeding to death. You were losing so much blood then." She exclaimed. That's why she found it hard to believe he was giving her a serious confession. During that situation, how could

he think of confessing to her? Sumire found it very strange. Why did he confess then?

"You know I would find you more attractive and take your confession seriously if you didn't bleed to death. I truly don't understand what your thinking."

Yuhi laughed. "Was that an outburst?"

Her cheeks reddened. 'Did it sound like she was rambling?' How embarrassing, whenever she is around Terashima Yuhi, her composure vanishes. Sumire would like to think that in the past year, she has changed now. She has changed and turned into a sensible and grown-up woman. However, in front of Terashima Yuhi, she has regressed into a little girl again.

Yuhi's gaze softened. "Hey, let me hug you."

Huh? Wait what? That's his reaction to all of this? Then again, this person isn't as smart as she thought. He has his foolish moments. Sumire didn't say a word, and Yuhi placed his hand on top of hers. He removed the cigarette from her hands.

"Not smoking?"

It's enough to light the cigarettes. Sumire knew how stupid it sounded. But over the years she has a bad habit of lighting cigarettes and not smoking. "I don't have to."

She doesn't even have to light it now. Yuhi stood so close to her so she could smell it, his scent - tobacco and alcohol.

"Say, I wanted to ask you. You were the one who kept sending me books, right?"

Yuhi's lips curve to a smile. "Yeah."

The first one had been December last year.

W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. When she first received it, she didn't need to wonder who sent it. 'I only know one person with such strange reading tastes.'

She found a handwritten note scribbled in the front spine. She recognized the writing immediately. Yuhi wrote it in a rush; she always wondered what situation he was in when he wrote it.

Sumire received the second one in February.

Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*. The maiden in the castle of thorns who slept for a hundred years.

The third one somebody passed it on to her, it was June around the time of the cultural festival.

Proust *Swann's Way*. The narrator travels backward in time in order to tell the story of a love affair that had taken place before his own birth. Swann's jealous love for Odette provides a prophetic model of the narrator's relationships. All Proust's great themes - time and memory, love and loss, art, and the artistic vocation.

That one was the only one that didn't include a note with it.

The fourth one was the one she received right after Mamoru's death.

The poppy war by RF Kufang. A story about revenge. He sent such a gruesome book right after somebody's death. Sumire understood what Yuhi was trying to tell her.

'Don't take revenge.' He wanted her to read the book and see the horrors of revenge.

Since she came to Tokyo, Yuhi gave her two books personally.

Heart of darkness and Existentialism Is a Humanism by Jean-Paul Sartre.

The second one, however, made her question his motives. "I dislike existentialism, you know."

Yuhi nodded. "That's why I sent it. Don't you feel pulled in and drawn when you read anything philosophy related?"

Sumire paused and thought for a few seconds before she nodded. "Despair and loathing, sadness, and happiness. It was all the same, all those emotions."

Gee so much for having a clear mindset. She was starting to sound like a strange person. Then again, others comment on how strange her reading taste is. That person often mentioned before that girls her age should not express such interest in 'tragedies' and books based on Philosophy like Voltaire.

Shakespeare's Tempest and Hamlet. Since she was younger, she read a lot of tragedies.

Sumire felt Yuhi's lips on her neck, and she shuddered. "Yuhi, don't do that."

"Sumire," Yuhi mumbled softly. "I understand that you're in pain. But you have to remember something for me. You're not alone, and even if the entire world abandoned you, I won't. I will stand by your side even if you become a monster."

Light laughter escaped her lips. "Is that a prediction for the future?"

"I don't want it too," Yuhi admitted. "But--" his sentence fell short when she suddenly turned away.

Sumire didn't know what it was, but she felt bile rise to her throat. It was already early morning, five or six am. Sumire knew this because she frequently became sick at this time. She turned to the side and threw up the contents.

Yuhi patted her back. "Morning sickness?"

"A little," Sumire admitted.

"Yeah, you do seem quite pale." Yuhi brushed his fingers across her cheeks.

Why is he touching her so easily? She pulled his hand away. "Let me..go." She muttered.

Yuhi sighed and pulled away from her. "You know, Sumire. I've always wanted to ask you something. Is this stubborn nature of yours inherited of something?"

Sumire bit her lip, she averted her gaze from him, but Yuhi continued.

"I understand it is difficult to accept my help. Mamoru was the one who helped you over the last few years. Since your parents died, you only had him. I get it; he saved you. You relied on him a lot. However, Sumire I don't want to give up on you. You can push others away, but don't push me away. I will stand by your side, no matter what."

"..."

He rendered her speechless with his words. What can she say to that? How come this person always says the things she wants to hear the most?