

Melody 161

### **Eternal Melody 161 That is not his role**

Shin wanted to help her, but if he helps Sumire, it would mean supporting her with Yuhi. As much as he liked Yuhi now, he was still friends with Atsuro first. It would not be right of him to intervene like that. He watched as Sumire slumped her head on the table again.

She looks so helpless right now. This was the first time he was seeing her this way.

His gaze fell on the bracelet in her hand and blinked. It seems like she is still wearing it. Shin assumed that she would take it off since he did not give a proper explanation.

The main reason he got her that bracelet is indeed to protect her, but he also wanted to give her a present. He was busy abroad last year, so he did not buy her anything for her birthday.

His thoughts broke off when he felt Sumire's gaze on him. "Tell me something Shin, did Ru tell you anything?"

"About?"

"About me...did he tell you that he liked me?"

Shin blinked when he heard her words. Now, this was a question he did not expect. Then again, even though Sumire is dating Yuhi now, she is still in love with Mamoru. It is different from his one-sided crush towards her.

"He told me everyday how he wanted to see you, how he wanted to hug you all the time." Shin trailed off and sighed at the memory. "It was so annoying when he sulked and moped around when we had so much work to do."

Mamoru did not trust many people regarding this issue. Shin understood that he was the only one who actually knew all the details. But the others said that.

Sumire laughed. "It seems like he caused you trouble."

Shin nodded. "He did." He trailed off. "This isn't what you wanted to ask me, is it?"

"Did Ru know that I loved him?"

At that comment, his eyes widened. Shin figured she had something to ask, but he did not think it would be this. It seems like this is one of the things she regretted the most. "He didn't."

Shin did not want to lie to her. If he said yes just to appease her, she would not be happy either.

"I see, mmm, of course."

"You loved him?"

Sumire nodded. "Yes, of course, I fell for him. I mean, who wouldn't? He was so kind, friendly, and treated me very well. How could I push him away? I wanted to. I knew that I was only using him to get over Yuhi. But I wonder when did I start having feelings for him?"

As a scientist, the study of humans should interest him. It does interest him; however, he does not want to study Ibuki Sumire. Her complicated thoughts and her emotions, he does not want to dive too deep. That is not his role. His role is only to protect her and ensure that she is safe from that organization's hands.

Sumire does not know yet, exactly how dangerous this investigation into Mamoru's death is. The organization Mamoru looked into was involved in those illegal crimes and those with supernatural abilities. The latter is a bit concerning.

A research facility that exploits and conducts experiments on those with abilities. Shin clenched his fist as a vague memory appeared in his head. Is it possible that it has something to do with that place?

It does not seem like Sumire has any memory of it yet. The first time they met was actually when they were children; they met in that facility. Is the facility from their childhood and this recent one the same?

If so, then he has to pay special attention to the events from now on. He cannot risk her getting hurt in any way.

"Are you free after school?" Shin asked.

Sumire blinked. "Free?"

"Accompany me for a bit. I will give you more details."

The only way for her to protect her properly is this. He needs to keep her close and within his sight. If he keeps her well informed while doing this then nothing should go wrong.

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The rest of the day seemed to go by quickly. Maybe it was because he did not openly participate in the ceremonies, but he did not have much to do. Shin spent most of his day reading up on some academic papers. Yuhi seemed very reluctant to let Sumire go but Hino was waiting for him at the gate. Something about important work that Yuhi could not miss out on.

His gaze fell towards the brunette hair girl who was beside him. He went ahead and asked her, but--going out with her like this...does it not seem like a date?

Shin shook his head as they crossed the busy road. Still, didn't something like this happen in the past before too? Back then she was the one who grabbed his hand and led him along.

'Aren't you having fun?! If this isn't exciting, I'll show you another place.'

Even now the image of that carefree girl remained in his mind. To think something like that happened in the past. But now he noticed that there was no longer any trace of that bright smile. She was looking around with curiosity in her eyes. But Shin got cold vibes from her.

He heard rumors that she didn't usually go out anywhere with guys. But this was the first time he saw it with his own eyes.

"Hey, this isn't a date or anything weird. So..."

Sumire blinked and nodded. "Oh, right. So you're not taking advantage of me?"

Was she actually behaving coldly because of that?

Shin sighed. "Why would I do that? You said it yourself, that me and Yuhi are close friends--" His sentence fell short when she suddenly appeared in front of him.

"So if you two weren't friends you would have made a move on me?"

He felt his cheeks colour at her words. His heart beat sped. 'Made a move...?' Just how he had such crazy thoughts in his head. Shin started to seriously consider her question.

Sumire laughed softly as she backed away. "Sorry, sorry, that was a bad joke."

A joke huh?

### **Eternal Melody 162 Words and numbers**

Gallery - Tokyo - 14:00

When she suggests to go to the art gallery. Shin didn't think much of it until they got separated. Just when he was about to surrender, he spots brown hair leaning against the wall.

He blinks and rubs his eyes. He isn't seeing things is he?

Shin walked over to confirm it.

Sumire.. it really is her. .. Their gaze meets and she immediately turned the other way but she didn't get very far. No sooner did she stop leaning against the wall, she yelped in pain.

"Ouch."

"What are you doing?"

"You see, my shoes broke. So I was leaning on the wall just now to support myself. But when I saw you I had this urge to run away."

Hah? What the hell is that? "I don't remember doing anything to make you run away from me." Shin sighed when he saw the look in her eyes. "Let's go over there."

It didn't take long before he sat her down, and got some medical supplies out.

"Shin, do you. ..really not like that person. anymore?"

"Up until middle school, I liked her a lot. Even now when I'm left alone with her those feelings tend to emerge. However, right now there is someone else I'm interested in. That person already has somebody they love a lot, so I am not planning on confessing or anything. However, leaving them alone wouldn't be good too. When they are alone they are so reckless."

Wait wait what is he doing giving out details? What if she figures it out? No no, not even she's that smart. His thoughts break of when she reaches over and pats his hair.

"That must be difficult, your sure hanging in there. I'm sure that girl will at least notice how much you care about her. "

That would be nice sounding words and all; if it wasn't coming from the source of his problems. Geez, for someone so intelligent. How does she not understand that so many guys like her? Sure there are those who hide it quite well.

"Today why did you agree to go out with me? Weren't you supposed to be practicing with your friends?"

"Yeah, were taking a break. I wanted to see the painting." Sumire laughed. "You coincidentally asked me out too."

"There, done."

"Thanks a bunch Shin! You even fixed my shoes."

"It's a temporary fix. "

"Still, thanks."

She seems so cheerful...

"Don't stand up yet though. It probably still hurts." Sumire nodded. Hearing a beeping sound he turned to the black hair girl beside him. ..

Huh? What? Shin blinked. 'She looks flustered and shy.' That's completely unheard of. Ibuki Sumire is a strong and confident woman.

What did the message say? He only catches the ending, since the entire message couldn't be displayed on screen. But its enough for him to understand.

From: Yuhi

If, I were to tell you all that in person

would it make you happy?

Since when did their text messages include proper declarations of love instead of senseless flirting? But huh, if its like this; then there is no need to worry. Even if some other person steps in, these two will be just fine from now on. Although this really rubs salt on his wound, it can't be helped.

From the very beginning, he never expected anything to come out of this love. Seeing her this happy, he's glad that he never confessed to her.

It's a good thing that he didn't say anything.

"Shall we get going?"

Sumire nodded and stood up. She still seemed unsteady while walking, so Shin kept a close eye on her.

There are loads of people here. What's more, why does she keep looking at him? 'Yuhi, you have to put a leash on your girlfriend - she can't just keep staring at guys for long time and expect the other party not to be affected.'

Rather what's with her staring at him?

"Shin, did you get taller?"

"Huh, I suppose so." Shin replied vaguely.

Sumire laughed. "How strange. Even though we used to be the same height before. I guess we really are high schoolers now."

"It's a bit too late for you to be realising that. " Though he doubted Sumire thought that way back then. After all, she's no longer sticking like glue to that person anymore.

"How have you been doing recently? On that department. You haven't been submitting any papers recently."

"I haven't had the time. Though I have the luxury to express my intelligence freely unlike mother did..."

"Yet your entering the national exams?" Shin noticed her entry, since she often checked the list out.

Lila nodded.

"What's your plan?"

"To get first place."

His sweat dropped, what's with that confidence? But then again, she could probably do it; overtake him. Even though she has been busy recently, she's probably been studying whenever she gets the chance. Even though its not enough for her to produce papers, in her own way she has been putting in a lot more effort.

"I have to ask though. Between words and numbers which one do you like better?"

"That's a good question. But in the end I like them both equally. Words and numbers, in my eyes they are both so very beautiful. Though unknown words and numbers can be similar to the unknown. I still want to explore the world of literature and mathematics, even in a foreign language and formula. That's why I am working on my language."

"Working on it?"

When does she have time to do this? Isn't she busy with investigating the cases?

"I know it is frustrating looking words in a dictionary and formulas in books. But I think every single word and number is important. Nothing moves me more then a word that holds so much meaning that it shines and sparkles. A world like that is the sweetest in the world. "

That's right. From the very moment he met Ibuki Sumire she was already like this. Someone filled with confidence whenever she talks about anything associated to her dreams.

When he first met her, he really was envious. By that point he reached the limits of his research; and though he was being given so many opportunities in the science field. It felt as though something was missing.

**Eternal Melody 163 Different meaning**

The reason why he agreed to come here to the gallery was because he wanted to look at the painting again. He was here when the painting first came out and stared at it like he did now. But even now he was having a hard time understanding. Shin looked at the painting carefully.

Despite teaching in an art school for so long, he still could not understand the messages students portray in their work. Yet there was one painting that stood out to him, the piece Sumire did at the recent festival. There was something different about it than the others.

Shin thought he would finally be able to understand and that was the reason why he came here. But it seems like that is not the case here.

He wanted to understand what other people saw in it, because he hadn't quite figured out what he saw in it himself. It isn't long before he notices his aunt; who approaches him. "This really captivates you, doesn't it?" she asked.

Captivates? Shin did not understand what she meant by that.

"I don't understand it," Shichiro said.

His aunt seemed puzzled at his words and Shin further explains.

"I don't understand what is so special about this painting. I am only interested in this because of you and her."

"Do you need an explanation?"

Shin puzzles over this for a moment. "I don't know. But I do know I won't be able to understand her like this."

"I see, but you won't get an answer." His aunt said.

"It's normal that you won't see it the same way as us."

"Why?"

"You're not them, you think and act differently. You are not that person so you will never see it like they do. While artists portray different emotions and feelings behind their works. There will always be a handful who interpret it differently. What it means to me, that girl and you will be different."

"But isn't there supposed to be more? More information?" Shin did not like this response of hers.

His aunt sighed. "You need to stop looking at things from a logical point of view."

From: Sumire

Sorry Shin! But I saw Yuhi.

I will make it up to you.

Shin did not bother replying and closed his phone. The words the girl said about numbers and words replayed in his head. It seems like he still lacks something fundamental as a human. The stuff his aunt said, even though she is no art expert, it must be something common.

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Yuhi did not think that Sumire would find him. He did not intend to tail her, it was an accident. He just happened to have work in this area. So he snuck out to have fun with her but-- Is his girlfriend really okay? Maybe it's just his imagination but there is this pink sparkly aura around her.

Hino mentioned it before but this is the first time he saw it. Even though she was so embarrassed just now. No rather, in the end he was the one being embarrassed.

"Yuhi look look, this fabric is really pretty." Sumire pointed to the fabric they were selling at one of the stands.

Not as pretty as you. But even if he has gotten softer, that's still far too cheesy for him to say.

"Hey remember we're looking for purple and not royal blue."

"I know I know. You're making my dress for the next stage so it has to be purple. But looking around for other materials isn't bad either. "

Well she makes a point there. It's not like he's going to have time to go material shopping later on. Her dress is a his priority though, the rest of the winter line can wait.

"So Yuhi, today your not going to go sneaking of somewhere. "

Oh dear, she knows after all doesn't she? What happened earlier today. He thought since she was all cheerful when she came out to

Although she was still showing enthusiasm towards fabric shopping. It was clear as day that she was bothered.

"Sumire. Hey your mad huh."

"I'm not mad."

"You really are."

"I'm not. It's just, Yuhi you're too careless. Even though you promised to be with me forever." She trails off. "Gah forget it, you'll be leaving soon anyway so it's not like me saying this now will have an impact."

Promise to be with her forever huh? Indeed he's said it to her so many tines already; one would think it would have lost it's effect and meaning by now. But from the looks of it, she is treasuring them even now.

Sumire clearly sulky still about him leaving.

'If you want to be selfish Sumire you can.'

Yuhi wraps his scarf around the brunette. "I won't be reckless anymore. So don't sulk okay? Aren't we on a date?"

"Dummy, I'm always worried about you when we're apart."

"I know that."

He knows all too well, because whenever they see each other she always calls his name cheerfully.

She holds onto him so very tightly. It's okay Sumire, he won't die. He won't throw away his life anymore.

"I feel like your playing me at times Yuhi."

"Hm?"

As she told him the reason why, he is rendered speechless again.

What the hell? Really, why is it that she can say such things like that so easily? Isn't it enough that wherever she goes the place always ends up smelling like sunshine.

"Yuhi?"

What is she doing tilting her head in such a innocent and pure manner like that? What's with this girl, why is it that even now she makes him act so strange. Damm, he wasn't expecting this at all when he asked her out.

"Don't look at me now." Yuhi felt the heat creep up on his cheeks. This is humiliating, why is he behaving like a child for?

Don't look, since he is making an uncool face.

"Is Yuhi embarrassed?"

"Yeah.. So don't--" his sentence falls short when she tilted his head to face her.

"Your so red."

"Stupid isn't it normal? After hearing something like that. " Rather he's starting to sympathise with Ichinose, it's no wonder you find it difficult to talk to her. She says the boldest things after all.

"So this is Yuhi when he's embarrassed.."

Hey hey at least listen to what he is saying.

"Can I, take a picture?"

### **Eternal Melody 164 No matter wha**

He doesn't usually use crude language around her. But even if she is cute. Having photograph evidence that he pulled such an expression is a no. Who knows what would happen if it were to land in the wrong hands?

"B--but...this is rare. I don't think I will see it again before you leave."

Yuhi cursed. If she uses that against him, then he can't say no. "Make it quick."

Yuhi however, noticed that she did not take her phone camera out. "What are you doing?"

"I took a picture with my heart's lens, so it's okay now!"



Hearts lens.. What the heck is she? Is she human? He's pretty sure that there can be no human that's this cute in existence.

"Yuhi?"

He walks over to a nearby vendor and buys something before returning to her. "For me?" he nodded, and she smiles brightly, "Thankies, Yuhi. "

"You're easy to please, huh?"

"Since I'm hungry, do you not want some Yuhi?" He doesn't respond and hears her continue to hum happily. Really, she knows how to mess up his rhythm.

"Oops, I got cream on my hand."

Yuhi reaches over and licks the cream off causing her cheeks to turn a rosy red, as he gently cups her cheek before pressing their lips against each other. He nibbled and sucked on her tongue, the flavor of the cream tasted sweeter than he thought.

"That was a nice feast," he mumbles once their lips parted from each other.

"Dummy... But I liked it so."

Yuhi scratched his hair awkwardly. Does she like kissing? He should make a note of that. He relaxed when he felt her rest her head on his shoulders. "You okay? You seem stressed recently." Yuhi muttered.

"Well, all of this stuff is quite overwhelming. I never saw humanity as normal, but even then, I did not think there were this many secrets in the shadows. Tell me, Yuhi-san, is what do you think their aim is?"

"Their aim?"

"Forcing humans to evolve and gain supernatural abilities?"

Yuhi blinked when he heard that simple explanation from her. She understood it right away? She only investigated recently. How come it is like this now?

"You know Yuhi. I don't think it is right to force people to do anything. But how many people think that way? Others always assume that their opinion is correct; they do not think to listen to others. When others make their mind up, it is difficult to change their minds. Even if there is evidence to support a claim that goes against their belief, they will not change their mind."

"Don't concern yourself over it too much, Sumire. I know it is difficult for you to watch this kind of thing, but--" His sentence fell short when she lifted her head from his shoulder and stood up.

She walked over to a nearby tree and placed her hand in the center. "You know whenever I see large trees like this. I wish I could communicate with nature."

"Communicate with nature?"

Sumire laughed. "Yes, it would be nice." She trailed off. I can hear the sound of the wind. Its a comforting and peaceful sound. Recently there's been so many natural sounds in this land. Maybe its

because no new incidence has happened since last time. But the beauty of the land stands out recently. This place is completely different from Star Town, but I am growing to like it.

"Your right, it reminds me of home."

"A huh. It's really beautiful."

Yuhi wanted to tell her that she is beautiful too, but he saw the flash of pain in her eyes. He wonders if he can get rid of the pain in her eyes? Is it possible for him to make her happy?

The current Sumire is still in so much pain. She is holding back her feelings and going through so much inside.

Yuhi said nothing but grabbed hold of her hand. All he can do is hold her like this.

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Iro Road High School Main Building Rooftop

Thinking it through, perhaps he was the one who sought the warmth of another person. Back then, he spent endless days hunting down individuals with not a single care in the world. There was nothing for him to do and so the only thing he could do was hunt. Even long before he had found him, he wandered endlessly by himself. Hunting and fighting - that stream of red endlessly staining his hands. But never once had it been his own.

He was similar to that of a monster, no matter how many times he hunted down individuals and fought, he would not get tired. When Aki had discovered his abilities, Yuhi hesitated to accept. He wasn't the kind of person who liked being bound by rules and a single leader, after all.

Whenever he was around her, he always felt a sense of ease. All the troubling thoughts he had would dissolve in one go. They would often spend a lot of time with each other for a long time. Discussing music solely, but even so, he felt as though the connection he has with her was still stronger than the rest.

Yuhis' gaze fell on the person in his arms and blinked. When did she get here? He paused when he saw the tears in her eyes. He brushed his fingers against her eyelids, wiping her tears, but she woke up.

"Yuhi?"

"Mm, what's wrong? Nightmare?"

Sumire buried her face in his arms, and he blinked. She is acting a bit weird today. No, it was the same thing yesterday too. After they got back, she did not talk much. Yuhi lifted her face up and kissed her forehead, nose, and eyelids. "Don't cry anymore, Sumire. I am here for you."

Even if the world abandons her, he will stay by her side no matter what.

**Eternal Melody 165 Cruel Creatures**

"Yuhi-san, don't laugh at me."

Yuhi chuckled. "I just find you cute when you cry." He patted her back. "Are you okay?"

Sumire deeply sighed. "I read some unsettling news on the net again. I know rumors are just rumors, but why don't people leave me alone?"

Rumors? Yuhi frowned. "I will get Hino to take care of it, don't worry about anything. Just focus on your comeback."

"Well, alright." She pulled some documents from her bag and started to read.

Yuhi silently watched her for a few minutes. "Is there anything else you want to talk to me about?"

"Anything else?" Sumire trailed off. "There is actually. If I want to kiss you, can I do it, or do I have to make the atmosphere, right?"

What is she talking about now? Since yesterday, it feels like she is messing with him more? But if she wants to kiss, then why would he complain? He likes kissing too. Yuhi wrapped his arms around her and pushed her down until she laid down on the roof.

For a moment, he only stared. There was something prettier about her today. "Did you put some makeup on?" Yuhi finally noticed. He thought there was something strange. Her lips looked more luscious than normal.

"Yes, do you like it?"

She does look prettier, but he prefers her natural look. Yuhi brought his lips to her ear and told her that. Sumire laughed softly, and he looked away. "Well, that's that- so--"

Yuhi pressed his thumbs across her lips. "Let's kiss."

For the next few minutes, they do nothing but kiss or rather make out heavily. Yuhi does not realize how passionate it got until he hears a beautiful sound through their lips. It seems like he won't be able to hold back eventually. Sumire is beautiful -- and she gets prettier as each day passes by.

He recalled that serious talk they had and sighed deeply. What was he thinking acting like a gentleman for? He already touched her twice, isn't it too late to say such fancy-sounding words? Still, Yuhi understood that he wouldn't be able to do it.

What Sumire needs right now is somebody who can heal her. Somebody who can help ease her mental scars and pain. He is no better than her and is emotionally weak at times.

A hum of approval escaped his lips when he felt her hands run through his chest. She eventually broke their lips apart. "Yuhi-san, what about class?"

"That was only the first bell." He kissed behind her ear.

"Mm, I don't think we are that far from the classroom, either."

Yuhi chuckled. It seems like he isn't the only one who wants to skip class. Yuhi kissed her forehead gently and held her hands. "A bit more? Tell me if it is too much."

Her gaze softened. "Alright."

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"Hey, Sumire."

"Yes--" Yuhi swooped down and kissed her cheeks. "Yuhi.."

"If you do change your mind, tell me." He mumbled. "I know I said all that stuff to act cool, but I want to hold you. I am serious about that."

At that comment, a pained smile appeared on her face. "Right, mmm. I will make sure to tell you. We should go to class now. We are late, but I have a good excuse."

"Excuse?"

"Mm. Nakarsensei gave me this pass. He said I could use it whenever we have leads on the investigation that require me to go out."

His sweat fell. "So, you're using him?"

Sumire laughed. "Well, he was the one who offered, and I don't want you to get in trouble, Yuhi-san."

"Hm, I see." Yuhi trailed off and thanked her by kissing her lips again. He does feel bad for Shin, but one less rival is good for him. The two of them exited the stairwell and eventually arrived at the corridor.

He wonders what is going on in her head right now. "Ah--! There's a piano?"

Yuhi looked at the direction she pointed at and spotted a half-open room. It was one of the old storage rooms; indeed, he could see a piano at the corner. It was an old upright piano but a piano nonetheless. How odd, he hasn't seen that here before. But then again it is impossible to know about every room in the school.

"Want to continue skiving?"

Sumire laughed. "If your okay with that, Yuhi-san."

Yuhi nodded. It was a stupid question to ask, of course, he would be okay skipping. It is not like attending class will help him. Besides, he wants to spend a bit more time today. The two of them enter the room, and Yuhi closed the door.

He watched as Sumire walked over to the piano. "Can you use it?"

"Mm, it's old, but it is well maintained."

A well-maintained piano in the art building? Now that is strange. He should speak to the president about this later.

"Say Yuhi-san, do you think I am cruel?"

"Cruel?"

Sumire nodded. "Yes, cruel. You see, I cant forgive it when somebody deliberately harms me. I end up with twisted thoughts. I want to see those people break down. I want them to suffer just as much. But

such thoughts are too cruel. Many things in this world happen unintentionally. Just because one person causes you pain, it does not mean everybody else will do the same. But I can't forgive can't."

Yuhi could sense the bitterness in her tone. After this, he should check out those new rumors on the net. No matter how strong she is, words can be a double-edged sword. It can harm and break somebody down. What did she read?

She lightly touched the piano keys, not playing. "I think humans are cruel creatures. No matter how kind a person is on the surface, there is a monster inside them in the end of the day. This monster will emerge when their normal world turns upside down. When the things they know are no longer the same. If society evolves and evolved humans with supernatural powers emerge, what will happen to the normal people? Will they accept this?" Sumire sighed. "It's obvious what will happen. A riot, a massacre, humanity as we know it will be on the verge of collapsing."

### **Eternal Melody 166 What can he do for her?**

His eyes widened when he heard those words from her. It seems like there is more to this than the rumors he heard on the net.

"From now on, I will continue treading on this dangerous line. I will continue getting involved. I may be the center to all of this. So I have to remain strong if I break down and falter even once people will take advantage of that."

"It's okay for you to break down, especially in the face of malicious rumors intending to break you down."

Sumire shook her head, and weak laughter escaped her lips. "I have to stay strong."

"But Sumire---"

"Please let me be stubborn. Yuhi-san, I genuinely appreciate your efforts, but this is the type of person I am. Ever since I was a child, negativity surrounded me. I was a problematic child. But more importantly, I noticed it. There is something wrong with me. I don't understand. I don't understand how humans think. Ah, this feeling is familiar, isn't it? No matter how much Yozo tried, he still couldn't understand humanity, and he couldn't find anybody who understood him."

"Sumire-" His sentence fell short when she slumped her head on his chest.

"So what I'm trying to get here is that if I become a monster Yuhi-san, you can abandon me. I am already used to people leaving me, so it will not make a difference if you leave me too. At the end of the day, what you see is a lie. I don't know what you think of me, but I never saw myself as a good person. This wretched and vile existence is me. I am rotten to the core."

He didn't realize it was this bad before. Self-loathing? She just needs a bit of love to heal? No, that won't do. It won't do at all. What Sumire needs right now, perhaps he cannot give it to her because he loves her too much.

Sumire lifted her head and walked over to the piano. Her fingers lingered on the keys for a moment before she sat down on the stool. Yuhi continued to watch her expression, but he could not understand what she thought.

The current Sumire is-- his eyes widened when he hears the melody that surrounded the room. What song is this? Yuhi did not recognize the melody. It was not any of her songs or any of his. Nor was it a famous song. But he can feel it, her sadness and pain. All of it is mixing into one.

What can he do for her? Sometimes Yuhi felt he wasn't doing anything to help her properly. She is in so much pain, and yet all he can do is stand by and watch.

Sumire rested her head in his shoulders, and Yuhi paused. "You're messing with me too much."

Soft laughter escaped her lips. "It is rare for me to get the upper hand."

He wanted to ask her more about what she just said. But even if he asked, Yuhi understood that the topic is over now. She won't say any more than this. He parted her hair with his hands affectionately, and she laughed more.

"I feel like your treasuring me too much. Yuhi-san should know how many people I messed with to get to where I am now."

"Your point is?"

"You're allowing a woman like me to take advantage of you. Well, I guess geniuses aren't geniuses when it comes to love."

"Were you this hard to handle when you were dating Mamoru?"

Sumire blinked. "Well, I suppose so.."

"You should have said no," Yuhi mumbled. "I would like to be the one who sees you like this." Even though she is messing with him, at least it is him and not some other guy.

"What a strange fetish...Say," Sumire leaned closer. "Yuhi-san, how do you do it?"

"Huh?"

"You're as bad as me, but everybody thinks your a good guy."

At that comment, his eyes twitched, annoyed. "You keep insulting me since we met again. But did I do something bad to you?" Indeed he was not a good person, but does she have to keep repeating it?

"Well, if I don't convince myself that you're a bad person when other girls flock to you, I won't be able to push them away."

What sort of strange logic is that? Yuhi sighed and flicked her forehead. "Should I say that back at you? How is Sano lately?"

Sumire rolled her eyes. "That person is quite recently."

Quiet Sano?

"Other than a few text messages, he does not come onto me as much as before."

Yuhi raised his eyebrows at that comment. Now that is suspicious.

Sumire leaned forward. "So, the only problem is you talking to other girls."

"I will behave," Yuhi mumbled. "But could you reward me?"

She lightly kissed him. "Okay, I will." Sumire remained close to him for a moment before she pulled her bag out. "I know it is early, but why don't we eat something."

Yuhi nodded.

Has he become soft? He probably has. When he first heard that she was coming here, Yuhi did not think that she would bother him. He did not think she would give him the time of day. After all, she rejected him so strongly the last time they met.

"Say, why did you change your mind?" Yuhi decided to just ask her.

"Change my mind?"

"You said that time that you wouldn't talk to me anymore."

Sumire paused and nodded. "That's right. I said something like that, didn't I?" She trailed off. "But you know how I was Yuhi-san. After the accident I isolated myself. I felt the most alone and pain during that time. However, the letters you sent me through those books saved me. I thought if it was you, then maybe I could return to being normal."

"Normal?"

"Mm, not a mess of emotions nor a crazy woman self-harming, even if I dielt'sts not like I will see him again."

Yuhi could no longer take it and pulled her into his arms. "Tell me what you want me to do, Sumire, please." His voice wavered. "I can't see you act this way. Your hurt and in so much pain, but what can I do for you?"

What can he do, so she smiles again? So she stops saying such things?

### **Eternal Melody 167 Crazy ideas?**

To his surprise, he suddenly found himself on the ground. Sumire hovered over him. "Tell me, Yuhi, did you know how much I liked you?"

Yuhi looked away when she said that. How could he possibly know? He suspected that she had a crush on him but nothing to this scale.

"I liked you for so long, I wanted to be with you, and I even had all sorts of crazy ideas regarding you."

Crazy ideas?

Her cheeks colored slightly, and he felt his heart skip a beat. Bthump, bthump. What on earth is this situation? What is she trying to pull saying this stuff now?

"What sort of ideas?"

"Desires."

He could no longer take it at that comment, and soon he was on top of her again. He clasped her hands behind her, and a dangerous look flashed in his eyes. "I told you repeatedly not to mess with me before. But it seems you do not learn your lesson."

"Did it ever occur to you that I don't dislike it when you mess with me?"

What a woman, she wants to continue courting death.

But that is fine with him, she can continue behaving this way, and he can have his way with her. Yuhi lowered his face and kissed her again. This time around, he did not wait for confirmation and opened her mouth. Whenever he kissed her like this, she tasted like strawberries or some kind of fruit. So sweet... he usually disliked sweet things, but there is something different with Sumire. He does not understand exactly what is different, but he does know that he likes this.

He likes touching her; he likes spending time with her. Yuhi cupped her breasts with his hands and rubbed them slightly. Sumire kept calling him a fool against their lips - before he could do anything else, the doors opened.

It was Shin. He calmly walked over and placed something on top of the piano. "If you two want to do that stuff, just go home."

Sumire laughed softly. "Uh, I think we are finished." She quickly stood up and picked up the documents. "Is this new information?"

"Yes, it just came in. I haven't looked at it either."

Yuhi clicked his tongue irritated. He grabbed hold of her hand and pulled her back into his arms. "Did I tell you we were stopping?"

Sumire rolled her eyes. "Well, I don't mind. But do you want an audience?"

Audience but only Shin-- Yuhi looked over at the door and saw numerous freshmen peeking through the door. Right, Sumire played the piano. This room isn't soundproof either; it is normal for people to come running. But that does not make this okay.

Yuhi thought for a moment before he kissed her lips. "I don't mind."

At that comment, he felt a jab in his stomach and knew he overstepped his boundaries. Sumire pulled away and picked up the sheets. "Nakarsensei, could you tell those people to leave? I want to focus."

Shin nodded and walked over to the door. It did not take long before all the kids scurried away.

He glanced over at Sumire, who now wore a concentrated look on her face and sighed. So much for having his way with her. He already had his fun earlier, so he should be content, but he wants more when it comes to her. What sort of feeling is this?

He dove for his pocket for his cigarettes but realized they were missing. Yuhi walked over to the girl and hugged her from the back. He continued to assault her neck with kisses. It did not take long before she pulled something out of her bag.



His lips curved to a smile when it landed in his hand. "You shouldn't have hidden it."

She puffed her cheeks into a pout. "I was only concerned. You smoke too much."

"We had this conversation before." He lit the cigarette with his lighter and took a few puffs. "I need to smoke."

Sumire suddenly took the cigarette from his lips. "If I kissed you as a substitute like before, would you stop?"

Ah, that's right; they spoke about this before. Yuhi wrapped his arms around her waist. "Should we try?" He nuzzled his forehead against hers. "It does seem like a great idea."

Sumire laughed softly. "Yuhi-san, you intend to flirt with me today, right?"

"Mm, correct."

Shin coughed, but Sumire pressed a gentle kiss on his lips. "Be good; we have work to do."

It feels like she is stringing him along, but did he not realize that from the very beginning? Yuhi nodded and turned to the documents. He picked one of them and scanned it briefly. The name of the organization made him frown.

Is it a coincidence?

Black Alice?

Shin spoke up. "We got numerous complaints that this organization is targeting people with unusual abilities. However, the problem is, we believe the organization is affiliated with major influential figures. Because of this, we cannot take drastic actions."

Sumire sighed. "In other words, the SF isn't special either. They have no choice but to obey orders from above and end up silenced."

"Sumire that—"

"Aren't I, right?"

Shin slowly nodded. "Only for now. The leader of the group tends to do things a bit differently than most." He trailed off. "If you want more answers, then it is better to visit in person."

Yuhi noticed Shin's gaze on him, and he sighed. "I can't come with you, though."

The barrier around that place and the security always reject him.

"The SF headquarters?"

"Go with Shin after school."

"But you—"

"Unfortunately, I have a lot of work to do. My concert is soon, remember?"

Sumire slowly nodded. "I guess I could go. But Yuhi-san, you have to remember to answer my calls."

He chuckled when he heard that. It seems like she is adjusting and playing the girlfriend role well. Still, he could not shake off the bad feeling. The Sf isn't a dangerous place, but they interrogate many dangerous ability users there. What if something happened? Should he go with her even if it meant having to wait outside?

Sumire picked up the piece of paper again and pointed to a person photograph. "This person is a member of Black Alice?"

"Yes."

"I think I know where you can find them."

Yuhi looked at the photograph, and his eyes widened. Huh? This is— how could he not recognize her? The woman in the photograph looked slightly different, but he could still recognize her. This person is the one who was his girlfriend in name until recently.

### **Eternal Melody 168 Black Alice Organization**

Huh? How come? Yuhi looked puzzled, and the brunette beside him sighed.

"This is why I worry for you, Yuhi-san. How come you didn't realize?"

How was he supposed to know? He never looked at that woman properly; he only used her as a substitute. No, she wasn't even that much. If it weren't for Hino's request and the agency's sake, he would not bother. Now that he no longer needed her, Yuhi almost forgot about the woman.

Shin nodded. "I wondered when he would realize."

Even Shin noticed? But now that he thought it through, Shin showed a vague interest whenever that woman was involved. Yuhi, however, never thought much of it until now.

So the reason why she insisted remaining a couple with him was because of this? It seems like she was no simple person, but Yuhi understood that she was still nothing.

"Leave this to me. Shin, take care of Sumire today."

.....

The place he chose to meet her was the location of one of the many places the paparazzi photographed them. Yuhi wanted to create the illusion that he was thinking of the past. Sure enough, he spotted her all dressed up through the double doors. Yuhi pretends to look down all melancholy.

Sure enough, the moment she arrived, she wrapped her arms around him.

Sara brushed her lips against his neck. "Yuhi, did you miss me?"

"Mm."

"I thought you would, that little girl isn't good enough for you."

"Well, she is younger." His replies were rather vague, but Sara did not question him even once. She even went along with everything he said. It felt like it was far too good to be true. No matter what, he said she seemed to have a comforting reply for everything. It seemed very strange to him.

Sara kissed his neck and ran her hands through his chest. "You can ask me anything."

"Black Alice?"

At that comment, the woman froze, but she quickly regained her composure. "Sleep with me. I will tell you everything."

Yuhi nodded. "Alright."

After a few drinks, it did not take long before the woman passed out. He scooped her up and quickly carried her through the backstairs of the hotel lobby. He glanced over at the staff member who nodded at him, and he silently walked through the halls.

It did not take long before he arrived in the room. Yuhi quickly entered and placed the annoying woman onto the bed.

Sleep with her? As if. Yuhi extended his thumb out, and a dark light surrounded his fingertips. Initially, Hino suggested asking somebody else to do it with her. But his consciousness would not allow him to do that. That would be the same as asking somebody to \*\*\*\* her.

So he came up with this method instead. He could apply some pressure using his ability that would lead to dark marks. All he had to do was place his finger above the area he wanted.

A deep sigh crossed his lips after the first few successful ones. He was worried about Sumire and SF. If they didn't allow him inside, would it not be the same for her?

Sumire is, without a doubt, an ability user. But her ability is most likely something regarded as unacceptable. However, she has another life force in her body right now. That should be enough to let her inside. Should he have told Shin that Sumire is pregnant? It isn't confirmed, but she showed more than enough signs.

After a few minutes, Yuhi finished the marking process. He quickly removed his shirt and deliberately tore it, alongside the woman's clothes. He kept the blanket around her, though, so he could not see her bare skin.

It feels like Sumire will kill him, regardless. She wasn't kidding about carrying those knives around. Information, information - getting direct source from a member is better than nothing.

Sara stirred awake, and Yuhi quickly turned his attention back to her. For a moment she looked around, she saw him and then glanced at her body for confirmation.

Her eyes brightened, and lips curved to a devilish smile. "I knew you couldn't resist me."

"Mm."

"Alright, let me tell you what you want to know." She wrapped her arms around him. "This isn't free, though."

"Give me a break. Even I get tired."

Sara laughed. "Right, you do. So Black Alice? It is exactly like what your thinking. It is a global underground organization. They deal with people with supernatural abilities and use them to commit heinous crimes."

"What is with the name?"

"The name? Well--"

---

Sumire and Shin, who were on their way to the SF headquarters, were also having a similar discussion.

Sumire still found it hard to believe that Shin rode a motorbike. But, her gaze fell on the man who was parking the bike. 'It seems like he is a bit different than before.' She wondered what it was. The demeanour around him seems to have changed. He is no longer naive and seems to be more serious.

The SF headquarters is in a place like this? The entire area had barren lands. No signs of any buildings or wildlife, it looked like they were in a desert.

"By the way, you said something earlier about the name of the organization?"

"Mmm." Sumire nodded. "You don't find the name weird?"

"I never gave it much thought before. I mean organizations like this don't give much thought with names. Some try to make it sound threatening.."

"With that logic, don't you think the name Black Alice is strange?"

"What are you trying to say?"

"When you think Alice what's the first thing that comes to mind?"

"There is a book about it right?"

"Mmm." Sumire trailed off. "Yes. A book from 1895, by Lewis Carroll. It's a story about a young girl named Alice who falls into a rabbit hole and ends up in a fantasy like world. A world filled with strange creatures. People described that book as a mere fantasy since it plays with the idea of logic. Even if a young seven year old girl fell down a hole, there is no mysterious world at the bottom. In the bottom of those holes is a dark and grim place. So the story is ironic. Alice is a young and innocent seven year old. However, in recent years people have played with the idea of a grown up Alice in the mysterious place called wonderland. What if she turned into the Queen? What if she ended up like the Queen who caused problems for her?"

A strong gust of wind seemed to blow then. "What if she ended up as a black Queen?"

### **Eternal Melody 169 Two Queens?**

At that comment she noticed that a strange look appeared on Shin's face. "One of the new versions of the tale say, that a black and white Queen exist. There are two wonderlands, one world that is black and one that is white."

"Two Queens?"

"Or maybe it's just one Queen. After all without darkness there is no light and the same goes vice versa. The followers are divided because they think there are two Queens. But I wonder how they would react if they realize the Queen they are searching for is just one person? All their fighting--" Sumire closed her eyes briefly. "--and all their pain. Was it all for nothing?"

Shin looked away and then sighed. "I feel like you know more than you let out."

"Well, I had plenty of time. I didn't work or go to school after the accident."

"So you---"

"I have a vague idea of it. I still feel like this supernatural powers thing is strange. But, it's not like I am clueless. Besides that person was also an ability user."

Shin rubbed the back of his head. "So he basically gave it away. Then, I guess it makes things easier."

His gaze darted towards the bags in her hands, "Let me that."

"Eh? Ah no, I'm fine. I'm healthy so I'm strong enough."

When she saw his unwavering expression she lifted one side. "Half."

Shi nodded in understanding and he slung his bag with his free hand across his shoulder, as they held the bag and walked out of the parking lot of the convenient store.

As the brunette looked up, something caught her attention. Oh, that's. . ' A sign a aurora is coming. 'A aurora huh? Come to think of it she and Shin had a conversation about this before.

'They say you can see the aurora in the skies when your with the person you love the most'

Back then, she said those words out of impulse. But at that time Shin loomed at skies intently, as though he was shocked. He told her that he didn't see anything then; however perhaps he saw it.

The rainbow coloured lights are like stars twinkling in the darkness. The train, whose destination is unknown appears to be crossing under the night sky. Yes, it reminds her of that story. The train that's heading towards the heavens, brings Givonnai and Campanella to the Milky way, waiting at the end is a departure that saddens peoples hearts.

After a few minutes of walking in silence, Shin spoke up. "Sumire."

"What is it?"

"You, should start wearing a scarf. Those hikies are in plain sight."

Hik-- it took her a moment to realize what he was talking about.

She felt her cheeks turn scorching hot, embarrassed at Shin's words. Sumire dove her hand into her bag and rummages inside.

Soon she found find a black material. Oh this is, . . her gaze softened. That fool, if he was awake he should have just said so. Then again, it seems like he is making an effort to be sweet with her these days. She ought to do something for him.

"Hey, isn't that Yuhi's?"

"Gah. Why on earth do you know that?"

"Probably because he always wears it?"

A deep sigh escaped her lips when she heard those words.

"Well, if your relationship is still doing well despite your engagement to Makoto then, I guess there was no need for me to worry."

"It's a 'fake' engagement. So obviously nothing would happen. Besides Soujiro has accepted it already, that the one I will chose in the end of the day is Yuhi."

"You sound pretty sure of yourself there. But what would you do if Yuhi cheated on you with another big breast beauty?" Sumire steps on his foot then, causing him to yelp. "Ouch, I was only kidding around. You always so serious."

"I don't care for jokes that insult my relationship with Yuhi. Besides why are you calling that woman a big breast beauty now? You said that she was plain last time."

Shin nodded. "Yeah, she's in plain in contrast to you. But in most peoples eyes she can be considered a beauty, and well her figure isn't too bad."

"Your make me want to hit you."

"Well, anyway if your relationship is fine then that's all good."

When she heard his tone, Sumire decided to just say it.

"Shin say do you . . still like me?"

Shin halts in his tracks. "Your going to ask me that, you have no tact do you?"

"I don't want to hear it from you."

"What a rotten personality, really it's a wonder why your so popular with guys."

"It's not like I ever asked to be popular. If possible, I would have liked it if I wasn't popular. That way, a lot of people wouldn't have gotten hurt."

Shi reached over and flicked her forehead. "Stuuuupid. That's like asking you to stop being yourself."

"If your trying to comfort me, you don't have to hit me!" She exclaimed.

"Like those people would say, why do I have to bother consoling you? But yeah, it's like what I said just now. By saying you want to stop being popular that's like depriving you of your personality. I'm sure all those guys have said wish washy lines like, ' the reason I fell for you was because of your music' and stuff like that. But if you read between the lines what they are saying is, the reason why they fell for you was because of your personality."

Oh. . Shin looked over at her and sighed. "You never noticed?"

"Rather, when I realised that they all liked me. I consulted Siena and she shoved all her otome games at me, and we had a seven day marathon on searching for a answer why."

Nase Siena was one of her dearest friends. Somebody she could rely on during her harshest times. Right now the girl is abroad 'seeing the world.'

Shin's face colour turned pale. "Hey hey, how does consulting games help you find the answer?"

"Eh but at that time, it felt like the most logical way."

### **Eternal Melody 170 No regrets**

"You already know the answer to that question you just asked. I still like you, Sumire. I love you a great deal. But if you were to ask me if my love can beat Yuhi's, or Ichinose's, I'd answer with a 'no.' Unlike those two, I won't be able to do anything grandiose in helping you.

Even though I can stand beside you when you're in pain, aside from that, then I won't be able to give you the comfort and love you need. Truthfully speaking, you knew even before I confessed and already crossed off of the candidate list right? "

"You're making it sound like everything was an experiment." Sumire pauses when she saw Shin's questioning gaze. "Perhaps it was something like that. At the end of the day, I ended up choosing an ending that's different from the original script."

She chose Yuhi. She didn't choose Arashi. She picked a more painful path, one filled with more thorns.

"I don't regret it even now, spending time with the five of you, those days were fun. Atsuro is working hard towards his dream. It was a lot of fun, and even now, I know your all supporting me. You probably didn't think I noticed it, but the ones that have been giving me support this entire time, I know who they are very well. Thank you very much."

Shin averts his gaze from her then. "Mamoru asked us to look out for you. But I'm sure he realized it then too, that even if he didn't ask. We would have eventually consented to it."

Sumire laughs softly. "Even though he planned our encounter. Aren't you grateful for it?"

"Yeah, your troublesome and a pain. But if I nor the others met you. We would not have gotten this far. Sumire, what are your dreams right now? Your Takahashi Yumi's student, but you don't have to follow in her footsteps, you know, isn't that why you left the Trio stars? "

"You know me well. What I am aiming for is something much bigger then what I've started already. But even then, despite my huge goals. I think I would still rush to Yuhi if he is in trouble." She trails off and laughs again, this time with flustered cheeks. "I said I would choose my dreams over love. But since I've been singing his songs recently, I'm starting to think so otherwise."

"So you will choose love?"

"No, there's no need to chose one anymore. If it's the present me, I believe it's possible. To combine them both and show everyone that I can become my very own star, shining brighter than everyone."

For the next few minutes, Shin didn't say anything, and suddenly they hear his phone's sound.

"Hello? Sumire? Yes, she is with me— why? Her phone?"

Right at that moment, she took her phone out to see the red battery symbol and dark screen.

"It seems to be out of battery... Huh? Yuhi?"

Sumire suddenly got a bad feeling. "What about Yuhi?"

...

Hospital - Two hours later-

Even on Shin's bike, it took them two hours to arrive. The entire journey, she felt anxious.

'I can't believe that idiot!' When she heard the news about Yuhi getting into another accident. She panicked and almost fainted. Thankfully Shin was with her.

She didn't waste any time and left Shin behind in the hospital lobby. She rushed up the familiar stairs of the hospital.

Sumire immediately burst into the room. Right at that moment, Yuhi was getting changed.

She immediately hid behind the door when she realized. But she caught a glimpse of—gahhh! 'This is why I need to stop acting so impulsively.'

"Hey, you came."

"Yes, um, are you fine?"

"Mmm, just a little scratch." Yuhi trailed off. "Come in here, help me."

'Help him?' What could she help him with?

"Bandages."

At that comment, she slowly opened the door again. The moment she did, Yuhi wrapped his arms around her waist. He kissed her ears. "Were you afraid?"

Sumire bit her lip. "I'm used to it."

After all, Ru was very careless. He always ended up in the hospital after picking fights with people. She thought Yuhi was more level headed, but it seems like that isn't the case here. 'Another foolish person.'

Yuhi kept kissing her, and a content sigh passed her lips. She turned around and wrapped her arms around his neck. "Yuhi..."

"Yeah?"

"Bed."

He chuckled and picked her up. The moment he did, she noticed a pained look emerge on his face. Sumire paused. "Put me down."

"It's fine." Yuhi carried her to the bed and placed her down.



She glanced over and noticed the bandage around his waist. She tugged on the material, and it immediately slipped off, revealing a terrible wound. Her eyes widened, and she clenched her fist.

"This—" It was worse than what she thought. But then again, would Hino sound so panicked if it were just a normal wound? To think this happened to Yuhi, Sumire did not know what to think.

She should have told him not to bother.

Yuhi cupped her cheeks. "Hey, don't cry even if it makes you prettier."

Sure enough, she felt her eyes water.

He bent down and kissed her eyelids. "Hush, it's okay. I'm fine, Sumire."

"Yuhi, but I don't like you getting hurt," Sumire admitted. She understood that it was unavoidable, but this was still harsh for her. "This is the second time you ended up in the hospital because of me."

Yuhi kissed her again. "Mm, but I don't mind it. It's for you. Besides, I got the information I wanted before that woman vanished."

"She vanished?"

"Yeah, the hotel room, they set it on fire, but she suddenly disappeared."

Suddenly disappeared? Those people must learn the situation too late and headed there to stop it. They intended to silence Yuhi by killing him and dispose of the woman back in their organization. Yuhi must have understood since he nodded.

"It was a good thing the fire wasn't too big. I could get rid of it."

At that comment, Sumire stared at him. Yuhi just admitted that he also has an ability. But it does not seem like he will disclose what it is to her. Sumire did not want to surrender, but she knew this was not the time to inquire.

She placed her hand on the wound, and he flinched. "Hey, now.."

"Let me bandage it up."

Yuhi lowered his face and kissed her lips. "Mmmm, but first thing is first. I want to make sure you're okay. I know this must bring back bad memories for you."