

## XXVI

Yuuto walked out of his room. Turning to the left to head downstairs to the inn lobby, he ended up face-to-face with Sayaka, who simply smiled at him. "So I've finally got you, hmm?" she laughed.

"Yeah, seems so," Yuuto answered.

"Let's talk for a bit," she said. "I just...have a few things to tell you."

"Sure," Yuuto agreed, "what's up?"

"It's just...the last two months, you've been spending so much time with Hanae...I guess it's just kinda weird for me, since we'd spent so much time together during the first month of school, and we just seemed to be drifting apart...did I do something wrong?"

"What? No!" Yuuto cried. "She even thinks I've been spending too much time with you! She just wants some more attention. After all, I *did* neglect her a little during that first month, so I guess that wasn't too fair..."

"Yeah, I suppose," Sayaka agreed. "B-but anyways, I...I know we've been 'dating,' but Hanae is still your fiancée, and ultimately you'll have to choose between us...so I just wanted to confess properly today. I kinda wanna catch up to her a little, since she had a head start compared to me...so, well...I've liked you for a long time. I know it wasn't that obvious, but I've had a crush on you since the first day of school. Do you remember that?"

"I...I do, actually. You dropped your books by the stairwell, right?"

"Yep. And only one person stopped to help me," Sayaka giggled with embarrassment. "You stood out amongst the crowd, you know?" You meant something to me. If anything, you represented the idea of facing life head-on with a smile."

"Am I that philosophical?" Yuuto chuckled. "I never noticed."

Sayaka could only laugh in response. "Yeah, I suppose. I...I don't expect you to answer to my feelings right away, but...I just want you to know that I've liked you for a long time now..."

"Huh...so I was the one you were sneaking glances at every morning?" Yuuto asked.

"You—wait, you *noticed* that?" Sayaka responded, stunned.

"Yeah...sorry if I'm being dense, but I noticed you stealing glances towards the back of the class. I just thought you were into someone else though," he admitted. "I just didn't think you'd like someone like me, y'know? To be honest, if I had known it was me you were glancing at, I would have just asked you out...but hey, look where we are now, right?"

Sayaka sighed deeply. "Dammit! I should have confessed," she mumbled with regret. "Maybe then I could have had a leg up on Hanae," she added to herself. "Oh well, I guess it worked out in the end, huh?"

"Yeah," Yuuto agreed. "I must apologize though. You know how complicated my situation is right now...so I can't answer to your confession as of yet, and I hope you understand."

Sayaka smiled. "I get it, don't worry," she assured him. "After all, I think I'd be stuck with a killer headache if I were in your shoes." She giggled. "However, don't you think for even a second that I'll give up on you!" she declared. "I intend to be with you, and that's final!"

Yuuto chuckled and gave her a tight hug. "I'm glad to hear it," he said.

"Y'know, I'm starting to get the feeling that this is gonna keep happening," Yuuto mumbled. Nori chuckled as he watched Hanae and Sayaka glare at each other. Each girl held onto one of Yuuto's arms tightly, unwilling to let go. Off in the distance, Yuina watched them through her binoculars, with the students around her all turning to look in confusion.

The students were inside of the inn, sitting at the dinner table.

"Say, dude, how has Ms. Adachi not killed you for this blatant disregard of morality rules yet?" Nori inquired.

"I'm pretty sure it's just because she doesn't want to deal with the backlash from Sayaka," Yuuto laughed in response.

At the other end of the room, Ms. Adachi chugged some sake. "Fuck id awl!" she screamed, her words heavily slurred. "Shumone get me uh boyfriend already!"

Hanae, ignoring her teacher's ramblings, nuzzled Yuuto's chest. "Darling," she whispered, "wanna head to the mixed baths together later?"

Leaning over to her, Yuuto sighed. "Listen, the only people in there are middle-aged men hoping to catch a glimpse. If you go in there, God knows what they'll do to you. I don't think I can take those bastard on, y'know? Their perversity is gonna overpower my lack of talent," he joked.

Hanae nodded. "I suppose so," she thought. "Then wanna go into the girl's baths with me?"

"I think the other ladies would murder me," Yuuto said. "And before you even try to suggest it, going into the boy's baths may be even more dangerous than using the mixed ones."

"Then how will we bathe together?" Hanae complained. "Oh, wanna go skinny dipping in the ocean?" she suggested.

"That's indecent exposure," Yuuto reminded her. "Let's try staying out of jail. I'm pretty sure jail is worse than any of the baths."

"True," Hanae mumbled. "Crap...alright, fine, I guess we can bathe together when we get home...I'll have to settle, I guess."

"Settle for *what*?" Yuuto asked.

"Don't worry about it, darling," Hanae assured him.

"That just worries me even more," Yuuto sighed.