

ACCIDENTALLY BECOME A FATHER

Chapter 3: Who is Yuna's mother?

And unfolded it.

Neat handwriting. Not a child's. Steady. Upright.

Tokyo.

District name.

Street name.

Building number.

Unit 203.

My unit.

I slowly raised my head.

She wasn't smiling now.

She was watching me.

Waiting.

"Where did you get this address?"

"From..."

"From where?"

"The old house."

That answer explained nothing.

I looked back down at the paper. The details were precise. Even the postal code was correct.

Not approximate.

Not close.

Exact.

If this was a coincidence, then coincidence was working far too hard today.

"Have you been here before?"

"No."

"So this is your first time here."

"Yes."

"And you still knocked without hesitation."

"Yes."

I studied her face.

"What made you so sure I'd open the door?"

She answered without pause.

"Because Papa isn't a bad person."

I let out a faint breath.

"That's a rather quick judgment."

She shook her head slowly.

"It wasn't quick."

Her eyes didn't move.

Didn't waver.

As if she had reached that conclusion long ago.

I folded the paper once. Then again.

The air in the room felt heavier now.

Not because the room was small.

But because the situation was no longer simple.

I glanced at the plastic folder on the table.

That name was still inside it.

Kanzaki Sayaka.

I didn't want to think about that yet.

"Anything besides this?" I asked.

She lowered her gaze briefly.

Then reached for her bag again.

This time, her movements were slower.

More careful.

She pulled out a small envelope. The corners were worn, softened from being handled many times.

She opened it.

And took out a photograph.

She held it with both hands.

"This," she said quietly.

She offered it to me.

I took it.

A woman stood in the center of the frame.

Long hair. Stage dress. Professional smile. White fabric reflecting the glow of overhead lights.

Beside her—

A little girl.

Shorter hair. Smaller frame.

Holding her hand tightly.

Smiling at the camera.

I felt something tighten in my chest.

I looked up.

Then back down at the photo.

Then up again.

The girl sitting in front of me.

The same eyes.

The same face.

The same person.

I looked back at the woman in the photo.

And this time, I recognized her.

Not from television.

Not from a screen.

But from somewhere else.

Somewhere closer.

Somewhere real.

Kanzaki Sayaka.

My fingers tightened slightly around the edge of the photograph.

Because I wasn't just looking at a stranger anymore.

I was looking at someone I had met before.
