

Melody 501

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 501**

Chapter 501: Learning

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"There is no use getting angry at him anymore. If I do that, it will only show him that I still care. It will remind him of how I behaved when I found out he was seeing other girls. I don't want him to think that I want to return to the past."

"But even so, I don't think letting him off the hook the way you have been doing is such a good idea either."

"True, but hmmm," Sumire pointed to the newspaper. "When he gave me that bracelet, I honestly didn't know what to do. He has never done something so out of character before."

"Well, it does seem a bit weird. Are you sure he isn't pretending?"

"It was handmade."

Aika seemed dumbfounded. "Uh- yeah, I can see why you would be troubled but isn't this weird? Why would he suddenly do that?"

"That's exactly what I want to find out. Besides, he has his use."

Her sentence fell short when she heard the sound of her phone.

From: Sano

I want to see you soon.

When can we meet?

Sumire holds up her phone to show Aika. "See? He can even say things like this now."

Aika frowned when she read the text. "Are you going to meet him? You just got discharged."

"I won't meet him for at least a week."

"Huh, why a week specifically?"

"It's probably his time limit before he explodes."

"I thought I was ruthless."

Sumire laughed. "Well, I shouldn't mess around too much. I don't want my dearest to get mad."

"Speaking of Yuhi, for you to ask me that question. Is he pushier?"

"It's more like I am more aware of how he looks at me now."

Aika grinned. "Well, the poor guy has been holding it back, so maybe you should indulge in his fantasies a bit."

"It's not that simple; as I said, I have no experience with such things. I don't even know if I am reacting the way I should."

"Hmm, if your thinking that seriously, then maybe I can lend you some learning material."

"Learning material?"

..

It is nightfall when Sumire finishes reading the books. Her entire face was red, and she felt her body tremble. 'T--that stuff- Am I supposed to do that?' The books all had plain covers, so Sumire thought they were genuine learning materials. But the stuff written in them was very explicit.

Uhhh, to think she has to do that. Isn't it embarrassing? Then again, if she thinks about all they have done, doing that stuff shouldn't be wrong. But uh, can she? Whenever Yuhi touches her, it feels like her heart is about to leap out from her chest.

'I can't do such things!' But lately, Yuhi's desire for her is uncontrollable.

"I didn't know you were into this stuff." A familiar male voice said.

D--don't tell her that Yuhi-- Sumire hesitantly turned around indeed to confirm her suspicion. Yuhi held up one of the books she finished earlier.

"So, this is what you do when I am not around?" Yuhi seemed half amused and half curious.

"N--No! You got it wrong." Sumire exclaimed. "Aik-chan, have me these!"

Yuhi rolled his eyes. "Why would she give you if you didn't ask?"

Uh, he makes a point there. Indeed Aika only gave her these books because she asked for advice.

"But that's your fault."

Yuhi put the book down and walked over. Sumire tried to take a step back, but that only led to her back hitting the wall. Yuhi cupped her cheeks. "You know I don't mind you being inexperienced. I never expected you to know such things."

"But that's, it's not like it was my first time with you."

"Right Atsuro, Mamoru and Kanagwa Ren?"

At that comment, Sumire laughed awkwardly. So he knew about that.

"There are also some unconfirmed rumors about you fooling around with some design student."

"Uh--"

"But even with all this, you say you know nothing?"

"The only one I remember was with Ru. The other's mind went into that weird mode I mentioned before." Sumire trailed off. "So I don't know Yuhi-" She stops when she saw the look he gave her.

What a gentle gaze, and yet Sumire felt that something else was there. It feels like her skin is burning with this simple touch on her cheek and gaze.

"So, tell me. Why were you reading these booms?"

"You-You just said the reason."

"The reason?"

"I want to make you happy. I want to do something for you." Sumire mumbled. "So Yuhi--" His lips made contact with her before she could finish.

It was a light and yet passionate kiss. 'He is so stupid, but it seems he understood. I don't have to waste words when I am with Yuhi.'

After five minutes, Yuhi pulled away with a gentle gaze on his face. "Do you understand now?"

"I think so."

Yuhi laughed. "Your as vague as ever." He pulled back after flicking her forehead. "You don't have to read such things. If you want to know, I could teach you."

Sumire puffed her cheeks into a pout. "It sounds like you are treating me like a kid."

"A kid, huh? If that were the case, then I wouldn't have kissed you the way I did just now."

He always has a counterattack for everything. This isn't fair at all. Sumire watched as Yuhi picked up the books from the ground.

"But really, Sumire. Are you okay asking Aika for this type of advice?"

"I know you slept with her before."

"Yeah, more than once."

He is way too casual about this. Then again, Aikchan mentioned it casually too.

'Back then, I was troubled about my boyfriend dumping me for a prettier girl. I asked Yuhi to sleep with me since he said I was prettier and that it was his loss.'

That story surprised her, but Sumire understood why the girl told her. Aika didn't want her to, later on, learn about it from someone else.

Indeed if she heard it from others, there would have been a chance that she would misunderstand.

"You're okay with it?"

"It does make me feel strange, but I understand the circumstances."

"Understand, huh? Back then, I slept with many women. Initially, I wanted to find the right timing to talk to you about this. I didn't think it was right for me just to bring it up. Tell me, Sumire, do you not mind?"

"I don't."

'I already had a talk with Sano regarding this.'

"No matter the past or present, I have already accepted everything about you, Yuhi." Sumire paused when she noticed Yuhi's heated gaze.

'He is an idiot, but I truly like him.' She hesitantly stood up before walking over to where Yuhi was. The moment she got closer, he grabbed hold of her wrist and pulled her to his arms.

"I want to do some bad things to you."

Sumire laughed. "Uh, bad things?"

"Yeah, terrible things. But you have your big show tomorrow."

"Pervert."

Yuhi chuckled. "If you truly want to know the definition of that, I could show you."

Sumire shook her head. "Tell me where you went? Is it to do with the articles?"

Yuhi paused and awkwardly scratched his head. "Actually, Yoru got hurt—"

He barely finished that sentence when she quickly put on her coat. "Why didn't you say so earlier?"

"But he is fine now."

"I need to see for myself."

Sumire figured they would start targeting the members of Akagumi but isn't this way too fast?

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 502**

Chapter 502: The Power To Protect

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At Bar Akagumi - An hour later -

Yuhi didn't get a chance to tell her any details since she rushed off so fast, so she didn't know what she expected. But when she saw several needles piercing Yoru's shoulders and legs, her face turned pale, and she immediately broke down in tears. There was somebody else in the bar alongside the usual crew—a tall man with dark maroon-colored hair wearing glasses and a blue-colored uniform.

There was something familiar about him, but right now, her focus was on Yoru.

"I'm not dead," Yoru assured her, but it was hard for her to believe him due to his current state. Sumire felt like her heart would stop when she saw the number of needles; before she knew it, she was crying.

"Yoru," Sumire sobbed his name.

"It just hurts a lot,"

That wasn't the right answer since she only cried more.

Yuhi frowned and walked over. She felt Yuhi wrap his arms around her and pull her into his arms, shielding her from the sight of Yoru in pain. "Quit answering; you're making this worse."

"Geh Yuhi-san, don't look at me like that. I already feel like I am at death's door."

"Death?" Sumire repeated.

"Oh no, it's not like that-!"

"Oi, stupid, can't you see how frightened she is because of you?" Sora snapped.

"Who are you calling-" Yoru paused. "Sumire-san, I am alright. I just have to receive an antidote, and they can pull the needles out."

An antidote? Her thoughts broke off when the doors to the bar opened, and Eli strolled in. "Now, now, where is the patient?"

"There, the one who is feigning death on the stretcher."

'Eli is here.' Just seeing the man made her feel relieved. Eli turned to her and patted her shoulders with a reassuring smile. "Relax, he will be fine."

"But, there are so many needles."

For him to get hurt this badly despite his good reflexes and strength, that must mean somebody powerful got to him.

What could have happened? Sumire wanted to ask, but she felt depleted of all strength. Right at that moment, somebody passed her a drink of water. It was the dark-haired man wearing the same Hyou4 uniform as Asuka. Dark hair, glasses, and -ah!

"Sora," Sumire mumbled.

This man Sora was part of the government organization Hyou4, and he was the third in command. She met him frequently whenever she intruded on Asuka's jobs.

Sora nodded. "You should drink. The stupid one will be fine, don't waste your tears anymore."

"Were you two together?"

"It was a coincidence. I was fetching some stuff for the vice-captain when I sensed fluctuating waves of power. I thought it was an ability user losing control of his powers, but no, it was the stupid one here using so much power without thinking straight. But by that point, he already had several needles in him, so I guess it was due to the needles that he became desperate."

"Did you catch the suspect?"

"I handed him over."

It seems she will have to pay a visit and find out directly. But Sumire already figured why they would target Yoru. Yoru is a very high-profile member in the district where the Aakagumi bar is everybody knew him. Usually, that would mean people wouldn't pick a fight with him so easily, but there were some stupid ones out there.

Jae walked over and passed her a handkerchief. "Despite what he says, he is very concerned about his best friend."

Sora's eyes twitched, annoyed. "Who is my best friend?"

Sumire tilted her head puzzled. Even though the two were arguing, she could tell that they somewhat got along with each other. Yuhi squeezed her hands, and she turned back to him.

"Are you fine? I already called Eli beforehand."

"Mm, sorry, I just rushed out."

Yuhi shook his head. "You said it yourself that they are family."

As usual, he is way too understanding and quick to adapt to her words,

Sumire turned back to Eli, who had pulled out a large needle. "Right time for the shot."

Yoru's face color turned pale. "Hey, wait- why is that needle so large?"

"You have several needles inside you already; why are you complaining about one more?" Eli said.

"This is different."

"Terashimkun, can you hold him down?"

Yuhi sighed. "Geez, quit acting so foolish. You already made Sumire cry; you're lucky you're too injured for me to beat up."

"That doesn't mean I am safe later."

Sumire watched as Yuhi quickly walked over, and she used that chance to slip away. She didn't go very far; she just opened the door and remained on the porch outside. It was good that Yoru didn't get hurt too badly and that Eli already had an antidote ready for this type of poison. But what if they come up with something different next time? What if they don't have an immediate solution?

Her thoughts broke off when she heard the chime and realized that Sora had walked out too. He wore a coat on top of his uniform. "Are you leaving already?"

"I have to report to the Captain and explain to the vice-captain why I dropped her stuff and lost it." Sora seemed more annoyed at the last part, and she laughed.

"I am sure if you report about the incident first, Asuka won't blame you."

"I heard you were in Tokyo, but I haven't seen you."

"Mmm, I avoided the Hyou4 headquarters for a while. I wanted to settle in before I got involved in such things." Sumire trailed off. "Moreover, the power I thought disappeared ago came back to me."

"I am surprised you only just remembered being an ability user after the incident last year."

"It's called trauma."

Sora paused and looked away. "I apologize. I wasn't there for his funeral."

"You don't have to blame yourself for that. I understand that it is hard for you."

'...You're a bunch of delinquents. But if you think about it realistically, the power of red is something to protect.'

"What?"

"I was just thinking about what you told me before. How I can use this power to protect."

Sora was silent for a few minutes before he spoke up. "I didn't lie when I said that. Others saw that power as a destructive force. But if you look back at ancient records, the color red is a healing flame. So the original purpose is to protect and not destroy."

Her gaze softened when she heard those words. Even though he acts like a cold and indifferent person when anybody talks to him, they can see he is a huge softie.

"Did you used to be part of Akagumi?" Sumire asked.

Sora clicked his tongue, annoyed. "You figured that out too quickly."

"I noticed how you avoided looking at Yuhi even though he was right there."

Sora didn't say anything right away, but he didn't leave.

"For me, the power to protect someone important is the reason why I joined Akagaumi before."

"You mean protecting Yoru?"

Sora didn't look at her when he said this. But Sumire sensed the pain in his tone. "That may be the case."

Her eyes went wide in surprise; she didn't expect him to admit it. Then again, she always got similar vibes. Whenever they met, she thought 'ah, this person is like me.'

Chapter end

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 503**

Chapter 503: Their Little World

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Sora continues. "I didn't have anyone else then but him. My family was already beyond repair, and that man did nothing but verbally torture me every day. Before I met Yoru, I lived in anguish, it was so painful, and I couldn't breathe. I just wanted it all to end. I wanted time to stop, for it to be all over. But then, one day, I saw him picking a fight, and for some reason, I helped Yoru escape. I didn't think he would start following me around afterwards. Before I realized it, we were always together. To escape in that small world, in our refuge with just us two - back then, that was all we needed. The presence of each other. "

Ah, that reminds her of her and Mamoru; the two of them had been the same. They wanted to escape into their little world.

"But I knew that even though I wanted those peaceful days to continue, something would eventually change. Change it did. That single encounter with Terashima Yuhi was enough to change everything. I was no longer Yoru's hero; it was all about Yuhi. I no longer had any purpose. At first, I put up with it, but then I reached my limit, so I had to leave before it became too suffocating."

"You could have joined in."

Sora shook his head. "We're similar. So you should understand. People like us will always have a hard time fitting in with large groups."

Sumire paused at those words. "At first, I thought I would have a hard time fitting in. They didn't know how to speak with me, but as time went by, that changed."

"I see." Sora trailed off. "Then I suppose you finally have a place you can belong. At least one of us can have that."

She wants to tell him that it's not true, that it's a misunderstanding. That he still has a place to go back to. However, she knew she wouldn't be able to deny it. Sumire was about to say something else, but she spotted Atushi coming from the corner.

He looked over at her with a bright smile. "You came, Sumire? Now that you're here, maybe Yoru can stop whining."

"Ah-huh." Sumire heard Sora turn away. "Sora, your number-"

"It's the same. Goodnight Sumire-san."

Sumire watched as his lonely figure disappeared in the darkness of the night. She doesn't understand his situation very well, and she knew better than to intervene. But now that she has admitted that she sees everyone in Akagumi as family, one day she will have to get invol- her thoughts broke off when she felt Atushi pat her head.

"Did you cry?"

Sumire puffed her cheeks into a pout. "Why didn't you contact me right away?"

"Yuhi said he would deal with it, and he did."

"But still."

Atushi nodded. "I understand how you feel, Sumire. But you also have to understand Yuhi's feelings. Right now, he is struggling with whether or not he should tell you everything. Let's face it; you are very careless. If you hear somebody you care for is in danger, you won't hesitate. That is fine and all. But sometimes, you have to take a step back even at the cost of your justice."

"I understand, I do, but sometimes it is hard for me to turn away. How can I ignore their pained cries and pleas for help? I am in a position of power."



Atushi sighed deeply. "I figured you would say something like that. Did you know Yuhi asked for a meeting with Honjo Raizo?"

Sumire blinked at those words. "Yuhi did?"

"What are you going to do? He might find out what happened."

"It's alright. I already resolved myself. Besides, it's not like anything will change."

Yuhi-san will accept everything about her regardless of how negative it is.

"It seems it was a good choice for you to come here to Tokyo."

"You even followed me here; your stalking skills are something," Sumire commented.

"Well, how could I leave a lovely lady alone? Also, it seemed Yuhi was having a hard time before you came here."

Sumire frowned at that part. "Did you find out who was causing him problems?"

"Yeah, it was the agency that woman who he had to pretend to be in a relationship with who started those rumors."

"They were already benefiting from the fake relationship; why would they do that?"

"Well, isn't it because Yuhi never openly showed interest? They probably thought after a long time Yuhi would at least sleep with her, but he didn't even do that."

"Those women think they can still mess with my dearest even though he has me." Her eyes twitched, annoyed. "It seems they no longer wish to live."

Atushi pulled out his lighter and lit a cigarette before taking a deep inhale. "Calm down; you're just returning to the entertainment properly. You can't lash out."

"So, do I just leave them?"

"No, just show them that they can't mess with you. You just have to beat Takashi Yumi, no pressure at all."

Sumire sighed deeply when she heard those words. No pressure? Just the mere thought of it made her worry.

"What's the problem if you lose, you can cry to Yuhi, and I am sure he will comfort you."

She sent him a harsh glare. "You know Atushi, you always unusually harsh with me."

"You're going to hate me more when I say I plan to break up with Futabsan."

Ah, is that why he had that solemn look on his face? Atushi has been dating her best friend, Momoi Futaba, since last year. But she always thought that his heart was never really with her. Futaba was the one who confessed to him too. There must have been many issues before they became a couple that she doesn't know about it.

"Why would I get mad? You have the freedom to love whoever you want to."

Besides, she enjoyed seeing them together. Sumire always felt that there was a large wall between them.

"This came from the girl who turned me down."

"Atushi, do you truly think it was good for me to come here?" Sumire recalled Yuhi's expression when they spoke earlier. It wasn't just Yuhi but even Sora.

Atushi didn't reply right away, but he suddenly mumbled. "At first, I hesitated when you said you would come to Tokyo. I already heard from Yuhi how dangerous it was getting over here. If staying in Star town was too painful for you because of what happened, and you wanted to run away. At the very least, I wanted you to find somewhere peaceful."

"But in those peaceful places, Yuhi wouldn't be there."

"Right, even though you did not specifically mention it, I understood you wanted to see Yuhi. Yuhi doesn't like to talk about his issues too much, but I knew he was having problems. I thought of the best way that I could help you two and thought, 'maybe it is just better to let them meet and see whatever happens'"

Sumire chuckled. "What an illogical reasoning."

"I truly didn't want you to shoulder an even heavier burden. But I knew the day would come where you would remember about your abilities. Before you could even remember correctly, you learned about it, so I suppose it was fate."

#### **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 504**

Chapter 504: It All Started From Him

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"How did you meet Yuhi?"

Atushi sighed. "It was the worst meeting ever. But before I knew it, he was visiting this bar a lot and even occupied the sofa a lot. Right around that time, he saved Jae from some bullies, and Jae started following him around, worshiping him like some King. Before I knew it, he had extended a helping hand to so many people, and this place became their base."

"Ah." This is the first time for her to see such a tender expression on Atushi's face. In the past, it was difficult for her to understand him.

Everybody is changing; it isn't just her. These changes are for the best, and the main trigger for this change was Ru's accident. To think time still goes on even if somebody important vanishes. If that is the case, then does that mean that person had no value?

No, there is no doubt that so many lives changed because of Ru helping them. Time stopped for a while when he passed away, but humans move forward. They may still hold grief in their hearts, but they work hard to overcome it so they can move forward.

It would be the same for her, even if she knew Ru was alive. Sumire understood that she would not give up her current life just to return to him. He probably understood that too, and that was why he let her escape.

Before Sumire could say anymore, the doors opened, and she felt a familiar pair of arms wrap around her from the back. "Hey, how much longer are you going to stay out here and flirt with different guys?"

Sumire laughed softly. "I don't think I am brave enough to do something like that."

"Is that so?"

Atushi shook his head. "This woman is too frightening to mess with; only you could get away flirting with her, Yuhi."

Sumire pouted at those words. Is he saying she is scary? Well, she can't deny that, but he has the nerve to say that when he used to like her. Then again, maybe that is why he can say that? Gah, she shouldn't think too deeply about it.

Her thoughts broke off when she felt something cold on her cheek. Oh? Sumire looked up at the dark skies and saw small droplets of snow falling. Her violet-colored eyes brightened as she saw the snow.

Yuhi lets her go, and she walked down the steps as she danced happily. Atushi said he would head inside to check on the destruction inside and left her alone with Yuhi.

"If you dance like that tomorrow, then maybe you will impress your partner."

Sumire sighed. "Are you and Atushi holding a grudge or something? What is with all the insults today?"

"Nothing, but sometimes I am envious when I see you confide in other people when you can easily talk to me."

She rolled her eyes at those words. "Your jealousy is becoming very petty, Yuhi-san. I mean, we already had an honest talk. I was just reminiscing with Sora and Atushi."

"You can do that with me too; we have plenty of memories."

Sumire looked over at him and noticed how gloomy he was. Geez, is he truly sulking about this? She supposes she has no choice.

"I am waiting for you

Wow, oh, wow, oh

Open Dream Land

Decorate my favourite song with desire.

I call you over

What I have is different from others

Because there are a lot of likes."

The snow was falling and settling quickly, but she could still do basic dance moves as she sang.

"Continue to turn around

The key to the heart

If we meet here

The world continues

A flash of a promise

When you share your future in this chest, the door is open

This is the entrance to the heart race land." Sumire sang.

When she finished singing, Yuhi burst into laughter, and her eyes twitched, annoyed. "There, I perform an exclusive song for you and yet!"

Yuhi laughed. "Sorry, sorry, I didn't mean to laugh. But I just thought you could sing and dance no matter where."

"Of course, I am a professional!"

Yuhi's gaze softened. "Indeed you are; that was a nice song. When did you have time to write that?"

"It was supposed to be my next single," Sumire mumbled. "The release date was the day after the accident. I would have performed it in my concert first, and the release would be the next day."

This is why she had very mixed feelings regarding the song for so long. But after much thought, she decided that she still wanted to go through with releasing this.

Sumire didn't realize when Yuhi left the steps area and approached her until he stood directly in front of her. "Yu-" Her sentence fell short when he cupped her cheeks.

"Inside your head, there is ninety-nine percent about your dreams and the poor one percent for me."

"Your jealousy is even extending to my dreams now?"

"But if I think about it, your dreams are because of me."

Sumire rolled her eyes at that comment of his. But she cannot deny it; indeed, everything started from this person. It is because of Terashima Yuhi that she even became an idol. The reason why she even entered this industry.

Her gaze softened. Everything started with this person, and she does not doubt that everything will end with him too. Deep down, she most likely decided a long time ago to be with this person forever.

"Yuhi-san, why don't we take a short walk?"

"A walk, huh." Yuhi trailed off. "Before then, I want to do something for you."

Something for her thoughts broke off when he suddenly kissed her. It was a gentle and brief kiss, but she felt his love behind it. When Yuhi drew back, he brushed their foreheads together.

"I want you to achieve your dream, but I want to be there with you."

"Right now, I'm working hard so I can stand next to you properly."

Yuhi shook his head. "You are working hard because you like to sing and because you want to see people's smiles when they hear your songs. Sumire, everything may have started with me. But along the way, you found your own goals. That is the meaning behind your song."

Her eyes widened when she heard those words. How is he able to interpret her songs so well?

Yuhi squeezed her hands. "Let's get going."

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 505**

Chapter 505: No Confidence

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Despite it already being winter, there was an area in Tokyo with cherry blossom trees still in bloom. It was truly a mysterious place. She walked a few steps ahead of him. 'Initially, I wanted to cling to his arm and act cute, but if I do that now, it feels I might lose.'

Even though they have spent so much time together since she came to Tokyo, even more after they became a couple, whenever they don't see each other for, she ends up feeling very lonely.

So much for not getting attached to him again. When she first came here, she prepared herself to meet Yuhi again. Tokyo is a large place, but the chances of meeting were still quite high. No amount of preparation would have prepared her for their first meeting after so long.

At first, she didn't recognize him; he had grown more mature and more handsome. But he recognized her immediately. 'That's probably why he tried to make a move on me.'

They ended up in the same school and ended up as deskmates. It was truly inevitable.

'You don't have to hide it anymore, Ki. Your own color, the colour that overlaps with his. I know if it is him, he will accept you regardless.' Sumire recalled Ru's words when she was in the facility. He was in so much pain when he said those words, and yet he still smiled like an idiot.

Her thoughts broke off when she heard Yuhi humming. He only hummed quietly, and yet Sumire immediately noticed that it was a melody.

"You're unfair, too, Yuhi-san, working on songs secretly without me."

"Unlike you, I have been doing my job."

Sumire sighed deeply. "Well, I can't deny those words."

"Are you going to be okay? It isn't easy. I know you have been doing small jobs in between since the festival in June, but not a lot."

"Mm, well, I have been working on my stamina by going jogging in the morning and afternoon, but the fatigue will get to me, I am sure."

"If you collapse, I will have an excuse to hold you in my arms."

She rolled her eyes at those words. "Do you even need an excuse for that?"

"I do; my wife is picky these days."

His wife, huh? They will get married after graduation. Some people may argue and say it is too soon. But for some reason, Sumire didn't want to leave it for even another year or two. Moreover, Yuhi-san was supposed to go to France after graduation, but he will stay for a while because of her. Eventually, he will have to go, and she won't be able to stop him.

Before that happens, 'I want to selfishly tie him down to me.' There is no doubt that when Yuhi goes abroad, he will meet so many new people. What if he finds somebody prettier than her? Somebody who he has more in common with?

Sumire sighed deeply at that thought. He hasn't even left yet, and already she is having such crazy thoughts.

"You know I can't wait to see you on stage again." Yuhi suddenly spoke up and broke her thoughts.

"Eh?"

Yuhi chuckled. "This entire time, you focused on your admiration for me as a singer. But did it occur to you that the same went for me too?"

Sumire coughed awkwardly. "Yuhi-san, with all due respect, you only saw me sing that time when we were children."

"Stupid, I was keeping an eye out for you on the news. It didn't take me long to find out that you were preparing for your debut with the connections I have. You delayed it for four years, though. I wondered what the reason was."

At that comment, Sumire paused, but she nodded. It should be okay to tell him, right?

"The truth is, Yuhi-san, I have no confidence in my own capabilities."

"No confidence?" Yuhi repeated, puzzled. "But you-"

"Right now, I am very different. I can be very shameless and say I have an amazing voice that won't lose out to anybody."

The current her is brimming with confidence that the past lacked.

"However, in the past, it wasn't like that. I doubted my capabilities more than anything. Back when we met, I didn't deny your words when you assumed I was somebody on the verge of debuting because the reality was it was like that. An agency already scouted me, and I was on the verge of debuting. But whenever I went on stage, I would break down.

My mind would go blank; my breathing would become unsteady. I would hyperventilate on stage and lose consciousness. My manager and the rest of the company gradually lost hope in me. Eventually, they scouted somebody else, and that person did whatever she could to kick me out."

Whenever she thought about it, it made her feel very bitter.

"That person is the current entertainment Queen; the one people quote is the next Takashi Yumi."

At that comment, Yuhi's face color paled. "Are you talking about Hori Fuuko?"

Sumire nodded. "Right." She paused, sensing that his tone seemed odd. "Yuhi-san, don't tell me she was one of your past lovers?"

He immediately turned silent, and she sighed. "So the person who made me suffer a lot back then was your woman."

"Hey, don't make it sound so weird. It was another company arrangement."

"You seem to fall for those a lot. I suppose I can get the details from Hino later on."

She didn't even have to turn around to know that he wore a defeated look on his face.

"It was because of that woman that I decided to leave the agency. The funny thing was when I was leaving; they were practically begging me to stay. That woman even had to lower her head for me. It occurred to me when I saw how desperate they were; from the start, they didn't scout me for my abilities. What they wanted was my family prestige. As the sole survivor of the Ibuki family, as the only heir. The amount of prestige their company will receive when I debut will be a lot."

When she first found out, it dumbfounded her. It struck her as odd why an entertainment company would be after her family prestige. But later on, she learned that while they were the number one company, they were on the verge of bankruptcy since so many artists left and breached the contract without paying.

It didn't take her long before she found out why the artists left when she researched it. Many experienced the same thing as her. Those who rose to power decided they wouldn't tolerate it and find another agency. Those in lower positions all decided to sacrifice their dreams rather than stay in that place.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 506**

### Chapter 506: The Struggle

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"It seems they had already dropped word to several media outlets. But that didn't matter to me. I paid the breach of contract in full. They tried to get more out of me, but I hired a lawyer and, in the end, got a restraining order too."

"I'm terribly sorry." Yuhi trailed off. "I think the reason she was so harsh on you was most likely me."

"Did you date her around that time?"

"We met shortly after I got to know you. But by that time, I was completely obsessed with your voice. She was a good singer, and we received many jobs together. It was obvious people were trying to match us. I didn't think she would go so far as to leave her agency and join yours just to bully you."

Sumire shook her head. "Even if they hadn't, I was planning on going anyway. When they first scouted me, I was very doubtful, and after I joined, it felt like they weren't listening to me sing at all. They gave me the best resources and a good team, but I always felt there was something wrong. When I failed to perform on stage for the first time, I noticed the look on my manager's face, a look of resentment and disgust. She told me that an idol who cannot sing on stage and who has stage fright could not succeed. I took those words as advice, but it wasn't."

"That is not an attitude a manager should have."

Sumire nodded. "Right, she said many more condescending things. When I met Hori Fuuko, I immediately sensed something off about her. After a while, I learned that all her words contained poison; she would wear a smile on her face and act like a perfect lady. But embedded in her compliments and even normal words, there are backhanded insults and criticism. A normal person would break down and fall apart, and yet they won't understand the reason why."

They would think it is their fault and blame themselves for overthinking and misunderstanding somebody nice.

'Your very talented Miss Sumire. It is a shame you can't sing that way on stage.'

The first time she implied that there was something underhanded going on.

The second time she treated her like a stray dog that the company picked up.

The third time was awful, and the fourth was when she finally snapped. The fourth time that woman dared mention her family and the accident.

"But you managed to get into Star agency?"

Sumire nodded. "Mm, that strange, eccentric president kept scouting me during a yacht party. The invitation to that party was mine, but my manager made up some excuse so Fuuko would attend in my place. I usually hate those places, so they probably thought they could take advantage of it, but I went, and it surprised me how many scouts there were." She laughed. "It seems like many people were trying to poach me from the start, but my company suppressed the news from reaching me. They didn't want me to feel special; they wanted to keep bringing me down."

"Then perhaps those bad experiences happened for a reason. After all, in the end, you found a pot of gold. Star agency became number one the year you joined them, and you earnestly prepared for your debut."

"Fu, Yuhi-san finally believes it. Everything happens for a reason, even those daily misfortunes."

A deep sigh passed Yuhi's lips. "I didn't want to use it for this context, so even though you handled it calmly, I am sure those words got to you?"

"It really did. From the start, I didn't have much self-confidence. I doubted everything I did. But at the very least, I could manage. But after years of listening to how useless and dirty I was, I started to think



that way of myself. I have always loved to sing; whether or not I was talented in it didn't matter. Yet after putting up with that for so long, I started to doubt myself. I can't achieve my dream if I can't sing well. But forget singing well. I need to get words out first."

It was painful, and she struggled so much to overcome her fear.

"Even when I joined Star agency, people told me I was a good singer, and I drew loads of attention. I still thought something was wrong."

They said countless praises at her, and she even gained fans within the company, but it made her more uneasy.

"I am not good enough. I am useless. Nobody will like songs like these."

The more people praised her, the more afraid she became.

"I see, so that's why you took so long."

"That stuff with San happened too, and whatever hope I had left just vanished. But Ru helped me regain what I lost. It was because he put in that much effort that I decided I could aim for my debut properly."

It was because Tsueno Mamoru never gave up on her, alongside her new company, who gave her the platform to stand on. The president never neglected her like her last company. He often gave her advice, but he didn't spoil her too much either.

"Even though it took a long time, Yuhi-san, are you saying you still became my fan?"

"Yeah."

Sumire blinked, startled at his words. So she turned around and faced him. She hadn't realized that he stood directly behind her. Yuhi extended his hand out and pinched her cheeks.

"You were absorbed into practicing back then. You didn't realize how many times I visited you. By the way, I broke things off with Fuuko when I heard that she drove an artist away from her company. So even though it was indirectly, at least I helped you."

Her eyes widened when she heard those words. "You didn't know it was me, right?"

"Yeah, I had no idea. But I couldn't tolerate the idea of staying beside a woman who would bully another artist like that."

What humble-sounding thoughts. If she heard this from another person, she might have thought they were faking it.

"The entertainment industry is like this now. But one day, I want to change it to a place where everybody supports each other. It is hard to get rid of all the jealousy and negativity. However, one could even say it is impossible to get rid of all that hate and bitterness, even if it is only a small chance. I want to build a supportive community."

Truly this person is amazing. 'Then again, I thought so from the very start, from the moment I saw him stand on stage singing in the snow. He cared more for the fans' well-being than his own.'

Because she saw somebody so earnest like him in the entertainment industry, she decided to give it a go seriously. After she met Yuhi that time, she earnestly aimed for debut properly. But by that time, those people were already starting to suppress her.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 507**

Chapter 507: Love And Dreams

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"Without darkness, there can be no light, and the same goes vice versa. Yuhi-san, what you are aiming for will be very hard to achieve, even if you succeed. The resentment and pain some people have experienced already will never go away. But even with that, you still say this is your goal?"

"Why are you making it sound like it's just me who wants this? I know you are thinking the same too."

Sumire nodded. "But you know I feel like I have too many dreams. Aiming to be an excellent artist, good designer, a great writer, and number one in the entertainment industry is a bit too much."

Yuhi's sweat fell. "You do have a lot there, but for you, which emotion is the strongest?"

"Hmmm." Sumire trailed off, and her gaze fell on the sky. Despite it being dark out, she could see the stars clearly. Her gaze softened. "Right now, the current me has my head filled with singing. I want to sing again on stage. I want to release these emotions I have suppressed this entire time."

"Only singing, huh?"

Her sweat fell when she saw the dark and gloomy aura around him. Sumire buried her face in his arms and hugged him tightly. "Don't be so silly; you know for me, love and my dreams are the most important."

"Hah, what about all the dangerous stuff happening?"

"That is important too, but my dearest happiness and my dreams take priority. I know we have to deal with all of that stuff happening. We cannot ignore those people for long. But I do not want to trade away this second chance at living a normal life. I want to succeed in both love and dreams."

"You haven't succeeded in love yet?" Yuhi caressed her hair. "I find that insulting."

"Well, Yuhi-san, we are not married yet, so it is hard for me to say this is a success."

"Then let's go get married now. I am sure the office is still open."

Sumire stepped on his foot, causing him to let go of her. "Ouch, my wife, why are you always so hasty?"

"It is because you keep saying foolish things."

Yuhi sighed deeply. "Foolish, she says. You know I am serious. I don't necessarily have to wait till graduation to marry you. But I am only doing so to respect your wishes."

At that comment, her lips curve to a smile, and she turned to Yuhi with a bright smile on her face. "That is what I love about you."

She watched as his face color slowly turned red, and he sunk to the ground with a defeated expression. "Don't look at my face for a few minutes."

It took her a moment to realize why and she laughed again. This person is truly foolish, but he loves her so much.

...

The following morning, Sumire reluctantly headed to the TV station for rehearsal. She wanted to remain in Yuhi-san's arms for much longer, but it would be bad if she were late. It looked like the TV station staff didn't expect her to come early, but they still greeted her politely. It seemed she had arrived a bit too early since they were still setting up the stage. Sumire had found a quiet spot in the corner and read the script.

It seems straightforward enough, and she won't have much to do during the first half. But the dance with the most popular male member. 'I wonder if Yuhi-san is okay with me dancing with other guys. He didn't say anything when I mentioned the details of the program.' But then again, he isn't the petty type.

Her thoughts broke off when she felt somebody presses a cold drink against her cheek. Sumire looked at the source, and her eyes widened, spotting Hino.

"Eh, uh- what are you doing here?"

"Acting as your manager." Hino casually pulled up the spare chair and sat beside her.

Sumire blinked, startled at his words. "Manager? Oh." So rather than openly display his jealousy, Yuhi-san sent Hino to watch over her?

"I think I can guess what you are thinking, but that isn't it. You need a manager Sumire. I know Star agency let you free because of what happened in your last place. But it will be hard for you to manage your schedule and sing at the same time."

So Hino knows about that; then again, he did investigate her.

"I understand, but is it okay for a big shot president like yourself to become my manager?"

Hino chuckled. "I used to follow Yuhi around all the time; relax, I know what to do."

Now that she thought about it, Yuhi-san doesn't have a manager. But supposedly, there was somebody who managed all his schedule and work. It seems that person is Hino.

"I see, but I wonder, Hino, is this an excuse for you to spend more time with me? I mean, you like me, right?"

At those words, Hino sighed deeply. "You are as blunt as ever. But unlike Sano, I won't use such methods." He trailed off. "Speaking of which, it has only been like a day since you last talked to him, but he is already going crazy. You're not replying to his messages, right?"

Sumire nodded. "Ah-huh, but that fast, huh? I thought he would last longer."

A pained expression appeared on Hino's face, which she couldn't miss, and Sumire looked away. "I apologize. I said that without thinking."

At the end of the day, Hino is still Sano's best friend. It must be hard for him when she says stuff like this.

Hino shook his head. "No, I think I am starting to understand what you are trying to do. Previously I was too harsh, but later on, I realized that this is the only way to settle your feelings without directly taking revenge. If you wanted to do the latter, you could do so easily, and he would lose everything. But a part of you still holds onto the hope that he will return to how he was before, correct?"

"Indeed, even though I know it is foolish of me to have such thoughts. That person must have experienced a lot for him to change so much. I know little about his matters, but I already experienced how cruel his family can be. So I understand what it might have done to him."

"For me, it seems like you still care for him."

"I do."

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 508**

Chapter 508: Faces From The Past

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It took her a moment to say those words, but she nodded and repeated them. "I do care for Sano."

"But it isn't love, right?"

Sumire nodded. "If somebody were to ask me if I fell in love before, I would say yes and with two people." The only ones who could occupy the spot in her heart are Terashima Yuhi and Tsueno Mamoru.

"I see. I guess it is Sano's loss. But don't break him down too much. He has experienced enough pain."

"Mm, I am aware."

Hino passed her a small book. "I organized your schedule for you up till the end of January. If there is anything you want to change, tell me."

Sumire briefly flicked through the pages, and something came to mind when she saw how empty January second was. "Say, Hino, I want to do more work after the new year."

Hino blinked, surprised. "Normally, people would want more of a break since they are still in a festive mood."

"No, there is no need. Besides, I have already had enough of a break."

"Then I will arrange more work that day."

Sumire watched him concentrating on the schedule and chuckled. For somebody who just recently got this role, he sure is serious. Then again, she supposes it is like him.

"Well, now isn't this our big star?" A familiar shrill voice said.

A deep sigh passed her lips. As long as she is in this industry, she will run into those people again one day. People call Hori Fuuko the current entertainment Queen and even the next Takashi Yumi; naturally, they would cross paths eventually. But Sumire didn't think it would be this soon.

She looked up to confirm her thoughts. Indeed, the person who called out to her was her former manager. A woman with long curly pink hair followed behind her.

"Katakursan, we didn't have to come here."

Katakura Leona, now age thirty-six, was her previous manager. The woman had straight purple-colored hair tied in a bun, and she wore a grey colored suit.

"Of course we have to complain! How dare they replace you when we made time for them? I thought they replaced you with somebody famous, but instead, they replaced you with worn-out goods."

It seems this person hasn't changed. It was then when Fuuko took a look at her. She seemed startled. "Ibuki-chan?"

"Mmm."

Fuuko seemed very surprised. "You mean they replaced me with you?"

Actually, she hadn't heard that they decided on the female guest already. All she knew was the director of the program seemed unsatisfied and wanted to make a few changes.

Her lips curve to a smile. "It appears so."

"I see; congratulations, even though you have not had any work this past year."

There it is, the famous poison tongue. It seems neither has changed. To think somebody is capable of smiling even when saying such poisonous things.

Katakura interjected by standing in front of Fuuko protectively. "You don't have to waste time with this woman." She glared at her viciously. "I am warning you, Sumire, you better return Fuuko her slot back; otherwise, you will face the consequences."

"Return the slot?" Sumire scoffed. "It seems you are not up to date on the news. The director seemed unsatisfied with some details in the program and asked me to attend."

'Although the reason the director most likely took an interest is Sano. But I can't mention that now.'

"Who knows what dirty tricks you used? How dare you, a small-time star, take a job away from Fuuko, who is the entertainment Queen? How dare you resort to such dirty tricks even though you belong to the supposedly top agency. It seems that is all that company is good for."

Sumire frowned when she heard those words. She could tolerate them insulting her; it won't make a difference now. But for them to insult the agency. Before she could get a word out, the focused Hino suddenly tossed her the schedule book back.

"Here, I got you some new offers. You have to choose, though, because some have clashing times." Hino spoke calmly, like the other two weren't there.

She looked at the list for January second, amazed. So he was quiet this entire time because he was messaging people? But some of these are way too much! If she takes on such jobs, won't people call her out for being arrogant?

It seemed Houjou finally noticed Hino's presence since she seemed startled. "This-"

Fuuko looked over at Hino, and she immediately recognized him. "Hino-kun, I haven't seen you in a while. How are you?"

Hino's gaze dimmed when Fuuko addressed him. "Who are you?"

Fuuko remained calm. "Oh silly, how could you forget me? We spent a lot of time together."

Those words would sound misleading to those walking by; in fact, they would assume that Hino had a special relationship with Fuuko before.

"Now I remember you; you're that rat Yuhi tossed away after you bullied a female artist and chased her out of her company."

It seemed the break-up was a sore subject for Hori Fuuko since Sumire never heard her talk about it. In fact, it seemed few people knew about the woman dating Yuhi. At those words, some curious staff members started whispering.

Fuuko clenched her fist but remained calm. "It has indeed been a while since I last saw Yuhi. Hino-kun, what are you doing here?" She looked over at her. "What type of relationship do you have with Ibuki-chan? You appear close."

Sumire rolled her eyes at this question. Despite how calmly she asked, Sumire already interpreted those words as something bad. This woman is even resorting to implying that she and Hino have an odd relationship.

The people who didn't know Hino was her manager gave them odd gazes.

"Isn't Ibuki dating Terashima? To think she brought another man here."

"Did you see how close they were just now? I think they were about to kiss."

The entertainment industry never changes; people love to gossip and misinterpret every single little thing. If a man and woman get close to each other, it ends up being a scandalous rumor.

"It's nothing serious, and I am only her manager. Do you doubt my credibility as Nasaki hino?"

At those words, the people whispering immediately shut up.

It seems Hino is quite famous in the Entertainment industry, not just as the president of Yuhi's company but as a gold tier manager. Her eyes twitched, annoyed when she heard that title. Just now, he was being too modest about having manager experience. For him to obtain that title, he must be that good.

Oh dearest, what kind of monster did you send over to her? She would rather scramble around with her schedule carelessly like she did before. Sumire immediately figured out that Yuhi was the one who sent Hino over, only he is capable of making Hino do anything.

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 509**

Chapter 509: Confrontation

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Katakura's glare deepened. "With all due respect, do you have any idea what kind of artist she is?"

"Oh? How can you know what kind of artist she is?"

"I was her manager for several years. I know her better than anybody."

"Three months, it only took three months before the praises turned to venom. In those three months, you already found somebody to replace her. You had your eyes set on Hori Fuuko, but because of her poor background, you didn't want to risk losing the potential money-making tree." Hino dismissed her words.

Sumire's eyes widened when she heard Hino's words. 'I have to admit that I am impressed. I didn't think he would have this side to him. Then again, there were many rumors regarding how cold Hino was regarding those who approached Yuhi with bad intentions. To think he is now doing the same thing for me.'

Fuuko interjected. "I will apologize for offending you in advance. But sometimes, people are not what they seem. I know you are biased towards her because of her relationship with Yuhi-san, but-"

"Who gave you the right to use Yuhi's first name?" Sumire, who had kept quiet this entire time, suddenly felt irritated.

"Of course he did; we were in a relationship-" Sumire harshly cut her off with a glare.

"In the past, yes, but not now. Moreover, he doesn't even acknowledge that you were his girlfriend. He referred to you as somebody the company arranged; you're not even a mistress or passing fling." Sumire pointed out.

Fuuko remained calm. "No matter what you say, the reality is we had that relationship before." She suddenly collapsed on the ground dramatically. "Isn't this a bit too cruel? You already stole Yuhi from me, and now you're even after my opportunities."

Stole Yuhi from her? Her eyes twitched, annoyed. 'I was going to leave her be and just let Hino-san handle her, but it seems she wants to court death so badly.'

"I know your upset because the company chose me over you. But that was only because you kept running away."

Fuuko's words implied that she had this escaping habit before the accident and has always been that way. Indeed the others were looking at her with a mixed expression.

Sumire took a deep breath before she walked over until she stood opposite the girl.

"The words of my senior, I will keep in my heart. So, why don't you get out of my sight now?" Sumire didn't want to waste any more time on this. She wanted to return to looking at the schedule Hino thought of her on such short notice.

He most likely didn't get any sleep and made the arrangements overnight.

"Ibuki, don't be so vicious! You don't own this station. Fuuko can be here whenever she wants."

"It seems Miss Katakura thinks I am saying this to bully her artiste."

"Of course you are. Why else-"

A dark aura surrounded her. No, it was a black aura wrapped in red flames emitting from her body. Her violet-colored eyes turned a bright shade of red as she walked towards Fuuko.

"Do you remember what you said to be the last time we met?"

"The--the last time." Fuuko seems very different now. She genuinely seemed frightened.

Sumire wondered how many people could see the black aura and the flames? It seems Fuuko could see it since her entire face color had turned pale.

"It seems you forgot, so let me remind you. 'It is a real shame that unfortunate accidents follow you. It is because you are this way that your entire household suffered.'"

"Ibuki, you can't just accuse-" Katakura paused. Sumire only briefly turned to glare at her, but already the woman had collapsed on her knees.

"How many times did you remind me of my upbringing and the accident that only just took place that year? Did you truly think you could mask your words and real nature by smiling? Sometimes smiles reveal the true nature of a person. You may have been smiling, but it was so vicious and frightening." Sumire touched the woman's cheek, and a large cut appeared.

Fuuko screamed, and the onlookers were looking puzzled. Nobody else could see the cut or the aura she was letting out. To a bystander, they were only exchanging a few words. So it looked like she was overreacting.

"It was so frightening; you were so scary. While enjoying all my privileges, didn't you have to beg for me to stay in the company? You knew it would be difficult for you to remain in the industry. Indeed over the past few years, you maintained a top position, but you could never go beyond that. You remain stuck in the same position as when you first took my place."

Sumire did her research. She knew she would eventually have to confront this woman, which is why she looked into her career. It seems after she left, this woman had a hard time trying to obtain any awards and getting into good programs. They even had to cook up a fake rumor like her being Takashi Yumi's successor.



Despite the fake rumor, people naturally flocked over. After all, no normal person would make something like that up. Hori Fuuko started to receive attention as a potential successor, but the reality was the woman was a poor imitation of Yumi-senpai. The funny thing is, she doubts that the two have even met before.

"I--you really are--"

Sumire wouldn't let her speak anymore. "Now you're even trying to drag Hino-san and Yuhi into your poisonous words." Her gaze darkened, and the black aura surrounding her increased. "You can step all over me all you want, but the moment you hurt people precious to me is the moment your courting death."

She felt nothing but pure resentment for this woman. 'Initially, I intend to leave her be. When I told Ru about it before, he said that there is no use getting revenge.'

Sumire realized that he only said that because he didn't want her to dirty her hands with this matter.

It seems Ru planned to stain his hands dealing with these people so she wouldn't have to. This entire time so many people have been protecting her, but what has she given them in return? A part of her is still afraid, but she no longer wants to disappoint people.

'I want to sing. I want to stand on stage again—no matter what shape or form it takes. I want to stand in the general public's eye. I will no longer run away from this.'

She has already made her mind up; her gaze fell on Fuuko with a disgusted look on her face. Times have changed already; she will not allow this woman to suppress her like in the past.

Back then, there was so much happening, and she had a hard time coping. But the situation has changed now. Even though she still has those problems, at the very least, she is no longer alone. Yet this woman is trying to drag in those precious to her into this petty dispute.

Before Sumire could do anything else, she felt a familiar pair of arms hug her from the back. The dangerous aura surrounding her seemed to leave her body the moment she felt his warmth and his voice calling softly.

"Sumire."

## **ETERNAL MELODY Chapter 510**

Chapter 510: Why Does He Like Her So Much?

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Sumire turned around and spotted Yuhi. He was holding a small box in his hands. "I got you some pastries. I thought you would be hungry since you didn't eat breakfast." He looked at her with an affectionate gaze and spoke in a dotting tone.

It rendered her speechless, and Hino spoke up. "Didn't you have a meeting?"

"I rescheduled."

Yuhi must have heard about these people coming here and changed his plans. Even though she only mentioned it briefly last night, it seemed he took it very seriously.

"You need to drop that habit." Hino sighed.

"If it's for my wife, I have to come flying."

Uh, doesn't he realize that they are in public? Sumire suddenly felt very shy. Although he can call her his wife at home and at school, it is very embarrassing to say such things in the middle of a TV station like this.

Yuhi laughed when he saw her expression. He leaned down and brushed his lips against her ear. "I am honest. Do you have a problem?"

"You're just trying to get back at me for teasing you."

"Maybe I am unsatisfied."

Says the one who fell asleep after they came back from their date!

Fuuko weakly stood up, and Sumire could not miss the girl's eyes as she looked at her and Yuhi. "Yuhi." Fuuko called out. "Are you really dating Ibuki Sumire?"

"Dating isn't exactly the word I would use."

She looked hopeful, and Sumire rolled her eyes.

"I mean, I plan to marry her after graduation, so isn't she more like my fiancée than a girlfriend?"

"Did you hear that?"

"I heard it! He said they would marry!"

"So it's a serious relationship?"

Sumire noticed some people had casually taken their phones out to snap pictures. Some were doing this from the start, secretly recording. So those people captured Yuhi saying such words.

Katakura must have sensed that things were no longer in their favor since she went over to Fuuko.

"Let us go, Fuuko. There is no use staying here."

Fuuko bit her lip and shook her head. "No, I will stay."

Has this woman not had enough?

"After all, if she can't perform, then it will cause a problem for the director."

So she is basically implying that she will fail. Ah, she truly is a fool. Yuhi suddenly leaned down and kissed her.

"What are you doing Yuhi-san? This isn't appropriate." She kept her head low, shy about the brief kiss that just happened.

"I believe I just kissed you."

Uh, she knew that, but why did he suddenly kiss her? Sumire looked over and saw the furious look on Fuuko's face. Oh, dearest, this isn't the best way to get rid of the romantic rivals! In fact, with Fuuko's furry, it wouldn't surprise her if the girl tried something right now.

Hino took a step forward. "Alright, this is enough now. Hori and Katakura, you two can stay if you must. But an artist under me will never fail to achieve results." He trailed off and called out for a member of staff. "Get Miss Hori and Katakura here with comfortable seats. They will be sitting there for a long time."

Sumire resisted the urge to laugh when she heard Hino's casual but savage words. In other words, he was implying that he believes that she will do well and Hori Fuuko will not have to move an inch. It seems Hori-san isn't the only one who can use poisonous words.

The moment those vile women were out of sight, she buried her face in her dearest embrace again. It wasn't enough for her, so she wrapped her arms around his neck.

"Hey, people will stare."

"My dearest, they were bullying me."

The onlookers nearby were looking at her dumbfounded. Some of their expressions read, 'that is a lie.'

"Hmmm, I know. I will do something about it later. I won't let anybody harm you."

Despite those casual words, Yuhi said it in a frightening tone. The people who went along with Hori Fuuko were casually shuffling away. But Hino called out to them.

"Just so you know, I memorized every one of your faces, so even if you leave now, it won't do any good. Maybe you're better off staying and repenting?"

She doesn't care about those people. Hino can handle them; she just wants to be with her dear. Yuhi must have understood since he leads her out of the room. It was amazing how he carried her without dropping despite being in this position.

It did not take long before Yuhi put her down and pushed her against the wall. "What were you speaking about with Hino?"

"Oh uh about-"

"About Nagawa?"

Shoot, how does he- wait, how long has he been listening?

"After what you told me last night. I was curious what would happen if you met again. So I intentionally leaked that her replacement would come."

Sumire stepped on his foot. "Your curiosity almost gave me anxiety!"

"But you handled it well, my wife."

Gah, this man sometimes she doesn't understand what he is thinking. But somehow, her heart feels settled. She wondered what she would say to those people if she met them again for a long time. 'I took careful steps to avoid them the last few years.' Yuhi's actions were abrupt, but at the very least, she confronted this early on. Now she can focus on the stage with Yumi-senpai and then continue her career.

"Your wife?"

His lips curve to a smile. "My wife, you did very well." Yuhi gently placed a kiss on her forehead.

Sumire played with the buttons on his shirt. "This looks fancy. Are you trying to impress somebody?"

Yuhi laughed. "Yeah."

"Hmm, is she pretty?"

"The most adorable, amazing, and beautiful wife there is."

Stupid, he answered that way too easily. Then again, she already understands it. This person is head over heels in love with her. It doesn't make sense to her, though. Although she has accepted Yuhi's love, it does not make sense for him to like her this much.

Why would he like somebody like her when there are better people around? Hori Fuuko has a bad personality, but her singing isn't that bad; she is pretty and belongs to a wealthy family. Meanwhile, while she belongs to a good background, she is the only one left in her family. Her looks are average at most, and while her singing is amazing, she can't just use that to tie Yuhi down.

Her thoughts broke off when she felt Yuhi kiss her neck. "My dear?"

"I truly am sorry, even if it was to get it out of the way. Perhaps I should have stepped up sooner. It brought back bad memories, didn't it?"