

ACCIDENTALLY BECOME A FATHER

Chapter 2: A birth certificate

And I took it.

The plastic folder was thin.

High quality.

There was a brand logo in the bottom right corner.

I figured this kid didn't come from an ordinary family.

I opened it.

Official paper.

Stiff.

Thick.

Bearing a government seal at the top.

I recognized the format immediately.

A birth certificate.

Her name was written clearly.

Yuna.

Date of birth: nine years ago.

Place of birth: Tokyo.

Mother's name.

I hadn't looked at that part yet.

My eyes stopped at the father's column.

Nishida Itsuki.

The exact same kanji.

Not a single stroke out of place.

I reread it slowly.

Nishida.

Itsuki.

I looked up.

She was sitting cross-legged now.

Hands resting on her knees.

Back completely straight.

An innocent expression that was far too composed.

"It's official," she said.

I ignored her.

A few seconds later.

"There are a lot of similar names out there."

"There are."

"And a lot of Nishidas."

"Yes, I know."

"And a lot of Itsukis."

"...True... and?"

"So it's highly likely this isn't me."

She tilted her head slightly.

Leaning forward.

"But the address is correct."

I hadn't turned to the back page.

I lowered my gaze again.

The official seal.

The signature...

My signature?

Since when was that here?

I looked closer.

Every stroke.

It all looked authentic.

Not a cheap imitation.

Nor a crude forgery.

If this was a fake, the person who made it wasn't an amateur.

I let out a soft exhale.

"You know, forging documents is a criminal offense."

"I didn't forge it."

"Do you know what 'criminal offense' means?"

"I know."

I stared at her.

She wasn't the least bit anxious.

Nine-year-olds usually aren't this calm when they're lying.

I closed the folder slowly.

"If you've got the wrong person, what are you going to do?"

She gave a small shrug.

"Then that means Papa is a bad person."

I stared at her for a few seconds.

"That is terrible logic."

She fell silent.

I opened the folder again.

The mother's name was finally visible near the top.

Kanzaki Sayaka.

My hands stopped for a fraction of a second.

I hadn't reacted.

Not yet.

That name wasn't common.

Too specific.

Too well-known.

I closed the folder again before my thoughts could wander too far.

"Alright," I said quietly.

"Let's assume this is real."

"It is real."

"Let's assume," I repeated.

She didn't argue this time.

I placed the document on the table between us.

"If this is true," I said,

"when exactly did I do something this major?"

She smiled slightly.

"That's something Papa should remember."

I had no doubts.

I didn't remember ever doing it.

Not even once in my entire life.

I never had.

I stared at her.

She stared back without blinking.

The room fell silent again.

I tapped the paper lightly with my fingertip.

For quite a while.

"Do you have any other proof?"

She immediately reached for her backpack again.

Without rushing.

Without panicking.

As if she had been waiting for that very question.

Her hand disappeared into the bag.

Then she pulled out a small, folded piece of paper.

She didn't hand it over right away.

Just holding it in the air for a moment.

"This too," she said.

I stared at the paper.

"Papa's address."

She smiled.

I hadn't taken the paper yet.

My hand paused mid-air.

If the address was right, this wasn't a coincidence.

If the address was right—

I finally took the paper.

And opened it.
