

義妹生活

三河ごーすと

illustr Hiten



Days with my Step Sister



presented by
ghost mikawa

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Gimai Seikatsu - Short Story

**- taken from Kadokawa Light Novel
Festival Memorial Book**

Whenever cherry blossom season comes around, I, Ayase Saki, always find myself pondering one thing: Why is everyone so happy about new beginnings? During the new school term, when I hear the joyful and high-pitched laughter of the other students, it feels like I'm just watching them from a different world through a glass window, despite us being in the same plane of existence.

New environments are more troublesome than blissful. After all, if your surroundings reset back to a blank slate, you're forced to show the people around you what kind of person you are.

I've devoted my time to become stronger and more independent so that I wouldn't be underestimated. I want to be able to live my own life and future alone. That's why I never felt like making any friends. I let them think that I was hard to approach and get along with so that they would then leave me alone out of fear or annoyance. After all, that makes it much easier for me. Yet, once spring arrives, I have to do it all over again. That's why I can't stand this cherry blossom season.

“Cherry blossom viewing, huh?”

Right after passing through the school gate, large cherry blossom trees stood around me, as if to greet the incoming students. When I looked up at them, I remembered a conversation I had with Mom.

‘One of the bar’s regulars invited me to go to a cherry blossom viewing. Would you like to join us, Saki?’

‘Hmmm... I’m good. I don’t feel like I would be excited about that sort of thing even if there were other adults around.’

‘My, what a shame. I wanted to introduce the daughter I’m always bragging about.’

‘You sound awfully close to that person.’

‘Oh my. I don’t really think that’s true, though.’

I knew she was being intentionally evasive. As of late, I had realized that Mom was talking about this man pretty often. Although we don’t get to spend much time together because of our disjointed lifestyles, and we’re hardly able to eat breakfast or dinner together, we try to tell each other about what’s going on. About her job, about my school, about how my studies are coming along, about stories from her work that aren’t quite everyday occurrences, even just about how cold the weather is recently, or how the cherry blossoms had started to bloom. All in all, they were fairly common, harmless conversations.

After she and Dad started to live apart, and especially after they got a divorce, she barely spoke about any men at all. I figured she might have given up on relationships for the time being, but from the sound of it there seems to have been some kind of development I wasn’t aware of. While I

felt happy for this change, and genuine joy that she was feeling better, a feeling of loneliness assaulted me, like I was being left behind.

Right when I was about to pass beneath the cherry blossom trees, I stopped. At the stairs next to the entrance, there was a bit of a darker area in the shade. I could see a single male student with his back to the wall there, his calm eyes fixated on the book on his hands. He had black hair and a medium build, the exact opposite of typical flashy highschool boys. Instead, he seemed calm and collected.

Even as the other students passed him by, gleefully chatting, he had no reaction whatsoever. He simply continued to read. It almost looked like he was separated from the outside world by an invisible but thick glass film.

“Like a comrade in arms.” I muttered.

However, my voice didn’t reach him. Thankfully, I must admit. If some random girl suddenly said something weird like that, he would surely be perplexed. Worst-case, he might even assume that I’m hitting on him.

In the first place, calling out to him would be a course of action contradictory to his desires. He had clearly drawn a line between himself and all the people who would find joy from new encounters in this fresh season. He must be like me, not desiring any human relationships with people too close for comfort. That being said, simply knowing that there was someone who had a similar mindset to mine caused me to feel a bit more relaxed.

In the end, I walked past him into the entrance, not saying a single word to him. Naturally, I don’t know his name, and I doubt I’ll remember his face too well. Even if we run into

each other again, I'm sure that I wouldn't even recognize him.

Typical of this cherry blossom season, it was a time of new encounters. At this point in time, nobody knew that this was the first encounter of the two who would eventually become step-siblings.