

Melody 421

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 421**

Chapter 421: Chasing His Back

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Her thoughts broke off when she noticed Yuhi getting close to her again.

He did it subtly, and yet it was hard for her to ignore him.

Hino sighed and awkwardly rubbed the back of his head before turning to the shelves on the other side.

"You're mad at him, right?"

"It's more like I don't know what to say around him, he—" Sumire struggled to find the words. "—saw that we were both suffering, but he still hid things." ;

If Hino had told them the truth a long time ago, then surely some of these disasters would not have happened.

Yuhi nodded. "Indeed, if he said something before, we could have gotten together sooner."

"Are you sure about that Yuhi-san?"

His lips curve to a smile. "Of course, I am sure about your feelings. Back then, you checked me out a lot."

At that comment, her cheeks burned red. He—he noticed? Well, no, of course, he noticed. Whenever she picked him up when he was working in the gym, he would be wearing only a pair of shorts. ;It was a bad habit of hers to stare at his well-defined muscles since well, where else was she supposed to look?

Yuhi laughed. "I thought it was cute, don't worry about it."

She wants to die of humiliation right now. What is with this situation? How can he be so calm and casual?

"You didn't find it weird?" Sumire asked.

"I think you have forgotten something; back then, I was already in love with you. Like I could hardly complain that you liked what you saw enough to continue—"

At those words, she hit him, and Yuhi laughed more. "Are you embarrassed? It's okay."

Even if he is okay with it, she isn't. She thought she was subtle and that he didn't notice. But now that she has learned that is not the case here, she wants to find a hole to crawl in for a few days. Maybe she can hide out in that kid's tent. Speaking of which, is he still sleeping? How strange, maybe she ought to check on him.

"I guess I am a little nervous." She admitted.

Yuhi squeezed her hands. "Yeah, that is fine too." He trailed off. "By the way, it seems I am the first to find you."

Sumire laughed. "Indeed, as expected of you, Yuhi-san. But I knew you would come."

Even if she did not learn from Sano, Sumire understood that she would not stay in this place for long. If Yuhi realizes she is missing, he will do whatever he could to try and reach her.

Sumire let go of their hands and picked up one of the books; she walked over to the pillar area and sat down on the ground. Her back pressed onto the pillar, moments later, she hears shuffling to find that Yuhi had done the same except he was on the other side.

"I promised you before that I would find you no matter where you go."

"Mm, that's why I said that."

"You remember that well, huh? You know it's funny."

"What is?"

"It is funny that even now, you are still chasing after my back, even though you are so much more now."

At those words, Sumire felt the heat return to her cheeks as she clasped her mouth. Why—why did he notice? Indeed, she has repeatedly told him that she respected him. But even then, she didn't think he would say something like this. Then again, what does he normally say after she makes those respect comments?

"You've been working extra hard, haven't you, for the Takashi Yumi event, this time? You are determined to sing."

"I thought I was ready the previous times too, but look what happened there." A burst of weak laughter escaped her lips. "I like to sing, even if it is painful and suffocating at times, even though it was because of music that Ru got into an accident."

After she pondered on it for so many months, Sumire realized while she worked on the individual songs for Kou and the others that she still loved music. She thought she could let it go, but everywhere she went, something reminded her of her love for music.

At first, she was content just watching Yuhi, but she was chasing after him again before she realized it.

The main reason she wants to sing now is Yuhi; she wants to stand on the same stage as him, as equals and not as master and subordinate. Right now, she can remain by his side as his girlfriend, but she wants more than this.

"Are you not going to reply?"

"No matter what I say, you have made your mind up. Besides, you have put in a lot of effort."

"Aha, I guess you found out about my morning running sessions?"

"Before I came here, I went to the room you use as a study in my main apartment. You idiot, what are you going to do if you collapse?"

Her sweat fell when she heard the irritated tone. "W—well, I didn't, so isn't it okay?"

"You're going overboard. So now I understand why you've been looking pale, and you don't seem to eat around me either. You keep telling me you have eaten already, and I take your word for it since I trust you, but ha, you have the nerve to trick me?"

"No uh—"

"So to find extra practice time, you skip meals and don't sleep—" Yuhi sighed deeply. "Are you an idiot?"

Sumire frantically tried to explain herself, but she knew it would do no good now that he has everything worked out. "B—but it's fine, I managed."

"I can see why Nagawa insisted you didn't leave the house."

"Uh, you spoke to him?"

"I snuck back into jail a few times when there were inspections to make it seem like I was there. During those times, Nagawa visited me and informed me of your situation. He told me that with your current condition, you would collapse if you're outside longer than five minutes, so he decided to keep you inside."

Sumire paused when she heard those words.

It is not like she did not suspect that. His behavior seemed very unusual; he went to such lengths to drug her just she would be unable to leave. No matter how possessive and odd he normally is, Sumire understood that he would never go that far.

To think she can think such things now, a few months ago such a thought would not have crossed her mind at all. The passage of time, huh?

Ru often told her before that time heals all wounds. But this is the first time that logic has ever applied to her.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 422**

Chapter 422: I Went There To Die

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"So anyway, after I learned that from Nagawa, I felt like the next time I would see you, I would let you have it—" Sumire interjected. "By showering and showing up naked?" She said drily.

Yuhi awkwardly ran his hands through his hair. "Well, I didn't want to show up as a mess, and I had to be ready for you to hug me and get all affectionate."

What is with his unusual amount of confidence when it comes to her? She thought he would be a bit more cautious. No matter what the reason was before, she still turned him down in the past. But ever since she came here, Yuhi made it clear that he still had feelings for her.

"I didn't mean to," Sumire mumbled. "But—"

"I know you get carried away when it comes to me."

At those words, Sumire bit her lip; indeed, she cannot deny those words. But whether it is Yuhi or Sano, it seems like she has underestimated both of them. The care they have for her is more than she originally thought. Now that she is gradually collecting the fragments of truth together, Sumire is learning a lot more than before. But that is precisely why she is hesitating; maybe she should stop?

Recently such thoughts have crossed her mind, and she doesn't know what to do with these emotions. Is it fine? The other day she told Eli with such confidence that even if it means destroying the balance of the world, she will uncover the truth, but this is too much.

Yuhi aside, what is she supposed to do with Nagawa Sano's feelings? Initially, she thought she could use him. Even if he no longer liked her or never felt guilty for what he did, she would have found a way to make him fall for her again.

It would have been easy; there are traits of Sano that remain unchanged. She knew she could easily get to him by playing innocent and yet acting brave. But it was not like that at all.

From the moment they met again, she knew she would not have to execute that plan since the man was still madly in love with her.

"Are you concerned for him?"

"Is it that obvious?"

"I could tell when he came and informed me of your situation. It seems like you are keeping him at arm's length, but the reality is far different. You agreed to live with him because you were worried about him."

"In the first place, he should not have gotten involved with any of this. But," Sumire closed her eyes as she recalled something. "- those people knew he would be my weak point."

It was something that happened a long time ago. She brought Sano to a party where they did not invite him, and it generated many stares/questions. But nobody could voice those thoughts out loud since he was her escort. Finally, however, they used an opportunity where she was busy to set Sano up.

She recalled that day. The image of him drugged heavily and doing it with several women. Those people deliberately lead her to that sight while expressing their concerns about her being around Sano.

But she did not blame him or get mad. So it must have been that incident that leads to people thinking Nagawa Sano is somebody they could use against her.

"Do you still like-"

Sumire shook her head. "I don't think that is it at all; it is simply because things ended up messy. I only need to resolve the issues we had back then."

"Initially, I thought he was a jerk, but I think I realized before you did that he was somebody you cared for and not hated."

"But no matter how important he is, you are my priority now, Yuhi," She trailed off. "Can you tell me about your travels abroad?"

"Even though I had left the Holy Knights organization, I still did some underground world for a while. But, unfortunately, one time one of the raids ended badly."

"A spy?" Sumire guessed. Yuhis success rate with missions was very high back when they still belonged to the same organization. He is not the type of guy who would make a blunder no matter how difficult the situation was.

In fact, people often said before that as long as Terashima Yuhi is on their team, then they can win. Indeed those words were true; Yuhi never loses. The only times he would lose is if somebody caught him off guard or used underhanded means.

"Yeah, a spy, the enemy was waiting for us. The worse thing was the spy ended up being the head of the unit, so the enemy not only knew our plan but how we fought too. But there was this one guy that just kept on going; even though the leader, his best friend, just betrayed us all, he still kept ongoing. The fight was very brutal and one-sided since the enemy knew all our moves. Only the strongest fighters from our side could catch them off guard, but it was still difficult. They knew our weak points and what kind of attacks we would execute."

"That commander—"

"He ended up dead. Funny enough, while me and spencer, the guy I just spoke about, tried to corner him to give up. One of the people on the enemy side accidentally dropped the bomb that meant for us directly on him. He died in seconds without even the room to say his last words. After the enemy realized their mistake, their plan fell through, and we somehow managed to get to them."

"Were you close?"

Sumire could not see his facial expression, but she could tell that there was something different from his tone. "I apologize if that was insensitive."

"No, your right. We were close, the three of us. When I first joined, I didn't intend to get close to them. I was just doing this until those people in Japan stopped searching for me, then I would return and start my career again."

Now that he mentioned it, during his last few days in Star town. Yuhi seldom saw anybody, and he didn't even bother spending time with her.

"But with such a lively and interesting bunch around me, it was difficult for me to ignore them."

"Do you miss those times?"

Yuhi laughed. "Well, life as a fugitive isn't exactly something people would desire. The fact that I went in as a volunteer baffled people."

"How come?"

"Most of the guys there didn't have a choice but to fight; they had to fight to keep their family and home country safe. So when I first joined, and people learned I was a volunteer, they all thought I was searching for a place to die."

Sumire recalled the last time she saw him and bit her lip. "Was that not the case? You could have gone abroad to hide; you didn't have to join the guerrillas."

"Yes, I went there to die."

### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 423**

Chapter 423: Proof

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

Ru, like herself, often had a bad habit of using old brand items. It was more convenient for the two of them to use old items with less value than new items that would work faster. It was the same with these old pair of headphones they found at a second-hand store.

Ru fell in love with them at first glance. Back then, he was frugal and tried to save money as much as possible, so he didn't get them right away. But after they passed by that store so many times, Sumire noticed that he was always looking at it, so she bought it for him.

Sumire recalled how happy he was when she first bought it and how he hugged her. They were not dating then; during her first year of middle school, she was not in a relationship. But Sumire had such strange thoughts.

Why does this person hug her like she is somebody precious? Why is his being in his arms so warm? It makes her feel so safe and so secure. It was a peculiar feeling.

Eli already told her that there is evidence that Ru is alive.

"Is he injured?"

She wanted to bombard the boy with questions, but she had a hard time processing the current situation.

Yuhi must have understood since he is the one who asked the question.

Kaito nodded. "He was badly injured. It looked like he couldn't use his legs without crutches, and even then, he struggled."

"Where was he living?"

"There is a place nearby here. When I was running away, I initially went there, but Mamoru-san was no longer there. The place was still there, but I couldn't get inside since everything was blocked off."

Yuhi pulled her into his embrace then, and Sumire held onto him tightly. She felt her entire body tremble. Ru is alive, he is alive, but he is so hurt to the point that he cannot move properly without support. She thought it would be okay as long as he is alive and living well somewhere. Even though she longed to see him, it was okay this way.

But now that she has learned that he is alive and hurt.

She needs to find him; she needs to do so quickly.

How could he have left this mountain region all alone in his state? How badly is he suffering now? All sorts of questions appeared in her head.

Kaito suddenly went on his knees. "My phone, if I had that, maybe I could call him for you, but my father took it away. He was the one who found me staying with Mamoru-san for a while and took me away."

"This isn't the first time you ran away?" Yuhi asked.

"Yes."

After a few more questions, Yuhi sent the other two away and turned back to her.

"Yuhi-- Ru--"

Yuhi continued to caress her hair and pat her back. "I will find him, okay? Sumire, you have to go back to Nagawa, stay there for a while until I pick you up."

She shook her head. "How can I when he--"

Yuhi interjected. "You know he isn't that type of guy. At the very least, I can trust him with your safety; he will keep you safe. So please, just for a while. Once I have news, I will pick you up immediately."

But how can she go back when she is in this state? It feels like she would have a breakdown at any moment. Yuhi cupped her cheeks again.

"Not immediately; let us stay for a few days. I have a few more questions for that young boy too. So calm your nerves until then, Sumire. No matter what happens, I will respect whatever decision you make."

Despite her odd state, she immediately understood the meaning behind his words. Sumire wrapped her arms around his neck. "I am not going to leave you, Yuhi."

Yuhis gaze softened. "Alright, I know already--"

"No, you're going to let me go to him once you confirm he is alive. Yuhi, I do miss Ru," Sumire admitted. "But I no longer want to be with him that way."

"But your--"

Sumire took a deep breath. She was still having a hard time learning he was alive, but she immediately noticed something. The reason she can calm down and not immediately have a breakdown is because of Yuhi.

She brushed her lips against his and gave him a light kiss. "I like you, Yuhi. I love you so much."

Yuhis cheeks colored, and she laughed softly. "I know I have never said this properly before, and this timing may seem unusual, but--" Her sentence fell short when he kissed her back.

"Now you are underestimating how much I like you. Look me in the eyes directly. Do you still think I will give you away?"

Sumire looked at him directly in the eyes, and she saw something she never saw before.

"You're not going to give me away?"

"Silly girl, how can I do that after everything that has happened."

"So if those things hadn't happened-"

Yuhi sighed and pinched her cheeks. "Brat, do you want me to get rid of you that badly?"

"No!" Sumire exclaimed. "But I know what you're thinking, Yuhi-san. I know you know that I miss Ru a lot. However, I am serious about this relationship!"

Besides, even though she was upset and shocked just now, Sumire never thought of returning Ru that way. Indeed she has to find him, but she does not want Yuhi to think that she will leave him when she has found Ru. Sumire took a deep breath.

"Ru is alive, so we have to find him together."

At those words, she watched as his eyes widen. "There is no winning against you, huh?"

"Right."

Yuhi held up the case files. "In that case, shall we do this together too, partner?"

Sumire beamed happily when she heard those words. "Yes."

....

The next few days went far too quickly for her before Sumire knew she was in front of Nagawa Sano's apartment doorstep again. She came early morning, not wanting anybody to spot her. She thought she could just casually sneak in, but her gaze fell on the error message when she typed in the code.

It seems he changed it. Well, she more or less expected for him to do that. What does she do call him? But if she does that, then it won't be a surprise.

Her thoughts broke off when she heard the door open. There stood a woman with long, vibrant red-colored hair and beautiful silver-colored eyes. The girl frowned when she saw her.

"You--"

"Is Nagawa Sano home?" Sumire kept her voice low and head down. She still wore her hat, so it was not like the other person could see her clearly.

At those words, her gaze dimmed, and she folded her arms across her chest. "I think we should talk."

"Talk? But we just met," Sumire already felt like she knew where this was coming from. There was something familiar about the girl.

"I don't know where you have been the last few days. But I think you haven't heard yet, let me introduce myself. I am Penelope, Sanos' fiancee."

Chapter end



## ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 424

Chapter 424: Return

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

It took Sumire a few moments to register what the girl just said, not due to shock but the opposite. She figured that the Nagawa family was gradually getting impatient after learning that Sano would not pay that other woman attention. Hence, they brought back his real fiance, who was studying abroad.

Sumire sighed deeply. Those people are too predictable. She usually would not pay any attention to them. After all, things are no longer the same as in the past; she wanted to avoid getting involved with that family as much as she could.

But she recalled Eli's confirmation. If what Eli said is true, then Sano was not aware, but he followed the other person's orders. It is most likely due to the pressure from the black Alice organization but, there is something more to this than meets the eye.

One of the first things she learned about Nagawa Sano was that only a few people could control him. The Nagawa family, Sano, has always been unable to disobey their orders. If his family members said they were getting threatened, it would be easy for Sano to give the order.

Still, she has to find evidence. To bring the truth to light, she needs something to support this theory.

"I'm Ibuki Sumire."

Sumire watched as the girl's expression changed to a darker one. "Oh? So your that woman who won't let him go."

She tilted her head innocently. "I think you're the one with outdated information. He is the one who won't let me go."

"I see how it is. If that is your answer, then prepare yourself-" Penelope raised her hand.

Sumire immediately noticed something off about the girl. Is she an evolved human too? A strange aura emits her body; it reminds her of a thousand-year-old fox spirit. But this is bad; if she allows the girl to hit her, her thoughts broke off when blonde hair appeared in front of her.

The next time I meet him, what if I don't do as you say and hurt him?

If it comes to that, then just look him in the eyes.

Sumire watched as Sano restrained the redhead, but his gaze was on her the entire time. It was a mixture of pain, relief, and shock. Sumire pulled her hands back as she looked down at the ground.

Why does he look like that? Even for a mere glance, Sumire could tell that he was a lot thinner and paler than before. This is so very stupid; maybe she should just go.

Sumire turned to leave, but she suddenly felt a familiar pair of arms hug her from the back. "You can't go again, Sumire."

"Tell your fiance to go first."

Sano nodded and let go of her. He turned to the redhead, who looked like she would kill her at any moment. Indeed the woman just saw her man having a sweet moment with another woman.

"Penelope, you should go."

Penelopes eyes twitched, annoyed. "I've been here the last few days taking care of you, but your--"

"Please go."

The woman seemed startled at his meek tone and averted her gaze. "If you say it like that, then not even I can do anything." Penelope sighed. "I will get somebody to fetch my stuff tomorrow, Sano remember to take your medication."

With those words said, the woman swiftly left. Sumire, however, had watched the exchange with great curiosity. Could it be that woman just now genuinely cares for Sano? She was under the impression this entire time that none of the girls who Sano went out with cared for him, but it was not like that at all.

This is interesting; perhaps she can learn something from that woman. It was shortly after she dated Sano when she learned that he already had a fiance. It bothered her a lot back then, but she never brought herself to ask him questions.

But now the situation has changed. "Was that the fiance I never met?"

She was genuinely curious to think somebody so interesting would appear in front of her. That strength and aura she felt from moments ago. It was the first time for her.

Sano, however, didn't answer her question and engulfed her in a hug. "San."

"Sumire, Sumire," Sano called her name repeatedly. Sumire noted the loving tone behind each syllable and sighed.

After she learned that stuff from Eli, she figured it would be hard for her to continue dismissing how Sano felt about her. But seeing and hearing it up close like this is still a bit hard for her.

How much has this man suffered because she misunderstood his actions and words?

"I'm okay; I'm safe." She mumbled. "You were worried about me?" It was a stupid question.

"I missed you so much."

"I won't be seeing yuhi for awhile so," at those words, he held her tighter, and she sighed. This is going to be a long day.

..

The reason he held her tighter, it seems, was due to his fever. When she finally realized it, at least twenty minutes had passed. Her gaze fell on the man who collapsed on the bed. He was still clutching the edge of her shirt tightly.

What a stupid person. Sumire extended her hand out and ran her fingers through his hair. In the past, when they were together, she couldn't even do something simple and affectionate like this with him. But now, she can do so easily even though no title binds them together anymore.

This person cares deeply for her, and he always has from the very start. Even though he did all those bad things to her in the past, it was simply because he had a hard time communicating his emotions. It did not help that the people around him behave that way.

Her thoughts broke off when she hears the sound of her phone.

"Asuka?"

"I heard that you went back."

Sumire laughed. "Ah-huh, sorry if I caused you any trouble."

"No, I figured it was something like this. So there was not a full-blown search party." Asuka trailed off.

"Is it fine for you to stay with that man again? If you are uncomfortable, we can make other arrangements for you."

"Asuka, I have a question for you regarding Sano."

"What about him?"

"Did you know he genuinely liked me?" It was something she wanted to ask those around her back then. In their eyes, did it look like Nagwa Sano was genuine about her?

"I did; that was why I got angry at him when he started to behave like that towards you. It is because I knew he genuinely cared for you, so his cruel words and actions would not only hurt you but him."

Sumire closed her eyes as she recalled something from the past. If she thought about it carefully, it made sense. Asuka is not the type of person who would randomly become hostile towards another person for no reason.

If only she learned about this sooner- Sumire shook her head. It would not have made a difference.

"After I settle down again, let's meet in a cafe in a few days."

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 425**

Chapter 425: I Have To Decide

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

It upset him how the day after Sumire returned; he had to go to that urgent meeting. During the meeting, he could barely focus because he wanted to see her as quickly as possible. The next few days followed a similar pattern. Sano had enough with the random meetings that would not help him in any way, so he officially requested leave for a week.

Sano immediately found her in the backyard with a spaced-out look on her face. She had a tray of watermelon and a fan beside her.

"Sumire."

The girl tilted her head and gave him a lazy smile. It seemed like she was half-awake to him. Did she go back to sleep after she sent him off this morning?

"It is unusually hot for this time of year," Sumire commented as he sat down beside her.

'I won't see Yuhi for a while, so..'

She must have met with Terashima too. But if so, why would she return here? The last few days, Sano repeatedly asked himself this question, but he would not get any answers. Those two, did they fight?

"Yesterday, that girl-"

"Ah."

"Why didn't you just reject her? You don't have feelings for her, right?"

Sano sighed. "Well--"

"In the end, you thought she was cute and good to use as a rebound."

'Whose fault would that be?' Sano wanted to argue but knew he couldn't.

"That's a bad habit of yours, you know? Collecting weak and feeble girls. Are you trying to act superior when you're just a weak and helpless man?"

'This girl is just way too blunt.'

"Since you came back, you're unusually harsher."

"Well, because I have to."

She has to, huh? Sano didn't know what she learned from Hino while she stayed with him. But she must have learned something regarding him. She was already blunt and cruel before, but at the very least, she didn't do so directly.

"I can't move like this."

Sano didn't budge an inch and continued to inhale her scent. They are so close enough that their lips can touch, but he can't do it anymore. Yesterday, she trembled so much.

"San? Were you that worried?"

"Yeah."

"It's okay; you know how sturdy I am."

"That's why I worried."

Today the reason he officially requested leave is because the last two days, the girl hasn't been very well. Sano only intended to continue to hug her, but the more he inhaled her scent, the more he wanted from her. Before long, he was hovering over her.

Somehow, he gets more turned on when she refuses him.

"Wait, this is too sudden."

"If it wasn't so sudden, would it be okay?"

"Eh, what?"

"Stick out your tongue."

He knew her very well; on days where something bad would happen, she would be more submissive and more open to do things with him.

That was how it was when they dated, but what about now?

"No."

A flat-on refusal - "Isn't your relationship with Terashima on hold? Can't you let me kiss you?"

At least he assumed it was like that since she has not contacted him since she came back.

Sumire looked away, and he sighed as he buried his face in her chest. "You came back for me, but you're even more distant."

His sentence fell short when he felt her run her hands through his hair. "What are you doing?"

"Mmm, I think you haven't been sleeping well."

Hah, what on earth?

"San?"

"What do you want from me, Sumire?" Sano lifted his face. "You know what I want from you, but--" His sentence fell short when she traced his lips. "Sumire.."

"Be quiet; it's okay."

"Why?"

"Three o'clock."

At that comment, Sano immediately understood. 'Somebody is watching them?'

They remained close like that for a few minutes before Sumire pulled her arms away. He frowned at the sudden absence of her warmth. Sano grabbed her wrist, however.

"You don't expect to do something like that and just walk away, right?"

"Actually, I do."

"Tsk."

Sumire turned to him and smiled softly. "You won't hurt me, will you?"

'She is right about that, but since when was she brimming with confidence?'

"What would you like for breakfast?" Sano swiftly changed the topic. "Or is it lunch already?"

"Actually, can we eat out this morning? I want to go into town for a bit."

...

Downtown - Bookstore-

Unlike the first time she stayed in his house, she was able to leave because of Hyou4s protection. Hyou4 they are a government organization that deals with criminals; at least on the surface, it looks like a normal office job. But the criminals they deal with are specialized beings, in other words, people with evolved genetics like Sumire.

"You wanted to go to the bookstore?" Sano mumbled as he watched her browse through the shelves.

Sumire laughed softly. "We can grab a bite to eat after this. But there were a few books I wanted to buy."

Now that he thought about it, back then, she liked to read a lot. Whenever he picked her up from places, she would always have a book in her hands. Sano didn't see anything special about books; for him, books were just things with unrealistic dreams or false facts. Physical books collect too much dust and take up valuable space. The time spent reading could be used for something more valuable.

In the past, whenever he saw her read, he would find a way to pry the book off her.

"Make it quick."

Sumire rolled her eyes. "You're so impatient; choosing books takes time."

"I thought you said you already have something you want to buy."

"I do." Sumire nodded. "But each visit to a book store, there is a chance of finding something new."

Sano only sighed at those words. Why does she seem happier talking about books than speaking with him? His thoughts broke off when Sumire tugged on his sleeve. "I am going to look over there for a bit, okay? San, you're treating me today, right?"

Even though she has plenty of money herself, Sano, however, didn't mind it too much; he liked the idea of her using his money. It made it seem like she was relying on him.

"Sure."

"Alright!" She said happily and rushed over to the other side.

Sano leaned against the wall, deep in thought. What is he going to do about Penelope? Since she came back, he has been indebted to her. She has done a great job helping him while Sumire wasn't around, but he still couldn't love her.

He knew what his parents were doing; anybody could see it.

From: Penelope

Sano, do you have some time today?

I would like to meet you briefly.

Unfortunately, you cannot say no today; my grandma will be joining us.

At those words, Sano frowned. Penelope grandma? She is of royal descent from England. Why would somebody of that status come all the way here to a small place like Japan? It seems those people lurking in the shadows are making their moves; soon, he won't be able to ward them off as he has done.

His gaze fell on Sumire. In the center of this upcoming struggle is her, but Sano recalled her expression when they saw each other again. She already knows, doesn't she?

He has to decide what to do soon; otherwise, she will get even more hurt.

### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 426**

Chapter 426: Petty Jealousy

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

\*UNEDITED\*

When he learned from Hino that Terashima Yuhi was around too, Sano immediately headed back into the shop. He half expected to find the two kissing or doing something but instead they were just standing there.

"I don't think I can say it if you look at me like that."

Yuhi laughed. "It almost sounds like you want to confess to me."

Sumire rolled her eyes. "Why would I have to confess, your already mine."

"Indeed." Sano watched as Terashima turned around. "Alright then, go ahead."

"It is a bit uh weird to say, but I am very reassured that we are working alongside each other as partners again. I mean after you left things were very bad for me, I lost control a lot and went off on my own, in short I was a troublemaker. With you by my side I feel like I can do anything, so, uh thank you."

Sanos eyes widened when he saw this scene and heard her words. This is the first time he has ever seen Sumire look like that.

Terashima turned around. "Yeah, me too."

"So-"

He watched as Terashima caressed her cheeks. "I have to go, is Nagawa really here with you? You didn't sneak off right?"

"Mm he is."

"You go first."

Sumire laughed. "But you're the one leaving."

"Call him, I need to make sure. I think you have forgotten how badly the media wants your blood."

Sumire laughed again. "You so silly."

Sano could no longer take the sight anymore and immediately turned away. He pulled out his phone and typed a quick message.

...

At Ruby Hotel, a few hours later,

Sano's gaze fell on the woman fast asleep on the bed beside him and sighed deeply. He ran his hands through his hair and pulled out his cigarette and lighter. He didn't have to know what time it was to know that several hours passed. This hotel is famous for its views, he could see from the large windows that it was already dark out.

Terashima must have dropped her off, he gave them extra time together. Why did he do something like that?

Is it because he was jealous? But even if it is like that he shouldn't have done this. This was the first time he regretted calling up another woman and sleeping with them. Sano sighed deeply. What is Sumire doing to him? The things he could do so easily before, he can no longer do because of her.

She is important to him, but to this extent?

"Mmm," Penelope mumbled as she pushed him back down and climbed on top of him. "What happened? You called me so suddenly."

"Does it matter?"

"Is this about that girl again?"

Sano looked away and Penelope sighed. "You really have to let her go. You've been hung up on her for so many years. At first I respected your decision but you already twenty five Sano. You're in the perfect age to get married."

"Didn't you have a boyfriend?"

"I broke up with him before I came back here. I thought auntie and uncle called me back here because you were ready to get married. But it turns out they just want me to shift your attention."

"Are you not up for the challenge?"

"Sleeping with you is great and you are very open to doing physical things. But I don't think this will lead to marriage."

"It won't?"

"You have another girl in your heart. As long as you still like her you will prioritise her over me. I am not asking for your heart, I have never done that. But I want you to at least respect me when we get married. You can have your lovers but you cannot love somebody."



Indeed this is the reason why he maintained his engagement with this woman. Penelope has never asked for anything from him. She even left to study abroad for awhile because she wanted him to sort his feelings out.

From: Sumire

So, this is great. I've been locked outside for several hours and your not picking up your phone at all.

So many people have been staring at me. If I get caught, this is your fault.

Sano blinked when he saw the message.

It just occurred to him that he hasn't given her the new passcode yet. Since she returned to his side she hasn't gone out, so he didn't think to give her the new code. Sano immediately pulled Penelope away, and picked up his trousers from the ground.

Penelope rolled her eyes and passes him his shirt. "Leaving?"

"Yeah."

"I will drop you off. You left your car behind in that bookstore."

Right, he did didn't he? Sano quickly puts on his clothing and Penelope got dressed too. They were out of the room in five minutes.

"You didn't tell her--?"

"I forgot."

Penelope sighed. "Sano, whenever your head is in the clouds you end up doing stupid things."

Is that how it is? He never paid much attention to his personality, let alone certain characteristics. He spent more time focussing on the family business, his studies and the women in his life. The latter however only applied to Ibuki Sumire. He never paid much attention to other women.

...

The car journey was fairly quite. It looked like Penelope wanted to ask him more questions, but he was not responsive.

It seemed there was no need for him to rush, by the time he arrived- there was somebody opening the door.

"Thank you for this Jun-kun."

"It is not a problem but Sumire-san, you have to write a long explanation to Ran-san where you have been."

The girl laughed sheepishly and he felt his heart beat, just a single laughter from Sumire and he ends up as a mess.

"Mm I understand! Oh and did you get Yuhis mail? Are you guys ready?"

"We made the arrangements as you two sent things over. It will be a bit of impromptu performance but our debut was the same."

Sano silently walked over. Sumire was the first to see him, when she did she immediately glared at him.

"Listen I'm sorry—"

"Don't you know that the weather is getting colder?"

Sano pulled her into his embrace and she stepped on his foot causing him to let go. 2im angry, no hugging."

"Listen I—" Sano paused in mid-sentence. He cant tell her that he got jealous and ended up calling Penelope to sleep with her. He knew she would never let him off for doing that. It is not like they are dating, but it does seem weird for him to sleep around with other women when he supposedly likes her.

Right at that moment Penelope walked in. "Sano, if everything is fine, I'm going to go."

Sumires gaze darkened. "So while you left me waiting out here in the cold you were fooling around?"

"That's—"

"Alright, I get it." Sumire trailed off. "Jun-kun, sorry but can I stay over at the m5 mansion tonight?"

Sanos eyes widened horrified at her suggestion. He grabbed her wrist. "Wait Sumire, you cant go."

If she goes to a place like that then those people will surely try to get to her.

"I can leave at any time, I told you that already."

"I'm sorry, please don't go." Sano apologized.

Please don't leave again.

To his surprise she suddenly grabbed hold of the edge of his shirt. "I feel sick, lets go inside already."

Sano slowly nodded. He turned to Penelope who was observing the scene carefully, she mumbled something like I see before walking away. He would have called out to her but realized it would not be wise to do so in this situation.

After Sumire said a few more words to Kira Jun, he led Sumire inside the apartment. The moment he closed the doors, the girl slumped onto the ground. Startled, he bent down and placed his hand on her forehead.

Warmth transmitted from her face to his hands in seconds and his eyes widened. Just now she was complaining about the cold and lectured him, it was because of this?

"Sumire? Hey—"

"Your so foolish, you don't know that I get a cold easily? Aren't you my doctor—no you were my boyfriend before. Did you forget something that simple?"

At those words, flashbacks appeared in his head to when they first went out with each other. It was winter when he first started to date Ibuki Sumire.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 427**

Chapter 427: The Past - Our First Meeting

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

\*UNEDITED\*

A few years ago

Sano found himself sneaking out of the party with a frustrated feeling. He should have known better. A person of his status attending a gathering like this. However this time he thought it could work out due to his relations with the host. But it seems like he still has a long way to go. Sano recalled the look of disgust on their faces when the host introduced him and sighed. His parents did say it wouldn't be easy but even then he didn't think it would be to this extent.

His gaze fell on the skies and he sighed again. It looks like it will snow. What should he do? Just head back now? He knew the other guests would book a room upstairs but he no longer wanted to remain in this unpleasant atmosphere.

Is that--

Sano took a deep breathe and got closer as he spotted a woman with long black hair standing in the center of the water fountain.

He blinked surprised. What is she doing? He took a few steps forward and ended up watching her for a few minutes. The girl would occasionally bend down and take a handful of water.

"The water isnt that cold."

At that comment Sano awkwardly rubbed the back of his head. "I didn't mean to peek."

Sumire laughed. "I know, your just trying to get away from prying eyes. Come over here, nobody will find you."

Sano nodded and walked over to where she was. "Ah your Nagawa Sano correct?"

"You know my name?"

The girl chuckled again and nodded. "Of course I knew, it felt like you were out of place just like me."

Out of place huh? Sano sighed. "I didnt think you would be so blunt even though we just met."

"I believe it is only right to be straight forward."

Sumire jumped down from the fountain part and took a seat beside him. The ground was awfully cold and out of instinct he removed his jacket and passed it to her. "Sit on this."

She placed her hand on her mouth and shyly laughed. "Oh, I see that you are that type of person."

Sano wondered what she meant by that comment but knew better than to make a remark. He recalled his discussion with his friend earlier and paused. Maybe he can take advantage of this situation? He immediately shook his head. It won't work out she is far too young. He cannot recklessly seduce her.

"How old are you?"

"Uh fifteen."

His face colour turned pale at those words and he mumbled right. He almost did something criminal there. She is younger than he originally thought. When he first saw her earlier, Sano assumed that she was at least eighteen. With her looks it is only natural for him to think that way and what is with her body? Any normal person would misunderstand.

Anyhow he definitely can't do anything now that he knew her age. He doesn't want to do anything criminal.

"Achoo."

At that Sano's eyes twitched annoyed. "You have a cold?"

"No, I'm perfectly okay!"

Right as she said those words, he heard the sound of another sneeze and then another. Sano removed his blazer and draped it around her shoulders. "Use this."

He already gave his jacket away and now his blazer, naturally he felt the cold. Sano wrapped his arms around his shoulders and sighed. What is he even doing out here with this little girl?

"Say you're not asking me to return to the party?"

"You're only young, a kid can be expected to understand those events."

"Ah, are you calling me stupid? Despite what it looks like I know what I am doing."

Indeed he heard from his companion earlier that the girl got a special invitation from the higher ups to attend the event. There were many people who wanted to approach her and gain her input on their investments. But just as there are people fawning over her, there are those who dislike her too.

He heard all their hostile remarks. There were those who dislike the girl because she in their words is just a little bit smart. Those who say she is only lucky, and that the more she advances, the more she will struggle. In other words it was all jealousy, just because she has talent and they do not.

Sano sighed at the thought. There are far too many people like that in this circle, people who use their mouth more than gain any actual skills. Then again with his current stance in the business world, he has no choice but to suck up to those people.

His thoughts broke off when he noticed the girl looking at him.

"What?"

"I was thinking you are quite good looking."

"Hah, what?"

"You dont believe me? I doubt this is the first time you have heard somebody compliment you."

Naturally he has heard it several times. He knew one of the main reason why his family sent him out to gather connections is his looks. If he didnt have a handsome face, then it would be harder to seduce and gather the connections they need.

"So what, do you want to date me?"

Sano leaned closer like he was about to kiss her but he was only joking around. To his surprise though the girl leaned forward until their lips lightly touched. "Yes."

It was just a light response and yet it shocked him. "Wait, what--"

"I guess this means we are dating."

"Hold on, hold on a second you--"

Sumire stood up. "Right now that I have gotten that out of the way, I guess I should take my leave."

Sano sat there dumbfounded for a few minutes before he quickly got up and went after her. The girl was already at the gates and there was a car parked at front. Sano grabbed her wrist and pulled her back.

"Wait you-" Sano didn't know what to say. This was all happening too quickly and they barely spoke back there. What on earth is she thinking?

"Hm?"

He felt his heart skip a beat when she turned around. There was something mesmerising about this scene. Was it due to the sudden droplets of snow falling from the sky, or maybe it was the look the girl gave him.

This might be his chance. He didn't have much luck today, and he knew that things would only get worse after today. Those looks of disgust were not normal. It seems there are many people present today who do not like his methods. If he does not take advantage of this opportunity now then the situation will worsen.

Sano took a deep breath. "Will you go out with me?"

It was a first for him asking somebody this. But Sano felt that it wouldn't work out with what she said earlier. He needs to be the one to ask her.

"Yes, I would be glad to."

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 428**

Chapter 428: Cards

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

Sano didn't think she would follow him back after that. Sure he said he would drop her off, and sure they kissed a bit in the car, but why did she suggest going to his place? It was a good thing that he

started to live alone several months ago. It would be hard for him to bring her to the manor. Even if his family were not home, the servants there would talk.

His gaze fell on the girl looking around at his room. "This is a nice place. I didn't think you could get a place like this."

"Hah, is that supposed to be a compliment or an insult?"

"Hmm, in this case, maybe a bit of both."

Maybe he has gone crazy. It is not like this girl has feelings for him; he thought for a moment that she fell for him at first sight. But from the way she talked just then, and when they kissed.

"Do you want something to eat? You didn't eat much at the party, right?"

Sano knew this because he was watching her for a long time.

Sumire nodded. "It was the same for you. It must be hard pretending to go along with those people and eat at the same time. You can't appreciate the food that way."

Could it be that she has been watching him since the party too? He bent down and opened up the mini-refrigerator. There were a few microwavable meals inside. "Do you like curry?"

"I love it!" Sumire beamed.

Sano flinched hearing the words love. He needs to calm down; this all seems so stupid. He quickly microwaved the food and got some cups out from the cabinet.

"You can sit wherever you like- just-" Sano trailed off when he saw perched on his bed.

She must be crazy, or maybe she is just far too clueless? He didn't know that girls her age would be this bold. Sano quickly prepared other things like a bowl of chips and some salad. It only took a few minutes before he made a mini-meal for two. He pulled out the mini table and adjusted it before pulling it towards the bed.

Sano took a seat beside her, and she immediately held her hands up. "Wh--what?"

"You didn't want to eat here?"

"No, I was just wondering why you were sitting so close."

"The table is small, and you're the one who sat on the bed."

If she sat on the couch, there would be more space, but no, this is what she chose. Sano observed her for a few minutes. "Are you nervous?"

Sumire laughed awkwardly. "Uh, well, just a little."

Sano raised his eyebrow at those words. But isn't she the one who bravely got close to him and suggested they dated? Moreover, when they got inside the car, she is the first one to kiss him. Sano extended his hand out and interlocked a strand of her hair with his fingers.

"Have you had a boyfriend before?"

"No!"

Why is she acting so defensive and jittery about this? It did occur to him that the girl may be nervous, but even then, this is a bit too much.

He hasn't even done much- Sano thought back to how he kissed her in the car. Or maybe it was because of that?

"Don't think just because I like you too. I will let you lead."

Sumire shyly covers her mouth with her sleeve. "Mm, okay."

In the next second, he is hovering over her. "I guess you understand what it means to follow me back here?"

"I do."

..

It was Sumire who snapped him out of his trance by leaning closer to him. The images of the past immediately faded, and he discovers that Sumire already finished eating her food. How long did he space out for?

"You're looking exhausted."

"I'm okay."

"No, at the very least, you should take a bath and get refreshed."

Sano immediately understood and sighed. "You can only talk in the garden, don't bring him inside."

Sumire nodded. "I understand."

With those words said, he quickly turned back to the house and went inside. The person that would be meeting Sumire is a man Sano is all too familiar with. They have met several times due to the guy being a famous researcher. How many times have his parents tried to build up a connection with that man only to fail?

Sano recalled the warmth of her body when he hugged her earlier. If she is unwell, she shouldn't spend too much time outside. It is indeed colder now. To think she waited so long outside, the normal thing to do in that situation would be to find another place to stay. It is indeed more difficult in her situation, but it isn't impossible.

Why did she bother waiting for him for that long? Her actions even now made little sense to him. Sano approached the bathroom door and immediately opened it.

He slipped out of his clothes and slipped into the large bathtub. A deep sigh passed his lips. Why on earth did he call up Penelope like that? Why did he sleep with her? Why did he leave Sumire alone with

Terashima? Those two were about to go their separate ways; why did he rush off like that? Is it because that was the first time he ever saw that look on her face?

He keeps worrying about stupid things like this; this is the reason why he kept losing her. The sound of feminine laughter from the window made him pause. She has never laughed like that in front of him. So is that researcher and her close too? Another man, why is she always so nice to other guys but him? Even when they first started dating, she always remained aloof and cold.

From the very start, that girl has never been remotely his. Unfortunately, he could not hear what the two were discussing, but he couldn't mistake her laughter.

What is he going to do with her?

Sano recalled Penelope's question in the car earlier and sighed. Indeed he is running out of time. If her grandmother is back, that old woman will urge the two of them to get married. Unfortunately, even though he has amassed all this power, Sano is not confident that he could take her down.

That and Penelope is very close with her grandmother. Even if the older woman is a terrible person, her granddaughter has never done anything wrong. She has helped him out and never asked for anything in return.

But he could never love her. Earlier, when Penelope asked him that question, all sorts of scenarios appeared in his head. Despite his chances looking very bad, there were many things he wanted to do with her. He is confident enough not to back down.

She wouldn't stay with him if she disliked him, nor will she stay out of pity. Sumire is most likely figuring out what to do with him too, which is why she is staying. Sano felt a warm, tingling sensation in his stomach at the thought. He can make this work during her stay here; he still has a chance to play his cards right.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 429**

Chapter 429: For Now Goodbye

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

But he recalled what just happened and sighed. He already messed up so early on. Why is it whenever it comes to her, he is unable to be himself? All the rationality flies out, leaving behind nothing but a mess. It is unlike him to act emotionally; people around him have always praised him for his calm behaviour. So Sano knew there was something wrong. He only behaves this way when he is around her.

Doesn't that make her a hindrance? If he only experiences these bad emotions when he is with her, he should stop associating with her.

At first, he was desperate; he clung to her even though he knew how dangerous it would be. There is a reason why all those people respect her, a reason why even those who scorned her didn't do so in front of her.



They feared her, even though she was only a fifteen-year-old girl. He knew how risky it was. If he didn't chase after her, then he doubts she would have followed him up on the situation. It was because he chased after her that they started dating.

But back then, he was desperate; he needed it badly, a strong connection.

Sano didn't even know at what point did he fall for her. She was fifteen, far too young for him to like her, let alone touch her. Even kissing was a stretch, but considering how she initiated those, he tried not to feel guilty.

It wasn't like him to fall for anybody, let alone a young girl. Her age was very off-putting. When he first saw her, he thought she was eighteen, but when he learned her real age, he pushed the thought out of his mind.

Another fact was well her personality. It didn't take him long to figure out, no more as he noticed within the first day. The girl had a very complex personality. She was unusually cold and cruel to people she didn't know, and even with people, she knew she would say cruel things.

His previous women had been a mixture of meek or just slutty-Ibuki Sumire was neither of those. Her strong behavior bothered him greatly. That sharp tongue of hers caused him a lot of problems.

While he could not directly announce, they were dating since it would destroy his image. He made it seem like she was interested and had a crush on him. He made it seem like he was important to her. It was surprisingly easy to do that, considering how she was the first one to approach him at parties or bring him along everywhere. Before long, all the connections he needed were right at this doorstep.

It was the right decision. At one point, he amassed enough power to call his own. He didn't need her anymore. But he still remained with her because she was already the only woman in his heart.

He liked how hard she tried to get along with his family even though they made it clear that they disliked her. He liked how she even tried to speak the same way his grandma and parents do, even though she would fail miserably.

She worked very hard as his girlfriend and did whatever she could to make their relationship work.

It was him; he is the one who ruins- his thoughts broke off when he spotted a shadow leaning against the sliding door.

"Is your visitor gone?"

"Mm, your taking a longer bath than usual is there something wrong."

Even when they are not in a relationship, she is considerate enough to take notice of things regarding him.

"I got caught up thinking about the past."

"Our past?" Sumire guessed.

"Yeah."

There is silence on the other end before Sumire mumbled. "I see, you know San, I think this is a good time to say this. I think both of us act this way towards each other because we had a bad breakup; we need closure."

"Sumire, I don't want to let you go."

She laughed softly. "Mm, it seems you are stubborn about that. You know it was hard for me after we broke up. Even though I said I wouldn't get attached to you, I ended up doing so. We spent all that time together. It was only natural for me to get attached. It was so stupid back then if I said something. If I communicated my feelings properly, this wouldn't have happened."

"Sumire."

"I liked you a lot, San. It was my first relationship, and you were a good boyfriend. Im sorry for causing you problems."

What on earth is she rambling- Sano quickly realized something. He wrapped the towel around his waist and slid the door open. There was an unusually light around the girl, and it looked like she was fading. Sano immediately grabbed hold of her shoulders.

"Do you have to leave?"

"Ru is alive."

At those words, Sano looked down, and Sumire laughed again. "You can't deny it now?"

"It was only recently, Sumire, that I found out what truly happened. I didn't intend to do that. No matter how much I despised him, I didn't want to kill him."

"Mm, I understand that very well. San, you are a nice person." Sumire looked towards the hallway and her gaze softened. "This house is exactly like how I wanted it. You even kept some of my clothes." she laughed again. "It is a bit hard for me to keep pushing you away when you show how strongly you feel for me. I understand that you still love me; what happened in the past is because I couldn't communicate things properly."

No, it wasn't just her not communicating; it was him. He should have told her from the very start that he was serious about her. If he told her that, then she wouldn't have misunderstood. That other stuff that was happening with his family, if he said something- his thoughts broke off when he felt her lips lightly brush against his.

"Sumire.."

"This will be the first and last time that I kiss you sincerely."

So this means she is directly rejecting him now?

"Is it because you found Mamoru?"

"There is that, and I can tell that your fiance cares a lot for you. Hey San, I think this is enough now. We are not getting any younger. In my heart now, there is only room for Yuhi. But before I can tell him that properly, I want to meet Ru first. I want to communicate the feelings I couldn't get across before."

At those words, he leaned forward and kissed her. It was not an aggressive or emotional kiss; it was the type of kiss one would give to the person they love.

Sumire covered her mouth with her sleeve and laughed again. "Your very pushy."

"Sumire, please, don't go."

"I need to see if it is him. I'm sorry, Sano. But while I am away, can you do me a favour?"

"I will do anything."

"Please watch over Yuhi for me."

So she is going without saying anything to Terashima. Of course, she will. "Even now, another guy."

Sumire brushed her forehead against his. "When I come back, I hope you have sorted your feelings a little. For now, goodbye, Sano."

### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 430**

Chapter 430: In A Dream

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

Sano woke up and realized that the girl was no longer by his side. For a moment, he panicked but then heard the sound of something from the outside. He slipped on a bathrobe and made his way outside to find Sumire practicing with a wooden sword. He silently observed her from the door frame, his arms folded across. Even after he kissed her like that, can she still practice? Then again, Sumire is stronger than him; she always was.

He wondered why she didn't push him away. Is it a bad habit from the past? Sano placed his hand on his head. It occurred to him that something was wrong, something bad happened in his dream, and she is no longer supposed to be here.

"San?"

"Good morning."

Sumire nodded and walked over. She extended her hand out, "Your fever seems to be gone."

Sano blinked at how casually she did this. It was normal back then, but how can she still- Sano paused in mid-thought. Then again, he is the same. Even though they are no longer dating, he still has bad habits from the past.

"How long have you been practicing?"

"What time is it?"

"Eight."

"Then four hours."

He frowned when he heard those words. "Four am?"

Sumire laughed lightly. "Or maybe it was five? I went running around the block."

This girl is so fearless, even though he repeatedly warns her how dangerous it is. But then again, she was never to sit back, even if it meant being in severe danger. She often told him in the past that if she sits around and does nothing, she will end up feeling very restless.

"Shall we order take away?"

"Ah, I did that already. It is just some onion rings, fries from that new American takeaway place. San, you like that kind of thing, right?"

"Yeah, did it arrive already?"

"Mmm, no, it should be about—" Sumire's sentence fell short when they heard the sound of somebody knocking on the door.

"I will get it."

Sano exited the house and went around from the garden. Did she time the delivery? Normally, he has random waking up times, but he would wake up at a specific time frame since he requested leave. How odd that she noticed something like that.

The moment he saw the delivery man, however, Sano blinked, surprised. Isn't this guy Maon Kou?

His lips curved to a grin. "I thought I recognized the address."

Sano recalled the last time they talked and cautiously stepped back. The maroon-colored-haired man laughed.

"You don't have to worry. Yu-yu explained everything."

By Yu-yu, he means Teashima Yuhi? Sano paused. Now that he thought about it, Sumire's behavior towards him is a bit odd now too. That must also be Terashimas doing, but exactly what did he say?

"Why are you working in a takeaway place?"

Kou chuckled. "The new restaurant happens to be one of my family restaurant chains abroad. They seemed to be short in hands, so I decided to pitch in. The girls there knew this was your address and started to argue about who would come here, so the boss told me to go."

Sano couldn't miss the hostility at the mention of other females. "Im loyal to her."

"Loyal, huh? Hey Nagawa, did you know that Mimi liked you?"

Sano blinked, surprised at those words. "What do you mean?"

"I think you are under the impression that she never loved you, but that was wrong. Sure she may have accepted your offer to date for superficial reasons, but it didn't take long before she genuinely fell for you."

"That is impossible."

"You can keep telling yourself that, but think for a moment. Why did she end up so hurt and affected if you meant nothing to her?"

He paused for a moment. Indeed, when they first saw each other again, there was that look of hate and pure disgust. But it didn't take long, did it? It didn't take long before she gave him her number and they started to talk. She even helped him with some business proposals, and she didn't change him as her doctor when her illness started to act up.

Right now, she is even living in his house even though she doesn't have to. Sumire has made a lot of sacrifices for him. If she never liked him like he originally thought, then she wouldn't have bothered.

"Do you think it is okay for me to like her?" Sano muttered.

He never thought he would end up consulting anyone about this, but now that Hino is open about his feelings towards Sumire. Sano felt awkward discussing these matters with him.

"That is up to her and not me, but let's see-" Kou chuckled. "I think anybody who can make her happy deserves her love."

Anybody who can make her happy? After a few more words, Maon Kou quickly left, not before passing him the takeaway bag. Sano walked back to the garden area to find that Sumire sat on the patio with a dazed expression, the wooden sword by her side.

"It smells good."

"I saw Maon."

Sumire laughed. "Uh, I wondered why you were taking a while. I thought for a moment that maybe the delivery person was a cute girl, and you started chatting her up."

"No."

She rolled her eyes. "Imp only joking."

Sano looked at the ground. He was still having a hard time processing the words Maon Kou told him. But the more he thought it through, the more his mind cleared up. It is clear to him that Sumire isn't hostile towards him. But he never once suspected that maybe she behaves this way because she used to like him.

He placed the bag on the patio, and Sumire started to take the dishes out. He walked back into the house and pulled out a foldable table before placing it in front of her.

Sumire laughed again. "Mm, you are prepared." She trailed off. "For this time of year, it is unusually warm, so I thought we could eat outside during lunch too."

"If you would like."

He didn't know what to do today. Generally, on his days off, he would call up different women and sleep with them. His days off usually center around his third priority, women. But he won't do something like that when the girl he likes is with him.

"You don't have anything else to do?"

"Well, nothing outside. I am going to practice for Yumi-senpais live later. The rooms on the third floor are soundproof, right?"

"They are."

Now that he thought about it, she hasn't sung on a proper stage since she arrived in Tokyo. He knew it was because of the accident, but it troubled him. How many times has he set up events for her, only for her to not show up? He still doesn't have a solid footing in the Entertainment industry, so it reflects badly on him.

"Will you be able to sing?" Sano awkwardly asked. He didn't want to criticize her, but her career may no longer recover at this rate.

The rumors on the net and the medi nearly everybody is saying bad things about her. Even the people who defended her at first have backed down.

It is only natural for them to do so, an idol who can't keep her promises, an idol who refuses to sing. Nobody would waste their time on somebody like that. Time heals all wounds, but almost a year has passed now. Sumire already has a new boyfriend too, so there are those who no longer use that reasoning to argue her case.

"Yes."

Sano blinked when he heard her firm and immediate response. This is a bit surprising; the last time, she still seemed so uncertain, and in the end, she didn't show up. It was a venue he specially asked for, but she never came.

Sumire suddenly stood up and stretched her arms. "Then I suppose it is time for me to get going."

"Get going?"

"Mm, after all, this is a dream."

Sanos eyes widened when he heard those words. Wait a second, what is she-- he watched as a strong gust of wind appeared and their surroundings turned blurry. Sano immediately reached out to hug her.

"No, please, Sumire."

Sumire laughed. "I was a bit worried after I just left like that, so I wanted to make sure you ate something."

"You can't do this to me."

"But I can. Im so sorry."

In the next second, he heard the sound of something shattering.

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Sano woke up to white walls and a white ceiling. He was panting heavily and screaming.

"Sano? Sano--" It was Penelope, but there was someone else there too. Despite his blurred vision, he could make out his friend.

"Hino, Sumire. Take me to her."

At those words, Hino bit his lip. "Sano, look at the day."

Sano looked towards the television.

It had been two and a half weeks since Ibuki Sumire disappeared and since he went into a short coma. There was no doubt that he was thinner than before, and his hair seemed longer.

"You can't find her?"

"We looked all over Japan. Sano, she isn't here."

Then she went abroad? But where would she go? These questions sprang to his mind, but unfortunately, he had no answers.

"By the way that-" Hino pointed to something on the bed. "-is for Yuhi?"

Sano looked towards the bed and spotted an envelope with Sumire's handwriting.

To my dearest Yuhi.

There was no doubt what that letter was for, but Sano wanted to laugh. Even though he was the one, she said goodbye to, the one she was thinking of the most is still Terashima Yuhi.

Even now, he cannot win, but that thought no longer bothered him as much. All that matters now is finding her.

Chapter end