

## CHAPTER THREE

### Azure

"Where am I...?" My eyes flutter open, which I intended to close forever. A faint aroma of cocoa filling my nose, vision illuminated by the sunlight filtering through an unfamiliar window. "Some dream?" I stretch lazily, maybe am in heaven, "Wait, Why'd I get a ticket to heaven?" I blink, sitting straighter when realization slaps me. What happened to my voice? Or is that someone else? I look around, finding myself in some strange cozy one bhk apartment room with a tranquil atmosphere, lightened up by one large window on the wall, ALONE. So that was my voice? "Ahem... Ahh..." I touch my throat, suddenly feeling a hard bulge on it, checking my vocal cords, "hello? Check." An unfamiliar voice, deep and low. Waking up to these things after committing suicide is crazy, hah.

But there's something more to this, I feel stronger and taller. For some reason I don't dare to even look down, scared I might faint from too many surprises. As if opening my eyes after a suicide isn't surprising enough. Plus, my mind feels lighter, no dark thoughts or negative intentions.

I stand up slowly, taking a deep breath while I scan the space. It's nothing like a woman's room, of course a man's room. The scent of musk and cigarette, a soap that I remember my father and grandfather used, boots and coats with the vibe. But what am I doing here? Did some super hero catch me mid-air and brought me here?

That's when accidentally... my eyes fell on a mirror hanging on the wall, and I wish this accident never happened. For all I can see is a man himself, in the mirror, mirroring my shock and

horror expression on his face. Cause last, I remember I was a human female. I don't know if I should scream or jump out of the window again but- I feel dizzy.

After passing out for minutes long, I wake up again with a gasp. "Why did I even wake up again to this dream?!" If only I had someone to ask what's going on, I would've protected my new image as a man by not fainting at least. Okay, maybe I got a surgery. Let's believe that.

A deep sigh, I stand, finally ready to face and decipher this situation. I look down, seeing my flat plus broad chest and a boner- "What in the heavens is that unnecessary bulge doing down there!?" I squeal into the thin air, groaning. Is this stand-up ovation set by default every morning for no fucking reason? I adjust my pant discreetly, walking around the space with heavy breathes and checking out each door of this room. One balcony, one kitchen and another bathroom. Yes, bathroom is what I need. For I feel alive and wanting to take a shit. Maybe I can figure out this shit during shitting.

I spent two hours, staring blankly at the ceiling and trying to process. Unable to pass through the hurdle of 'How am alive again?'

Fuck this. I can't get a clue inside this bathroom, plus this male body is distracting. What's with these abs and a 9-inch cock? If I had my phone, I'd search 'How to fuck yourself' right away.

"Hah... Goddamnit." I mutter, taking a drag of cigarette, "Wait, did my spirit possess someone?" I spring, wiping my ass with a tissue paper using one masculine hand. The other masculine hand femininely adjusting my hair. "But why did my spirit do that-" I pause, remembering the life I lived, "Understandable... Spirit didn't want me to end up that way, I guess. Then what am I supposed to do this way?" Wish I had someone to resent and

take a revenge like any other horror story, but in mine, me is all I could blame. Is this a justice for myself against my own self? So first of all, I need to figure out where am standing. After I get out of the bathroom, I begin my searching. All the existing cupboards, drawers, and cabinets to find some clue about this situation. I get my identity card, not mine though. But this man am inside, his name his Azure Alarie. Surprisingly, I have the same surname again. I read ahead; date of birth-12<sup>th</sup> of July 1972; age 25; occupation- Mocha Hub Manager; address- 323 street, Marunochi, Kanazawe-shi, Ishikawa. I pause, processing the possibility of this information.

If am born am 1972... then today is 1997. But I was actually born in 1996. Stop, this can't be. I run a hand through my hair, pausing again. "That address..." it's where I spent my childhood. My happy years and, grandpa were there. Is he still here? I feel so overwhelmed and cynical. Coming back to past at the same place I lived my first few years, what's that supposed to mean. At this date and year, I was a toddler who used to play in grandpa's lap. Not stand here as a twenty-five-year-old man figuring out my existence with an erection early in the morning.

"Hah!" I scoff in disbelief, "This card is fraud." throwing the identity card out of the window without thinking, "Oh shit." I rush towards the window, looking down. That's when another sight hits me, my grandpa's house. I don't know why my eyes well up, threatening to flow out.

I quickly get out of the room, running down the hallway and staircase, catching my breath. It's a desperate urge to see him again. To apologize, to feel his love, cherish the moment. Maybe that's why am here, and I can't hold it back anymore. Damn, the stairs seem endless, am all sweaty and panting. Should've took the lift. When enter out to the open sky, the world seems nothing like 2021. Wiping my dampened eyes, I make my way to his doorsteps. My feet stop when I hear a faint crying sound, maybe

of some baby. I swallow hard, peeking across the wall where he often strolls in the lawn. I see him. His wrinkled arms carrying a small child, caressing her back gently to console her. She's a girl, tinted skin and blue eyes glistening with tears sparkling innocence, hair as dark as rain clouds. I know her... she's someone I killed. She's someone... I hate. But the sight of her, so vulnerable and unknown of the world, don't know why makes me feel a pang of remorse. She glances this way, our eyes meet. That one-year-old me, takes my breath away. Anything but the monster I knew I was, I see her as just something that needs to be protected.

I inhale sharply, looking away. Wanted to see grandpa but I can't face my own self right now. *Should I feel sorry that I killed you?*

How am I supposed to react?

Suddenly there's a voice that aims me, I was dying to hear it. Grandpa's. "Excuse me young man?" he asked softly, making me turn around by instinct, "Do you need something?" I gulp, shaking my head nervously, glancing at Azile staring at me with her round eyes. Grandpa continues, "You've been standing there for a while I see."

"Uhm, I-I just wanted to see..." I stutter like an idiot.

"See who? My granddaughter?"

"NO!" I yell, don't know why, "I mean, you!" I blurt.

He raises an eyebrow, "Me? What is there to see in me?" he laughs, a warm and comforting sound.

"Love." I mumble, "Actually, my grandpa is no more. I see him in you. So... can we become a family?" I ask directly, clutching the hem of my shirt like a shy boy.

A strange silence stretches out, he and his granddaughter, both gaze at me like am a rare sight. Finally, grandpa speaks, chuckling, "You're too open for a man. Come on in."

My eyes widen slightly, following him in. A place I missed a lot, a sense of nostalgia hits. Those wooden floors, worn out walls, sliding doors, and plants growing everywhere. Suddenly Azile tilts her body towards me, still held by grandpa, stretching out her small hands while she looks up at me with hope. I hesitate, turning my face away.

"I think she likes you." Says grandpa.

But I don't, even if she carries the most beautiful eyes and heart melting smile.

He continues, "She never trusted a stranger so much, to leave my arms and wanting to held by others. She trusts you already!"

But I don't trust her, if you knew what she could do years later, you'd disown her. "Well... Maybe because I look like her." I blurt out. Grandpa pauses, glancing at me over his shoulder with a serious expression. His look is somewhat mysterious, can't figure out.

He suddenly smiles warmly, handing me her granddaughter, "W-What? Me?" I stutter, awkwardly wrapping my arms around her, slightly flabbergasted.

"Yes you. Maybe even I trust you with her. You both do look alike. So, let's be family and... keep an eye on her. Let me bring some snacks." He smiles and walks into the kitchen, leaving me standing still with my mini girl version. Who's now staring at my face curiously, one tiny palm cupping my chin. I take a deep breathe, blinking.

"I don't like you, little monster." I mumble, slowly turning my head to look at her, narrowing my eyes. She giggles softly, snuggling closer. For god's sake what in the tiny koala is this

thing? I walk into the living room, sitting down on the floor and sit her on the table. "Please don't mess it up this time. Should I keep your mind protected from evil ideas? Hm?" I speak to her like an idiot, "Are you... understanding?" I whisper, looking at her.

She looks back at me, babbling, "Yesh. Azil!"

I scoff, smirking slightly, "You did?" I can't figure out if she's calling me Azile or just speaking her own name. I tentatively adjust her hair, subtly rubbing a thumb on her cheek. "Please don't make yourself suffer ever again." I mutter under my breathe, indicated to both of us. She nods, God knows why.

Grandpa enters, a tray of raw mango and a cup of tea beside. "Having a good time I see?" he asks, placing the tray on the table.

"Nothing too much, just teaching her to be a good girl." I say with a customer care smile on my face.

Grandpa throws his head back and laughs, "Good lord, hope she is picking her lessons fast. Don't want my one-year-old granddaughter to go around bullying people, ha-ha."

"Ah grandpa, am talking about her future here...!" I shake my head, running a hand through her hair.

"Did you say grandpa?"

"Can't I?"

"You can call me father you know?"

I chuckle, "Why? You don't want to feel old?"

"I don't look that old son."

"Haha... You called me son?"

"Hah! Whatever it is." He continues, "Even in future, she will be a kind and generous lady. Am sure of that!" he states, making me stare at him incredulously, "I will raise her well!"

I don't know anymore... 'kind and generous' what? My ass. What does that supposed to even mean?

"Grandpa, I don't doubt your upbringing but there's something called gene-" I blurt, stopping my words with a long pause, "Uhm... I wonder what kind of parents are hers. Not even coming for a visit." I comment casually, like I have every right to judge his family as a 'supposed' stranger.

Around 15 seconds later, we both are still silent. I decide to break the ice, "I'm truly sorry but-"

"Will you promise me a thing? Azure." He interrupts.

I gulp, blinking, "Y-Yeah? What is it?"

"No matter whatever happens, don't let her genetics ruin my upbringing." He looks right into my soul. The atmosphere tense.

"But how can I..."

"My son is my own gene. But he is built up just the way he was upbrought." He pauses, "Hope my genes are carried to her too."

I hesitantly nod, looking down at Azile's fingers wrapped around my index one while she plays. Where was it? When things went downhill? Where did grandpa's upbringing go wrong?

I sigh, caressing Azile's head, hoping no bad notion ever gets inside it, "I promise to you." And to myself.

*I failed you last time, last life. But she'd bring you wisdom. Her past will decide her future.*

Later that night, I get busy exploring apartment. Habit as an ex-woman, I keep everything tidy and organised. To my disgust I found used condoms under the bed, and heavens know who the

hell am I reincarnated as. Unknown of what I was dealing with for past twenty-five years in this lifetime. Or what I will have to deal with in future as this identity.

But something about this place got me. When I was Azile back then, the fourteenth floor, room 403, of side building was haunted, cause a man died after jumping off the window. And am living in exactly the same room. I remember the incident I heard a lot of times when going to school, scaring the shit out me. They said even after years, the ghost of the man is seen lurking around our house, searching for someone. Hell, they said he used to stand behind me many times, watching over. It still sends a shiver down my spine. Though I don't believe it now.

I glance at the mirror, my eyes raking up and down my new body. "No way in hell you can be single." I mutter, smirking flirtatiously at my reflection, running a hand through my hair. Crushing on my own form. Then I clear my throat, with a deep voice, "Heartthrobs like me," broadening my shoulder, "Sleep without shirts." Stripping off my clothes and flopping on the bed, smiling contently. Happy with my new life.

Grandpa's word ring in my ears as I stare at the ceiling, *Will you promise me a thing? Azure.*

I blink, "Wait a second, how did he know my name?" before I could delve further into the thought, the landline rings. Who's calling me this late? I ignore the first ring and close my eyes. But the damn telephone continues being an unnecessary alarm, making me groan and finally reach for it, "Hello?" my tone low and tired.

"Ghosting me honey?" a woman's voice, flowing out of tiny holes, "Are you at home?" I listen, my head spinning because I don't want to be 'honey' or 'sugar-cube' to anyone.



“Ahem... Who is speaking may I know?” my voice cautious, hope she is just messing around.

“YES! MYSELF KAZUMI!” she yells, I pull the phone slightly away from my ears, wincing, “Remember Kazumi?! Huh? The girl you love. Or did you forget!? Jerk.”

My eyes widen, another surprise- I have a freaking girlfriend and am jealous- “O-Ooh, Kazumi...!?” I yell back, acting happy (or surprised), “Nice to meet- Ah, Nice to talk to you. Been so long actually...” I trail off.

“What? What long? I’m talking to Azure here?” she asks suspiciously.

“Yes-yes, miss. Myself Azure.” I introduce.

“Shut up, I know your name. Why are you acting so unknown?”

“I-I don’t know Kazumi!” I whine into the phone, acting cute for no reason, “I am having short term memory loss, but I really miss you.” There go the words, an effort to be a good boyfriend. Not like she’d come over at midnight.

“Oh yeah? Stay there. Am coming over.” She hangs up, leaving me dazed and regretting life decisions.

Okay when she’ll enter, I’ll act like a gentleman. As I used to expect from men when I was a girl. Then I will make an excuse and tell her that we should stop. I have enough time to think of a valid reason I guess. The doorbell rings, I jump, looking at the door in disbelief. Even a minute has barely passed, how come she’s already here!? I groan lowly, rubbing my face before peeking through the peephole. My heart stops... she’s hot. I feel something unwanted stirring in my pants.

“Open the damn door!” she shouts out.

I take a deep breathe, swinging the door open and leaning against the doorframe, flexing my body, “Hey there, Shawty~” I

smirk mischievously, skill coming to me by default as I see her standing in a black laced nightgown hugging her figure.

Forgetting my plan to breakup or how she came here so fast.

“Shawty?” she raises an eyebrow, laughing, “What happened to you?” she walks in, casually pinching my abs as if it’s her toy.

“Ow! Can’t I call you that?” I turn to her, closing the door behind me, “How did you come here in seconds though?” I chuckle softly, “You live next door or something?”

She eyes me suspiciously, sitting on the edge of my bed, “Yes sir? I am your dear neighbour...”

My eyes widen, we both surprised for different reasons.

“You’re joking right?” Two of us speaking in unison.

“You really live next door?” I ask.

“You really have short term memory loss?” she asks back.

I nod, speaking, “Tell me how we started. I want to hear it from you.”

She sighs, “God, I can’t believe you are... huff, anyways,” adjusting her bangs, shifting on the bed. I can’t help but notice suddenly that girls are so hot. Now I know why guys go crazy. “You listening?” she clears her throat.

I bite back a smirk kneeling down on the floor to come near her face level, smiling before whispering, “Yes ma’am.” That’s when a blush spreads across her cheeks and ears.

She adjusts her hair again consciously, licking her lips subtly, “Mhm. Fine. Don’t look at me like that.” She pauses before speaking, “So we’ve been dating for six months now. We first met at the Mocha café of yours. I was a customer who deliberately used to visit often and give you signs, but you were a fool to not notice them. So that’s why I had to seduce you in a club when you were drunk off your ass and then let you fuck me

all night." My smile falters, I stare at her sceptically, "Then I blackmailed you to leak your nudes to my friends so that you have no choice but to date me."

That's it. I can't believe my ears. Speechless.

"You... What?" my voice goes shrill.

"What?" she blinks innocently, with a straight face.

"No shame!! You have no shame!" I stand up, pointing a finger at her accusingly, "You used me!"

Kazumi laughs, throwing her head back, "Yes, why? You got a problem?"

"Of course I got a problem! I used to think girls were innocent!" I heave, adjusting my pants, "Break up!"

"He-he, stop being so dramatic. What are you? A girl?" she chuckles, pulling my hand towards her but I resist.

"I don't know that. But you are no less than a perverted uncle." I narrow my eyes at her, before flicking them down her chest to pause at her cleavage, gulping.

She raises an eyebrow, "Sure-sure. I am the pervert and you're the decent one here. Happy?" with a sudden tug she makes me fall over her, flopping on the bed. Our faces inches close, as she mumbles, "I think your pervert needs a help." Batting her eyelashes seductively, our bodies pressed so closed that I can feel every rise and fall of her curves.

I swallow hard, whispering against her lips, "What help?" while feeling something rising under my boxers.

She giggles softly, "Use your... shaft. Or did you forget that too?"

A red shade rises my face, even though I know nothing about using my *shaft*. But my shaft is excited.

