

Melody 401

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 401

Chapter 401: No more Salvation

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The moment his name escaped her lips, Kuga practically bolted out of the door.

"That guy seems like he is quite afraid of me; he escaped rather quickly," Eli said as he took a seat opposite of her.

Sumire sighed. "At least warn me before you show up out of nowhere."

"If I did that, you would run away."

This person is somebody she knew shortly after she became a member of the Holy Knights organization. But even after so many years, many things about him remained a mystery to her. All she knew about him was that he is a genius scientist; in public, he appears to be an easy-going and friendly guy. But he normally has a detached personality and spoke in a monotone voice.

Sumire learned this part about him fairly quickly since they spent a lot of time together.

"There is no need."

If Eli came here from abroad, then it must be like what Kuga said. "Is it bad?"

"Yes, your little friend there was telling the truth. The situation in the delinquent world is something one cannot avoid any longer. It will not be long before you start to see more things on the news."

An age where delinquent fighting, where underworld matters will strongly affect the average person. An age of conflict and misery on a different scale.

"You told me you were observing people that Ru asked you."

Eli chuckled and slid a few photos.

Her eyes widened when she saw the photographs. "Shin, San, and Hino?!!"

"It was interesting observing them."

Wait a moment, why did Ru ask Eli to watch them? When Eli first told her that Ru asked him to watch over people, she thought they were suspects in his case. But that is not the case here. Moreover, is it just a coincidence that those three are the ones she has interacted with the most since she arrived in Tokyo?

It can't be a coincidence; could it be that Ru already knew? That person, to what extent did he predict? How much did he foresee? It seems like there are many things she didn't know about him.

"So when you told me in your messages about them, I thought you knew. But based on your reaction, you had no idea."

"You observed them because--"

"They are the ones who will help you since he is no longer around."

She didn't have to know; a part of her already understood. Otherwise, she would not have repeatedly come to them. No, that is not it. She did not have any ulterior motives, and the same went for them. None of them ever approached her with bad intentions. Whenever she could not go to Yuhi, they were there for her.

One of the reasons why her relationship with Yuhhi has not fallen apart yet is because of them.

But her gaze fell on Sanos' photo. "Do you know he is a suspect in Ru's case?"

"Yes, I did my research. He is practically a lapdog to those people; at least that is what it looks like on the surface."

Sumire raised her eyebrows when she heard those words. "Are you saying it is all an act?"

Eli shook his head. "I think it is more like he does not understand the extent of his influence." He trailed off. "Let us start from shortly before you two broke up, perhaps three months before."

At that comment, Sumire flinched. Three months? Is it a coincidence? The last three months of their relationship were the worse.

"During that time, his brother was not doing very well. There were a lot of bad rumors about him. One night when he went drinking, he ended up messing with the wrong people. This scenario happens a lot, and people usually end up having to pay a lot of debt. But the thing is, what he betted on then wasn't the family fortune but a human being."

Sumire felt her heartbeat increase as Eli took out another photo from his bag. A familiar girl with cyan-colored hair.

"He betted on this girl as collateral for the damage he caused them."

"..."

"She must look familiar to you; after all, she is the one who he cheated on you with."

It seems her bad feeling came true; Sumire could more or less guess the scenario from now onwards. But she still has to hear it first to make sure.

"The Nagawa family prepared to surrender her, but Nagawa Sano stepped up and saved her. He said he would take responsibility and marry her. Those people deliberately chose to mess with the other Nagawa brother for a reason; they did not want to cross Nagawa Sano. So by shielding her like this, the girl became free. For a while, there was no contact from them. But after your break up, news regarding that brother's actions leaked. Nagawa Sano struggled to keep everything together, and those people reappeared to help him."

All of the pieces are slowly falling to place. It is almost as though somebody is doing this deliberately. Ever since she left Star town, no ever since Tsueno Mamoru passed away, something strange has

happened. For the longest time, she has thought this way. But now, she is starting to think differently. Could it be even long before then?

At some point, Ru started to become very cautious whenever they went anywhere, and he stuck to her like glue. That behavior started around after that incident in the casino where Sano set her up.

Then at some point, he asked her out. Huh? Now that she thought about it this way, Sumire felt her heartbeat increase. Could it be that is the reason why he asked her out?

Sometimes I wish I could take you away, take you somewhere far away.

I want to quickly turn into an adult. If I do that, then it will be easy to take you away.

Eli extended his hand out and patted her hair. "He did it all to protect you. You understood that much, right?"

"Since when?"

"The ones who targeted your family, and the ones who caused that incident. No, I think it was long before then. Tsueno Mamoru has always been watching over you and protecting you. Initially, he intended to do so from a distance, but the situation changed."

"What are they after?"

"It is hard to say. But after everything that has happened, I can say they want you. There is something they need from you."

So many people sacrificed their lives, and for what? For her? Why? Even though she is a nobody. There is no need for so many people to sacrifice themselves for her, the malice of this world. All this kindness and warmth, she does not deserve any of it.

Why? Why did those people have to die? Why is she the only one who survives?

"Mam, sir, here are your orders."

"We haven't ordered--"

"Ibuki Sumire, according to our boss, you must--" Sumire did not give the waitress a chance to finish those words. In the next second, she picked up the gun on the table and pulled the trigger.

It was only a single shot, and this was the first time she used a gun before. But that was enough; the waitress filled with hostility just a few minutes ago and was on the ground in seconds.

Ah, once again, there is no more salvation for her.

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 402

Chapter 402: If I were the Rain

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

If I were the rain that binds together the Earth and the sky, whom in all eternity would never mingle. .
.Would I be able to bind two hearts together? "

It didn't surprise Atushi when he received the call from Yuhi saying they would come back early. He felt that he understood what Ibuki Sumire was thinking more than anybody here, even more than Yuhi. But that was only because once upon a time he was in love or maybe still is in love with Ibuki Sumire.

Atushi smiled softly at the sight of Yuhi fast asleep on the couch. They only just arrived two hours ago, and yet Yuhi is acting casual. He already heard that something serious happened, but those people are quick to censor the news.

"His nightmares are back, aren't they." Atushi started quietly, not wanting to disrupt the atmosphere around the bar. Everyone else that usually occupied the bar was out doing who knows what. But Yoru and Kija were with the others, so he didn't need to worry too much.

Jae nodded at his statement and sighed. "Yeah. It makes me worry. He hasn't slept properly for the past few weeks."

He turned to look at him and rolled his eyes. "You haven't been sleeping much either, Atushi-san. Are you hunting down those people who hurt our members?"

"You know I have to. Can't let them go around hurting other members of Akagaumi."

"But you're letting it disrupt your sleep." Jae pointed out with a frown.

Atushi reached over and pinched his cheeks.

"Ouch!" Jae whined.

Atushi laughed and messed up his hair, easily earning himself a kick to his arms with his position. The two went back and forth, throwing punches and kicks.

"You two are being noisy. I'm trying to sleep."

Atushi looked down at Yuhi, he still had his eyes closed, but he had a small frown on his lips.

"Oh, please. You weren't even sleeping from the start, Terashima."

He scoffed, pulling on some strands of his disheveled hair. He grunted in response and sat up to stretch like .

"Like a lion." Jae finished with a laugh.

Atushi chuckled, and Yuhi looked over at them with a dark look, but before they could exchange any more words, they hear the sound of the bell.

A brunette-haired girl walked in with a rather unbelievable look on her face.

"What happened to you?" Atushi dared ask.

"I'm tired and sleepy...pshuuu."

Pshuu?

Jae chuckled. "It's been a while since I last saw the Princessa like that. Alright, come and relax on my--"

Amid Jae's speech, the brown-haired girl had already positioned herself on the couch; to be precise, she was lying down on Yuhi's lap.

"I'm hurt. King and the Princess's are so close with each other!" Jae said dramatically.

Atushi rolled his eyes. "Come now; you're not a kid."

But he had to admit that indeed it was just a comforting sight watching the two. The black hair boy who had sat up moments ago was now in a rather slouched position as Yuhi ran a hand through the girl's brown locks and hummed a tune. Not like him to start singing, he noted.

Atushi already heard how in the past, he quit the music industry for a bit and indeed thought of it as a legitimate enough excuse. He is more serious now; it must be because of Sumire.

"So why are you so tired?" Atushi asked, knowing that the brown-haired girl was awake.

"Mmm, I worked on a few songs."

Yuhi is a member of Quatro light, no Midnight five now. Since Sumire is the official composer, and the group just debuted, she must have a lot of work to do. But he also heard rumors that she accepted to be on Takashi Yumi's show.

Atushi watched Yuhi carefully and saw him silently fuss over her. Only Yuhi treats Sumire like she is so fragile.

"To think it's finally time, despite the delay?"

Jae chuckles. "Time just goes slowly for you like an old man." He hit the golden hair boy lightly across the head then, "What about you, King? What do you think will happen tomorrow?"

"What you ask," Yuhi said with a deep sigh and pulled a serious face.

"Those guys are performing first huh?"

"Ah, you mean them? Yes. It's quite the honor for them to perform the opening."

Indeed performing the opening was somewhat of a grand matter, which is why the media made such a big deal out of it. Since it isn't one of the senior teams, those guys better make it count, performing the opening and on the first day.

"Wasn't Kusaji having issues before, though? Will he be alright?" Atushi said, recalling the expression he had seen on the boy's face.

"Sumire."

Sumire lifted her hand up and pulled out a marble.

"Atsuro is fine now. Yamaguchi-san managed to talk to him properly. As for Shin-" Sumire trails off. "-he is still an idiot."

His sweatdropped; she's blunt as ever, huh, with that stuff.

"Now now, Princess. Nakara Shin is in a better position than Ichiko, correct?"

"True.. That one is still stormy."

"Just start burning things then."

"Yuhi, you really should learn to be more considerate---hachoo." Sumire's sentence broke off as she sneezed.

"I knew you would catch a cold." Atushi deeply sighed, not surprised at all. "I told you not to go out without your cape at least."

This girl's bad habits don't change. He wonders how Yuhi deals with- Atushi paused in mid-thought. Then again, Yuhi is just as bad as her.

"Right, sorry. I didn't know it would suddenly start snowing out of the blue. Gee Atushi, you act like a parent sometimes."

Ouch, that is a huge blow to his self-esteem, especially considering how he still harbors feelings for her. But he supposed this was fine. He has already heard everything, after all, the things he wanted to know and the things that are still left to be said.

Jae chuckled. "Don't start flirting with you two. King will get jealous----oh my that's bold."

Hmm?

Atushi watches as the silent black hair boy takes one look at the brown-haired girl and rummages with his free hand to the side of the couch. Yuhi pulled out his black leather jacket and wrapped it around the girl.

"You'll get sick. Be careful."

"Yeah, thank you."

Somehow these two seem different than before.

Or have they always been that way? Atushi looked over at Sumire, and his eyes widened. Ah, now he understands. The kindness Yuhi shows her; she is no longer able to reject it, so she can smile naturally.

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Once the two had fallen asleep, Jae stops filming with his camera causing him to shake his head. "Those two will kill you when they find out," Atushi commented.

Earlier it looked like Jae was cleaning his camera, but he was secretly filming the two this entire time."

"Now now, there's nothing wrong with documenting memories. Besides, it's been a while since I've last captured something with the Princess figure."

Atushi sighed. "Quit making it sound perverted."

"Oh my, you found out?"

He shook his head and began to wipe another glass. The bar was closed early due to the heavy rain. Usually, on days like this, he would head back to the academy right away. However, the trains had stopped, and there wasn't any way for him to get back. Well, he supposed that in itself was lucky; it felt as though he hadn't been around as much beside her.

Since he, too, was a member of the elite, he knew what was happening with her.

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 403

Chapter 403: Just Empty shells

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"Say, do you think it's okay? If we allow that guy to meet with her?"

Atushi stopped cleaning the glass and pulled out his lighter and a cigarette. "It's not as though there's much choice right now. Honestly speaking, I'd rather have it, so she doesn't have any engagement partners right now."

That's right, especially considering these circumstances. "However, in the end, she is still a member of the top class elite. She needs a fiance. She has nobody left in her family other than the few guards and elders that survived or weren't present at the incident. She has to make use of any connections she can get. Though I doubt she ever saw it that way."

"True, she isn't that type of person." Jae chuckled. "It was funny how she didn't recognize me for a while after she came here."

"I found that odd too. You two met before."

"Right, she is my life savior, but-" Jae trailed off. "Maybe it is better if she doesn't know that."

Atushi was about to say anything when the doors opened, revealing a woman with long purple hair. She looked towards Sumire and Yuhi on the couch, and a relieved sigh escaped her lips. But she quickly turned to the windows and pulled the blinds down, and closed the curtains.

"Asukchan? What is the problem?"

"I controlled the news as much as I could. I reported it to my captain too, but I don't know how this got posted." Asuka pulled out her tablet and placed it on the counter.

Atushis eyes widened when he saw the news report.

IDOL KILLER STRIKES AGAIN

"At one today, somebody killed a waitress with a gun. Strange enough, most of the workers gave the same answer like somebody instructed them to do so. It was around three when the police finally came; before then, there was plenty of time to dispose of the evidence. The rumors of the killer is the one and only Ibuki Sumi--" Atushi stopped mid-sentence.

Wait what? What is this?!!

"Asuka!"

"I tried! But if they can bypass Hyoudo's security, then that means it can only be--" Before Asuka could finish her sentence, they hear a large pounding sound on the doors.

Jae walked towards the window and carefully peeked through the blinds. "Kiragi-san, were you rushing to tell us this because people followed you?"

Asuka nodded. "I don't know where they came from, but there are a lot of them. Somebody also gave the reporters a tip that they have seen Sumire coming here."

Somebody? Atushi gritted his teeth. A reporter who is that persistent in following Sumire there can only be one.

"Ibuki-san?"

"We know you are in there; please don't hide."

Atushi sensed the mocking tone in their voices and clenched his fist due to his sudden burst of anger. This was a setup. Atushi was about to march up to the door, but Sumire grabbed hold of his hand.

"It's fine."

"But-" He hadn't realized when she woke up no she was never sleeping from the beginning. Quite some time has passed since she did anything like this, so he almost forgot. Whenever something bad happens, she will take responsibility for it even if it is not her fault.

"Asuka, how many people are outside?"

"Two hundred."

"I see."

Atushi's gaze fell on his hand, and he noticed a spec of blood.

"Your bleeding."

"Wahh- really?!"

Atushi sighed and quickly took out the medical supplies. "How's that? Did the blood stop?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"It did? I used the juice from shoujiou roots. It's good for stopping blood. It also prevents anemia. When it starts to bruise, scorch some tsuwabuki leaves and make a paste to put on it. "

As he explained this, though, he noted Sumire stared at him, "What is it?"

"I just thought that you're nice after all."

He hears Jae chuckling in the background, and he sighed.

The thing is, she is really serious about that, isn't she? "I'd ask what sort of impression you've had of me up until now. But something tells me I'd rather not know."

"Fufu, is that so? Who knows, you'd probably have gotten a nice response."

She's messing around with him. But he supposed she has always been like this.

His eyesight moved towards Sumire, who was combing her hair with her fingers. There was something about this sight that reminded him of something. He watched her a bit more before he realized something whenever he looked into her eyes before it looked like he could see the illumination of the moonlight.

Ah, moonlight; whenever he thought of that, he begins to think of their senpais. After all, their group M5 represents the moon, doesn't it? As he was wracking his brains on the matter, he did not notice that the girl was staring at him at a closer range.

He only realized because Jae commented about waking Yuhi up. "W--what is it?"

"I just thought that you'd changed a lot, haven't you, Atushi?"

Huh? Where did that come from? "That's quite random."

"Aha, you think so?"

Yeah, he does. She has had plenty of chances since coming here to say something like that to him. "But that's true, hmmm how to put it? Just now, you pulled an expression on your face that I had not yet seen before, so I felt the need to say it like that."

"In other words, it was random."

Sumire laughed softly. "Ah, I'm caught?!"

"Moron."

But the girl only responded with a laugh causing him to sigh. Even though they are older now. He can see that some things about her won't change at all. He supposed a part of him is glad about that, yet he occasionally wonders if that is the case.

When she first came here, after she sang on stage, she would break down backstage. For sure, those tears are not a lie and those hazard eyes either. Recently it appears as though she is much calmer than before.

It's Yuhi's influence, but there's something different here.

"Sumire, you told me before that were just empty shells waiting for something to happen, correct?"

Sumire nodded. "I did." Her tone changed!, and he knew instantly that she sensed what he was about to ask.

"I didn't mean--"

"But I did not get that feeling when I first read the lyrics to M5 debut song." Usually, when anybody sings, it's difficult to pay attention to the lyrics. But after the conversation they had then, he found himself looking at the lyrics carefully.

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 404

Chapter 404: Fear is proof

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

"I see you figured it out. That's right; it's only natural to be. Someone like me has always been empty, after all. "

Sumire shook. "It's quite alright."

"Then may I ask, under what circumstances did you use to write those lyrics?"

She was silent for a few minutes before she extended her hand out, almost as though she was trying to capture the stars with her palm. Even though they were indoors, he felt this way.

"When I'm feeling insecure. Like when Yuhi and I were not together, I felt so useless at that time. All I could do was wait. Yet, it was because of that we were all pleased when we saw each other again. I hate it, you know? The feeling of being weak and powerless. Even though that place was my home, it was suffocating and stifling all the time. The only times I found light were when I was with or whenever I sang. That's why the second I realized my strength, and I wanted to use it to change something. To change this net called time."

Ah, so that's it, that's the reason why she has been able to remain strong this entire time, even though she broke down and cried after each stage. Atushi also noted how quickly she got back on her feet. No matter how painful it was.

She is an amazing person.

Atushi thought so before, but when she says things like this, he affirms those thoughts.

"But if something were to break that net? If something were to break that change, what would you do?" At this point, his tone must have sounded desperate since she reached over and patted his hair.

"When that time comes, I'll rely on everyone else to give me the strength to fix it, to build something new. "

His eyes widened. "It'll be alright; you can find what you've been looking for."

Sumire stood up and walked towards the door, but right then, Yuhi woke up. "In a few minutes, Nagawa will arrive. Stay with him for a while until this dies down."

"Yuh-no don't."

Yuhi laughed. "If that is how you feel, then how can I sit back? Besides, I won't be doing this alone."

It was then Atushi heard familiar voices outside and walked towards the window. From there, he could see the other guys in M5. It seems Yuhi is slowly changing. But what about Sumire?

Atushi watched as she leaned forward and kissed Yuhi. For a moment, everybody in the room is stunned. This?

"I will wait, so you have to come to fetch me. If you take too long, I will let San take me away."

Yuhi laughed. "Now we can't have that, can we?"

....

It was nightfall when the mess calmed down. There were still quite a few reporters outside, but when they realized Sumire was not around, they hurriedly left to search for her. Atushi recalled the sight from earlier off Nagawa Sano taking her away. Is it fine? That guy is the main reason why so many bad things have happened.

Since Sumire and Yuhi left earlier, Atushi remained outside leaning against the entrance in a daze.

He answered the reporter's questions properly. Many tried to twist the situation about Sumire staying in a bar. But after he explained that this was his place, and Yuhi stayed there, they scrapped the idea of using it in the report.

"Isn't it too cold to be smoking outside?" A familiar voice said.

Atushi looked over and spotted a woman with long purple-colored hair. He glanced over at the drink in her hands. "Is that for me?"

She sighed and passed it over. "Futaba is angry at you; when will you make up with her?"

Atushi laughed. "I didn't think you would pry into our little lovers" spat."

Momoi Futaba was Sumire's best friend and currently his girlfriend. They got into a fight when she heard that he would follow Sumire to Tokyo. Futaba told him that he would get in the way and that Sumire does not want this. He understood that very well, but he had to go.

Did they think it was wise enough to leave Sumire, who was suicidal, alone? Even though she is calmer now, he knew how emotionally unstable she is.

"We all know that you still like Sumire. She knew that too, and yet-"

He shook his head. "The feelings I have for Sumire are quite different now, unlike the past."

That is right; unlike before, these feelings have changed. But even then, he never entertained the idea of them being a couple. Most people found that odd since there was a time where he could have successfully chased her.

Now that he thought about it, back then, his gaze fell towards Kiragi Asuka. This person gave him some advice.

Asuka noticed him staring. "What is it?"

"You told me recently, didn't you, that "Fear is proof that your imagination is functioning. Frankly, I feel bad for anyone who can't feel fear. Without imagination, you can never deduce which action to take next." "

—

She didn't think he would bring this up. Still, she nodded, not understanding where he was coming from.

"From the very start, I may have just been afraid. When I first met Sumire. At first, I thought she was some stupid girl with no worries at all—someone who lived a carefree life. But somehow, along the way, I found myself becoming attached to her. The way she can stand up and take action for someone else, even at the risk of their own life."

She, too, thought the same of Sumire and thus didn't want to get involved with her.

She thought of Sumire as a fool. Someone who didn't know she was pushing and stepping on others, and yet, slowly, that changed. She doesn't know at what point it changed, but she was always watching the brunette hair girls back before she knew it.

Unconsciously the lilac hair girl found herself joining in the conversation, despite initially being too nervous.

"It's not often that you see it. But beneath her weakness, she is a strong person." she trails off. "Maybe that's just what she wants us to see through. She can change who she is, depending on the situation."

Atushi nodded. "Maybe she's just good at reading people's feelings and desires."

"But even that alone is not enough."

"She knows how to talk to people. But if you always try to please people, you tend to forget to please yourself. So I worry her kindness will change. Circumstances change people. It could happen to her too."

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 405

Chapter 405: Reason to exist

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UNEDITED

"There's a hidden side to everything, in everyone, there is a god but also a demon."

When she recalled those words, Asuka turned quiet. She wonders since when did he know about it. Exactly when did he plant these seeds and why did you do it? ...In the end there will always be questions to matters we will never get the answer too.

"But, it's like I thought."

"Hmm?"

"When it comes to Sumire. Kiragi-san, you talk a lot more."

At that she could feel her cheeks blaze, "!!" as she averted her gaze, "Isn't that only normal? Were friends."

They are friends with each other but she's never actually admitted it, so doing so now is embarrassing.

To her surprise Hamano only responded with a gentle gaze on his face.

Even now that smile has not changed, it's the same as back then. It is something completely unreadable to her. Instead of continuing on that topic, her expression changes slightly.

"We are so to speak born twice. Once to exist, and once to live. Didn't Rousseau say that? Once just to be alive, and once to find a reason for living"

Atushi looked over at her with a puzzled gaze.

She shuts her eyes briefly before she opened them again.

"Oh well, who am I to judge the way other people live. It's not like everybody knows their reason for existing. Most people go through their whole lives without knowing. I guess you might even see it as excessive. "

"Thinking that way seems complex. I have time of now maybe I can take a stroll around the own."

"Hamano."

"Yes?"

"I can't tell you how to find your answer. Let alone happiness. But, I'll give you a hint. It's something that has always been beside you."

..

Tokyo Metropolitan Office

It was pitch dark when she arrived inside the office but that didn't matter as she walked over to her desk and switched on her computer. There has to be something she can do for those two. Asuka recalled the expression on Hamano Atushis face earlier and sighed. What on earth was that all about? She did not think that person would say such things.

Her thoughts broke off when she heard the sound of the creaking door. Asuka was on alert but only for a moment her gaze softened when she saw who it was.

"Ah Asuka there you are. I heard from the others that you were here. Here are some manju buns, you like these don't you? "

Asuka nodded and told her to leave it on the table. Sumire walked over.

"Today's also your day off isn't it? I half expected to find you training. But even you can get lazy and just sit around and relax."

"Were you not the one who taught me to do that?"

Sumire chuckles. "Indeed."

She hears a shuffling sound and finds Sumire pulling up the spare pillow and laying flat on the ground not too close beside her and yet not too far away.

"Ah this is refreshing, I'm really tired."

"You also had a day off today , correct? Did you go somewhere"

"Ah huh, Yuhi also had a day off so we went to the aquarium. "

Aquarium and she went with Terashima too, in other words they went on a date didn't they? It is still a bit hard for her to accept Sumire dating somebody other than Mamoru. But she was one of the rare few that knew that the guy Sumire waited for this entire time was Yuhi.

"Hey are you listening?"

"I am."

"Anyway Huan was really cute today when he wore that outfit Atsuro bought for him. Ah, natural colours really do look so much nicer on him."

"Perhaps, did you go out as a family?"

"I assumed they didn't spend much time together before the shooting incident, but that is not the case. It seems she even brought her kid along.

"That's right. It really is rare."

But huh? If that's the case. "I didn't see the kid earlier."

"I brought him back to Atsuro's. It would be hard for me to have Huan tag along while I stay with San."

Nagawa Sano, Asuka does not understand why Yuhi asked Nagawa that favour. Why would he entrust Sumire to that guy of all people?

"I had to give you the manju buns.." Sumire mumbles. "That and I wanted to see you."

Asuka sighed. "That does sound nice but this is you we are talking about here, what is the catch?"

Sumire laughed. "As expected of you." She trailed off. "I wanted to see you and ask about Arashi."

"The master?" he repeated.

"Ah huh, actually I ran into him in the aquarium today. He was there with Kensho and some old classmates to plan for the reunion. Ah did he tell you about it? The reunion."

Asuka gave a small nod of confirmation as she continued.

"He ended up saving me since I ran into some trouble whilst waiting for me. When he did I thought he really doesn't hesitate to show off when he sees a girl in glasses. Oh I was wearing my glasses earlier today because I wasn't feeling well and the fact that Yuhi said I looked cute with them on."

If you ask her, that's the real reason she left them on. But the aquarium, something came to mind.

"As I recall, does that place not hold special memories for the two of you?" Asuka asked.

"He told you?"

Again another nod. But Asuka kept silent on why Arashi felt the need to tell her. It's because she asked about it, about the two of them in middle school. That story everyone knew and had yet to understand.

"It does and that's why when I went there with Yuhi to have a date awhile back I felt awkward. Although we created our own memories there, somehow something was missing. I, love Yuhi I know that for sure but for some reason Arashi is, no senpai is someone I can't seem to detach myself away from."

"Is that not feelings of love?"

"I'm not sure. He's important and special to me, but to say it's love. I don't think I've ever thought about it that way."

"It's fine, after all I've erased it already." Asuka recalled something Sumire told her before and paused. Now that she thought about it her friend has always been this way. But back then she did not think too deeply about it. Now that it has gotten this far however she is starting to understand.

For Ibuki Sumire human relationships, no just getting closer to another person is frightening. She wonders what Sumire would think about the words she exchanged with Hamano Atushi earlier.

Chapter end

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 406

Chapter 406: The strength behind that weak figure
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"What do you mean somebody dethroned Aki from the top? Wasn't he supposed to lead after Mamoru disappeared?"

"It's true. They say a newbie that joined a few years back beat him. Her name is Ibuki Sumire."

Ibuki Sumire, Asuka wanted to meet her; she didn't think she would meet that girl in moonlight academy of all places. She didn't think that she would meet the scary girls from the rumors in such a regular place.

However, the second, they brushed past each other. Asuka could tell right away that she wasn't normal. For a while, she merely intended to observe the girl. But after learning of her lack of motivation of being on top, she couldn't hold herself back from challenging her.

She would have left the girl be. After observing her, it was clear that she was going through a rough time. Asuka didn't intend to take the girl's new home away from her soon after obtaining it. But on her way back, she caught the brunette being challenged for the top, only to hear the words she said. "You guys can't cure my boredom."

After hearing those words, Asuka knew instantly; this person has no intention to shoulder the burden of being on top. Such a half-hearted person being on top, she wouldn't stand for it, but that person saved her. During their match, she saved her opponent despite having almost won against her.

Who is stronger between her and Ibuki Sumire? Most people tend to ponder and debate about it since their match was interrupted. But the actual reality is like what most people are thinking. She's the one who lost.

From the very start, she stood no chance against that person, someone's fists who were heavy. It was only when their fists collided that she realized it; this person may do things indirectly, but she is already shouldering the burden of being on top, not just one burden but many. Such a heavy fist and look in her eyes, it was the first time she saw them.

When Sumire suddenly leaned forward, her thoughts broke off, Asuka startled, backed away, and Sumire laughed.

"You know that part of you has not changed at all."

"I could say the same for you; there is this thing called personal space."

"Mmm, but just now, you made a strange face. Hey, Asuka, you know I think I like it here."

Asuka sighed deeply. "Not, I think, but you like it here."

Sumire laughed. "Mmm, it is like that."

"I am not going back, Sumire." She emphasized those words. "I cannot leave you here alone. No matter how strong you are, the people after you are dangerous."

Besides, it is better for her to come here than Momoi Futaba. That person will sacrifice anything for Sumire's sake. She will go overboard and not hesitate to end a person's life on the spot.

"Better you than Futaba?"

Asuka sighed. "If you know, then please behave. Who do you think has to clean up after you two?"

"I know, I understand. That is why Asuka, I want you to take care of Yuhi."

So that is the reason for her visit. It struck her as odd when Sumire went away with Nagawa without causing a fuss; it is not like her.

"Is that an order?"

Sumire laughed. "Right now, I am not the head of the delinquent world, but Ibuki Sumire. As your friend, I am asking you to please take care of him until this mess ends. Can you do that for me?"

A burst of genuine laughter, Asuka blinked surprised for a moment but nodded.

"As you wish."

After a few more words, the girl quickly left. Asuka remained in that spot for a few minutes more. It seems Terashima Yuhi has won her over quickly. Everything is going like those two predicted, Mamoru and Aki.

"The person Sumire has always liked is Yuhi, that is why you don't have to worry. As long as they are together, she will smile naturally."

—

Two weeks later

For the next two weeks, Ibuki Sumire has lived with him.

When Terashima Yuhi first asked him to do this, Sano didn't know how to react. But he did not waste any time with pointless questions and rushed to her side. When Terashima called, he was with the boss who instructed him to play the hero who saves the beauty, but there was no need for that due to Terashima's call.

"What are you doing?" Sano asked as he appeared behind her.

He was watching her from the kitchen doorway for the last few minutes but decided to speak up.

"S--sorry! I just wanted some water."

Sano's gaze darkened when he saw the blood on her hands due to dropping the cup. Did he frighten her that much? Why is she acting so weird?

He extended his hand out, and sure enough, Sumire closed her eyes and gripped her hand tightly.

"I called Hino; he will come over. You don't have to worry so much."

"You changed my clothes," Sumire muttered.

"I had to." Sano trailed off. "Look, I didn't do anything.."

Sumire didn't reply, and he sighed. "I suppose it can't be helped." "There is a first kit on the first shelf behind you; use it to patch up your wound."

Where did he put the broom? He needs to clean up the mess before she gets hurt again. It didn't take long before he found it, and Sano quickly cleaned up the mess.

The entire time he felt Sumire staring at him.

"Say." She eventually spoke up. "Why does this house look like the one I designed when we dated?"

"That's because it is."

"Oh."

What a low reaction; he thought she would be happier. Then again, what does he expect at this stage? Their current relationship is so fragile and can shatter easily like glass.

Sano cupped her cheeks. "You need to eat something."

"San, actually--"

"Argh, just eat! You can't survive on an IV drip forever, and I don't want to force you like I did earlier." Sano recalled how he had to force her to eat.

It wasn't pleasant, and he wishes he never did it. But Sumire already lost so much weight, and she was bedridden. He had to get her to eat.

"Are you cooking?"

"I'll order some take-out for today."

He isn't in the mood to cook. Sano led her outside the room and sat on the couch.

Sano pulled her onto his lap and hugged her tightly. "I thought Terashima was joking when he called me and asked me to take care of you."

"But you accepted quickly."

"Of course."

"This is partly my fault." It is because he recently hasn't obeyed their orders, and that is why they decided to attack her directly. From now on, he needs to be more careful; otherwise, this will happen again.

Chapter end

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 407

Chapter 407: Slowly falling apart

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

Terashima timing with the phone call, though, it is almost like he knew. Although Sumire is indeed safe with him, this is still a risky move. What is Terashima going to do if Sumire changes her mind and stays with him?

"San, you're too close. Can you let go?"

"I won't do anything more than this. Besides, your body is so cold. I told you to wear more layers. Do you not like the clothes?"

"I like them."

She is talking now; maybe she feels a bit better?

"Sano, have you seen Yuhi?"

"I visited him. I said you were doing well."

"Visited?"

"They transferred him to Hyou4's prison. It seems Kiragi Asuka managed to pull some strings. I am sure they won't mistreat him there."

There was something that bothered him, though. He has heard some people say Terashima is deliberately staying in prison, even though there is evidence to clear him.

"Can I see him?"

Sano shook his head. "You shouldn't leave here."

"But it's been half a month."

"No, are you going to eat or not?"

"I'm not hungry."

This again! "Look, Sumire, you can't keep doing this."

At this stage, she will collapse again. He no longer wants to see her in such a terrible state in his family hospital again. Despite what it looked like, Sano found it hard to be her doctor. Although he could spend extra time with her, at what cost?

Sano felt her tug on his shirt, and he bit his lip. "I won't do anything."

"Even though you can? What if I say yes."

"Sumire, I know you're only emotional right now."

"Who says I am?" Sumire challenged.

Just a few minutes ago, she acted cautiously around him, but now she is doing this again. Since Terashima entrusted her to him in the past two weeks, Sumire has had occasional emotional outbursts like this.

"I am going crazy, San. Won't you help me? I miss him so much."

"Sumire-" His sentence fell short when she pushed him down. The moment she hovered over him, he instinctively wrapped his arms around her waist. But even then, he did not do anything more than that.

"In the past, you would have done it easily if I asked you."

"That was then; we were dating."

Sumire laughed. "Why are you trying to act like a saint when you cheated on me?"

"Sumire, please stop."

"Touch me."

Sano bit his lip. This girl is acting crazy again. He reported this odd behavior to Hino too, but Terashima's case keeps him busy.

"Sorry, but this is all I can do."

....

After Sumire fell asleep, he decided to cook and headed to the kitchen. But he only finished halfway when he heard movements from the room upstairs. He quickly closed the stove and put lids on the pans before he exited the kitchen.

He could recall the sensation of her skin even though an hour had passed already. She should be fine now, right? Hino told him how Terashima controls himself around Sumire. But Sano does not know how he can do something like that.

Sano ran his hands through his hair and sighed. This is driving him crazy. He is happy that Sumire is staying here with him; it is something he has always wanted. But he did not want it to be like this.

If she was going to stay with him, he wishes she broke up with Terashima and no longer had feelings for him.

"Don't get up; stay like that."

Sumire sighed. "You stopped me?"

"Well, I did kiss you a bit."

"Mmm."

"Are you fine?"

"My head feels like a mess. Thank you for stopping me."

Sano walked over and brushed his fingers across her forehead. The heat from her face transmitted into his skin. "You're feverish; you should lay down."

"Mmm, I'm sick again. This keeps happening a lot lately."

".."

"Is it because of the medicine you give me?"

She already has it figured out? "I'm sorry, but you need to stay put here, Sumire. If you go outside and cause problems, it will be bad." He placed a cup in front of her. "It will only make you feverish and a bit tired. But it won't harm your body anyway."

".."

She won't take it now that she knows, right? To his surprise, however, Sumire picked up the cup and immediately drank from it.

A fit of coughs escaped her lips, and his eyes widened, alarmed.

Sano patted her back and laid her down. "Why did you just do something like that?"

"You know for the longest time I missed you."

Huh? Did she miss him?

"It was during the time I dated Ren. I had those days where I wanted to see you."

"You did?"

Sumire laughed. "He had a hard time stopping me."

Sano paused for a moment, trying to register her words. Did she miss him? Their breakup was terrible; naturally, he orchestrated it to be that way. But even then, he could not leave her alone, and that was why he instructed some of his men to follow her.

He knew what she was like; whenever she got hurt, she would end up doing something carelessly. Indeed when he received the report that she was at the bar, he got his men to go after her. But, Sano clenched his fist when he recalled the police report.

You set her up again? You have no shame, do you?

Set her up? That is not what he did- he sent his men to protect her. How did it end up like that? After that incident, he tried to call her; however, it did no good.

"Your phone."

"I gave it to Ren. He told me he doesn't trust me with it."

So the one who blocked all his calls was Kanagawa. He supposes that made sense. No matter how much Sumire dislikes somebody, she would never block them. She is the type to keep the details of the person she hates even if it will backfire on her in the future. That was one of the few things he knew about her, yet he misunderstood this entire time.

Sano assumed that he went overboard this time and that she no longer wanted to see him. Of course, he went overboard; he had to trick those people successfully.

"Is Kanagawa Ren coming back?"

"I haven't heard from him since he left."

"Is that so?" Sano thought the two would remain in contact. After doing a bit of investigating, it seemed like she knew Kanagawa Ren before they started to date. He already had so many rivals then, but he spent far too much time focusing on Ichinose Arashi like a fool.

Now, where was that guy? The guy he was so worried about, nothing ever happened between the two. Sumire dated other guys, and now she is in this current state where she can't survive without Terashima Yuhi.

Sano caressed her cheeks. "Do you still have feelings for me?"

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 408

Chapter 408: Risky

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

It was a risky question, but Sano understood something. This is the best time to get the answers he wanted.

"I thought I did. But I don't get jealous of seeing you with other women anymore. I wouldn't mind if you got married either."

"Then--"

"But somehow, it is strange, even though I don't mind that stuff. Somehow I don't mind you being near me. If you end up sick or hurt because of me, it makes me feel unpleasant."

His eyes widened when he heard those words. It almost sounds like she still likes him, but at the same time, it is not like that. What on earth is with that?

Sano sighed. He didn't know what to say, and Sumire laughed softly.

"Is this confusing?"

"It is, but-" Sano trailed off. "It is better than you saying you hate me."

This is the best time, though, to talk about the things they couldn't back then.

Before Sano could say something, however, she extended her hand out and caressed his cheek. She sat up and leaned forward till their foreheads touched.

"It's okay, San. I know what you want to say. But you know something? I am still slowly figuring things out, so I do not want you to reveal those things. I should learn about my mistakes on my own."

"Wouldn't it be better if you heard it from me?"

Sumire laughed softly. "But you will feel guilty. I don't want that."

"No matter what my excuse was, I still hurt you, so it is okay for me to feel pain."

Sumire flicked his forehead with her finger. "No, that is not allowed. If anybody has to repent, it is me. After I met you again, I realized many things I didn't know before. You still remembered that I didn't like rainy days; you knew other things about me that you possibly wouldn't know unless you watched over me carefully."

"How can you say that for sure? I could have planned all of this."

What nonsense is he saying when she already figured things out?

"I wonder why you still insist on playing the bad guy. I already understand, San; it was never you." She trailed off. "It was those people, that organization-" Her gaze dimmed, and Sano felt the air turn cold.

Sumire pulled away from him. "If those people continue to do this, then I will have no choice. No, they already lost their chances."

Sano's eyes widened when he heard her say those words. No, she can't, she can't do anything. Sumire has no idea how dangerous those people are! All his sacrifice this entire time would have been for nothing if she rushes ahead like this.

He can't allow her to do that. Sano grabbed her wrist. "If you are going to do that anyway, then I might as well accept your earlier offer."

If he has to become the devil to save her, then he will do exactly that. The moment he got close enough to kiss her. However, she bit his lip and told him no. Sano angrily looked at her, but before he could do anything.

"She said no idiot! Let go of her." A familiar voice said.

"Hino!"

"Tsk. What is with your timing?" Sano said, irritated when he saw his friend.

Hino rolled his eyes. "After having a nice conversation with her like that, don't ruin it."

Sano paused when he saw the red marks forming on her wrist; he immediately drew back.

"Here, I got permission at last. These are all letters from that love-sick idiot."

"From Yuhi?!!"

Sano watched as her violet-colored eyes brightened. The darkness from moments ago completely vanished. Sano clenched his fist. It is not like this is anything new already. From the moment he saw Terashima Yuhi beside her, a part of him understood already.

This is the reason why she remained distant from him even when they dated. He already learned from her then that there was somebody she could not forget, but he dismissed those words. She is only a young girl; how can she already have somebody she loves so deeply?

It has to be a joke; she can't be serious. When Ichinose Arashi came along, Sano thought that maybe she was talking about this guy. But even then, something was nagging at the back of his mind. There is something wrong here, and yet he still focused on that guy.

Sano looked at the letters, no boxes Hino brought.

"Only two weeks have passed; why did he write so much?"

"Yes, from that idiot. Initially, he wasn't allowed to send these letters, but apparently, he is writing so many of them that his entire cell is full. So the guards gave me a bunch."

Sano hesitantly watched her expression and immediately looked away. It was just for a moment, but he saw the tender look in her eyes. Not once, has she ever made that face in front of him. Sano thought he already understood it, yet seeing this in person hurts more than it should.

His thoughts broke off when Sumire suddenly put the box away in the cabinet.

"Huh? You're not reading them now?"

"San, you said you made my food, right?"

Oh, is she trying to send him away?

"I'll get it," Sano mumbled. Of course, she does not want him to be around when she reads the letters from her beloved.

"No, Hino, can you fetch it?"

He seemed reluctant to leave, but Sumire urged him. The moment Hino left, Sano pulled her into his arms. "I don't know what you're up to, but I appreciate it."

"Mmmm."

"You can read those letters but not in front of me."

"Okay." She trailed off. "Is there anything else?"

"Please eat."

"Alright." Sumire caressed his cheeks. "I'm sorry for worrying you so much. I will be fine."

Sano shook his head. He wanted to talk to her about everything. If he told her everything that he knew, she would not react this way. No, even if he did tell her, she would still behave this way since it concerns those dear to her.

...

It was difficult to send Hino away; his friend insisted on staying. Hino argued that his emotional state isn't good, and he may end up doing something to Sumire. Indeed Sano couldn't trust himself after the earlier events, but he still managed to get Hino to leave. Sano leaned against the wall outside his backyard with a cigarette in his fingers.

What is he going to do about this now? At this stage, those people will hurt her.

The only reason why he put on that grand show was to protect her. But if she will end up getting hurt anyway, what is the point in all of this?

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 409

Chapter 409: Sano and Arashi

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

No matter what happens, he will remain by her side. He will be loyal to her until his last breath and if there is a life after death he will correct all his mistakes towards her.

Sumire is the most precious thing to him in this world.

But she isn't his. From the very start, she has never liked him.

There is somebody I can't forget, even then do you still want to date me?

The words she said back then echoed in his head. When he first asked her out, she said something like that.

"I was surprised you called me. I thought I was doing a good job of hiding." A familiar voice said, breaking his thoughts.

Sano sighed when he saw his visitor, "Ha? As if." He watched the pale blonde-haired boy sit on the wooden branch of a tree beside him. "Hamano will kill you; no, he has every intention of doing so. Going off and pretending to be missing."

While Hamano Atushi has remained a neutral party, according to the reports from his people, Hamano has fervently searched for this person.

He had already heard plenty of the small boy's rants.

"Ichinose."

Yes, this person was the one Sumire most likely had feelings for. Yet she probably will never be able to tell him, all the others including himself aside.

"Did you know from the start?"

"I can't say I did. But I was suspicious and conducted my investigation afterwards. However, since he was actually around that time, it was quite difficult. I only just put the final pieces together two days ago."

Sano sighed. "Once again, you did things in a roundabout way. I don't like that about you." He trails off, "That basketball match too."

After he learned about Sumire and Ichinose Arashi, there was a foolish time where he challenged Ichinose to a basketball match. That time he won, but Sumire was not impressed at all. She went home with him, but they ended up arguing.

Arashi's gaze turned soft. "Are you reminiscing?"

"There's no need to."

That's right; there wasn't any need to do something like that anymore. No matter how much he thinks about the past, those days will never return. What he needs to do now is focus on the present. He needs to find a way to get Ibuki Sumire to willingly return to his side.

"But this is surprising; you knew how to get in touch with me?"

Sano sighed. "Even if you hide, my connections are good."

He watched as Ichinose looked towards the house. "You want to see her? Go ahead; she probably isn't asleep."

"Two weeks ago, I accidentally ran into her when she was on her date with Terashima."

"I see."

"You know, before Mamoru passed away, I lectured him a little."

"You lectured him?"

Arashi nodded. "I saw him do foolish things like talking to people who would help Sumire in the future. But that lecture did no good because the next day I saw him speak to Terashima."

"To Terashima?"

"It was the first time I saw him so angry."

"Don't be an idiot. We all know that between everyone - between everyone who likes her. You're the one she holds dearest in her heart. You've always been by her side; you've always been protecting her. You're the only one who knows her pain, the only one who understands her. You're the only one." Arashi repeated.

Sano dropped the cigarette when he heard those words. "Those are the words Tsueno said?"

"Yeah. Imagine how it felt when I heard that? I didn't know that the guy Sumire had in mind was Terashima Yuhi. I always assumed it was Mamoru and that she couldn't express her emotions properly. But that was not an act at all; she has always loved Terashima."

"How come?" Sano mumbled. No matter how he looked at it, he was better than Terashima in every aspect. Why does she love him so deeply?"

"That is something between the two of them."

"You are not helpful."

She didn't even need to ask him something like that. From the very start, he had been towards her. From the very start, their fates had already been entangled with each other.

"Hey, what do you think my chances are now?" Sano asked.

"Wow, I did not expect that from you."

"Shut up and just answer."

It was brave of him to ask this person that question. This guy differs from all the other guys who like her. But that is the reason he asked. If it is this person, surely he can tell.

Sano half expected him to joke around again, yet instead, a serious expression appeared on his face. "It hasn't changed since then. You're still my greatest rival for her."

At that, his eyes went wide. "Truthfully, I expected you two to start dating again. Back then, you two were already close with each other after all. And slowly, you began to stop holding yourself back; I guess I was afraid. That's probably why I never directly said it, even though I had plenty of chances to do so. Pretty cowardly, huh?"

No, it wasn't cowardly.

It was anything but that.

Sano slumped on the ground. "You're an annoying guy."

Arashi laughed. "If you find me annoying, what about Mamoru-san and Terashima?"

"On another level," Sano mumbled. "This feels like a group of losers hanging together and brooding because we can't even take first or second in her heart."

"We can't replace those two, but we can still be there for her."

"I don't want to hear it from the guy who keeps running away."

"Says the one who keeps using forceful measures on her."

Sano recalled the red mark from her wrist earlier and ran his hands through his hair with a troubled look. "I would rather turn into a devil if it means stopping her from hurting herself."

"Sumire isn't weak."

"I know she isn't," Sano mumbled. He already conducted his investigation. He understood that a lot happened in the time he did not see her. No, even back when they dated, there were times where she snuck off and did something. Back then, he never pried, but he occasionally saw her with strange people. It is not like he does not know. But even then, Sano recalled the menacing presence of that man.

"Sumire cannot match him."

Arashi frowned. "Did you meet him after all?"

"Two weeks ago, that guy summoned me. But I did not see his face directly; he hid behind a screen."

But he did not have to see the man's face to know that he was bad news.

"I've never seen you look so spooked before. Is he that dangerous?"

Sano looked away but realized there was no use hiding it. "Yeah." It was the first time in his life that he has ever felt such fear. No matter what happened, he has remained calm. But the last two weeks, he has been on edge. What is with that guy? How can another human be so scary?

To his surprise, Ichinose was calm. "I don't think you've seen Sumire fight before."

"That is beside the point-"

Arashi shook his head. "You need to see for yourself first; then you can decide who is scarier. You can decide then which side you should stand on. But I don't think the current you can hurt her, even if you have to pretend."

This guy is acting high and mighty again. But he is right. He has never seen Sumire fight before; who knows, maybe she can match that person?

Also, he just lied; that was the second time he felt such fear. The first time was when she threatened to kill him when he followed her that time.

Perhaps if it is Sumire, she can fix all this?

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 410

Chapter 410: Another truth

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

Two days went by, but that talk with Ichinose in the garden remained firm in his mind. He did a little bit more digging around and learned more about Sumire's reputation. Indeed it does appear as though she is stronger than the average person.

But Sano recalled her medical records. Her body is breaking down a lot. Perhaps it is due to the unfamiliar nature of her abilities, but her body cannot handle those powers. Even if she is strong, if her body cannot handle that strength, she is the same as a powerless person.

Sano sighed deeply. He can't concentrate like this. His gaze fell on the stack of paperwork, and he shook his head. He can save this stuff for another time.

He packed his stuff and quickly left his office. It should surprise her if he comes home early.

Sano paused in the middle of the hallway, though when he spotted somebody familiar. It was his friend Hino, but the man was not alone. There standing opposite him was a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit and white lab coat.

Huh? Isn't this guy--? The one Sumire was with when that incident happened?

A furious look was on Hino's face; it was the first time he saw such raw emotion on his friend's face.

"Do you truly think what you are doing is for the best?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I thought it was strange Terashima Yuhi asked Nagawa Sano something so ridiculous. Terashima isn't stupid; even if it is safe with Nagawa, he also knows how dangerous it is. He will not do anything that will bring her harm."

"Are you saying I did something?"

"You're the only person who has the power and influence over Terashima Yuhi, the only one other than her that can change his words."

Sano's eyes widened when he heard that. Even before Hino responded, he already knew that the other man was right. Why didn't he think about this before? There is no way Terashima, who is normally so hostile towards him, would allow Sumire to stay with him, no matter what the situation is.

But for the stubborn Terashima to change his mind, only one other person other than Sumire can convince him. But why would Hino do something like that? Hino always insists that he stays away from Sumire.

Hino sighed. "Since you figured that out, then why are you not doing anything? If you tell Sumire, she will leave right away."

Eli laughed. "Nonsense, how can I persuade the Queen?"

At that comment, Hino slammed his fist against the wall. "Why did you return to Japan? No, what were you doing with Sumire?"

"What you say? I was following her orders and updating her on the situation."

"So it is your fault that she saved Nakara Shin that time and attracted their attention. I warned you to stay away from her!"

"You're acting so overprotective, but it seems she does not remember who you are."

"That's--"

"Noblesse oblige. Those with great responsibility should give back to those who are less fortunate. But here you are hiding your identity from her and committing a great sin."

Sano could not believe what he just heard. Hino--Hino knew Sumire? Since when? From the conversation just now, it seems like they have known each other for a long time. Sano didn't understand what was going on. But he knew it would be bad for him to remain and listen any longer.

.....

When he returned to his apartment, Sano searched for her immediately since she did not greet him.

Where is she? She didn't go out, right? Before he could panic, however, he hears a familiar voice.

"San? Is that you?"

"Yeah." Sano walked towards the kitchen. "Are you cooking again?"

"Mmm, I found some good books in your library. Do you mind? I made a bit of a mess."

"It's fine. You can use it as you-" Sano paused for a moment when he saw what she was wearing. "Is this new?"

"I used your card, and you don't mind, right? I didn't bring much with me. If I use my own money, the media will notice."

"I don't." Sano appeared behind her. "Use everything here as you please, even me."

Sumire nodded, and for a moment, neither of them spoke. He slid his hands around her waist and tugged on her skirt.

"Stop."

"You don't want to still?"

Sumire turned around and bit her lip. "I warned you, San, if you do anything, I will leave."

"Hah, you're not giving me a break." His gaze darkened. "You do realize that the moment you leave here, they will throw you in jail."

"If I go to jail, maybe I will see Yuhi."

"Like they would put you together."

"You never know."

"Stop, let's not do this." Sano ran his hands through his hair. "Terashima's trial date is soon; the verdict is innocent since he didn't do anything wrong. Just be patient."

He suddenly felt her tug on his shirt. "I think I'm a bit tired."

Sano picked her up and didn't say a word for the next few minutes until they reached the room. He carefully places her on the bed.

"If you have a fever, you need to stay in bed."

"It's because she willingly drank that thing the other day." Ever since then, Sano has not given it to her openly and has reduced the dosage. Now that she knew it would be difficult for him to give it to her without further damaging his consciousness.

"Are you returning to work?"

"Not that I have to. I can work from home for a bit." Sano recalled the stack of paperwork he left behind. Maybe he should have brought that stuff with him.

"I will be okay. You should go."

Sano shook his head. He doesn't know if those two are still there, but Hino is a sharp person. His friend most likely realized he would be there. Hino wanted him to know.

He loosened his tie slightly, and Sumire panicked.

"Uh--Uh--!"

"What?"

"If you're going to get changed, please do so in another room."

Is she serious? Sano scanned her expression for a moment and saw the panic and fear in her eyes.

"I always loosen my tie. You don't need to freak out."

"..."

Sano sighed deeply. "Is living with me that hard?"

"I don't know when you will attack."

"Then why did you stay here?"

"Yuhi told me too."

"So if Terashima tells you to die, would you?" Sano countered back. It was a harsh thing to say, but she makes it sound like she will do anything Terashima asks her to.

"Mmm, right."

"Damn it; she isn't supposed to say yes." Sano walked over to the bed and climbed on. He felt drained from working all day and then overhearing that conversation too. Maybe if he goes to sleep, he will wake up refreshed, and all the pieces will come to place.

"I'm also going to sleep."

"Right, then, goodnight."

It took Sano only a few seconds to realize that the girl closed her eyes already and had no intention of leaving.

Is she seriously going to sleep beside him? Since she decided to stay with him in the past two weeks, not once has Sumire slept beside him. Initially, he tried to trick her into that by lying about the other rooms, but she saw right through him.

"Hey, didn't you say you were afraid?"

"I am."

"You're very pretty. I think you understand, right? I can easily do what I want with you."

"Is that so?"

In the next second, she was on top of him. "I think you forget San, but I am stronger than you."