

## VIII

"S-so what is it that you wanted to talk about?" Sayaka asked. "And why under the school's confession tree of all places? What, are you gonna propose?" she said sarcastically.

"No, not quite," Yuuto replied, reaching into his pocket. He had asked Nori to be a messenger, similar to how Kaho was, and ask Sayaka to meet him beneath the sakura tree in the courtyard after school. Surprisingly enough, she showed up.

*Interesting*, Yuuto thought as he pulled the neatly folded letter out of his pocket.

"Lemme ask you: this letter...you didn't *find* it at all, did you?"

"Whatever could you mean?" Sayaka asked, averting her gaze.

"I mean you and Kaho didn't find it near the shoe lockers, but rather you found it in our classroom. Specifically, by your desk. In other words, you wrote it, right?" Yuuto inquired.

Sayaka gave a deep sigh. "Well done, you figured me out. That still doesn't explain why you called me all the way out here though."

"Yes it does," Yuuto said. "At the bottom of the letter it said, and I quote, 'I'd love to meet beneath the confession tree, *if* you can find out who I am, that is.' Doesn't that kinda sound like you, actually?"

"Err...alright, yeah, I'll give you that one," Sayaka giggled. "S-so...I assume I'm in for a hard rejection, huh?"

"Well, not *exactly*," Yuuto replied. "I'm just confused as to why you'd confess to *me* of all people. I mean, you're the prim and proper lady of a wealthy household. You have friends and supporters, and even fans. I'm...well...*me*. I'm not exactly a 'people person,' so to speak, so what is it that you like about me? Or was this a dare from a friend of yours?"

"Oh, it's no dare," Sayaka assured him. "I just...it's hard to describe, but I like your way of life, y'know? I like your attitude towards people. Your way of treating everyone with kindness and your way of dealing with everything life throws your way. I like your courage and your determination...I guess. That's the best way I can explain it, really."

"Huh..."

"I just...felt jealous after finding out you had a fiancée...I just wanted you to know how I felt since I may never get a chance to...y'know...to ask—"

"So you wanna go out sometime?" Yuuto asked casually.

"W-w-w-wait, WHAT? Really? B-but don't you have f-fiancée?" Sayaka stammered.

"Well, Hanae is *technically* my fiancée, but that's something that my Mom had plotted out behind my back. Not even my Pops knew about it. In other words, I still don't know if I'm sure about following through with that arrangement. I mean, I don't want to hurt her feelings or anything, but I'm just not sure about being in a relationship with her. I just don't know her well enough yet."

"Y-yeah, but nonetheless..."

"Hanae made a good point. Love is a difficult affair. She realized that I wasn't informed of our engagement, so she told me I should make a careful decision."

"So she's letting you date other girls?" Sayaka cried excitedly.

"Y-yeah," Yuuto replied, "but I didn't think I'd have to. However, if you wanna give it a try..."

"Yes! I'll do it!" Sayaka exclaimed. She threw her arms around Yuuto, hugging him tightly. "I'm free all weekend!" She took out her phone. "Can I get your number?"

"S-sure," Yuuto answered, taking his own phone out. Moments later, they had exchanged phone numbers. Yuuto looked down at his phone, smiling. *Finally, I have the number of a woman besides my own mother!* he thought with excitement. *That makes four contacts: Sayaka, Nori, Mom and Pops! Come to think of it, I should get Hanae's number too when I have the time.*

Sayaka giggled to herself as she stared at her phone screen. "I finally have a boy's number..." she whispered to herself with excitement. She immediately send Yuuto a text, causing his phone to buzz in his hand. He chuckled. "I'm right here, y'know?" he said.

"O-oh! Right...sorry, I'm just...elated. I don't even know my own father's phone number, so I actually have a *male* contact now! I can brag to my friends about this so much!" Sayaka cried.

Yuuto smiled and laughed. "Yeah, and I can bug Nori about *his* current status with the ladies."

The two continued to laugh and joke.

Hanae sighed as she continued walking. "I haven't even gotten my darling's number yet," she mumbled with jealousy. "God, why'd I have to watch that whole thing from that window?"

She continued mumbling as she walked on. "No matter, I'll get his number too for sure!" she declared to herself.