

Right Time, Wrong Brother

Chapter 4 - Alex

"Alexander, you are staying late tonight. I thought you would have left with Oliver to the club."

I pinched the bridge of my nose. "I'm sorry to disturb you, Yuka-San. Is there a chance of coming to see you?"

"Now?"

"Only if you have the time, sir."

"Of course, Alex. Pearl is still in reception. I'll let her know you're on your way."

"Thank you, sir, I will be prompt." I placed the phone back in its cradle and stood, shutting down my laptop and locking it away in my drawer. While I knew no one in my office would be so bold to take it, there had been a string of break-ins in the district lately, targeting clan businesses. I didn't want to take chances. Not when I was one of the heads of security of the Takada Clan. I'd pick it back up and take it home with me, on the way out.

Picking up my jacket, I pulled it on, pocketing the invitation, while I walked out of my office and headed for the main elevator in the lobby.

Stepping into the elevators, I pressed the button for the top floor and rode up.

The doors slid open, and I stepped out into a larger, more opulent version of my own office.

An older woman with a fierce scowl and a large string of pearls around her neck, stood only a few feet in front of me, hands wedged firmly on her hips, making me stop in my tracks. I blinked, then smiled my most charming smile, bowing. "Hello, Pearl."

Yuka's personal assistant of more than forty years narrowed her gaze at me. "Don't you hello Pearl me, young man. Why the hell are you still in this building? Why aren't you at home, with a pretty wife and child? Oh, that's right, you're too stubborn, too pig-headed and too into clan business to have the time to find someone who will put up with you."

"Oh, ouch, Pearl." I chuckled, clutching at my chest. "You wound me with your callousness. Besides, I've told you, when you give me permission to take out your useless husband, then I will have the girl of my dreams."

Pearl rolled her eyes and shook her head. "You're always sickly sweet with your compliments to me, Alexander."

"Of course." I winked, planting a quick kiss on her wrinkled cheek. "Yuka said I would be by tonight?"

"Yes. He did. And while you're in there with him, you can both go over the new security reports." Pearl turned back to her desk, waddling to it and I followed her. "I would have had them sent up to Suki in the morning, but when I heard, you were coming to see Yuka, I thought I'd just give them straight to you."

"Thank you, Pearl." I took the folders from her and smiled. "You have a good evening and let me know when you want your husband sorted."

Pearl's face flushed red, and she giggled. "I think the sake is going to sort him out for me, Alexander."

Pearl gathered her handbag and coat, and I walked her to the elevators, bidding her farewell. When the doors had closed, I turned and wandered to the large gold door to the left of the reception desk and pushed through it. Traveling the long hallway, I stopped at the end and knocked on the red wood of Yuka's office door.

"Come!"

Pushing open the door, I stepped only two feet into the office, leaving enough room for the doors to close behind me and stopped, my gaze averted to the floor, as per clan protocol, hands rigid by my sides and bowed. "Yuka-san."

"Ah, Alex, come, do sit down."

I lifted my head and walked to the chair being offered and sat in it, placing the folder on my lap, and finally lifted my gaze to Yuka Takada.

By all appearances, Yuka looked to be in his mid-late forties. With jet black hair and a complexion as smooth and supple of a man much younger than him. But the fine lines around his eyes and the wisdom in his gaze showed he was in fact pushing sixty-eight this year.

"Not quite as prompt as normal, Alex." Yuka chuckled.

I smiled. "Sorry, sir. I was chatting to my future wife."

Yuka's laughter reverberated around the room, a hearty chuckle which I was one of the only ones to have ever heard. "You know, you would be in trouble if Pearl's husband heard you speak to his wife, like you do."

"If he crawled out of the sake bottle long enough." I replied, with a wry chuckle and Yuka nodded.

"Very true." Yuka leaned back in his chair, hands sleeping in front of him.

"Now what is so urgent that you must come to me at this time of night? When you could be at the club with my son-in-law."

"You know sir, I only leave the office, once you have, and you are here late tonight also, so here, is where I am." It was a protocol I had implemented myself, after an attempt on Yuka's life, when the last head of security had left for the night. I had been promoted the following day and the other clan member was cleaning toilets at Ollie's club. "But I do come to ask of a small favor."

Ignoring the folders on my lap, I pulled the invitation from my pocket and offered it to him with both hands, bowing my head.

Yuka took the invitation, looked at it and frowned. "Ah, so the little brother you told me you do not like, has asked you to come home for his wedding."

"Yes, sir."

"And you want my permission?"

I lifted my head and looked at him. "It is Yamota territory, and I know while we have a truce with them at the moment, it is fragile, and I do not want to upset it."

"And with you being the head of my security, Yamota may see it as an incursion, or scouting mission." Yuka stroked his chin, holding the invitation in one hand as he did.

"Exactly."

"Hmm..." Yuka returned the invitation, and I pocketed it again. I watched him for a moment, before he leaned forward and picked up the phone. I lowered my gaze as he punched in a number and waited. "Sana, it is Yuka Takada."

I bit the inside of my cheek, in anticipation. This could go two ways.

"I have a small favor to ask." I closed my eyes, hoping to hell that Yamota was in a good mood. I didn't want to go to my brother's wedding, but I did want to go home and see my parents. Even to do that, I would need permission not only from Yuka, but also the man on the other end of the line. "My head of security is needing to come into your territory for—"

There was a pause, and I lifted my head. Yuka raised an eyebrow, and I held up four fingers.

“Four days. His kid brother is getting married on Saturday and he is wanting to see family, while he is in Miami. He will be leaving to come back to New York on Sunday.”

Yuka listened as Yamota responded and he nodded. “Yes. Alexander Kazumi. That’s right.”

I grimaced.

Shit Yamota knew who I was. Well, being the head of security for the Takada clan would get your name out there.

“Yes, I understand. Yes, and a bottle of Sake? Of course. Any brand in particular?” Yuka’s eyebrow rose. “Hokusetsu daiginjo YK35 shizukuzake titanium gold?”

Double shit. That sake was almost sixteen hundred US dollars.

“Thank you, Sana-San. I will.”

Yuka put the phone back into its cradle and looked at me. I lowered my gaze, frowning. “Takada-San, it is too high of a price to—”

“Sh.” I closed my eyes. “It is nothing, Alex. You know I value family above everything else, and since I have none of my own, I have come to see Oliver and you as sons.”

I lifted my head and looked at the man, who smiled and stood. “Come, let me show you something.”

I followed Yuka to a door on the left of his office and into another room. My stomach dropped to my feet as I stared at the walls lined with alcohol.

Yuka moved to one side, picking up a bottle and turning to me. “I have three of these, just sitting here. I prefer Kikusui Daiginjo Shukondeinoshiro Kamutachi. I am just waiting on this year’s batch to be ready.”

He handed me the heavy bottle and I looked down at it. The container which held the sake was made of pure titanium, with a slight pearlescent shimmer to it. I looked at Yuka and bowed. “You honor me with this gift to give to Yamota.”

“Psh.” Yuka said, ushering me out of his personal cellar and back into the warmer office. “Yamota owes me a favor anyway. This is just an add on to that. He knows that. This is just a peace offering, so you can attend your brother’s wedding.”

I nodded and returned to my seat, placing the bottle gently on the floor next to me and picked up the folders I'd placed on the desk, when I'd stood up.

Yuka sat in his chair and looked at me. "But you must go and deliver it to him in person, Alex. Which means your tattoos must be completely covered. Head to toe, carry your ID, but go in with no weapons. I do not want one of his underlings mistaking you for an insurgent. I'd like you to come back to New York in one piece."

I nodded. I'd been into a rival clan's territory unarmed before and I could tell you, it was one of the most terrifying things I'd done. To know you were surrounded by men who at any other time would be glad to put a bullet between your eyes, or a knife to your heart, was one of the most sobering things I'd ever done. "I understand."

"Good. Now, what are the folders in your hand?"

I smiled and opened them, and we delved into a more mundane clan agenda.