

Melody 441

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 441**

Chapter 441: The Past- Mamoru And Sumire Part 3

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No, no, how can she deceive him with this? Besides the appearance aside, it smells divine.

They lifted their spoons and said. "Thank you for the food." They said a quick prayer before they dove right in.

Mamoru went for the stew first and immediately felt a warmth that he hadn't in his entire life. What on earth is this? He went for the potato chip fried rice next, and his eyes widened. It tasted even better than the stew. What is this warm feeling inside him? Did it come from the food?

He kept eating more and more, but he found it even more delicious each time he ate it than before. It felt like the flavor improved each bite.

"Uh, is it bad?" Sumire looked at him with caution.

"You, was your dream to be a chef?"

At that comment, the girl burst into laughter. "I didn't think you would react that way."

"No, this is seriously really good. You could be a chef. You know they do those cooking courses in the leisure center, you can teach the teachers a thing-" Mamoru paused, realizing something.

Right there is a reason why they kept her out here. From what she just said there, she needs to be in complete isolation because of her abilities.

Sumire, however, didn't say anything to that. "Im glad you like it. I haven't cooked in so long, let alone have a meal with someone."

Mamoru couldn't miss her tone. "Then maybe I can come here again? I can bring you some ingredients from the shops too. You got everything here from hunting, right?"

Sumire's eyes brightened. "Really? I've heard that the shops in the facility provide many things, but I can't go there. I would like to experiment a bit with my cooking."

So it is not like she didn't want to cook or eat; she just hated her limited resources. Well, if it is like that, then he can help her out. Besides, she looks cute when she smiles. The lifeless expression from earlier seemed like a lie.

"Imagine you become a chef- no, if you do, then I will have to pay to eat."

Sumire giggled. "Are you the type of person who is bad with money?"

"It is more like I am the type of guy who does manual labor for free, so I end up being unable to pay for things." Maybe it is because he lived such a poor lifestyle before, but he didn't understand the concept of charging others for labor.

There is something peaceful about this moment. Even though his circumstances were a lot better than her, he could eat with others and talk to people. But he always felt alone. If he could eat like this every day and talk to her, then he would feel content.

Mamoru felt his cheeks burn red at those thoughts. If he could eat like this every day? It almost sounds like a proposal. Gah, what is he thinking? Even if the researchers consider him a genius, it doesn't make him any more grown-up.

"So uh, Mamoru-kun right?" She seemed uncertain, saying his name. "Can you tell me more about the rest of the facility?"

"Well, as much as I can."

Shouldn't she be more interested in the outside world?

"Then, if I tell you those things, will you talk to me about the outside world? Before I came here, I didn't go out much."

Sumire nodded. "Mm, but you know the world outside isn't all fun and games. Sometimes I think to myself that maybe life inside a gilded cage is better."

It was just a simple few words, but after she described the place as a cafe, Mamoru understood. This girl is exactly like him.

"That is what makes the outside world exciting, right?"

Sumire seemed startled with his reply, and Mamoru continued.

"The longer we stay here, the more we will become their puppet. People here have gotten used to getting everything. If they follow orders, they will get whatever they want, even the world. But life is different; in life, we go through hardships and pain to grow as a person. We experience good and bad things. If we stay here, we will turn into a puppet."

Mamoru knew it was dangerous saying this to somebody he just met, but he wanted to take a risk.

To his surprise, the girl suddenly extended her hand across from the table, and with a gentle gaze, said. "Your right, sorry about what I just said. If I stayed here, I could run away and escape reality but doing that would be unfair. Besides, I would rather have painful freedom than become somebody else's puppet."

It was hard for him to focus on her words due to the warmth of her hand on his. Also, her hands are so soft; he never thought another human being could be so warm.

Mamoru didn't say much after that; there was no need to. They ate the rest of their meal in silence, but it was a comforting silence, unlike the one he has known.

"Ah, Im stuffed," Mamoru said. "This is the first time I ate so much and felt satisfied."

Sumire laughed. "It is the first time I ate in so long."

"Why haven't you been eating?" Mamoru thought he knew the reason why but he wanted to make sure. It is a bad thing to jump to conclusions without knowing the reason.

"Would you if they gave you poisonous ingredients?"

At those words, his eyes widened. "That's--"

"I cook and eat, but only when I can go hunting in the forest area. The stuff there is beyond their control."

Right, the forest next door to the facility is something they borrow; it is not theirs.

"Then tomorrow I will get you something from the stores. Relax the stuff from those places come directly from the shops outside."

"En, I guess I can rely on you."

Mamoru awkwardly stood up. "I guess I have to go." He doesn't want to miss curfew and get punished. If he gets punished, it would be harder to see her.

Sumire led him towards the door.

"Well, that was surprisingly fun, Mr hobo."

"He--hey still with that?"

She chuckled. "I am joking. I had a great time Mamoru-kun."

There was something about the way that she said his name that made him feel embarrassed. Moreover, isn't she standing a bit too close to him?

He knew he didn't imagine it when she brushed her forehead against his and clasped her ha

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 442**

Chapter 442: The Past - Mamoru And Sumire Part 4

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Mamoru saw her sooner than he thought he would. It was his day to go hunting in the forest; when he saw the little girl crouched in the corner, he felt his heartbeat speed up.

It can't be her, can it? He cautiously walked over, and soon he was standing right in front of her. The moment he stood directly in front of her, Mamoru confirmed the girl he met several days ago.

What is she doing out here?

Surely today cant be her hunting day? They usually do not allow two people in at the same time because there was a risk that the two could negatively influence each other. Mamoru understood the real reason; they do not want to let the kids get too close just in case they plotted against the institution. While they have brainwashed most of the subjects in this place, some are suspicious about this place, like him.

He met a few recently and was put in the same group as them for class activities. They are an unusual bunch, but he does not sense any malice from them like he does with the adults.

Mamoru wanted to talk to the girl about them and wanted to hear her opinion. So after this, he did plan on sneaking out again. He did not visit her the following day after their first meeting since that would be far too risky, nor the second or the third.

While he knew the adults had no idea about the meeting, they knew he snuck out. It isn't the first time he has done that, so they simply brushed it off like usual. But Mamoru felt that if they knew who he met with then, they would react differently.

Who would have thought that he would end see her before he snuck away?

Mamoru parted a strand of her hair from her face only to feel the heat transmit from her face o his hand. Mamoru frowned and placed his hand on her forehead.

"Ouch."

Why is she so hot? With the way the institute monitors them, it is impossible to catch things like a fever. Mamoru looked the girl up and down and immediately found the source on her right leg.

A snake bite, is it poisonous? He carefully examined the wound. It is poisonous, but it is treatable. Mamoru carefully placed the girl on his back and paused. He cant go directly to the exit; the adults would be there. He should use the other entrance.

The adults will wait a little bit, but they will head back independently if he doesn't show up at the destined time. They know how ability users tend to go crazy on their hunts; as long as he makes it back before the curfew, it should be fine.

After walking for a few minutes, the girl stirred awake. "-uhi...Yuhi.."

It was a soft mumble, but Mamoru could make out the name.

Why does it feel like he has heard that name somewhere before?

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He remembers it after they reach the hideout. This hideout belonged to a former researcher Kein. When the man saw him, he didn't say anything and just pointed to the bed.

"Kein, you said you were in charge of a subject before you isolated yourself, right? What is that person's name?"

Mamoru didn't know why that incident made him curious.

To his surprise, the man had gone pale the moment he placed Sumire on the bed. He seemed frantic and also afraid.

"Kein?"

"Sumire-chan?" The man muttered.

Huh, he knows her name?

Mamoru extended his hand out. "Kein?"

The dazed man finally snapped out of it and placed his hand on his forehead. "The subject I was in charge of and this girl were close enough to be lovers."

"Uh, old man, is that your strange fantasy? She is—"

"I know what I saw! Those two kids were very close; it wasn't a brother or sister like relationship either."

He seemed agitated, and Mamoru paused to think. "I heard that your subject caused an accident and harmed loads of people."

"They were both my subjects, the one who did the damage," Kein turned to the girl on the bed. "It was Sumire-chan."

That incident only happened recently; it also fits with what the girl told him about being here for a while but not since childhood.

"Before the incident, was she like me?"

Were there circumstances the same?

"She was a normal subject, like you."

But something doesn't add up. "She said she has always been in that area since she arrived."

At those words, Kein clenched his fist. "They erased her memories." He trailed off. "To be exact, they manipulated a kid with a memory ability; that child was the subject of my friend. Naturally, the three got along very well with each other. The boy was a bit older than them, so he acted more like their older brother."

"What happened?"

"My subject managed to escape. The memory kid would have too, but he turned back to get her. Those people took advantage of him and made him erase her memory; then they tossed him aside."

It was clear that this was a very painful memory for Kein. But now it made sense that Mamoru wondered why a former researcher would hide in a place like this? From what Mamoru observed from Kein's behavior, this man hated the institution more than anybody.

To think something tragic like that happened. He briefly heard of the incident, but the stories the adults tell people are different.

"The adults talk about a kid who broke the rules, stole samples and went berserk attacking people and ended up killing their friends," Mamoru trailed off. "They tell such a story so they can ensure that we never step out of line and repeat the same mistake."

With the way they repeat it every day, most kids, including himself, have the thing memorized. The first time he met Kein, he knew there was something different about this man. Why would an old researcher stay in the forest not exactly owned by the institute but close enough that they can use it?

Mamoru figured that the man did not resign from the place in a normal way. Otherwise, why would he act so jumpy whenever other researchers go by this area?

It was weird; there was something weird about all of this.

But when it came to weird things, he should know better than to get so involved.

Yet his gaze fell towards the girl on the bed. "Could you give me some more details?"

Chapter end

### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 443**

Chapter 443: The Past- Mamoru And Sumire Part 5

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

When the girl woke up, she naturally didn't recognize Kein but did not question this situation. She seemed very happy to see him. Mamoru had to avert his gaze a few times because her smile was just too cute. Maybe because he hasn't been around many females since he arrived in the institute, he found everything this girl did cute. Then again, the few females he has been around acted so viciously and cold.

"I knew if I waited, I would get to see you."

Mamoru blinked when he heard those words. Wait, don't tell him – "You didn't get permission?"

Sumire tilted her head innocently. "It is more like I said I wanted to take a walk for some fresh air."

"And they just let you?"

"I told you my circumstances are different."

She did tell him that, but now that he knew the story, Mamoru understood something. It is not like they are deliberately giving her a lot of freedom. It is more to do with the fact that if they don't do what she says, there is a chance of her recovering her memories and hurting them all.

Mamoru watched Kein from the corner of his eye. The man was huddled up fixing a few pocket watches like usual. But he noticed how the man kept occasionally glancing over.

"And the snake bites?"

Sumire laughed softly. "Uh, I accidentally tripped."

Mamoru sighed deeply. This was partly his fault, so he couldn't scold her too much. "I am sorry for not keeping my promise right away."

He should have at least sent her some form of message, even though it would have been risky.

The girl looked down. "I know you stayed away because visiting frequently would be riskier."

"Yeah."

"But Mamoru-kun, I wanted to see you again. I don't remember when was the last time I smiled around somebody my age, let alone feel comfortable in their presence."

At those words, he felt his cheeks burn red. What did she just say there? Mamoru repeated the words in his head. There was nothing ambiguous sounding about them, but others could take it the wrong way. If they were a few years older than

If they were a few years older than they were, it wouldn't be wrong for him to interpret that she has feelings for him.

Sumire's gaze fell towards Kein. "Did that mister heal my wounds?"

Mamoru nodded. "Yeah, but--"

He didn't get a chance to finish his sentence since the girl suddenly stood up and rushed over. She tugged on the man's cape. "Thank you for saving me, mister."

Kein, who seemed gloomier since he asked about the past, suddenly seemed odd. No, since he saw Sumire, Mamoru noticed how shy he was acting. Uh, hold on, this guy isn't into little girls, is he?

"Mamoru, if you keep thinking that way, I will throw you out," Kein warned.

Right this man has an ability too, the mind-reading ability. It isn't very useful when he needs it the most, though.

"You should explain things to Sumire." Mamoru trailed off. "I mean, she more or less has things figured out."

"I am Kein, master of this tower. I was a former researcher in the institute."

"Master of this tower but isn't this place--"

"This is the only neutral ground in the restricted zone. I don't know whether you have noticed it, but we are not in Japan, but at the same time, we are." He trailed off. "The best example would be we are in another dimension."

"Another dimension?"

It looked like the girl was struggling to believe, so Mamoru pitched in. "For example, whenever you go hunting here, sometimes you can't go further even though birds can go past. There is a black wall surrounding this place. A forcefield."

"Is that so?" It looked like something came to mind since Sumire nodded. "I don't think it is a forcefield, though. If it was, then birds shouldn't be able to go past. Has anybody tried going through the black space?"

At those words, Mamoru blinked, surprised. He did think that she was the same type as him. But to think she is also sharp like this.

"I did have a crazy idea of running through it, but Kouji stopped me."

Sumire sighed. "He also stopped me."

Mamoru grinned. "Great minds think alike. Tut Kouji, what are you doing stopping us from achieving our dreams?"

"I wouldn't go that far."

"Eh, but it sounds cooler that way. Besides, I'm sure you tried something crazy, and that's why Kouji stopped you."

At those words, the girl turned red, and he laughed. "Your facial expression gives it away."

"Hush you."

This is fun; when was the last time he spoke to somebody his age this way? Kouji was a nice guy, but he was very quiet, and the kid didn't get his jokes most of the time.

Kein coughed. "So back to what I was saying. In this restricted zone, there are three territories, The institute, the castle, and the mafia hideout."

"This place?"

"It is a neutral ground, so I wouldn't include it as one of the territories."

"I've seen the mafia hideout, but why have I never seen this castle before?" From the name alone, Mamoru wanted to see it. It isn't every day where one gets to see a real-life castle. But no matter how much he searches, he can't find it.

"Probably because around the time you joined, they started a battle. Right now, they are having a huge power struggle to obtain more subjects, subjects they call the gifted. The ones with the strongest ones will win in the end. Recently it has gotten especially worse since the mafia has obtained somebody powerful."

So that's why the researchers seem more ruthless than usual. He supposes that made more sense. But it still bothers him, especially since he doesn't understand why they need to collect so many talented individuals. What use is there obtaining so many people with unusual abilities? If the outside world learned of their powers, Mamoru knew people would never accept them.

They will scorn them and treat them like freaks. Mamoru already felt the burden behind the heavy gazes of the normal workers in the institute, let alone in the outside world.

"Isn't it obvious why?" Sumire suddenly said.

Mamoru blinked at the girl's words. Wait, she already has this figured out? Even though he has been struggling with this the entire time. Mamoru glanced at her with anticipation. He already figured out that this girl is pretty smart, so she has most likely reached the same conclusion as him.



The next few minutes before the girl spoke felt like torture to him; eventually, he hears a sweet voice say.

"World domination."

#### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 444**

Chapter 444: The Past - Mamoru And Sumire Part 6

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It took Mamoru a moment to process what she just said, and when he finally did. He is the first one to scold her.

"Are you some idiot?"

Sumire pouted. "Why are you calling me an idiot? I am serious here."

There was something cute about the way the girl puffed her cheeks and folded her arms across her chest, but he shook his head. There is something more important to deal with right now.

"You do know what world domination means, right?"

"Of course I know!" Sumire exclaimed.

"Then why did you suggest that?"

"I mean, think about it. Why else would you create an abandoned zone, use all sorts of means for protective measures so people from the outside can't enter - divide the place into territories to collect the gifted. If they just wanted to educate us and help us control our abilities, they wouldn't have to split their resources."

Mamoru paused when he heard her explanation. He hates to admit it, but she makes a good point there. When he first came to the institute, he believed it was like paradise. At least in comparison to the life he lived before, it was paradise.

For the first time in his life, people acknowledge his existence and treated him with kindness. They would praise him and give him rewards for doing well. They gave him all sorts of things he had only dreamed of owning in the past. Stuff he would only see in magazines.

It was the first time for him to own such things.

But after he learned the truth, he did whatever he could to push away the rewards and cut off their kind words. He does not want to hear such empty things.

"Ibuki Sumire." Kein suddenly said in a serious tone. "You are not like the others who have entered the forbidden ground, the forbidden amusement park. That is why you should hurry up and finish your deal with them and go home."

Mamoru froze when he saw the serious look in Keins eyes. Is she different? Just because her powers are strong?

Sumire slowly nodded her head and laughed lightly. "Truthfully, I am delaying leaving a bit. I don't know what it is. But I feel like I shouldn't leave until that person picks me up."

"That person-- your family?" Mamoru asked even though he knew it was a stupid question.

"No, somebody who is more important."

Before Mamoru could question her further, the girl suddenly started coughing. A violent cough, and in the next second, he rushed over only to confirm his suspicions. There was a large trail of blood on the ground and her hands.

The girl was coughing out blood.

The way she reacted to the snake poison too- and how she couldn't digest her food despite eating. All of the pieces were slowly coming to him, and he didn't like it one bit.

Mamoru's gaze darkened as he turned to Kein.

"You know, don't you? Tell me exactly why they brought her here."

It was the first time in so long that he has experienced such anger. The next words that left Kein's lips didn't surprise him, but he still wished he was wrong.

"It's okay-" Sumire weakly spoke up. "I am-"

Mamoru pulled the girl into his arms. "I will be the person who protects you."

Sumire struggled to break free from his arms, so she hit him lightly. "Stupid, you're not allowed to say things like that."

Mamoru glanced down and got a better look at her face. She was struggling not to cry, and he found it very cute.

"You're not allowed to protect me; what if you get hurt? I finally made a friend. I don't want anything to happen to you."

Geez, she is so helpless. Mamoru leaned forward and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead. "Friends don't lie to each other, but you did from the first day we met."

"I couldn't let you know."

"I understand, but from now on, I don't want you to lie to me anymore. No matter how painful it is, share it with me. I will share the pain with you."

At those words, the girl laughed softly. The tears still lingered in her eyes, but there was a beaming smile on her face. "Then I guess I can count on you to protect me."

.....

Back to the present

Mamoru was still spacing out as he clung to the words he said to her that remain so clearly in his head.

He will be the person to protect her; he would do anything to make sure she escapes that hell and live a peaceful life. He would do anything, even if it meant taking her place. Mamoru remembered how he confronted those people about it shortly after that time. They told him that he wasn't suitable, but he insisted, so they conducted all types of tests.

Even after he left the institute, he still remembers the many nights he spent in pain and agony. But he deserved the pain for hurting so many innocent people. The test they gave him was simple, to use his powers to kill the weak power users or those who do not manifest powers—the betrayal of those who trusted him.

The sensation of the blade piercing his chest repeatedly, his arms and legs cut off. It occurred so many times, yet the more damage he received, the faster he would heal.

It is better for him to experience this pain than her. Mamoru lost count of how many times he tried the same thing on himself. How many times did he injure himself only for his organs to regenerate faster than sound?

What did those people do to him? Mamoru never truly found out. But he knew if he did not make that proposal that day, eventually, they would have done it to Sumire. They were already starting the experiment on her, and that is why she coughed out blood that day. But he put a stop to it.

Use me, do not harm her.

It was simple enough. The adults seemed surprised with the development. It seemed nobody knew that he was secretly meeting with her. Or maybe they did know? It is hard to tell what those people were thinking.

The pain and agony never went away. It was worse whenever he had a long memory of the past. Whenever the memory would end, he would feel the same sensation of the blade piercing his chest, tearing away the vital organ needed for him to live. It would shred away until it came in contact with that thing they put inside him, triggering something out of this world, causing him to revive.

How many people would torture him and experiment how many times he could get killed before he came back? They would take out their frustration on him, especially the adults who didn't have any abilities. These people were especially brutal against power users let alone him who was number one in the institute.

It was still a sick game though, why did these people take pleasure in watching him die every single night? The answer to that question was something Sumire told him.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 445**

Chapter 445: The Past- Mamoru And Sumire Part 7

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

All humans are cruel. In people's hearts, there exists something dark and corrupted. I don't think there is anybody in this world who is truly good.

Back then, he tried to persuade her that isn't the case. But it was only because he wanted to see the good in humans. He also understood her line of thinking; after all, one would only have to look at the adults in the institute.

There was a time where he got tired of it. How many more times would they beat him to death and revive him before they got their desired results? The only times he got a break were during dawn, when the guards would finally get tired and sleep.

How many times did he wish that he would just stay dead longer than a few minutes? Every single time he came back to life, it felt like he would lose something valuable. He didn't understand what that something was, but he felt that if this kept up the next time they revived him, he would no longer be the same him.

This is for her sake; it is better than her going through this is what he would repeatedly tell himself. Naturally, the girl didn't know anything about the experiments. She would scold him, however, for getting hurt and being careless.

How many times did he want to tell her, silly girl, this is all because of you?

But no matter how strong he was, even he had his limits. One researcher asked him one day if he still wanted to continue. It seemed this lady had developed a bit of sympathy for him. But he said to her with a foolish smile that this was for her.

The main concern was not his physical strength but his mind. It seemed he was far weaker than he thought mentally.

His mind couldn't handle the amount of torture he received daily, and he was breaking down inside.

"Mamoru, wake up."

Mamoru woke up panting and gasping heavily. The person who woke him up was John. The man had been shouting and shaking him for god knows how long.

He thought he was already awake and was thinking of the past. But it seemed like he had been stuck in the nightmare. Mamoru felt his entire body tremble and his heart pounding. The blood rushed to his ears, and he was vaguely aware of his fists over his chest and his nails piercing his skin.

"Sorry for being loud, but your body waves were fluctuating."

Well, that makes sense; each researcher was in charge of monitoring the physical condition of their subject. "But weren't you in the middle of business?"

John sighed. "You really aren't cute. It's true that I had work, but like I can watch my friend fall apart."

Friend huh? Only this man would call him his friend. John passed him a cup of water. "I came here to tell you what I found out. The strong power user you referred to that the mafia group had before, that man left around the same time as Ibuki-chan."

So it seems like he was right.

"It seemed he took a lot of money with him when he left and claimed it was to establish his own group. Naturally, the mafia group supported him because they believe they would benefit too. I guess they didn't think he would turn on them."

"Black Alice." Mamoru tapped his fingers against the desk. "Even the institute doesn't know what kind of people they are."

"Our investigations on them are limited. Or rather," John sighed. "Every single time we get close, they find out. I think only Terashima Yuhi has been successful with getting any information."

Mamoru laughed. "Are you saying Yuhi can beat the institute easily?"

"That man could probably do it. Ibuki-chan was regarded highly by the researchers. But I think that was because Terashima helped her stabilize her condition. They both learned something from each other."

"What do you think of those two?"

"I think they are each other's light and shadow. Though realistically, Ibuki-chan is the shadow, and Terashima is the light. It wouldn't surprise me if Terashima thought it was the other way around."

Mamoru sighed deeply. "So this is complicated. That man must have gone over to the Black Alice organization, no he is most likely the leader of that organization."

John nodded. "Considering how he left around the same time as Ibuki-chan, it won't be a stretch to say he is after her. There are no traces of anybody chasing Terashima, but they most likely have plans for him too."

When he first learned who Sumire was in love with, Mamoru felt relieved. It relieved him that the Yuhi she liked so much was the same guy he got to know. Terashima Yuhi is not a bad person; despite what others say about him, he is a good kid. Sure he may seem cold outside, but that is only a front since he is clumsy at expressing his feelings.

Mamoru chuckled; come to think of it, Ki is the same as well. When they first met, she tried to act strong in front of him, only for it to backfire. It didn't take long before he learned how kind she was,

"If it is Yuhi, he will be fine; no matter what happens, he will protect her. That's why we should focus on our own preparations."

"Are you sure about that? Sorry if I am stepping out of line, but that was the first time I saw you like that. The first time I saw you desperately act like a human."

Mamoru turned red, understanding what he was saying. "You were watching us!"

John beamed happily. "I didn't think you were the type to take advantage of someone when they were sleeping!"

"I only kissed her cheek!"

"Are you sure about that? The security footage captured it differently. My team and I thought you were doing indecent things, so we switched the footage off."

His eyes twitched, annoyed. "If you were watching, then you should have come down to help; she had a high fever."

"It is nothing you cant solve. Besides, you were the one who said you would handle her matters personally."

Indeed he did say that but, "That didn't stop those people from hurting her."

He let his guard down. He thought it would be safe as long as she stayed in the same area as him. While he does not trust any researcher other than John, at the very least, his team has good people.

"I apologize. I should have assigned somebody better."

Mamoru shook his head. "It's not your fault. Naturally, they were the ones who caught her; of course, they would try to get at her whenever I wasn't around."

Still, he hopes the incident didn't leave any mental scars.

Ki, for now, they cannot meet, but the next time we do. The next time he will tell her everything.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 446**

Chapter 446: Lets Have A Conversation

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

Nagawa General Hospital.

A man with ash-blond-colored hair exhaled deeply. It was difficult to focus on the video in front of him, let alone take notes from it. It was rare to finish his surgeries early, so he decided to use this chance to do some extra studying. But he couldn't focus; earlier on the day, he went to see Sumire. Ever since she woke up, he tried to stay out of her way and only visited her when she was sleeping.

But this morning, he miscalculated and caught her after she came from her shower. Her movement was limited due to her injury, so he made sure she stayed in a private room since it wouldn't be appropriate for her to use public facilities.

It was the same room he prepared for her during her last stay, so she had everything she needed. He still occasionally dropped by just to make sure everything worked.

Sano sighed again as he recalled the sensation of her lips when he kissed her. He didn't mean to do that, but seeing her like that when she just came after the shower, he couldn't control himself. It surprises him how he loses control in front of her. Back when they dated, sure, he thought she was pretty, but he never pounced on her the way he has been.

This is no good; maybe he should see her for a bit. She should be sleeping now. Sano quickly decided and stood up. The moment he reached his door, though, he felt somebody's presence on the other end.

For a moment, he was cautious. It isn't those people again, right? Lately, they have been coming more frequently and bothering him.

Sano took a deep breath and opened the door; the moment he did, he hears a familiar voice say, ouch. The other person had hit her nose on the door.

He blinked, puzzled, when he saw who the other person was. That long brown hair and amethyst-colored eyes wearing a hospital gown, it was the girl who he was on the way to see.

"Sumire?"

"Sorry to disturb you. Were you working?"

"I was watching a few new surgeries. Are you sure you should be walking around?"

Sumire nodded. "Mm, my rehabilitation is going well, so I decided not to use the crutches or wheelchair today."

Sano frowned at those words. "You should still use one. You will put unnecessary strain on your legs."

She laughed. "Then can I come in and rest for a bit?"

Sano nodded and let her inside. He closed the door behind them, and the girl jumped. He sighed deeply at her obvious reaction. "I won't lock it."

"Uh, right."

So even though she came here, she is still cautious towards him. Well, he supposes that made sense. Surprisingly, she came here despite what happened earlier. Then again, he managed to regain his senses and pushed her away before quickly leaving. Sano left quickly then, but he still saw the look in her eyes.

It was the same as when they last saw each other; this girl still feels nothing towards him. It wouldn't surprise him if she didn't miss him at all.

Sumire is so pretty.

"By the way! Did you get my packages too?"

Sano pointed to the box on the corner of the room. He hadn't known what to do with the package. It seemed odd leaving at home, so he just dumped it in a corner in his office. If she hadn't mentioned it, he would have forgotten about it.

Sumire happily walked over and opened the box. Sano also went over and stood close. It would be bad if she suddenly lost her balance. The moment she opened the box, his eyes widened. Aren't those men's clothes?

"Clothes---"

"Hold still." Sumire extended the clothes over to him. "Hmmm, I think this suits you after all this kind of style."

Huh? Wait a minute; the clothes are for him?

"You got me clothes?"

"Well, you only ever wear bathrobes and suits. You need some more casual wear."

'It's almost like she is my girlfriend.'

"Uh-" Sumire laughed. "Maybe I shouldn't do this; Yuhi-san will get jealous again."

At those words, his gaze darkened, which didn't go unnoticed. "I came here to ask about earlier. Why did you kiss me?"

Sano laughed when he heard her question. "Is it that hard to understand?"

"So this is the answer to the homework I gave you; it is a shame."

At that, he felt his calm demeanor vanish as he looked at the girl angrily.

"I understand how you feel and all. But whatever your problem is, leave me out of it. I know you can't get over me, but I already made things clear to you. You can't just do whatever you want every time you see me."

Sano sighed. "That fierce act isn't cute. You're the one who came here in the middle of the night; the least you can do is act sweeter."

He has had enough of this girl messing with his emotions. Just now, when he saw that she came here, he once again felt a false sense of hope. She even mentioned the package with stuff she bought for him the moment she came here.

She keeps giving him false hope and then crushing it.

"You're doing it again. I came here to have a conversation, but you're not even listening to me." Sumire sighed. "The least you can do is learn from him."

"He?" Sano trailed off, realizing something. "Right, that prick who survived the accident but left you to fend for yourself."

"Don't talk about Ru like that! You're the one partly to blame for the accident; he didn't leave me deliberately."

"Ha, maybe at the time, but he didn't even contact you. He saw how badly you suffered and the pain he caused you."

"Despite what you say, Ru is a good man. He doesn't take out his problems on others like you do. If he has an issue with me, he will tell me directly. Both Ru and Yuhi are like that; they don't hide what they feel and tell me. You say you will change, but can anything change that black heart of yours--"

Sano cut Sumire's sentence short as he pulled out something from his drawer. It was a medium-sized rifle; it felt unfamiliar carrying something like this. When they first gave this to him, he dropped it, and he didn't get much better using it either. But for some reason, today, it felt light as a feather.



"You're always going on and on about not comparing people. But here you are comparing me to your ex-boyfriend and your current one."

Chapter end

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 447**

Chapter 447: Separate The Past And Present

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Sumire stared at the gun and then back at him with cold eyes. "I see how it is. This is your means of escape. I can tell right away that you have never shot a person with that gun before. But you've pulled it out plenty of times whenever somebody gets closer to figuring out your feelings."

"You've gotten a lot braver since the last time. I'm warning you, Sumire, the only reason I feigned ignorance and let you be this entire time is because they told me they needed you alive."

This is a lie; what is he saying? He is the one who had to negotiate with those people not to hurt her. But since he has already come this far, he may as well continue. Besides, he hates it more than anything whenever she mentioned Tsueno Mamoru and Terashima Yuhi.

He thought the person's presence who bothered him the most was Ichinose Arashi, but that wasn't it. From the very beginning, those two were the ones obstructing him from getting her heart.

When they first dated, he could tell that Sumire already had somebody else in her heart. It was one of the first things he talked to her about when they became official. He wanted to know the reason why she went for him despite already having somebody.

It was a bit of a sensitive matter, so Sano didn't expect her to talk about it, so when she did, it surprised him. Perhaps there is a chance to turn this situation around. Perhaps it is possible for him to change her mind. He can make her fall in love with him.

He thought he was doing a good job right until that incident. The reason why he was so jealous wasn't Ichinose Arashi; it was Tsueno Mamoru. He insisted on saying that he disliked Ichinose because he didn't want to admit losing her heart to somebody who didn't even belong in the rich elite circle.

He never stood a chance from the start since she already has two people in her heart that she deeply cared for. It frustrated him when he found out.

"You can't continue to toy around with my heart like the other boys you play with."

She seemed to get angry when he said those words, but she remained firm. Her sharp gaze never left his. "Boys I play around with? This is ironic coming from you." She scoffed. "Or are you going to say those female garments at your place belong to your siblings again?"

"What does that have to do with this? You're the one who has been going around collecting a harem of guys. Or can you really say that you don't have over ten people who like you? It seems your quite good at seducing them." Sano dropped his gun and walked over to her.

The girl didn't budge an inch as he leaned forward and touched her cheek. "The reason why Tsueno got into the accident is because you fought in the car, right? You fought because you seduced so many men, and he found out."

".."

"What a bad girl."

At those words, Sumire slapped his hand away. "How dare you say that about my friends. Unlike you, those people have never had bad intentions towards me. Even if they did like me, they all stayed away and respected my happiness instead. Besides, are you really angry about this? You're the one who cheated on me."

"I had my reasons; you already know I didn't do it deliberately, right?"

"Just because you didn't doesn't make it okay."

"Then what about you? How many guys kissed you when we were together- no, how many times did Ichinose kiss you?"

Sano never saw this himself. But he got his people to follow her around, and they took photos. Ichinose initiated the kisses, not her, but she never tried very hard to push him away.

"So it was about that? Like you have your reasons, I had mine too."

"What kind of reasoning could you possibly have to lip-lock with somebody who wasn't your boyfriend?"

"Ha, I thought your behavior was odd. So even after so much time, you're still consumed with jealousy. Even though we aren't dating anymore, you're still treating me like I am your possession. Then let me ask you this, Sano, would you still treat me this way if we broke up in a normal way?"

He never even wanted to break up with her; he had plans of marrying her one day. But based on what she just said now, it seemed like such a thought never crossed her mind before.

"I never thought of it that way before."

He never wanted them to break up, so he doesn't know how to answer.

"The point I am trying to make here is to disconnect the current me and the past me. I have changed Sano, and so have you. While some traits remain the same, we are fundamentally very different from when we first dated."

"So what are you trying to say? Just forget it all?"

Sumire shook her head. "No, you can't forget, I can't ask you to do something that cruel. But if you keep mixing up my past actions and my current ones, my presence will only be painful for you. If you can't get over me, that's fine, but right now, I have a hard time accepting your feelings as genuine because of your behavior. I feel like the one you're in love with is the past me and not the current me."

The past her? Indeed he did tell Hino with confidence that Sumire would return to him. But the only reason he said that is because he thought that she was still the same.

"The reason I am saying this is because of what Hino said to me. I truly think he is right; at this stage, if we continue meeting, we will both explode. After spending time away the last two months, I thought about it. Staying away and cutting you off isn't the answer. But to work out any kind of relationship with you, you have to separate the past and present first."

"Isn't it still the same? You still have those guys who like you."

"You know I never asked them to like me. I have repeatedly told them that it is bad to get involved with me, let alone obtain feelings. I think the current situation is very bad, and I'm doing something stupid like setting them up with other girls even if it will upset them." Sumire trailed off. "Regardless of those other people, they have nothing to do with us. Your logic is twisted and wrong, and I am sick of you treating me like you have been."

### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 448**

Chapter 448: An Honest Conclusion

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Now, this was more like her; for a while, the girl had been acting strangely meek like she used to. But even he understood that there was something wrong with that behaviour of hers.

Sano sniggered, causing her to frown. "This isn't funny, and I am serious."

"As I am. But you know, even if you tell me this stuff now, I have a hard time adjusting. So you don't want me to project your past self onto your current, but you've always said that some traits remain the same. I will acknowledge that you have changed, but even if you have, you're still the same girl that I fell in love with." He trailed off. "I can't outright agree with what you say. Do you really think things will change if I follow you?"

"How should I know unless you try it? What I do understand is the current situation isn't good for anyone."

"What if things fail?"

"Then that is just how things ended up. But at the very least, even if either of us fails, this time we know that we both gave it our best."

"You know I'm never going to be like Tsueno or even Terashima. I will do a lot of things that will make you hate me. And we both know you will never act sweet around me like you used to."

"Is it hard accepting how I am now?"

"Our personalities were never compatible, but now it is hard to predict how things will go."

Honestly, he was a bit interested. Sano thought that the last two months, the girl didn't think about him at all. But her current perspective on the situation differs from what she said the last time they met. It seems the situation has changed slightly.

"I guess we can try this. However, you need to stop comparing me to the guys around you." Sano trailed off. "I don't know whether you do it deliberately, but you have a bad habit of comparing me to Tsueno and Terashima. If you want me to drop my emotional baggage, then I expect you to do the same."

To his surprise, the girl burst into laughter. "I wondered what you were going to say."

"Are you agreeing?"

"Mm, that's fair."

It is strange; it doesn't feel like anything has changed. But this is the first time he has seen such a sincere look in her eyes while talking to him.

"You look red."

"Ah! I have a fever."

'Apparently, she says.'

Sano lifted her up and carried her over to the couch. Unfortunately, he lost his footing on some wire and ended up falling on top of her. Their lips lightly touched, but it was still a kiss nonetheless.

"Sorry, I just--"

"Mmmm, Yuhi?"

Sano sighed when he heard those words. "Wrong person."

"Ah, San?"

"What?"

"Did you just kiss me?"

"Yeah."

"Then I'll hit you once when I get better."

This girl is so-- well, no matter what. Sano placed his hand on her forehead. "Your fever is very high; you should have stayed in your room."

"But I'm all alone there."

"I see. Should I get Razel to stay with you?"

"No, that guy is so boring."

"Then I'll make an exception to extend visiting hours for Terashima."

'A quick doctor's note explaining the patient's circumstances should do the trick. Besides with her medical history, it wouldn't be unusual. It surprised Sano when he got a look at her records. Her mental health history is worse than he thought. The stuff he saw as teen angst and all those cruel things he said to her resurfaced on his mind.'

If only he didn't say such things to her. But like she said, it is already too late to reverse what he did in the past; he needs to focus on the present.

"San, what about you?"

Sano paused when he heard those words. "You want it to be me?"

"Mmm, because I don't want to disturb Yuhi."

So it's fine to bother him? Sano sighed. "If that's what you want, I won't be able to talk much, though. Night is the only time I have to upgrade my knowledge."

"Mmm, I understand. So you'll come?"

"Yeah."

He needs to move some stuff, though.

"I'm sorry."

"About?"

"Everything. I didn't know anything. Ru, you see, he told me everything."

"I see."

"Are you still angry?"

Sano sighed deeply. "I think I have already said everything in regards to that moment."

"That is true, but I still wanted to ask and make sure."

Sano noticed the girl's eyelids barely open and wrapped the blanket around her. "Go to sleep."

"Goodnight, Sano."

It didn't take long before the girl fell asleep, and Sano moved away from her. A deep sigh crossed his lips; what on earth was all that about? He didn't think she would come here and confront him like this.

...

Sano didn't think she would visit him again the following night after that conversation. But a part of him felt that she would come, which is why he had tea and sweets ready for her. Sano remained at his desk as she sat on the couch wearing a pair of headphones, some pen, and paper.

When he went by earlier, he noticed that the sheets of paper were musical score sheets.

She always looks so dedicated to music, and yet she still can't return to singing on stage. She already knows that Tsueno is alive right? He wonders if there is something else that is weighing on her mind. Maybe he can help her?

After their conversation yesterday, he thought about things carefully during the day. They have had many conversations ever since she came here, but that was the first time where he felt that they reached a conclusion.

"Um." Sumire suddenly spoke up. "Are you sure I am not in the way? I find it hard to concentrate when there are other people around me, and I think it is the same for you. I could stay outside-"

Sano shook his head. "It is fine, your, not a bother, so just stay."

Sumire slowly nodded. "You know, even though you speak gently, it still feels like you are trying to boss me around."

Sano chuckled. "Old habits die hard."

At those words, Sumire sighed. "I suppose that is true. Say I've been catching up on the news the last two months, but I hear Atsuro has been coming to see you a lot."

"More like harassment."

Sumire looked troubled but nodded. "I suppose that is like him."

"Are you ever going to start speaking to him properly? He looks after your kid sometimes, isn't it hard for you?"

"It is, and really if it weren't for him, then Huan would be in a bad state. I do owe him, and yet," Sumire trailed off and sighed. "If he wasn't such a pervert, then maybe we could have a decent conversation."

"Huh, is that-"

"His medical treatments!" Sumire exclaimed. "No matter how I see it, they are just plain weird! Why does he have to touch me like that?"

Sano blinked, startled by this explanation. So it was something like that? He wondered why she went to such great lengths to avoid Kusaji Atsuro. They must have had that kind of relationship.

"When was this?"

Sumire looked down. "Awhile after Ru passed away."

Sano isn't surprised by her response. He noticed it when they dated, too; she has a bad habit of leeching onto guys whenever she is lonely. It doesn't make her a bad person, though; the girl just wants company. If she is left alone, who knows what she will do?

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 449**

Chapter 449: Records

If audio player doesn't work, press Stop then Play button again

Now he is starting to understand why she behaves that way and doesn't openly reject him kissing her. For her, those things have no meaning unless she is doing it with the man she likes. Sano sighed deeply. It is frustrating for him to admit this.

"Anyway, you--" Before Sano could finish his sentence, the doors to his office slammed open. There stood a man with red-colored hair and azure-colored eyes. Razel and another member of staff awkwardly stood behind the man.

"He wouldn't listen."

"I allowed Atsuro-san in," Razel said truthfully.

Sano sighed at Razels words. Then again, this guy has always been like this. The staff member looked panicked, and he could tell that she was having a hard time. He looked towards Razel, who nodded and said a few words to the lady before she rushed off.

"Kusaji, why are you--"

The redhead walked past him and turned to the girl on the couch. No turned to the girl who was at the window.

"Trying to run away?"

Sumire laughed awkwardly. "Uh, it seems I can't make my escape."

"Sumire!" Atsuro exclaimed. "What were you doing last night?"

"Of course, I was here in the hospital."

"Liar. I saw you at that gathering. You can deceive others but not me."

Sumire exhaled deeply as she pressed her fingers against her temple. She looked very troubled. "Listen, this is why I didn't tell you."

"Your still hurt, idiot. What would you have done if they caught you?"

"They wouldn't have. I was only looking around."

So from their conversation, it seems that Sumire snuck out last night. Last night he couldn't check on her because he had to accompany Penelope to dinner. So she must have used that to her advantage. This girl is very cunning; indeed, she has changed a lot. In the past, even if she had the opportunity to do something like this, she wouldn't have.

"Look around? They were armed."

"A few bullets won't kill me, and I can dodge just fi-" Sumire's sentence fell short when Kusaji suddenly sent a kick in her direction. The girl barely dodged it, and she had to do so with her hands.

"So, you can dodge it?"

"Damn it."

Atsuro walked over towards the girl and crouched down. He carefully rolled up her hospital gown, so her knees were exposed.

"What did I tell you before? You were previously underweight and very sick. Just because you have gained weight now and have more stamina if you push your body too much, you will get injured easily," Atsuro pressed on the dark-colored bruise with his fingers, and the girl flinched. "Does this hurt?"

"A little."

Sano could only stare at the scene with wide eyes. After observing them a little, now he understood why the girl was avoiding Kusaji Atsuro. Sano wondered if the man was conscious of it. But he touches Sumire so easily without hesitating even though she isn't his girlfriend. So it is not like she hates him, but she wants him to get out of this habit before they talk again.

"I am sorry, Atsuro."

"I understand why you went, but you need to think about yourself for once. You already went through something bad recently; if they got to you again, you would have wasted that fool's efforts."

"I know."

This is the first time he has seen Sumire like this. She seems almost docile and fragile even though the girl was bickering with Kusaji just a few moments ago.

Sano shook his head and went over to his cabinets to get the medkit. First, they have to stop the bleeding.

Kusaji opened up the medkit and only pulled out the bandages.

"You are not hurt anywhere else, are you?"

"Mm."

Sano watched as the redhead looked towards the girl's upper thigh, and Sumire laughed awkwardly. "There is nothing there-" Just as she said that Sano spotted something from the corner of his eye.

"When did you cut yourself here?"

"It was when I was in the institute. Ru stopped me before it became worse."

"Did you see the person I told you about? Don't worry; he is a harmless person. You can talk to him about your problems, and he won't disclose it to anybody."

"I have Yuhi."

At those words, Sano flinched.

"Terashima isn't always going to be there for you. Moreover, if you are serious about returning to the entertainment industry, you need to take care of your mental health. If something like last time happened-"

At that, Sumire quickly bent down and covered Kusaji's mouth with her fingers. Atsuro's gaze met his, and he pulled Sumire's hands away.



"Let me tell him."

The girl doesn't reply.

"If you won't let me say it, then get yourself discharged from here and let me take care of you."

Sano could tell from Kusaji's voice that he would rather have it that way, but the man still gave her a choice. He thought the redhead would insist more. Then again, he doesn't know much about this man, the information he gathered before was all useless.

"You can tell him."

He immediately understood the situation and turned to the man at the door.

"Razel, please take her back to her room."

Razel nodded and walked over. He tapped the girl's shoulder, and she stood up. The entire time she passed him, she didn't glance his way once and kept her head low. Once the two left, the redhead slammed his fist against the wall causing a small crack to form.

"Damn it. I told her so many times. She never listens to me, and this ends up happening."

The man's anger seemed to increase more as he said those words. Sano didn't say anything and waited until Kusaji called out to him.

"You investigated her, right?"

Sano looked troubled when he heard those words. "I wonder how I got the information so easily. You leaked it?"

"I just wanted you to know just in case you do want to pursue her again; you need to know everything."

"Is it that bad? At most, the records said there was a lot of self-harm."

"Right, I omitted something from those records because I thought it would be better if I explain it in person." He took out a file from his bag and passed it to him.

Sano cautiously looked at the envelope. He didn't know what he was going to find. But since Kusaji went this far to conceal it, only for him to reveal it now. It must be because of the recent case where the girl disappeared for two months. Unfortunately, he has yet to find out the details of that case.

Those people won't budge since he isn't asking them directly. Sano knew they would tell him if he asks them directly, but he isn't doing that because he wants Sumire to open up to him. It would be better if she talks about it on her own.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 450**

### Chapter 450: The Real Reason

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Sano quickly paused when he realized what he just said. Even though he didn't say it out loud, it was a first for him to have thoughts like this. He recalled the exchange he had with the girl not too long ago

and exhaled deeply. He hates to admit it, but she is indeed right. Both of them have changed now. The reason why they can't pull away from each other is because they had a bad breakup.

Sumire no doubt has feelings for Terashima. But it is hard for her to move forward since she has lingering regrets. Sumire recognized this earlier on; she realized it before they first met again after so long. But there was a part of her who held bitter feelings, a strong and powerful emotion. She acted on the latter instead and chose the more difficult route.

It seems whatever happened in the institute the last two months led to her changing her mind. He doesn't mind that outcome, but Sano clenched his fist.

The reason she changed her mind is most likely because of Tsueno Mamoru. Once again, it is because of another guy. Even though they had that talk, it wasn't easy for him to change his mindset.

Why does that girl act so differently around other guys?

Sano shook his head and opened the file in his hands; the moment he did, he dropped it because of the pictures. He felt his entire body shake, and the color slowly left his face.

He was horrified by the images. It was images of Sumire's suicide attempts.

The moment he saw the words on the file to confirm the images, he immediately felt sick.

It was this bad? Then again, he recalled Hino's warning gaze and tone when he first asked about the investigation results. Hino warned him to give up. It wasn't because Hino knew Sumire and Terashima from the past, nor was he warning him as a friend. It is because his friend understood him very well. He cannot handle something this heavy.

Just the mere thought of it was a burden to him. But he quickly shook that thought out of his head as he recalled her fierce gaze when she spoke to him.

Sumire understands that their current relationship is difficult, but she is still trying to make things work. He needs to do the same; otherwise, this time, he will really lose her.

"Is this why you're so overprotective of her?"

Sano knew that Kusaji silently interfered in the shadows whenever there were bad rumors about Sumire.

"Yeah."

"She told me the reason she avoided you is because of the sexual relationship you had with her."

At that comment, Atsuro sighed again. "While it is true I am used to touching her without asking; it is because I'm her doctor. How many times have I had to conduct examinations?"

"It isn't because of-"

"I will admit that is part of it. But honestly, those times were painful for me too. Even though I could touch her, it was the same as touching a doll; she didn't have any life in her. She was just an empty shell."

"Isn't it cruel to put it that way?"

Atsuro shook his head. "I can't deny the truth; that's how she was. Maybe it was because I love her so much, but it was very painful watching her that way, let alone touching her."

"So you're telling me she is avoiding you because you know her condition well?"

"That's right. Not many people who knew her know of her suicide attempts. After all, she always did it when she was alone. She would use a time where the people around her were very busy, so there was no risk of them finding out. The places she chose too were areas away from the town; it wouldn't have been easy."

"How did you find her?"

It seemed like the man was there every single time.

"I put a spell on her," Atsuro trailed off. "You know about people with evolved genetics, don't you?"

"Yeah."

"Mine is a bit more complicated. In ancient times people would use strange spells and curses to cure wounds and fend off evil spirits. I have abilities similar to that."

"So you put a tracking spell on her?" Sano said, dumbfounded. It all sounded like a story that would come out of a fairy tale, but there was no doubt that the man was telling the truth. Otherwise, it would be impossible to be there every single time.

"That's right, because of that, I knew where she was every single time."

Isn't that a bit dangerous? It almost sounds like he was stalking her. Then again, he was one to talk when it came to that. He has a bad habit of following her around and starts his day, ensuring he knows what she is doing for the day.

Sano picked up the photographs on the ground. It was hard to believe that something to this magnitude had happened to her. When they first met again, he behaved like an idiot. He couldn't see what was right in front of him. The pain in her eyes, that lonely demeanor - he dismissed everything for his agenda.

He was confident that the girl hadn't changed at all and that she would surely return to him after he provoked her a bit. But not only did she not return, she ended up messing with him to the point he became obsessed with her.

She played him good, and by the time he realized it, it was already too late to turn back. All he could do was criticize her behavior whenever he got the chance, but even that didn't make him feel any better.

"It was because of this that I decided I would watch over her far more than I already was. I know it may seem excessive, but if I don't do this and she is left alone again, I worry she will do it again."

Sano recalled something Sumire said before she left. "Terashima." It was just a single name, but it seemed Kusaji understood.

"To what extent that guy can help her, I do not know. But if she is still unable to return to stage, to her beloved music, don't you think it isn't that effective?"

Indeed but Sano saw for himself, how many times did he see how brightly she smiled when she was around Terashima Yuhi? Sumire may get better on her own even without Terashima, but there is no doubt that Terashima is the only one who can help her.

Sano paused in mid-thought. The only one who can help her? Who decided that. He can still try, can't he?