

XVI

The girl tapped Yuuto on the shoulder as he continued to converse with Sayaka, Nori and Hanae. Turning around, he smiled. "Yes?" he asked.

"U-umm...are you, by any chance, Yuuto Ishikawa?"

"Yeah, that's me...how'd you guess?" Yuuto chuckled.

"My father knows your family...we moved to this city last week because of his job," the girl explained. "My name is Yuina Sasaki."

"Sasaki, hmm?" Yuuto asked, putting a finger to his chin. "Yeah, sounds kinda familiar now that I think about it, but I can't quite recall why. Sorry, I have a bad memory when it comes to this kinda thing."

"It's alright, I heard about that. It happened because of an injury you got in the past, right? That's what my Dad told me."

"Y-yeah...damn, I guess you do know my family well, huh?"

Off to the side, Hanae and Sayaka both pouted with jealousy.

Nori rubbed the back of his head. "I'm starting to get more jealous... 'cause that girl is SO hot!"

Sayaka chopped him sharply on the head. "Language, Nori Chino!"

As Yuuto walked out of the school casually, Hanae ran up to him and tackled him. "Darling, let's go home together!" she cried.

"Sure, if that's everythi—" he began.

"Actually, Yuuto, I have something to ask of you as well," Sayaka said, walking over. "My parents felt like ordering takeout today so if you could come by to make a delivery at dinnertime it would be much appreciated."

"N-no problem, just three bowls of the house specialty noodles?" Yuuto asked.

"Yep."

"Alright then, I'll keep it in mind. I'll be there around seven in the evening, same time we had dinner last time."

"Yeah, sounds great!" Sayaka smiled.

"Wait, *last* time?" Hanae interrupted, curious.

"Yeah," Sayaka answered, "Yuuto came over to my place for a while when he last walked me home." She smirked. "You jealous or what?"

"Sayaka," Yuuto said, "remember what I told you."

"Oh, right. My attitude..." Sayaka giggled nervously. "Sorry."

"Yuuto waved to Nori as he walked by and headed home.

"Don't have too much fun, dude!" Nori called to him.

"Don't worry," Yuuto replied, "I'm not you!"

As the two boys chuckled, Yuuto felt another tap on his shoulder. Turning around, he saw Yuina timidly shuffling in place. The two other girls stared at her.

"You gotta be kidding me," Hanae mumbled.

"Another one?" Sayaka asked herself. "Dammit."

"U-umm...Yuuto...if you don't mind...I would like to drop by your new home...with a letter from my Dad. I never found you until today...so I couldn't visit since I don't know the address." Yuina said nervously.

"That's...fair, I guess," Yuuto said. "I'll take Hanae home, take you back to see my parents and deliver the letter, then do some work and head out for a delivery. There, I've got it all scheduled out."

Hanae clung to Yuuto as the two of them walked down the street. Yuina nervously followed behind them, adding tension to the awkward third wheel situation.

As they turned left, they came upon Hanae's house. "We're here," Hanae mumbled dejectedly. "Can I have a goodbye kiss?"

"We're not parting ways forever or anything," Yuuto reminded her, "so don't make it so dramatic!"

"But not seeing you until tomorrow will feel like an eternity to me, darling!"

Yuuto sighed. "Fine," he mumbled. He placed a kiss on her forehead and turned around. "Alright, I'm out. See you tomorrow, 'kay?"

"Good night, darling!" Hanae waved as he walked off with Yuina. *Try and get ahead of me now, you little homewrecker*, Hanae thought, giggling to herself as she entered the building.

Yuuto sighed, taking a sip of his tea. His mother, Aoi, was running around the house freaking out. As Goro entered the room, she shot him a glare. "I see *you* have also been plotting behind *my* back!" she cried. "And I thought I got ahead of you with that arranged marriage thing! But who knew *you* had thought a whole step ahead?"

Goro stared at his wife in confusion. "What?" he simply asked.

"Mom, the fuck are you on about?" Yuuto laughed, putting his teacup down.

"IT'S NOTHING!" his mother replied with a scream. "Y-yeah, don't worry about it, dear," she smiled, calming down. "Piece of shit plotting," she added under her breath, once again glaring at her confused husband.

"Dear," Goro said, "you *do* realize you're the one who's influencing our son with your language, right?"

"I don't give a shit about it," Aoi and Yuuto said in unison.

"S-son, you *should* care about what your mother is teaching you," Goro sighed.

"Hey, if Mom doesn't care then I don't," Yuuto shrugged.

"And if my son doesn't care, then neither do I," Aoi giggled.

"WHAT KIND OF LOGIC IS THAT?" Goro cried.

"But more importantly, Pops, you've completely ignored the fact that we have a guest," Yuuto reminded him, pointing to Yuina.

"O-oh. Shoot. Uhh...sorry about that. You...you're Hideki's daughter, Yuina, right? How is he?"

"Dad's doing quite well," Yuina replied, "thank you for asking. However, today I have a letter from him to deliver. I don't have the slightest clue what the contents are though."

"I see," Goro nodded as Yuina took a letter out of her bag and walked over, handing it to him. Opening it, he unfolded the paper inside and read it over quickly. Aoi, leaning in and reading over his shoulder, screeched. "I KNEW IT!" she cried. "YOU DID PLOT!"

Goro rolled his eyes. "Unfortunately, I have to disagree. I think Hideki plotted it for me and never told me about it," he said. "However, I don't necessarily object," he added under his breath.

Glancing at his watch, Yuuto saw the time. "Hey, Pops, I need to head out for some important business. I'll do a bit of work in the kitchen then head off for a bit. If you need me, just call me." He got up and walked into the kitchen.

"Son, what could you possibly have to do right now?" Goro called after him.

"Don't worry about it, Pops!"

Goro sighed. "Poor boy. Doesn't even know what we've gotten him into."

"And whose fault do you think that is?" Aoi snapped.

"Technically, since I wasn't the one to plot this, it's *yours*."

"WHAT THE FU—"

Yuuto checked his watch again as he walked up to the big metal gates. *I'm three minutes early*, he thought. *Nice*. In one hand, he held a bag with large three plastic containers inside, each with one bowl's worth of noodle soup inside. An additional small container with some gyoza inside rested atop the three others. With his free hand, he rang the doorbell of the Hamasaki residence.

"Who is it?" a voice cooed through the speaker.

"U-umm...food delivery," he replied.

"Is this Yuuto?" the voice asked.

"Yes, it's me," Yuuto answered.

"Come on in," the voice said as the gates opened.

As he approached the door, Sayaka opened the gates and ran over to him, hugging him tightly. "Good to see you, Yuuto. Is it a busy day today?"

"Yeah," Yuuto replied. "I gotta run back as soon as possible. I have other deliveries I need to make. I just dropped by here first since it's the biggest one. Three large bowls of house specialty soup, and a small box of gyoza as a complimentary appetizer. Consider it my treat."

"Aww, you're so sweet," Sayaka cooed. "But are you sure? I don't mind paying..."

"Oh c'mon, don't be like that. We're friends, so it's cool."

"O-oh! Alright then...here's the 4500 yen that I owe you for the soup, then. I do hope that next time you drop by, you can stay for a while," she smiled, taking the bag out of his hands. She kissed him gently on the cheek as she walked back into the

house. She waved casually, closing the door. As Yuuto walked out from the large metal gates at the front, he turned around. They slowly closed with the help of the machine that managed the gate. He smiled.

"Alright, going home!" he chuckled as he turned to head home.

"Sorry, I didn't get to invite him to stay for dinner today," Sayaka said with a sigh.

"You didn't get to?" Julia asked her daughter.

"He was busy today," Sayaka replied.

"Well, that's fine," Kenji smiled, patting his daughter on the head. "Everyone has times when they're busy. I mean, I just wanted to have some of this soup again, but your mother clearly had told you about some other plans of hers."

"Oh, and Yuuto also made us some Gyoza. He insisted that we just take it, even though I offered to pay," Sayaka said, having remembered.

"Oh?" Julia's eyes lit up. "He brought you a special treat?" she cried. "That's WONDERFUL! This is a significant development, trust me! Everyone knows that boys give the girls they like little gifts and treats here and there, just ask your father!"

"H-honey..." Kenji mumbled with embarrassment. "Jeez, let's not talk about that anymore. Dinner time, everyone!"