

Alchemy of Hearts chapter 7

Chapter 7: Fated meeting

In steady steps, Haruka explored the surrounding with her eyes, and her pair of bamboo straw woven sandals brushed against the red earth as she walked by.

With each step taken, her gaze lingered on the frontal view of the castle, taking note of the fact that whoever owned the place was fond of the traditional home setting and admired him.

Not for once did Haruka think of the possible danger she might encounter for trespassing into a random castle.

As if to be bewitched, she allowed whatever was pulling her to get the best of her.

On getting to the castle's entrance, she placed her foot on the stair, climbing the first two steps ahead before stretching her free hand to turn the doorknob.

As soon as she pushed the wooden door open, a creaking sound escaped from it as she walked into the house and closed it behind her with no atom of fear in her.

Her sharp gaze pierced ahead into the poorly lit room, squinting as she urged her feet forward.

At the same time in one of the rooms in the huge castle, a young man lay stiffly on the futon with both hands sprawled on his sides.

Suddenly his eyes popped wide open as he sprang up into a sitting position hurriedly. Loud pants from his nostrils and parted lips escaped, producing an echo in the room.

His chest rose and fell with great burst as his fingers tightly grasped the quilt that fell from his chest to the part above his waist.

Naoki felt his breath was snatched away for longer than fifteen minutes and was only returned a moment ago.

Lifting his head slowly, his long black hair cascaded down his slightly hunched back like a waterfall as he edged his right hand over to the left side of his chest, rubbing slowly on it.

His eyes closed briefly while his lips parted as he desperately gasped for air. Seconds passed and he pried his eyes open, darting his sharp eyes across the room like a predator on a hunt for his prey.

Gradually, he felt his cold body start to warm up, and in a few moments beads of sweat formed on his forehead while studying his environment.

Amidst the chaos his mind produced at that moment, one thought reigned in his mind.

'How come I'm here?'

Suddenly the memories from the time he accidentally knocked down the half-finished potion in his Rabo flooded into his head.

He could vividly remember how he collapsed limply on the floor after inhaling the dangerous fumes and how helplessly he was after his grave mistake.

Naoki continued in his thoughts but didn't remember moving himself to his resting room and could only conclude that Daisuke was the one.

'How long have I been asleep?' He thought and then suddenly, he recalled his bride was supposed to come forth that night and discovered he must have missed it.

But knowing his right-hand man would surely take care of things on his behalf, he felt a sense of relief wash over him.

A soft sigh slowly escaped Naoki's thin lips as he wove his fingers through his silky hair.

He stilled suddenly, pausing in his actions the moment he felt something different.

The man had just discovered something strange and was trying to confirm it when he heard the door at the entrance of his house open and then, a series of light unfamiliar footsteps followed.

"Did someone just wander into my house?" He mumbled thoughtfully as he unhurriedly pushed the quilt off his body and stood to his feet.

Just as his bare feet touched the tatami floor, an emergency thought came to his head. How was it possible to hear that soft sound from this much distance?

His bedroom was located up the stairs hidden away after a long corridor, so it wasn't possible to hear that sound except in the dead of the night.

Naoki's S-shaped brows pulled together as he tried to check his energy flow to ascertain things for himself.

His natural long lashes fluttered close and his ragged breathing slowly evened out. He could feel a new surge of energy swirling inside him.

A few months later, his eyes opened.

'That explains it.' He summarized the discovery of his heightened senses.

Suddenly, he heard a thumping sound in his head. It was the sound of a heartbeat he knew very well did not belong to him.

Narrowing his gaze to the closed sliding door in his room, his lips parted slightly, and uttered confidently, "It's a woman" before disappearing without bothering to explore the range of his new heightened senses.

He was going to find his female intruder.

On the other hand, Haruka explored the interior finishings of the house with her eyes.

Not bothering that she intruded into someone's abode without permission, she went ahead to check out the second room by her left.

Coming to a closed translucent sliding door, she pushed it open and stepped in.

The room had an unadorned clay wall, woven straw, bamboo ceilings, and a few sets of undecorated short-legged tables with cushions surrounding them.

Venturing further into the room, she breathed in the scent of sandalwood and shut her eyes to relinquish the aroma as she felt every nerve in her body start to slowly relax.

But her pleasure was cut short when she felt a sudden wave of cold air behind her and instantly, her eyes flew open as a chill ran down her spine.

'S-Someone... is here?' She mentally noted. Unfortunately, neither that thought nor the feeling did anything to prep her mind for what was to come.

She could feel the presence of a being behind her and fear gripped her heart as she clenched the side of her skirt and the handle of the katana.

Naoki stood at the entrance of the tatami room studying the woman backing him with an unsheathed katana in her hand.

From the way her normal breathing turned ragged, he could tell that she had discovered his presence.

He could also feel the thumping in his head grow louder and the corner of his lips tugged further downwards in annoyance.

'Who is this woman?' He wondered as different thoughts began to flood his head.

Although he couldn't sense any danger or signs of any supernatural powers from her, he continued to watch her closely to see the next action she would take.

When Haruka realized the person behind her didn't have any plans to move or make a sound, she braced herself to turn around in hopes that she would not be meeting her worst nightmare.

Finally, when she faced the entrance, she slowly raised her gaze to meet the man whose cold gaze had been watching her.

Instantly, Haruka's eyes widened in shock.

In the dim room, she saw the ashen-faced man dressed in a loose kimono leaning on the door frame. His long jet-black hair that fell past his waist from his sides fluttered lightly.

The man looked like a ghost, but what frightened her greatly was the icy glares he shot at her from his narrowed purple-glistening eyes.

The katana in her hand slowly dropped from her hold, and in that pin-drop silence, the clashing sound against the floor reverberated in the room.

"P-Purple eyes... H-He has purple eyes?" She thought aloud as her lips quivered.

Instinctively, she took a few steps back while stuttering, "G-Ghost... G-Ghost!"

'Ghost? Is this woman by any means referring to me as a ghost?' Naoki thought with knitted brows as he leaned away from the door frame.

Haruka sensed the danger from his facial expression and immediately felt her knees grow weak then without warning, they gave way in fright.

Bracing herself for the fall, she suddenly felt a wave of cold air rush to her side and before she could see things properly, she saw the figure standing at the entrance appear before her sight without walking.

Her heart froze in her chest and all forms of her adrenaline working ceased voluntarily, leaving her to her fate with this ghost.

Never had she felt such form of fear before but now she did and she wanted it all to end.

Regardless, she wished to know. How possible it was for him.

“H-How... How did you get...” She managed to let out those words before her eyes rolled to the back of her head and her body fully collapsed, falling face forward into his arms.

DICTIONARY

Katana – A samurai sword

Tatami room – A small traditional Japanese tea room