

Melody 531

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 531

Chapter 531: The Nagawa Family Case Part 3

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But at the same time, she could relate to Veronica; after all, she was in a similar situation. Back then, she thought that she would put up with anything as long as she had feelings for Sano. But who was she trying to fool?

'The feelings I had for him were so weak; did I truly have to put myself under that situation?'

"I did consider it. I considered leaving him. I agreed to meet with his mother that day, so I could tell her to stop. She wasn't only targeting me but affecting my family members too. I have a little brother, you see, after our mother's death, our father was always working late.

So it was just us two. One day I caught my father with his superior, when I saw who it was I wanted to hide, but it was too late. His superior was Evan's cousin; when she saw me, she hurled all sorts of abuses. Then, later on, she made a move on my father."

Sumire already knew where this story was heading. "Your father started to change. He trusted her more than you two."

"That is right, then one day he just kicked us out of the house. I managed to rent a small apartment, and we were getting by for a while. But the constant abuse did not stop, and my brother would come home injured every day. It seemed like the school was on it too and the police, so I could do nothing. I considered telling Evans, but I saw how stressed he was with work."

'The Nagawa family are worse than scum.' Sumire came here to get the details from Evans, knowing that he would have more information. But to hear it directly from one of the victims made ms sick.

"I thought if I broke up with him, then maybe I can save my brother at least, but it wasn't like that. My brother ended up in an accident at school; he fell down the stairs and is in a long coma now. That day I was finishing my job and rushed to the hospital when a bike hit me. My leg was severely hurt, but I stubbornly went to the rooftop to meet with Evan's mother."

"Wait, she was there with you?"

"She pushed me." Veronica was trembling, and Sumire walked over and placed her hand on top of the girls.

"You have to tell me everything. I will help Evans with this; that is why I came here."

'I need to destroy the Nagawa family.' After she investigated the Black Alice organization, Sumire quickly realized something. They tricked Sano. His family members, specifically his mother, were already working with them. The route of the Black Alice organization is the several founders. Nagawa Mira, that lady, she needs to take her down.

Veronica nodded, and she provided more details on the accident and the events before. After she finished listening, Sumire finally understood. It seems like they do this with any women who get close to their sons. But why? Veronica's case aside, there were girls there from noble families.

All the sons ended up with a fiancee too, so it is not like they are overprotective. What do all those girls chosen have in common other than their lineage?

"Sumire-chan, are you not scared?"

"Mm, I'm not because just like you, Veronica, I have somebody out there who will protect and have my back." Sumire trailed off. "That day Evans-san reduced you, later on, San told me that he left an important meeting. It seems he was aware of the situation and had plans to counter it. If he succeeded in that deal in the meeting, he would use it as a bargaining chip for them to leave you alone. He abandoned that meeting the moment he heard you were in danger."

Veronica burst into tears then. "I was always causing him problems. But I think by not telling him anything, I made it worse."

"It is alright; you did well."

After crying like that, the girl eventually fell asleep. Sumire brought the girl to what looked like her room. Evans entered the room after a few seconds. He turned to Veronica on the bed.

"Did she tell you everything?"

"Mm."

"I intended to say it, but I believed it would be better if you heard it from her."

"Indeed, my resolve won't waver now. I will take down the Nagawa family. Evans-san, I will grant your wish."

Evans nodded. "I apologize for troubling you with this, but even though I can shield Veronica from harm now. Recently my company has had to clash with the Nagawa family a lot. They already know what my weakness is. It is difficult for me to make a move."

"You do not have to worry about this anymore. I will help you." Sumire trailed off. "But why did you not contact me sooner?"

"I would have, but I heard about Tsueno Mamoru's condition. You were not in the best state to assist. I knew how it felt to nurse a loved one, so I knew what you would choose with your personality. Then the accident happened shortly after I returned."

"Wait, shortly after you returned?" Sumire repeated his last words, and Evans averted his gaze.

"It seems like they were trying to pin the blame on me. But somebody helped me win the case."

"Somebody helped you?"

"I do not know who they were. I tried to look into it, but I could not find any answers. But one day, a note turned up at my door saying that next time I have to be careful since I will be an important person who will support you one day."

'That wording sounds familiar. But I don't think he would do something like that. But then again, I have a hard time understanding that person.' He always wore a smile on his face as Mamoru did, but something was different about him.

"There is one person I suspect. Sumire-san your fiancée is Makoto Soujiro correct?"

At those words, she immediately stood up like something just came to mind. Right, that wording is familiar, but Aki-san would never use it without joking. The one who would say those words seriously and consider the future is Soujiro.

"I apologize for cutting the meeting short, but I believe I should be on my way."

Evans nodded.. "Then we shall discuss things another time."

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Chapter 532: Sumire And Soujiro

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At the Makoto mansion on the edge of town.

It was already past noon when she went to see Soujiro. Sumire hadn't realized how long she spent in Evan's place. She found the man doing paperwork in his office in his mansion like usual.

"It is unladylike to just barge in."

Sumire, however, didn't bother with those words and walked over to him until she stood opposite. She removed the documents from his hands and slammed her hand on his desk.

"Why did you make contact with Evans?"

"What are you talking about?"

Sumire took out a small slip of paper from her bag. It seemed Evans had kept the note to show her.

"This, you were the one who sent it, correct?"

Soujiro scanned the note; he paused for a moment before nodding. "That is right."

"Why did you interfere?"

Soujiro sighed. "It is not like I did anything harmful. I simply paid back the favor you owe that man for helping you out."

"But Soujiro by doing that-"

"By doing that, I declared to the other elites that we were still in contact with each other. Even though I had no confirmation that you were alive, then I understood the consequences."

"You know I can't marry you," Sumire mumbled. "Whether it was the past or even in the future or the present day, our engagement was only for mutual benefits. I am the only member of the Ibuki family now. I do not care about the benefits I will receive from the Makoto family."

"But you still shamelessly cling to this title because you can use it as a shield."

Sumire flinched when she heard his words, and Soujiro sighed. He stood up and walked over towards the balcony. Sumire took a deep breath before she followed him over.

"I told you before that while this is an engagement of convenience, you can rely on me for anything that would trouble you."

"I know. I am sorry for not contacting you much sooner. After I settled in, I figured I would contact you and tell you I am alive. But then Aki-san told me that it was far too dangerous considering how we still didn't know who caused the fire. There was a time frame where I didn't attend school for a while because I was hiding away."

Soujiro shook his head. "That decision was the correct one."

"If you helped Evans, that means you knew my connection to the Nagawa family. You knew about Sano and me."

"Yes. It took me as a bit of a surprise since there were rumors that you liked Terashima Yuhi."

Sumire laughed lightly at those words. "I see, so you already knew back then that I would have turned you down."

"It seems you are implying I have feelings for you."

"You don't?" Sumire questioned.

"That is not the topic you came to discuss."

'What a clever way of dodging the topic. But he is right. I didn't come here for this.'

"If you helped Evans-san out, does that mean you have some information on the Nagawa family?"

If it is, information Soujiro gathered, she could trust it to be helpful.

"I have. I shall give it to you."

Eh, wait, where is the catch? Then again, he is not the type of person to refuse to assist her. Even back then, when she held little power, he still agreed to her selfish whims.

"That would help." Her gaze fell on the pitch-black skies. She ought to head back soon; she does not want Yuhi to worry about her. But if she left right away, that would be rude to Soujiro.

'Being a considerate person is way too difficult for me.'

But she has not seen this person in quite some time. It will not do any harm to spend some time with him. Neither of them is good at conversing, so for a while; there was nothing but silence. But something was comforting about this silence. How odd, whenever it is quiet with other people, she finds it awkward. However, with Soujiro, it is nice.

Her thoughts broke off when Soujiro draped his cloak around her shoulders. "You shall catch a cold."

"Thank you." Sumire trailed off. "I know you have been worrying about me."

Soujiro sighed deeply. "Indeed, your actions cause me quite the headache. But since you came back in one piece, I assume that you saw him?"

Sumire briefly closed her eyes as the memory of her first night in the facility returned to her. They drugged her quite heavily, so she was barely conscious, but she knew he came to see her.

'Ki, the truth is I never wanted you to get together with Yuhi. I wanted to steal you away. But with my illness, I knew I could never give you happiness.'

'Please cope with this pain just for a short while. I will make sure nothing bad happens to you.'

'I will protect you like always.'

"Mm, I saw the idiot who spouted nonsense about protecting me without asking how I feel."

"You must understand where he is coming from. Even if he has loved you for a long time, it would have been cruel of him to tell you his feelings."

"But I-"

"You fell in love with him. But you weren't in love with him from the start; it was a mere coincidence."

Soujiro's words were blunt, but they cut deeply like a knife. Indeed she knew she couldn't deny that.

"I feel troubled whenever I think about this matter. Ru is alive, and I am very happy about that. But what happens next? Do we get back together? I can't just leave him alone, can I?"

She is happy Ru is alive; nothing pleases her more. He is alive, so she can finally tell him the words she could not do back then.

"Do you still have feelings for him?" Soujiro asked.

"Initially, I thought I did, for a while after I came here, it was like that. Even when I accepted Yuhi's confession, but at some point, I realized the only thing I have left towards Ru is feelings of guilt. I could not tell him that I loved him, which caused a huge mental strain on me. He died without ever hearing my feelings, even though he treated me so well."

During the first time they did it, Ru looked at her with such kind and gentle eyes. Even though they had been fighting, she could have told him then because she had already fallen for him, but she held back.

"I missed my timing, and that led to this situation. But even if I told him, it wouldn't have made a difference. Ru was very stubborn; he knew that I liked Yuhi even before I did."

She simply thought it was mere admiration and respect. But one day, Ru confronted her and said. 'Don't you have feelings for him?' When he asked her that question, she couldn't deny it.

Soujiro nodded. "I see, but Sumire, you have to remember something. Your parents raised you as a member of the elite. With our customs, it is only natural not to recognize love since we do not need it."

'But all of that sounds like an excuse..' She used it as an excuse didn't she? She used it as a shield to avoid what was right in front of her.

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Chapter 533: Sumire And Soujiro Part 2

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"There was an old couple when I visited the church often in the past who often talked to me. It surprised me when I learned that they naturally met and fell in love with each other. Both were members of the elite. Back then, I didn't understand; they will decide the person we. My parents taught me that."

"After hearing that talk, did you have a candidate in mind?"

"I did actually; it was somebody I knew as a child. We got along greatly like close siblings. But there was nothing romantic. I just thought he would make a nice partner since there would be no complicated emotions involved." Sumire trailed off. "But because of my position, I refrained from even proposing the idea."

"You were right in doing so; as elites, we may live a decent life. We do not have to worry about money or food or even prestige."

"We do not have to worry about food. I remember thinking how grateful I was for that. But, I didn't do anything to earn the food that landed on my plates every evening. So it made me feel strange. It was the same as receiving gifts. I received jewels of the highest quality, but again I did nothing to receive it."

Soujiro turned quiet for a few seconds before he grabbed hold of her hand. Ah?

"Forgive me if I ramble."

"That is okay; you seldom talk so much. I would find it pleasant if you spoke more."

'But it would also trouble me. He most likely knew that otherwise, he would not apologize.'

The person who knows her the best is not Tsueno Mamoru or even Terashima Yuhi; it is this person. When her parents picked out her fiance for her, she did not question it.

'There is nothing I can decide for myself. I am a doll.'

She went along with it. "When we first met, I pulled this expression that said it doesn't matter what we thought of each other."

"Mm, it was very unpleasant."

"Back then, I thought I simply wanted to get things over with. Earlier that day, I had a quarrel with my older brother. He was spouting some nonsense how you were not worthy of being my fiance."

Sumire blinked, surprised at his words. "Are you admitting that you got mad for my sake?"

"That appears to be the case." Soujiro trailed off. "I did not understand what had gotten into me. But before I knew what I was doing, I was arguing for your sake like a fool. We had not met yet, at least officially, but I was adamant about defending you."

"I see, so when we met, you were simply irritated. It was not as though you disliked me."

"To be truthful, I felt nothing regarding the engagement. It was just one of my duties, one of the things my family decided for me."

"I thought the same."

It didn't matter to her because she was having a hard time figuring out her own emotional state back then. She was struggling to maintain the facade as a member of the elite circle. She didn't have any emotions, so it was easy to pretend, but occasionally she would slip up.

During those times, her brother would tell her that there was nothing she could decide for herself.

'With no desires, it is best to just do as you are told.'

It was simple, and yet despite having no ambition, she could not agree with those words. But after she met Soujiro, that changed. Perhaps it was due to his cold and indifferent nature, but she often found herself acting like a cheerful person in front of him.

Her efforts did not go to waste because she would occasionally see a rare smile on his face.

Her thoughts broke off when she sneezed several times in a row. Soujiro frowned and extended his hand out towards her forehead.

"I believe you have a fever." Those were the last words she heard him say when she felt her consciousness fade.

...

When she woke up, she discovered that she had her head on Soujiro's lap. Sumire became frantic and tried to sit up, but her vision still felt blurry.

Soujiro sighed. "I will not take advantage of you, so please rest assured."

Her sweat fell at those words. "I am surprised you knew what I was thinking."

"I have learned your habits by now."

'Even though we were apart for so long?.' Then again, after their first meeting, they spent awfully a lot of time with each other. Even though she was only a mere child, he still entertained her with the news she wanted.

"It is the same for me. I understand by now that you do not have any lecherous thoughts."

"Hah, if I were to entertain such things for a moment, I believe you would not come to see me as you have."

"So, does that mean your acting virtuous so I would see you more?"

"Perhaps."

'What an interesting person. I thought that back when I was a child, but now I am grown up, that thought hasn't changed.' Sumire didn't speak for a while. Her entire body felt like it was burning, and she barely had any strength to move. Perhaps she has been pushing herself too much recently.

If she thought about her recent events, that TV program, the handshake event, and the several other events after. What she felt was not physical exhaustion but mentally.

Hino, who has now turned into her manager, is taking her career very seriously. It surprised her how much effort he was putting into it, considering how it was not his idea. But while it wasn't his idea, it was Yuhi's. It is only normal considering their relationship.

Her thoughts broke when she felt Soujiro comb her hair with his fingers. Something was soothing about it. From the corner of her eye, she noticed Soujiro was reading documents in one hand.

"If you overwork, you will end up like me," Sumire mumbled.

"It seems you have changed since we last met; you now acknowledge your careless behavior."

"I have to put in more effort than before; otherwise, I won't be able to return to the stage."

"You put up a good front in front of Terashima, but the reality, you are still afraid."

"I feel like I have resolved myself to a certain extent. But," Sumire trailed off as she closed her eyes. "- occasionally, I would see images of the past. Just when I am about to make a firm decision, I would see those images and hear those voices telling me, 'Remember your sin.' Ru is alive now, and I confirmed that with my own eyes. But it does not erase my guilt. I wronged him; from the start, I should not have accepted his hand."

If she didn't date him, the accident would not have happened if she didn't say yes.

"So you must have learned the reason."

"According to Sano, the enemy leader has a strange fascination towards me. He has been watching me for a long time.. It seems Ru's presence by my side was a problem for him."

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Chapter 534: Sumire And Soujiro Part 3

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"You are not at fault, catching the eye of an unusual man."

Sumire laughed lightly when she heard those words. "If you put it that way, I seem to have caught the attention of many strange men."

"Indeed, it seems I have to include myself in the count."

Sumire froze when she heard him say those words. Uh, what is he trying to say? Or rather wait a minute, she has felt a bit strange ever since he started to stroke her hair. She carefully looked at his expression to see a tender gaze on his face.

'I wonder since when did he look at me like that? How unusual. This person got engaged to her only through a political reason.' Sumire understood that very well; the engagement did not happen because either side held feelings. This is simply their role, their duty.

But due to the accident that led to claiming her family's lives, she is no longer obliged to fulfill this duty.

"Our engagement. What are we going to do?" Sumire asked. It was the first time she was bringing up this question. She has had so many other things in her mind, but now that she has this chance, she wants to talk to him.

"I believe I stated my thoughts on this already."

Indeed they had a brief chat about it but not a proper discussion.

"You told me it was up to me. But that is very vague."

Besides, if he truly left it to her, she may end up doing something very cruel.

"My thoughts have not changed. I am not doing this any more simply because of the promises I made to your late parents. I do not mind if it is you, no I believe I would like a union between us two."

Sumire didn't know how to react to his words. For a while now, he has left her speechless. He isn't a simple person but didn't she know that?

"If we got married, I believe you would give me the respect I deserve even if there are no feelings of love. You would not cheat on me, and you would treat me well."

"This is the first time you have mentioned such things."

"There was a time where I thought if we got married, then I would no longer encounter such problematic situations or have negative thoughts. I could live a peaceful life, but-" Sumire paused. "If I did that, I would be running away."

She has power, a power far stronger than anybody in this world. The first time she discovered her abilities was a long time ago. But due to her frequent health relapses, she would suffer from a loss of memory. She would forget her abilities, remember, forget, and then the cycle would repeat.

If there is a reason for her to have this ability, then she would like to use it for the sake of good.

"But I understand very well that I am not a noble person; how many times have I stained my hands with the blood of an innocent person? Under the disguise of following orders. I have done many despicable things."

Soujiro placed his hand over her eyes. "Get some rest. I shall inform Terashima you are here."

—

A few days later.

"Soujiro, I understand that you're a much kinder gentleman now than before, and you're considerate to the guys who like her. However, you have to stop her; she's acting strange".

Soujiro looked up from his desk; he had been busy writing his signature several times on several documents that were now being stamped and put together by an exhausted-looking Naoki.

Once he realized how much work there was to do, he held a small regret about allowing his female guard some time off. But then he shook the thought out of his mind. That girl already works hard enough for him as it is, indeed like what she told him before she is up before four in the morning.

A young girl like her ought to value her sleep more, go to school and make more friends. Yet, she always prioritizes him before all others. He supposed as one of his guards that is something he taught them, and yet, sometimes he feels as though he's restricting the girl's freedom too much. But he supposed he would think about that another time, as he glanced over at the woman who had placed her hand to her chest and was muttering, 'scared me.

"What do you mean by strange?"

This person in front of him is one of the minister's daughters who came by the other day to report her father's activities. Her name is Alethia, the person she is speaking about is none other than Sumire.

For the past four days, she has remained in his mansion. It surprised him when he received that call from Terashima. Judging from the phone call, it seemed like the man was running away and was chasing somebody.

"Her eyes shone brightly just like the main characters in a shoujo manga. She walked like she was floating on air, and I think there were flowers somewhere. Though it's a gorgeous fairytale-like scene, it's so unlike her that it scared me." Alethia explained.

That is unusual.

Soujiro stood up. "Naoki, take care of things for a bit."

The half-dead-looking Naoki managed to only wave his pen in the air. Perhaps he should ask for some extra help. Naoki is at his peak already. Soujiro followed Athena out of his office and down the hallway.

Ever since that talk four days ago, the relationship between Sumire and him has changed slightly. Although they were comfortable around each other before, it appears to be more natural now.

In fact, it wouldn't be exaggerated for him to say that it's far better than it was before.

Though they were considered a couple officially, there appeared to be a rather strained atmosphere between them. Their conversations, too, always seemed strained, like they held back. In his case, it was his background, and in hers, her family wished to marry her into wealth and take over that family.

'I only learned this much later on when her family tried to get her engaged to somebody else.'

After he learned that the engagement was in danger, he did all he could to appease the girl's parents. It did not seem like Miss Bianca, Sumire's mother, wanted the riches of his family. But she wanted to take over.

"There Soujiro see!"

Soujiro's thoughts broke off and glanced over at where Altheia pointed. His fiance Ibuki Sumire was humming to herself in the rocking chair in the middle of the lounge area. A ball of yarn inside the basket on the table in front of her and a pair of needles in her hands as she entangled the yarn with the needles.

"She even started knitting and brought out the old rocking chair."

Indeed, she is acting unusually.

When she woke up the morning after that night, he passed on Terashima's message. It surprised him that she had stayed put this entire time.. The only visitor she has had the last few days was the young man called Jae, who only came by to drop off her belongings.

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Chapter 535: Sumire And Soujiro Part 4

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"What does she want to do? It's strange."

He silently observed the girl for a few minutes and stopped when he saw her flushed gaze.

"I think she just discovered or rather admitted to herself at last that Terashima Yuhi is important to her," Soujiro concluded.

When they had that talk a few nights ago, Soujiro recalled her expression whenever she brought up her feelings for Terashima. She makes it way too obvious.

At this stage, the two will marry. That man is relatively slow. By that man, he was referring to Kusaji Atsuro; he was the first one he contacted when he heard the possibility Sumire was alive.

'Do not seethe with rage when she ends up in someone else's arms and not yours.'

It has surprised him how the redhead has remained silent this entire time. In the next half year, Terashima and Sumire will marry.

Yet despite these thoughts, the third Prince knew something like that would not happen. After all, Kusaji Atsuro is still someone whom his fiance needs. That is something he cannot deny.

Many men are in love with Ibuki Sumire, but only a few stood out out of all those guys. Nakara Shin, Nasaki Hino, Nagawa Sano and that researcher called Eli. He still doesn't know if he can include Kusaji in this count, considering his movements since she arrived in Tokyo.

But there is no doubt that these men will play an important role in her life.

He watches as she pauses and begins to check the manual, yet even more, confusion fills her face, and he notices the mistakes beginning to show. The brunette suddenly stands up and chucks it on the ground, and stamps on it.

His sweatdropped. 'I knew it; she has no patience for stuff like this. With her personality, I found it odd that she even attempted this.'

"I don't want to knit anymore. I'll just go out and buy it!"

Sumire claps her hands."I know I'll bake some cookies. So odd, why do I suddenly want to do these things?"

The woman beside him looked ill, like she was about to pass out due to terror. Soujiro, you need to stop her."

True, he wouldn't deny that. However, it was his first time seeing her this cheerful, even for another man. Somehow just seeing that smile on her face made it all worthwhile. "It's fine to leave it be. It's getting interesting."

After Tsueno Mamoru's accident, Soujiro decided to come and meet with her. But when he did, she was a shell of her former self. 'I don't think she even remembers that we met. For Sumire, the first time she has seen him in so long was after she came to Tokyo.'

The Sumire he met then was exactly like a doll; she had no emotions.

Her expression only started to come back when she came here to Tokyo and met Terashima Yuhi again.

'I believe I should discuss that time with either Terashima or maybe even Momoi Futaba. There was something dangerous about her current state then. I fear it will resurface if she returns to the entertainment industry properly.'

Just thinking of dealing with the pink hair girl, though, caused his face to break into sweats. On second thought would be a bad idea. Besides, she genuinely seems to be happy now, so it should be okay before it seemed like she was suppressing her feelings for Terashima.

Soujiro watched her for a while longer, and her peculiar behavior continued. But he decided that since she was fine, he would return to his office.

He was working peacefully for the next few hours and occasionally received reports on her next actions.

So from singing randomly to looking at magazines to cooking. He hears the girl all way from his office. Goodness gracious, she really has gone ahead and done it. Doing feminine things once in a while for her, though, isn't a bad thing.

'But wait a moment, baking?' Sumire can only cook regular food and cuisines. She cannot bake! Yet he realized that too late since he heard a large explosion come from the kitchen.

By the time he arrived there, dust and fire covered the kitchen. Aletheia was desperately trying to take out the fire with the fire extinguisher. "Fire! This is terrible."

It was only a minor fire, not large enough to set off the alarms in the manor. But it was still a fire nonetheless. He spent the next few minutes helping to put out the small fire, but it did not go down before turning to the culprit.

Soujiro's eyes twitched, annoyed as he glared at Sumire, what are you doing?"

The knitting, and other weird things aside, this was crossing the line.

"I'm sorry!"

Honestly, he pulled the brunette into his arms and ensured she wasn't inhaling the fumes. Soujiro lifted his hand, and a white light appeared, and the fire disappeared within a single second.

Once they were out in the lounge, Soujiro proceeded to lecture her, "Please explain, how come baking cookies will cause an explosion?"

'I know she is bad at baking, but this is the first time anything has exploded; last time she tried, she burnt the food, yes. But nothing exploded; that damage is going to be troublesome to clear up. I could ask the servants, but I sent most of them away because I know how uncomfortable she is around so many people.'

"I thought that flour was yeast," Sumire said innocently.

At that comment, he hits her lightly across the head. "Stupid girl."

He was no master cook himself. As members of the elite, there is no need for them to learn things like cooking. He only learned because he recalled those late nights after the Ibuki family manor caught on fire. He stayed up all night wondering where she was? Was she safe? Or did her body turn into nothing?

"Even so, it shouldn't have blown up," Altheia mutters.

Good grief, she was too happy that she didn't remember what he told her the last time. He supposed when people are happy; they do stupid things.

"I advise you, unless you get a teacher, do not bake. If you want to gift cookies, for now, just buy them."

"Okay!" Sumire said, raising her hand as though she was reciting something, as she repeated his words.

"Hmm, it's odd though I can make normal meals, like french cuisine. I am good at that."

Aletheia turned to him with questioning eyes, and he confirmed her thoughts with a nod.

"How on earth did you teach her that?"

"It's a secret."

Or rather, in Sumire's words, it is something far too embarrassing for anyone to know. Since she would rarely pull such an expression for him, he allowed it to slip.

Sumire stood up. "Alright, next, I'll bake a cake."

The servants who he entrusted to watch over her during her stay tried to persuade her against it.

Soujiro glanced at the retreating duo. This fiance of his, is she serious? Ordinary people would stop after such a disaster. She doesn't think when she's happy; well, he supposed it was alright.. Even though it is clear that she is doing this for another man, it does not bother him in the slightest.

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Chapter 536: Soujiro And Yuhi

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It was difficult for him to concentrate on working, knowing she was still going to cook. So Soujiro followed her to the other kitchen, only to find that she had already started. When he saw the girl's choice of ingredients, Soujiro understood why the explosion happened. It seems she doesn't even have the basics down.

"You'll need this and this," Soujiro said, reaching over and rummaging through various cupboards.

"Soujiro!" Sumire seemed surprised to see him.

"Good grief, you do know how to make a mess of everything."

Sumire laughs. "Aha, so you came after me because you're worried? Don't worry. I won't destroy this kitchen too."

He's skeptical to believe that.

"It's fine. I have you helping me now, right?"

Soujiro exhaled deeply; gee, she is something else. If one of the elders catches him now, they'll surely fuss about him fooling around. However, he is at the end of his peak; not even he can work twenty-four hours straight forever.

'If I do something else, it will help me relax more.'

The people around him believe he likes working non-stop, but the reality is he doesn't do this work because he enjoys it. He is the heir to his household. He comes from a long-standing traditional family. If he doesn't do this work, then the lands his ancestors have protected would fall into ruin.

Soujiro gave the girl a few instructions as he focused on his share of preparing the ingredients. But even then, he found himself staring at her profile from the side.

She has grown prettier before; looking at her like this, he really can see it more clearly. To think that the innocent-looking girl when they first met would end up becoming such a beauty.

No, there was already something beautiful about her before, though it was not obvious to the eye, unlike the girl's sister. That's why nobody had paid attention to her before. However, now it's become more evident, they are all paying close attention.

Appearances are significant that much he knew, but he disliked the fickleness of the elders. The elders are old members of the elite society who act like they rule anybody with ancient elite blood in them.

'I want to abolish this system and reform it as much as I can.' While maintaining a facade that kept up with traditions, he has secretly worked on new reforms. He wants to reform the elite society so Sumire can have one less thing to worry about."

"Soujiro, is there something wrong?"

"Hmm, it's nothing."

Soujiro reached over and intertwined a strand of the girl's locks in his fingers despite those words.

He watched as a light dusk of pink appeared on the girl's cheeks.

"What is it...? Why are you touching me suddenly?"

"No reason, I just want to. Can't I?"

Soujiro had no idea what had gotten into him, but he understood he was already close to her. The desire to touch her, to hold her in his arms.

'I would never have thought I would end up with these thoughts.' It was fine as long as they could maintain a relationship where they respected each other. It was fine if they could treat each other like close friends. But before he understood his own feelings, he learned that she already had somebody in mind.

To be exact, he caught her watching Terashima Yuhi's shows frequently. At the start, he didn't think much of it. It is normal for girl's her age to like male idols, but it wasn't that simple. If he didn't see the look in her eyes, perhaps he would have remained oblivious to everything.

"You can, but you shouldn't."

"You're right. Sorry." He murmurs. "Your hair is longer now."

"You think so?"

Soujiro nodded. "It was much shorter when we first met."

When they first met, huh? It does seem as though a lot has happened since that time. However, perhaps their relationship took more of a turn in the past year more than anything. It felt like they understood each other more, and so he believed he could change things.

"That's right, and you were already balding." She trails off. "I didn't realize that you were the one sending me those letters. And you weren't exactly kind to me when we first met either, and even after the banquet, you wouldn't get close to me."

"Sumire."

"Yeah?"

He brushes his fingers across the girl's lips.

Stuff like having the right to touch her was already something he has had for a long time now. Since he's the fiance, this amount of contact should be normal. However, he has always respected the girl's boundaries, especially ever since she started to date Terashima.

But recently, the need to respect her boundaries has disappeared just a little bit before he could lean over though they hear a ringing sound.

"---My phone!" Sumire stammered, realizing.

Soujiro exhaled deeply. "You should answer that."

It's probably because he isn't respecting her boundaries anymore that they get interrupted as much as they do.

"Aha." She laughed nervously. Sumire pauses and suddenly reaches over to touch his cheek, causing his eyes to widen. "Thank you, Soujiro. Despite this strange situation, I am aware you were trying to comfort me."

It is odd whenever she thanks him; no, he ends up with this light feeling in his chest whenever she speaks to him.

'It seems I do have feelings for her. But, there is no need for me to do anything about it. The reason why he investigated the Nagawa family it was not for her sake alone.'

...

Since she was busy with her phone call, Soujiro decided to head back the long way to his office. The moment he stepped outside, he saw a man with black hair leaning against the large pillar in the garden.

"It's late."

Then again, he supposed that this guy doesn't think of things like that.

"But I'll presume you have business with her. She's on the phone to Eli."

"What's that? Are you trying to be spiteful?"

"I would gain nothing from that."

Yuhi laughed at those words. "Heh, that's true."

'Ever since Sumire returned, no during the time she disappeared. I have sensed something different about this guy. He seems to be more carefree - no, there's a degree of responsibility around him now..'

Perhaps he finally realized how dangerous the current situation is? The main reason for his irritation towards this man was his attitude.

"I'm not here for Sumire. Didn't you say we would talk?"

Come to think of it, at that time; he did say that.

"You are late."

He expected a call back after that first one, but the man did not respond. So he left him a text message asking him to meet, but that was two days ago.

"Number one idols don't get a lot of free time, you know?"

"I still find it odd that you are taking your job seriously enough."

Soujiro watched Terashima take out his cigarette and a lighter. "Yeah, if you're asking me personally, doing all these jobs is a pain, and dealing with all those people is rather bothersome."

He knew it; there's no way he could have changed that much.

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 537

Chapter 537: Soujiro And Yuhi Part 2

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"However, I'm not going to let this go. I never intended for things to get this far, but I will not stop composing music. Perhaps that meant a part of me really didn't want to let it go. I wouldn't have realised that though if she didn't come along. What about you?"

"The same would go for me. I realised many things when she came back. Things that I had been trying to deny this entire time." Soujiro sighed.

It is precisely because she came back. That he began to suspect his brother in the first place. Although he had been reluctant to take action about it at first. A part of him already knew.

His eldest brother Althos connection to the Black Alice organisation, and his frequent meetings with the lady of the Nagawa family. It was the main reason why he started to investigate them.

"I see, and what you spoke about with her that time surely isn't a lie is it?"

"Do you really not mind it?" Soujiro asked. "Because even I find myself troubled about this situation. I understand that right now she is choosing to remain with you and the other people whom she deems important. She has made that choice, so nobody has the right to intervene and say she is wrong. However that does not make that okay. Since you were there that time surely you understand what I'm saying."

Sumire has made this decision to continue with her activities in the delinquent world, to continue involving herself in danger.

"For someone like her who has never had any one to love before. And just when she was about to experience love that accident happened. If those reports are true then she can never have a peaceful life with the man she loves."

It was something he discovered when the head of Hyou4 reached out to him and explained Sumire's situation. His family being a long standing traditional family, it was only normal for them to hold records that modern day libraries do not have. It was among those records where he discovered that Sumire's ancestors, to be exact she is the reincarnation of somebody from the past.

'It all sounded like a fairytale when I heard it. But after researching for several months I concluded why.'

Sumire's blood is special, and that is why that man has taken an unusual interest in her.

"She cannot be together with the man she loves without sacrificing a lot. Such a burden for a young girl like herself, we cannot allow her to shoulder it by herself."

That's right, he understood it a long time ago. That even if it wasn't Terashima, someone would come and sweep the girl away right under his nose.

Soujiro continues. "The two of you are together now and I understand it better than anyone, how much she cares about you and that's why I am worried. When the time comes....it will break her in more ways than one when she has to truly make a choice."

By that time, this charade would be over and he would be no more than a bystander. However, just for a little while longer. If it is for awhile longer please allow him to play a key role in her life.

"I can't say it doesn't bother me because it really does. Even now when she's singing and shining so brightly on stage, I understand that it's because of Mamoru and not me. That bothers me, yes it does. But more than anything it's best if she's happy."

'A part of me can sympathise with Terashima, no I can relate to that. Those are the same thoughts I have towards the relationship Sumire has with him.'

"As an idol she holds herself back quite a bit and I believe it's because she knows that it will show. Her feelings for Mamoru if she gets serious. However I don't want her holding herself back anymore because she has already been suppressing herself for such a long time. Even if I cannot completely have her heart."

Perhaps he has changed a little.

"Terashima, when did you start falling in love with Sumire?"

At that comment the black hair boy began to choke on the cigarette.

"You know what I mean by that -- Terashima are you alright? I see the look of death appearing on your face."

Soujiro passed him a drink and Terashima calmed down.

"That was close, on the other side my old man and Jae had been beckoning to me with a nice big smile."

"My apologies, I didn't think it would upset you that much."

"Why did you ask all of a sudden? Unless you're falling for someone who isn't Sumire?"

Soujiro could not miss Terashima's hopeful tone. 'He will not get rid of me that easily. Although I do not intend to compete for her love, he does not want Terashima to underestimate him.'

"No it's different. It's just that I've noticed that there is someone who is always struggling with love. She is always seeking happiness more than others, and has a lot of experience too. But her luck with men has never been good to begin with and her relationships with them don't last long. It's unfair, right?"

Even though I feel unpleasant that a young man who is in love with a young lady is on the verge of getting arrested."

Yuhi's eyes twitch in annoyance. "Oi who are you referring to there?"

Soujiro ignores that comment and continues. "Right now her partner is not good either. He's like the kind of guy who lies and neglects her. Perhaps there's a reason for it."

"Somehow I have been taking it lightly. But I have a bad feeling about this guy. Sometimes it irritates me too. even though she's not a bad girl. Somehow it's frustrating. Just a man that understands that girl and takes better care of her would be enough. Although it would be ideal if she chooses a man that can give her real happiness."

Suddenly the black hair boy tosses a disk in his hands. "Take this. She told me not to show you but since you've become kind enough to understand others then i'm sure it's alright now."

"You are one to talk."

"Haha really?" Soujiro watched Terashima light another cigarette. "You can go ahead and do something about it. Though you may think it's awkward due to your past relationship, I can see you two being good friends now. But you ought to do something since I know I can't. Anyway I've already got my hands full, being devoted to a young girl for quite a while now."

He watches as a gentle expression crawls onto Terashima's face.

"I wonder when I started to fall for that girl....Yuhi trails off as though he was thinking about it. "It was when I let my guard down for a moment. Since then I can't even resist well enough. I have let myself fall completely for her and she has played with my emotions. Because of that I can't help but feel happy. Maybe I was already too late. If I'm separated from her I won't be able to live.. It's like an addiction."

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 538

Chapter 538: Secrets

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Other people who hear these words may think Terashima is too possessive, but Soujiro saw it differently.

"Is that so? Then you'll be relieved to hear that the same goes for her."

Yuhi didn't get a chance to ask him anything, and Soujiro watches as a pair of dainty arms wrapped around Yuhi's waist within seconds. It was Sumire; she no longer wore the same clothes as earlier. No, her entire appearance had quite the glow.

She modified her clothes and even put on makeup.

"Yuhi....did you come to see me?"

'I knew she would follow me out. Even though she has been in this strange mood since morning, her senses are still sharp.'

"Sumire." Yuhi seemed surprised. "I came to see Makoto there."

Soujiro rolled his eyes at those words. 'As if, after this, he would have snuck around and gone to find her.'

"Jerk, even if it's a lie. You should still say you wanted to see me!"

"Aha. Did you miss me that much?"

"Of course I did!" Sumire exclaimed.

Terashima leaned down and kissed her forehead. "I received another confession; how will you take responsibility?"

Soujiro retreated inside, deep in thought. Who was it who told him about Terashima and Sumire? He indeed ended up discovering it himself, but before then, somebody else mentioned it. Just thinking about it irritated him.

'Lady Sumire is in love with the idol Terashima Yuhi.' He does not want to admit it, but it threw him off guard. Although he had no interest in the entertainment industry, even he knew who Terashima was.

So it surprised him. It caught him off guard, considering how he knew how bad she was when it came to anything to do with relationships. She is awkward and bad at talking to people, and she usually has an indifferent look on her face. But when it came to Terashima Yuhi, she wore such a bright smile on her face.

It vexed him, and that was when he realized he was in love with her. But he never intends to tell her. After the accident that killed off her family, he realized how much of a fool he was.

'I should have told her.' Because nobody found her body, Soujiro went with the assumption that she was still alive.

"Sir."

Soujiro glanced up and saw Naoki. "That person is out at the back. He said he wants to check on the stone with you."

"Then I shall go. Terashima is here, so Sumire shall be fine. But just in case, please remain."

'I do not need Naoki to condemn me for taking such careless actions.'

.....

At an underground chamber on the outskirts of town, Soujiro was lead inside the building.

He learned that he was an individual with evolved genes when he was no more than five years old. A part of him already understood before then that there was something different about him. But when he finally learned the reason why it baffled him.

'I am someone with evolved genetics, somebody with abilities like the ones you see in movies?' It seemed unreal to him.

"We are going further underground than I thought." Soujiro broke the silence.

This man walking ahead of him is a contact point to the black Alice organization. He is a member of the church, the same church which is sheltering the organization.

'When I first learned this, I was very puzzled. Why would such devote believers follow such a man?'

It did not take long before he learned the reason.

"Indeed, it seems they had to move the stone since it was too close to being discovered. Sir Soujiro, you appear to be quite distraught. Is it because she has returned to your side now?"

Despite that causal question, Soujiro understood what the man was trying to do. 'Did you switch sides?'

"My intentions have not changed," Soujiro answered.

This man has no idea, however, what his real intentions are. On the surface, he is making it look like he will go against Sumire and bring her to that man. But that is not the case at all. He figured this was the best way to obtain information.

'I have to pretend I am on the enemy's side. I have already consulted this with Terashima, so in the event something goes wrong, and she finds out, he will let her know.'

In the past, Soujiro would not have trusted Terashima with this job; after all, they had a bad relationship. There is a chance Terashima would sabotage him; even now, that is the case. But Soujiro recalled his expression earlier. If it is the current Terashima, it is okay to have faith in him.

"The reason sir Lucifer is interested in Ibuki Sumire is her blood; it seems she has a strange affinity to darkness. You are aware that humans with evolved genes have different abilities, correct?"

"Yes."

"Ibuki is a special type because she belongs to a group of humans with half human and half demon genes; she is a hanyou but a purebred one. She has more demon genes, more demon blood than she does humans. Surprisingly, she has managed to age in a normal way, but that will not last long. Eventually, she will stop aging, and her appearance will remain the same."

Soujiro frowned when he heard those words. "Are you saying she will not die?"

"It is harder for her to die; no matter how injured she gets, she will not die. That is why sir Lucifer will take more drastic measures even if it means endangering her life."

'How cruel. Why does she have to suffer such a terrible fate?'

He maintained his calm expression despite his distressed emotions. He cannot lose composure now.

"The black Alice organization exists for Ibuki Sumire; there is no doubt about that. But I do not think Lucifer understands the extent of her importance on the world. That is why we have to resort to using ancient arts. There was a time where magic was common in Japan; there was a time where people fought battles daily. Several spells could only activate in front of certain objects embedded with magic."

"So that is why."

"The church managed to dig up this ancient stone, but we have no idea how to use it. The language is hard to decipher. But I have learned that the Makoto family members were in charge of the stone before. So I believe the secret of your ancestors was passed onto you."

Indeed that is the only reason he could strike a bargain with this man. It did not take long before they arrived at the underground chamber. Brick covered the walls and a marble stone flooring. There was a large pillar in the center, and below it was the stone.

The only light source in this room came from the candles. Soujiro stood directly in front of him.

"Looking at it now, I can confirm what I told you. I can read it."

'I do not understand why, but I can read everything on this tablet.' It looks like it is on the verge of falling apart, but the words written there were clear to him even then.

Makihara seemed pleased with his response. "This is indeed a magic stone, and if we use it against her, we can surely win. However, only one person can use the magic from this stone. If it recognizes you as the master, you should not only be able to read it but use the ancient arts."

Soujiro had no interest in this stone at all.. But when he learned of its existence, he realized it would become a threat to her.

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 539

Chapter 539: The Only Way

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'I have to destroy it. I have to bury that spell away.'

If he does this, then Sumire will not get hurt. At least that is what he intended. However, he looked at the words written on the stone. Soujiro clenched his fist. That girl has no luck whatsoever. It seems Makihara does not understand the words on this stone; otherwise, he would know that one must use her blood to use this.

"I wish to be alone. I cannot focus with so many people around."

Makihara nodded. "Very well, I shall be waiting in the entrance."

The moment the man left, Soujiro extended his hand out, and the stone started to glow.

It seems this thing will recognize him as the master. But there is somebody else who can use this. However, if she does then, it will cause negative side effects on her.

He clenched his fist tightly. Why is it like this? No matter what he does, there is no way to save her from living a cruel fate. Even if she did not have these powers and lived on as a normal member of the elite, she would still suffer due to the weight of her duties.

Due to her family perishing, she does not have to worry about such things. But that was only because she was young; now that she has come off age, those people will enforce those responsibilities onto her.

With the current situation of her powers, the elites cannot do anything. But if she did not have those powers right about now, they would put pressure on her.

When his brother Shiki first dropped the hint that Sumire was alive, he tried to maintain a calm composure. Even though he didn't see her dead body and held onto the foolish hope that she was alive. After so many years, his hope slowly faded. So when his brother said that and invited him to that concur, he went. It was her; it was truly her.

'I was glad; she seemed happy and appeared to be living a normal life.'

That was the main reason why he didn't approach her sooner despite knowing she was alive. But with the recent move of the elite circle and that organization, Soujiro knew he had no choice but to lure her out. He could have personally gone to her but decided it would be better if she came to him.

It seems he will have to find another way to save her. But since he has already infiltrated their ranks, it should be easier. No, that man is not that simple. He cannot allow him to catch on.

....

It was already late when he returned to the mansion when he saw the guards drifting off. Soujiro used the other entrance. 'Normally, I would lecture them for being incompetent, but now is not the time for that.'

Soujiro blinked when he saw the figure fast asleep on the couch. A deep sigh escaped his lips. 'What is she doing all the way out here?' Even though they are engaged, he has not forced her to remain in his chambers. Although this has led to the servants talking, it did not bother him. He does not want to take advantage of her. There is still a large age difference between them, even if she is of age now.

Right now, she is the only member of the Ibuki family. She is not obliged to carry out this engagement. She is a normal individual right now. She doesn't have to associate with this world.

Allen ran his fingers through her hair and brought a strand to his lips. 'As long as she carried out her duties as my wife, I won't mind if she had a lover or two.'

Or rather, in her household, there were a lot of male guards. She noticed how fond she was of her cousin and her head guard Senbi Nao. It would not surprise him if she was in a relationship or had a crush on them.

If she performed her duties as his wife, as his betrothed. It wouldn't matter if she had another man; initially, he thought that way. But after he learned of her feelings for Terashima Yuhi, he changed his mind.

'Unknowingly, I found myself wanting to compete with that man.'

Sumire stirred awake, and he quickly drew his hand back. She sat up half dazed. "Soujiro?"

"You should head back to your chambers; it's late."

"I'll stay here."

A troubled look appeared on his face when he heard her say those words. This woman should know better than to stay in the room of someone of the opposite gender.

Sumire walks over to the divider, and he hears rustling. Is she changing her clothes? It didn't take long before she re-emerged wearing her nightgown. She crawled over to the bed and laid down. Soujiro, who stood on the other side, just stared at him dumbfounded.

"There is a terrible leak in my room, not affecting all the guest rooms in the west wing."

"Then use the guest rooms in the south."

"But there are seldom any guards there, so your servants advised me to come here."

'This is troubling; what type of challenge is this?' Moreover, she has no idea, does she? Recently he is starting to lose control. The self-control and resistance he built towards her are gradually vanishing. He thought it was a good thing that she was too busy to meet for a while.

The next time they meet, hopefully, things return to normal. But sadly, it was not like that. For the last few days, it has been difficult for him to keep his composure around her.

Soujiro laid at the furthest corner of the bed and turned his back so he wouldn't have to face her.

"You have gotten quite cheeky."

"Mmm, isn't it better to be bolder than to shy away?"

"That would depend on the situation."

'In situations like this, being bold is far too dangerous.'

"Do you want me to leave?" Sumire asked softly. "You know, I don't want to put you under an awkward position. But I figured that if I don't stay over in your room for at least one night, the servants may think we do not get along."

"My reputation does not matter." Soujiro trailed off. "But yours does."

She already has a bad enough reputation in the entertainment industry, let alone the elite world. Indeed, this is the correct decision.

Soujiro turned around and extended his hand out to touch her long hair once again. "Your hair, you grew it out for him, correct?"

"Mmm, but I also think this makes me look more feminine. Mother often said with my behavior; this is the only way for others to see me as a female." Sumire laughed. "Thinking about it now, though, when we first met, my hair was shorter."

"I almost mistook you for a knight."

ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 540

Chapter 540: The Current Her

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When he woke up the following day, to say so the least, it was fascinating. He never thought the day would come where he would wake up with Sumire beside him. She remained fast asleep, so he decided not to disturb her. Soujiro crept out of bed, and went for a quick shower, got dressed, and headed to his office.

But, his gaze fell on the documents in front of him, horrified. How on earth did it come to this? He triple-checked the documents before sighing deeply.

'How could I write her name as my signature?'

At first, he thought it was a mere illusion, but Soujiro checked the other documents. He signed all of them with her name.

He must be going crazy. Then again, he knew what the issue was. No matter how defenceless and clueless she is, how could she sleep beside him the entire time?

'Even when she explained the reason to me. I didn't think she would remain in my arms all night long. I didn't do anything to her. I just cuddled with her and fell asleep.'

But how could she fall asleep so carelessly? Soujiro expected to wake up and not find the girl in his arms anymore, but she remained. More than that, he felt irritated. Terashima wakes up like this every morning with her. He gets to see her in that state every day.

Soujiro slammed his fists against the table when he heard a soft voice call out to him.

"Soujiro?"

It was Sumire, from her clothes it looked like she was about to go out.

"Soujiro, sorry for disturbing you. But I'm going to head to practice."

"Practice?"

"Mmm, Hino said he would lend me a practice room in his company. I decided I would go early before it gets busy."

'That man should provide her a private place, he most likely has, and she doesn't know.'

Soujiro's gaze fell on the clock and frowned. It was only a few minutes past four in the morning.

"You'll get sick again, waking up this early."

Sumire laughed softly. "There isn't much time before my big show. I have to practice."

Her big show, huh? When he first saw the news, a part of him wanted to stop her. She doesn't have to return to the entertainment industry if it is so difficult for her.

"I will walk you out."

Sumire nodded. "Alright."

Soujiro quickly left the room with her.

"Terashima has plans to go to France, correct?"

"Mmmm, I said I would join him after I finish with things here."

"It seems he has already delayed the trip for you."

"He is hoping I sort things out before the year ends, but I doubt it. If I haven't sorted things by then, he can go ahead. I don't want to be a stumbling block to his dream."

'That man will wait till the very last minute, but if she isn't ready, he will cancel all his plans to go surely.' For Terashima Yuhi, Ibuki Sumire is even more important than his dream. It seems Sumire doesn't understand this.

"Besides, if I am to go with him, I will have to discuss things with you."

"With me?"

"You're my fiance, and I have no other relatives."

Is that how it is?

"Do you want me to cry, cling to you, and beg?"

Sumire sighed deeply. "If you did that, I would end up frightened to death."

His lips curve to a smile. "But it is an interesting idea, my dear. If I acted childish like that man, perhaps you would be more inclined to stay."

"Perhaps."

"I don't intend to end this engagement."

"I see, so that's your conclusion after all."

"You suspected it?"

"Well, we may not have feelings for each other. But we would make a good couple. I can see why you would prefer to stick with me." Sumire trailed off. "It may seem like I am rushing things, with my marriage to Yuhi in half a year. But before then, I shall give you a suitable answer."

If she is marrying Terashima, the natural conclusion is she will end the engagement. But she hasn't mentioned that.

"Initially, I said it was up to you."

"Mmm."

"But I realize this is something I need to think about too."

"I see, well then Soujiro--"

Soujiro extended his hand out to cut her off. "It should come from me this time."

The first time around, it came from her side. Her parents were the ones who brought up this engagement.

He kneeled down on the ground and placed his sword sheathe on the ground.

"Lady Ibuki Sumire, even if it is for a short while in the next five months. I request to remain your fiance formally."

"I accept."

Soujiro looked up with a tender gaze. "It seems you are the type who will use whatever cards she can until the expiration."

"Indeed, but as cruel as I am, it seems you accept regardless."

At Entertainment, a few hours later.

Sumire bent down slightly to watch the video. 'This is the song Yumi-senpai said we would sing; she even made a dance tutorial for me.' But, no matter how many times she watched it, something felt wrong to her.

Dance isn't her expertise, so maybe she is doing it right, but it's wrong.

She took a deep breath before she started to dance again.

Hino allowed her to borrow this practice room in his company. She said she would share with others, but they led her to a private one when she came this morning.

'I suppose this is better; it would be hard for me to focus with so many people around.'

It was hard for her to focus on the dance alone. The conversation she had with Soujiro not too long ago remained fresh in her mind. It seems he will help with the case. It relieves her that somebody reliable will join, but at the same time, she feels conflicted.

This is no good, having such negative emotions while dancing.

Her thoughts broke off when she heard a light knock on the door. Sumire tells the person to come in, and Hino strolled inside the room.

"Hey, got a minute?"

Sumire nodded, and Hino walked over. "I think you should write a new song."

"Write a new song?" Sumire repeated.

"Yeah, for your second single."

Sumire frowned at his words. "But I already have a song in mind."

"Change it."

Her sweat fell at how blunt Hino was. 'Yuhi warned me that Hino is a spartan when it comes to music but, this is the first time I see it.' Then again, he is a CEO of an entertainment company at a young age. He must-have skill.

"I'll use these songs I intend for the album instead?"

Hino's lips curve to a smile. "You catch on quick."

"A new song, huh?"

"Is it hard? Yuhi tells me how you come up with new songs like nothing."

Sumire shook her head. "I have been working on something." She trailed off. "Before I show you, Hino, let me ask. Why did you bring this up?"

Didn't he already have everything lined up for her to release those songs for her second single? Why did he suddenly change his mind?

"I talked to Yuhi, no I talked to Nakara Shin, that stupid researcher, and even Sano. I looked at the comments on the net, too, and generally asked around. It seems the current you is different now.. I feel that you can write a different type of song."