

CHAPTER III - A REVERSE-AFFAIR?!

Chusei North High School. Or just Chusei High for short. The most boring-ass school I could imagine going to, if not for my relationship...

I found myself dozing off in class again. This happens quite often. I can never quite understand *why* it happens, but I suppose it's because we have crappy teachers. Nothing interesting ever happens at our school. But then again, considering the most "interesting" things to happen at schools tend to be cruel and violent in nature, that may not be so bad.

As the bell rings to signal the start of lunchtime, I feel myself starting to drift off to sleep.

"Michiko, what's wrong with you today?" I hear a voice ask.

Damnit, it's Yuki. Yukiko Mizushima, or "Yuki" for short. My best friend. She's kinda rocking a ganguro look, with a slight tan and dyed blonde hair (I like it better than her natural black hair, but hey). She's quite a bit taller than me though, so it's kinda funny when we're standing together, especially side-by-side. Her eyes are this enticing emerald green. They look fake, like they're contact lenses or something, but they're totally real. She inherited it from her mother.

Anyways, in response to her concern, I tell Yuki that everything's fine, but she didn't look convinced. And here I was thinking I'd hidden my eyebags pretty well. I bit the bullet and used a *ton* of makeup for like the third time in my life, and it didn't even work.

"What, did you and Touma get into a fight?" Yuki asked curiously. "He isn't here today, after all."

"He found out," I replied.

"Found out about what?" Yuki asked again.

Fuck your questions, you know what I'm talking about. *You* were the one who suggested it.

"Wait, don't tell me you mean he found out about *you and Junichi*," Yuki whispered.

I nodded, and for a split second, I could swear Yuki *smiled*. Is she really even my *friend*? Like, girl, you're supposed to be on *my* side, not trying to fuck me up!

"You could use me as a scapegoat," Yuki suddenly said. "I don't quite mind. Just tell him I convinced you to do it. Your affair, I mean."

"That won't work," I replied apathetically. And I meant it. I'm not usually one to give up without trying, but I *know* Touma. I *know* he's not gonna forgive me, even if I placed all the blame on Yuki's head. Even if he *believed* me, he wouldn't fully forgive me. He doesn't forgive OR forget that easily.

"I'm going to see him later," I said quietly. "He left his work phone at my place."

"Want me to tag along?" Yuki asked. "I'll help explain everything."

"No, it's fine," I answered. "I appreciate the thought, but I don't wanna get more people involved in this whole thing than necessary."

Yuki sighed and shrugged. "Alright then. Hey, by the way, do you know that girl standing at the door?" she asked, pointing over my shoulder.

Turning around, I notice a head of curly blue hair and pair of hazel brown eyes...that are giving me the stink-eye. A little girl was glaring at me from our classroom door. She wore our school's uniform too. All of a sudden, however, I find myself thinking back to about four months ago. When I was reading his journal, Touma had told me about a childhood friend of his who (supposedly) had those very features: curly blue hair and warm, brown eyes. She's apparently a year younger than us, and her classroom is just down the hall. I gulped.

"That might be Touma's neighbour," I muttered. "Her name's Shizue. Shizue...Sasaki, I think?"

"Say what?" Yuki asked. "Hey, if they're neighbours and she's *that* cute-looking...do you think they could be having a reverse-affair?"

I told her that I doubted it, and asked what the hell a "reverse-affair" was supposed to be. Yuki shrugged and laughed. She apparently made it up.

Touma's journal was *precise*, from recording the time to recording events. It was sometimes a little *too* detailed for my taste (like when he wrote about the first time we had sex), but it left little to nothing out. Although I doubt he'd record it if he'd been having an affair, I couldn't think of any reason for him to do so. And yet, even so, a tiny seed of doubt was sewn into my mind.

The girl at the door, finally noticing that I'd spotted her, quickly slinked away. I sighed. "I'm gonna follow her," I said.

•

I look down upon the school's courtyard from the roof, enjoying the gentle breeze against my hair. I've always enjoyed this sort of breeze. It cools me down. It helps *calm* me down. And God knows, I need something to calm me down right now.

About four months ago, Touma Koizumi told me that he had a girlfriend. And as it turns out, it was one of the most popular girls in our school: Michiko Inoue. Touma's my dear childhood friend. And, I admit, he's also my crush. I've held feelings for him for the vast, vast majority of these last six years. I think I fell in love the moment we met, actually, and throughout these years of getting to know him, I couldn't help but fall for him even more.

Even so, when I heard he got a girlfriend (and straight from the man himself, too!), I decided to respect his wishes and wish for his happiness. I decided to remain the good childhood friend, the one who

indeed never finds love but still supports her friend out of love for him. I was content with just making him meals and watching him enjoy my cooking until he decided he had no more use for me. I was alright with becoming a distant memory if it would one day grant him happiness. But little did I know that Michiko Inoue was merely toying with my Touma's heart by dangling before him a carrot on a stick, and now that she's had her fun she's gone ahead and run off with another man! And the school playboy, no less! And for that, I will never forgive her.

I've known Touma for *six years*! I know more about him than she does. I know that whenever he's going through something extremely stressful, he falls ill for a day or two. I know that he's ill right now. That's why I'm here. I wanna call him from the rooftop where nobody can hear us, and I'm going to tell him that I'm coming over this evening to cook for him again.

How that Michiko Inoue's run away, I have a chance to be with my Touma again, and I'm not going to throw that away!

Pulling out my phone and quickly dialing his number, I only need to wait for a few seconds before he picks up. "Shizue?" I hear Touma ask. He's not *too* sick. His voice is a little raspy, but that's about it.

"I'm coming over this evening to drop off homework and make dinner," I said. "What would you like to have? Maybe a simple porridge will do?"

"Fuck no," Touma replied (as I expected). "I hate porridge, and you know that. Can we have yakisoba instead?"

Yakisoba. Japanese stir-fried noodles. One of Touma's favorite dishes, alongside curry and pizza. I could never understand *why* he enjoyed pizza so much, but that's because my tongue is biased. If the food isn't Japanese, it seems my stomach won't fully accept it no matter what.

"I'll pick up some ingredients and come over around seven this evening. Don't be occupied," I said. "We're having yakisoba."

"Great," Touma replied. "Someone from my office will be dropping by this afternoon too, but that'll be around four to five o'clock. Don't be too alarmed if you see an unfamiliar person coming in. They probably work for my employer. They don't *always* send the same people to make deliveries for us workers. I'm expecting a package from my boss, y'see."

"Got it," I replied. "See you later."

"Thanks, Shizue. I appreciate it," Touma said before hanging up. I can't help but crack a smile. He appreciates me.

•

"Well shit," Yuki muttered quietly.

"Well shit, indeed," I agreed. Our ears were pressed against the door to the rooftop. Sure, it's rude, but curiosity got the better of us. We eavesdropped on Shizue Sasaki's phone call.

I think her last name was Sasaki.

Motioning for Yuki to follow me, we both quickly left the area and headed back towards the classroom. "So she really does go and cook for him, huh?" I mutter.

"What, you *knew* about this?" Yuki asked. "Isn't this sorta thing a *telltale sign* of an affair? Who in their right mind would, as a young and opportunistic woman, go cook for someone they didn't love?"

"An old friend, maybe?" I suggested. "There are *too many* possibilities. The likelihood of it being an affair are minimal." Or so I told Yuki. Really, I questioned it myself. It wouldn't make sense for Touma to have an affair, but even then...

"So what's the plan now?" Yuki asked. "You know his childhood friend is gonna go and make him a lovey-dovey meal, right? So what're you gonna do? Drop in on 'em and say hi?"

I sighed. "Don't put it that way," I said.

"Well, you can't just do *nothing*," Yuki muttered. "The faster you resolve this whole issue, the earlier you can get your relationship back on track."

Well, she *is* part of the reason why my relationship is *off* track to begin with, but I manage to keep *that* thought to myself.

"Y'know what? I do have a plan, actually," I said. "I'm gonna go deliver Touma's work phone back to him." I smiled. "Mind tagging along?"

"You changed your mind, eh?" Yuki laughed. "And here I thought you wanted to keep me out of your affairs...I was beginning to think I'd lost my value as a friend! You're always getting *me* outta *my* binds, so you better bet I'll toss you a line. So yeah, I'd love to tag along."

I couldn't help but giggle at that one. "Thanks, Yuki," I said gratefully.