

MY

Confidential

Secret

My Confidential Secret

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1

SURPRISE GIFT

[Tokyo, Japan - 7:30 pm]

DO you ever wish you could be anything other than a human? Like a rock, where you don't have to move and can be moved by someone else, or being walked on yet not feeling any pain.

Or a bird, in which you can fly around freely, enjoying the chilly breeze brushing across your face while exploring Tokyo for free.

'They did it again, everyone! The Yamaguchi Clan donated a large sum of money to all of Japan's orphanages! They have once again shown us how compassionate even the most intimidating family can be!'

Katsumi's attention was drawn to the radio being played by a netizen, which interrupted her thoughts while she rested on the dock near the ocean. She could already anticipate the negative remarks coming after hearing the positive ones about the Yamaguchi Clan.

Not everyone is in favor of the Yamaguchi Clan, for they are still part of the Yakuza. Katsumi understood their concern. Just like those "haters", she has trust issues. A terrible one.

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The sound of the ocean suddenly mixed with footsteps. She realized at that instant that her relaxation time was over.

"Katsumi-san, it's time."

A man in his thirties wearing a quality suit calmly informed Katsumi. With a sigh of disappointment, she stood and walked to the limo. The gentleman opened the door for the lady, who thanked him before proceeding.

"Your weapon is in the suitcase, my lady; prepare everything while the vehicle is in motion."

"Location?"

"In an alleyway in Harajuku, my lady."

"Target?"

The man handed Katsumi a folder with information about the target.

"Kenji Yamashita, a homeless 40-year-old man."

Katsumi began reading the information given. She learns that this homeless man has been seen murdering stray dogs and cats for money and then using the money to buy illegal drugs. He then sells those drugs for a much greater price, which he then uses to purchase additional drugs for himself.

As a result, he has become aggressive toward everyone he encounters. He has also been seen harassing women, particularly those in their teens. This homeless man always manages to flee before being taken to the police station. As a result, he has become a popular "urban legend".

Little do these victims know that the man they call an urban legend is actually a living man who's just clever with his actions.

"The other men are in the process of capturing him, my lady."

"Good job," Katsumi responded apathetically.

It was a thirty-minute ride to the mentioned location, and Katsumi used the opportunity to prepare her weapon. When they arrived, a separate man, known as Katsumi's family butler, opened the door for her.

With her coat and gun placed on the gun belt around her waist, she heads out.

"It's great to see you here, Murase-san."

"Likewise, my lady." The butler bowed. "I've been busy hunting the target. It is now your job to annihilate him."

"Please show me the way."

"Certainly, my lady."

They entered a dark alleyway on a dangerous street. It was the ideal location for them to avoid being discovered.

And when they were face-to-face with the target, one of Katsumi's men shoved the homeless man toward her. Up close, you could see him much more clearly. He was merely an old man in raggy, filthy clothes, and his entire body stank.

She knew she was in the presence of a homeless man who hadn't showered in months, if not years, but the overwhelming odor made her scrunch her nose.

Upon closer inspection, the man did not appear to be terrified of her. He glared at her, and she returned his stare. Just as he isn't afraid of Katsumi, she isn't afraid of him.

"You do know who I am and why I'm here, right?"

When Kenji let out a chuckle, the gazing contest was over.

"Of course! Who doesn't know about your stupid family?" His chuckling ceased, and he gazed at her with hatred. "And you're here to end my life, aren't you, Yamaguchi Katsumi-san?"

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"It's a good thing you're not as stupid as they say you are; my job will be accomplished faster than I expected."

Katsumi replied as she pulled her gun from her belt and pointed it at Kenji. All the confidence the guy had before is now gone and is replaced with fear.

"Wait, wait, wait! Grant me at least one wish before you pull the trigger!"

Katsumi desperately wanted this to end, but her soft spot prevented her from doing so. This is the only part of her personality that she needs to work on if she's going to take over her parents' job.

"Let's hear it."

But he requested once more to be alone with the lady. Katsumi's men believed his wishes were excessive, but Katsumi agreed to them.

Once they were alone, Kenji grinned broadly and praised Katsumi for her generous heart. A harmless wish from the male is what Katsumi was expecting, but she was met with a disgusting act when the man pulled down his pants, revealing his manhood to the lady.

Katsumi had never seen a man's hood before. Inside she was panicking, as you could hear mini-katsumi's in distress, but on the surface, she tried to maintain a calm expression.

Her reasoning was that the man was doing this to make her feel uncomfortable. He'll be delighted if she shows that he won. So with a relaxed, un-phased expression, she stared at the man's hood and snickered.

"What am I looking at? A mushroom?"

And immediately, the sneer on the man's face frowned. Followed by his death.

Butler Murase returned the lady to her house when the mission was finished. She needed a thorough rest after this traumatic experience to cleanse her eyes and mind.

Katsumi's phone's alarm clock went off on the way home. When she checked, it was the alarm clock reminding her to prepare dinner. She discovered it was a repeated alert, and the initial time was 8:00 p.m. When she looked at the clock, it was already 8:30, 30 minutes after the original set-up time.

Katsumi panicked.

"Murase-san, we need to get back home pronto!"

"Yes, my lady."

The moment Katsumi arrived home, she quickly ran inside and towards the kitchen. In a panic about what to cook for her family, the aroma of grilled fish drew her attention.

She went into the kitchen to see her twin brother, who was cooking.

"Kento, what are you doing? Isn't it my turn to cook? You already had your turn yesterday."

"You were handling a target, so I knew you'd be late and exhausted," he explained.

Kento felt like a God-sent angel for the first time. It's true; Katsumi was exhausted after what happened a while ago. Having the duties of a teen and a yakuza clan's daughter can be really emotionally and physically tiring when done at the same time.

"At the very least, let me help you," Katsumi said.

Today is a special day for the Yamaguchi siblings. Their mother and father will return from a business trip from Seoul, South Korea. They hadn't seen them in three years and were overjoyed to see them

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again. And because of that, a big feast is required to celebrate their return.

"Why don't you cook Mom's favorite? You know what her favorite dish is, right?"

Fortunately for Katsumi, she did! It was exactly the same as her favorite dish, sashimi. It is a type of bite-sized Japanese dish of raw fish dipped in soy sauce and wasabi paste. It might not be many people's favorite, but it was a delicacy for Katsumi and her mother.

After an hour of cooking, all of the dishes were complete. The twins continue decorating the table with utensils and dishes. It only took them 5 minutes to settle everything. And at the exact same time, they heard their older sister arrive home.

"I'm home!"

"Welcome back!" Katsumi said. "Did you find mom and dad's favorite wine?"

"Barefoot wine," Kazuha says, placing the bottle of wine on the table with a smile, "just like you asked!"

When Kento shifted his gaze to his older sister, he noticed a red substance smudged on Kazuha's right jaw. He pointed it out to his sister right away.

"I was on my way back from retrieving the wine, and I bumped into the Yoshida Clan's men."

The Yoshida Clan is the Yamaguchi Clan's sworn enemy. Years ago, they were great friends, but their treason against the Yamaguchi Clan was unforgivable, and they have since become foes.

"Did you kill them?" Katsumi inquired.

"I didn't do anything at first, but they were the ones who started the brawl, so I had to protect myself."

"So... you killed them," Kento repeated.

"There was no death, just a lot of bruised faces, including mine."

The twins sighed at the reckless act of their sister as they both worked together to aid her. They did so before their parents arrived.

And a few minutes later, their parents arrived via helicopter. As the chopper descended, the siblings waited on the rooftop. It took a few minutes to wait for the main rotor blade to halt.

The door swung wide, revealing their parents, who smiled warmly at them.

"My children! How have you been? It's been so long since I've last seen you in person."

"Welcome home, Mom and Dad." Kazuha greeted them with a hug. The twins did the same, with their father joining in.

Beaming with joy, it was nice to see the Yamaguchi family all together after a few years. The greeting was cut short as they made their way to the dining room for the feast.

It took their parents by surprise to see the dining table packed with delicious foods, especially their favorites. They assumed it was prepared by personal chefs, but when they learned it was prepared by their children, they were overjoyed.

They talked while they ate. Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi were curious about what had occurred in the years they had been gone.

Beginning with Kazuha and her orphanage company, sadly, there are more parents abandoning their children every month. And, as pleased as she is to foster them, the orphanage is becoming overcrowded.

Kento, on the other hand, was in charge of resolving criminal issues in order to make Japan a better place. And, despite the fact that the media portrays the country as magical, there are more new cases

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of crime occurring. Robbery, murder, assault, domestic abuse, drugs, theft, kidnapping, and many other crimes.

Finally, Katsumi was tasked with the assassination. When it came to assassination, she was the best of the three siblings. Fortunately for her, there weren't many targets to eliminate, but these targets are becoming more daring than before.

Remembering that mushroom incident, Katsumi suddenly lost her appetite to eat and became very exhausted. Personally, Katsumi wasn't satisfied with her life. She felt pressured.

"Your mother and I have some very good news for our twin."

"What is it?" Katsumi wondered.

"We have both enrolled you in a high school in Seoul."

"We know it's been two years since you two dropped out, but I promise there are plenty of kind students your age who can assist you."

"But what about our jobs?" said Kento.

"If we concentrate on our studies, we might not be able to prepare for our future as family members of the Yamaguchi Clan."

"All we wanted was for you to live a new normal life where you could make your own decisions about your future."

"Your mother and I discussed this in Seoul after learning how you both feel about the way we live."

Not all parents, especially dangerous ones, would let their child live freely the way they want to instead of their parents. That made both of the twins happy. But how can people live the so-called "normal" life they want if they were born in the opposite environment? Katsumi thought.

It's like producing realism after spending your entire life doing abstract art. It will not go as planned.

"You don't have to worry about getting the jobs done here; I'll be in charge of that," Kazuha reassured them. "You two can concentrate on the career you want to pursue."

A life in which she has complete control over her career, decisions, and making new friends. Katsumi couldn't help but smile with glee.

To top it all off, their parents had enrolled them at San-Ib High School in Seoul. It is famous for their arts and design majors for senior high school students, where they are focusing more on visual arts and performing arts.

Katsumi couldn't help but be concerned, despite their cheerful conversation. She hasn't attended school in a long time, and she's only ever been with her family.

Despite the fact that this is what she desires, she is frightened of being alone.

[Katsumi's Bedroom - 00:00 am]

Checking the undergarments off the list, Katsumi prepares the next. She took half of her clothes out of the closet to bring to Seoul, then folded and packed everything inside her large luggage.

A few minutes later, someone knocks on her door. "Come in," she says, as Kento enters.

"Dad said we should surrender our guns to him," he explained.

Katsumi sighed as she headed towards a lock that was hidden at the back of her closet. She entered the password to unlock it and retrieved a small black bag from the locker.

She surrendered the case to him.

"Please handle it with care."

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Kento looked over the case and noted the Yamaguchi Crest in the upper right corner. It also contained the letters Y.K. in the center. Which is an abbreviation for Yamaguchi Keiichiro.

"Isn't this Granddad's?" he wondered.

"That's why it means so much to me; he gave it to me before he died."

"I see."

Kento couldn't help but think about their grandfather as he admired the crest. Keiichiro is a courageous, strong, and compassionate man whom the twins greatly admire. He taught the family how to use a pistol, how to fight, and, most importantly, how to be empathetic. This could be why Katsumi has a soft spot for people.

"I'll see you tomorrow, then. Good night."

"Good night."

Tomorrow is the twins' departure date for Seoul. Despite the fact that it is Thursday, they will not be attending school that day. They were given the option of exploring the streets around them to become acquainted with their new surroundings.

Despite her concerns, Katsumi remains optimistic about making new friends and discovering a new hobby. But she knows that she shouldn't expect everything to be hearts and roses. She *is* still the Yamaguchi clan's daughter.



OFF TO SEOUL

[Airport Runway - 7:00 am]

KATSUMI counted her belongings, paranoid about leaving without all of the things she owned. The twins were traveling by private plane. The predicted arrival time is 10:00 a.m. when they leave the country at 7:30 a.m.

After double-checking everything, the twins said goodbye to their parents and sister. Mrs. Yamaguchi was concerned about sending her children to another country where she would not be present. But she knew she had to let go and trust them in order for them to grow independently.

"Well, everything is ready!" remarked Katsumi.

"Once you arrive at the apartment where you'll be staying, everything that you'll need—whether it's furniture, food, kitchen tools, or toiletries—has been prepared for the both of you," Mr. Yamaguchi explained.

"Thank you, dad, mom," Kento answered nervously.

Mrs. Yamaguchi couldn't help but cup her son's cheeks for comfort when she saw him in this state.

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"Don't forget to contact us once you both arrive in Seoul, and remember to have fun and be yourself."

These comforting words put their minds at ease. It will be tough at first to attain the items Katsumi desires, and it is frightening. But Katsumi believes in herself. She must, or else nothing will change.

Katsumi sat near the window to unwind throughout the flight. Trying not to overthink what's to happen too much. Kento sat close to his sister, resting and enjoying their flight.

An hour into their flight, Katsumi was starting to get nervous. She knew that the moment she stepped foot in Seoul, she would begin a new life with a new her. However, in order to achieve her desired life, she needs to accomplish a lot of things.

Her mind wanders about with the same worries over and over. Will she make any new friends? And even if she did, would they still like her if they learned about her family background? Will she be all right?

These negative thoughts will not go away, no matter how hard she tries. Like it has a mind of its own.

"Everything okay?" Kento inquired, concerned. When he noticed Katsumi's distressed expression, he couldn't help but approach her.

"Yeah, I'm just nervous," she says.

"It's natural to be nervous; I'm the same."

"You are?"

"Yeah! I can feel nervous in situations like this too, you know."

"You just look so calm. I couldn't tell."

"It's because I know I'm not alone; you're here with me," he explained, lightly shrugging his shoulders against Katsumi's.

Katsumi has been afraid of being alone for a long time. But she isn't. Even if she doesn't make any friends, she has her twin brother

to keep her company. And when she reflected on this, her anxiety subsided, and she felt relieved.

"Thank you."

Kento responded with a smile. It was unusual for the twins to be so wholesome toward one another. So immediately after that, Kento broke the tension.

"This just made me feel greasy," he remarked, shivering all over, and Katsumi laughed.

"I'll go take a nap," he said as he stood up and walked over to the bed behind the plane.

"Make an alarm clock; I'm not waking you up."

"Sure, you won't, sis."

The plane became quiet after Kento went to sleep. Katsumi didn't have much to do, so she chose to spend the time drawing designs inspired by the clouds and whatever she could find around her.

[Seoul, South Korea, 10:05 am]

The momentum of the plane landing woke Kento up. He had a hunch they had just landed and pulled himself off the bed. As he walked out of the bedroom, he noticed his sister fast asleep on the couch, her art supplies on the table.

When the pilot spotted Kento, he stepped out of the cockpit and bowed.

"We have arrived at Incheon International Airport, sir, and your luggage will be delivered to your vehicle shortly."

"Thank you." Kento responded with a bow.

After the pilot and co-pilot had left, Kento patted Katsumi on the shoulder to wake her up. Katsumi squirmed and opened her eyes slowly.

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"We've arrived; let's go to our apartment."

Katsumi walked out with her brother sluggishly. The cool breeze ruffled her hair the moment she stepped outside. As her vision improved, she noticed that the kanji, hiragana, and katakana letters had transformed to Hangul. And everyone was conversing in Korean.

When Katsumi realized she was in South Korea, she became nervous. Kento patted her on the back, which helped calm Katsumi down. The boy grinned, and Katsumi returned the smile.

"That's right, Kento was with her. Everything is going to be fine."

"You're blocking the way."

It was as if she had been hit in the gut. Katsumi thought that was another wholesome sibling moment. But she keeps forgetting that her twin is a jerk.

She steps out of the way to make room for him to pass. Once they got on the ground, Katsumi didn't think twice and flicked his twin on the head.

Kento was in disbelief, his mouth agape in surprise, as he stared at Katsumi, who pretended to be completely innocent.

"You sneaky son of a gun."

"What are you standing there for? You're blocking the way," Katsumi mocked as she walked past Kento, who snickered in astonishment.

"Wow... I'm not gonna lie, that was petty, sis."

[Apartment, 12:02 am]

"Here we are! Room 213 for Katsumi and Room 212 for Kento," the landlady said as she led them to their rooms.

After directing them to their unit, the woman bowed as she went downstairs. Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi rented two-unit rooms, one for each of their children, so that they could have some privacy.

Their other goal was to teach the twins basic survival skills. They'd learn to cook, clean, shop for groceries, and handle their money while still completing their schooling individually.

Even though they had to part ways, they were thrilled to have everything to themselves. No more waiting in line for the restroom or cleaning up someone else's messes. And plenty of alone time for themselves.

"Do you want to go out to eat for lunch?" Kento inquired.

"Sure, I'll message you when I'm finished unpacking, and if you finish before me, you know the password to my place, right?"

"52615. Do you know mine?"

"61313," she says as she unlocks her door and walks in. "See ya!"

Katsumi felt one step closer to restarting her life after entering the unit. Looking around the living room, she couldn't help but admire the interior design of the unit she'll be staying in. It was larger than she anticipated, and she had not anticipated a second story.

Katsumi was still in awe of everything. It's amazing how quickly time passes. She was once in her room in Tokyo, and now she's face-to-face with her unit in Seoul.

Her gaze was drawn to a cat lying on the staircase while she was glancing around the living room. Its unexpected appearance astonished her. With its black, fluffy fur and piercing blue eyes, it was a stunning cat.

"Hello there. How'd you get in here?" she said in a high-pitched tone as she reached out to pet the cat.

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Surprisingly, the cat is friendly. Katsumi was thrilled when she saw the cat not resisting her pets. She realized the cat had a collar on and felt a small piece of paper stuck in it.

She removed it and unfolded it. It was a letter from her parents. It said,

'Perhaps you're asking why there's a cat in the apartment. We assumed you'd needed some company. Her name is for you to choose, and don't worry, this cat is very smart and kind.

P.S. She is female.

- Love MOM and DAD '

"Well, a small furry company wouldn't be such a bad idea," she persuaded herself, and the cat responded, making Katsumi laugh.

She continued with her tasks by lugging some luggage up the stairs and into her new room.

After unpacking the first batch, she was ready to go downstairs to fetch the other two suitcases when Kento strolled into her room with the extra bags she required.

"Should I help you unpack?" he asked.

"Nah, it's good. I'll leave this for later; I'm starving."

"Well, there's a café nearby, and we can drive there."

"From where did you get a car?" Katsumi questioned.

"It's a gift from Mom and Dad," he explained, holding up the note he had received. "I'll drive."

"Good, because I'm exhausted after all that unpacking."

The nearest café was a 10-minute drive away. However, the food was simply delectable. As a result, there is a huge line at the counter. They have a nice lunch for an hour before heading back home to rest.

3

A NEW FRIEND

[Apartment, 8:00 p.m.]

The stars shone brightly in the moonlight on a breezy night in Seoul. Katsumi was getting ready to go for a jog to the Holic Café, where they had lunch. Because the croissants she had there were so good, she was craving more for supper.

She went to the café with her shoes on and the laces neatly tied. Despite receiving stares from other netizens, she disregarded them and continued on her way. Katsumi always takes advantage of the opportunity to jog when she wants to order her dinner in order to get some exercise.

She arrived at the café in 30 minutes, giving her enough time to exercise before eating her supper. She orders something different alongside the croissant and her normal cup of tea. It's simple, but Katsumi likes it.

She ordered something for herself to eat tomorrow before returning to her flat. The cold breeze brushed against her skin again, causing her to shiver. It's a good thing she brought a jacket; it wouldn't be great to catch a cold and miss her first day of classes.

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Katsumi decided to take the short cut back, which meant walking through a dark alleyway. There were several Korean-style house interiors, which she found fascinating. It looked archaic, and she felt like she was being drawn into a K-drama.

As she turned a corner, she noticed a bunch of high school students approaching her. Katsumi saw that they appeared to be having a good time. But as she approached closer, her gaze was drawn to one of the students.

This young man looked frail. Katsumi would have just ignored the student, but she had a feeling something was wrong. The look the boy gave her made him look so nervous. Like he was crying for help.

The more Katsumi investigated his circumstances, the more clues she discovered concerning a possible bullying case. The child appeared to be very uncomfortable with another student's arm wrapped around his shoulder.

There were three other students with him, and as much as Katsumi disliked stereotyping, they appeared to be mean.

Katsumi attempted to ignore the boy. But, once again, if she does nothing to ease her conscience, guilt will follow her at night, possibly resulting in insomnia. She sighed in annoyance and spoke out.

"Excuse me!" she exclaimed, capturing everyone's attention. Katsumi understood what she'd done, and she couldn't go back now.

With how close she was to the group, she could see the name written on the student's name tag. This was the only information she needed to fake a scenario.

"Kim Namjoon, your parents are looking for you."

What Katsumi said made the group chuckle, except for the guy she was talking to. Katsumi couldn't figure out what was hilarious about what she said and was perplexed by their reaction.

"Did I say something funny?"

"I'm sorry, but who are you?" inquired the student with the name tag, Wang Jackson.

"I'm his friend, and I'd like to have him back because his parents are concerned about him."

Jackson stepped in front of Katsumi as she reached for Namjoon's wrist.

"Hold on there, Lady. What's the rush? We're friends of Namjoon, too," he replied dismissively.

"Are they?" Katsumi asked.

When everyone's attention was on Namjoon, he felt pressed. When the individuals pressuring him were in front of him, he couldn't speak truthfully, and you could see he was scared by his expression.

"Uhm..." his voice trembled. Namjoon looked up and attempted to be courageous for a change, but he couldn't look Jackson in the eyes and shifted his gaze to Katsumi.

Katsumi smiled and nodded, telling him that everything would be fine. Namjoon took a deep breath and apologized with a small bow.

"I'm truly sorry!"

His response astounded the students. They were not expecting him to "disobey" them. And before they could react, Namjoon ran away with Katsumi.

Katsumi felt a rush of excitement as they sprinted. It wasn't how she felt while she was playing games in her room or accomplishing something at home. It was such a nostalgic feeling, which she thought she'd lost.

They were out of breath after they got far enough away from those students. Katsumi couldn't stop smiling at what had just

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happened. She was proud not just of herself for assisting someone in need but also of the Namjoon who stood up to his bullies.

Namjoon smiled when he saw Katsumi smiling. It was his first time rejecting Jackson in this manner, and he felt terrific on the inside.

"Thank you for helping."

"It's nothing; anyone would have done the same."

"Not everyone," he murmured.

South Korea is well-known for its bullying techniques, in addition to its music and cuisine. Bullying is usually defined as discomfort or being mean to someone. But in the country Katsumi is in, they go beyond that when attempted murder and ruining someone's career are involved.

And most of the time, nothing is done about it. Katsumi keeps forgetting that any country, even their dream country, has flaws. And the fact that she is unable to stop it stinks.

Looking up at Namjoon, she realizes that maybe there is a way she can help.

"Can I borrow your phone?"

He handed over his phone without hesitation. Katsumi grabbed it and added her phone number and name to his contacts. Then she dials her phone number with his phone and enters his number in her contact list.

"What are you doing?"

Katsumi handed him the phone back. "I put my phone number in your contacts; call me whenever they come to harass you again."

"Are you sure? I really don't want to be a bother."

"It was my decision, and you're not bothering me."

With all the cruel things that have happened to him these past few years, Namjoon wouldn't have expected to meet someone like

Katsumi. That compassionate gesture alone helped him feel that there was still humanity in this brutal world. Katsumi is a living example of this.

He wanted to do the same for her after receiving something so meaningful to him. He didn't want to waste the opportunity to be friends with someone who was the polar opposite of Jackson, so he developed it even more.

"As a token of my appreciation, please let me walk you back home."

Namjoon's thoughtful act moved Katsumi. She was so used to having to live with a jerk like her sibling that seeing someone who was the opposite of him made her happy. And she was relieved that he had been the first person she had met in Seoul.

"It's just down the road at Euljiro Street. Let's go."

[Apartment Unit, 10:00 p.m.]

Katsumi walked into her flat while humming a song. It was obvious that she was happy. When she spotted her brother on the couch, stroking her cat, the joy on her face vanished.

"Bro! You're here!" she exclaimed nervously.

Kento was dissatisfied. His gaze turned upward, piercing Katsumi.

"What time do you think it is?" he inquired calmly, making Katsumi even more anxious. Kento's frustration was ticking like a time bomb, ready to explode at any moment, but he was holding back.

Katsumi looked up at the time, 10:15 a.m. She was having such a good time eating at the café and conversing with Namjoon on the way back that she didn't notice how quickly time passed.

This had never occurred to Katsumi before; generally, she'd go do what she had planned to do and return as soon as her plan was

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completed. Is this what they mean when they say you're enthralled by something or someone? She wondered.

Kento saw his sister smile in disbelief while looking at the clock. Has Katsumi lost her mind? He thought.

"It's past 10, where have you been?"

"I've brought back food!"

Kento was surprised.

"For me?"

"Yeah, I got a savory croissant, a slice of cookies, a chocolate crepe, and an iced green tea just for my twin."

Katsumi placed each item she mentioned on the table in front of him. Kento wasn't expecting her to bring back something from her jog. She had to lie in order to escape being reprimanded, even if it meant sacrificing her breakfast. But because of what she said, Kento's anger simmered.

He sighed, "You're really good at getting away with trouble."

"And I know you're glad I brought you something, despite your upset demeanor."

"Shut up."

"So, you're saying you don't want it?"

Katsumi reached for the package, but Kento grabbed it before she could.

"Who says I don't want it? Ridiculous," he muttered softly.

How Kento was acting right now made Katsumi chuckle. To her, he was acting really cute with his grumpiness. And just like that, Kento leaves her alone with the food Katsumi "bought for him". Now she had to think of another breakfast for tomorrow before attending school.

Today was very pleasant, which she had not anticipated. Who thought she'd meet new people on her first day?

Although she can't be happy right now, who knows what Namjoon will do if he finds out about her family background? Despite the fact that Katsumi became used to being betrayed or abandoned, she had a hunch that if she lost another friend, she wouldn't be able to recover soon.

Gatekeeping oneself may be somewhat harsh, but who can blame Katsumi? She's been through a lot in the last several years, and it's all because of her one and only friend, who is now a foe.

Because of that ex-friend, she grew cruel, had significant trust issues, and began to gatekeeper herself more frequently. To make matters worse, she was never told what she had done wrong to deserve such a betrayal.

As a result, she won't expect much from her and Namjoon's friendship.



FIRST DAY OF CLASSES

[Bedroom 4:25(?) a.m.]

IT was a lovely Friday morning. When Katsumi awoke, the sun's rays hit her room, causing her to squint from the brightness. The time was 4:25. However, it was quite bright outside for such an early morning.

Katsumi didn't give it much thought, assuming it was because she was in a different nation. She cleansed her face before going downstairs to get a glass of water. She still had approximately 2 hours to get ready, so she was taking it slow.

She wandered drowsily towards the ground-floor kitchen, yawning.

"Good morning, sis."

Kento's unexpected presence made Katsumi flinch in surprise, and the girl felt completely awake. She initially assumed someone had broken in, forgetting she had her brother with her.

"My God, Kento, just because you have access to my unit's password doesn't give you permission to scare me."

"Well, you have 10 minutes before I leave you."

Katsumi was noticeably confused.

"It's still 5 o'clock in the morning; what are you talking about?"

This time, Kento was visibly confused.

"No. What are you talking about, sis? It's 6:50. Classes start at 7:30. Did you forget?"

"6:50?"

And Kento was right! The time was 6:50, allowing her only 10 minutes to get everything ready. Katsumi began to panic because she hadn't packed her things, eaten breakfast, or cleaned herself.

Katsumi was unsure if she could prepare in the time given. She dashed to her room, her glass still in the sink. All she could think about was what she should do first.

"I'll be waiting for you in the car!" Kento yelled before leaving.

As she changed into her outfit, the first thing she did was brush her teeth. She then put dry shampoo on her hair and brushed it while she packed her belongings. Kento, on the other hand, calmly prepared the car.

Katsumi arrived a minute late and sat exhaustively in the passenger seat.

"That was intense," Kento chuckled.

"Why didn't you wake me up?"

"I thought you were ready by the time I went to your unit."

Katsumi let out a sigh. "My alarm may be broken; I'll have to buy another or repair it somewhere."

As he began driving the car, Kento answered with a gentle snicker. It will take them roughly 30 minutes to get from their place to San-Ib High School. Katsumi's stomach growled on the way, loud enough for both of them to hear.

She had forgotten to eat breakfast before leaving her unit and had only a glass of water. Kento decided to give up his packed lunch after seeing his sister's upset expression. He reached into the glove box in front of Katsumi and removed the package from Holic Café.

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"Eat this."

When she opened the package, she found a savory croissant she had purchased the day before.

"You didn't eat this yet?"

"I was planning on saving it for lunch to save money, but you need it more than I do right now."

Kento dislikes showing affection and believes he does not do so. But when he truly cares for someone, such as his family, his warm side shines through. Just as now, Katsumi was moved by his small acts of kindness toward her.

"Come on over here and give me a hug."

"What? No, sis. I'm driving; get away from me," he irritated replied.

[San-Ib High School, 07:35 a.m.]

When the twins arrived at their school, they noticed that there were few students present. It could be that it's already past 7:30 a.m. and everyone is in class. Kento quickly parks the car, and the twins' jog to the principal's office, where they should have been five minutes ago.

The place looked exactly like the photographs Katsumi had seen on the school's official website. The interior is remarkably tidy and orderly, with backdrops in dark blue, dark yellow, black, and white.

She had discovered a lot about the institution simply by browsing their website. The identity of the principal, however, surprised the twin the most.

They entered the office once they arrived, and their aunt greeted them with a smile.

"Welcome back! It's great to see you both!"

"Likewise, Auntie! You haven't changed a bit since we last saw you," Katsumi said, smiling.

"I'll take that as a compliment; please sit down, both of you."

Principal Lee Emi is Mr. Yamaguchi's older sister. She was and still is a Yamaguchi, but after marrying a South Korean gentleman, her surname was changed to Lee.

She was intended to be the Yamaguchi clan's heir. But Emi's father, Keiichiro, had given her the opportunity to pick her own path. When she turned down the offer, the successor was taken over by today's successor, the twin's father.

And now for the present. Emi had decided to establish a high school in order to help children in South Korea develop their goals and futures. Which has been a successful institution in Seoul.

"Before I dismiss you to your classrooms, there are three important points and changes you should be aware of."

Point 1: Their surnames: The Yamaguchi Clan is well-known not just in Japan but also throughout the world, particularly in eastern Asian countries such as South Korea. And if they wish to live without being the focus of attention, the twins must change their names.

"So, from now on, your surnames will be Yamada Kento and Arioka Katsumi."

Point 2: Their background: They've worked hard to falsify and fake their background history with the help of Principal Emi's husband and son. This includes their family, prior school, date of birth, and any medical conditions they may have. This is done so that anyone interested in the twins and willing to look into their background will come across the false material.

Point 3: Their personality: It would be extremely beneficial if they acted as if they were nothing, as per their alleged personality. The three siblings have not been publicly shown to the rest of the world, thanks to their parents. Because of the mystery, netizens have speculated on

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their appearances and personalities based on information shared on social media.

Due to his profession, Kento is thought to have a cocky attitude and to go after girls. He does make fun of his twin a lot in a cold, cocky manner, but it is nothing like his true demeanor.

His grandfather has taught him since he was a child that everyone has their own boundaries that we must respect, including him. That is why consent is so crucial to him, and he always requires it before doing anything, especially if he believes his actions may make them uncomfortable.

He's cold but a very nice person.

Katsumi, on the other hand, is thought to have a mysterious nature. Someone who is quiet and intelligent but lonely

She is the only Yamaguchi clan child who is not well recognized by the general public. As a result, they don't know much about her job. The only time she got out in public was to rest at the beach and help Kazuha with the orphanage.

Although her predicted personality and her true nature may have some similarities, Katsumi has attempted to become the polar opposite.

"You are free to continue acting as yourself, but please be cautious of the people around you."

"Understood." They both responded.

"Good! I'll call your advisers; in the meantime, you can relax in your seat."

It didn't take long for the twins to wait, and soon enough, Principal Emi brought their adviser.

"These are our two new students, both of whom transferred from Japan; please assist them if they require assistance."

"Yes, ma'am."

Katsumi was assigned to Mr. Ahn's class, while Kento was assigned to Ms. Park's class. Once they were introduced to their respective classes, they were dismissed.

Katsumi was a little nervous as they walked to their different classrooms. This means she'll be separated from her brother, which made her even more anxious.

When was the last time she went to school? Her previous school experience was in Japan; now things are a little different. She had to make new acquaintances, achieve high grades, and not worry about her family background while living in another country. It will be difficult at first, but Katsumi is determined to succeed.

Mr. Ahn instructed Katsumi to wait outside the classroom until he called her in. While waiting, Katsumi leaned against the wall as she prepared her introduction lines.

It's important for Katsumi to introduce herself without stuttering or eating her words. She does not want to be mocked or laughed at on the first day of school.

On his route to their respective classrooms, Kento ran into his sister. She appeared nervous and worried. He expected his sister to feel this way, given that they'd waited so long to start school.

Without the teacher looking, as they walked past her, he flicked her on the forehead, receiving a groan from the lady. Katsumi was furious when she realized it was her brother who had done it.

But her rage quickly subsided when she realized they were neighbors. As the teacher went inside, he was left outdoors.

"How are you not nervous?"

"I am... just a little bit."

"Then show it, stupid," growled Katsumi.

"Ms. Arioka, please enter."

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Mr. Ahn called out, and the more anxious Katsumi became,
It was either now or never.

Katsumi inhaled deeply while holding the door handle. It took some time, but she eventually opened the door and entered.

"Good luck."

Just hearing Kento's voice soothed Katsumi's anxiousness a bit, and with that encouragement in mind, she stood in front of her classmate.

"Please introduce yourself."

"My name is Ya-Arioka Katsumi, and it's a pleasure to meet you."

She bowed.

'Shoot, I screwed up,' she thought. As she stood straight, she couldn't look at her classmates' reactions. She felt embarrassed. Despite all of her rehearsals, she still managed to botch up her lines.

Mr. Ahn remarked, "Katsumi, please sit next to Yoongi, and Yoongi, please raise your hand."

A man with large, adorable glasses and curly hair raised his hand. He reminded Katsumi of Namjoon but with a softer, more feminine appearance. Katsumi bowed before heading to her assigned seats.

On her way, she could hear her classmates' gossip and soft laughter. Was it because of the mistake she made at her introduction a while ago? Is her opportunity to make friends over?

Katsumi sighed dejectedly.

When she looked over at her seatmate, she noticed him shifting his gaze back and forth, as if he were hesitant to approach her. Perhaps her chances aren't over. Katsumi leaned forward to greet Yoongi personally as the mentoring lessons were being discussed.

"I hope we get along."

Yoongi only responded with a bashful nod. His actions were very cute to Katsumi, and she couldn't help but snicker softly. It seems like he and Katsumi could somehow get along with each other.

She was thrilled to experience the class at this school and what they had to offer. Is it going to be any different than in Tokyo?

Her answer is no. The first, second, and third subjects were all identical to the ones taught in Tokyo. It was still boring and difficult to understand for her.

It felt like she was in college. After a brief description of the subject, the teacher would go on to the next slide of the presentation. But Katsumi wasn't a fast learner, nor was she a fast writer.

She lets out a frustrated sigh. Was it this difficult to study? She pondered.

"You have 10 minutes to solve these three problems written on the board."

Katsumi thought it was absurd that she had only 10 minutes to answer three questions. Because of the teacher's rapid pace, she was unable to fully comprehend the lessons. She required 10 minutes for each question, not 10 minutes for all three!

As she struggled to follow the teachings with the notes she had taken, she noticed a small, fragile-looking hand at the corner of her vision, handing out a notebook. It was Yoongi. It had a short message on it that said, 'Feel free to utilize my notes.'

The notebook was filled with important parts of the lecture, and it was written neatly. Despite the fact that mathematics was Katsumi's weakest subject, she could easily understand the notes Yoongi took.

It was a miracle.

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A guardian angel. That's how Yoongi appeared to Katsumi at that moment. And surprisingly, she was able to solve all three questions before they got to check their answers.

Katsumi received a perfect score!

At lunch break, Katsumi approached Yoongi before he lost sight of him in the hallway.

"Yoongi!" she exclaimed.

"I-is there a problem?" he asked, flustered.

It was either now or never. Katsumi thought.

"I just wanted to thank you for your assistance," she bowed, which placed the boy on edge. "I couldn't have answered those questions without your help."

"It's nothing; anyone would have done the same thing."

It was now her opportunity to nurture her chance to level up her status with Yoongi.

"Can I join you for lunch?" she inquired.

Yoongi wasn't expecting such a question from a new student. At the very least, he expected to be the last person in mind to be accompanied. Normally, it would have been with the class president, not some random guy you met.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course! I'd like to be friends with someone with whom I feel somewhat at ease."

"You're comfortable with me?" he inquired, surprised.

"Yes. Is there a problem?"

"N-no." He gave out a deep sigh.

He could tell by looking at Katsumi that she wasn't going to take no for an answer. He didn't mind, but it was his first time eating with a

woman he'd only just met. And being given the responsibility of taking care of the new student put pressure on him.

"I'll be eating with my friends. Are you okay with that?"

"That is no problem, Yoongi."

"Then...let's go."

Katsumi was overjoyed on the inside and out. She was glad she was the one who approached someone. Thanks to her courage, she was able to make new friends.

Everything appeared to be going as planned, and she didn't need to be concerned after all.

S

UNEXPECTED MEETING

[Cafeteria, 11:45 a.m.]

THE cafeteria at San-Ib High School is believed to be one of the best in terms of food and interior design. There were a range of nutritious food options for the students to enjoy. Asia, South and North America, Europe—you name it, they've got it.

Katsumi was overwhelmed by the sheer number of options available to her. It's fun to experiment with new flavors in a situation where things may get really stressful. A pleasant, peaceful paradise with food

They begin by paying for their meal using a self-service machine. Yoongi went first to show Katsumi how and what to do. He chose the cheapest food available today: a cheese stick. This costs about 3,720 won, or about \$2.

"Is that all? Aren't you going to buy more, including your drink?"

"My family cannot afford much, so I must save."

Katsumi, for some reason, assumed that every student here had money. And overlooks the existence of scholarships. She had never given money any attention before. If she needed anything, she would buy it, even if it was expensive.

"Is bibimbap alright for you?"

"I don't have enough money for it."

"I'll pay for it."

"Are you sure? That's quite expensive."

"I insist it's a token of my gratitude for assisting me a while ago."

The only people who would do such a thing were his friends and them only. That's why Yoongi couldn't express how grateful he felt for her.

Katsumi placed an order for two separate sets and handed Yoongi his receipt. She ordered bibimbap bulgogi for both of them, as well as pickled radish and a bottle of water.

The next step was to show their receipt to the lunch lady in order for her to get their order on a tray. When they received it, they walked up to a table where Yoongi's friend was sitting.

Katsumi was anxious about meeting Yoongi's friends for some reason. She was aware that if she sat with them, she would be looked at. However, she wanted to be friends with that person too, so in order to accomplish that, first impressions are important.

When Katsumi sat down with them, Yoongi's companion turned his attention to her, just as Katsumi had predicted. The friend was perplexed and hoped for an introduction from Yoongi, but the guy was too preoccupied with the food to notice.

Katsumi, on the other hand, did the honors of approaching him first.

"Nice to meet you; my name is Arioka Katsumi, and I just transferred today; Yoongi is my classmate."

"Classmates, I see," the guy said, still in awe. "My name is Kim Seokjin, and it's a pleasure to meet you as well."

Seokjin was a pretty gorgeous man upon closer inspection. While Yoongi had a circular feature, Seokjin had an oval one. He was tanned with plump lips, a Chiseled jaw, and a tiny nose with a peach blossom-

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shaped eye. He, like Yoongi, wore huge glasses, which made him even cuter.

"Katsumi is Japanese, so please help her if she needs it," Yoongi added.

Seokjin responded with a nod. Katsumi smiled as she watched Yoongi eat his lunch. She felt great meeting new people and making new friends. A few minutes later, another of their friends arrived and sat at the same table as them.

"I see we have another new face."

The voice Katsumi heard made her freeze, as it felt super familiar. And it was indeed someone she knew. Namjoon is there in front of her and was as surprised as Katsumi to see her again at school.

They weren't expecting to see each other again at this school. Katsumi felt she should've known what institution Namjoon goes to because of the uniform he wore before, but somehow, she forgot. She felt stupid for failing to notice.

"You're Katsumi, right?" he inquired.

"And you're Namjoon! It's great to see you again."

"You've both met before?" Seokjin inquired.

"We met in the streets just yesterday at an alleyway, and Namjoon was with some guy, Jackson? I thought he needed help, so I helped him."

"What were you doing in an alleyway?" Yoongi asked.

"It was a quick way to get to my apartment."

The conversation was cut short as Namjoon's attention went elsewhere. He was looking for Kento, who was in his class, and just like Yoongi, he was in charge of the other twin. He lifted his hand when he spotted Kento with his paid food so the youngster could see him.

His friends noticed what he did and turned to check who he was waving to. Katsumi breathed a sigh of relief as she saw her twin approaching their table. She was delighted she could still see her brother, even if they had to pretend they were strangers.

"Let me introduce you to Yamada Kento, a transfer student from Japan and a classmate of mine."

Namjoon then started to introduce the rest of his friends to the new boy one by one. Seokjin and Yoongi noticed several parallels between Kento and Katsumi. From their names being both K to the countries they both live in. Their appearances were even identical. Even though they met each other, it seemed as if they were distant cousins.

However, Katsumi was the first to protest the theories they were proposing. They may have similar looks or come from the same country, but that doesn't mean they know each other. It was like saying Namjoon and Seokjin were siblings because they shared the same surname. Which they were not.

Katsumi did make a valid argument, which led them to believe she was telling the truth. Instead, they were persuaded to believe they were both doppelgangers who happened to cross paths by chance.

While the twins were enjoying their lunch, Jackson and his friends had just entered the cafeteria. And one of his friends, Nabi, had just seen Kento eating his lunch.

"I'll be right back."

Jackson sighed and let Nabi be when he realized what she was up to. The girl sat beside Kento at the table to catch his attention. But Kento was the only person at that table who ignored her while he went about his business. He knew who the person was from the scent of her perfume.

"Kento, was it? Would you like to eat with me?"

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"I'm fine here."

"Oh, don't be ridiculous; if you agree, I can give you everything."

"I don't need your money, and I'm not interested."

Nabi realized that no matter what she said or did, the lad was completely uninterested. She sighed, defeated.

"Such a shame."

As she walked away, her gaze trailed the boys, who didn't dare to glance back. She then stared at Katsumi, who became agitated and returned her gaze to her food. Nabi couldn't help but snicker when he saw Namjoon's friend alongside them. Jackson would be overjoyed to know she was here, she thought.

Katsumi's gaze followed Nabi as she returned to her seat and watched her murmur something to Jackson. Whatever Nabi said to him made him look her way as they made eye contact. Katsumi was startled by the sudden action and hurriedly averted her gaze.

How could she have overlooked something so important? Katsumi was naïve to believe she'd never see Namjoon's bully again, despite the fact that they were both wearing the same uniform at their first encounter.

She then discovered that Nabi was a classmate of Kento and Namjoon. And the moment she saw Kento, she was interested in him. Kento is an extremely attractive young man, so it came as no surprise to Katsumi that girls were swooning over him already.

[Dismissal, 4:30p.m.]

Katsumi had everything arranged and was ready to depart as soon as they were dismissed. Many things had happened on her first day, and she had had a good time despite the tough lessons. Perhaps it was because she had made more than two friends in one day.

Although it may not appear so to many, it was a big achievement for Katsumi.

She heads out with Yoongi. Namjoon and Seokjin would always wait for him outside the school grounds, and they'd all ride in Namjoon's car together. Yoongi was apparently brought and fetched by Namjoon or Seokjin every single weekday since he lived far away from school.

He couldn't afford transportation, so he walked there and back whenever it wasn't available. But that was before he met the two, and they're now refusing to allow Yoongi to walk that far.

However, once they left the school grounds, their buddies were unfortunately accompanied by Jackson. Katsumi got irritated by the mere sight of the man.

She lets out a sigh.

Yoongi paused in his place, unsure whether he should butt in or flee. He wanted to flee, but he didn't want to abandon his friend. If he were in their situation, he would want a close buddy to assist him.

But regardless of which he chose, they were both caught by that annoying man.

"Hey! There's our third geek!" exclaimed Jackson.

His focus was immediately drawn to Katsumi. And he was overjoyed to see her.

"It's you! Don't tell me you came here to see me."

It's remarkable how someone can be so obnoxious while also looking so punch-able. Katsumi may appear to be someone who can keep their patience for an extended period of time, yet she is the polar opposite. This boy was putting her patience to the test, and an inch more and it would explode.

"Let's not be delusional now, shall we? I transferred here to learn and make new friends; that's it."

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"Wonderful! Why don't you come hang out with us? By the looks of it, you're already friends with our geeks."

"To where?"

"Today is a special occasion. You'll see when you come with us."

Katsumi suspects they're up to no good after witnessing the look on Namjoon's face the first time they met. And if something happens to these boys, who are now her new friends, she'll never forgive herself.

"Alright, then."

Katsumi's friends were taken aback by her remark. They didn't anticipate the lady agreeing to Jackson so quickly. They assumed she was scared of the man when, in fact, all Katsumi wanted was to keep them safe. And she must accompany them to ensure their safety.

"You'll come with us too, right, Kento?" Nabi inquired. Her eyes sparkled as she pouted. If this was her plan to entice Kento to join her, it failed.

It was his time to relax now that he was a retired yakuza. He desired to live his new life free of drama and risk. He also didn't want Nabi to cling to him much longer. The girl didn't appear to respect his boundaries and continued to disregard his consent.

He turned down the offer and went away. And as he did, he was on his phone. The girl received a message from Kento the minute he went by Katsumi.

It says, 'Be back home by 9 p.m. I'll prepare dinner.'



A CRIME FOR A GIFT

KATSUMI maintained her guard during their walk. If Jackson and his men harm her friends, she will not hesitate to fight back for them. And no matter how many times she asked Jackson, he never told her where they were headed.

They were soon in front of a toy store. It was only filled with stuffed animals of various shapes, sizes, and colors. Little Katsumi might've gone insane and bought every single one she liked. But her priorities had shifted; Namjoon and the others were now her first priorities.

"What are we doing here?" Namjoon inquired, his voice trembling.

Katsumi had the same thought. Out of all places and stores to visit, the toy store? Unless they wanted to buy some of the plush animals to satisfy their inner child, what were they doing there?

"You disobeyed us yesterday; don't think we'll let you go unpunished," Jackson explained.

"Why are Seokjin and Yoongi involved in this?"

"Your problem is also their problem," said Nabi.

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Katsumi saw no point in listening to them. Namjoon received this terrible penalty because he stood up for himself? Or were their egos simply shattered?

"Just be gentle with us; we did nothing wrong," Seokjin grumbled.

"Your punishment will be to steal from the store without getting caught."

Katsumi and the boys were completely surprised. Giving such punishment is a crime, not a punishment! Punishments are intended to be given in such a way that the individual in trouble learns their lesson without putting themselves at risk.

Stealing is not an option, and Jackson was going too far. Just because they irritated him does not give him the right to imprison them.

"Jackson, that is a crime, not a punishment," Katsumi protested.

"Well, they should've thought about the consequences before they disobeyed."

Jackson instructed his men to advance, pushing the three "geeks" towards the toy store's entrance. This perplexed Katsumi. Despite the fact that she was a friend of the three, she was not pushed by them. Why is that?

When Namjoon and the others saw she wasn't the only one getting dragged into trouble, they assumed she had decided to join the opposite group. As a result, they have a betrayed expression on their faces as they stare at Katsumi.

As the three headed inside, Katsumi followed along. But was abruptly halted by Jackson, who seized her wrist.

"And where exactly do you think you're going, sweetheart?"

"Their problem is my problem, Jackson," Katsumi said dignifiedly.

The guy let go, and Katsumi hurried her pace. The boys were perplexed by her decision. They were convinced she had chosen Jackson's side over theirs, but she proved them wrong.

The store they entered had two employees and two CCTV cameras on either side. It stinks because they were being watched, and Katsumi knew they'd be caught quickly if they tried to steal. She could see, especially from their strained expressions, that this was their first time shoplifting, and Katsumi was no exception.

Her mind was distracted with ideas to get out of this situation as she looked around, pretending to choose which plush toy to pick.

Seokjin was beside her, his hand trembling in fear. He did not want to go to jail. He didn't want to disappoint his parents.

"I can't go to prison; I still have my mother and five siblings waiting for me at home," Yoongi sobbed.

"No one is going to prison," Katsumi remarked quietly.

"But there's no other way out," wailed Seokjin.

He was correct. Cameras are strategically placed throughout the store; staff is observing them, and Jackson and his friends are waiting outside, watching their every move. They were trapped.

Katsumi looked around to see if they had anything that could help them escape. All she discovered that could be useful was a Coca-Cola bottle that Seokjin kept in his water bottle holder.

It wasn't the best strategy, but it was their only option.

Katsumi planned their escape when Jackson and his friends were not watching. They swiftly exited the store as soon as they appeared preoccupied. Unfortunately, they were caught.

"They're running away!"

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They pursued them, just as they had predicted. And Katsumi had underestimated them. She hadn't expected such bullies to be so fast, and they were swiftly catching up.

This is where she used the coke. With the help of some Mentos, she places it inside and shakes it vigorously before releasing the liquid onto their faces. The quick attack prompted the enemy in front to tumble on the group as a result of the burns on their eyes. And the enemies fell one by one, like dominoes.

Katsumi's face lit up with delight as she watched what happened, and they were able to ride the bus at the bus stop. Just like that, they had successfully escaped Jackson.

They were out of breath and were fortunate to find a seat at the back of the bus. Katsumi had watched the boys "disobey" Jackson for the second time, and she felt proud of them.

"For a brief moment, I thought you were one of them," Namjoon admitted.

"Well, you thought wrong."

"Let's just hope you keep your word; I don't want to get my hopes up for someone who will betray us in the end."

They both exchanged glances. Katsumi should have gone to their side sooner, or this tense argument would not have occurred. But she understood Namjoon's concern. He was terrified. And she feels the same if that person you call a friend wasn't genuinely true.

"So... does anyone know where to go?" Seokjin inquired.

Apparently, neither Seokjin nor Namjoon had ever taken public transportation, so they had no idea where the bus would stop. Katsumi recommended they take some rest at her flat, which was only three bus stations away. They could wait for their service driver to pick them up without fear of Jackson catching them.

Katsumi had sent a secret message to her brother about their intention to remain at her unit before they arrived. The boys must not find out about him living next door, or they would be forced to say goodbye to their new life.

Katsumi made a drink for the boys to enjoy as they sat on the couch. Namjoon had informed his driver of his current location, and all that remained was for them to wait for him to arrive.

"Won't your parents be upset if we barge in, Katsumi?" Yoongi wondered.

"Actually, I live alone."

Yoongi was taken aback by Katsumi's apartment's interior design. It was bigger and cleaner than his home was, and the fact that she lived alone in such opulence made him think she was fortunate.

Namjoon received an unwelcome message from Jackson when tea was being served. Threats and insults were hurled at the unfortunate kid. Worse, they were able to figure out where they were.

This terrified the boys, as well as Katsumi. They're not sure if Jackson was telling the truth or attempting to intimidate them all. Nonetheless, the guys were perplexed and terrified.

Katsumi acted swiftly and told them to turn off their phone's location in case they were being followed. They don't want that, and Katsumi wanted the boys to be able to relax without having to deal with Jackson and his group.

"What if they find out where we are?" Seokjin worriedly asked.

"If he disturbs the people in this apartment, they'll be kicked out immediately."

"But how are we supposed to go home? Jackson might be closer than we thought," Yoongi said, worried.

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"I don't mind if you guys stay over; you can go home early tomorrow morning," Katsumi recommended.

"Tomorrow is a Saturday, Katsumi, and Jackson will definitely be looking for us night and day!" Namjoon wailed.

He was terrified. He was the most terrified of the three. And seeing him like this, with everyone else terrified, Katsumi grew curious. Why would Jackson go to such lengths? What does he stand to gain by doing something like this? Pride? To maintain his ego? I don't see him doing the same to the others, so why were Namjoon, Seokjin, and Yoongi their punching bags? Katsumi pondered.

When she repeated the same question, the guys had no idea why. They were not told why they were the only people Jackson was harassing.

They assumed they had the face of a punching bag because they were constantly the focus of bullying and abuse at school. Was it because they possessed the physical characteristics of a "geek"? They wear spectacles, read a lot of books, and are the smartest students in their class.

Katsumi thought that was a ridiculous reason. People who wear glasses are stereotyped as "geeks," while, in truth, they use them because they can't see clearly. People can be intelligent without wearing glasses.

Even if they were actual geeks, there's nothing wrong with being knowledgeable about a subject they've been interested in. Why attack them for it instead of complimenting them on their knowledge?

Geeks are still people, and they should be treated as such.

"Are you going to be just like them someday?" Namjoon inquired abruptly. He appeared to be quite serious about the subject. "Is the

reason you're hanging out with us part of your plan to eventually hurt us and become like them?"

Katsumi was noticeably perplexed.

"What makes you think that, Namjoon?"

"You almost betrayed us, didn't you?"

"But I didn't. It wasn't even my intention to betray you, and I don't even have a plan to begin with." Katsumi sighed gently. "Are you starting to have doubts about me, Namjoon?"

The boy remained silent.

"Think what you want, but what I just said is true; I may be a tough woman, but I will never betray or bully my friends."

Namjoon was taken aback by Katsumi's genuineness. It was his first genuine conversation with anyone other than Seokjin and Yoongi. And he was surprised at himself. Perhaps he was too hard on Katsumi.

If he were in her shoes, he wouldn't be so confident about siding with them either. Jackson is an intimidating individual who has the ability to make all of the students neglect someone. And being on the side of someone so powerful will give them an enormous advantage, so no one will ever harm them.

"I'm sorry; I was scared."

"Apology accepted."

Seokjin and Yoongi were pleased that the stressful drama was over, and they were able to lighten the mood by cracking jokes.

They messed around till the sun went down and it was time to go home. Yoongi had to return home because he still had to care for his siblings and mother. He didn't have a choice because he was the oldest child in the family. Namjoon offered to drive him home as they waited for their service.

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Seokjin, on the other hand, chose to spend the night. His parents were not at home, and he was allowed to wander unless he was safe and sound. But he still had to tell his parents where he was and give them Katsumi's address. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

Katsumi excused herself to the bathroom as Namjoon stepped out to summon his butler. She had to inform Kento that Seokjin would be sleeping over tonight so he wouldn't just barge inside and raise a commotion.

No one, not even their closest friends, should know their secret. Even if they appear to be kind and trustworthy, not everyone can be trusted. Katsumi had already learned her lesson the hard way and didn't want to go through any more trauma in her new life.



SLEEPOVER

NAMJOON'S butler arrived after a few minutes. Namjoon and Yoongi were now at the front entrance, being escorted out by Katsumi and Seokjin.

"Are you sure you want to stay here, Seokjin?" Namjoon asked, giving the boy one last chance before leaving. Seokjin nodded and smiled reassuringly.

"I'm sure; I finished all the books I bought last week, and weekends are usually boring without them."

"I see," Namjoon replied, concerned.

"Don't worry, Namjoon; I'll look after him," Katsumi said, patting her chest with a reassuring grin.

The boys were less concerned with Katsumi and more concerned with what Seokjin would do. He would frequently say and discuss inappropriate things, possibly exposing the two without their knowledge. When he feels at ease with the person he is with, he becomes a chatterbox, and once he begins, there is no stopping him.

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Before leaving the unit, they all wished each other a good night. Once outside and on their way to their transportation vehicle, Nam-joon and Yoongi had to pick up the pace.

Katsumi and Seokjin stood there, watching the two get into their car from the window. They breathed a sigh of relief as the car sped away.

When Katsumi was finally relieved, she smiled and turned to face the boy.

"So, are you hungry?"

Seokjin nodded.

Katsumi took whatever she could find in her refrigerator. When she opened the door, she was surprised to see a large takeout order of spicy rice cakes and jajangmyeon, along with four large packets of yellow pickled radish. In front of them lies a folded piece of paper with the words "Eat this. From Kento", written entirely in Kanji.

Kento may have anticipated someone staying with her overnight. So, excitedly, she got the meal out and heated it before bringing it up to her bedroom, where they'll be eating as Seokjin lends a helping hand.

They ate on the couch after placing their meal on the table. Katsumi has never seen somebody as pleased as Seokjin while they eat, and he makes it seem so tasty with the ecstatic expression he is making. And seeing him love the food made her smile.

It was like watching a completely different person than before. He was scared and nervous around her before in the cafeteria, but Seokjin suddenly seemed more at ease. It made Katsumi glad to see her bond with the boy improving.

She hopes to see more from him, as well as from Yoongi and Namjoon. But, remembering her furious conversation with Namjoon earlier, she realized it wouldn't be easy.

"Uhm, about earlier with Namjoon, please don't hate him. He had a traumatic past, and he let those memories get in the way."

"What do you mean?"

Seokjin didn't say anything further after that. He realized he shouldn't be discussing other people's painful experiences if they don't want to share them with others. He was going too far, so he came to a halt before his noisy mouth went any further.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you anymore."

And Katsumi understood. If it were her, she wouldn't want anyone else hearing about her traumatic past if you weren't comfortable sharing them.

The mood began to become awkward, but Katsumi did not want this to happen. Seokjin seemed to become more aloof and silent. So she changed the subject and decided to take advantage of the chance to learn more about the boys individually. Which Seokjin gladly agreed to do.

And from this conversation they had, Katsumi learned so much about them. Seokjin was the oldest of the three, and Yoongi was the youngest.

And, being the oldest, he decided to begin introducing himself. Seokjin is the sole child in the family. His parents were frequently away on business, and as a result, he became bored at home. He developed a hobby and taught himself to cook, bake, sketch, play instruments, read, and maintain his personal hygiene. All of the lessons he taught himself provided him with one advantage: he was a very quick learner.

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Yoongi, although the youngest in his group of friends, was the oldest child in his family. He lived with his mother and five siblings, but because they were impoverished, he had to be the bread winner. Because his mother is prone to illness and his siblings are still in primary school, he had no option but to care for his family while studying.

But because he was so independent, he taught himself everything, from how to pay the bills to basic survival housework. From learning to play an instrument to learning different languages. He does all of these things for his siblings in case they need assistance with them so that he can assist them.

Seokjin's final introduction was Namjoon. He begins by exaggerating by claiming Namjoon to have an IQ of more than 200. But of course, Katsumi didn't believe him until Seokjin brought out his phone and showed her a picture of the SAT exam results, in which he came in first place with a perfect score. This boy was a genius, but there were some things Namjoon was very dumb about. Cooking, arts, and performance—he was generally inept at anything artistic.

That was because his parents were analytical people who wanted their son to be the same. He was allowed to do anything other than work in the arts. He did it as a child because it delighted his parents. But because his parents were usually working, he had to teach himself most of the time. That's where he discovered music. It was incredibly soothing to him, and it helped him focus better on his schoolwork.

As a result, he was enrolled at San-Ib High School. He persuaded his parents that he could remain at the top while still listening to music, and the SAT exam result proved it.

According to Seokjin, despite his scary and frigid demeanor, Namjoon is actually an extremely kind, loving, and compassionate child.

Katsumi recognized one thing they all had in common while listening to their varied personalities. That is how they obtained their knowledge. They all take self-taught lessons, and while having varied motivations, they all manage to be at the top of their school with the knowledge they have.

And Katsumi thought they were very cool for that.

They got ready for bed after their dinner. Katsumi prepares his clothing as Seokjin showers. She couldn't locate any pajamas that fit the boy, so she grabbed some big shorts and hoodies from her closet. Fortunately, they all fit Seokjin.

"So, where should I sleep?" he inquired.

Katsumi converted the couch where they sat while eating their lunch into a comfortable bed. It was the perfect size for the man to sleep on.

Katsumi awakens the next morning to discover Seokjin missing in bed. It was ten o'clock in the morning. As a result, she assumed he had departed early in the morning while she was still sleeping. But when she walked down, she noticed Seokjin cooking.

"Good morning, Katsumi."

Seeing Seokjin cook a meal perplexed Katsumi, because since when had she done her grocery shopping when the only food she had was already eaten yesterday?

"If you don't mind, I'm making an omelet for our breakfast."

"Where did you get these eggs and sausages?" she inquired.

"They were already in your fridge."

"They were?"

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"Yeah, perhaps your butler bought it; there was also a letter inside, but I couldn't understand it, so I just left it for you to read."

Katsumi's eyes widened as she became anxious. She swiftly took the letter from the fridge, and it was, as she had predicted, from Kento. He purchased it and instructed her to use it for their meal.

"It's from your butler, right?" Seokjin inquired.

"Yeah, yeah, it was," Katsumi lied as she quietly ripped the paper and threw it away, erasing any trace of her true identity.

Katsumi cleaned her bed and washed her face while waiting. When she finished her morning routine, she was greeted with the aroma of freshly cooked eggs.

"Breakfast is ready! Let's eat!" Seokjin said as he set their plate of food on the living room table for them to eat while watching television.

Katsumi was pleasantly surprised by the omelet's appearance and flavor. The egg was precisely seasoned and cooked, and the fried rice tasted like it came from a well-known restaurant.

It was like Seokjin brought gourmet food into the apartment. Katsumi wondered if Seokjin could cook like this more often after eating such a delicacy.

In the middle of their breakfast, a sudden phone notification sounded, which surprised Seokjin. He noticed the noise coming from his phone, and he quickly checked it, realizing it was a message from Namjoon.

It was the boy notifying Seokjin that he was going to the café Yoongi was working at to conceal his safety. Jackson knew where the youngster worked, so there was a possibility he'd bother him, make a mess for Yoongi to clean up, and possibly get him fired.

It was an immature thing to do to someone who was simply concerned with his family's well-being, but Jackson was that type. When Seokjin told Katsumi about the message and his plan to join Namjoon in order to safeguard Yoongi, she was eager to get involved as well.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course, I'm sure! Seokjin, you're all my friends, and I wouldn't want you to suffer because of someone who does. Your problem is now my problem, and we're all in this together."

There are no words to convey how moved and grateful Seokjin was at that moment. Although he was still in disbelief at what seemed like something he had always witnessed in his dreams, he was thrilled that their conversation was taking place in reality.

He hadn't felt this happy in a long time. The joy of discovering someone and being their friend. The joy and relief of having someone on whom to rely. And the joy of having to share these various emotions with someone else.



SABOTAGE

[MoonBucks Café | | 11:45 a.m.]

KATSUMI and Seokjin arrived by car at the café where Yoongi works. While Seokjin's car was parked in the parking lot next to the café, Katsumi noticed another car that looked extremely familiar to her.

That black BMW with the chicken ornamentation inside was an exact replica of their vehicle. Did Namjoon invite her twin? And, if so, did Kento accept his invitation? Because it will be a surprise if he does.

Kento never leaves the house unless it is for business or family reasons. If it's not that, he'll stay at home, either playing video games, resting, going to their personal gym, or doing his hobbies.

As they entered the café, they noticed Namjoon and Kento. When Namjoon saw Katsumi with Seokjin, he began to feel bad about what he had done to her. He expected Katsumi to ignore him, and their time together would be awkward because he assumed she carried a grudge against him. But he was mistaken.

When Katsumi noticed him, she smiled broadly and waved to both of them. He returned the smile, relieved.

"Are we on time?" Seokjin inquired, and Namjoon informed them that Jackson had yet to come. But the more he waited, the more nervous

he became. He had no idea what to do or how to defend himself and his friends. But he is aware that he is not alone in this.

"Right now, we can just relax; the pastries here are delicious!" Namjoon exclaimed.

So, Seokjin and Katsumi walk over to the cashier and order a variety of snacks and drinks for both of them. Although, there weren't numerous pastries to select from, all of which looked absolutely delicious.

After deciding on their lunch, Seokjin and Namjoon leave the twins at the table and go to the toilet.

"I'm surprised you'd join us, bro," Katsumi remarked.

"We're friends, Katsumi. Watch what you're saying, or at the very least speak Japanese if you're going to talk about something personal," Kento responded in his native language.

Katsumi let out a sigh. When she's with her brother, she completely forgets that they were pretending to be strangers and instead were pretending to be friends. It's something she's currently working on, and she needs to get used to it quickly, or else if they get caught, nothing good will come of it.

"Sorry."

"In any case, did you get the email from mom and dad?"

"No, I had no idea they sent a message; is it important?"

"It's just a bunch of affectionate words and more money being sent; they already miss us."

Katsumi suddenly misses her parents after hearing about them. Although this was the life she desired, it was strange not to be able to continue working, not carrying any weapons in case, a member of her family's enemy group was pursuing her.

But it's amusing to her that the joy of having an enemy hasn't faded away. In her new one, she has Jackson, and instead of guns defending

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her, she is the weapon used to protect someone else she cares about: her friends.

She flinched in surprise when a cool substance brushed her cheek. It was Yoongi with the drink that she ordered.

"Your order is ready, Ms. Arioka," he said as he continued to place everything on the table.

"Thanks, Yoongi."

"Happy to serve."

"How long will your shift last?"

"At 8 p.m., you're not going to wait for me, are you?"

"Anything to protect my friends from Jackson."

"It's the afternoon; won't you have lunch?" Kento inquired.

"Thank you for your concern, Kento, but I had my lunch break an hour ago."

Yoongi bowed and went about his business. Katsumi grew to admire the child as she watched him serve the clients and take their orders. Customer service isn't an easy job, and in her opinion, it's the most difficult. Dealing with customers who have varied personalities, whether good or unpleasant, is a very tiring profession. Katsumi was the polar opposite of someone with a lot of patience; that's why she thinks this way.

Another thing Katsumi discovered was that Yoongi begins his workday at 6 a.m. And the truth is, it took her almost an hour to travel to Moonbucks Café from her house, and Yoongi lives quite far away. That means he has to get up an hour or two earlier to get ready and go to work on time.

All of this he does for his family, Yoongi, is the epitome of a hard-working individual, all for the sake of his loving family's survival.

Two hours had passed; Namjoon and Seokjin had returned, and this time Kento and Katsumi were in the restroom. Just as Katsumi is about to leave, she notices Jackson and his friends bullying her friends.

Customers were compelled to leave due to the negative energy emanating from them. And things weren't looking good from Katsumi's point of view. Namjoon and the others were afraid, but they maintained a brave face.

Jackson suddenly grabbed Namjoon's shirt and yanked him up. What surprised Katsumi even more was that the staff was refusing to assist them. They aren't even assisting their coworker, who is visibly uncomfortable in this situation.

Before things got out of hand, Katsumi dashed over to them, yanked Namjoon away from Jackson, and gave him a gentle push. Katsumi expected an angry stare, but instead got an insulting chuckle. To Jackson, Katsumi being tough for her pals was adorable.

"Not a bad push!" he exclaims. "But still, not enough to beat me."

"Is that supposed to be a challenge?"

Katsumi was furious and irritated with Jackson's personality at that point. And you could tell by her intimidating glare and heavy tone of voice as she took a small step forward. She was prepared to fight the boy, but Seokjin stopped her before she could.

"You know I liked you from the beginning, and I still do, but because you chose them, you'll have to suffer like they do."

Her blood was boiling. Being angered only by looking at someone's face, using violence to assert dominance, Katsumi hadn't felt these emotions in a long time, and she hadn't expected to in her supposedly new life. A new existence that was intended to be much healthier.

Namjoon observed Katsumi's desire to punch him. So, before the girl made a scene, he held her hand, capturing her attention.

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"Hold your anger back, Katsumi; this is not the place to fight; keep that in mind."

Katsumi is aware of this. She understands she shouldn't feel the need to resort to violence to solve their problem. Jackson, on the other hand, was provoking her to do so with his words and annoying expressions.

Jackson couldn't help but giggle when he saw Namjoon acting tough in public. To him, it was hilarious.

"How cute! Now our Gyu is acting tough!"

This time, all four of them returned his stare. They were tired of Jackson treating them like they weren't humans, and they weren't going to obey or fear him any longer.

Nayeon unexpectedly entered the café with an older man, most likely in his forties. Nayeon smirked triumphantly when she saw Katsumi with the others. She turned to the man she'd come with and said, "Daddy, she's the one I was talking about; she's the one who bullied me in front of a lot of people."

Nayeon pointed to Katsumi, who was noticeably perplexed. Katsumi? Bullying Nayeon? Of course, she had the audacity to lie and pervert reality. Any bully would do something like this to avoid getting in trouble.

"Is that so?"

The man approached Katsumi while Jackson moved aside to allow him to get a better look at her. But Katsumi stood up, demonstrating that she was not terrified of the man. Why sulk and be terrified of them when she and her companions didn't do anything that Nayeon accused them of?

"Young lady, my daughter told me everything about what you said to her, and I can get you suspended, or worse, expelled, for doing such a thing!"

Katsumi didn't think it was surprising that the man's daughter would deceive her. But it seemed incomprehensible that she had been accused of such a thing.

The old guy then notices that there are no more customers in the café, only them and the staff. "Why are there no customers?" he asked.

"We were just hanging out here chatting and minding our own business, Mr. Im, when these three came in and attacked us," Jackson lied. "Then, all of a sudden, one of the workers here joined in too! Isn't this unfair, Mr. Im?"

Katsumi and the boys were enraged by this. They were suddenly depicted as the bad people in this case, despite the fact that they were the ones harassing and disturbing their peace.

"Wait a minute! It was them who attacked us! That's bullshit!"

"Hey, young lady! It isn't appropriate for you to curse at such a young age! Didn't your parents ever teach you basic etiquette?"

"With all due respect, Sir Im," Namjoon argued, "she was just defending us by the lies your daughter accuses my friends and I of doing, and I should let you know that your daughter curses more than my friend."

"Non-sense! Nayeon is far too innocent to curse."

"Innocent, my ass," Katsumi grumbled, rolling her eyes.

But when the old man heard what she said, he was taken aback yet again by Katsumi's attitude.

"If that's how you're acting, fine; you're all banned from this café, including you, Mr. Min Yoongi."

"You can't do that," Katsumi said emphatically.

"I own this café, and I can do whatever I want."

Yoongi was taken aback; he had never expected this to be his last day at work. Who knew that their bully owned the Moonbucks café? It

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was like getting yourself into trouble. But no one knew, and no one was expecting this twist.

Yoongi began to panic.

"Please, sir, I really need this job; I'm the only member of my family who can provide for them."

"You should have thought about the consequences before you did such awful things to my daughter."

"But, sir—!"

"My decision is final. Have a good day," the old guy says as he walks out of the café, leaving everybody stunned.

Jackson and Nayeon bowed at the man as he walked away, but soon he was gone, their fake manner shifted, and they began laughing at their enemies' bleak expressions.

As Katsumi took deep breaths, the temptation to punch and use violence against them was swiftly suppressed. She had to remember that her actions would not only land her in more difficulty but also put her friends at risk.

"Having fun, Jackson, Nayeon?" Katsumi inquired as they continued to chuckle.

"Well, yeah! You thought you could get away with it!" Jackson laughed.

Katsumi took another deep breath, holding her rage in and attempting to calm her erupting volcano of patience.

"Don't think that this is the end."

"And who will come to their aid? You? Who is as poor as Yoongi?" Jackson questioned as Nayeon drew a file from her bag and threw it on the table next to Katsumi.

She sneers.

"I pity your poor ass." Nayeon giggled and returned to her crew, leaving Katsumi to pick up the bulky files and view them.

They appear to have looked into Katsumi's background. Who would have thought someone could do something like this? She didn't think anyone would, but her parents were right. Nobody can be trusted.

Her genuine identity, however, was forged with Aunt Emi's assistance, and the incorrect information about her life was researched. Except for her date of birth.

According to the report, Katsumi was born into a poor family, and the main reason she moved to South Korea was because her uncle resides here, and he is the only family member she has.

Even though everything in the articles was fabricated, the idea that these people would look into her identity is unsettling. What would have occurred if her parents hadn't decided to create a false identity for her before coming here? Her "normal" life would be over in an instant.

As Katsumi continued to read, Kento seized the full file from her and ripped it in half. The file was a thick stack, and instead of being intimidated by his strength, Nabi was impressed.

Kento scowled at Nayeon and Jackson, not impressed with them or what they had done to his companions. It may not appear so, but he genuinely cares about them.

Jackson threatened, "What's with that look, dummy?"

Kento remained silent and turned to face his friends.

"Let's go."

He took his and Yoongi's luggage and walked out of the café. The others followed him out, leaving Jackson and his friends alone, sneering at their successful mission to exert power over their foe.

Katsumi was the last to depart, but she wasn't content for some reason. As her friends made their way to the parking lot, she returned

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and grabbed a plastic bottle of ketchup. She quickly flung it at Jackson and rushed away.

She heard the man crying her name as she ran away, but the girl couldn't care less. Katsumi was overjoyed; she had gotten her petty revenge, although in a small way.

She picked up speed as she returned to her friends, who were following Kento to the parking lot.

"Where do we go now?" Yoongi wondered. "I can't go back home; my mom can't find out about this."

"We could waste time at my place," Kento said.

Katsumi didn't agree with the suggestion, but she couldn't admit she didn't. She didn't want to explain why, and she wasn't particularly good at making up reasons. Instead, she followed her companions and went with the flow.

Kento's gaze met Katsumi's as he opened his car door. That's when he realized he'd forgotten about his secret and quickly regretted his idea. But there was nothing he could do; Yoongi and Namjoon were already in his car, and Seokjin was preparing his own.

The twins could already guess the questions they'd be asked once they arrived, and they hoped there wouldn't be too many.



ME, MYSELF, AND I

As the twins had predicted, when they arrived at their destination, their friends appeared puzzled. They had returned to Katsumi's apartment complex. But they didn't say a word and followed Kento to his unit, which was just in front of Katsumi's unit. The boys noticed this coincidence and couldn't help but comment on it.

Seokjin questioned, "Wait, that's where you live?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Katsumi lives right in front of you," Yoongi said.

Kento entered the house and stated, "I guess we're neighbors then."

These men made the decision to set aside the questions they had, despite the fact that they still had many. They removed their shoes before entering fully and followed Kento into his unit.

Even Katsumi had never been inside his house before, and she was attracted by its interior design. It was nothing like hers, with everything covered in monotonous colors. Whether it was the wall or the furnishings, the simplicity was pleasing to the eye and it was calming to be there.

They were met by an Akita dog, which barked at them from upstairs and joyfully wagged its tail. When the dog saw Kento waving at him, it ran down the steps to meet its visitor up close.

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The velvety fur and adorable features made the visitor go soft on the inside. It was so lively and engaged with its guests that everyone could give it a pat on the back.

"Her name is Snowball," Kento introduced.

And when they greeted the dog, their voices rose, making Snowball even more hyper.

As they sat on the couch in the living room, Kento handed his friends some water. The atmosphere was quiet, and everyone was repenting for what had just happened.

Yoongi couldn't believe he'd be dismissed so easily for something he wasn't even responsible for. It was an injustice, but it is the reality of their brutal society. Katsumi felt compelled to lend a hand to him when she noticed his concerned expression. At the very least, assist him in finding another job.

She was upset. She was remorseful since she could have been the cause of this whole catastrophe. Yoongi would not have been fired if Katsumi had simply shut her mouth and stopped saying unnecessary things.

She said softly, "I'm sorry."

Yoongi questioned, "Why are you apologizing?"

"You wouldn't be in this state if I didn't shut up," she sighs. "I'm really sorry."

Yoongi smiled.

"It's fine; I've got two other jobs to somehow help me cover up the coverage of my previous job."

"You do?"

"Mhmm, I've messaged my boss at the Jack'n'Jill restaurant to see if I can work there today."

Katsumi was relieved to learn that Yoongi's employment at the Moonbucks Café wasn't his only one. Although she is aware that the employment he still has is insufficient to support his family, especially because he is only working part-time, the compensation is awfully low.

A few minutes later, Yoongi abruptly stood up, surprising his friends. As he picked up his coat to put it on, the child appeared to be in a hurry.

"Is everything alright?" Seokjin inquired.

"Yeah, my boss agreed, so I'll go right now."

"Are you just going to walk?" Namjoon questioned.

"I don't own a vehicle, so I have no choice."

"We can use my car; I'll send you there," Kento offered freely as he took his keys from the table and stood.

"Thank you," Yoongi says before departing.

Friends said their goodbyes to Yoongi. Namjoon felt bad about what he had done after they left. This all started when his request for help for Katsumi on the streets two days ago occurred. And if he hadn't somehow stood up for himself that night and ran away with Katsumi, Yoongi wouldn't have been fired.

Namjoon thought it was all unfair.

As the boy was lost in his thoughts, he didn't realize that he was gazing directly at Katsumi. And when the girl noticed the boy's glare, she became nervous. She realized she had done something wrong, and it's natural for them to be upset with her.

"Is there any other way to give Yoongi back his job?" she wondered.

"Unfortunately, no. Unless you have a higher position than Nabi's father, in which case I don't think so," Seokjin replied.

Katsumi let out a sigh. She truly felt remorse and powerlessness for being unable to assist Yoongi.

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"Out of all the punishments, why did they have to bring Yoongi's personal life into this?" Namjoon questioned, stunned.

"Were they always like this?"

"No, their attitude has shifted dramatically since their eighth year of junior high, and we have no idea why," Seokjin explained.

"Have you asked them?"

"Of course not. We've been too scared to." Namjoon groaned.

Katsumi felt nostalgic in this setting. She had been through something similar, and even to this day, she still doesn't have the answer. She had been betrayed by a close friend since birth. The day she was going to ask why that friend did such a thing, he wasn't available. She and he were both forbidden from ever seeing each other again.

That's why Katsumi believes there must be a cause for Jackson and Nayeon's behavior toward her pals. She wasn't able to obtain the answer she was looking for with her close friend before. So, she would go to any length to assist her friend in the present and solve this situation.

Namjoon noticed Katsumi's frightening expression and understood just what she was thinking.

"Please don't do anything further, Katsumi."

The girl returned the boy's stare, saying nothing. Her expressions were easily read by someone as observant as Namjoon, so it didn't surprise her.

"Respectfully, we don't need what you're planning to add to our mountain of problems." He sternly continues, "As much as you seem fearless against Jackson, we aren't the same. Our wish is to remain low-key and enjoy life without unnecessary rebut just to hurt more of us. So please, if you want to dominate using violence that badly, then I'm afraid you're on your own."

He stood and left the unit as Seokjin spluttered. And when he was alone with Katsumi, he could feel the strain in her. He understood Katsumi was trying to help, and he appreciates that. But, because they only met two days ago, she still doesn't know much about them or why Namjoon was acting like that.

"Namjoon was only concerned about Yoongi."

"If he is, then why...?" Katsumi sighed.

"Once you get to know Yoongi better, you'll figure it out."

Seokjin stood and excused himself, and Katsumi was left with many unanswered questions.

Choosing a plan that considers everyone's particular position rather than the one that will terrify the opponent the quickest is something they all considered before taking action; Katsumi has still yet to understand that.

She sighs as she returns to her bedroom. Although she didn't want to do anything unnecessary, she also didn't want to sit back and do nothing when, obviously, something had to be done in this situation.

Using Namjoon's remarks, Katsumi devised a strategy to assist Yoongi without causing further harm or trouble to any of her friends.

However, in order to create a proper plan, she must first identify her target. At least, that's what Katsumi was taught.

She swiftly takes out her iPad and texts her information seeker. That person is someone she has a close relationship with. Someone she can rely on and who is quick at her task is none other than Katsumi's older sister, Kazuha.

Wang Jackson and Im Nayeon are her targets for this mission. Seeking their whole biography, which covers their family background, personal background, history background, and school background

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Katsumi couldn't forgive the two for what they did to Yoongi, however exaggerated. It was about time they got the same treatment.

A message was returned a few minutes later. Kazuha had accepted the request without hesitation.

10

INVESTIGATION

[Living room | 2:30 pm]

Katsumi went to the kitchen after the drama to get some food and drink to quench her thirst. Today had been a tough day, and she needed to relax and unwind.

She sighed when she opened the fridge and saw how empty it was. All that was inside was a bottle of milk and some water; everything else was bleak.

It was time for Katsumi to go grocery shopping. She goes to the market with the money her parents gave her.

It was Katsumi's first-time buying groceries in Seoul, but she handled it with ease. Although her greatest weakness is her inability to stop herself from buying all she wants in one visit, as a result, she returns home with four large bags full of drinks and delicacies she purchased.

She was struggling to walk with all of them. It was so heavy that Katsumi had to stop and put the bags on the ground to keep her arms from turning numb. In any case, she was growing really tired.

Kento hasn't come back, so she had to go by foot instead. It's not a huge deal; it's her fault she overspent, knowing she'd have to carry everything back home. The consequences of her actions

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Katsumi had to resume her tracks after a minute of rest. However, when she took a step, she unintentionally stepped on her shoelace, causing her to trip.

"Shoot!" she curses, attempting to keep her balance with the bag still in her clutches, utilizing more exhausted muscles to avoid going face down on the ground.

But just as she was about to fall, someone raced to her aid, securing their arm tightly around Katsumi's waist. When she looked up, she found herself face-to-face with Namjoon. She splutters.

"I wasn't expecting to see you here, Namjoon."

The boy looked down to see Katsumi carrying four large bags.

"Let me help you with that."

She was perplexed by his actions and gave him half of the bags. She had assumed he didn't like her based on their previous interaction. Yet here he was, offering assistance.

Namjoon caught a glimpse of Katsumi's stare and stopped himself from looking. He was embarrassed.

"Let's go," he replied, directing her to Katsumi's flat. When they arrived, they placed everything they had on the kitchen island table. Namjoon let out a long sigh as he did so, relieved to have his arms free of something weighty.

"Thank you for the help."

"You bought too much; can all of these fit in your fridge?" he said.

"I think so." She pauses. "I hope so."

There was a moment of silence before Namjoon laughed, which made Katsumi grin. It was great to see him like this; it gave her comfort to know that despite all that had happened, they could still grin like this.

"Namjoon, I apologize for being ignorant a while ago," she begins. "I know my approach to problem solving is a little aggressive."

"A little?"

Katsumi sighs, "Very aggressive." Namjoon nods in satisfaction.

"I was just very upset with Yoongi's unjust punishment."

Namjoon sighed.

"I know it's unfair, and I feel the same way, but if we continue to interfere with Jackson and Nayeon, they might tell our parents," he explained. "I don't mind if they tell my and Seokjin's parents, but we have to consider Yoongi, who doesn't want to cause any trouble or worry his mother."

Katsumi became even more intrigued after hearing all of this. What was it about Yoongi that they had to think about in order to be so cautious about their actions?

"How bad is Yoongi's personal situation, if I may ask?"

"You haven't been told anything about Yoongi's family background, have you?"

All she had ever heard from Yoongi and Seokjin was that he came from a poor family and that his mother was ill. As a result, he became the family's breadwinner. That's why he's working two or more jobs at once.

But how dire is Yoongi's situation? Katsumi has yet to visit his house or meet his family members. That's why she thinks this way.

[Bedroom | 6p.m.]

Katsumi was fatigued as she lay on the bed. So much had happened in a day, and it was exhausting to have to think of solutions to the situation. It was not an easy task. Aside from Jackson, Yoongi was the source of Katsumi's curiosity.

She was still perplexed as to why Namjoon was considering Yoongi's family history when devising a strategy. A little, short ring came from

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her iPad just before she went to sleep. She quickly glanced at the notice and realized that it was a message from her older sister.

'Confidential information,' Katsumi read, and she opened it right away. And, as she had predicted, Kazuha had emailed her all of the details concerning Nayeon and Jackson. Katsumi is impressed by her sister's ability to gather so much information in such a brief period of time.

Katsumi began reading right away, not wasting any time. She was taken aback by the photo Kazuha sent. Jackson and Nayeon appeared really lovely in the photo, but their behavior definitely threw them off. What a waste, thought Katsumi.

She learned a lot from both targets as she dug deeper into the document.

Beginning with Kwon Jackson. He was born into a wealthy household, and the most intriguing aspect is that he has a younger brother named Jihoon. According to the document, Jackson has been excluded since Jihoon's birth.

His parents appeared to be quite interested in his younger sibling. Every year, they forget Jackson's birthday; they don't have time for him and know nothing about him. In his family, it was always Jihoon this and Jihoon that.

Moving on to the second target, Im Nayeon's surname was originally Kim, but her mother married someone else two years ago, changing Nayeon's surname to Im. She's the same age as Katsumi, which surprised her. Nayeon looked so young that Katsumi thought she was at least two years older than her.

She is the only daughter in her new family, with two elder stepbrothers. That is why her stepfather spoils her with gifts. It was the father's first time having a daughter, so thinking spoiling her was a good idea created a bad outcome.

Nayeon's family was impoverished before her mother married another man. However, the luxurious treatment she has received has given her the notion that she is a princess. Someone who is far superior to everyone else

The disadvantage is that her stepfather's company is having significant financial issues. And, reportedly, he was searching for a partner to help him buy the Moonbucks Café and a shareholder to help his company become stable.

That is, even if Yoongi was not fired, he would eventually lose employment if Mr. Im did not swiftly find a partner. Despite the fact that this was an unfortunate occurrence for the Im family, Katsumi couldn't help but smile at their suffering. It made Katsumi happy to watch her foe in pain.

After finishing the document, she closes her iPad. Even though she knew who her targets were, she believed it wasn't enough. After what Namjoon had said earlier, Katsumi felt she needed to investigate Yoongi in order to come up with a plan.

She needed to go to Yoongi's residence to accomplish this. So Katsumi went to her twins' unit to ask him to borrow the car for tomorrow's trip.

She entered the unit without warning and found no one inside. She guessed that her brother was in his room, and she was correct.

She knocked before entering his room and discovered him playing a scary game with his VR headset. Katsumi realizes Kento didn't hear her enter since he was wearing headphones. The child was having fun with their cousin and his friends while playing GhostPhobia.

Katsumi would normally tap on the youngster to draw his attention in this situation, but she didn't want to startle him. Instead, she walked

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downstairs to get a snack and returned to watch him play while eating on the bed.

It took over an hour for the youngster to conclude his game, and when he turned to sip water, he flinched in astonishment at the sudden appearance of his twin. Katsumi had her mouth wide open as she was in the middle of eating the last ball of takoyaki.

"Gosh, you startled me, Katsumi."

"Sorry," she said, her mouth full.

"Is that the one I bought?" Before the boy complained any further, Katsumi immediately took out her wallet and gave the boy 5 thousand won.

"It's 9,500 won."

Katsumi contributed more, which Kento eagerly accepted.

"So... why are you here?"

"Can I borrow the car key?" she inquired.

"Why?"

"I plan on visiting Yoongi's house tomorrow morning."

"Do you even know where he lives?" he inquired, brow furrowed.

Katsumi shook her head as she realized she was going to Yoongi's house without knowing where it was. Kento sighed as he noticed Katsumi's expression gradually frowning.

"I'll escort you."

"You know where he lives?"

Kento gave a nod. "Before we went to his second job, we stopped at his house because he needed to change his clothes. I can take you there if you want."

"Thank you. I'll be going at 9 a.m., if that's okay?" Katsumi rose up as the youngster nodded.

It was 8:45 a.m. the next morning, and Katsumi was waiting for her brother in the living room. Kento texted, stating he'd be a bit late because he needed to pick up an order he'd placed at a neighboring restaurant.

Katsumi was in disbelief. Her twin decided to buy his breakfast at the scheduled meet-up time. Katsumi reasoned that whatever he bought, he should buy one for her as well.

When she got in the car, she discovered that the youngster had purchased two enormous boxes of pepperoni and cheese pizza with plenty of banana milk, rather than a single slice or two.

"Are you going to eat that all?"

"No. It's for Yoongi and his siblings."

Katsumi hummed and nodded in response, but she couldn't help but wonder: wouldn't Yoongi's family have eaten their breakfast by now? Whatever Kento's purpose is, it must be something good.

Katsumi was worried during the ride. Her head was filled with Namjoon and Seokjin's statements. As she was eager to put on an aggressive performance, the two suggested she stop. It was all for Yoongi; they're enduring this hell hole, but why? Katsumi simply didn't understand Yoongi's circumstances, and she was about to find out more about them.

11

THE MIN FAMILY

IT was only a matter of time before the twins showed up at Yoongi's house. Katsumi was expecting an old-looking apartment. Instead, there was a modest wooden house in front of her, an exact reproduction of the house she saw in the Japanese drama '*Yamada Taro Monogatari*.' The only distinction is that the house is part wood and half brick.

Katsumi couldn't believe what she was witnessing, and she assumed Kento was playing with her. She didn't notice Yoongi leaving the home to water the plants in the small front yard until she spotted him.

"What are you waiting for?" Kento asks, eliciting an anxious huff from his twin as she unbuckles her seat belt and exits with the food and beverages.

She walked slowly towards the front gate. Looking closer, the construction of his home appeared new and clean, something Katsumi had not expected, and she couldn't take her gaze away from the home in front of her.

Eventually, Yoongi saw her. Katsumi was taken aback by the sudden gate opening when she noticed the boy's broad smile at her unexpected visit.

"Katsumi! Come in, come in!" Yoongi exclaimed enthusiastically as Katsumi entered timidly. "What brings you here?"

"I felt bad about what happened yesterday, so I came to apologize."

Katsumi raised the objects she was carrying to show the boy, and when Yoongi saw the things she had brought with her, he was pleased. He did, however, feel awful that she had to spend her money on him.

"Thank you," he exhales with a smile, "my siblings would love this."

Yoongi invites Katsumi inside, and she gladly enters. From Katsumi's vantage point, the inside appeared to be decent. The first thing you'll see as you walk in is a little entryway with a door on the side. It then leads to the kitchen, which now has a new painted flesh color, a long table, and four chairs beside it. It then leads to a tiny hallway with two doors, one to the restroom and the other to the backyard.

Katsumi has never been to a small home before. What's more intriguing to her is that she didn't feel claustrophobic but rather at peace. She takes a seat on the chair while Yoongi goes to the kitchen to get a beverage and a cup for the visitor.

"Please make yourself at home."

"Thank you."

Yoongi goes out into the backyard and calls out to his siblings, informing them about their breakfast. Katsumi was taken aback when she discovered that the pizza she brought was their first meal of the day. She had always believed that bringing such enormous amounts of pizza was a horrible idea, but now she realizes that it wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Yoongi returned with a smile as he opened the pizza box, and five youngsters ran in excitedly. The sight of these children overwhelmed Katsumi, causing her to straighten her back.

"What do you say to Ms. Katsumi, everybody?"

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"Thank you very much for the pizza, Ms. Katsumi."

Katsumi smiles as she says, "There's no need to be formal. Please, eat as much as your stomach can hold!"

Katsumi hasn't been in this setting in a long time. When she was in Japan, she would occasionally assist Kazuha with the children at the orphanage, and this is what she normally sees when she goes. The children's expressions were pure delight. She is never tired of seeing it.

Yoongi sighs with relief as he bites into a slice. His number one priority is to see his family smile, and Katsumi has assisted in making that happen.

"Thank you very much for the pizza, Katsumi."

"It's never a problem, Yoongi; call me whenever you need help with anything, and I'll gladly assist."

Yoongi gave a sweet smile. Katsumi's remarks felt like another divine blessing to him. He felt truly privileged to have met such wonderful people who are eager to assist him and his family in surviving in this industry known as life.

"I'm glad there are people at the rich level who are willing to help people like me," he says. "I really wasn't expecting another visitor today."

"Another visitor?" Katsumi wondered.

"Namjoon comes here every Sunday to help me with the garden we have in our backyard, and Seokjin comes here frequently to help me with my siblings and house chores, either when I'm at work or when I'm caring for my mother."

As she reflected on her chats with Namjoon and Seokjin, Katsumi realized that the real reason she came here was to get to know Yoongi better in order to devise a flawless strategy that takes everyone's situations into account.

And, of all the people in Yoongi's life, Katsumi is most intrigued by his mother.

Suddenly, the ambiance of children's laughter had been mingled with the coughing of an elderly lady in the room next to them. Yoongi got up and dashed to the room where the noise was coming from. Katsumi followed and peered inside before gently entering out of curiosity.

She came across a sickly old woman laying on a futon. While the woman coughed, Yoongi dipped a towel into a bowl of cold water, squeezed out the excess, and folded it rectangularly before placing it on top of the woman's forehead.

When the woman felt her son's hands lovingly caressing her hair, she slowly opened her eyes. When she saw Yoongi taking care of her again, she gave a feeble smile. The woman lifted her arm closest to her kid and cupped his cheeks, caressing them with her thumb.

Katsumi's heart warmed as she saw what she was viewing. It was a touching yet heartbreaking bond between a mother and her son.

"Son, I thought you had work today," the woman said, her voice frail.

"My shift begins at 12 p.m., Mom."

"I thought you worked at 5 a.m., dear; did something happen?"

The woman's unexpected inquiry felt like a dagger piercing Katsumi's heart. She can't deny that Yoongi was fired in part because of her.

Yoongi smiled slightly.

"The café is being renovated, so our work will resume next month; don't worry, mom."

"I see... but please don't overwork; I'll help as much as I can once I'm no longer sick."

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Katsumi is standing near the entryway when the woman notices her. She bowed as she saw Yoongi's mother looking at her.

"Oh, I didn't know we had guests."

"She is a new friend of mine who just transferred to the school about two days ago." As the lad introduced Katsumi, she kneeled alongside him.

"It's nice to finally meet you," Katsumi replied. "How are you feeling?"

"I feel better now than I did yesterday, darling. And you don't have to be formal with me. Please address me as Auntie."

Katsumi responded with a nod and a smile. Their chat continued, and around halfway through, Namjoon entered with two distinct plastic bags. He purchased medicine for Yoongi's mother as well as seedlings for the garden.

Namjoon was astonished to see Katsumi when he entered. But he was glad she opted to pay a visit to Yoongi's house for a change. The boy softly shook his head before giving Yoongi the pills.

"Auntie, I bought your medicine; you must drink it after you finish eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner," he explained.

He stepped in and kissed Auntie on the hand after giving her the medicine. It was the first time Katsumi had seen Namjoon act so gently and respectfully. Namjoon was always furious or apprehensive. Although it was wonderful to see, Katsumi grinned without realizing it.

"I'll prepare your food so you can start drinking your medicine," Yoongi stated as everyone exited the room.

Katsumi had learned a lot about Yoongi and, to her surprise, Namjoon as well. Yoongi's mother, siblings, and financial situation; Katsumi now understands Namjoon's rage during their disagreement yesterday.

He had every right to be upset at someone who acted and thought selfishly without considering the consequences of their actions.

While the others were busy preparing other things in the kitchen, Katsumi sat back down to finish her slice of pizza. She noticed Namjoon wasn't wearing any glasses, which was another thing she had seen for the first time.

"Where are your glasses?" she inquired.

"In my bag; I'll be taking care of the garden today, so the glasses will just get in the way."

"Can you still see?"

"I put on contact lenses, so I'll be fine," he said. "I'll get started with the garden."

"Thank you for the medicine; I'll pay you back as soon as I get the money."

"You don't have to pay back; I just want to help," Namjoon replies, putting a grin on Yoongi's face.

"Thanks," he said.

Namjoon patted his back before Yoongi went to his mother, leaving the boy and Katsumi alone.

"Would you like to help?" he said, and Katsumi accepted instantly.

The backyard was larger than expected as they walked out the rear door. Nature surrounded the house, and it was breathtaking. Even though the sun was burning hot that day, the trees helped to keep the environment cool.

They had to travel across the back door and down a track that led to the garden. It was larger than Katsumi had expected, and the soil had been plowed neatly into portions.

Namjoon began by teaching Katsumi the basics of seed planting.

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"First, we make a row with the planting stick and trowel, then we plant the seeds in the row we just made, making sure there are spaces between each seed you sow."

Then, using the seed starter mix, pour the soil on top of the row and lightly tamp it with your hand. However, you could use the planting stick to speed up the process."

"Why don't we use ordinary soil?" Katsumi inquired.

"We could use it, but I learned that using a much lighter-weight soil could somehow quicken the growth process of the seed, and this seed starting mix is designed to hold a lot of moisture, which is important for growth."

You'd learn something new every day, and thanks to Namjoon, Katsumi had a basic understanding of how to begin planting. After all of the planting, they began watering the soil to begin the process of growth, and you'll be able to see the sprouts after a few days or so.

Despite the hard labor, Katsumi found herself having a lot of fun planting. The prospect of watching the youngsters grin at the plants after they were completely grown motivated the job, and either Katsumi or Namjoon was looking forward to that day.

After about two hours, they were able to sow every seed they had before the clock struck 11:30.

Namjoon huffed in delight as he wiped the sweat from his brow.

"All we have to do now is take care of them and watch them grow until they're ready to eat!" He joyfully said.

They both smiled and gave each other high-fives for their efforts. Seokjin had arrived and noticed their happiness, which made him smile as well.

"Job well done to the both of you!" he exclaims.

"Seokjin! Since when have you arrived?" Katsumi asked, smiling, as they both approached him.

"Just a minute ago," he said. "You both clean yourselves; ice cream awaits you at home!"

The two, like children, waddled back home and cleaned their suits before entering.

12

ATTEMPTED MURDER?

[Car | 11:45]

It was about 12 p.m., and the buddies were on their way to Yoongi's work at the Jack'n'Jill restaurant.

Seokjin drove them to their destination today. They didn't have anything to do, so they decided to hang out at the restaurant where Yoongi works.

Katsumi's gaze was drawn to the view outside the window, but her thoughts were elsewhere. She couldn't get her mind off the Plan she devised to take vengeance for Yoongi's recent discharge.

But the more she thinks about it, the more she realizes that seeking vengeance isn't always the best approach.

Revenge isn't such a peaceful idea, and it could injure the lads even more, especially Yoongi. That is not what Katsumi desired.

She should not act in accordance with what she was taught as a child. This is her new life, and she needs to break her old habits.

Nonetheless, it will take some time to get used to breaking old habits, which is probably for the best.

Namjoon, on the other hand, couldn't get his mind off the argument he and Katsumi had the day before. He had no intention of hurting or

severing their friendship. He didn't mean to say anything that made Katsumi think he didn't consider her a friend.

But in the last several hours, she has demonstrated how humble and earnest she is about getting to know the others. She has also demonstrated that she can learn from her mistakes.

He discovered Katsumi was a highly understanding person because of the bond they had during their farming sessions.

She had empathy, and even if she couldn't understand another person's circumstances, she went out of her way to learn more about that individual.

They arrived just in time a few minutes later, and everyone was starving. Katsumi sat down, promising she wouldn't cause any more problems for Yoongi this time.

If Nayeon and Jackson decide to make a scene at the restaurant, she will keep her cool and protect the guys without exploding.

Katsumi took out her phone after they had ordered their dinner and messaged her twin about her whereabouts. If something happened to her or if he wanted to join them, he could.

The server had served their appetizer as soon as she put her phone down. Everything they tasted in this restaurant was delicious and they enjoyed every bite of the meal!

The meal, drinks, and snacks—before they knew it, they had ordered everything on the menu, costing them thousands—nearly millions! They were promptly served three types of bingsu, for free, which they all eagerly consumed.

Katsumi's phone rang in the middle of their dessert, drawing their attention. It was from Kento.

"Who's it from?" Seokjin inquired, which surprised Katsumi.

"Uhm... my uncle texted me and asked how I was," she lied.

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"That's sweet."

Katsumi chuckled. She was embarrassed to have to lie. However, if she doesn't want her new life to end, she must keep her secret hidden.

Hour had passed and it was now 6:30 p.m. They stayed at the restaurant until Yoongi's shift ended, spending roughly a million won in the process.

During the wait, they did little but talk, eat, and keep an eye on Yoongi. Nonetheless, they had a good time together.

She'd learned a lot more about Seokjin and Namjoon, and the two had learned a lot more about Katsumi.

Namjoon and Katsumi were inside, paying for their dinner while waiting for Yoongi, and Seokjin was on his phone right outside the entry door.

A black car drove past, and inside were Jackson and his companions. Jackson's companion noticed Seokjin outside the restaurant she was driving to and notified him.

"Drive closer," Jackson said, and his order was carried out.

The boy had planned to slap Seokjin on the head as a prank, but his friends decided it wasn't "*exciting*" enough.

"Come on, give them a break; we've already taken Yoongi's job; what else do you want?" Nabi jokes.

"Watch me," Jackson's companion said, then opened the window with a little bottle of empty beer.

"I don't think that's a good idea, man," Jackson responded too late. His stubborn pals had smacked Seokjin on the head with the alcohol as they approached the child.

Nayeon and Jackson were horrified when they saw what had happened, while the rest of their friends were cheering.

As they came to a halt, they noticed Katsumi and Namjoon running out of the restaurant, yelling Seokjin's name in agony.

Nayeon and Jackson looked back at the crime scene and saw Seokjin's body lying in his blood.

"Do you want to lock us up?" Nayeon yelled in dread.

"This wasn't the right thing to do," Jackson continued.

They were both terrorized by what their friends had done. They bullied them, but they were not murderers.

"After everything you've done to them, you're saying that now?" they chuckled.

"Leave him alone; he has enough money to heal."

They drove away as the two looked back at the crime scene and caught Katsumi's gaze. She was furious. If looks could kill instantly, they'd be dead by now.

Worse yet, they had no idea how to deal with situations like this. They were terrified just thinking about what Katsumi and her companions could do to get back to them.

Before they lost Seokjin, Katsumi had to drive him and the others to the hospital. Namjoon and Yoongi were in the back, with the boy attempting to cover the wound. Seokjin was brought to the operating room as soon as they arrived at the emergency hospital.

The three stood outside the room, their clothes, arms, faces, and hands all covered in blood. Their hands shaking in terror, their eyes and noses stinging from crying—who would have guessed that this pleasant day would take a turn?

They sat on the bench, anxiously waiting.

A bottle of alcohol has the power to kill you. Normally, bottles do not shatter. Assaults are often characterized by repeated blows. Although the skull is extraordinarily tough, it is not invincible.

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The surgeon approached them around minutes later. He bowed, and they did as well. Anxiety filled the air, and everyone hoped that whatever outcome came would be positive.

"How's Seokjin, doctor?" Katsumi inquired.

"We had taken out any excess shards of glass; thankfully, only small crystal shards were found," he explained. "Mr. Seokjin will remain in the hospital for us to monitor, and we will need to notify his parents or any relatives about this unfortunate incident."

As Yoongi and Katsumi approached the room where Seokjin would be resting, Namjoon immediately contacted Seokjin's parents.

This was the most extreme "punishment" Jackson and his friends had ever done. What they did had the potential to kill Seokjin. This was no longer punishment; it was murder, and such an act will never be forgiven.

Murder. Katsumi was reminded of her ex close friend's betrayal just by thinking about the word. To her, it felt like re-living the same scenario but with another victim.

Katsumi had decided not to pursue her vengeance any further, but Jackson had pushed the limit, and her vengeance will now continue. And she had a plan.

It may not be as aggressive as what they did to Yoongi and Seokjin, but it is the best approach given everyone's circumstances. Excluding herself.

13

GRATITUDE

SEOKJIN had just gotten out of surgery 30 minutes before. Bandages were wrapped around the boy's head. Katsumi sighs as she contemplates vengeance and glances at the boy's unconscious body.

Namjoon and the doctor came in to check on Seokjin. In his presence, Katsumi and Yoongi stood and bowed.

"Are there any of you Seokjin's family members?" he inquired.

"He is an only child, and his parents are still working abroad; however, I have informed them of Seokjin's condition."

"I see..." the doctor was perplexed. "In that case, I can tell you this: Seokjin requires a blood transfusion because, as you can see, he has lost a lot of blood; we need to find a blood donor who has the same blood type as the patient."

Katsumi inquired, "What's his blood type?"

"AB positive."

This blood type is uncommon, with only 11% of the South Korean population carrying it. Fortunately for Seokjin, Yoongi had the same blood type as him, and he quickly agreed to donate blood for his friend.

Yoongi took half an hour to donate his blood, and the bag of blood was immediately used for the boy.

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They were now driving home in Seokjin's car. They stopped at a drive-through on the way to order something for Yoongi's family supper.

Yoongi initially declined because they still had Katsumi's pizza in the fridge, but they both pushed. When they arrived at Yoongi's house, he had plenty of food for his siblings' supper.

Namjoon was the last to go home. He guided Katsumi to his house, which happened to be only 5 minutes away from her flat.

Namjoon, as Katsumi had predicted, lived in a large home. Nonetheless, the structure was large and magnificent, enough to wow another person of the same level.

"Have a safe journey back, and please take care of Seokjin's car."

"Will do," Katsumi answered. "Good night."

"Good night."

He opened the door but paused as he was about to leave. Katsumi assisted the boys greatly today. And, to Namjoon, helping his loved ones was the same as helping himself.

Katsumi demonstrated tremendous loyalty and empathy throughout these short hours.

Even though he was considered one of South Korea's sharpest people, his mind was not working during Seokjin's tragedy and while he was in a lot of agony.

However, thanks to Katsumi's quick thinking and guidance, they were able to save Seokjin in some way, and he is grateful to have someone like her by his side.

He smiled softly as he turned.

"Thank you for assisting us, Katsumi," he said, hesitantly adding, "I'm glad to have met you."

'I'm glad to have met you.' These words were all it took to make a woman shed a tear. Someone like Katsumi, who had suffered through the worst of her previous friendship, was just as happy to have such companions as the boys.

She's a blessing. That's exactly what they meant to her—a huge blessing.

Katsumi began her revenge plan the instant she returned to her bedroom. There is one option she could utilize, and that plan is to acquire MoonBucks and save Mr. Im's company from going bankrupt.

The boys may think she is assisting the opponent, but if we compute the Pros and Cons, the Pros win by a long shot.

Katsumi will be the owner of MoonBucks Café, so Nayeon and Jackson will be unable to mistreat her pals. Because if they do, she can simply withdraw as a shareholder in Mr. Im's company, leaving them insolvent.

Another advantage of becoming the cafe's owner is that Yoongi can finally get his job back, which is really important.

With that in mind, Katsumi promptly contacts Kazuha to assist her with the procedure. It will take a week or two to complete the process, but that didn't matter to Katsumi. As long as she is the owner of that Café, that's what matters.

Kazuha consented to the plan but was concerned. If her opponents or allies learn that Katsumi purchased the property, they will be suspicious of her.

"Are you sure you want to keep doing this?" she inquired.

Katsumi realized her older sister was only concerned about her. Who can say? The simple new life she has desired will vanish in an instant. But she's already made up her mind. Katsumi, after all, can't escape reality.

Rosequarts C.

"I'm sure," she replied solemnly.

Katsumi had to pick up Yoongi and Namjoon early in the morning in Seokjin's car. She went to Kento's unit before leaving to alert him about the vehicle.

When she entered the flat, she was greeted by Snowball, who hovered above her, her tail wagging. Snowball was more active than Majesty, Katsumi's pet cat.

Kento came out of the kitchen after hearing her welcome the dog. The youngster was in the midst of having breakfast.

"What are you doing here this early?" he inquired, perplexed.

"I'll be picking up Yoongi and Namjoon in Seokjin's car; would you like to accompany me?"

"Seokjin's car? Why do you have his car?"

Katsumi mentioned the incident yesterday. Seokjin required hospitalization for a month or two in order to heal properly. Because his wound is serious, the doctor and nurses must keep him under observation if Seokjin is to survive.

His car will be kept by Katsumi until his parents arrive in Seoul to utilize it and return home. That assumes it won't take long.

As the story progressed, Kento became apprehensive. It reminded him of what had occurred to Katsumi with her ex-close friend in the past.

Kento discovered Katsumi's severe injury and the terror he was feeling at the time. He has vowed to protect her ever since. But the same thing happened with Katsumi as a witness; he felt bad for not being there to safeguard what was vital to his twin.

"So, you'll be driving?"

"Yes. Unless you want to drive instead."

He yawned, "I'd prefer to get more sleep. Wait for me; I'll just brush my teeth."

"I'll be waiting for you in the car!" Katsumi exclaimed.

Kento arrived in the car in a flash, and as he had said, he fell fast asleep on the way to Yoongi's residence.

Namjoon, to her astonishment, was already at Yoongi's home when she arrived. He picks up Yoongi every single weekday for school, but since Katsumi had Seokjin's car, he decided to join them instead.

Another reason was that he wanted to go to the garden. He added a scarecrow he bought for the plants' safety. Crows had been visiting the garden recently, so Namjoon came up with this idea to scare them away.

"I see Kento came along," Yoongi remarked.

"I've told him what happened to Seokjin and about the car."

"Kento must have been concerned enough about the incident to accompany us."

Katsumi smiles quietly. "You're right. Even if he appears cold at times, he genuinely cares about his friends. He must have regretted not being able to protect Seokjin; that's why he came along."

Kento gradually opened his eyes and listened to the entire conversation. It's strange how twins can sense one another's anguish and troubles even when they don't tell or discuss them.

Namjoon responded with a hum. "You seem to be very close to him."

Yoongi laughed. "Right? I'm wondering if all Japanese people are like that?"

Katsumi's only response was an anxious chuckle. She turned to face Kento, and his sweet expression soon changed to a sideways scowl. She just kept on forgetting about their secret.

14

RIGHTEOUS

Once they arrived at the school campus, she parked near the premises and walked to their classrooms. They passed Jackson and Nayeon, who were hanging out with their pals right outside Namjoon and Kento's classroom.

Nayeon and one of her pals are apparently classmates with the two. That's how Nayeon recognized Kento on his first day.

"Look who we have here!" remarked one of Jackson's buddies. The air became stiff almost immediately.

Although something seemed off. Normally, Jackson would pound on the boys and taunt them mercilessly, while Nayeon and their other pals would cheer him on. But neither of them was doing anything. They remained still; in fact, they didn't dare to glance at them and instead appeared troubled.

Namjoon noted Katsumi's frightening expression and knew that if they went any further, she would not take things lightly and would resort to violence.

The last thing Namjoon wants is for his friend to be suspended or expelled. He instantly places his hand on her shoulder and whispers to catch her attention.

"Let's go. Just ignore them," Katsumi said in response.

She was aware that the boy could see right through her and her motives. It wasn't good, and she needed to cool down before starting a big brawl.

"I see you're missing one member here. Who was it again? Bin?"

"More like Great-Trash." The opponent laughed at a joke made by one of their allies.

"And whose fault is it that Seokjin is in the hospital right now?" Katsumi demanded angrily.

"Katsumi," Namjoon warned softly.

She is aware of what her adversaries are doing and is doing her best to resist, but they continue to test her patience with each passing second. She's not a patient person, so she's surprised she's been able to hold out this long.

Jackson had enough of their unsettling conversation. He was well aware that what his pal had done was wrong—an attempted murder. Nayeon felt the same way.

He snatched his friend's arm and glared at him. "Chunghee, stop doing this," Jackson urged.

Katsumi couldn't help but snicker in amazement when he heard the name. Chunghee means "righteous" in Korean, which is plainly the polar opposite of who this individual was.

"I can't believe someone named that would commit attempted murder and then lie about it," she snickered again. "How righteous of you, Chunghee."

The boy snatched his arm from Jackson's grasp and marched disdainfully towards Katsumi. Everyone who was watching, notably Kento, was apprehensive.

Rosequarts C.

He got his hand under her upper arm, ready to pull her and take whatever hit came her way if anything happened to his sister.

"Even if I did it, you have no proof," he softly said. "Not so victorious of you to do, *Katsu-mi*."

Katsumi felt appalled when Chunghee repeated the pun she had put on him. 'Katsu' means win or victory in Japanese. She didn't mind the pun on her name, but how he put it in a sentence irritated her.

Chunghee's irritably sneering face was the last thing she saw before he departed. This guy may be far more annoying than Jackson and Nayeon.

From what Katsumi saw and examined, Jackson and Nayeon knew what their friend had done had crossed the line, and that's the reason for their distressed expression when they saw them.

They still recognized right from wrong, and their values hadn't completely vanished. Chunghee, on the other hand, felt no remorse.

He was unconcerned about the implications of his acts, whether they were murderous or not. All that mattered was his superiority over others, like a King over peasants.

There must be another way to gather evidence to apprehend this individual before he commits any more evil acts.

Jackson had entered his respective classroom, and unfortunately, he was classmates with Chunghee. The guy sat down arrogantly; he felt satisfied after winning the verbal duel with Katsumi, which boosted his ego.

Jackson sighed in annoyance as he saw this.

"You do realize what you did was attempted murder, which is a crime."

"Like I said before, you've done just as badly as I did, and you're the same."

Jackson will not deny that he verbally tormented Namjoon, Yoongi, and Seokjin numerous times, including the time he forced them to commit a crime by stealing from a toy store. Jackson and Nayeon are not foolish though. Murder is out of the question and crosses several borders.

"Just remember, *Murder* is your crime." He tried not to shout. "I know I'm not in the place to say this, but that's *worse* than theft."

Chunghee jolted. He wasn't happy with Jackson as much as Jackson wasn't happy with him.

"Don't you dare speak to me like you're any better!" he growled. "I'll forget this conversation ever happened, so you'd better watch your mouth."

Jackson sighed in frustration as Chunghee left in a bad mood. He didn't want to be or become a member of a group whose bullying tactic is attempted murder.

All he wanted was to be noticed. But the attention Chunghee was attracting wasn't what he was looking for, and thinking about it now, he felt regretful and apologetic for what he had done to Namjoon and the others.

He needs to find a way to get away from this, but if he can't, he needs to find a method to stop Chunghee from attracting unwanted attention.

The moonlight beamed brightly at midnight, everyone was asleep, except Kento. He knew he had to act after the verbal war of his sister. Fortunately, he was an expert at it and knew exactly what to do, how to do it, and how long the process would take.

He's on the phone, waiting for the other end of the line to pick up. And he was able to pass through about a minute later.

Rosequarts C.

"Good day, this is Choi Youngsoo, the head of the Seoul Police Department; how may I assist you?"

"Good day. I called to request assistance with an investigation into an attempted murder case that occurred last Sunday evening in front of Jack'n'Jill restaurant."

"We received the same call about this incident from the restaurant itself; are you a witness?"

"My sister and friends were there as witnesses."

"We're currently solving the case, sir, and we need witnesses to tell the story for our investigation," stated Youngsoo. "May we ask for your phone number and name, sir?"

"02*_**_*26. Name, Kento..." He pauses. "Yamaguchi."

He's aware that if he revealed his true identity while in South Korea, his new life would be over in an instant. But this was the only method he could think of to get the results swiftly and get the cops to cooperate enough to put Chunghee away for good.

Three weeks later, Katsumi had acquired full ownership of the MoonBucks Café and had become a shareholder in Mr. Im's company. Her strategy was working well, and she knew it was time to return Yoongi's prior employment.

On a Friday afternoon, the group of buddies ate lunch at the school cafeteria. They all intend to visit Seokjin after classes end. According to his mother, he woke up yesterday morning, and Namjoon received the message that night.

Concerning Chunghee, Kento had notified Katsumi of his assistance with the police investigation. Fortunately, only the police were aware of their condition, and they pledged that the twin's secret would remain hidden.

Kento had also been informed about the MoonBucks Café by Katsumi. As a result, the twins intended to take their vengeance after school, right before they paid a visit to Seokjin.

"Can you guys accompany me somewhere before we go to the hospital?" Katsumi pleaded.

"Where will we go?" Yoongi questioned.

"You're not going to get us into trouble again, will you?" Namjoon quips, making Katsumi laugh.

"Of course not! I have good news to share, and I'd like you to come with me."

"As long as we don't keep Seokjin waiting too long, I messaged him and told him we'd see him today."

"I promise it won't take long."

15

RIGHTFUL OWNER

AFTER classes, they quickly drove to Moonbucks Café with Kento as the driver. It barely took a week for Seokjin's parents to return to Seoul, and Katsumi has already returned the car to its rightful owner.

Jackson and Nayeon were inside Moonbucks Café with their buddies, waiting for the new owner. Nayeon's father was in the kitchen, making certain that every inch of the café was pristine. He didn't want to jeopardize his relationship with the mystery buyer who had saved his company and purchased the café.

Nayeon was overjoyed that she was able to still enjoy the luxury she had always desired, but for some reason she felt uncomfortable. She felt unsafe with the group of friends she was hanging out with after the event with Seokjin.

Everyone was laughing, smiling, and playing as if nothing had happened. It seemed as though they were ignoring Chunghee's crime, which may have resulted in the death of an innocent person.

She wanted to flee, but she was also terrified. She's afraid that if Chunghee can do that to someone else, he'll do the same to her. Or maybe he'd do something even worse.

Jackson noticed the hunched girl seated someplace apart from her group but close enough to communicate with her. It was strange, but she felt safest with Jackson, despite the fact that he was the "*boss*" of their group of pals.

Jackson, on the other hand, was aware of Nayeon's shift in attitude and knew why. He felt the same way and hoped he could rescue both of them, but every plot of escape resulted in them being physically bullied by their friends.

"Everything will be fine, Nayeon" Jackson soothed her tenderly with a smile. Nayeon returned the smile and nodded in response.

Just then, a black car pulled up in front of the Café. Katsumi and the others were inside. When they got to the café, they found Jackson and Nayeon inside with their friends. Namjoon was skeptical when he saw them.

"Isn't this the Moonbucks Café?" Yoongi inquired. "Aren't we banned from this place?"

"Not anymore," Katsumi said, unbuckling her seatbelt.

"What exactly do you mean?"

The twins exited the car with the cafe's proof of ownership certificates, leaving Yoongis' inquiry unanswered. They both exited the car and followed the twins into the café.

The enemies inside were taken aback when they saw them enter boldly. As a result, several of them were taken aback by how daring their foes were.

"Stop!" yelled Chunghee, putting his palm in front of Katsumi. "Prohibited customers are not permitted to go any further."

"Funny," Katsumi quipped.

Rosequarts C.

Nayeon felt a flood of anxiety rush through her body. She was worried Katsumi would make a mess, but she didn't want this day to ruin her father's reputation. All because of her arrogance.

"Leave this instant," she urged hesitantly.

"I have reasons to be here."

Seeing that Katsumi looked serious, tears welled up from the fear of being at fault for her father's business going bankrupt.

She bowed. "Please!" she pleaded.

Everyone was taken aback by her sudden compassion. She wasn't thinking properly and behaved immediately since she didn't want to be the cause of the family's demise.

"Don't worry, I'm not here to start a fight," Katsumi said.

She slipped her evidence of ownership of the Moonbucks Café onto the table next to the terrified girl. Her eyes widened in disbelief at what she had just read.

Katsumi was the buyer who purchased the shop and saved her family from bankruptcy. She didn't anticipate that her adversary would be her savior out of all the people in the world.

"What's going on here?" Mr. Im said, emerging from the kitchen to investigate the noises he had heard. He was perplexed as to why customers he had prohibited only a few weeks before were returning on such an important day. "Why are you here?"

"She is the new owner of the café, dad," Nayeon explained, still in disbelief.

"What?" Mr. Im couldn't believe it; he couldn't believe his daughter. Not until Nayeon presented him with the café's proof of ownership document, which Katsumi had given them. "You're Arioka Katsumi?"

"The one and only," she said proudly.

"I wasn't expecting you to save my company, but thank you."

Mr. Im was conflicted about leaving the café in the hands of his daughter's alleged bully. But the process had already been done, and if he withdraws now, his company will be jeopardized.

"The key is yours, and if you need help, I'm only a phone call away."

"Thank you, and I am looking forward to working with you."

Chunghee refused to accept Katsumi's takeover of what was previously "*his*" café. He was entitled enough to take the key from Mr. Im before Katsumi could.

"What are you doing?" Mr. Im questioned, terrified.

"Do you really believe *they* are the true buyers of this café, Mr. Im?" he inquired. "Just think about it."

Hearing Chunghee speak exhausted the twins. They knew this Café was like his castle. Because he's friends with Nayeon, they get free drinks, which he doesn't want to lose. He'll go to any length to retain this café, which is, in his words, "rightfully his".

"You sure talk a lot for someone who doesn't hold authority," Kento remarked, which annoyed Chunghee.

"Are you concerned that I might be correct?"

"Might be correct? You're far from being correct," he said. "You're just upset; nothing is going your way, and you're losing control of it."

"Shut it," Chunghee cautioned softly, his teeth clamped.

Kento clapped back, "Make me."

Chunghee walked intimidatingly towards Kento, attempting to assert power, but failed. Mr. Im drew him away instantly to prevent him from beginning a needless fight.

Rosequarts C.

"As much as I don't want to appear as if I don't trust the people I work with," Mr. Im added, "It's possible that you forged such a document."

Mr. Righteousness smirked softly at Mr. Im for siding with him. He loved that he had some authority back.

"The person I worked with during the process had a different voice than yours; may I ask what her name is and who she is?"

Katsumi believed it was stupid after all of this probing. She was now bothered by the question. She recognized the individual but didn't know how to address what relationship they have.

Kazuha is her older sister; however, keep in mind that Katsumi is hiding her true identity under a different one. As a result, she had no idea what Kazuha meant to her.

It could be her butler, her older or younger sister, her helper, or anyone else. She could answer incorrectly and miss out on the café because of Chunghee's foolish question.

Nayeon sighed, having had enough of her friend's deception. "Dad, she's Arioka Katsumi; it even says so on her name tag," she protested.

"But, sweetie, she's your bully."

"Oh, come on, I made that up!" she exclaimed. "We made it all up; it wasn't Katsumi's fault; it was us who bullied them."

Mr. Im was stunned by the facts, which rendered him speechless. He had been deceived all along by someone he trusted. He was simply stunned.

"Why would you tell a lie like that, sweetie? Bullying can get you suspended, or worse, expelled."

"I know. I was stupid and didn't think about the consequences," she admitted, her voice shaking. "I'm truly sorry."

Mr. Im sighed in disappointment before returning his gaze to Katsumi and bowing.

"I apologize for my daughter's sake; she has acted arrogantly and lied about the truth, and I promise to teach her a great lesson as her father."

Mr. Im realized he was pampering his stepdaughter much too much. He had always wanted a daughter, so when his late wife died and he re-married, he was overjoyed to learn she had a daughter.

He had always given Nayeon everything she desired, and as a result, Nayeon had grown disdainful.

The meeting was over sooner than expected.

Nayeon had learned her lesson and hadn't bothered her or the boys since. Katsumi has reclaimed her keys and is now the legal owner of the Moonbucks Café as well as a shareholder in Mr. Im's company.

And because she was the owner, Yoongi got his job back and was quickly promoted to Café Manager. He was pleased when he heard this.

Typically, the manager is paid far more than the others. If he continued to work, he would be able to earn more money to provide for his family and possibly purchase each of his siblings a Christmas present.

Yoongi's face lit up with excitement as he imagined the children's smiles.

16

APOLOGIES

Two weeks had passed, and a lot had happened in that time. First and foremost, the pestering by Nayeon and Jackson had ceased completely and instead, they were now the ones being bullied by their own friends, and Katsumi and her friends were unaware.

Nayeon and Jackson had become slaves to their buddies, and Chunghee had taken on the role of "leader" of the gang.

The procedure for imprisoning Chunghee has taken longer than expected. To arrest someone, they needed to follow proper procedures. First, the police must investigate the crime.

Second, the officer must have reasonable grounds that the suspected individual, Chunghee, committed a crime. Fortunately, they had discovered clear evidence—the most important evidence to put Chunghee in prison—so this was crossed off the list.

However, this is insufficient to arrest him. It then leads to the final procedure: the police must receive an arrest warrant from a judge.

Normally, this stage of the procedure takes a week to complete, but because they have probable evidence, it will only take hours.

Finally, Seokjin had been released from the hospital!

To commemorate the occasion, the buddies went to his home and ate the famous spicy noodles that they have always wanted to try.

Auntie Kim had brought the cooked noodles to Seokjin, who had set the plates and utensils on the living room table.

The twins were eager to eat this well-known Korean hot noodle. They'd heard of it but hadn't tried it, and being the spicy fans that they are, it piqued their interest.

"Here you go!" Mrs. Kim exclaimed joyfully as she set the large bowl of spicy noodles on the table. "The milk is right next to Seokjin; in case you need to wash off the spice; enjoy!"

"Thank you, mom!" Seokjin exclaimed as he took a seat on the floor.

Yoongi was terrified only by gazing at the scarlet sauce. He wasn't fond of spicy food, but for some reason, this noodle was the only one he thought was tasty. Although it was extremely spicy.

"Let's eat!" exclaimed Namjoon eagerly. They all picked up their chopsticks and dug in with dread. They know it will hurt once they eat even a single noodle, but it was too delicious to resist.

Yoongi blew on the food even though it was cold, knowing it was spicy, before devouring the fire. The rest followed after and began the disaster within their mouths.

"Shoot," Seokjin said quietly, taking in air with his jaws clenched.

"This happens every time; I know it will hurt me, but I still eat it," Yoongi sobbed.

Namjoon turned to look at the twins, knowing it was their first time eating this food. Despite the fact that they were heavily sweating and crying from agony, they continued to eat, forcing the noodles into their mouths.

Rosequarts C.

"Slow down! You're going to choke!" shouted Namjoon, frightened.

"Does it taste that good?" Seokjin inquired, chuckling.

The twins laughed as they nodded in unison.

"It's spicy but delicious!" Katsumi said, as Kento nodded in agreement.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it!" Seokjin gushed.

When the twins saw the boy's contagious smile, they smiled back. How long has it been since Katsumi had an experience like this? Katsumi was having the time of her life eating noodles at her friend's house while they talked all day.

Namjoon kept noticing the striking resemblance between Katsumi and Kento while they were eating. All he knew was that they were from the same country but had never met before meeting at school.

"You both look like twins," he blurted out, not realizing that they *were* twins.

Everyone, especially the twins, was taken aback by what Namjoon said. Their hearts were pounding with fear, believing that their secret had already been revealed.

"I've said that before, during their first meeting," Yoongi pointed out.

"I suppose doppelgangers exist in different genders," Kento replied calmly.

They boys believed him and Katsumi understood why. She and Kento were in sync only a second ago. For the last few weeks, the twins had kept their secret hidden, and their expressions and behaviors were revealing their secrets.

However, their secret has not been revealed to millions, it remains private. To keep their identity hidden, they must be more conscious of what they are doing and take it seriously.

Seokjin was given permission to attend classes the following day. His doctor instructed him to maintain the cast on his head for another week to ensure the stitches healed completely. His companions were also instructed to keep an eye on him and ensure that he did not move his head aggressively.

Kento and Katsumi had just arrived at the school campus and jumped out of the car as soon as it was parked. They hadn't seen Seokjin in school in a month, so they were looking forward to his return.

When they exited, a voice that sounded similar to Seokjin's yelled Kento's name. He was tall and easily visible. Katsumi's heart rate fell nervously as she saw the boys approaching them, and she was eventually seen.

"Katsumi's here, too!" Yoongi exclaimed joyfully to the others.

The girl didn't have a choice, so she greeted him with a wave and a smile, her shoulders relaxed as if she weren't hiding anything.

"Good morning!" she exclaimed.

"It's great to see you back in school, Seokjin," Kento added.

"It's great to be back!" he exclaimed. "Let's get going!"

The hallway was full of student conversation as they entered the school building. They were all enthusiastic for the founding anniversary next month and had heard there would be a variety of activities planned for the entire first week.

Something new that was mentioned was that students could now choose to participate in the booth activities in groups with their friends or classmates, or simply not participate at all.

Rosequarts C.

Nayeon and Jackson, who were standing in front of them, abruptly blocked the hallway. The lads expected them to bully them once more to celebrate Seokjin's return, but the twins discovered that wasn't the case.

They appeared apprehensive to approach them and wore the polar opposite of a disdainful demeanor. Katsumi was about to walk forward to act as a shield when Kento grabbed her arm. He shook his head, telling her she should leave this to the three instead.

The twins stood in the back, observing the boys. People expected them to hunch in dread, but to their amazement, they did not. Their backs straightened, and their gazes were fixed on Nayeon and Jackson. In their eyes, they had grown braver.

"If you have nothing to say, can you move out of the way?" Namjoon asked, making Nayeon and Jackson stare at each other with concern.

It took a few seconds before they bowed and stated, "We're sorry."

It's not every day that known school bullies have the courage to apologize in front of other students. The students nearby were in disbelief at what they were witnessing, but the victims were nonchalantly gazing.

"We've hurt you, taken our rage and jealousy out on you, and done many disgraceful acts," Nayeon remorsefully shifted to Seokjin, "even dangerous ones."

"I know what we did was unforgivable, and we won't be forgiven easily or at all, but... we truly regret what we did, especially to you three, and will accept full responsibility for our wrongdoings, whether suspension or expulsion," Jackson continued shakily. "We're very sorry." They bent even more deeply, their eyes clenching shut.

The boys were speechless and had not expected such an apology from them. Nayeon and Jackson realized they were in the wrong, admitted it, and accepted full responsibility for their conduct. It was as if they had met a completely different person, and their sincerity struck their hearts.

Even people who are recognized as evil can change. If they were willing to change, they would prove it, and Nayeon and Jackson did just that.

"At least you're aware of your wrongdoing," Namjoon replied calmly, approaching Jackson and intimidating him. It was the first time he had felt this nervous being approached by Namjoon, and time seemed to have slowed.

Jackson was expecting a punch, but Namjoon went past him after pausing, giving him a calm look.

They expected to be unforgiven, but they never expected the anguish of disappointment to be so severe. They wanted to be forgiven; they wanted to be on good terms, but how could they when all they had done in the past hurt them? They would not forgive themselves easily if it were in their situation.

Nayeon noticed Jackson's sadness. She knew the boy hoped even a little for their forgiveness. "Let's go. Homeroom's about to start," she stated quietly.

Jackson responded with a nod and a hum. He took a deep breath and smiled proudly. It was unfortunate that he was not forgiven, but it was to be expected, and he should be grateful that he was able to apologize to the boys. It was a start toward doing something that many individuals do not achieve because they are afraid of being rejected. And he overcame that fear, moving one step closer to the life of optimism he craved.

17

THE BULLY'S BULLY

[Next Week | Lunch time]

Katsumi was sitting alone in the school grounds, beneath a large tree, eating her lunch. She hadn't eaten alone in a long time, and she was a little lonely without company, but the cold wind and the smell of nature put her at peace.

Seokjin and Yoongi were both absent from school today. Seokjin had to go to the hospital for a week-long examination to see if the bandages were still necessary, and Yoongi had to accompany his younger sister on a field trip to an amusement park.

Because the school's founding anniversary is coming up next month, the staff, teachers, and students have been working hard to get ready. As a result, Namjoon and Kento volunteered to assist with the preparation of the stalls near the front gate.

In less than a month, these large corridors and classrooms will be packed with various booths, decorations, and people, while the grounds will be filled with a variety of gaming booths, rides, special events, and contests.

Everyone, especially Katsumi, was looking forward to the approaching event. She'd always wondered how events like the forth-

coming founding anniversary would be celebrated in South Korea, and it was thrilling!

The environment around Katsumi was quite relaxing from where she was. It was strangely quiet but calm, perhaps because she was a little further away from the main school building.

She stood up and departed after finishing her meal and putting her garbage in her bag. As she walked away, she was busy untying her headphones so she could listen to music on her way back to class.

But as she was inserting each side of the earphone into her ear, she noticed a familiar figure just beyond the bushes alongside her.

When she got a closer look, she saw it was Nayeon, and she was being cornered by two of her female pals, Ari and Dasom. It was quite a scene, and seeing Nabi being bullied was unusual, and it was sufficiently intriguing for her to listen in.

She couldn't take her eyes off them. She should've ignored her because she knew she shouldn't be doing this, but her body refused to obey and remained still. The atmosphere was intense for her, as if something horrible was going to happen.

Nayeon put on a strong face, trying not to reveal how terrified she was of her foes.

"You're joking, right?" Ari exclaimed, outraged.

"I'm not," Nayeon replied shakily. "I said what I said; I don't want to be your friend anymore."

"You're making a huge mistake, Nayeon," Dasom said angrily.

"Well, bullying Namjoon, Yoongi, and Seokjin was a huge mistake, and yet you guys still do it."

Ari and Dasom were not pleased to be told the truth. Dasom laughed in disbelief. "And you think *you're* no different from us?" she

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asked, pressing Nayeons' head with her finger repeatedly, then quietly chuckled, "Don't make me laugh."

Dasom pushed her again, causing Nayeon to fall behind on the bench and her elbow to hit the rails on top of it. When Nabi shrieked in pain, Dasom stomped her foot on the bench and sneered at the girl before pouring water on top of her.

Nayeon gasped and shivered from the cold as the ice hit her flesh. The temperature was colder than usual because it was nearing winter, and being drained by the icy cold might cause Nayeon to develop a cold. That was exactly what Dasom intended.

Katsumi instinctively yelled at the females to get their attention, and it worked. Those girls raced away laughing, as if satisfied with what they had just done.

As Katsumi approached Nayeon, she noticed her shivering and wiping the water from her arms, face, hair, and clothes.

"Are you okay?" she inquired.

"Does it look like I'm okay?" Nayeon asked dejectedly, and a tear streamed down her cheek as she raised her head.

This had a significant impact on Katsumi. She felt pity and empathy for the young lady. Nobody wants to get purposefully soaked, especially in freezing temperatures. Then, Katsumi removed her hoodie and handed it to Nayeon without thinking.

"Use this," she advised. "You can wear this while waiting for your shirt to dry."

Nayeon frowned. "You don't have to force yourself to help me, Katsumi."

"You can either dress warmly or freeze from hyperthermia."

Nayeon sighed at the choices she was given and chose to stay warm in order to avoid such an incident. They went to the science

room to borrow a heater from the teacher so that her clothing could dry. They remained inside the room with the heating on while they waited.

Katsumi returned from the cafeteria and handed Nayeon a cup of hot tea. The girl had assumed Katsumi had abandoned her, so she was surprised to see her return with a drink that could help her heat up.

She felt grateful but perplexed by her kindness. After what she had done to her buddy, Nayeon expected Katsumi to walk away from her instead of aiding her.

"Why?" she mutters.

"Because it's been scientifically proven that drinking hot tea can help you lower your body temperature."

"No—not that," Nayeon said, snickering. "Why are you being nice to me? I've only been mean to your friends, so I expected you to despise me."

Katsumi gave a sweet smile. "I despise you." She pauses. "But I could tell you wanted to change for the better, and you've demonstrated that, and I'm proud of you."

Nayeon's heart ached from the enormous relief that she could start over and steer herself in a far more positive manner.

When she faced Dasom and Ari a while ago, she was terrified and wanted to flee. It was difficult for her to break away from her toxic friendships.

She was afraid of getting wounded since there was a chance they might hurt her, and she was correct. Katsumi, on the other hand, saved her yet again, and she's thankful she did.

Rosequarts C.

Katsumi went to MoonBucks after class with Kento and Namjoon. She was the new owner of the café, so she was responsible for keeping it operating.

The personnel remained the same, but there were a few new ones, specifically chefs, to work on the meals and snacks to improve the taste and presentation of the cuisine.

Katsumi sat at one of the unoccupied tables and worked while Namjoon and Kento ordered their dinner and drinks. Mr. Im had provided her with every detail about the café, including the whole menu, because she was the new owner.

With only five meal options and three drink options, there wasn't much to it. There wasn't a variety to choose from, so Katsumi was busy writing and drawing suggestions for what to put on the menu to give customers a variety of options. And, of course, it had to be intriguing and delicious in order to pique their interest.

After a few minutes, Seokjin and Yoongi came, the doorbell ringing to indicate they had entered. Yoongi had brought his younger sister to the Café for a snack because their residence was about an hour away, and he thought of treating her before returning home.

"Heya!" Seokjin said, and his buddies cheered softly when they noticed he wasn't wearing any bandages on his head.

"The bandage on your head is finally gone, huh?" Namjoon inquired.

"Yep! It's as if my head can breathe comfortably again."

Yoongi assisted his sister in sitting alongside Kento while he sat between her and Katsumi. He noticed what the girl was doing as she was doodling a variety of dishes in her notepad.

"Is that for Art Classes?" he wondered as he sat down.

"These are Food and Drink Ideas for the Café."

"Can I help?" he inquired. "As the Café Manager, I feel a sense of responsibility to assist."

"Oppa is amazing at drawing, and he's super creative at coming up with ideas!" Yoongi's younger sister exclaimed when she noticed Katsumi hesitated to respond. It made them both smile contentedly.

"Is that so? Then I'll ask your older brother to help me." Katsumi answered with a smile.

In the midst of their brainstorming, Seokjin and Namjoon brought their tray of orders. Katsumi decided it was time for a little snack break.

Seokjin inquired, "So, did Yoongi and I miss anything at school today?"

"I was with Nayeon at lunch," she explained, surprising the boys.

Yoongi inquired, "What were you doing with Nayeon?"

"On my way back to the classroom after lunch, I happened to see her with Dasom and Ari, and she was breaking ties with them."

"Why didn't you just ignore her?" Namjoon inquired.

"Damson purposefully got her shirt soaked; it was a freezing afternoon, and I couldn't ignore a person in need, so I lent her my hoodie while she waited for her shirt to dry."

The atmosphere grew quiet. Katsumi knew she should have ignored her, but for some reason she couldn't. It was like witnessing the guys being bullied while watching Dasom bully Nayeon.

Kento began to speak up in an attempt to divert attention away from this. "Anyway, Namjoon and I helped with decorating the booths for this upcoming founding anniversary," he explained.

"Oh! The founding anniversary is just next month, isn't it?" Seokjin inquired, and everyone nodded.

Rosequarts C.

"Yeah," Yoongi replied. "Are you planning to join a booth or create your own?"

"Decorating is stressful enough as it is," Kento explained.

"Why'd you ask?" Seokjin wondered.

"I thought we could bring Moonbucks Café to the event?" he wondered. "To advertise the café and make more money for the company."

Katsumi was closely listening to her friends' talk, even if she wasn't paying attention to them. When she heard Yoongi's suggestion, it immediately jolted her head, her eyes shot wide.

"Yoongi!" she exclaimed. "That's a brilliant idea!"

The child let out a big huff, holding his thumping heart in relief. "Oh, thank god! I thought I said something dumb!"

"I'll go to the administrator's office tomorrow and request the participation slip, so all I need now are volunteers to assist me. Who's up for it?"

Namjoon and Kento were undecided, while Seokjin and Yoongi raised their hands without hesitation.

"Think about all the free food we'll get to eat!" urged Seokjin. Namjoon grinned at the boy's reaction and raised his hand in surrender. If this booth brings a smile to his friend's face, he doesn't mind sacrificing his time for it.

Seokjin asked, "Kento? You're not going to join?"

While everyone was staring at him, Katsumi took advantage of the situation by employing her younger twin technique. She pleaded silently as she lipped out *'please'* to win this persuasion.

Kento realized that his sister was aware of his vulnerability toward his family. If they are injured, tear up, become depressed, or want assistance, Katsumi knows his willingness to do whatever for them.

He averts his gaze and groans in defeat. "Fine," he answered, "but I'll only be in the kitchen where no one can see me."

Katsumi's face lit up with delight. "Thanks, bro!" She exclaimed, drawing their companions' attention.

"Bro?" Yoongi inquired.

She feared when she realized what she had said, but she tried not to make it obvious because it would make them even more suspicious.

"Yeah! *Bro*, as in, dude," she argued.

"In Japan, we say that to the people we are close to, especially our friends." Kento lied, but his tone was so compelling that the lads believed him.

The day went on until nightfall, when they all decided to leave and return home. They bid each other goodbye before departing in separate cars, with Katsumi accompanying Kento.

Kento watched her as she buckled her seatbelt. "That was a close call, wasn't it, Bro?" he jokes.

Of course, he had to ridicule his sister and make her feel ashamed of her mistake. Katsumi glared at the boy, dumbfounded.

"Really?"

"Well, wasn't that fun, Bro?" he mocked again with a British accent, which irritated her.

"All right, now you're doing this to irritate me," she remarked. "Are you having fun?"

He chuckles with a nod, "Yeah."

"Just drive," she murmured, and Kento started the engine while chuckling once more before driving away.

Jokes aside, what she did was indeed a close call. Despite the fact that she has been in Seoul for quite some time, she is still unaccustomed to living under this fabricated identity.

18

JUSTICE HAS BEEN SERVED!

KATSUMI and her friends decided to help with the decorations in the Gymnasium the next day. Despite the fact that the space was enormous, they had a good time crafting.

This month, the kids were not required to do much. Those who had signed up for a booth, whether with friends or classmates, were all busy preparing for the event.

They go out for lunch after decorating for several hours. It had been a long day, but after a bite of exquisite cuisine, they felt instantly recharged.

Namjoon noticed Nabi and Jackson eating alone, without their companions, around the corner from him. Katsumi did say they had severed relations with their friends, but he didn't believe it until now.

"Are you okay, Namjoon?" Katsumi inquired as she noticed the boy chewing his food slowly and dejectedly.

"Yeah," he replied softly, taking a piece of his food and chewing slowly. His attention returned to the two, and he sighed.

He felt empathy for both of them because he had suffered similar loneliness. And, recalling Katsumi's story about Nayeon, he wouldn't want even his enemies to be bullied because he detested it.

He averted his gaze and concentrated on his meal. They still had work to do in the gym, and he needed to recoup his energy if he was going to finish it on time.

Nayeon and Jackson were enjoying their lunch alone with one another. They discovered how calm it was to be away from their former friends, and they were excited to spend the rest of their high school days away from the negativity.

Although they were too naïve to think that way when Chunghee was still on campus, "Look who we have here!" They turned around to see Chunghee enter the cafeteria with his companions. "It's the two chickens who have betrayed us."

They laughed as Nayeon and Jackson ignored their presence, focusing on their food. It was a waste of money for them to buy something they'd like only to have it replaced by a loss of appetite after seeing Chunghee.

"We'd prefer our lunch to be peaceful; leave us alone," Jackson remarked solemnly, but his boldness was mocked by their laughter.

"Wow, Jackson! Is that really you?" They laughed once more.

Being given the same treatment as they had done before to their former targets, they now realized how annoying these guys were.

Nayeon noticed Jackson clenching his fist in rage and placed her palm on top of his to help calm him. They had to contain their anger and avoid getting violent, or else suspension or expulsion would await them.

Namjoon saw them struggling while Chunghee kept harassing them, and he saw himself in their situation. To him, it felt as if he was watching him and his friends get bullied.

Rosequarts C.

Everyone was looking. Katsumi couldn't help herself and was about to stand when Namjoon beat her to it as he walked towards their table with his tray of food.

He looked Chunghee in the eyes. "What are you looking at?" He frightened him, but Namjoon didn't back down and sat near Jackson to eat with them.

It was like watching a scene from a movie; everyone was fascinated by what Namjoon had just done. A former bully's target stood up for them as if they were buddies defending one another.

"This is new. The bully's target is defending its bully," Chunghee stated, but Namjoon wasn't listening. He kept insulting the boys, but Namjoon ignored him and kept eating his lunch.

People around him were laughing and snickering, which felt like a punch to the stomach for Chunghee. He was ashamed, and he was angry at Namjoon for putting him in this situation.

"Hey! I'm talking to you! Are you deaf?" screamed Chunghee as he poked Namjoon's head angrily, receiving an angry glance in return.

Namjoon's death stare had taken them aback. It was their first encounter with such a look from him, and even Jackson and Nayeon were terrified.

"What's with that stupid look, huh?" shouted Chunghee, poking his head forcefully once more.

Katsumi purposely ran in front of Chunghee and pushed him away from Namjoon in order to sit next to Nayeon, who was on the other side of Jackson.

"Oops, sorry, you were in the way," she apologized as Yoongi, Seokjin, and Kento joined her at the table, their support of Nayeon and Jackson disgusted Chunghee.

Just as he was about to lay his fingers on Katsumi, a woman's voice called him from behind, and he responded with an angry grunt, but as he turned around, it was Aunt Lee Emi, aka the principal, and his manner changed instantly.

"Principal Lee, what a coincidence to see you here," he said.

"This *is* my school," she stated emphatically. "Please come to my office right away."

"May I ask why?"

"I'll explain the reasoning in my office."

Because he was stubborn, Chunghee refused to cooperate, saying, "With all due respect, Principal Lee, I'm still in the midst of my lunch."

Auntie Emi switched her gaze to Katsumi and Kento on the table before returning to the youngster to validate his words.

"It doesn't appear to be the case," she responded; "it's an order, not a favor."

Chunghee scoffed in defeat and walked out, returning his gaze to Katsumi's table and softly threatening them. "This ain't over."

It was unexpected to see the principal summon a student to her office, but it wasn't shocking that Chunghee was that student. The harassment had ended thanks to Aunt Emi, and they were able to eat their meal in peace.

Kento had gotten a text message from the police alerting him that Chunghee had been arrested and would be detained for attempted murder. Katsumi, who was sitting right next to him, noticed the text message he had received.

She let out a sigh. "They really get on my nerves."

Seokjin agreed, saying, "Tell me about it."

Rosequarts C.

Namjoon's actions had been rather shocking, and Jackson had not expected him to assist them. Namjoon, according to Jackson, has not forgiven them. Not only him, but as well as Yoongi and Seokjin.

He wanted to thank them for going out of their way to help someone who had been bullying them for years.

"Thank you," he murmured nervously.

"It's no problem," he says after a brief pause. "I wouldn't want even my enemies to go through what I went through."

Because of their past wrongdoings, they'd always considered Namjoon the bad guy, but seeing him like this with such a compassionate heart warmed theirs.

Lunch went on, and Jackson and Nayeon were invited to join them. It was nice of the boys to invite them, knowing their past, but they had forgiven them. And ever since they joined their circle of friends, every day has been fun.

A day had passed, and they decided to eat in the garden beneath the large tree. Everyone was preparing for the Founding Anniversary, so no classes were held this month. And today was the event's Booth participation sign-up.

There were requirements for creating your own booth. The school will provide the money for the materials necessary as well as the classroom, our place for the booth. However, a minimum of eight members and a maximum of ten members are required.

Katsumi took out a pen and paper to fill out the booth participation slip. "Guys, I need you to sign this for the booth," she continued, handing Namjoon the paper and pen.

"Which booth?" Nayeon inquired.

"Because I own the Moonbucks Café, Yoongi thought of advertising it in school on the school's founding anniversary," Katsumi ex-

plained. "We thought of selling the new items we have on the menu, both Food and Drinks."

The idea then piqued Nayeon's interest. "Can we join?" she inquired.

"Of course!"

Kento completed signing and handed the slip to Nayeon and Jackson to sign.

Seokjin then returned from the principal's office in a pleasant mood a few minutes later. He'd been informed that Chunghee had been detained, and his parents had apologized and offered to pay his hospital fees on his behalf.

Hearing this, the friends were overjoyed for him and were glad Chunghee had gotten what he deserved.

Hopefully he will stay where he belongs, and his pals will learn a thing or two from what transpired. Or, at the very least, scare them into never doing it again.

19

A FEVERISH KAT

AFTER lunch, the friends, including Jackson and Nayeon, continued to help with the decorations in the Gymnasium. Just a little more push until they were finished with it.

On the way, Katsumi excused herself to use the restroom. She entered an empty stall and went about her business casually. She was pleased with all that had occurred in the last several days.

Their circle of friends has gotten a bit bigger, Seokjin has received justice, and her secret has not been revealed. Everything was going exactly as she had hoped, and that brightened her day.

A collective chuckle could be heard outside the door behind her as she flushed. She didn't give it much thought because it was a public spot. But seconds later, a bucket of cold water fell down above her as she turned to exit the stall.

She shrieked in surprise when she felt the frigid temperature on her body. Nayeon was drenched just a few days ago, and now she has met the same fate as her.

She wasn't just saturated; she was abruptly bathed in an unsanitary environment. Her hoodie and uniform were both fully drenched.

She attempted to leave, but as she pushed the door open, something appeared to be blocking her path. With a shove, the item behind the door toppled down to the floor, allowing Katsumi to flee the stall.

The object in her path was a metal ladder. Someone had planted the "prank" on her, and she had no idea who. She thought, It should be the same people who did the same thing to Nayeon.

She crept out of the restroom, checking to see whether the attacker was still nearby. But, of course, no one was nearby. She shivered as she waited in the restroom and decided to message Kento for assistance.

If she walks all the way to the gym saturated, she will most certainly temper the floor and leave a trail of puddles, which will be a nuisance for the janitor.

When she came back inside, she took her phone from her pocket and noticed the screen was also damp.

"Ah fuck." she exclaims as she first dries her hands before grabbing tissues to wipe the droplets off the screen. It was a relief to discover that her phone was still operational. This way, she can call Kento.

Her brother, on the other hand, was folding sheets of paper to create a flower in the gymnasium, when he suddenly heard his phone ring in his pocket. It piqued his interest, and when he saw the ID of the person who called, he realized it was his twin.

He responded.

"Yes?"

"Hey, uhm... do you have any extra clothes with you that I can borrow?"

Kento's brow furrowed, puzzled. "I do, but why?"

Rosequarts C.

"Someone did a nasty prank while I was in the washroom stall; I'm all soaked and it's freaking cold," she complained.

"Alright, I'll be there in a minute."

However, a minute would turn into ten minutes for him to arrive. And, unfortunately, waiting for him in soaking clothes and wet hair felt like an eternity.

Students who used the restroom were taken aback by her look, but because Katsumi is well-known at school for her friendship with the old bullies, she was made fun of. On the other side of the room, a faint laugh could be heard.

She felt embarrassed by her appearance. As they exited the restroom, the girls continued to giggle. At the very least, the humiliation has been paused for the time being.

Katsumi was shivering from the cold, and her damp garments were making her feel uneasy by the minute. She was growing impatient when she heard her name being called from outside.

She dashed out the door and saw Kento with the change of clothes she asked for.

"Change quickly; you'll catch a cold," he warned, handing out what appeared to be a hoodie and jogging pants.

"Thank you," she says as she snatches the garment, heads inside, and quickly changes. The outfit was a little too big for her, which was weird because Kento's clothes were much smaller than what she remembered wearing.

It may be because Kento had gained weight or muscle, plus that child was still young and still in the stage of growing up. So, she tosses the thought aside and heads out with her drenched uniform and hoodie.

She had to wander about without her socks. Leaving them on when they're wet gives them a mushy feeling, which she found very uncomfortable.

"Do you have any idea who it could be?" Kento inquired as Katsumi exited the restroom.

"I do," she replied, "but I don't want to make such accusations. The attacker escaped before I could see their faces, leaving me with no evidence of them doing it," she added.

"I see," he says, nodding. "There's a CCTV camera nearby, so I can inform Auntie Emi about what happened."

"Thank you," Katsumi said, nodding.

"Oh, and by the way, I borrowed Namjoon's clothing."

"I see!" she says as she nods. "That's why it's larger than the size you normally wear."

"I forgot mine, so he lent his instead."

The others were already aware of what had occurred when they arrived at the gymnasium. Kento had informed the others about what had occurred to Katsumi, which is how he was able to borrow the spare clothes from Namjoon.

Nayeon handed her a towel to pat her hair dry, and Katsumi eagerly accepted it.

"Do you have any idea what the attacker's motive was?" Yoongi inquired.

"They were doing this for fun; I just know it!" Nayeon shouted irritably.

"In any case," Namjoon remarked, "I'm glad you're not physically hurt."

Everyone agreed. It was heartwarming for Namjoon to say such a thing, and it made Katsumi feel a lot closer to him.

Rosequarts C.

They proceeded with their jobs, and they were getting closer to finishing the work in the gymnasium. After the job, it was time for Katsumi to work and plan her booth.

Despite the fact that they were short on one more person, the principal has allowed them to bring a maximum of three strangers into each booth.

They were given three and a half weeks, which Katsumi wasn't sure was enough time to arrange everything, including the decorations, interior design, and food and drinks for their menu. But with seven of them together, they'll undoubtedly figure it out.

[Bedroom | 09:48 p.m.]

It was late at night, and Katsumi had just emerged from her warm bath. As she walked towards the bed, she let out a tiny sigh and sat down. She takes her notepad from the desk beside her bed and opens it, revealing sketches for the new drinks and snacks on the cafe's menu.

Katsumi sincerely hopes that this booth will be a success and bring in a lot of guests for the Moonbucks Café. She sneezes continuously as she nervously admires the sketches in her notepad.

"Shoot. Am I catching a cold?" she huffs. "I certainly hope not."

She sneezed again and decided to take a nap to recover overnight. Hopefully, she will feel much better the next day. However, things came for the worse.

As Kento stepped outside his unit on a cool morning, he realized he hadn't received a message from Katsumi, as he usually does. The car keys are with her because she was supposed to drive today, and he needed to know if she was prepared.

He won't be able to attend classes without those keys, something he cannot allow to happen.

He enters her apartment after entering the code. She wasn't in the living room, where he expected to find her every morning before school. So he went upstairs to her room, figuring she was there.

As he climbed the steps, he yelled, "Katsumi? It's time to go!" But received no response. When he arrived on the second story, he noticed Majesty (the cat) sitting outside her bedroom door.

Meow

The cat greeted Kento as he approached to pet it. Majesty then enters the bedroom through the small door at the bottom. Kento followed the cat inside, but as soon as he opened the door, a cold breeze blew out, making him shudder.

It was extremely cold inside. Kento was perplexed by this. Normally, Katsumi turns off the air conditioner, but it was still on when he walked in.

"Katsumi?" he called out, and a tiny, hoarse reply came back.

"Kento?" Katsumi was curled up in her bed, looking unwell. She was sweating profusely on her brow and neck, and she was breathing heavily. "I think I might have a fever," she continued.

"You think?" He approaches her and touches her forehead. Even with the air conditioning on full blast, she felt quite hot. "You *do* have a fever; you're burning up!"

"Curse those attackers; if it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't be in this state," Katsumi sighs, coughing loudly.

"Well, you can't go to school with your condition; you'll have to miss class today. I'll notify Auntie Emi."

"Thanks, bro," she weakly replies.

Rosequarts C.

"Have you eaten breakfast yet?" He said, and her stomach grumbled loudly enough for both of them to hear. He chuckled. "Wait here, and I'll make you something to eat."

"There's no need; just go; you'll be late for school," she remarked.

"Right now, your health is far more important than school, sis; I'll just notify Auntie that I'll be late today so I don't get in trouble."

Katsumi closed her eyes and nodded quietly. Kento had cooked his twin's breakfast in an hour, serving something ideal for the sick. He had also made her lunch so she could eat it quickly.

He did everything he could to make his sister feel at ease before leaving with the car keys while Katsumi was deep asleep.

Kento arrived on the school grounds an hour and a half later. He was now inside the principal's office, notifying Aunt Emi of Katsumi's illness and the cause of his tardiness.

Aunt Emi understood him and his sister's condition and prepared a slip for him to avoid being taken back to her office or getting himself into trouble.

It only took a few moments for him to receive the slip from her.

"Regarding those students who bathed Katsumi in water yesterday afternoon, I've investigated the entire incident and informed their parents; rest assured that they will be punished appropriately for their wrongdoings," she stated as she handed him the paper.

Kento bowed after smiling. "Thank you, Auntie," he said as he walked away.

All eyes were on him when he walked into his classroom. He had predicted something like this would happen because he was late.

"What a calm entrance for someone who's extremely late; can you tell me why?"

He bows and says, "I apologize, sir." He then took the slip to the teacher which instantly explained his predicament to him. He was excused as a result, and he was allowed to sit down without complications.

Time flew by rapidly, and it was already lunch break in the blink of an eye. Kento was instantly asked about what had transpired earlier when they went to get their lunch to eat.

"Why were you late today?" Nayeon inquired

"I had to take Katsumi's car keys because she was supposed to drive today, but it appears she is sick with a high fever," he added.

"Oh, so that's why she's been absent," Yoongi remarked.

"It must've been because of what happened yesterday," Namjoon reasoned.

"Principal Lee informed me about the attackers," Kento said. "She said to rest assured; there will be a suitable punishment for their wrongdoings."

"As they should!" Jackson retorted.

"Wait. Principal Lee approached you?" Nayeon questioned in surprise.

"Yeah, how else could I have gotten the slip? It was from her."

"I had no idea you and Principal Lee were close," Seokjin said, putting Kento in a bind.

"We aren't," he countered gently, "maybe because I'm a new student? Who knows?"

Kento was a master of deception; even his closest friends believed every single lie he spewed out. He felt awful about it, but it was for a reason. He didn't care whether his identity was revealed, but he knew Katsumi did. This was what she wanted, and he didn't want to destroy it for her just because he didn't feel the same way.

Namjoon had just dropped Yoongi off at his residence and was on his way back to his own. They passed Katsumi's apartment building on their way. When he saw that, he got a strange feeling of anxiety in his chest.

Kento had to look after the Moonbucks café for her, leaving the sick girl at her unit alone. He was concerned that she hadn't eaten anything or that she didn't have the stamina to swallow the medicine she was prescribed.

As cold as he had been with her the first time, he had evolved and now genuinely cared for her. He couldn't get the feeling out of his head, no matter how hard he tried.

"Let's go to the supermarket, Mr. Hong, and I might stay overnight at a friend's house," he said.

"Yes, sir," the driver replied as he steered the car toward the supermarket.

He got everything Katsumi needed to recover, including ingredients for her food and medicine in pill form, as well as a fever pack.

It was his first time purchasing these for someone with a fever, so he did as his mother had done whenever he was sick in the past.

He sighed as he remembered those moments. He didn't have time to be sentimental, though.

After paying for everything he got, he was now standing in front of Katsumi's unit, wondering if she was awake or not.

Regardless of his concerns, he knocked and rang the doorbell.

"Katsumi! It's me, Namjoon!" he softly yelled. A middle-aged man opened the door in a matter of seconds.

Namjoon didn't think much of it and assumed he was the girl's butler.

"Hi," he greeted shakily, "I'm here for Katsumi."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Namjoon, was it? Please come in!" the man said politely.

The boy excused himself as he entered the unit and removed his shoes, which he placed on the rack near the entryway.

"I assumed Katsumi was alone, so I brought her some ingredients and medicine."

"Thank you; I was planning on going out to get her groceries; you've saved me some time."

"Glad I could help."

The butler took the groceries from him and delivered them to the kitchen.

Namjoon spotted the man in the process of cooking. Katsumi must not have eaten yet because it is already past 3 p.m.

"Namjoon?" Katsumi weakly called from behind, wrapped in blankets to stay warm.

"Katsumi! You're up!" he exclaimed, startled.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, coughing.

"I came over to see how you're doing."

"Please, Ms. Arioka, return to your bed and rest," urged the butler. "We'll bring the food to you once it's cooked."

"Thank you, Mr. Daehyun."

Katsumi returned to her room, while Namjoon assisted the butler in preparing her meals and medicine. Butler Daehyun decided to make a simple rice porridge for the girl.

It's a simple rice, salt, and water dish. It has a fairly mild flavor that is extremely soothing when one does not have much of an appetite.

Rosequarts C.

They cleaned up their mess and brought the sick girl a dish of delight. They brought the food to her room on a tray with utensils and medicine.

A cool breeze stroked against their skin as they entered. It was colder in the room than it was outside, which is unusual.

"We've brought your food, Ms. Arioka."

Katsumi slowly awoke from her snooze, smiling as she struggled to sit up. Namjoon assisted the butler in placing the tray of food on the tiny table on top of her bed.

"Thank you," she says as she picks up the spoon, scoops it, and blows on it before biting into it. Namjoon felt relieved as he watched her regain her strength.

Butler Daehyun had to go for a few minutes and asked Namjoon to stay, which he gladly did. He didn't have much to do at home, and he'd previously informed his driver of his location. So he's sure he'll reassure his parents.

Katsumi was still hungry after she finished her meal and craved a snack. Namjoon gladly agreed to assist her in alleviating her hunger.

He went to the kitchen to get the ingredients for his recipe, Korean rice cake dumpling soup. And for the beverage, he decided on honey-lemon tea.

For many people, being full while lying in bed is really uncomfortable, therefore tea would be the ideal beverage to accompany the soup.

He cooked roughly three portions, two for himself and one for Katsumi. She could have seconds if she wanted more.

"This is delicious!" Katsumi exclaimed as they ate together.

"I'm glad you like it!" says Namjoon.

"I had no idea you could cook this well."

"Fortunately for you, aside from eggs, sausages, and ramyeon, that's the only difficult thing I can cook," he remarked.

"Where or who taught you?"

"My mother, when I was a kid," he said dejectedly, dropped his head, and grinned.

Katsumi notes the changes in his expression and deduces that something has occurred between him and his mother. He gave the appearance of not wanting to continue with the discussion, so she respected that and changed the subject.

She didn't want to make him feel uncomfortable, no matter how inquisitive she was. It's not something you do to someone who is trying to recuperate from a fever.

"You know, I'm really glad I came here to Seoul," she said, smiling softly. "Because that's how I met you."

A wave of tingling stroked Namjoon's back as he felt his heart palpitate even faster. He was a sucker for compliments, but he'd never felt his body react like this when he got one.

"And Yoongi, Seokjin, and surprisingly, Nabi and Jackson," Katsumi said.

The boy huffed, releasing the tension from his body, and gave out a chuckle. "I feel the same way," he said. "I'll go clean up this mess while you rest."

"T-thanks."

He walks out, carrying the tray of dishes, and smiles as he closes the door. They both huffed as if they were holding their breath and finally got the chance to let it all out once he was out of sight.

They did this while banging their hearts with their palms on their chests.

"I've got to get this checked out at the hospital," he said.

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EVENT PLANNER

[Saturday || 11:30a.m.]

Katsumi couldn't find Namjoon the next morning and suspected he had left while she was sleeping the night before. Since he had helped tremendously, she felt even better the moment she awoke.

In a good mood, she heads down for a drink of water to quench her thirst. There, she saw Butler Daehyun and Kento in the middle of cooking a meal for the afternoon.

"Good afternoon, Lady Katsumi," Daehyun bowed.

"Good afternoon!"

"You look better than you did yesterday," Kento commented.

"Is that what you're having for lunch?" She wondered as she observed her brother preparing the ingredients.

"It is, although it depends on whether you're sick-free or not."

Butler Daehyun excused himself and handed the lady a thermometer so she could measure her temperature. This is to keep her from barfing her lunch.

When she's unwell, there are a variety of dishes she's not permitted to eat, particularly oily ones. When she consumes it, she will ex-

perience stomach pain, which will lead her to vomit everything she has eaten, making her even sicker.

The aroma of fried sirloin steak permeated the living room. Katsumi lay down to snooze while she awaited the thermometer's result; it felt like torture.

If she still had the fever, the steak would be a waste because she couldn't eat any of it. That was her problem. She was hungry for anything other than the porridge she had been eating all day.

And alas, after a few minutes, the buzzer beeped, implying that the thermometer had finished monitoring her temperature.

Butler Daehyun excused himself once again as he removed the thermometer from her armpit. The result was 35, which means she had recovered from her fever.

"*Yosha!*" She cheered softly when Kento placed a plate of cooked steak on the table, one for each of them.

"Please join us, Mr. Daehyun!" Kento says, and the butler gladly obliges. They all sat in the living room, enjoying every bite of the steak Kento had served and the egg soup Butler Daehyun had prepared.

After the feast, the butler handed Katsumi a brown envelope and explained what it was.

"It's from Lady Emi," he stated as Katsumi opened the letter.

"The participation slip you've sent has been proven, and all the information, including the classroom you'll be using and the money given, is written on that document." He continues, "And lastly, the certificate with the document represents your proof of participation."

As Butler Daehyun explained, Katsumi read what's written in the document, and it was truly regarding her involvement in the founding anniversary, which was just 4 weeks away.

Rosequarts C.

With the news, Katsumi and Kento went to the café where Yoongi was working at the cashier.

"Yoongi!" she exclaimed enthusiastically as she approached him.

"You seem happy today," he remarked, surprised.

"I just received the acceptance envelope for the Founding Anniversary event participation!" She gleefully explained. "Our designated classroom is room 103, next to the gymnasium. We can get started on the preparations tomorrow morning!"

"That's fantastic news!"

"It is!" She said eagerly with a faint squeak. "We'll be conducting a short meeting in the private room upstairs; is it okay if I borrow you for just a short while?"

"Well, you are the owner and the boss of this café."

"Oh, right," she chuckles.

The twins headed up to the private room and waited for the others to arrive. Katsumi felt super excited. She wishes it was tomorrow. It'll be her first event with her friends in Seoul after being out of school for years.

Kento waited downstairs for their order, but Katsumi was already in the private room, busy drawing the ideas she had for their menu.

The members enter one by one, bringing a more dynamic atmosphere within.

"Well, we're finally doing the booth!" Jackson exclaimed with excitement.

"I only joined to be in the kitchen," Kento stated flatly.

Namjoon and Yoongi arrived last, apologizing for being late with the dishes and drinks everyone had ordered.

"Let's get this meeting started!" Katsumi said eagerly.

She begins by displaying the documents and explaining each and every detail of them. This covers their designated classroom as well as the money provided.

They also discussed what materials they should acquire with the money they were given to make the decorations for their booth.

They next decide on everyone's allotted job. The chef, waiter, or waitress, as well as the inbound marketing people—their job is to attract more customers, whether it be on social media or around the school.

"Does anyone want to be the cook for the event?" Nabi inquired.

"I volunteer as a tribute," Kento replied, raising his hand instantly.

"I don't mind being the cook either," Jackson remarked, and Seokjin nodded as he raised his hand as well.

"The extra helper and I can advertise the shop around the school campus," Nayeon went on to say.

"Which leaves Yoongi, Namjoon, and I as the waiters."

Finally, they determine what to include on their menu in order to better serve their customers and attract and retain more regulars at the Moonbucks Café.

Katsumi got out her sketch pad and scribbled her cuisine ideas for the event, each one so detailed that the members mistook it for a printed picture.

"All in all, we have a total of 20 items on the menu, both with 10 items each for drinks and food," Katsumi explained.

"We also have to think about the space given to us, so that's the perfect number of items to put on the menu," Yoongi added.

"I can bring a refrigerator for our pre-made cakes and crepes!" Seokjin stated.

Rosequarts C.

"Perfect!" Katsumi exclaimed. "All we need to do now is figure out how we're going to decorate our assigned classroom!"

It took the members about an hour and a half to decide on an interior design. Once they had everything arranged, they used the remaining time to go to the mall and get the things they needed so they could begin and finish the preparations early.

Yoongi and Katsumi had to stay because the boy was still working and Katsumi was the boss and had to keep an eye on the store until it was time to close.

"Good work today!" The employees said as they exited the café, while their boss smiled in response and walked towards Yoongi, who was still counting the money they made for the day.

"Yoongi, let's call this a day." She said, "It's almost 10; your family must be waiting for you."

"I still have to pack the snacks at the counter after this."

"I'll help you." Just as she got to the back of the counter, she felt a buzz and ring tone coming from her pocket.

"Hello?"

"Katsumi, sorry for calling so suddenly."

"No worries! Why'd you call?"

"I'll be straightforward. Have you noticed any strange occurrences near you?"

"No, why? Did something happen?"

"Kosuke called, saying he's planning on visiting Japan." Katsumi's face grew pale and terrified as her sister continued, "He's been attacking us three weeks after you and Kento have been there."

"What...?"

She rushes out of the café, away from Yoongi, so he doesn't overhear their conversation.

"Katsumi, he's looking for you." So be cautious. I'll notify Kento and dispatch some bodyguards to protect you both—"

"No." Katsumi cut in. "There is no need for bodyguards. I'll be fine on my own."

"But Katsumi—"

"If he's looking for me, I don't care," she said a bit loudly. "If he wants to fight, then I'll fight him."

Kazuha grumbled in astonishment as she listened to her little sister's sternness: "I thought you wanted a peaceful life."

"I do, but..." she says with a sigh, "that peaceful life I desire won't become my reality if Kosuke still exists."

"Katsumi..."

"You know what he did to me in the past, sis." Her voice trembles. "I don't know what I did for him to loathe me this much, but I know that hatred will not let him stop until he kills me."

"I understand. If that's what you desire, then...when you arrive home, take the book titled 'kraken' from the second-floor shelf; it will bring you to a secret gun practice room."

"Thank you. Please keep me updated, sis."

"Sure, good night."

The call ended as she sighed heavily in distress. Katsumi knew this day would come, and she knew her yearning would only stay temporarily because of one man she used to be close friends with.

Yoshida Kosuke is the Yoshida family's youngest child. During elementary and grade school, he and Katsumi were the best of friends.

They shared many interests, including fashion, music, and sparring. The two were inseparable. Because of these two, the Yoshida and Yamaguchi clans were said to get along like a true family.

Rosequarts C.

However, the Yoshida clan's eldest son perished one day. Kosuke has been distant from Katsumi since that day, and their friendship slowly died.

Katsumi, on the other hand, did not want their friendship to end. But every time she tried to approach him, he would keep his distance, and his kind, caring gaze would transform into a menacing one filled with hatred.

After some time, Katsumi received a letter from Kosuke asking her to meet him on the rooftop. Just reading that letter made her happy and gave her hope that they'd be friends just like before.

Except that the light of hope would dim and she would be greeted with a devastating betrayal. Five deep stab wounds in the abdomen and a near-death experience

If it weren't for Kento, she would've been dead. Killed by a man who she thought was her trustworthy friend.

When Yoongi noticed his friend's dismay, he asked, "Is everything all right, Katsumi?"

She turned and saw the worried look on his face. She smiled reassuringly and nodded, masking her problems.

"Yeah, a family member called just now. It's nothing special."

"Alright. I've cleaned everything; do you mind if I take some of the pastries?"

"I don't mind at all. Bring as many pastries as you want; you're not required to pay for them."

"Thank you!" He smiled brightly and dashed back inside to prepare as many of the pastries to take home for his siblings to enjoy.

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A THREAT

As soon as Katsumi got back home, she properly started to focus more on Kosuke. Her life was on the line, and she realized she needed to hone her rusty skills.

Kazuha had told her to take the book titled 'Kraken' from the second-floor bookcase in order to disclose a passageway leading to the secret gun practice area.

When she unveiled the secret room, she felt thrilled. Although the mansion she lives in in Japan contains several secret rooms, she is taken aback when this occurs outside her home.

She walked down the stairs without hesitation. The chamber was larger than she had anticipated; all of the equipment was present, but no firearms were in sight.

Katsumi continued to glance around and noticed a door alongside the entrance she had passed through. From her perspective, it didn't appear to be the typical push-and-pull door found in everyone's home, and the door appeared to be made of glass.

A rectangular password machine hung next to the door. Katsumi pressed the spacebar, which activated it, and it appeared that accessing the glass door required a password.

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She sighed and decided to contact Kazuha for assistance. But while she was doing so, she heard the sound of another passageway sliding open behind her.

She turned to hear another set of steps directly opposite the one she had entered from. Footsteps could be heard once the door was fully open.

Katsumi hurriedly squatted beside the open wall so that whoever's footsteps belonged couldn't see her. While hiding, she notices the silhouette of the person growing larger with each step they take toward the ground floor.

She put her arm over their shoulders and squeezed aggressively, strangling the person between her arms. However, the individual instantly grabbed her arm and shoved it down as they took a back step out with his left leg.

This caused him to break free from Katsumi's grasp. The girl was going to attack again when the unknown person placed their hand through her shoulder and pressed down.

To avoid the agony, she rolled away from the threat and grabbed her pocket knife, holding it in front of her to protect herself from any additional attacks.

As she turned around, she discovered that the presumed anonymous threat was none other than her twin.

"Kento?" she exclaimed, baffled. "What are you doing here?"

"I should be asking you the same thing," he said in disbelief as he massaged the side of his neck to relieve the pain created by his sister while taking deep breaths. "You trying to kill me, bitch?"

"Sorry, I thought you were a potential threat."

Kento deeply huffed as he took out his cellphone.

"Anyways, Kazuha-sis sent a message about that jerk, Kosuke." He rolled his eyes, "and about this base. She told me to check it out once I got home, so here I am."

"I see..."

"I'm assuming you received the same message from Kazuha-sis as well," he inquired.

"Yeah," she nodded. "And before you came, I was trying to figure out the password code to open the glass door over there," she explained, pointing to the door in question.

"Did you consult with Kazuha-sis?"

"Yep, still no reply."

"Let me see what I can do."

Katsumi moves aside and lets the youngster use the skills he learned from his father, and as he was doing so, Katsumi received a response from her older sister.

It says, *'The password is Katsumi and Kento's birth year'*. And when she told Kento about it, he replied,

"Oh, 1997." He enters the password, and the door and lights open automatically.

They discovered a room filled with various weapons inside. Every nook and cranny in the room was decorated—big, long, short, famous, weak, strong.

They hadn't seen the sight of weapons in a long time, and the fact that they could continue practicing to perfect their skills excited them.

"Ne, Kento, let's try out these guns," Katsumi suggested as she grinned and walked deeper into the room to select a lovely firearm to test out.

Rosequarts C.

She picked up an IMI desert eagle and scanned the gun for any damage before walking out of the room and seeing Kento pick up his preferred weapon, the Uzi.

Katsumi arranged the weapon, put on a headset to muffle the noises, and slipped on some gloves before taking a deep breath and pointing the gun at the target in front of her, which hit the bullseye perfectly.

"I see your shooting skills aren't rusty," Kento complimented as he prepared his practice alongside the girl.

"Do you reckon yours is the same?" she inquired.

Kento pulled on the gloves with a sneer, "Watch me," and in the blink of an eye, he was able to shoot repeatedly, perfectly in the middle, until he ran out of ammunition.

"Not bad, *show off*."

In disbelief, he sneered. "Jealous?"

"No." She shook her head. "But competitive? Absolutely."

"The loser gets to buy dinner."

"Bring it on."

Like a game of basketball in the arcade, their gun competition began until a winner was determined.

Their practice continued the next day, and they also trained for combat at a taekwondo center. They trained nonstop, day and night.

The thought of Kosuke kept their motivation flaming, and the thought of beating the guy was like a coal that fueled the fire.

When Monday arrived, they were forced to halt their training for their classes. Today was also a special day; it marked the beginning of their preparations for the founding anniversary event.

Everyone arrived with a cheerful demeanor, eager to work their magic in their now-empty classroom. They were all so thankful for

receiving a huge amount of space for their booth and got much more ecstatic when they saw it in person.

Each member brought different materials, and half of them began by building their mini-kitchen while following their interior design plan.

They split the classroom with a metal pole and utilized one-third for the kitchen. They draped a curtain over that pole to conceal the kitchen from the customers.

The space provided was sufficient to accommodate the refrigerator, tables, ingredients, utensils, and other appliances.

The other half was making the posters, the menu board, and the menu booklet for the customers on the laptop. They even brought a variety of papers as well as a printer to utilize after they were completed.

In the midst of their job, Katsumi received a phone call. She shifts her gaze to her phone on the floor, expecting a call from her older sister, but instead receives a call from an unknown number.

Regardless, she still answered it.

"Hello?"

"How have you been, Tsumi?"

In an instant, Katsumi recognized the owner of that deep voice. She was too stunned to move as her heart sank and her eyes widened, horrified.

"How did you get my phone number?" She yelled a little too loudly, drawing the attention of the others. Realizing what she had done, she gave an awkward smile and excused herself.

"Did I surprise you?"

"How did you get my phone number?" Katsumi demanded. She'd changed everything since arriving in Seoul, including her phone num-

Rosequarts C.

ber, so receiving a call from the person she least expected to call her was unexpected.

"I have my ways," he snickered softly.

"You're planning something, aren't you? You never called me before."

"I just wanted to check in on how my lovely Tsumi is doing in Seoul without informing me," Kosuke retorted angrily.

When he found out Katsumi was in Seoul to pursue her dreams as a fashion designer, he was livid because he felt she had fled her sins and responsibilities, which was an affront to him and, more crucially, to his long-lost older brother.

"What I do in my personal life doesn't concern you." Kosuke clicked his tongue in annoyance, and Katsumi overheard it. "Don't ever call me again."

She was going to remove her phone when she heard Kosuke chuckle sinisterly. If that's how he avoids Katsumi from hanging up, it worked, and her attention was fully focused on him, alarmed.

"What?" she queried irritably.

"It's nothing. Have fun with your booth, Tsumi."

Her eyes widened in fear. "Wait, how did you—" **beeb** and the line ended.

Katsumi's eyes were filled with fear as she questioned herself, *How did Kosuke know about the booth? Has he arrived in Seoul? Was he with them on the school campus? He's not spying on her, is he?*

She instinctively looked around nervously. For her own safety, she must be more aware of her surroundings from now on. After all, *she* is who Kosuke is after.

The sound of the door suddenly sliding open behind her made her flinch, and seeing Katsumi act so surprised took Namjoon aback.

He was aware that his friend was upset by someone, but he didn't anticipate it to frighten her to this extent.

"Is everything okay?" He inquired, concerned.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine!" Katsumi gave a forced smile, which Namjoon immediately detected.

"Are you sure?" He inquired again, a tender expression on his face, assuring her secret was safe with him. But Katsumi didn't have the courage to tell him because doing so would expose her whole existence—as *Katsumi Arioka*—to being a forgery.

Kosuke derives pleasure from Katsumi's suffering; he doesn't mind tormenting those close to her—her loved ones, even her friends—as long as it's her weakness that causes her agony; it doesn't matter to him.

Regardless, her friends had to know, even at least one of them. She inhaled deeply before confronting him. "I need to speak with you later; are you available?"

"Yeah, about what, though?"

"It's time for you to know the truth."

"And, what is that?" She took another breath in and shakily huffed out, gaining all the fortitude she could muster as she attempted to look Namjoon straight in the eyes.

"About my actual identity."

Namjoon appeared astonished, but he tried to look serious in this type of situation and responded with a nod and a smile.



SWIMMING IN PROBLEMS

[12:02 p.m.]

The bell sounds, signaling the start of their lunch break. It was time to confront Namjoon with the truth. Katsumi nervously closes her locker door after grabbing her wallet from within with a huff.

When she closed it, Namjoon appeared alongside her, causing her to jump and gasp in surprise at his unexpected appearance.

"I'm here; what's the secret?" he stated.

"Uhm, can we eat first?" she inquired.

"Yeah, sure. No problem."

As the boy spoke, a middle-aged man in a suit with tattoos on his neck emerged from a corner, and Katsumi couldn't take her gaze away from him.

From the looks of it, he appeared to look like a visitor roaming about searching for someone.

Katsumi was scanning the man from head to toe when she discovered a ring on his right thumb. She recognized the man right away because of the ring he was wearing.

The Yoshida clan wore a ring that was not like any other ring. It was composed of black onyx crystal and had their blood embellished around the ring with a little black opal crystal in the center.

But why was one of Kosuke's men at San-Ib High School with no sign of Kosuke himself?

"Katsumi? Are you paying attention?" Namjoon said as he waved his hand gently in front of her face to capture her attention.

But when he blurted out her name, the man in the suit heard it and was now looking in their direction. Their eyes met one another, which sent her panicking.

Namjoon noticed her horrifying expression and turned his head to see what was causing her to react like that, but Katsumi pulled him back to face her.

She is certain that if the man sees Namjoon's face, he will report the youngster to his master, which will be disastrous.

"Is everything okay, Katsumi?"

"L-let's talk somewhere else."

She urged as she pulled Namjoon's arm to escape from the man who was approaching them. But just as she turned, there she saw another of Kosuke's men. The man noticed her, and worse, he noticed Namjoon.

"Shit," she cursed as she rushed through a nearby door into a room that appeared to be extra lockers for the varsity teams.

Lucky for Katsumi, the room had two entrances and exits. If they go the other way, they'll run into Kosuke's men. And since there were two doors available, they could fake their escape and hide in one of the lockers.

Rosequarts C.

"Katsumi, who were those guys? Do you recognize them?" Namjoon inquired. The boy was quick to recognize the source of Katsumi's tension, and it made it easier for her to explain.

"I'll elaborate later. Right now, we should find a way to hide from those two."

She hastily looked around and discovered Kento's name written in Hangul on one of the lockers; she had forgotten her brother was a member of the basketball team as the waterboy and the bench player in case one of the team players were ill.

Quickly, she pulled on the handle, but it required a password to unlock the locker. She didn't have much time to ponder, so she entered whatever came to mind—their birthday date. If it didn't work, she'd have to fall back on Plan B. That is, either fight back or escape through the other door.

Fortunately, the locker was unlocked, and she hurriedly pushed Namjoon inside before entering and closing the door. The locker was large enough for them both to fit inside and move their arms around.

They both stayed as quiet as possible, not letting any breathing sounds be heard.

"Katsumi—" Namjoon softly called, and she turned her head behind, finding the boy's chin near hers. His chin was soft, and she could smell the scent of his cologne, which smelled like temptation. She took a delicate swallow. How could someone's neck seem to be so kissable?

She rapidly dismissed the thought. It wasn't the time to be seduced when they were in a situation of life and death. She laid her index finger on her lips as she softly whispered, "Do not talk."

He nodded slowly; his anxious gaze fixed on Katsumi as she shifted her gaze to the two men who had already entered the room.

"Have you found them yet?" They conversed in Japanese.

"I lost sight of her, but that girl was definitely Yamaguchi's daughter, right?"

"Yes, no doubt she's the one we're looking for."

"Contact the young master."

In the midst of all of this, Namjoon leaned forward to get a better look at what was going on. His face went even closer to Katsumi's, and he almost felt their cheeks touch.

It was a simple but effective technique; she could hear her heart-beat racing at breakneck pace, and it seemed like it was about to burst at any moment.

She focused her attention back on the men in suits as she breathed in and out, trying hard to suppress her emotions.

"Hello, young master? It's me. We saw Yamaguchi's daughter, but she quickly vanished. We sincerely apologize. She saw us and was quick enough to flee, and there's a 99% probability she knows we're looking for her," one of the men mentioned. "Yes. Okay. Yes, I understand. Yes, sir."

"How did the young master respond?"

"Return to your hotel and try again tomorrow. The young master will arrive tonight or tomorrow morning at Incheon Airport."

"Understood."

As they walked out of the room, they abandoned their task exactly as their master had instructed. When the danger has passed, Katsumi lets out a long huff of relief.

"That was close," she said, relieved.

"Who were they, and why are we even hiding from them?" Namjoon inquired, sending shivers up her spine as she debated whether or not she should tell him the truth.

Rosequarts C.

She was terrified that if she told him or any of her pals, their friendship would end right there and then.

"Katsumi?"

She softly sighed, "I'm-I'm sorry, Namjoon. I'll tell you next time."

"O-okay then..."

There was a brief moment of stillness before Katsumi tried to shove open the locker, but it was locked, and they were trapped inside.

"The door won't budge; I'll message Kento to help."

Namjoon nodded as Katsumi took out her phone. She messaged Kento in Japanese so Namjoon wouldn't understand what she was typing. Because asking for help isn't the only information she was informing him about.

With the ask for help, she explained why they were stuck inside his locker about Kosuke's men chasing after them.

"All we have to do now is wait for Kento to arrive," Katsumi said, putting her phone back in her pocket.

Anxiety seeped further into her heart as she waited. According to what she's heard, Kosuke will be arriving tomorrow, and the guy is aware of her booth.

Furthermore, one of Kosuke's men witnessed her flee with Namjoon. He'll undoubtedly know by then that she has made new friends, which he may exploit as a weakness to bring her down.

Finally, there is a chance that Kosuke will hurt her friends in order to see her suffer. Or, much worse, murder them. Which she does not want to happen and *must* avoid.

But she could only think of one way to safeguard her friends: she had to cut relations with them. It'll hurt them for sure, especially herself. However, that was the only safe solution she could think of for them to survive.

"I'm sorry."

"What are you apologizing for?"

"Just... I'm sorry."

"It's all right. We'll leave sooner; no need to apologize."

That's not it, she reasoned in her mind.

Katsumi kept her head low, unable to establish eye contact due to the intense guilt she felt. Tears were gathering, but she fought to push them back. Who knew her friendship would end sooner than expected?

Just then, they heard Kento's voice as he entered the room and typed in the password for his locker.

"I'm sorry," she said abruptly. "Goodbye."

She dashed out as soon as the locker door opened, tears streaming down her cheeks. It had been years since Katsumi had cried like this, feeling the pain caused by her guilt.

Kento was taken aback when she caught sight of her wet cheeks as she hurried out. He returned his gaze to the locker and saw Namjoon, still stunned.

He was aware of Kosuke's men but was unaware of the reason for her tears.

"Are you alright, bro?" Kento inquired.

"Yeah," he responded with a soft nod as he stepped out of the locker, clearly concerned for Katsumi.

Kento sensed something else had happened for his sister to react like that, and he had a horrible feeling about it after seeing the boy's reaction.



MISSION: SAVE FRIENDS

The bell rang, and all of the pupils returned to their classrooms to finish off their booth preparations. Katsumi was inside Principal Emi's office, explaining her dilemma and what had transpired during lunch.

She had advised that the group leader for the booth preparation be Yoongi, the manager of Moonbucks Café, and excluded herself from joining in.

She was also informed of her decision to eventually expose her identity to her friends and explain who she is and her family background.

Emi, the principal, glanced up at her with concern. "Are you certain about your decision, Katsumi?" she inquired.

Katsumi bowed her head; her gaze fixed on the floor. "I've come to a final decision after contemplating for a while," she nodded, "and I'm sure of it."

It was the best she could think of and the correct thing she could do. She had to explain what was going on to them, even if there was a possibility of losing them forever. But the most important point right now is the safety of her loved ones.

Principal Emi sighed softly. "I understand," she remarked, adding, "and please be careful."

"Thank you, Auntie," Katsumi said as she bowed and walked away, apprehensive. It was time for her to consult with her friends and potentially cut ties with them for good. Her heart beats quickly, dreading every step she takes towards the classroom.

She comes to a halt just meters away from the classroom, contemplating: Was this really the correct thing to do?

Kento leaned patiently against the wall, waiting for his sister. He was told by her about the plan she planned to do after lunch. It was tough to decide, but seeing Katsumi shake in dread and appear as if everything was okay broke his heart.

"Katsumi," he softly called, and she gave a dejected smile.

"I'll be fine," she pretended.

"Nevertheless, I'll be here with you."

For a brief moment, Katsumi felt a rush of relief. Being told she wasn't alone at something she felt she was doing alone was very comforting for her.

"Thank you," she murmured, taking a deep breath before entering the classroom to find her friends continuing the process of decorating their booth.

When she saw them face-to-face, the anxiety returned, and she became increasingly nervous.

"Katsumi! Jackson, and I decided to bring the appliances two days after the event to avoid them getting stolen," Seokjin informed her.

Katsumi was so concentrated on her task that the unexpected interaction caught her off guard. Nayeon became aware of this and approached her gently.

"Are you okay?" She inquired, and Katsumi nodded in response.

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"There's something important I have to discuss with you all, and it's not about the event."

The members gathered in front of her one by one, eager to lend an ear and listen to what she had to say, and Katsumi gained a lot of bravery in the process.

"I have lied to you all about my identity. My surname isn't Arioka; instead, it's Yamaguchi. Yamaguchi Katsumi." All eyes widened and brows rose as she continued, "I've been fabricating my existence since the moment I arrived in Seoul to protect my identity as the daughter of the Yamaguchi Yakuza clan." She pauses. "Kento here is my twin brother, and we've both decided to open up about it."

"Why tell us now?" Namjoon questioned.

"My adversary's name is Kosuke Yoshida of the Yoshida Yakuza clan. Both of our families aren't on good terms, and I've been his target since the end of grade school, when the eldest son of the clan died. He has attempted to kill me but failed multiple times. I lived, and he's unhappy about that. So now that he finds out that I've relocated to another country to pursue my dreams, he's livid. His main goal is to murder me, and he'd go to *any* length to hurt the people I care about, including my friends. That is why I am exposing myself to protect you all."

"Wait, wait, wait," Yoongi exclaimed, perplexed. "You mean, *our lives* are in danger and we could get *killed*?"

"There's a possibility for that to happen, but Kento and I will be here to protect you." Kento responded.

"However, in order for me to protect you guys, I have decided to cut ties with you all and end our friendship." They were all dejected, and Katsumi felt her heart ache slightly as she saw their sorrowful expressions.

She was relieved that there was still a chance that they cared about her and their friendship. If there was another method to keep her friends safe, she would have gone with that plan, but since there wasn't, this was the best she could come up with.

"Will you come back?" Nayeon inquired, her voice gloomy.

Katsumi grinned. "Of course, this is merely a temporary situation. I'll be back after the fight with Kosuke is over."

"You say that as if Kento won't be joining you," Jackson pointed out.

Kento stated that because Kosuke is after Katsumi, she would most likely be doing all of the work, and that while she fights their adversary, he will stay here with her loved ones to keep an eye on them and guard them in case the man does attack them.

They nodded in response after comprehending the situation that had been brought to them. It was a lot to take in because they had previously been doing student things but were now involved in something dangerous.

Katsumi sincerely apologized for the mayhem she had caused and vowed that she and Kento would do all in their power to protect them from Kosuke and the Yoshida clan.

She proceeded with her plan and what she had decided to do for the remainder of the week. First and foremost, she will contact her parents about the news of their adversary.

Then, while she waits for their response, it is preferable for her to stay at home instead of attending school in order to avoid the people she cares about.

Whatever plan her parents suggest, she will follow it without inquiry or complaint. She would gladly return to Japan if she had to.

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That being said, the following day, Katsumi was resting on the couch, watching movies on television. She had sent the news to her parents, who advised her that she should remain at home while they booked a trip for the next day.

They'll arrive in the evening after packing everything and organizing their paperwork before flying to Seoul.

Today was a Saturday, so she expected her friends to be secure at their own homes when Kento unexpectedly entered her apartment unit. Her interest peaked when she observed him dressed casually. "Where are you going in that outfit?" she inquired.

"School."

"School?" she repeated, surprised. "It's a Saturday; why are you going to school on a Saturday?"

"They have decided to continue on with the decoration for the booth. It's better to finish with the interior of the café so that we can prepare the ingredients, utensils, kitchen gadgets, and all that." He then notices the worry expression on his sister's face as he adds, "Everything alright?"

She told him about the conversation she overheard while she was locked inside the locker the day before. Her main concern was that Kosuke would be arriving in Seoul today.

He was aware of the booth they were setting up; he was aware of the school she attended, and so she suspected her adversary was aware of which classroom her booth would be in and who was assisting them.

"On second thought, I should go with you just in case Kosuke visits the school—" she said, standing up but being promptly shoved back to the couch by her twin.

"No, no, no, you stay here while I go. If Kosuke sees you, there's no doubt you two will start a bloody brawl in the classroom."

"That might be true, but—"

"No buts," he argued as he sat on the couch near her. "I'll go alone, and if he does end up visiting the school, I'll be there to protect them."

Katsumi let out a huge sigh of distress. She wasn't sure of the plan, and with those possibilities on the table, she was terrified of what her adversary would do to her innocent companions.

Kento softly placed his hand on Katsumi's shoulder, causing her to gaze up at him. She noticed him giving her a consoling glance.

"Do you trust me?"

"I do," she groaned, "but—."

"You do, period. End of discussion," he interrupted her, and his twin gave her a serious look that elicited a sigh from him. "Keep in mind that you are not alone in this, Katsumi. I'm always here for you, so depend on me a little. Trust me."

The sincere look on Kento's face caught her off guard. She had always assumed that because Kosuke was after her, she was responsible for everything and had to protect her loved ones by herself, forgetting that there were others in this with her, such as her twin and sister.

She took a long breath and nodded her head in agreement before making her final decision. "Alright, I'll entrust you with them."

Her words made Kento smile, and they filled him with determination. He rose up with a content huff and said, "I'll get going; there's leftover pizza from yesterday's dinner in your fridge that I left; you can eat that for lunch."

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Katsumi nodded and murmured, "Thanks," before the youngster exited the apartment, leaving his twin alone. Despite this, she couldn't help but be concerned about the future.

Knowing her adversary, she had a hunch things would not go as smoothly as Kento had hoped.

24

UNWANTED THREAT ARRIVAL

As promised, Kento came to school on a Saturday with the rest of his friends to continue working on the booth. Their team had obtained permission from the principal to continue working on their booth on weekends.

Even without Katsumi's assistance, they were confident they could do the rest by today without complications. He rode in Nam-joon's car with Yoongi as the driver parked in front of the school gate.

As he walked into the classroom, he noticed that his friends were already there, working on the booth.

They smiled as he closed the door, and he began assisting with the decorations. To expedite their labor, each individual performed a distinct task.

Those who were talented at drawing were allocated to make the posters and menu design; those designated as cooks were tasked with the kitchen; and the remainder were tasked with making DIY decorations for their café's interior design.

And, because of their teamwork and hard work, they were able to finish decorating the café in approximately 5 hours or less. They all

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stood near the door, admiring their work from a distance, and were pleased with what they observed.

It was impressive that they completed their work in such a short period of time. Which leaves them enough time to prepare their meal and kitchen supplies for their own mini-kitchen.

"Now all we have to take care of are the menus and the actual food preparation," Seokjin went on to say.

They all agreed as they began cleaning up the mess they had made, leaving no bits and pieces of paper behind, making the floor pristine in the blink of an eye.

After cleaning the floor, Kento dusted his hands together and proposed, "Let's eat our lunch."

Nayeon enthusiastically put her hands together. "Oh! I know a pizza place near campus where we can have lunch!", and everyone agreed on the idea.

They returned the cleaning mops to their original location before proceeding to the aforementioned pizza parlor, where they all enjoyed their plates of pizza.

[2:00p.m.]

Kosuke had arrived moments before and was now on his way to the school where his adversary was enrolled. The ride was smooth, there was no traffic, and he arrived just a few minutes before his scheduled arrival time.

As he stood in front of the school gate, he smirked smugly at the building in front of him, his heart pumping with anticipation of seeing the expressions on his adversaries faces.

Because of his men, who were here the day before, the man was able to walk around the hallways with ease, as if he owned the place.

Therefore, he was able to get to the classroom where Katsumi was doing her booth. He paused in front of the room and looked up, reading the number on the door, which read 103.

He carefully opened the door and found no one there. Although he expected to see the students inside, he remembered it was afternoon and they might have gone out for lunch.

"Should we come back another time, young master?" inquired one of his men.

Kosuke shook his head and replied, "No, I'll wait," and the men obeyed his commands and stood beside the entrance door, inside the room, with him.

Minutes later, the friends returned to the classroom, laughing and chatting joyfully inside. Their conversations were cut short as they noticed two large men guarding the entrance to the cooking area.

They were perplexed, but the fear did not prevent them from backing away. Jackson shielded Nayeon, the one in front of the group, with his arm behind him.

"Who are you, sir?" he inquired cautiously.

The man stood motionless, his back straight and his gaze fixed. Kento observed the ring on their finger and recognized them right away.

Just then, Kosuke emerged from the kitchen and said, "My apologies; we came to visit this booth a little earlier than expected."

Kento became more wary in front of his companions as Katsumi informed him: their enemy had planned to visit them in Seoul, but he had not anticipated them to come this early.

Kosuke chuckled at what Kento had done, knowing the child wasn't happy to see him, especially not in another nation where they had flown to enjoy a change of their new life.

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The remainder of the members observed what happened and were perplexed by what they did.

"Long time no see, Kento," Kosuke said in Japanese, and the pals were taken aback that the mysterious individual recognized the child.

Namjoon had an excellent understanding of who he was after connecting the connections. "Kosuke Yoshida?" he blurted out, and the name's owner snickered in surprise.

"Did you and Tsumi speak about me?" he then pouts sarcastically. "I'm flattered."

"What are you doing here?" Kento replied sternly in Japanese, and despite the fact that his friends couldn't comprehend a word he was saying, they realized the man in front of them was someone dangerous.

Yoongi, their only buddy who understood their language, took notes on what they were saying. So, at the end, he was able to assist the others in translating them.

"Am I not welcome here?"

"No, not one bit," he said softly, shaking his head. "Get out and go back to Japan."

Kosuke laughed at his adversary's rough demeanor. "Sorry, I can't do that," he replied, his gaze shifting to those who were behind Kento.

Nayeon averted her gaze as she noticed they had made eye contact. Jackson scowled back at the man, blocking his gaze with a brave expression.

Kosuke walked around the classroom as he huffed shakily in upset. "I see you both made friends," he added while he approached the window beside him to gaze out the window, Kento trailing after him, making sure his pals were secure behind him.

"You came to Korea, abandoned me, and made friends. Live your lives as if you haven't committed a major transgression against the Yoshida family, especially your sister." As he spoke, the others made the wise decision to take steps back, ready to flee if the man wanted to attack them because he exuded the caution that they were concerned about.

"Speaking of Tsumi, where is she?" he asks, looking at Kento, who is scowling at him menacingly.

"What makes you want to know? She's none of your business."

In disbelief, he snickered. "It's none of my business?" Still in disbelief, his scoff escalated into a snicker. "You say it's none of my business?" His snicker turned into a chuckle.

"Of course she's my concern!" He exclaimed. "Don't forget, she's the one who ruined my older brother's life! And now she's left for another country, just to what? Live a new life. Continue her education? Follow her dreams?" He laughed in amazement. "Don't make me laugh!" he cried.

Kento was surprised by what he had heard; he and his family had never known the reason for the Yoshida's clan's sudden rebellion, and hearing such an accusation perplexed him tremendously.

Was that the root cause of their sudden change of heart? And if it was, what did Katsumi do to the Yoshida clan, from Kosuke's statements, to the Yoshida family's eldest son, that incensed them enough to cut relations and declare war on their family?

"Well, I'm sure she's not coming, so leave," he stated flatly.

"I'm not going anywhere. I always get what I desire, Kento. Even if it means killing those in the way." Suddenly, he pulls a weapon from his blazer and points the gun at the youngster, who remains unmoved.

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Nayeon's screech drew Kosuke's attention, as did faint gasps from his friends. "But first, I'd have to kill your friends." He was about to point and pull the trigger on the woman when Kento kicked the gun out of his hand, sending it flying out the window and destroying it.

He then landed a strong blow on him, but Kosuke deflected it and struck him in the stomach before shoving him away. Jackson caught the man as he and the others assisted him in getting to his feet.

"You think you can beat me? Go ahead," he threatened, and their fist fight began shortly, one on one, but Kosuke was a crafty man who didn't follow the rules.

While he was fighting his opponent, the men of the Yoshida clan attacked his buddies, who fled, only to be greeted by a couple more of Kosuke's men waiting outside.

25

FAMILY INTRODUCTION

Katsumi lay down on her couch on a Saturday afternoon after spending the early afternoon in the living room watching more movies.

While she was watching, her phone received a call from Namjoon. "Hello?" she responded as she answered the phone.

"Katsumi, we urgently need your assistance!" He remarked in a frightened tone, and you could hear the panicked voices of the others yelling all over the phone. These sounds had her entire attention, and she was becoming concerned.

"Kosuke is here, and he's beating up Kento," he added, and Katsumi instantly rose up and switched off the television.

"I'll be there as soon as I can!" She replied as she dashed to the secret compartment to retrieve a weapon before entering the school grounds.

On her way, she heard Kento threaten someone before the call cut out. Things were getting out of hand, and there was a chance Kosuke had already harmed her friends and brother.

She hurries her pace, and after obtaining a weapon, she gets her car keys and drives to school. The gun was vital to bring; after all,

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Kastumi knew his adversary well enough to know he wouldn't arrive alone and would almost certainly call for backup.

It was fortunate that there was no traffic on the way, and she arrived in a few minutes less than the regular time.

She parks her vehicle in front of the gate, locks it securely, and dashes into their classroom, where their booth is allotted.

She swiftly opened the door and entered the cluttered room. All of the wall decorations, as well as the curtains from the kitchen area, had gunshot holes in them.

Worse, she noticed blood streaks heading to the entrance on the floor near the window. Her spine tingled as she imagined the worst-case scenario.

"No, it can't be," she whispered shakily as she dashed out of the classroom, following the trail of blood splattered on the corridor floors in search of their locations.

The track took her to the gym entrance, which she entered without hesitation but found empty, with no one in sight.

She was going to continue walking when she noticed a man emerge from behind the large red drapes, smugly staring at the woman.

"Well done; you managed to find me, Tsumi."

Despite standing meters away from the platform, Katsumi recognized the guy based on his hair color, body proportions, voice, and height, and seeing him made her blood boil with rage.

"Kosuke," she growled softly, her voice hushed in wrath as the man flashed her a sneaky look that irritated her even more.

"How have you been?"

"Quit the act and tell me where Kento is," Katsumi replied sternly, while the man giggled.

"Is Kento the only one you're looking for?"

Katsumi didn't want Kosuke to know she had friends because she knew he'd target them to make her and them suffer.

"Of course," she lied, and the man chuckled, as if he found what she said hilarious.

"*Ann*, Tsumi is acting as if she has no friends! How adorable!" The man teasingly said it in a mocking manner. She realized there was no use in lying any longer, and her purpose to protect her companions had failed at that point.

Kosuke scowled as his voice grew deeper. "Chinen, bring them out," he demanded as his soldiers pulled them through the curtain.

They couldn't speak because a cloth was put around their mouths, except for Kento, and their hands were tied behind their backs. The sight of her twin brother, who had been shot, surprised her the most.

"Kento..." her whisper echoed across the gym hall as the boy grinned weakly with anguish written all over his eyes.

"I-i'm sorry...I did my best—" Kento's remarks were cut off when Kosuke shoved him to the ground and stepped on his injured abdomen.

His agonizing grunt echoed down the hall, while others watching wailed through the fabric covering their mouths. Kosuke laughed. "Your best wasn't good enough, was it?"

Katsumi fired a shot at him, but the youngster deflected the bullet from her aim. He gave her a menacing stare, but he wasn't upset; he was impressed that she was able to shoot her after all these years of resisting to attack him.

"See, you can attack if you want to."

"Let them go!" she shouted emphatically. "Who you want isn't them; it's me!"

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"Where is the fun in that? The show is just getting started."

"What do you mean?" Katsumi inquired, perplexed.

Kosuke looked at one of his men and nodded, signaling that he was ready to begin the plan. Then, as one of the minions moved, around twenty other guys followed him and gathered around the woman.

Katsumi remained in place, watching every man who gathered around her, cautious of what their next move would be.

"Now, the six of you, please enjoy the show," Kosuke said in Korean for the others to understand, as he then whispered. "Let's see if she really improved," he said while glaring at his rival.

The minions all pointed their guns at her at that moment, startling the others, but Katsumi remained cool and serene. She was not going to let down her guard.

"Are you ready to die, Missy?" Smugly asked one of Kosuke's minions.

"I should be asking that question."

Hearing her overconfident response irritated the man, prompting him to act inappropriately and shoot his revolver. Katsumi avoided the gunshot, which struck one of them across from the attacker.

Bullets after bullets after bullets were shot at her, but she mysteriously managed to dodge every single one of them while also attacking the attacker physically and with her rifle.

They were being slain one by one, and she was surviving the onslaught of Kosuke's men thanks to her past training.

She took her time standing up after the strike, catching her breath, and looking triumphantly at her enemy. Again, Kosuke didn't seem disturbed but rather astonished by her ability to sustain such an onslaught.

Her friends were surprised to see her still alive in the midst of something that would have killed them, and their hearts beat in dread and relief.

Kosuke's solo round of applause resonated through the gym hall as he smiled. "What an improvement," he quipped. "I never thought you'd kill twenty of my men so effortlessly."

She then pointed the gun at him and said, "And you're next." As she was about to fire the gun, Kosuke swiftly took out an arrow gun and shot up to the second-floor balcony near the window as he flew towards it.

Katsumi was surprised by the unexpected action and smiled and winked teasingly, "Until the next time we meet."

She rapidly shot her gun at him, but he escaped the premises and her attack. She clicked her tongue in annoyance.

The yells of her companions drew her attention, and she turned to see what was going on, only to discover Kento looking pale as he lay down on the stage floor.

Katsumi promptly approached him and undid the rope that was wrapped around his wrist and lips. She then assisted him in sitting up by supporting his back with her arms.

"Get a grip on yourself!" She expressed concern, which got a giggle from the man.

"D-don't worry... I'm not dead."

"You better not be!"

"Shut up. Get them out," he managed to say through the anguish in his abdomen, and Katsumi obliged, removing the rope and cloth from her friends, beginning with Jackson.

"We should take him to the hospital!" he exclaimed when he could talk again.

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Kento shook his head and said, "N-no, don't. I don't want to."

"What are you talking about? You're hurt! You got shot!" Seokjin exclaimed worriedly.

"T-this is nothing," he murmured after Katsumi had untied everyone.

"Bring him over to my unit," she suggested.

"And leave him all in pain?" Nayeon asked, surprised. Kento rose up, panting heavily, agreeing with her sister's request.

Although the buddies were hesitant, they didn't want Kento to be in too much suffering. They reasoned that he might not want to go to the hospital because of their family's background.

And so, without further ado, Jackson carried Kento all the way to the twin's car, and Katsumi drove them all back to their apartment complex.

When they arrived at Katsumi's apartment, they placed Kento on the couch while the cat jumped on and sat near him.

"Please take a seat; snacks and beverages are available in the refrigerator and kitchen drawers if you want something. I'll just get the medicine kit," Katsumi remarked as she moved up to her room, but she was stopped by Kento, who had her wrist in his grip.

"I'll go; you stay here and accompany them."

"But—,"

"I'll be fine," he assured her before walking up to her room while ignoring the agony. Katsumi gave her companions her undivided attention once Kento had completely exited the living room.

She assessed everyone's health to see if they had any wounds and showered them with food and beverages to help them cope with the trauma Kosuke had put them through.

Fortunately, no one was seriously wounded. However, marks on their wrists remained apparent from being forcibly gripped, presumably by Kosuke's men.

Katsumi apologized several times as she applied an ice pack to their bruises and left them for a few minutes.

Minutes passed, then hours, and the friends were deep into a serious talk when the doorbell rang, drawing their attention. Katsumi cocked her head, perplexed as to who that may be. "Don't tell me it's that guy again!" exclaimed Nayeon.

They grew apprehensive and nervous when they realized this was a possibility. Kosuke might have followed them all the way to his adversary's apartment building discreetly.

Katsumi became wary as she considered all of the possibilities. She approached the front door lightly and glanced through the peephole. When she realized it wasn't Kosuke, she sighed in relief and smiled as she opened the door.

"Hey, I'm so glad you're all here," she said, relieved. "Come on in!" As she stepped aside to allow her parents and sister to enter, they noticed her pals seated on the living room couch.

They were all taken aback by the unexpected visitor, especially her friends. They stood up once in front of Katsumi's parents, instinctively.

"Oh, you have visitors?" her mother asked.

"These are my friends, Mom," she said, and everyone stood straight as they greeted her with a courteous bow. Because in front of them stood the Yamaguchi clan's leaders.

She approached them, smiling, making them all nervous; you can see the anxiousness in their eyes as she approaches them.

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She unexpectedly clasped Seokjin's hand in hers and smiled. "It's a pleasure to meet you all!" she said as she greeted them.

"It's nice to meet you, too, Ms. Yamaguchi," he said, returning her smile.

She was taken aback when she heard her surname named; she had forgotten Katsumi had told them about their situation, including her family background, which they had hidden for their twins' new existence.

"May I know your names?"

They bowed as they introduced themselves to her parents and sister, making certain that they utilize their words properly when introducing themselves.

It made the mother really happy to meet her daughter's friends, because this is the first time the twin's mother has ever met their friends other than Kosuke and Mariya, another friend of theirs from elementary school.

"Please sit down," she said as she sat down on a little couch next to them, and Katsumi sat down next to her friends, next to her mother, as they sat with their back's rigid in anxiety.

"I apologize that you all had to experience something horrible; none of you got hurt."

"Fortunately, we're all fine," he reassured. "However, Kento is badly hurt."

"Kento?" the father inquired rather calmly. "Where is he now?"

"He's upstairs in my room, cleaning and healing his wound," Katsumi said.

"I'll go see how he's doing," remarked Kazuha.

"Thank you, sweetie."

"Continuing on," she took a deep breath in. "Since Kosuke met your friends, there is a possibility he will lie to his parents about your friends being new members of the Yamaguchi clan, which means..." she paused, preparing herself to tell them the truth.

"Which means my friends are also in danger?" Katsumi finished the sentence.

Her mother gave her a nod. "Precisely."

Her buddies returned her stare with a frightened expression. It was natural for them to be scared, especially since their lives were on the line.

"For sure, the Yoshida Clan will not stop until they get the so-called *"justice"* that they've been seeking," Father added. "While you're used to danger, your friends aren't."

"So, what should we do?" Katsumi inquired, distressed. She is constantly trying to find a solution to protect her friends, but now that she realizes how horrible it is for them to be embroiled in her family's conflict, she is stuck and begins to panic slightly.

"The only solution your father and I thought of was to train them for whatever battle may come in the future," she replied.

The companions' brows furrowed in surprise. "Train? Us?" Yoongi exclaimed incredulously.

He wasn't the sort to injure another human being, and now that they had to train to protect themselves, which meant he had to inflict pain on another person, he wasn't sure he could.

The mother looked at the boy and responded with a nod. "That's the only way you'll be able to defend yourself, sweetheart. The Yoshida clan shows no mercy for anyone who is friends with or close to a member of the Yamaguchi clan, especially our friends and cousins."

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Katsumi bowed her head and listened. It was the first time she had ever felt this frightened, and she was always nervous when it came to the people she cared about, and in this case, she was afraid that one of her friends would be hurt or wounded just like Kento did.

Her father spotted her ambiguous expression and approached her. "Katsumi..." She looked up, trying not to reveal her frailty to him. "Do you have faith in your friends?" He stared at her with such softness, and she nodded in response.

"I do."

That was all Namjoon needed to hear as he moved his gaze determinedly to her mother. "Then we'll do the training," he stated, causing Katsumi to jerk her head in astonishment.

Yoongi agreed with a nod. He still despised hurting people, but if it was for his own good, for self-defense, he wouldn't mind. "If that Kosuke guy comes back and hurts us, it's better to start training then," he went on to say.

Seokjin gave a nod. "That's correct. I don't want to be defeated by someone like him," he explained.

"What kind of training are we going to go through?" Nayeon inquired.

Jackson guessed, "I guess training with guns?"

Katsumi snickered at their eagerness to train, and just by looking at them, she was motivated to do the same, but most importantly, she felt a sense of relief.

She wasn't about to lose to someone like Kosuke. He betrayed her, mocked her, and caused harm to her brother and friends, for which she will never forgive him. Her chest quickly filled with determination.

If he wants to fight, then so be it.

26

HOME SWEET HOME

THEY were still having a conversation with Katsumi's parents in the living room.

"We have to return to Japan for the training. Is it alright with you?" Mother inquired.

Everyone was taken aback. They understood they needed to acquire the skills to protect themselves against the enemy, but they didn't expect to be trained in another country.

That alone caused a slew of issues: for one thing, Yoongi didn't have a passport, so he couldn't visit another nation even if he wanted to.

Furthermore, he didn't want to abandon his siblings because he was the only adult who could care for them and his sick mother.

Second, they couldn't leave without their family's knowledge or permission. If their family is not informed of the circumstances, it will be considered kidnapping.

Finally, there's school. That was quickly explained by Katsumi's parents, who told her friends that the principal is a Yamaguchi clan member. They will most likely get excused from class without jeopardizing their reputation with her assistance.

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They promptly devised solutions to the difficulties presented to them, and one by one, they were resolved.

Kazuha ran an orphanage and a foster home in Tokyo, so she jumped at the chance to assist Yoongi and his family. Both children and elderly people were no difficulty for someone who enjoys caring for others, such as the man's family.

Furthermore, she agreed to pay for everything—food, education, and any home necessities—needed to care for them, such as medicines, beds, and so on.

Concerning Yoongi's passport, they were in the process of creating one, and it would be ready by tomorrow before their trip.

Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi will explain their predicament to their parents individually and seek their approval.

They don't have to worry about food or a place to stay. They'll be staying at their mansion, which will provide them with lots of food and drinks for their daily nourishment as well as a bed to sleep on.

Of course, they will never leave them unattended and will do everything in their power to defend them from the adversary.

Kento appeared seconds later, his waist covered in bandages. He was still in pain, so he covered his wound with his hand.

Kazuha assisted him in descending the steps and addressed his mother.

"Oh, Kento! How are you doing, my dear?" She expressed concern in her tone.

"Never been better," he remarked sarcastically.

"Sit down; I'll check your wound."

He sat on the chair where his mother sat, as his mother had requested. She retrieved her doctor's supplies and examined Kento's heartbeat and wound.

She prepared him for treatment by tying his wrist with a rubber band and wiping his forearm with alcohol-soaked cotton before injecting him with a painkiller.

"So with that being said, we have to start the training sooner in case the Yoshida clan starts attacking early," the father stated as his mother soothed her kid. "Therefore, once you get back home, please pack your things, and we will leave tomorrow afternoon."

After treating her son, the mother and father returned them to their home. Kazuha accompanied Yoongi to explain the situation to his family, while Mr. Yamaguchi accompanied Nayeon and Jackson, and Namjoon and Seokjin were accompanied by Mrs. Yamaguchi.

[The Next Day]

Afternoon came in a blink of an eye, and Katsumi was taking her last luggage down in the living room, preparing her luggage to transport back to her home country.

She took a look around the room. She had made many memories in this living room, and just thinking about them made her feel a little nostalgic. But she assures herself that she will return. She will return after the struggle with the Yoshida clan, even if it takes a few years.

Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi, as well as Kazuha, were successful in convincing her friends' parents and explaining their position. Of course, they were worried throughout the procedure, and it was fair that they were concerned for their son and daughter.

However, because of Katsumi's parents and sister, they all agreed. If their lives were truly in danger, it would be better for their child to practice self-defense. It was also a great idea to be taught by someone who has spent their entire life training.

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The doorbell rang, and Kazuha and her pals were standing behind it. As they walked in, she greeted them. "Did you guys bring any luggage?" she inquired.

It perplexed her as to why they only carried a backpack or a sling bag with them, and she assumed it was all they would carry to Japan.

"No, of course not," Nayeon responded.

"We left our luggage in the car downstairs," Yoongi explained, and Katsumi nodded her head in response as they sat on the couch waiting for Kento.

Jackson looked around the unit for her parents but couldn't find them. "Where have your parents gone?" he inquired.

"They left first this morning. Mom will be preparing dinner for us, and Dad has to take care of business as usual."

When they overheard Katsumi talking about her father, it piqued their interest. They speculated that his job would be perilous and that he would be occupied all of the time as a result.

Katsumi laughed and nodded. "Yeah, ever since Kento and I came here to study in Seoul, Dad took up all of our jobs, keeping him busy every day."

Yoongi's interest grew even more. "Job?" he inquired. "What type of job did you do?"

Katsumi hesitated as she dropped her head, contemplating whether to answer them and speak the truth or not. Nayeon observed her hesitant expression and assumed that the question hurled at her was making her feel uneasy.

"You don't have to tell us if you don't want to, Katsumi," she said, eliciting a sigh and a shake of her head from the woman.

"I don't want to sugarcoat things and keep any secrets from you all." She paused for a moment and then continued, "I used to assas-

sinate people for a living. A target was assigned to me, and I had to kill that target before the day ended at night. I don't do it often, but I'm given the job at least three times a year."

There was a brief hush, and Katsumi felt she had terrified her friends with what she had said. It was not avoidable to be afraid of what she had done in the past.

No matter how you look at it, she was a murderer in the eyes of many people, and she can't change that. She couldn't look up at them any longer, so she kept her head down and stared at her thumbs whirling against each other.

"By now, I'm sure you're all terrified of what I did. I understand."

"Why would we hate you?" Nayeon said, her brows wrinkled.

Katsumi's head jerked up, noting how everyone was staring at her as she murmured, "Because of what I did...?"

"It's true; what you did is terrifying, and there are chances of our lives being at stake," Namjoon said, making Katsumi's head bow dejectedly. "However, I trust you. I believe that you won't cause harm or kill us." His words made her breathe a sigh of relief as she looked at him. "The past is the past, and you've shown us you're compassionate. Regardless, we'll love you for who you are."

Katsumi was moved by his words and couldn't help but giddily grin as Kento entered with his bags and dog, and Kazuha instantly approached the dog to pet her.

Once everyone was complete, they headed downstairs to the vehicle and were on their way to the airport. There was very little traffic in the middle of the road trip.

It was still early afternoon, and because they'll be flying early, they'll be able to arrive in time for dinner.

"Will there be enough rooms for us to stay in?" Yoongi wondered.

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"Definitely!" Kazuha said. "There are four open guest rooms; two are single and the others are double."

"I see..." he answered, nodding his head in response. Kazuha's statement made them question just how huge their mansion is. They estimate that having that many guest bedrooms will be quite large.

A couple minutes passed, and they had arrived at the airport. Kazuha assisted her siblings and their friends in removing their bags from the trunk.

She delegated one of her bodyguards to look after the vehicles as she escorted them to their private jet. But first, they had to get their flight tickets and load their bags into the plane.

With a huff, she looks at the kids. "All right, before we line up, do you have everything with you? Is there anything else in the car?" she inquired, and they began to examine their devices, passports, and other critical items they planned to bring with them to Japan.

They then checked their bags and obtained their tickets. Because of this, they had to wait a few moments for their bags to be safely stored on the private plane before Kazuha escorted them outside.

"Have a safe trip, kids!"

"Please take care, sis," Katsumi requested, and she nodded.

"I'll entrust you with my family, Ms." Yoongi stated.

"Of course, you can count on me."

Nayeon and Jackson were the first in line to climb the stairs to the entrance, while the others followed, with the twins being the last to enter.

As they settled in, two flight attendants and their pilots greeted them. Katsumi fixed her gaze on her sister from the window, who was watching the jet take off.

Her heart raced nervously upon seeing her being left alone. Kosuke was still in Seoul and might be aware of the scheme. He is a guy who knows everything about his adversary, so she thinks her feelings are valid.

She exhaled her anxiety and decided it would be better to relax on the flight. Turning to her right, she noticed Yoongi in a daze, his countenance troubled.

"Are you okay?" she inquired, which caught his attention. "You seem nervous there."

"A little," Yoongi answered with a hesitant chuckle. "It's my first time flying to another country and the first time I'm leaving my family behind," he huffs in distress. "I'm not sure if this decision I made is really the right one."

"I understand. But no matter what happens, Kazuha-sis will be there to safeguard your family." The soft tone of her voice helped reassure the boy as he flashed a little grin. "And I'm sure they'd want you to be safe if you were in danger. Therefore, your decision to train with us was the correct decision."

He nodded and averted his gaze. It was also the correct move to keep the threat away from his family. And so he felt relieved as well as confident about how things were going.

"Thank you, Katsumi."

She smiled and nodded softly. Yoongi then walked to the back of the plane to take a nap on the bed that had been made accessible to passengers after the seatbelt sign had been turned on.

Katsumi huffed as she watched the clouds out the window beside her while the flight attendants served their drinks and meals. She didn't order anything for herself and politely declined all offers of service.

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Namjoon was seated in front of her and noticed her fatigued expression as she looked out the window after denying any food. He placed his order and was given the chicken sandwich set, which he divided in half to give to Katsumi.

He was met with a shocked gaze from the woman.

"I know you haven't had breakfast yet, let alone lunch. So it's best to eat a little," he said.

"Thank you," was all she could say, still stunned by his kind gesture, before ordering two cans of juice and placing one alongside Namjoon's plate.

This time, her actions made him smile as they both continued to eat their lunch.

The flight took two hours and fifteen minutes till they arrived in Tokyo, Japan, where the twins' butler met them as they stepped out of the plane, and they were overjoyed to see him again, healthy and well.

"Welcome back, Katsumi-sama, Kento-sama."

Katsumi then introduced their butler to her friends, greeting each person with a respectful bow. Butler Murase led them to the helicopter after greeting them, sitting proudly beside them.

"Your mother is waiting for you," he added, motioning towards the flying vehicle.

"Helicopter? Why are we going by helicopter?" Seokjin inquired.

"It's the quickest way to get to the mansion without getting stuck in traffic, Seokjin-sama," he said as he unlocked the door for them to enter, helping them hop inside one by one as they were given a head-set.

"What about our luggage?" Nayeon asked.

"The Ramp Agents will take care of your luggage, and I will personally bring them to the mansion as well as the animals."

They said their goodbyes before the butler shut the helicopter door and the aircraft took off, traveling towards the Yamaguchi Clan's residence. And, as Butler Murase had indicated, flying was much faster, and they had arrived at the rooftop helipad.

Mrs. Yamaguchi waited until the propeller stopped before they emerged from inside the flying vehicle. With outstretched arms and a wide smile, she approached her kids and hugged them one by one.

"Welcome to the Yamaguchi household!" she exclaimed joyfully.

"It's a pleasure to be here, Mrs. Yamaguchi," Namjoon said, bowing as the others followed.

"There is no need to be so formal. Please call me Auntie; I insist," she said, and everyone complied with a smile. "Now, let's not waste any more time; you kids must be starving from the trip!"

Mother pushes them all towards the stairs as she escorts them to the dinner table. On the way, they marveled at the interior design of the mansion.

They knew the Yamaguchi Clan resided in a large mansion, but they didn't anticipate it to be so large on the inside; it felt like they were inside a hotel, which baffled them.

At the dining table, they were met with various Japanese dishes, which watered their mouths and grumbled their stomachs. They sat down and began the feast, everyone taking whatever they could fit on their plate.

Tempura, Yakitori, Tamago rolls, and Karaage, with a platter of various sashimi in the center. It looked divine, and they were all enjoying the cuisine.

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They didn't notice the passing of time because they were so engrossed in the food. It went by faster than imaginable, and an hour has already passed.

"When will we begin training, Mom?" Katsumi inquired.

"Ideally, by tomorrow. Today, please rest."

Butler Murase arrived from the airport seconds later, securely transporting their baggage and pets to the mansion. They finish their meal, and the twins accompany their companions to their room.

They entered the living room and noticed their bags had been placed there. The friends were getting nervous just thinking about carrying their big baggage up the stairs.

"Who says anything about stairwells?" Katsumi inquired, which perplexed them.

"How are we going to get to our rooms then?" Yoongi wondered.

"We use the elevator, of course," Kento said as he picked up his bags and proceeded towards the elevator, which was only a few steps away.

All were stunned. They realized immediately that the Yamaguchi clan wasn't simply wealthy; they were extremely wealthy. It was the first time they'd seen and rode in an elevator inside a mansion.

It did, however, make their journey to their allotted room much easier, and it relieved them that they didn't have to put their muscles to work.

Before heading to her room, Katsumi places her luggage in front of her bedroom door and prioritizes her friends first. She escorted them each to their rooms, which they had decided on during dinner.

The boys will sleep in couples, while Nayeon will have her own room. Given that there were only two double-bed guest rooms, it was a perfect fit.

The partners that have been chosen are Namjoon and Jackson, Seokjin, and Yoongi. Who is going to sleep on which side of the bed? The boys will figure it out on their own.

They each had their own closet, as well as their own television and mini-refrigerator in their room. However, the toilet and shower were located outside and were only available to guests.

Inside, they also have a telephone, which they can use to contact the head butler, head maid, and family members whenever they have a problem or require assistance.

Toiletries (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, and soap); Personal Care (shaving cream, razor, comb, and hair dryer); Tissue Box; House Slippers; Bathrobes/Towels; Pillows; and Blankets can be found in either the washroom or the bedroom.

Free gyms, food, drinks, Wi-Fi, and entertainment (such as gaming consoles, a mini-movie theater, and a mini-arcade room) are accessible in the mansion whenever they like.

It was truly like staying in a five-star hotel, and the best part is that they were permitted to remain in such an estate for free!

Despite these pleasures, they can't forget why they came to Japan in the first place. Their lives were in jeopardy, and their main purpose was to be trained for future battles with the enemy.

They were terrified, but they had no other choice. It's either live or die.



REUNION WITH A MISSION

KATSUMI huffed as she sat on her bed inside her bedroom after escorting her friends. Looking around, she was relieved to be back.

However, it wasn't time to relax. She unpacks her bags and puts all of her clothes, as well as other items she brought, back where they belonged.

The light streaming in through the window warmed the room. It was 6 p.m., but the sun was still shining brightly outside.

Just then, there was a loud knock on the door, followed by its opening, and Seokjin's head peered in as he called out her name.

Followed by Yoongi and Nayeon as they admired the place when they entered the room. The interior was larger than her bedroom in Seoul, and it astounded the youngsters.

Tonight, the twins decided to show their companions around the mansion so they wouldn't get lost looking for them. The house had many open and hidden chambers, so it was preferable if they understood every nook and cranny from top to bottom of the area they'd be staying in.

They began the tour once everyone had assembled inside her room, beginning with the ground floor. "This is the kitchen; usually

Kento and I take turns cooking dinner whenever mom and dad aren't around to cook for us," she said.

"You mean, I always get to cook dinner. You're always busy with the jobs sent to you," she said.

"Oi, I still cook for you."

"You rarely cook for me."

They proceeded to the living and dining rooms, and then to the backyard outside. The exterior of it surprised the boys as soon as they walked outdoors. The grandeur was breathtaking, and there was plenty to unpack.

"This is the backyard; this is where we might be doing some of our training." She went on to say, "If we have some time, we can play soccer, volleyball, or badminton on the field and maybe swim or have a barbecue party."

And they were already ecstatic, just thinking about all the activities they could do outside. They continued inside and worked their way from second to last on the list.

Down a long, dark corridor, they reached the mini-movie room, where they could watch all sorts of movies inside while being seated on a comfortable puffy chair.

They made their way to the gym on the second floor. They were free to exercise whenever they wanted. It was also part of their training to keep in great shape so that they wouldn't become fatigued when engaged in physical combat.

They will also find all of the bedrooms. Mr. and Mrs. Yamaguchi's bedroom, the guest bedroom, and the siblings' bedroom are all included.

Finally, going up to the third story, they will find the spa room, game area, and mini-arcade room. Training can be highly difficult at

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times, so the parents created rooms loaded with entertainment to help relax and destress, whether physically or mentally.

If they need to find their parents, they can do so in the spa room, while the twins are most likely to be found in the game or arcade area.

They were all in awe when they unlocked the door to the mini-arcade. It was similar to the arcades in the mall, but three times the size of the originals.

It was unlike anything they'd ever seen in someone's home. It contained a bowling ball area, a karaoke section, a basketball section, and various arcade cabinets that could be played alone or with a partner.

They went to the gaming room for the final part of the house to show them a hidden room that was only accessible if they had the passcode.

A secret button is hidden under the books on the shelf cabinet. When pressed, it exposed a secret passage that led to another secret bar room.

Billiards, TV, air hockey, and a golf course welcomed them as they entered. The bar was only for adults, although children were welcome to play the games on the premises.

"I suddenly feel poor just by touring around your place," Nayeon laughed as she walked around the room with the others. "Nevertheless, this room is awesome!"

They continued on with their day of playing inside to have fun first before beginning their hard training tomorrow. Even though they were nervous, they were enthralled, and the excitement engulfed them.

The next morning, Katsumi was woken by a knock on her bedroom door. "Miss, breakfast has been served," the maid remarked. She checked her phone for the time before responding sleepily.

"Are the others awake already?"

"They are all at the dining table, except for you and Kento-sama."

"I understand, thank you."

The maid then left, having discovered no trace of them. She jumped out of bed, straightened her hair, and brushed her teeth before heading up the stairs.

Kento welcomed her from behind as she exited her room, his hand in his jean's pockets, still drowsy like his twin.

They kept their heads down and yawned the whole way, and when they got to the dining table, they saw their friends freshly seated and the meal set on the table.

"Good morning, my sweet twins!" Mother said in Japanese as they approached the table, and they responded back in the same language.

"Good morning," their buddies said in Korean, and they responded in the same language as they sat.

"Thank you for the food," Katsumi began, but her mother interrupted her.

"Wait, we have to wait for one more person," she rushed to say.

Katsumi looked around the dining room and saw that they were all complete, which confused her. "Who?" she inquired, returning her attention to her mother.

Just as she asked, the person mentioned arrived at the dining table carrying a plate of sausages. "I apologize for keeping you waiting; the sausage is ready!" he said as he placed the platter on the table.

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His abrupt entrance startled the twins, causing them to spring awake. "Eunsun!" They both exclaimed in unison as Kento continued, "You didn't inform us you were coming!"

"I thought of surprising you guys," he added cheerfully as he sat down next to them. "Let's start eating."

The mother introduced the man in the middle of the meal. His name is Lee Eunsun; he is full Korean but was born in New York and raised in Japan.

He is an only child, but because he grew up with the twins, it never felt like he was an only child to him.

Mother explained the reason for him being here, and he will begin assisting with the training today, with the twins as his assistants.

Because Eunsun was the finest at combat, both physically and with weaponry, they requested that he perform them a favor, which he eagerly accepted.

Time flew by, and they were done with their breakfast in no time. They head out to the backyard after resting for quite some time to start off their first lesson: aiming.

"Aiming is an important skill to have when dealing with enemies in the future, and we will be having you play archery to improve that," Eunsun explained as the lads stood in a straight line, facing the archery target with their arrows and bows in hand. "Katsumi will be demonstrating the first shot."

He handed her the bow and arrow, and she situated herself in front of the target. She pulled and aimed calmly before releasing the bow and hitting the bull's eye.

She went through three more rounds, hitting bulls-eyes each time, impressing everyone in the audience and earning a round of applause.

"Well done, Katsumi!" he exclaimed, then turned to his students and continued, "Now it's your turn!"

"I'm not sure if I can do this," Yoongi muffles, straightening his back. They missed the initial shot, although that was expected given that it was their first attempt.

They were able to hit the white end on their second shot. They improved on the third shot, and on the fourth shot, several were able to hit the red circle.

Jackson hissed in, "Ah, so close."

"This is harder than I expected," Nayeon grumbled. The sport needed them to use their arms, which was becoming tiresome with each shot.

"Don't give up, and keep practicing," Eunsun encouraged.

"The technique to be able to aim is to use your dominant eye to guide you. Straighten your backs, lift your arm up, and focus on your aim," Eunsun added with a grin. "By doing so, you'll be able to hit the middle."

Kento and Katsumi helped them with their posture and guided them with words, and they were soon able to hit the bullseye by following their technique and suggestions.

All were happy and continued with the exercise; being able to hit the bullseye felt satisfying, and seeing their confidence grow put a smile on the trainer's faces.

It not only motivated the pupils, but it also encouraged the trainers to continue teaching them. Once they had learned the art of aiming with an arrow, Eunsun thought it was time for them to start practicing with a gun.

They head to the shooting room while the maid and butlers clean up the yard.

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When they arrived, the students were taken aback by how beautiful the place was.

Eunsun walked by the lads and into the room where the firearms were stored. After some time, he introduced starter firearms and earmuffs to help muffle shooting noises and preserve your hearing.

As they gather around him to listen to his instructions, he places them on the table. "Each one of you will get a gun and assemble it on your own, but first the twins will demonstrate everything, assembling until shooting," he said.

"Yes, sir!"

"Katsumi, Kento," he softly called out, and they approached him, taking a rifle with no rounds in it, as Kento did the same before they started assembling it.

Placing the bullets inside the magazine, which is the part of the gun, and pushing it inside, they pulled the slide, wore the earmuffs, and walked towards one of the counters.

They pointed at the target in front of them and aimed for the head with their dominant eye before pulling the trigger on the gun.

The pupils were paying close attention to every element of what they did. Katsumi sighed as she finished firing the target, effortlessly hitting the head.

Kento performed the same thing, and he was done in a matter of seconds. They returned, removed the earmuffs, and replaced the rifle on the table.

The demonstration made their hearts race ecstatically, and they were eager to practice with a rifle because just watching the twins made them look like total badasses.

Despite the exhilaration, a couple of them couldn't help but feel scared, and they immediately doubted their ability to do the same with such ease.

"Have faith and confidence in yourself," Kento advised. "Feeling nervous is a normal thing, but you can't panic when shooting a target because you might get hit first even before firing the gun."

"That happened sometimes to us before, when we were at our first war with the Yoshida clan," Katsumi added.

The prospect of being shot worried them. It made them question what it would be like if a bullet punctured your skin and if they would ever survive such an encounter.

Their expressions became solemn as their gazes softened. To cheer them up, Katsumi produced a shaky chuckle and yelled, "Let's start practicing with the guns!"

"Get one gun and just follow those steps the twins demonstrated and fire," Eunsun went on to say.

They all obeyed the orders and took the teachings seriously, with the goal of protecting themselves in mind.

They shouldn't play around because they were dealing with a gun. One error could endanger oneself or others.

Following the trainer's guidance, they all focused and remained as calm and relaxed as possible.

After successfully assembling their firearms, they lined up on the counter and concentrated on the target in front of them.

They ignited the gun and shot after a few seconds of concentration. The lessons they received in the backyard were quite beneficial, as they were now able to strike the target with the rifles on the first try.

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The trainers were astounded by how quickly the students learned in just a few hours. When their ammunition ran out, they decided to take it up a notch and employ double-handguns.

Although it was much more difficult to aim, they performed an excellent job, and once the ammunition was depleted, they proceeded to the third level: shotgun.

This was the lesson's final level. The shotgun was significantly heavier to hold and delivered a much larger blow when fired. Jackson and Namjoon were unaffected because they had a slight advantage over the others with their big muscles.

Nayeon, Yoongi, and Seokjin were able to figure out the shotgun's impact with the assistance of the trainers. This allows them to correctly aim and shoot the target.

It wasn't a simple job, but they managed to complete it properly without their assistance during rehearsals. Seeing their friends improve over time made the twins quite proud of their own progress.



THE START OF SOMETHING NEW

THE afternoon came quicker than expected, and they were soon called by Mrs. Yamaguchi to eat their lunch. As they began to eat, the mother seemed pleased to see them and began the conversation.

"So, how are the lessons going?"

"Training is going better than expected, and they're all quick learners," Eunsun said proudly, much to the mother's delight. "We'll be continuing on tomorrow with the second lesson."

"That's fantastic to hear!" she exclaimed. "Please rest after lunch; you may continue practicing your aim later on."

"Yes, auntie," they said, nodding and continuing to eat.

After a few moments, Mrs. Yamaguchi's butler entered the dining room and bowed before approaching closer beside her. He whispered a message to her, and instantly, her face became solemn.

Katsumi's curiosity got the best of her, and it made her stop eating, wondering what message she was given for her face to shift so significantly.

"I understand; please prepare the car."

"Yes, ma'am," he bowed before walking out of the room as the mother sighed deeply.

"Is everything alright, Mom?" Katsumi inquired. Mother fixed her gaze on her and forced a smile.

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"Just some business to attend to, sweetie," she said reluctantly.

"What kind of business?" Kento inquired, as did his twin. They insisted on her informing them of the news so that they would be aware of what was going on.

Mother glanced at the lads, contemplating whether she should do so. She sighed in defeat, recognizing that they should be aware of what was going on because they were already a part of it.

"The Yoshida family held three of our butlers who were in charge of looking out for the children, which was supposed to be Kazuha's job." She went on to say, "I have to go and get them, bring them back home."

It was dangerous work, but it was unfortunately the norm in the family. They were aware of the situation and given instructions to remain safe at home.

She reasoned that this was just a ruse to keep any adults out of sight and that their true goal was to attack the twins, particularly Katsumi, at home.

They were given the key to the hidden room in their parents' bedroom, which leads to the gun room. They were told to run there to get a firearm in case of an emergency.

The mother smiled and wiped her mouth with a napkin before leaving the table. With that, Kento and Katsumi were in charge of their dinner.

"Be careful, mom," Katsumi urged solemnly.

Mother nodded and waved as she exited the dining room, saying, "Will do."

"I can't believe even the employees here are being held hostage," Yoongi exclaimed, his voice faint with shock.

"Whether you're an employee, friend, family member, related or not, if you're on the Yamaguchi's side, the Yoshida clan will deem you part of the enemy's crew," Katsumi said in a dejected voice.

"It's a messed-up reality of ours," Kento remarked, fiddling with his meal, his mind racing with thoughts of his mother.

Despite the danger that might arise in the near future, they chose to divert their attention away from the potential danger and do the things they wanted to do in their leisure time.

Kento and Eunsun chose to play video games, while the other five chose to continue honing their aiming skills in the shooting range.

Katsumi is in her room, passing the time by designing costume ideas on her drawing pad. It's something she enjoys doing in her spare time.

Aside from her regular employment, she aspires to be a fashion designer. However, as long as Kosuke is alive, her dream will remain a fantasy that will never be made into reality.

Nonetheless, she was still passionate about it, and she had stitched roughly ten different outfits over the years, hiding them within the concealed wardrobe behind her bathroom mirror.

She set down her colored pen after she was satisfied with the design and huffed contentedly as she removed her headphones, smiling at the outcome of her doodle.

"Wow, that's beautiful!" a surprised voice said behind her, causing the woman to flinch and glance behind her.

"Nayeon-ah!" she exhaled, her heart pounding in her chest. "You scared me there!"

She chuckled apologetically. "You weren't responding to my knocks, so I went in. Sorry."

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"It's fine. Anyways, are you guys finished with practicing in the shooting room?"

She smiled and nodded. "Yep! We decided to take a break; the boys are in their room resting."

"How about you? Are you not going to rest?"

"I was going to, but it's boring resting alone in that big room!" she replied. "Are you going to plan on staying in your room until dinner?"

Katsumi gave a nod. "Yeah, I have no other plans other than sleeping and drawing."

"Then, let's talk!"

"Talk?" Katsumi inquired. "About what?"

"You know, girl talk," she continued, but Katsumi was a bit unknowledgeable about the girl talk Nayeon was saying because the terms she and Nabi use are very different.

The girl then grabbed Katsumi's wrist and dragged her to the bed to resume their discussion—somewhere that felt cozy.

"What do we usually talk about during girl talk?" she inquired, sitting down on the bed alongside Nabi.

"Tell me, do you have anyone you like?"

Katsumi's brows furrowed in response to the inquiry. "I like you, of course," she replied, catching the girl off guard. "Same goes for the others as well."

"No, I mean, do you have a crush on anyone? Like, love," Nayeon elaborated, and this time, her words caught Katsumi off guard.

"Oh, I see."

"Do you have anyone you fancy?"

She then began to contemplate, starting with Yoongi. Immediately, she shook that thought. For her, Yoongi was a great friend she wanted to protect, like a younger brother.

Jackson? She shook her head once more. Although the man was attractive, she had no romantic feelings for him and only thought of him as a good friend.

Seokjin and Nayeon are in the same boat. They're great friends, but nothing more. which brings us to the last person in mind, Namjoon.

She cocked her head, unsure of her feelings. She liked the man, but she wasn't sure if it was love. Perhaps admiration? However, it is not love.

Nayeon glanced at Katsumi, who was dazed, lost in her thoughts, and fading off. The girl had misinterpreted her actions, believing the woman was thinking about her crush.

Katsumi, on the other hand, shook her head, dismissing her assumptions. "I don't have anyone I love, but I do have someone I admire."

"Who?" Nayeon asked herself as she moved closer to her companion.

"Namjoon."

"Why do you admire him?"

"Because he's a kind guy who has a strong will." She then went on to say, "Those times when you and Jackson were our nemesis, I've seen a lot of Namjoon's real side during the struggle they had dealt with. His determination to fight and bring justice to his friends, plus the kindness he has shown and given them was really admirable. Maybe it's because I wanted to be like him, or maybe I've always wanted a friend like that during my toughest days in the past," she continues, reminiscing about all the wonderful things she had done with Namjoon, and the kind deeds she had seen him do made her look soften. "But it is for this reason that I genuinely like him."

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Her heartbeat was tender during her explanation, and she wasn't aware of it, nor did she know what it meant when it occurred.

It was an unusual sensation she had never had before in her life, and she didn't dislike it. Her heartbeat felt at ease, and instead of dismissing it, she welcomed it entirely.

It had been a few hours. Nayeon and Katsumi headed down to the backyard and saw Kento and Eunsun preparing the grill for their dinner.

It seems like they'll be having grilled pork and chicken for their supper, with Kento searing the food for them. As the delicious smell streamed across their senses, it enthralled the lads.

They eagerly began to dig in once the pork was done. The flavor of the juices exploded within their mouths with each mouthful, evoking a delighted moan as they chewed.

After training, pork was truly the best. Katsumi went for another round, taking a chunk and chewing happily while glancing around the backyard, feeling content.

Meters beside her, Namjoon was seated in the pool's corner, skinny-dipping while eating alone. She smiles and grabs another plate of cooked food and two cans of soda in hand before approaching the lad, sitting beside him.

She handed him one can, which he gently took. With a clink of their cans, they began drinking, ending with a pleased huff.

"What are you doing here all alone?" she inquired.

"Just enjoying the breeze and the stars with delicious food," he replied. "How about you? What made you decide to sit with me?"

She breathed out a sigh. "I don't know," she paused, "just thought you might like some company," before taking a sip of her soda as silence ascended.

Seconds later, jazz music began to play in the background, breaking the silence as Jackson and Seokjin danced along to the music, making the others giggle.

"I'll go grab some more pork," Namjoon added.

"Thanks!"

He lifted his feet out of the water and stood up; when he returned, he was jogging and had slipped on the way, causing him to slump over and into the cold pool.

"Are you okay, Namjoon?" Katsumi inquired, apprehensive as she moved in closer, bracing herself in case the man drowned.

The pool was deeper than imagined, yet the man stood tall, half his face out of the water, hands high, still clutching the dish of pork.

He swiftly handed her the pork, and they both reached out to each other. She snatched the plate from him, but it slid a little, causing their hearts to race and Katsumi to jump into the pool to save the pork from the water.

What was impressive was that the meal had arrived safely on land while the two were submerged in the pool.

"We're fine!" Namjoon stated. Nayeon and Yoongi reached out to help the two out of the water.

As she was being dragged up, Katsumi grabbed a bite of the pork that had been rescued. Nayeon laughed when she saw this.

"Is the food more important to you?" she remarked as they drew them out.

The rest of her friends hysterically laughed, which made the two individuals, drenched from head to toe, laugh as well. They were

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given towels, and what happened inspired them to swim in the pool while wearing their clothes.

It was a great night for the second day, and it distracted them from the danger that awaited them in the near future.

The next morning, their next lesson will be at a dojo to learn and practice self-defense. They arrived at their destination wearing a basic white top and jogging pants. Because they didn't carry or own their uniform, *this* was the substitution.

They formed a straight line in front of Eunsun. He will be their instructor, and the twins will be his aides.

"Except for Katsumi and Kento, do any of you know any karate or taekwondo before we begin our training?" he said, and Jackson and Nayeon raised their hands.

"That's good," he responded with a nod, and they immediately began with basic defenses and attacks, both with and without a weapon, in a prepared and unprepared manner.

All of those crucial basic steps took the session 4 hours to go over, but thankfully, they were all fast learners and were able to learn quickly.

Now that they knew what to do, before heading out for lunch and resting, they were assigned the final phase of the morning's training, which is sparring.

However, because there were five pupils in front of her, Katsumi was allocated to one of the boys: Yoongi to Seokjin, Nayeon to Jackson, and Katsumi to Namjoon.

The fear shot right into Namjoon's eyes as he heard who he was up against. A white belt versus a black belt—he was beginning to feel nervous.

Katsumi noted his expression and responded with a chuckle. "Don't worry, I'll be gentle with you!" she replied, patting his back a little too hard, causing the lad to swallow and chuckle uneasily.

They were positioned in the room's upper right corner, with Yoongi and Seokjin in the center and the final pair in the lower left corner.

Before sparring, they donned body- and head-protection gear and faced each other. Katsumi bowed, and Namjoon did the same before going into a ready stance.

He did the same thing, but he was nervous. Nevertheless, he was aware that he needed to be more courageous. If this was the real battle, who knows what would happen if he remained nervous?

With a huff, he looks dead straight into Katsumi's eyes. The woman smirked as she returned his stare, seeing his bravery.

"Start!"

Katsumi let out a yelp before landing a kick to the waist, a jump twist, and a back kick to the stomach, knocking him to the ground.

"Sis, go easy on him at first, seriously," Kento urged as he watched what happened.

"Sorry," she apologized as she assisted the boy in getting up.

"No, it's fine," he responded. "Don't be too easy on me; I want to learn," he said, standing up and staring at her.

The determination in his eyes took Katsumi aback, yet she admired the expression on his face. He went into a ready stance, displaying his strong will, which the woman saw as an invitation to proceed.

She smirked and took a ready stance as she returned his stare. She charged at him with a yelp and a front kick, but she swiftly evaded, and he took the shot, kicking her in the back.

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Katsumi continued with a round kick that hit his head, but he pivoted and delivered a round kick back that impacted her head with the heel of his foot.

It seemed that his motivation fueled the energy and power; he was starting to get a little better than previously. Katsumi, on the other hand, simply did not want to lose.

In response, she attempted a double kick, but he grabbed her feet, which isn't allowed at a competition, but since it was for a battle they were practicing, it was permitted.

He twisted his body and shoved her down. But, at the same time, he tripped, causing him to fall on top of Katsumi.

As his lips accidentally landed on hers, the woman's eyes widened. He suddenly drew back and stuttered, his cheeks flushing.

"I-i didn't mean to," he stammered as he stood up swiftly, leaving Katsumi sitting up, staring into thin air, still stunned by what had just transpired.

"I-I'm really sorry," he apologized, bowing.

"No, it's fine," she responded, shaking her head. "It was just an accident," she claimed, but she wasn't; the kiss was her first, and just thinking about it made her heart skip a beat, and the sensation lingered.

"Hey Namjoon, this isn't the time to be flirting around!" Seokjin exclaimed. Both turned to be reminded that there was an audience and that they had seen the kiss they had inadvertently exchanged.

"I swear it wasn't on purpose," he added as Katsumi rose up, causing him to stare at her with an apologetic look on his face.

He was obviously nervous about what would happen because he assumed Katsumi was upset with him, but she reassured him with a smile and a kind pat on the back.

"It's fine. It surprised me, but it was just an accident, right?" He nods. "Then there's nothing to worry about." Just then, her stomach grumbled loudly for all to hear.

"The timing is impeccable," Kento remarked, causing everyone to laugh.

"Let's end our lesson here," Eunsun said. "Excellent work, everyone!"

"Thank you very much, sir!" They all bowed and headed to the building's cafeteria to eat their lunch.

29

FEELINGS BLOOMING

TIME flew by once more, and it was now 8pm late at night. They've already eaten at a restaurant for their dinner and returned home.

Katsumi was still dazed from time to time, ruminating about the recent accident of the stolen kiss. For some reason, the image in her head kept returning, and the rhythm of her heart was still audible.

When she arrived at her room, she sighed and sat down on her bed. "I'm so tired," she mumbles exhaustingly, still dressed casually and too lazy to change out of it.

Her entire body was sore from the workout; she didn't want to leave the bed, but laying on it felt uncomfortable. With a groan, she rolled out of bed and walked to her closet to change into her pajamas.

While searching for her outfit, she came across a knitted sweater among her stuff. The sweater she was wearing when she was doused with cold water in the school bathroom.

It didn't, however, belong to her or Kento.

It belonged to Namjoon.

She set it beside her, looked for the jeans and belt she had borrowed from him, and set it aside to look for her pajamas.

She steps out of her room, holding the sweater, jeans, and belt, and walks to Namjoon's. She noticed him heading back from the washroom towards his room as she approached.

"Namjoon," she called out. He looked up and swallowed nervously when he spotted her. Despite this, she jogged towards him with a smile and said, "Here," handing him the clothing, which he took.

"Thanks for lending me your outfit during that incident. It helped a lot."

"There's no need to thank me; all I wanted was for you not to catch a cold," he bent his head dejectedly. "Which still happened."

"Even so," she answered with a smile. "Your sweater kept me warm while my body was freezing," she said, making his cheeks flush as he lowered his head and smiled warmly.

There was a brief moment of stillness. They couldn't converse, as if their mouths were glued shut, and it became a little awkward for the two.

And so, Katsumi thought it was the perfect time to leave and said, "I'll see you tomorrow morning. Good night," before turning around to return to her room.

Namjoon, on the other hand, had more to say and stopped her. "Wait," he said, drawing her attention. She raises her brows in response to him.

He looks away as he speaks. "A-about a while ago. I'm really sorry."

She doesn't understand why he kept apologizing when she knew he did it without malice or by accident. It wasn't his fault in the first place. Katsumi lets out a sigh. "You don't have to keep apologizing, Namjoon. It was merely an accident, so it's fine."

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"But... I might have disgusted you, and it's possible I just stole your first kiss," he responded nervously.

"It *was* my first kiss," she said, which made him lower his head in humiliation. "But I didn't feel disgusted," she adds.

"Are you saying that because you're feeling bad?"

"No!" She immediately protested, sighed, and began thinking. What can she do to get him to stop degrading himself? Then an idea struck her.

"Namjoon," she softly called out, and the boy raised his head to look at her, humming in answer.

She swallowed before leaning in closer, her hand reaching for his cheeks, cupping them, and pressing her lips against his. Because he wasn't expecting her to kiss him, the touch of her soft lips on his surprised him considerably.

He remained still, and his lips were frozen as a result of the shock. While his mind was racing, his heart was racing abnormally, and he was loving every minute of the encounter.

She carefully pulled away seconds later and saw his reaction, still in a daze. She responded with a chuckle.

"Now we're fair. Good night!" she exclaimed as she rushed back to her room, a giddy smile on her face. It was her second time being kissed, but it was her first time initiating one, and she grinned mischievously.

Practice continues the next day, and the lads will be joined by a group of dojo students. That meant Kento and Katsumi could opt out of the practice.

Katsumi was now in her room, while Kento went to fetch up their teammates from practice. She continued with her hobby, drawing outfit designs on her pad.

It had been hours, and she was beginning to feel parched. She goes to her mini-fridge, but it is empty. As a result, she went down to the kitchen to get a drink.

She returns after having a few sips after grabbing one for herself. As she returned, she noticed her mother resting on the living room couch.

She returns to the kitchen to get a drink to help her relax after a long day of work. However, when she returned to present it to her, she discovered that her mother had been injured.

"Mom, what happened to you?" she worriedly exclaimed as she kneeled down to examine her wound more closely.

"The Yoshida clan, as usual," she added, finishing with a small chuckle.

"Were you fighting alone?"

"They only requested me, so I had no choice but to go alone."

Katsumi stood up with a troubled sigh. "I'll be right back," she yelled as she dashed towards the foyer for the med kit, but just as she arrived, Butler Murase was walking in their direction, holding the med kit.

He handed it to her and returned it to her mother, just as the lads returned, entering the foyer through the front entrance.

"Oh, Katsumi!"

She turned, and they saw what she was holding. "Why do you have a medical kit?" Seokjin inquired, and Kento approached her after hearing the boy mention the medical kit she was carrying.

"Did you get hurt?" he worriedly questioned, but she hurried back into the living room, ignoring him. They followed her and discovered the twins' mother in distress.

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"Mom," Kento's fearful eyes enlarged and hurried up, "are you okay?"

"Yes, I-I'll be fine, sweetie; don't worry," she said as Katsumi tended to her wound. Eunsun noticed this and advised the students to pay close attention to what she was doing.

Every dab of the soaked cotton made the mother groan in agony. It didn't take her long to finish cleansing her wound. She then applied some red liquid medicine before putting it in a bandage.

Everyone was watching her every move. It was critical for them to learn how to heal themselves or their partners whenever they were injured, and Eunsun seized the opportunity for them to learn.

Katsumi let out a sigh. "You should really be more careful, mom."

Mother chuckled as she said, "Will do."

"You should rest at the hospital, mom. I'll take you there-"

"No, I'm fine; it's just a cut," she answered, cutting into Kento's words.

"That's no cut, Mom; that cut is far too deep to be considered "little." It looks like you were stabbed by a knife," Katsumi stated.

"Was I busted?"

"*Mom*," Kento stated sternly.

"I'm sorry; I'll be more careful next time."

Mother was immediately treated with some painkillers and was taken to her room to recover. Kento insisted on assisting her, so he escorted her to her room via elevator.

Katsumi sighed deeply as she sat on the couch, her heart racing, worried for her mother's health. Even though she was a strong woman, she was terrified of losing the people she cared about.

Nayeon consoled her when she saw the woman's despondent expression, hugging her arm and lovingly holding her hand. Katsumi

looks at her, noting the troubled expression on her face, and responds with a forlorn smile.

"I don't get why mom won't go to the hospital," she said. "She got hurt, but why?"

"It's Auntie we're talking about," Eunsun replied. "Even though she's a doctor, she doesn't like being hospitalized."

Kento returned seconds later, which captured the attention of the others. "I've called Mom's assistant nurse and reported to Dad what happened to Mom."

"Did he respond?" Katsumi inquired, and Kento shrugged. His response caused his twin to sigh shakily, and he noted her worried expression.

"Everything will be fine, sis," he said, patting her head. "Her assistant will take care of her," he stated reassuringly.

Then Eunsun brightened the mood by clapping and standing up. "Let's have lunch!" he said. Everyone agreed and made their way to the kitchen. It was best if the twins centered their attention on something else.

Their mother is recovering, and there are others who are assisting her in her recovery. So, as usual, they had nothing to worry about and prepared their dinner with expectant faces.

The sound of the pencil being used enveloped Katsumi's room's serene night. Her sketch was finished with just a few minor tweaks here and there.

It was already late at night, but she wanted to finish the design she was making for a special bracelet for her friends, including her twin and cousin.

Rosequarts C.

She finished her sketch a few minutes later and was now starting to clear up her desk to get a good night's sleep. But first, she was thirsty and decided to go to the kitchen to get a drink.

Chugging down the water once she had arrived, she ended with a contented huff. On her way back to her room with a few water bottles, she notices someone relaxing on the small balcony patio.

Taking a closer look, she realized it was Namjoon. He was eating a modest midnight snack dejectedly, as if there was a lot going on in his thoughts while he ate.

To capture his attention, she uses the water bottle by softly placing it on his cheek. The sudden cold sensation on his skin caused him to flinch in surprise as he jerked his head in her direction.

"Katsumi," he sighed in relief, seeing it was her as she smiled in response.

"What's up with that troubled expression? Is everything okay?" she inquired.

"Y-yeah," he said hesitantly, "why aren't you asleep yet?"

She snickered and sat down next to him, setting one of the water bottles alongside his dish of sliced pie and saying, "That's what I should be asking you."

He glances away from her and fidgets with his meal, hesitant to tell her about his worries since he didn't want to show her that he was worried about what might happen in the future.

Katsumi placed her hand on top of his, which drew the lad's attention. "Namjoon," he looked up, reluctantly gazing directly at her eyes, and she gave him a reassuring glance while clutching his hand firmly, "you can talk to me about it."

His expression softened, and he averted his sight, mustering the courage to tell her the truth, beginning with a quiet huff, "I know this will sound childish, but... I'm actually scared."

"Of what?"

"The battle with the Yoshida Clan," he admitted. "After seeing Auntie hurt like that, the image and the possibility of that happening to me frighten me a lot." He let out a long sigh. "Aside from that, what if I don't even have the courage to fight back? What if, because of me, I let you guys down? Because of me, we might lose to the enemy. These negative thoughts just won't go away, and it's driving me insane," he huffed, running his fingers through his hair and ruffling it after, frustrated.

"You know, I thought the same as well."

He glances at her, puzzled. "You did?" he asks, in disbelief that the strong Katsumi he knew felt the same way he does right now.

She gives a nod. "It was our first battle with the Yoshida clan. I was so terrified that I feared I might kill my entire family as a result of my actions. But I was mistaken. I concentrated hard and didn't let my guard down. I kept focused. I was shot several times, but at least the rest of my family was unharmed."

"B-but you got shot," he mumbled.

"To be honest, I didn't care what happened to me," she shrugged. "All I've ever really cared about was protecting my family. They are the ones who matter to me the most."

He averted his gaze as she gazed at him, then grinned. "If you're nervous or scared, remember that you're not alone." She continues, "The others will be there for you. I'll be there for you." He turns to her once again as they exchange soft gazes. Her words were like sleeping on a chilly pillow; they felt soothing to his heart.

Rosequarts C.

He smiles. "Thanks for that and for hearing me out."

Katsumi grinned once again as she nodded her head in response. "Well, let's get back to bed! We need a lot of energy for training tomorrow, especially you," she said as she stood up and gently stroked his head.

Namjoon pledged his life to be powerful like Katsumi right then and there. Her bravery, dedication, acts of justice, and virtue personality are what he admires about her the most.

They both returned inside to their respective rooms. Namjoon turned to face Katsumi and thanked her once more.

He feels his heart racing as he watches her enter her room. His body craved her touches, and his lips wanted her kisses.

He contemplated for a moment before hastily calling out her name before the woman had fully entered her room. Her brows raised as she peered out. "Yeah?" she responded.

He gulped anxiously as a result of the sudden attention he had drawn to himself. He wanted to confess but lacked the courage to do so.

As a result, he simply smiled and said, "Good night."

She assumed there was an issue he wanted to tell her because of the pause and his contemplative gaze. That's why the unexpected greeting caught her off guard and made her smile.

"Good night," she said before entering her room and closing the door behind her.

Namjoon exhaled shakily as he could still feel his pulse racing rapidly, and the desire to see her again rose, but knowing he would be able to see her tomorrow morning brought a contented smile to his face. He returns to his room and lies down on his bed, looking forward to the next day.

30

MISSION HOAX-TRIX

KATSUMI awoke to a chilly dawn the next morning. With a groan, she rolled out of bed and brushed her hair before heading out to breakfast.

Yawning out of her room, she was greeted by Namjoon on the way to the dining table.

"Good morning, Katsumi!" he exclaimed cheerfully, and the woman was taken aback by his sudden burst of energy so early in the morning.

"Good morning; you seem excited today."

"Do I?" he inquired, and Katsumi responded with a nod. He chuckled as he says, "I guess I just slept well."

His upbeat manner snagged on her; she was smiling from ear to ear, and the energy poured through her entire body, replacing the drowsiness.

Breakfast was packed with chatter, most likely about the planned training later that day, and after lunch, they were allowed a couple of hours of free time.

Rosequarts C.

Katsumi caught a glimpse of Namjoon peering at her throughout the conversation. She grinned, causing the lad to blush deeply as he turned away with a delighted smile.

They helped clean up after breakfast before beginning their training in the new dojo area on the third floor. Kento and Katsumi participated in the training despite being permitted not to do so.

In the midst of the small breaks they took, Katsumi scrolled on social media and saw pictures and videos of school events. It reminded her of the impending founding anniversary event, which they were supposed to attend.

Despite the circumstances, she wished to participate in the event. However, she knew they wouldn't make it in time after only 3 weeks and 2 days remaining.

Her envy rose, so she focused on something else to take her mind off the event she so desperately wanted to attend. Their decorating, preparing, and spending money would all be for naught in the end.

When lunch break came, Katsumi chose to spend half of her time alone in her room before hanging out with the others. She kept sketching till an hour had passed and there was a knock on her door.

"Come in," she said, her gaze locked on her drawing, as Nayeon entered with a smile.

"Katsumi, let's start watching the movie!" she exclaimed as she approached her, and they all decided to watch a movie together in the mini-movie theater for the rest of the hours left.

Namjoon sat near Katsumi at the far end of the room, next to the wall, with food and beverages on their table. The film they chose to view was a new Japanese horror film.

There were Korean subtitles for the rest of the boys to understand. With their snacks, drinks, and company, it was the perfect way to spend the day and the perfect way to watch a movie.

Katsumi used Namjoon as a protection shield to hide from every impending jump scare because he had a bigger bulk, and the man didn't mind. He loved every minute and second of it.

In a blink of an eye, the movie ended, and the lads resumed their training, continuing with honing their gun skills.

Kento headed with the others to the shooting range room, while Katsumi went to the kitchen to fetch some water to rinse her throat from the sweet drink she had drank in order to avoid getting a sore throat.

She was on her way when she noticed Butler Murase cooking something on the stove. When he noticed her approaching, he greeted her with a smile.

"Good afternoon, my lady."

"Good afternoon! That looks good, Murase-san," she said as she inhaled the delectable aroma.

"Thank you. This is intended for Mrs. Yamaguchi. She needs to take her medicine; therefore, she'll eat her dinner a little earlier," he stated.

When her mother was mentioned, she became curious about how she was doing, and so she headed to her room after getting a water bottle and drank it on the way.

She knocked on the door before peering inside. "Mom?" she stated, and seeing her daughter visit her put a smile on her face.

"Come in, Sweetie!" she replied, and Katsumi walked into the room, closing the door behind her before approaching her mother on her bed.

Rosequarts C.

"How are you feeling, Mom?" she inquired, sitting alongside her on the bed.

"I'm feeling wonderful, sweetie, like I'm already healed!"

It relieved her to see and hear her mother sounding like herself again. She was concerned after seeing her in such a state a few days ago.

Their chat lasted until Butler Murase knocked and entered her bedroom, delivering a tray of the mother's supper inside.

Katsumi assisted him by placing the mini-table on top of the mother's bed for the butler to place the dinner plate on.

"Enjoy your meal, Ms.," he said with a bowed

"Thank you, Murase-san," she responded, and as she was about to take a mouthful of her food, another knock sounded on the door, and in strode a tall, buff, scary-looking man, covered in tattoos and with a scar on the left side of his cheek, who bowed and began to talk.

"Mrs. Yamaguchi, I've come to give you this." He hands her a brown package, which she opens to reveal the document inside.

Katsumi was dismayed when she read the contents of the document; despite her mother's injury, she was still working in bed.

"Another target?" she inquired of her mother.

"No, sweetie, it's a mission."

"A mission?" Her brows furrowed in puzzlement. It was her first time hearing about this mission assignment because all she had ever been assigned was killing targets.

"Yes, a mission sent by the police."

"The police?" she inquired in perplexity, "and what do the police want from us?"

"They want help with some kind of bomb. They said that there has been a bomb planted somewhere inside a mall near here. They

wanted our help to find this bomb and deactivate it so that the people inside would be safe."

"But you can't go in that condition, mom," she says. "I can go instead, if you allow me."

It was a perilous mission, and entrusting it to Katsumi, who was still a teenager, was dangerous enough. Her life would be jeopardized if a bomb was involved.

Yet with all the contemplation, she couldn't perform as well in her current state, which drove her to a conclusion.

"Bring Kento with you," she commanded. "Find the bomb and the one who planted it."

Mother handed her the envelope containing additional information. Kento was summoned and informed of the situation. He consented to accompany her, and without further ado, they entered the car, with the tattooed man driving.

Butler Murase briefed Eunsun and the pupils about the situation. The man understood the mission, but the others were stunned, their faces filled with worry for the twins.

"They'll be fine," Eunsun promised.

"How are you so sure? There are bombs involved," Jackson argued.

"I've grown up with the twins; they're smart and unbeatable. Someone who has experienced hell like the twins will be able to handle the situation."

They understood the twins had more experience than they had, but that didn't change the fact that a bomb was involved.

Nonetheless, there was nothing they could do to stop them because they were already on their way.

Rosequarts C.

They thought they were used to the dangers the Yamaguchi clan faced, but they weren't prepared for how dangerous the environment really was.

While the students were continuing their training, the twins arrived at the mall, where the bomb was located. A couple of police officers greeted them as they exited the automobile.

They bowed, and the twins reciprocated.

"Thank you for taking the mission, Katsumi-san, Kento-san."

"Don't sweat it; we wouldn't want hundreds of people getting killed today," Kento replied.

Katsumi questioned, "Are you sure this is where they planted the bomb?"

"Indeed, my lady, we are very certain," the chief officer said, handing them a small piece of white paper.

"What's this?" she inquired as she took it and unfurled the paper.

"It's a hint from the suspect who planted the bomb. We received a call from them just 3 hours ago, and they told us some kind of hint as to where the bomb is."

"If they called, why can't you just analyze the voice of the caller?" Kento asked inquisitively.

"They used some voice changer to call us, so we couldn't analyze the voice properly."

They nodded in answer and shifted back to the paper, reading the material in their minds. It says,

'We miss a word and strain the throat; altos blend a centered note; spin around with bokey-pokey; now it's time for...'

It was a riddle.

However, they couldn't understand what it meant.

"Time for what?" Kento inquired as Katsumi shrugged. They utilized their brains to begin pondering any possible interpretations of the message.

'We miss a word and strain the throat.' Does this imply yelling? Shouting?

'Altos mix a centered note.' Altos are the choir's highest male singing voice. Putting the two riddles together, they came up with 'A person or people singing a high note'.

Continuing on, *'spin around with bokey-pokey; now it's time for...'*

"Karaoke!" They both exclaimed in sync.

"Do you have any Karaoke rooms here?" Katsumi questioned the senior cop, who nodded. On the third floor of the mall, there is a mini-arcade section with karaoke boxes where people may enjoy singing.

There were three mini-karaoke rooms available for use. While searching through the boxes, they discovered a notepad stuck to the cushions, carefully concealed from the outside.

She took it out and read it quietly. But she couldn't figure out what the next riddle was. *'Tungsten, arsenic, and hydrogen'* is what was written on the paper.

Kento entered the room seconds later and read the note. "Science?" he guessed.

"I have no knowledge of science, especially this science," she admitted, handing the message to her brother and saying, "It's all yours, bro."

He sighed as he took the note from her and examined it further, searching on his phone to speed up the procedure.

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Finding nothing relevant, he proceeded to the images and noticed the letter 'W', which sparked an idea: he remembered the periodic table from junior high.

With the use of the periodic table, they'll be able to form a word or a concealed message. As the second element progressed, the letters 'AS' appeared.

He puts it down on the note pad before moving on to the final part, which contains the letter 'H'. Put them all together; they spell 'WASH'.

"The washroom?" Katsumi inquired.

It was a plausible guess, so they proceeded to the mall's restroom. Ending with the washroom on the ground floor.

Katsumi entered the women's restroom, while Kento went into the men's. They carefully explored every nook and cranny within, ensuring that if they did find the bomb, they would not trigger it or make it worse.

Katsumi's eyes felt heavy when she opened to check the stall in the middle, and her consciousness began to fade. She had suddenly become tired for no apparent reason.

To wake herself up, she shook her head and smacked both cheeks. However, it did not work, and she became sleepier and her body grew heavier. And in no time, she was unconscious on the cold ground.

Kento searched every nook, every stall, and every sink for the explosive, but there was none to be discovered. He walked out with an exhausted sigh, thinking it had been placed in the women's bathroom, and waited for his twin to emerge.

But seconds and minutes passed, and Katsumi had yet to come out. *Did she discover the bomb? What was taking her so long?* He pondered.

"Sis, what's taking you so long? You alright?" He messaged but received no response. If she had her phone with her while taking a dump, she should've seen the message. However, nothing had happened.

He was becoming concerned as fear flowed through his body and negative thoughts forced him to overthink.

He immediately began to consider whether he should enter. As he took a step forward, a janitor emerged from the women's restroom.

"Excuse me, is there anyone inside the restroom?" he said as he approached the janitor.

"No, sir, it's just me."

Her response astounded the child, and his negative thoughts multiplied along with the questions he began to overthink.

"Are you certain?"

"Yes, sir," she nodded, and after hearing her confident response, he stopped asking and gave a slight nod and a bow. As he was about to depart, he saw a notepad posted on the restroom wall, which piqued his curiosity.

"I'm sorry to bother you again," he says to the janitor, "but could you please get that note stuck on the stall wall for me?"

She complied with a nod and walked back inside, exiting with the notepad in hand. He bowed after receiving the note. As he walked away, he read the content, which had a slew of numbers written on it.

A phone number?

He paused before pulling out his phone and swiftly dialing the number on the note. It might be a dangerous thing to do, but the occurrences of his sister going missing and a sudden note left on the wall—these coincidences could not have just been a coincidence.

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The number he typed in worked as his phone rang. While patiently waiting, he heads out of the mall to get some fresh air.

Once outside, someone had picked him up, which surprised him. "Hello," he said commandingly.

Silence. The person who picked up the call uttered not a single word, and he was getting antsy waiting for someone to answer his stern greeting.

After a few minutes, however, a deep, calming voice could be heard on the other end. A voice that Kento recognizes.

"Did you miss me, Kento?"

His brows furrowed in surprise after hearing Kosuke's voice. Who would have guessed the number he dialed belonged to his adversary?

Then it struck him. His mother sustained an injury, and she received a mission—a police call from an anonymous caller threatening them with a bomb at a neighboring mall. These silly riddles and Katsumi's sudden disappearance.

The bomb was a ruse, and everything was set up to kidnap Katsumi. Kento felt very dumb after uncovering the true motives of this fake mission.

"What did you do to my sister?" he murmured menacingly, his heart racing in fear as he heard Kosuke evilly chuckle profoundly in response.

"Don't worry, Kento, she's safe with me."

Goosebumps crept throughout his entire forearm and legs, and a surge of jitter rushed through his spine. Just as he thought, his theory was correct.

"Safe?" he inquired in disbelief. "With you, she's never safe."

"As I already stated, there is no need to be concerned. I won't do anything to her," he pauses, "at least not yet."

"You!" He held back his anger as he noticed a crowd staring at him. "I swear, Kosuke, if you ever lay a single finger on my sister, you won't have any fingers," he said angrily in a soft tone.

Instead of intimidating his enemy, his aggressive tone of voice entertained him. Kosuke laughed, as if Kento acting tough was adorable to him.

"Oh my, I'm so scared," he remarked sarcastically, chuckling in the midst.

"Where is my sister?"

"Aww," he derides, "is the twin going to save her other twin? How sweet!"

"Where. Is. My sister?" He was serious, as evidenced by the tone of his voice, and seeing Kosuke mock his feelings made his fury boil even more.

"She's in my castle. Good luck finding her." He ended the call before Kento could even react, dreading every second after the conversation ended.

Even though he despised what had happened, he had to inform his folks of what had occurred and the unfortunate news.

He was enraged, felt dumb, and felt like a failure for failing to protect his sister, knowing full well that if Kosuke is still alive, she will never be secure wherever she goes.

31

ESCAPE THE MAZE

KATSUMI opened her eyes slowly, but her vision was obscured. She was sitting in a chair; her hands bound behind her back.

She swallowed anxiously as she remembered what had transpired before the circumstance she was in, realizing she had been kidnapped. She heard voices approach her room and chose to remain still, pretending she hadn't awoken.

Kosuke entered the room to pay a visit to his adversary, who was observed sleeping on the chair.

"Is she awake?" He inquired.

"Not yet, sir; she hasn't moved." Despite this, he knew his adversary. He was aware of Katsumi's discretion. So, he removed the blindfolds that were concealing her eyes and saw the woman completely awake.

He smirks. "I knew you were awake."

She took an anxious gulp. "What do you want from me?" She inquired forcefully, maintaining eye contact with him. As he giggles, he bends down to be the same height as her, their gazes never leaving one another.

"You don't have to know, Tsumi-chan," he teased, which made her quite unhappy.

"Stop calling me that."

"Piggy?"

"That either."

He then chuckled, "I've been calling you Piggy since we were friends, so why not?"

"Aren't we no longer friends? You betrayed me," she murmured glumly.

"I betrayed you?" He shortly straightened his back and chuckled in disbelief. "You and Kento are just the same. The audacity you both have is irking."

Katsumi's brow furrowed in perplexity. She, like Kento, had no idea what Kosuke was talking about. He claims she betrayed him; however, she had no recollection of doing so, especially to someone who she once deemed her best friend.

"What are you—?"

Kosuke's phone rang, cutting her query short. He'd gotten a phone call and answered it with an annoyed sigh while walking away from Katsumi.

"What do you want?" he grumbled softly. "I told you not to cook for me, for goodness' sake."

'Cook?' she wondered.

"Just stop! I'm coming back; don't you dare start cooking without me." He then hung up, turning around to find Katsumi sneering teasingly at him.

"Is that Mariya?" she inquired, to which Kosuke rolled his eyes in irritation.

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Mariya Yamada was good friends with Kosuke and Katsumi in elementary school. They were inseparable and would do everything for each other.

Katsumi had known she had a crush on Kosuke since grade school. Despite her obsession, she is a compassionate and brutally honest lady with a strong will, exactly like them both.

Seeing that they still had a close relationship put a smile on Katsumi's face. She yearned for the simpler times when nothing went wrong and everything was fine.

Despite their disagreements with the Yamaguchi and Yoshida families, Mariya believes their relationship will improve and they will all reconcile.

However, both Mariya and Katsumi are aware that it will remain a dream, difficult to make a reality.

"You," he said in a demanding tone, clicking his tongue and scowling at the woman. "Stay here," he says, then directs his attention to his men. "Watch her."

They complied with a salute and bowed as he exited the chamber, but Katsumi huffed and began planning her escape.

Despite the fact that the guys on duty were taller and larger in stature, it was no problem for Katsumi to defeat them. They were staring at her menacingly, and when she noticed them, she offered a charming, innocent look, indicating she wasn't afraid of them.

She removed the ring she was wearing and used its razor to cut the rope around her wrist. Her gaze never leaves the scene.

"You know, running away isn't a bad idea for you three," she replied, deliberately infuriating the men.

"And why would we do that?"

"I'm more dangerous than you think. I might suddenly leap on that guy and then break that other guy's nose in the blink of an eye."

They snickered, impressed by Katsumi's ability to belittle them with her words. "You're too weak to even rip the rope," one man remarked.

"All women are weak; stop acting tough, Missy," said another man.

Her strategy backfired because his statements irritated her. She despised being overlooked just because she was a "frail" woman who couldn't lift a kilo for her stature.

Her emotions got the best of her as she spoke maliciously and yelled, "Try me. You say I'm frail? Then give me a shot! Or are you just pussycats to beat up on a weak woman like me?"

They grunted angrily and stiffened their backs as they gazed menacingly at the woman. Being belittled and talked down to had irritated them considerably.

One of the men attempted to restrain another, but the man was too strong. He eventually broke free and strode forward, spitting abuse at Katsumi.

He grasped her collar tightly as he raised her up, but she managed to remove her hand from the rope, punch the man with the hand with the ring on, and slash his cheek all at the same time.

When the other men realized what had gone on, they rushed to his aid, pulling her back. As he approached her, she landed on her chair.

Immediately, she pushes herself off the chair, stepping on the man while rolling backwards, then removing the hairpin from her hair, letting it fall loose.

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She dodges the men's attacks by spinning while she crouches, then strikes the hairpin on their calf. Taking their ability to walk for the time being.

The last man pulled out his weapon and leveled it at her, but he was tripped by a single kick, and his weapon was snatched away from him.

As he rose up, she fired the silenced gun at him but missed, merely injuring his cheek and causing him to faint.

Her opponents were on the ground as she dusted her hands and stepped out of the chamber, only to be faced with a large, long hallway to walk through.

She exhales deeply in exhaustion, recalling the Yoshida family's residence within a castle. Which indicates that it will take some time for her to reach the exit and escape.

It had been years, and this was Katsumi's first visit to their castle. She had been aware of its existence since it was still in production, but that was when they were still friends.

Years passed, and the castle was only completed a few months after Kosuke's shocking treachery. He used a knife in an attempt to assassinate Katsumi on the school rooftop.

And for someone on their first visit, every corner she turned and every door she opened led to a different room; it felt like she was inside a maze.

She was starting to feel fatigued. All she wanted was to return home to her family and friends, who she knew were waiting for her. However, with this maze-like palace, it appeared like she would have to put in more effort to escape.

She turned the next corner and found Kosuke and Mariya cooking together in the kitchen. She pauses and swiftly hides behind the wall, making sure her adversary doesn't notice her while she flees.

But just as she was ready to turn around, she heard Mariya's voice and the soft-toned voice of Kosuke. She hadn't heard him speak that gently or chuckle without malice in years.

It made her reminisce about the past. When she remembered it, she felt an ache in her chest and a deepening melancholy in her heart.

She yearned for the days when she and Kosuke were still best friends. Knowing those days would never return saddened her even more.

Staying close to Kosuke, where she could hear their talk, wasn't a good idea, so she turned to get away. However, just as she turned around, a blunt force struck the back of her head, knocking her unconscious on the ground.

32

THE BLOODY TRUTH

A van halted near the castle door as Katsumi was being carried to a chamber. Kento and his friends were inside, on a mission to help Katsumi.

They discovered the castle using the GPS tracking equipment. They devised a strategy, and each member was assigned a task.

Yoongi and Seokjin were great with technology, so they were given instructions to stay in the van, keep an eye on the cameras, and keep them updated if they ever found their group mates in trouble.

The remaining teammates infiltrate the castle in groups of three: Namjoon with Nayeon, Jackson with Eunsun, and Kento on his own. Because they were in a large castle, this would make it easier to find Katsumi.

Namjoon and Nayeon were cautiously exploring when they unlocked the door and discovered a large hallway with many doors on the side. It astounded them to witness such grandeur and space in a residence, especially because it was their first time inside a castle.

"How are we going to find Katsumi here?" Namjoon grumbled a little too loudly. "This could take us forever."

Nayeon quickly shushed the man. "Be quiet; remember, we are not the only ones here," she remarked.

"Sorry," he apologized in a hushed tone. Both of them were worried about Katsumi, but they had to be careful and aware of their surroundings so as not to produce an uproar.

She might be close, and it would be terrible if they failed their objective.

Prior to this, Katsumi had awoken inside a bedroom, sitting on a small couch in front of the bed, blinking a few times before raising her head to look around.

She saw her legs and arms tied together as she tried to move them a few minutes later. While she was doing so, she noticed a man sitting on a couch in a corner, staring at her.

She couldn't tell who the man was, but as her eyesight cleared a few seconds later, she saw it was Kosuke, and he was fiddling with a rifle.

Her brows lifted as she realized who he was, and Kosuke took notice, assuming she figured it out from afar. He quietly smiles and asks, "Finally awake?"

She groaned again, recognizing that her escape attempt had failed and that she was once again in the hands of her adversary, which frustrated her considerably, and it also dawned on her why Kosuke was doing all of this.

The Yamaguchi family had never heard of a proper explanation for their betrayal; they had been told that it was all because of the "*sin*" Katsumi had committed, but nothing else.

She raised her head, returned his gaze, and simply questioned, "Why are you doing this?"

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While firmly gripping his revolver, he scowled and tilted his head, as if reading her countenance. "You really have no clue what you have done?" His voice was defeated.

"No, to be honest. You never provided a proper explanation or rationale."

He looked at her with disdain. "I know we assassinate people as our job, but how can you forget murdering someone who is dear to you and to me?"

"What are you talking about—."

"You *killed* Hoshi-nii!" he cried as he stood in wrath, tears welling up in his eyes. "You *killed* my older brother, gahd dangit!"

He threw his gun in front of her, which had shot at her but missed, causing Katsumi to frozen in place. Her eyes widened at what he did, and her heart beat quickly.

Slowly, she returns his gaze, her eyes filled with terror, but she maintains a brave expression.

"And I will never forgive you for what you have done," he growled as he menacingly gazed at the woman, leaving her behind before she could defend herself.

She shakes her head as she recalls what occurred, including the death of his older brother, which occurred directly in front of her eyes.

It wasn't her; she didn't know who killed him, but she was certain it wasn't her. And she needed to find the truth, but in order to do that, she knew she had to get out of the castle first.

This time, she was bound with handcuffs around her wrists and ankles, making it much more difficult for her to leave the premises.

Nonetheless, she continued to slice and break them with her ring, but her techniques were ineffective, and she had to devise a new strategy.

Just then, the sound of the door opening could be heard, and Katsumi froze in place as she hurriedly dismissed the rotor of the ring blade and tried to act normally.

She turned to see Namjoon gingerly peering inside, and her frown straightened into a relieved smile. "Namjoon!" she exclaimed, but when she realized who he was, her surprised smile faded in confusion. "Namjoon? What are you doing here?"

"We came to rescue you," he said as he and Nayeon rushed into the room.

"Is it just you two?"

He shook his head as he kneeled to unlock the ankle restraints, while Nayeon hurried behind him, unlocking the wrist cuffs.

"No, all of us came to your rescue," he responded.

Hearing the locks click and unlock, Katsumi was surprised to see them successfully release her wrists and ankles like pros, causing her to stammer, taken aback.

Nayeon helped her up and encouraged the two to leave quickly before someone entered the room and caught them red-handed.

Yoongi and Seokjin had briefed the others about what they had seen on the CCTV cameras and prompted them to return to the van because Katsumi had left the premises earlier.

Seokjin handed her a bottle of water as they entered the van. They had to wait for the others to arrive before fleeing.

However, Yoongi, who was still watching the CCTV cameras, noticed the guards inside the castle panicking. One of them was

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walking quickly towards Jackson and Eunsun, but he was too late to convey the news.

They swiftly cut back and blocked the guards' defense. Yoongi quickly alerted Kento of the situation and went to assist them.

Unfortunately, word of Katsumi's escape reached Kosuke, who was furious. He was enraged and directed his troops to pursue them and use them as bait to bring the woman back.

The lads in the van found out about what happened, and we're watching the battle on the screen. Their hearts were racing, but the three youngsters eventually managed to juke and flee the castle grounds.

In the worst-case scenario, the guards pursued them, causing them to panic. Katsumi took the steering wheel and began slowly moving the van.

"Aid them in!" She screamed.

When Nayeon and Namjoon opened the back door of the van, they saw their companions racing for their lives towards the moving van.

"Give me your hand!" Nayeon yelled, and Eunsun was the first to reach in. Hands linked, and she immediately drew him inside. Jackson grasped Namjoon's hand while Kento took Seokjin's.

Once everyone was inside, Katsumi stamped on the accelerator, quickening the vehicle's speed as they closed the door behind them.

She continued on the journey back to their mansion without looking back. However, their gas was running low, and they needed to go to the gas station to get some.

When they arrived, Katsumi stepped out of the van to fill the tank, while Eunsun went inside the store to pay for the gasoline.

Half of them followed Eunsun inside to purchase themselves refreshments as a reward for completing the mission, while the other half rested inside the van.

Kento leaned against the vehicle beside his sister as she worked on the gas.

"Did that jerk hurt you?" he inquired.

"Fortunately, not a single scratch. There were several attempts, but I'm alright."

He huffed deeply. Knowing their family's circumstances, he felt a sense of obligation to keep his sister safe, but he decided to be reckless, and as a result, he felt enormous regret for not being able to protect her.

Katsumi noted his solemn expression as he stared into thin air. She knew his mind was preoccupied with worry, wrath, or maybe revenge, as if his thoughts were telepathic.

She sighs softly. "I discovered the reason for the Yoshida clan's betrayal of our family," she added, which piqued Kento's curiosity as his head jerked in her direction.

"I thought they were just rebelling out of spite. There was a reason?"

She gave a nod. "Do you remember their oldest son?"

He nodded. "Hoshi."

"Apparently, they assumed I was the one who murdered him."

"Why would they think that?"

"It must've been because they found out I was with him the day of his death." She went on to say, "What's worse, I was holding a gun during the time of his death."

Chills rushed down his spine. To think this happened without him knowing, he was baffled.

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"So, did you do it?"

Katsumi's brow wrinkled as she confidently objected, "No." She then sighed, "That's why I've decided to clear my name. I didn't do it, and whoever did is still lurking around this country with no punishment." She then shifted her gaze to him and asked, "Will you help me?"

33

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

A day had passed, and Kento and their friends had chosen to join forces to help bring justice to Katsumi's name and to Kosuke's older brother.

If Katsumi was innocent, as she claims, they couldn't let the true offender escape while the punishment was imposed on her.

Because the Yamaguchi clan is close to the Seoul police department, they requested their assistance in their investigation.

Hoshi was assassinated in front of Koyama Diner, and sadly, there was no CCTV camera installed directly on the restaurant's street.

While the rest of the family sat on the couch in the living room, Kento called to inquire if there were any CCTV cameras near the crime scene. He hung up and returned with a helpless expression.

"It's no use," he replied while shaking his head. "There's no CCTV around the restaurant. Plus, the murder took place five years ago, and they said the data from the CCTV footage the government carries dates around only two years ago."

The lads huffed as Katsumi glanced at the ground, considering another way to obtain evidence from the crime scene from back then.

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She knew it would be a challenging endeavor, but she hadn't anticipated how difficult this investigation would be. But then, a few seconds later, a light bulb went off in her head as she had an idea.

"Didn't Hoshi-nii tell us about their camera glasses that they always wear on missions?" she remarked, causing Kento's mouth to drop open and his eyes to widen in surprise.

"He did! Months before he died!" he exclaimed.

"Hoshi was on a mission that night?" Eunsun wondered, his brow wrinkled.

"He wasn't," she clarified. "He mentioned that he was accompanying Kosuke on his first mission. Furthermore, he only wears glasses during missions, and he was wearing them when I met with him."

"So that means Kosuke was around," Jackson surmised.

"If he was, then he must've witnessed his brother's death since you said Hoshi died right in front of you," he remarked. "So, why was he so sure you were the one who murdered his brother?" he asked, his face skeptical.

She sighed as she remembered the stupid thing she pulled off back then. As a result, she was the sole suspect in his death, despite the fact that she was completely innocent.

"I was holding the gun that Hoshi-nii had given me as a gift for Kosuke. I naively toyed with it, pretending to be a cop from an anime and holding the gun in front of him. It didn't have any ammunition, and I didn't pull the trigger, but he got hit in the head where I pointed the rifle, giving the impression that I murdered him."

It was unpleasant and upsetting for Katsumi to see the face of the man she cherished and considered an elder brother as blood flowed down his face from the hole in his head.

"When that happened, I didn't know why, but I ran away," she continued after a deep huff. "I was so scared of what was happening and scared of what might happen to me. I forgot the glasses Hoshinii was wearing had a camera and fled, thinking no one saw anything."

"Nevertheless, we now know the reason for the Yoshida clan's betrayal when, from their perspective, we were the first ones to betray them," Eunsun went on to say.

"And we need to do something about this injustice to prevent future wars," Kento continued, and everyone agreed with a firm nod.

They created a strategy for acquiring the USB containing the film from their cameras, and they had to act quickly since time was ticking, and they knew that each second wasted meant another day closer to when Kosuke would attack.

They used Yoongi's hacking abilities to covertly hack the security camera devices in order to map out every corner of the castle that night.

Jackson informed the others of his discovery back when they were on the hunt for Katsumi, and along a hallway in the basement, he reached a room with files and boxes with the years written on them.

Because of the several halls he looked over and traveled through, he couldn't recall which room he had entered. Fortunately for them, Seokjin had remembered seeing Jackson exit a room from the van's CCTV feed.

This was fantastic news for them. They were able to monitor Jackson's path and see for themselves which direction went to the correct room, owing to the camera footage from their mission that had been recorded.

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They paused the video just as the man opened the door, and there were undoubtedly boxes and files inside. With this information in hand, they plan when and how they will infiltrate the fortress.

They began carrying out the plan the next night after it was devised. Seokjin and Yoongi were in command of the security camera and were able to freeze the footage, giving the impression that the intrusion was not taking place.

They snuck into the halls and basement, only to be faced with more passageways until they arrived at their destination, dressed entirely in black.

The door was locked, but they were able to enter with ease due to Nayeon's pick-locking talents.

"We're looking for the year 2010." Copy the data and replace it."

Everyone nodded and began looking for their preferred file. It took some research, but Namjoon eventually identified the file concealed in a secret lock, which Nabi was able to open.

"Hoshi must've been very special to the Yoshida clan for his footage to be in a lock," Nayeon stated as she pulled out the USB and handed it to Eunsun along with the laptop.

"He *is* the oldest son of the Yoshida Clan," Jackson explained.

"He's the kindest of them all," Kento added. "He can be very aggressive, but he's a very kind-hearted person with lots of empathy for people, and he would help Kazuha-ne with the orphanage."

"You could say he was the Yoshida family's first pride, and many people looked up to him. Kosuke and I were among the many," Katsumi added.

The discussion was cut short, and the files on the USB had been successfully transmitted; two video files, one entitled Kosuke and the other Hoshi, were copied into the laptop.

"Great! Put this back and let's go," he remarked as they took off.

"Welcome back!" Yoongi said as he opened the van door with a smile as Seokjin approached him with an inquisitive expression.

"Did you get it?"

"Of course," Nayeon responded, proudly shrugging.

Katsumi sat in the driver's seat, with Kento sitting beside her as she started the engine and stomped on the accelerator. They head to the cinema room as soon as they return to the mansion to watch the tape on a larger screen now that they've acquired it.

They began by playing footage from the 'Kosuke' file. The video begins inside a car. They watch Kosuke during his preadolescence, examining the camera in front of him to see if it is turned on.

He put on the spectacles, and the camera turned to face his butler. "Good luck, young master," he said with a slight bow.

"Thank you, Koi-san." With a deep, tense sigh, he walks out, his stuff slung over his shoulders, to his hideout, where he will carry out his assassination.

He was a couple minutes early on a rooftop, a couple buildings away from where the target was supposed to be, so he began to assemble his sniper and waited on standby.

While waiting, he noticed his older brother exiting the restaurant where his goal was, and he happened to meet up with Katsumi.

They waved and smiled as they gave a small, happy greeting. But because he was so far away, he couldn't overhear their conversation.

He snickered, "What's this? A date?" At the end, his snicker became a little despondent as it faded quickly into an awkward chuckle and a sigh.

"Pay attention to the mission, Kosuke. There's no time to be jealous right now," he grumbled as he shrugged his shoulders and estab-

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lished his position, waiting until his target left the restaurant. Just seconds later, he heard footsteps behind him, and as he turned to see who it was, he was forcefully hit on the head.

He grunted as he landed on the chilly floor, his glasses having slipped off. The camera took a whack and landed across him, yet it continued to record.

Before being shattered by it, a black Oxford shoe emerged in front of the camera. However, the recording was still in progress. Despite the fact that the lens was cracked, sounds could still be clearly heard.

The sound of an unidentified individual strolling was suddenly interrupted by the sound of their clothes rustling and their kneecaps cracking. As well as the sound of the sniper being used.

It wasn't loud; Kosuke had installed a silencer to prevent the gunshot from disturbing or revealing that a gun had been used. Then there are rustling noises and the steps of someone exiting the site.

They then chose to watch the 'Hoshi' film. It all started in the bedroom of the Yoshida clan's late, oldest son.

Hoshi was seen dusting his clothes and examining himself in the mirror, spectacles already on, and seeing the man brought back memories for the twins.

It broke their hearts, and they missed the individual while they continued to watch. Hoshi exited his room and was greeted.

He exited the premises and waited for his personal butler in front of the vehicle. "Good evening, sir," the butler said, bowing to him.

"Good evening, Kiri-san!" he said as he walked down the stairs. "Please take me to the gun shop, then to the restaurant for Kosuke's mission after."

"Understood," he said as he bowed slightly and opened the door for the man to enter, then shut it again. They were held in traffic for

a few minutes, and Hoshi was scrolling through social media on his phone when he suddenly received a notification from Katsumi.

KT: <'I apologize for being late, Hoshi-nii.

But don't worry; I'll still be there.'>

It said, and he promptly reacted.

HS: < 'Did you get up late from your nap'?>

KT: <'You sure do know me.'>

HS: < 'I'll go to the gun shop, so there's

no need for you to rush, Katsu. Please take

your time; I'll see you shortly'!>

KT<'How I wish Kento had your patience,

Niichan. See you!'>

Hoshi chuckled and shook his head softly in response to Katsumi's reply. He then received a notification, which he swiftly disregarded before huffing deeply and switching off his phone.

While watching, Kento gave his sister a side look, which Katsumi observed. She chuckled and acted sweetly to cover up the things she said about him.

The video continues inside the gun store. He bought a little gun with K.Y. etched on the grip's bottom. Then he went to the restaurant, where he was scheduled to meet Katsumi after finishing his business there.

He waited inside the restaurant for his friend because she had not arrived. He then received another notification from someone else, which he dismissed once more and proceeded to purchase a little drink for himself. He became so irritated by the continuous messages

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from the same lady he appeared to be ignoring that he gave up resisting and messaged her back.

He witnessed Kosuke's target enter the premises seconds after staying inside. He glanced at him a few times but remained unconcerned, sipping his tea while waiting for Katsumi.

He paid for his drink and left after receiving a text from her. When he exited the premises, he noticed Katsumi and gave her a big smile and wave.

"Hey!" he explained.

"Hoshi-nii! Sorry for the delay."

He shook his head and added, "It's not a problem."

She observed the gift he was holding and inquired, "Is that the gun you mentioned buying?"

"Yep! It's actually for Kosuke," he explained as he took the weapon out. "Since today is his first night of missions, I thought I'd give him something as a good luck gift," he continued as he handed the gun to her.

She admired and played with the weapon, pointing the rifle beside her, before acting out a scene from one of her and Kosuke's favorite cop anime.

"Be careful, Katsu," he grinned as she went on, then pointed the gun at him and pretended to shoot, making a sound effect in the process.

That sound effect, however, combined with the sound of a real gun discharging, hit Hoshi on the forehead. When she realized her beloved brother from another mother had dropped lifeless on the floor, she frowned in an instant.

Katsumi approached the man and gently shook him, softly crying out his name, her voice quivering with fear. He wasn't moving; his

eyes were open, and blood flowed from his brow. He was no longer responding.

As she glanced at the rifle she was carrying, her body began to shake in horror. If anyone had seen the murder scene, they would have assumed she was the one who killed the man.

She took the gun and package with her and fled the scene of the crime as swiftly as she could, afraid of becoming a suspect. Leaving Hoshi's corpse behind.

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EVERYTHING IS CLEAR

KATSUMI observed as her previous deeds were replayed for her to investigate. She was ashamed of what she had done all because she didn't want to lose the friendship of the Yoshida clan, but her actions had backfired.

In addition, she concentrates on her surroundings for any possible hints. Looking hard enough, she eventually found something she found suspicious.

She noticed a figure in the background who appeared to be familiar. "Can you zoom in on that figure in the back, Yoongi?" she inquired, to which the man obliged and did so with ease.

The video zoomed in on the figure mentioned by Katsumi, making the footage blurry to watch. But, with a little magic, Yoongi was able to make everything clear once more.

It was a relief that the Yoshida clan utilized a high-quality camera on their glasses; otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to make the footage clearer when magnified.

Continuing the film, a man was visible on top of a rooftop for a brief while as Hoshi's body dropped to the ground. He stood, turned around, and went away quickly.

Yoongi takes a moment to show the man's face as clearly as he can.

"Do you know who it is?" Kento inquired as Katsumi appeared perplexed, searching for answers and combing through her memory to discover who the familiar man was.

"He looks familiar, but I don't remember who."

"Then, while you recall who it is, let's start with gathering any clues or parts of the video we find suspicious," Eunsun says, before heading towards Yoongi and taking control of the footage. "I'll go first."

He played Kosuke's footage and paused at the perpetrators' shoes. "First and foremost, these look like the shoes Kento used when he was still in grade school, but I'm certain this isn't his doing," he said.

"How are you certain it's not his?" Nayeon inquired.

"During the night of Hoshi-nii's death, I was with Eunsun, and we were playing games live," Kento replied casually. "There are CCTV cameras inside the mansion to help prove my liability, and the video is still up."

"But it doesn't mean it belonged to Kento," said Seokjin. "It's a popular brand, so the shoes could belong to anybody."

"True, but the shoes Kento owns are specifically made just for him, as you can see the bear-like image indented on the shoe in this video."

"That implies... someone is attempting to frame Kento for ruining Kosuke's mission?" Jackson deduced.

"Exactly!" shouted Eunsun.

"And whoever that someone is, there is a possibility they framed Katsumi for murder as well," Namjoon remarked.

"Why did you think that?" Seokjin puzzledly queried.

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"We might not be able to see it, but I heard the gunshots with a silencer after the cracks that I assume were from the knee caps when kneeling."

Yoongi performed his task by combining both films and aligning them with the evidence in Hoshi's clip. When the sounds from Kosuke's tape and the video being played on Hoshi's were played side by side, they blended perfectly.

When they discovered such critical information from the tape they collected, the lads watching let out a gasp of amazement, and a shiver rushed through their bodies.

While that was going on, Katsumi had a thought about who the man could be. She wasn't sure if it was him because they hadn't seen each other in years, and she knew she'd only met him once.

Then she realized. The suspect was captured at her 7th birthday celebration. As a result, she began looking for the photo on social media.

It didn't take long for her to notice a photo of him in the background. The photo was clear, and you could see his face, which looked just like the man in the video.

"I found it!" she exclaimed eagerly, capturing the attention of the others.

"Do you recall who the man was?" Jackson inquired, and Katsumi responded with a nod.

"I sent the image to our group chat. Please display it on the screen, Yoongi."

Yoongi quickly did so, putting the picture together while Katsumi approached the boy to wait beside him until he accomplished what was instructed.

When the companions saw both images side by side, they were astounded by the similarities. Both men had the same hairdo, skin tone, soft jaw structure, and a scar on his left brow.

"Is that picture from your birthday party?" Eunsun pondered, and Kento quickly remembered the person on the screen, his brows furrowed in familiarity.

"Wait a minute, isn't this...?"

As the twins made eye contact, Katsumi nodded. "Exactly," she huffs, shifting her gaze to their companions, "this was Mariya's former personal butler."

"Mariya?" Nayeon inquired, her brow furrowed in perplexity, and so Katsumi provided a photo of the woman, whom Yoongi displayed on the screen.

"During elementary school, Kosuke and I had a close buddy named Nishikawa Mariya. She loved Kosuke back then, and given what I saw on the day of my kidnapping, she still feels the same way."

"But if she liked him, why would her ex-personal butler sabotage Kosuke's mission and assassinate Hoshi?" Seokjin inquired.

"Do you think she was the one who told him to do those things?" Jackson wondered.

"There's a possibility that that would be the case," he said. "Knowing the Nishikawa family, the butlers would only act on their master's orders, and if they break their rules, punishment awaits them—terrible punishment."

"Plus, murdering a family member of the Yoshida Yakuza clan isn't a great idea if you don't want to get murdered," Eunsun remarked.

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"But why would she do something like that?" Nayeon questioned in utter confusion. "If she adored Kosuke, why did she murder his brother?"

"Perhaps it has something to do with the messages that we saw in the brothers' footage," Yoongi mused aloud before returning to Hoshi's POV video and playing only the scenes where the messages were shown.

"In this part, the first notification reads a message sent from Mariya, '*Hoshi-nii, please bear me out.*' To which he ignored." He then fast-forwarded the film, "Next, this second notification from the same person, Mariya, which says, '*Are you with Katsumi?*', followed by, '*Does Kosuke know about this?*'" He continues, "Based on Hoshi's reaction to the message, Mariya may have done something in the initial notification that enraged him. He hasn't forgiven her or is determined to tell someone Mariya doesn't want people to know, which is why she's pleading through messages."

"How about the second alert?" Katsumi inquired, having already sat back down. "What does our meeting have to do with Kosuke being aware of it?"

Kento's brows furrowed when he heard her question. "I thought you knew, sis," he replied, and she shifted back, her forehead crashing in uncertainty.

"Knew what?"

"Both Hoshi-nii and Kosuke were head over heels for you."

Katsumi's surprised expression revealed that she had no knowledge about the Yoshida brothers' secret; Kento had assumed, based on the obvious hints they presented, that she had known or had a hunch they both liked her more than just friends.

The other lads had the same reaction as she did, but for a completely different reason: they were overjoyed to discover more explanations for the data presented, which will help them get close to the truth.

"Mariya must have known about their secret in that case. Hence her message, which sounded a little bit like she was threatening him."

It was exactly as she had said. With all of these explanations and proofs being disclosed and discovered one by one, the murderer's motivations for murdering Hoshi began to make sense.

However, they had to get up early the next day for their next training, and it was already late at night. As a result, they called the meeting to a halt in order to have a good night's sleep and resumed the next day after dinner.

But, before going to bed, Kento called the police department to assist them with their investigation. For starters, they needed to track down Mariya's former personal butler.

They eagerly started the investigation, and the following morning, Kento had gotten the basic facts about the individual as well as Mariya's. Their entire history was sent, and throughout the training, he received another file with credit card receipts.

He went through the paperwork and found nothing out of the norm. But it was the fact that the man went missing six years ago, the day after Hoshi died, that piqued his interest.

Nonetheless, his receipt transactions did not end that day and were shown to be used for up to a few months before he stopped using his card entirely.

Because of this, the police thought that the man had quit his job to live alone and died in a place where no one could locate him.

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Mariya, on the other hand, appeared to have undergone surgery on her lips and nose, a facial lift, facial liposuction, and even a blepharoplasty and kerato-pigmentation operation.

It seemed as if she was transforming herself into a whole other person. Kento thought it was a shame for Mariya to undergo these procedures since she was known as one of the most beautiful women at their school.

Nonetheless, it was her decision, and he knew he shouldn't protest or feel embarrassed about anything when she was happy with her new look.

He shared the report with the others after training, which perplexed Katsumi.

"I didn't know Mariya had all these surgeries," she said.

"It has been a while since we've seen her," Eunsun remarked.

"No, I mean, I saw her the day I was kidnapped in the castle, cooking in the kitchen with Kosuke. She appeared to be the same to me."

"Maybe the surgeon was that professional with their job," Nayeon said.

"Maybe, but her eye colors are still the same."

"Are you certain? Maybe she was facing the other way, so you couldn't see her new look," Seokjin speculated.

Katsumi grumbled in frustration, questioning whether what she saw was the Mariya she remembered from primary school, and immediately went on social media to check on Mariya's account, where she found her looking like her typical self in her most recent upload.

She handed them the photo as proof that what she actually saw was not a fraud. As a result, they began to wonder why there were

plastic surgery receipts on her credit card and for whom they were intended.

Namjoon's eyes expanded, as if a thought had struck him. Nayeon was taken aback by his reaction. "You've figured something out?" she inquired.

"This may sound crazy, but what if the butler never actually quit or died but was still working for them under a different name?" he said, a little excited.

"Like what Kento and Katsumi had done?" Seokjin speculated.

"Similar, but what I meant by a different identity includes both the background and his physical appearance."

"If that was the case, then it would explain for whom the purchase was as well as the reason for it," Jackson said.

"Damn, you have incredibly intelligent and creative thinking, Namjoon-ah," Eunsun exclaimed, impressed.

Namjoon snickered proudly as he bashfully dropped his head, disguising his flustered reaction, and they began to believe that what Namjoon had thought was true, so they began to study Mariya further.

Continuing with Mariya's new personal butler, Kento messaged the police, who conducted an investigation for a week.

A report came Sunday night, and when Kento received the email, he immediately reported the others. They all met inside the cinema to continue their discussion.

According to the information provided, Mariya's "new" personal butler's name is Jio Kazunari. A 47-year-old man who has worked for the Nishikawa family for approximately 6 years. He is the family's only kid, and both of his parents died of old age two years ago.

They placed the pictures of both butlers' side by side, and while looking at them, they could detect some similarities, but they are very

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different people. The "then" butler had close-together monoid eyes, a flat nose, a thick jaw, black eyes, and curly hair.

While the "now" butler had significantly wider apart double eyelids, a pointed nose, chiseled jaw, dark eyes, and straight hair, they shared bushy brows, a similar face shape, and a similar skin tone. Even though he had parts replaced, he still appeared to be the "then" guy, but with a new appearance.

"However, our theories are just assumptions; that isn't enough to put him in jail," Kento added, and everyone nodded in agreement.

"But why did she do all of this?" Katsumi asked, still stunned; she couldn't imagine that an innocent-faced person like Mariya would murder someone. Specially making her the suspect in the crime.

She initially thought they were close friends back then, so being betrayed by one of the people she trusted the most hurt her and filled her head with a lot of intriguing concerns that needed to be answered.

"Perhaps it's because she wanted Kosuke all to herself," Seokjin speculated, prompting many puzzled head turns.

"She'd plan a murder just for that? Why can't she simply confess or earn his love?" Jackson inquired.

"Because she knows Kosuke already has someone in his heart, and that person's name is Katsumi. Even if she tries to confess, she will be rejected, and she knows she will never be his again."

"Didn't Hoshi also fancy Katsumi? She could've said something about that and planned their love lives for the both of them," Nayeon remarked.

Yoongi cocked his head, a skeptical expression on his face. "I don't think that'll work for her."

"And why not?"

"Do you remember the POV footage? Her texts to him were begging and blackmailing in some way. And by bringing up Kosuke, he may have found something about Mariya—perhaps her affections for his brother." He goes on to say, "However, how he reacted shows it might be more than just that. Knowing now that Mairya would go to this extent of murdering someone for someone else's love, there are chances that it must've been because of how creepily obsessed she was with Kosuke. And Hoshi, knowing that, must've crumpled her entire reality, afraid of letting Kosuke make known of her obsessive behavior when he's not around."

Namjoon's eyes widened in realization after brainstorming during the discussion. Connecting the dots one by one, the motive for Mariya's murderous crime became clear to him.

"That's it," he said. "She knows Hoshi cared for his brother; therefore, she tried blackmailing Hoshi because she must've known Kosuke had feelings for Katsumi as well; however, it didn't work. And she knows he will eventually tell her to her crush, which might ruin her close platonic relationship with him, and so the only solution she could think of to prevent that from happening was to eliminate the problem, which is Hoshi. But, because it was a perfect opportunity, she takes advantage of it by sabotaging Kosuke's first mission and taking advantage of Katsumi and Hoshi's meeting at that restaurant, disguising her butler as Kento and framing Katsumi for the crime as if the Yamaguchi Clan had betrayed them. This ends Hoshi's life and Kosuke's feelings for Katsumi, who was falsely accused of murdering his older brother. She did everything she could to get the man she desired, which regrettably worked."

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Listening to their theory made a lot of sense, and it sent goosebumps up their spines. It was the best they could come up with, and they were certain of what had occurred.

They were aware, however, that further evidence was required. They didn't want to confront Mariya because they knew that if the case went to court, she would undoubtedly delete more potentially crucial evidence that they were unaware she possessed.

But they understood they couldn't get further evidence on their own. They required assistance from someone close to the culprit, and that person was none other than Kosuke.

Knowing it would be a difficult assignment to persuade their adversary, they had no alternative if they intended to bring Hoshi the justice he deserved.

However, before confronting Kosuke about their discoveries, they conferred with the twins' parents, displayed the evidence on television, and outlined their future plans.

They wanted this dispute to stop as soon as possible, even if it was a risky idea. So, after the meeting, Katsumi began messaging Kosuke an invitation, which she then sent via email.

'Dear Kosuke Yoshida,

I, Katsumi Yamaguchi, welcome you to visit the Yamaguchi residence at any time this week to make amends and discuss a discovery we have been investigating for your brother, Hoshi's, justice.

I am positive that I did not murder Hoshi Yoshida and have complete proof to show my innocence as well as evidence for the true suspect.

If you're still suspicious, Mr. and Mrs. Yoshida are welcome to join the discussion. We eagerly await your response and acceptance of the invitation.

Sincerely, the Yamaguchi Twins.'

Katsumi hoped for a positive response, but she realized that would only happen in a fantasy and would not be conceivable in reality. And, as expected, Kosuke responded adversely.

'Dear Tsumi,

Don't think I will reply with kindness, but do expect a response of honesty. After escaping my dungeon, don't think I will let you go so easily.

You're not the murderer, you say? That bullshit of a sentence caused me to laugh hysterically in disbelief; it made me lose my breath and tear up.

However, since you managed to infiltrate the castle and steal confidential footage from the year 2010, I expect vital and real evidence to prove who the real suspect is.

I will go alone on Thursday, as my mother and father wish, and I will keep this meeting confidential. In addition, if you don't provide evidence, allow me to end you for both wasting my time and my brother's life.

I hope you have a bad day.

Kosuke.'

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Katsumi sighed as she finished reading the messages. It baffled her, knowing Kosuke had been aware of their intrusion into his home all along.

She wasn't nervous or afraid for her life; in fact, she felt quite the contrary. Excitement, happiness, and determination flowed through her veins.

It was now or never to make atonement, deliver justice to the victim, and clear the Yamaguchi clan's name. The deadline was Thursday, and she had three days to assemble the evidence.

35

THE TRUTH TOLD

KATSUMI had been working on a PowerPoint presentation and documentation for the past few days while the boys proceeded with their training.

After receiving the email, they started thinking about ways to protect Katsumi. Things might go well if she defends herself properly, but if she doesn't and Kosuke is still convinced she is the true murderer, the man will honor his vow and kill her right then and there.

Which they needed to avoid and devise a method to save Katsumi from him. She was, however, self-assured enough to defend herself using the evidence they'd discovered.

Kosuke can be difficult to please and persuade, but she knows that when strong evidence outweighs another, he will side with justice.

It might hurt him because of how close he is to the suspect, but they can't empathize with Kosuke now. Katsumi needs to prioritize herself in order to keep her family secure.

The night before Thursday arrived, and Katsumi was frightened, but she was determined to finally make amends and redeem her record.

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The time was 1 a.m. Katsumi was wrapping up her presentation at midnight. Namjoon yawned his way back to his room after using the restroom.

He eventually noticed the woman and caught her attention, jolting him awake as he headed to the kitchen to get her a cup of tea.

As he set it down on the table, it drew her attention away from the cup of tea and toward him. "How's the presentation going?" he inquired as he sat down in front of her.

"Just a few slides left until I'm done with it," she said with a big sigh of tiredness. Seeing her work hard made his heart race for her anxiously, and remembering the threat made it beat ten times faster.

There were so many questions and what-ifs about what would happen tomorrow; there was not a single positive idea in his thoughts. He trusted Katsumi because she is a competent and reliable woman, but he was still afraid of her because of his anxiety.

Time passes, and Katsumi has completed her presentation. Stretching the stiffness away, she shifted to Namjoon in front of her, who was fast asleep, laying his head on the table.

She was so preoccupied with her presentation that she had forgotten Namjoon was with her. And she had assumed he had already left with the tea beside her because of the silence.

Just having someone to accompany her through her trials made her happy. Namjoon might have simply left her with the tea, but watching him stay with her warmed her heart.

She didn't want to wake him from his slumber, but it would be awful if he had a cold from sleeping outside on the patio, where it was a little chilly.

Reluctantly, she brought her hand towards him and gently placed it on top of his fluffy hair. It was incredibly velvety, as if he had been caring for it on a regular basis.

It felt so nice that it made her forget what she was doing. She strokes his hair tenderly and calls him out softly after shaking her head slightly.

"Namjoon-ah," she said, leaning in closer so he could hear her. Not anticipating it, he raised his head to gaze at her as soon as he awoke.

Their faces were only an inch apart, and they could see their eyes enlarging in surprise as they twinkled at each other. Closeness brought their hearts together, racing together. Minds emptied, thinking of nothing and embracing the sudden intimacy.

It couldn't be avoided when Katsumi's attention shifted down to his lips and back up, causing the man to blush feverishly and his heart to race faster. It's incredible how a little movement affected him to such an extent.

The sound of plastic bottles crashing to the ground resonated through the corridor, startling the friends on the patio, who both jerked their heads towards the noise in response.

They noticed Kento and Eunsun in awe of their closeness and were taken aback when they noticed them staring at him. Eunsun's movement grew rigid, like a child caught in the act; he didn't know what to do next and stuttered.

"We were just heading to the kitchen for water," he stammered out. "I didn't know you two were...c-close like that."

They blushed even more after hearing his words and were about to clear up the misunderstanding when they noticed Kento's intimidating expression.

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Eunsun turned to see the same expression and chuckled nervously. "Kento is just as shocked as I am," Eunsun remarked anxiously as he nudged the man's belly, but he didn't budge and kept glaring at them.

"It's just a misunderstanding, Kento," she then shifts to Namjoon, "right?"

Namjoon immediately nodded his head aggressively. "Katsumi was just waking me up from my slumber. Speaking of slumber, I'll head to bed."

Katsumi nodded her head in agreement as they both hurried back to their rooms, and Kento eyed the man as he retreated to his bedroom.

Eunsun pushed him towards the staircase with a sigh, quickly to avoid future problems, knowing that one powerful strike from the man would knock anyone out, especially when he's angry.

The lads were preparing the theater for the meeting with Kosuke Yoshida when morning dawned. Tension permeated the air, and their hearts were racing.

One wrong move, and things will not proceed as planned, potentially leading to another conflict. Katsumi studied every piece of evidence and comprehended the documents prepared to avoid this. It was like presenting your thesis research to the jurors; despite all of her preparation, she was nervous.

Kosuke had arrived in the afternoon. Two buff men guarded him as he made his way to the mansion's main door.

Kento addressed the man respectfully, his face nonchalant. "I'm glad you arrived safely."

Kosuke grinned at his presence, surprised by his choice of words. "Are you genuinely happy?"

"Of course, we wouldn't want anything happening to you on the way, or else your parents will think we were the ones who caused it."

"Fair point," he said with a nod. Kento scooted over, motioning towards the door, and directed the man to the theater room.

Before entering, Kosuke had directed his men to safeguard the room from the outside, which they did. Katsumi stood in the middle of the room in her casual formal attire, awaiting his arrival.

She smiles and replies, "Welcome, Kosuke."

"Looking confident, I see."

"I have every right to feel this confidence; I'm not the murderer of Hoshi-nii, and I have receipts to prove it."

"And I trust you do, or else you know what's coming for you."

Katsumi snickered, fearless, "Of course." While the woman appeared confident, the rest of her friends were dreading on the inside.

Kosuke sat on the opposite side of the room from them. As Yoongi began displaying the presentation on the screen, he was given an envelope holding the documents containing the proof and evidence of the crime.

Namjoon handed Katsumi a bottle of water and whispered some encouraging words to her. She could feel her body tensing, but it gradually relaxed after hearing his words. He smiled at her, and she returned the smile.

The lights then dimmed slightly as the screen illuminated the room. Mixed with tension and hope, the meeting has begun.

"I'll get right to the point. I DID NOT KILL Hoshi-nii because the gun I was holding was empty. As a result, killing him is out of the question."

"Then why did you flee?"

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"I was terrified, Kosuke. I was afraid I'd be suspected because I was the only one there with the gun, not realizing it was all recorded from Hoshi-nii's glasses." She sighed deeply and huffed, "Moving on."

"In order to solve this case, we had no choice but to steal information from the footage of your glasses. And upon investigating the footage, there are many clues that we found suspicious and would like to address."

"First and foremost, these shoes we found may look like they belonged to Kento, but they don't," she says, skipping to the next slide of the PowerPoint. "From Hoshi-nii's perspective, at the time he was shot, you could see a man standing on top of a building's rooftop, where you were hiding. When the two are combined, the sound of his garments ruffling as he stands up corresponds to the footage. In addition, there is evidence in social media of his live gaming with Eunsun playing games that same night. As a result, Kento isn't the man who ruined your first mission."

Moving on to the next slide reveals the man—the true suspect—who wrecked Kosuke's mission and assassinated his brother.

When Kosuke saw the man's picture on the screen, his eyes widened slightly, and his head straightened gradually. He recognized the man right away, and Katsumi observed his expression.

"It seems like this man isn't a stranger to you." The woman said, "Good, I don't have to explain deeply who it is. Kame-san is the suspect. Unfortunately, at this time, his job was that of butler to a certain wealthy family member. And that is no other than—"

"Mariya," Kosuke said as she grinned.

"Precisely."

His face was filled with dismay because the one he thought he could trust wasn't exactly who he believed, and Katsumi felt sympathetic after realizing his pain.

"Would you like me to stop—?"

"Continue," he cut her off again, his voice grave. If it meant giving his brother justice, he would do anything to put the killer behind bars, even if the culprit was someone he cared for.

"Very well," she continued before moving on to the next slide: "While we suspect the butler is the assassin, Mariya is the master-mind."

Proof number one: because our suspect works for Mariya, specifically as her personal butler, he will be punished instantly if he does this without their knowledge or disobeys their master. Which was said to be extremely cruel, and everyone avoided it.

Proof number two: the day after Hoshi-nii's murder, he went missing. As a result, they followed his credit card, which was curiously still being used after a few months. Police believe he died alone; however, tracking Mariya's credit card receipts reveals that she had undergone extensive surgery on her face just the day after Hoshi-nii's death."

Kosuke's brow furrowed in surprise as he examined the receipts on the screen, because he knew the woman had no surgery on her face.

She is constantly with him every week to visit him, and her face is the same as it has always been. Her eyes did not change color; they remained in the same position and form.

It baffled him after seeing the receipt, which instantly swapped with a picture of Mariya, updated just yesterday, and nothing had changed from her, as Kosuke knew.

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"If the surgeries weren't for her, we speculated that it could be for her former personal butler, who was deemed dead by the police and who now goes as her "new" personal butler, Kazunari Jio-san. He started working for her six years ago, just a few months after Hoshi-nii died.

The final proof: if you viewed Hoshi-nii's footage, you'd notice Mariya pleading for a chance, but he ignored her not once, but twice. The messages she sent the second time, on the other hand, indicate her threatening or blackmailing him.

She knew both of you had feelings for Katsumi," she paused, "to me, and used that knowledge to put Hoshi-nii in a bind. We suspect, based on his responses and her messages, that Hoshi-nii had discovered something from Mariya that she didn't want anyone to know, and that the reason she planned this assassination was to remove the threat.

She knew Hoshi-nii and I were going to meet at a local restaurant where your target was, and she took advantage of that to murder your brother and frame me for it without putting dirt in her hands. After all, who else would've known about the camera on your glasses since the only people you've told me about it are Mariya, Kento, and me? The End."

Katsumi noticed his expression as the light switched on after her presentation. He appeared to be pondering something with himself, his countenance somber once more.

"Something got your tongue?"

He raised his head, noticing how everyone in the room was staring at him, waiting for his response. He stood up with the paperwork in his grip, his eyes unconcerned.

As he sighed heavily, everyone in the room prepared their weapons for his unexpected act. He appears to have been rendered speechless by the meeting, and he wasn't expecting such a lengthy explanation, let alone a presentation on who the true culprit is.

He was impressed, but also ashamed, because he had assumed she was the murderer. However, as a result of this meeting, he realized he had been talked to about this in the past, which led him to believe Katsumi was the murderer of his older brother.

"Is the investigation still ongoing?" he inquired, which caught them off guard.

"Y-yeah," she said, "but why are you asking?"

"Use me as bait for Mariya."

Katsumi raised her brows in surprise. "Are you sure?"

"Of course," he responded, as if it were an obvious thing, and went on, "Mariya visits every Sunday."

"And how about your parents?"

"I'll explain everything once I get home, and then I'll be back to start the plan." He was ready to leave when Yoongi ran up to him and handed him a USB disk.

"Mariya seems to be stalking you," he said. "There are hidden cameras in your bedroom, car, and bathroom, and she also has access to your home's surveillance camera. The only safe place is the helper's bedroom, the parent's bathroom, and the wine cellar room. Other than that, she can hear and see your every move. So please open this where it is safe and make sure to be discreet about it, or else she'll figure out you know about this."

He bowed after taking the USB file, and Kosuke bowed back before returning to his fortress.

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BIGGEST RECONCILIATION IN HISTORY

Being back at his castle wasn't the same now that he knew someone was watching him through the CCTV cameras that were intended to keep him safe.

Nonetheless, he maintained his calm and pretended he was unaware of the facts. He changed his clothes behind the divider, like he normally does, and pretended to be unconcerned. When inside him, he felt disgusted and disturbed.

He immediately notified his parents of what he had uncovered, anticipating that they would question him about what had occurred during the meeting.

This was what he wanted to avoid at all costs—avoiding Mariya eavesdropping on their conversation and discovering that she had been caught by her actions.

His parents instantly understood, and when supper arrived, they avoided the subject. They continued with Kosuke's plan, however, so that he could still report the specifics.

Mariya was tentatively watching them eat while eating with them as if they were eating together like a family.

"Kosuke, are you available tomorrow?" The father began, which immediately drew Mariya's attention.

After being called out, Kosuke raised his head and showed an uncertain look. "Uhm," he responded hesitantly.

"It appears that Kosuke has other plans for tomorrow," the mother chuckled, teasing him. "Could it be a plan with Mariya?"

His mother's correct guess brought a joyful smile to his face, and he nodded. "Indeed, it is, mother. I was planning on inviting her for dinner."

"In that case, are you available in the morning and early afternoon? It really is urgent."

"Of course, father. I'll be there before noon."

"Thank you, son."

Mariya was duped by the chat since she was so thrilled for the upcoming invitation that she knew she would receive it later for their, in her viewpoint, date tomorrow evening.

After the Yoshida clan's meal, Kosuke sent her a message inviting her to dinner at a fine restaurant tomorrow, to which she pretended to be foolish and checked her schedule before accepting his invitation.

Kosuke acted giddy with a smile after receiving a positive response from Mariya because he was being watched during the talk.

So, when the next day came, Kosuke was able to hand out the documents that were handed to him by Katsumi at his father's firm without any issues because the woman was unable to monitor what they were doing or eavesdrop on their conversations.

He went over every single element of the document, and hearing all of this made them feel ashamed. They caused a needless conflict amongst the Yamaguchi clan due to their sudden assumption at the crime site.

Rosequarts C.

And when they found out it was all due to Mariya, they were even more shocked, but mostly outraged. How could she fool them, how could she lie to them, and how could she continue to show her face to them, knowing full well what she had done to the Yoshida family?

"What do you intend to do with this knowledge, Son?" The father inquired solemnly, and Kosuke maintained eye contact, his fury boiling and his need for vengeance strong.

"We'll have no choice but to arrest her, dear," the mother said instead, then turned to her son, who was looking down at the ground despondently, and asked, "Will the Yamaguchi clan be helping you with the arrest?"

"We can't expect them to help us after everything we've done to them and everything they've done for us," the father murmured, lowering his head and closing his eyes in humiliation. "We've brought shame to the family; now it's our turn to do something about it."

"Don't worry, father; the reason for inviting Mariya to dinner later on is just for that. My butler has contacted the cops for assistance, and I will initiate the arrest."

He has long wished for his brother to receive the justice he deserves, as well as for his murderer to be apprehended. It was too much to ask Katsumi for help after what he and his family had done to her family.

When night fell, Kosuke puffed up his collar and dusted off his sleeves to look acceptable for his supper later that night. When he was ready, he went outside with his wallet and cellphone, then got into his car, which was opened by his butler.

On the way, he contacted Katsumi about his upcoming plan and silenced his phone, as well as archiving her profile from his list of communications.

It was best to stay safe when confronted with Mariya. She should not know of his strategy and alliance with the Yamaguchi clan since he cannot afford to lose sight of and grasp the suspect.

And hours later, Kosuke arrived at the restaurant with Mariya. When she stepped out of the car, he extended his hand for her to take.

His gentlemanly actions made her heart skip a beat, and she blushed in response. Finally, she was getting the affection she had yearned for for so long, with no remorse for what she had done to get there.

They were led into a separate room while the police stood by in the room next door. They listened to their conversation, which was being picked up by a covert microphone hidden beneath Kosuke's collar, as they waited for their cue to emerge from their hiding location from the master.

Katsumi had read the message a few hours later and had been taken aback by it. She anticipated that they would work together to plot the arrest and support the Yoshida clan, but she was mistaken.

He wrote,

"This is Kosuke Yoshida. It is entirely up to you whether or not to save my phone number. I'm messaging you to take note of Mariya's arrest, which will commence tonight.

A judge has granted us permission to guarantee the suspect's apprehension. I'll be conversing with her and hoping to hear the truth from her own mouth. If she manages to confess, we'll arrest her. If she resists and opposes the accusation even with the evidence present, we'll arrest her and go to court. There is no need to be concerned; if she attempts to flee the premises, she will be apprehended and brought to prison without further action.'

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They assumed he didn't need their help because they didn't want to confront the Yamaguchi clan after what they had done or because they intended to capture the suspect themselves.

They weren't disappointed or upset by it, because they were relieved that Kosuke was finally taking action against the true perpetrator. The unexpected message had just caught them off guard, as they were anticipating the unexpected.

"What's done is done; we have no choice but to wait patiently for his update," Kento proposed, and the others agreed.

"Do you think he'll update us?" Nayeon wondered.

"Of course he has to," Katsumi grumbled. "After all the investigating we've done, it's a given that he should update us on the arrest."

The night had gone, and they had still received no update from Kosuke, till evenings went into days, and Katsumi began to grow irritated as the days passed, and they had still received no information from the man.

Until a week passed, the Yamaguchi clan was having their dinner. The Yoshida clan had arrived at the mansion so suddenly, causing Butler Murase to panic.

Ms. Yamaguchi was the lone parent in charge and gave them permission to enter their home. Butler Murase was taken aback and had second thoughts; yet, he had to follow the commander.

He returned to the front door as his mother excused herself, trailing behind the butler. The youngsters couldn't help but follow the mother to the living room, where they saw Ms. Yamaguchi face-to-face with the Yoshida clan leaders and their son.

"I was not expecting the Yoshida clan to visit. You're here for an important matter, I suppose?"

"And, based on the calm tone of your voice, I assume the twins informed you of the situation?" The father stated.

"Indeed, they did."

"What happened to Mariya?" Katsumi inquired, her curiosity overpowering her need to speak.

"She was sent to prison," Kosuke explained.

"She didn't resist?"

"She did, and now we're currently in the middle of a trial because of her actions."

Katsumi was perplexed, and she thought of the woman's boldness in resisting arrest for a crime she knew she had planned.

"We came here to ask for your assistance, specifically Katsumi, and to be the witness to testify for the trial." The mother spoke in a gentle voice.

"Me?" Katsumi remarked, surprised. However, the unsure tone of her voice and puzzled expression on her face misread Ms. Yoshida's response as sassy.

"We know what we're doing is shameless, and I'm very embarrassed to show my face after what we've done in the past to your family, but I just want this to end and finally do justice to my eldest son," she quickly added.

They noticed their reluctant expressions, which led to one conclusion: he fell down on his knees, which astonished them as the rest of the Yoshida family members did the same.

"It may not be an adequate apology, but, pride aside, the Yoshida clan will be forever in your favor. Please assist us in obtaining justice for my late son," they then bent. Knees on the floor and head to the ground is a common expression of sincerity when asking for a favor or asking for forgiveness and making an apology.

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And that is exactly what the Yoshida family did in front of the Yamaguchi family; Ms. Yamaguchi knew she shouldn't forgive so readily, but Hoshi was like her own, and she knew she couldn't ignore their request, especially because she has always been looking for ways to give the man his justice.

She turned to face her daughter, who was looking at her with eagerness and hope in her eyes. That's when she realized it was time to make amends and heal old wounds.

The mother sighed quietly and returned her gaze to them. "Please raise your head, Yoshida-san," she stated in a calm voice. "We will assist with the trial, so please raise your head."

They did as they were ordered, their heads slightly down, and feelings of shame, remorse, and relief lingered in their hearts.

"Thank you," Ms. Yoshida said as she handed them a folder containing the documents carrying the necessary information for the upcoming trial.

While they were conversing, Kosuke approached Katsumi and handed her the USB Yoongi had given him days before, which she received with a puzzled expression.

"What exactly is this?" she inquired.

"It's a voice recording of Mariya and I's conversation that night in the restaurant to update you on how it went," he went on to say. "Also, if you have more evidence on Mariya or the case, please do inform me."

She gazes at the USB in her palm and then back at him, a soft grin on her face. There was one item she kept in a safe lock in her hidden wardrobe for years.

"I actually have one more item that I'd like to give you," she says, her face resolute. "I'll be right back." She dashed up to her room and

into the bathroom, where she unlocked the safe to reveal a paper bag containing the item. She dashed back with the item in hand and handed it to him just as they were about to leave.

"Here," she said.

When he peeked inside, he was completely bewildered; it had never occurred to him that the gun he had seen in the footage of his brother would be in his grasp.

"I didn't know how to give it to you, so I kept it. So, when the time comes, it will be returned to its rightful owner."

As he peered up at her, Kosuke's eyes sparkled with loving emotions. "Thank you, Katsumi." The pleasant tone of Kosuke's words warmed her heart, and the corner of her lips slipped upward in relief.

It was like going back in time to their elementary school days. In a genuine, friendly chat packed with happy smiles, Katsumi's heart beats in comfort. It was wonderful to see their platonic connection restored.

Her friends smiled from afar at the sight of the two getting along. Namjoon was broken, while everyone else was pleased. Although he was delighted for her, knowing Kosuke had a crush on her, he was heartbroken when he considered the potential of it returning.

Nonetheless, he smiled throughout the entire meeting until the Yoshida family left the premises. Later, after supper, their intention to continue training changed, and they all went to the theater room to watch the recording of Kosuke's meet-up with Mariya.

Everyone was intrigued, including the mother. Katsumi had also reasoned that by listening in on their talk, she could gain a sense of what had occurred before the trial.

They sat back, seats comfortable, as Yoongi played the recording.



COURT FOR JUSTICE

GAZING herself in the mirror, dressed in a simple blouse and long flare skirt, Katsumi felt her palms sweating and her body temperature plummeting as she looked in the mirror.

Even though she knew she was not at fault and was one of the victims in this case, she couldn't help but feel nervous in situations like these.

She took a long breath in and out as she looked at herself in the mirror and gave a slight nod to encourage herself.

Kento, clad in a basic knitted polo shirt tucked into his trousers, entered seconds later after a knock on the door and the opening drew her attention.

They both dressed proudly and confidently to show that they had nothing to be embarrassed about because they were innocent. He cracked a smile.

"Let's go; the others are waiting inside the van," he remarked, and she nodded, grabbing her sling bag and heading out.

Today is the continuation of the trial for Mariya's crime of masterminding Hoshi's killing. Katsumi wasn't the only one whose heart was racing frantically on the approach to what was to come.

But the worry was combined with determination since they were just a pinch away from serving justice—a pinch close until the rightful murderer received the punishment she deserved.

And, unlike the twins, they sat in their respective seats when they arrived. They sat up front, while the rest of the family and friends sat at the back.

A few minutes later, the Yoshida clan arrived with their lawyer and took a seat beside Katsumi. Kosuke smiled at her, and she smiled back.

The trial then began. Mariya entered, accompanied by her personal butler, who was dressed in jail garb. Gloom and hatred filled the look in her eyes.

They exchanged eye contact along the way, and Katsumi's presence increased her wrath. It ignited even more when she saw her dressed so fashionably, as if she had no problems at all.

"You." Her voice growled.

Katsumi tried to escape her gaze, but what was there to be afraid of when she was entirely innocent? So, unfazed, she scowled back at her, her angry eyes penetrating through Mariya's.

"I'm here because of you!" She growled again, but the guards stopped her and dragged her back to her seat. Mariya fell silent at the sound of the gavel, noticing the uproar she was causing.

Katsumi's frightening expression shifted to the front. Kosuke reached for his hands, holding Katsumi's skirt, to place over her shaking ones. However, he came to a halt in the middle, paused, and then retrieved it.

He was afraid that being comforted by someone like him would not make things better because of the disgrace and remorse he felt

Rosequarts C.

for what he had done in the past. He feared if she gave him a bothered look.

Katsumi was called to the stand a few minutes later to give her testimony. She left nothing out of her story, word for word, and every story she delivered piqued the audience's interest.

Her story was supported by evidence. The gun shown in the footage has 'no ammunition loaded' printed on a receipt found inside the bag she gave Kosuke.

The suspect's shoes, which were said to be Kento's during the sabotage of Kosuke's mission, have established that the twin wasn't the suspect, with a live video showing Eunsun and him playing games on a site called Youtoo on the same day of Hoshi's murder.

Mariya's assertions that she did not send texts were proven false by the footage on the screen. In addition to the butler's alibi, the film presented has been revealed to be false.

Every single word Mariya used in her testimony, after Katsumi, was revealed to be a fabrication. With the evidence Yoshida's team had on hand, they were all revealed to be lies.

The butler theory proposed by Namjoon, Seokjin, and Yoongi proved to be correct. Mariya's former personal butler has not died but has simply changed appearance due to the extensive surgery. Her credit card receipt and the butler himself attest to this.

The truth is that Mariya was engaged in more than just Hoshi's murder. The butler admitted to being responsible for the harassment of the Yamaguchi clan, which included the attempted murder of a family member.

Mariya, not Kosuke, was responsible for the murder attempt on Katsumi on the rooftop that day. Katsumi then had a flash of insight.

Minutes before the incident, Mariya had given her a drink to consume. It tasted strong, but she covered her tracks by claiming it was coconut juice. Katsumi, who had never drunk coconut juice before, trusted her without understanding she had been drugged.

The pills had come into effect when she arrived on the rooftop after reading the letter, and the narcotics had completely distorted her perception, mistaking whoever the person was for Kosuke.

Since then, the Yamaguchi family has assumed that the men who attacked them were members of the Yoshida clan, not recognizing that they were all men who work for Mariya.

Because of her devious strategy, the Yoshida family had always assumed Katsumi was the person who had murdered their oldest son. One of the daughters of the Yamaguchi family. She is the reason for Yoshida and Yamaguchi's friendship's downfall. All because of Mariya's greedy love for Kosuke.

Mariya was enraged by his unexpected confession and panickedly exclaimed, "What are you talking about? Stop it with the lies!"

Despite her denials, she was silenced by the judge, and the evidence presented to prove her dishonesty sealed her mouth shut as she grimaced in shame and rage.

And in the end, Katsumi pleaded innocent, while Mariya Nishikawa and her butler, Jio Kazunari, pleaded guilty.

Mariya and Jio were sentenced to 30 years in jail for first-degree murder, perjury for Mariya, and synthetic identity fraud for the butler.

The end of the court and the ultimate decision of the murderers were signaled by the bang of the gavel. The Yoshida clan celebrated their win, beaming with pride at the justice they were able to bring to their deceased son and the reconciliation they were able to bring to their connection with both families.



A LEAP OF FAITH TOWARDS LOVE

THE next day arrived. Katsumi was preparing her things for their trip back to Seoul in two days more as dinner was being prepared.

There is no need to be frightened because the war between both families has now ended. Their friends have no need to continue their training because the reason is no longer relevant.

There was a knock on her door in the middle of her work, and in peered Namjoon's head with an enthusiastic smile across his face. And when he was allowed in, he waddled inside towards her like a joyful puppy.

"Are you already packing?"

"Better to do this early than rush the night before," she added, looking around for a specific item. "Can you get that pouch on my desk, Namjoon-ah?" she asked.

As the conversation continued, he complied without hesitation in her favor. "By the way, Auntie allowed us to swim for dinner since we'll be eating outside in the backyard."

"Swim?" she inquired, gently taking the purse from him.

He hummed as he nodded. "Aside from the accident, we weren't able to properly utilize the backyard. And so, Auntie agreed to let us use the pool."

"I see," she said despondently, and his face softened as he observed her expression.

"Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, I'm just not a big fan of swimming. You go first, and I'll follow you after this."

Namjoon frowned at her response, as he was looking forward to reconnecting with Katsumi after weeks of focusing on the investigation.

But he realized he couldn't make her do something she didn't want to do, so he smiled and nodded. "I'll see you later, then," he said, and she nodded as the man grudgingly headed out of her room and down to the backyard.

When he arrived, he was greeted by the aroma of freshly baked pizza. The smell would have made a pizza lover like Namjoon happy, but he was still feeling down.

He took a seat next to Yoongi, and the boy noted his friend's behavior. He thanked him with a scowl as he handed him a slice of pizza to cheer him up. Seeing him like this, his curiosity won over.

"You good?"

"Yeah, why?"

"When you see a pizza present, usually you're greedy about it and will always take the first slice."

Namjoon chuckled at his remark before staring at the piece of pizza in front of him and sighing, "It's not really a big deal for it to make me this depressed, but Katsumi seemed distant when I told her about swimming."

Rosequarts C.

"That's quite typical. Because of the scar on her abdomen, she became very hesitant when it came to swimming."

"Is her scar really that bad?"

"For her, it is," Kento said. "She says it's like a blob on a painting that messes up its beauty, but we really don't care."

"That's because we live in a society that defines beauty as someone who has no flaws. In reality, people who are placed on the "flawless" list still have flaws, which is fine. She just doesn't see how beautiful she is, and a scar like hers won't change anything," Kosuke added after overhearing their chat.

"Since when did you arrive?" Eunsun explained.

"Auntie invited me for dinner just a second ago, and I couldn't say no to free food," he shrugged as he sat next to Kento. The lads felt strange being in the same room as Kosuke without having to be wary of him. It felt refreshing and relaxing.

Kosuke's presence took a toll on Namjoon. Seeing him stung him, especially after hearing what he'd just said about Katsumi. He immediately thought he had no chance of beating him because there was a chance the man still had affection for her.

As he chewed into his pizza, he noticed Ms. Yamaguchi coming outside with all of the ingredients for their meal. He swiftly approached her for assistance, but Katsumi beat him to it and helped her mother carry the items outside.

He opened the door for them and assisted the women in preparing their meals, followed by Seokjin and Kento. From the campfire, Kosuke observed them, and seeing Katsumi grin was refreshing after years of her ominous grimace.

The lunch was ready in minutes, and they began devouring it. Some started swimming but decided to eat later because they had just had pizza.

Namjoon was busy grilling the meat with Seokjin when he noticed Kosuke and Katsumi, who were happy and laughing near the campfire. His heart ached once more, and he wrenched his head away in jealousy.

He despised the sensation of jealousy. It made him feel selfish since he didn't want to watch the woman, he likes smiling with another who had the same feeling towards her. He told himself that if she was content, that was all that mattered.

Mr. Yamaguchi returned from work and brought games for the youngsters to play with, while Ms. Yamaguchi placed another batch of pork alongside the chefs.

"Did you make the sauces, Auntie?" Seokjin inquired. She gasped as she realized she had forgotten about the seasonings.

"I'll go make them, Auntie," Namjoon offered, quickly heading inside to the kitchen in quest of the flavoring liquids needed to make the sauce.

The ambiance of the people enjoying the pool outside, combined with the silence inside the home, made Namjoon feel at ease. It sounded like sentimental memories of a good time in one's youth, a memory that most people would like to revisit.

But his calm collapsed when Kosuke entered the kitchen and took a drink from the fridge. His muscles tensed as he couldn't look or welcome the man meters away.

He tried to ignore his presence and concentrate on the sauce he was making when a shadow from behind covered part of the light from his view, followed by a deep voice asking, "Is that for the pork?" which startled Namjoon greatly.

Kosuke wasn't anticipating such a reaction, but he quickly learned that not everyone was quick to move on from the past.

Rosequarts C.

"My bad. It wasn't my intention to frighten you," he remarked with a small bow.

Namjoon responded by shaking his head. "There is no need to apologize. And, yes, this is for the pork."

Suddenly, Katsumi walked into the kitchen to get more Styrofoam plates and noticed what he was working on.

"Is that for the pork?" she asks, and he nods, eliciting an excited response from her with her shoulder raised. "Can't wait!" she sings before leaving.

Namjoon chuckled and blushed somewhat as a result of her eager manner, and upon watching, Kosuke noticed his reaction.

"Namjoon, was it?" he asked.

"Yes?"

"How do you feel about Katsumi?" he inquired, which surprised the man.

"I think she's a great friend."

"A great friend?" he questioned with great suspicion. "But your reaction to her doesn't seem to indicate that you see her as just a friend."

Namjoon turned aside, blushing profusely once again, not responding to him. Kosuke snickered softly at how he appeared.

"Why don't you confess?"

Namgyu let out a quiet sigh through his nostrils. "Easy for you to say," he muttered.

"In that case, would you mind if I confessed to her first?"

His statement immediately drew the man's entire attention as his head shifted to him, baffled, but he didn't want to reveal how much these words affected him, so he shifted back to his job and pretended to be unconcerned.

"Go ahead."

Kosuke's suppressed grin escalated to a chuckle, and Namjoon frowned at being laughed at.

"What's so funny?" he inquired.

"My bad, my bad. Your reaction was just hilarious; I couldn't help myself," he chuckled again, which elicited an irritated pout from him. He then kindly touched the man's shoulder and said, "I was merely jesting; no need to worry," before strolling back outside and leaving the man sighing alone, now overthinking his comments.

He shook his head vigorously, attempting to clear his mind of those thoughts. Whether Kosuke was joking or not, he reasoned with himself that it shouldn't bother him. Katsumi possesses both intelligence and beauty; of course, he is not the only person who would be drawn to her.

When he returns outside with the bowl of sauce he created, he lays it on the table among the cooked pork, along with Styrofoam bowls.

And within seconds, his sauce was a smash, with everyone enjoying the flavor blending with the meaty juices of the pork. With these combination flavors exploding in their mouths, it's as if heaven was brought down to earth.

Namjoon felt he should be delighted that they were enjoying the sauce he prepared, but he couldn't get Kosuke's remarks out of his head. And seeing him with Katsumi smiling while skinny-dipping in the pool with Seokjin and Yoongi exacerbated his jealousy.

Nayeon caught him glancing at them both and smirking at his glum expression. "It looks like someone's jealous," she teased, drawing his and the others' attention near them.

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Namjoon sulked and pouted in defeat, not saying anything. What was supposed to be a joke turned out to be correct, and Nayeon was surprised by how accurate her guess was.

"Are you really envious?" she gasped. "Does that mean you like Katsumi?" She exclaimed it a little too loudly, and Namjoon instantly shushed her by covering her lips with his palm.

"You're talking too loudly, Nayeon," he said. "Plus, she's a better match for Kosuke than I am for her."

Jackson's mouth agape slightly as he glanced at the man, perplexed by his remarks, "I know you were selfless, but damn, confidence really has left your system and never returned."

"Come on, it's a fact," he argued.

"How come you're so sure of that?" Nayeon inquired.

"Because," he grumbles, frustrated.

"You're acting like you and Katsumi didn't share intimate moments in the past, am I right, Kento?" Eunsun chuckled as he lightly nudged on his shoulder, drawing daggers from him. In answer, he zips his lips and makes movements as if he won't speak any further.

"If that's the case, then it means you have a chance," Jackson replied, causing the youngster to sigh dejectedly once more.

"Namjoon-ah," Nayeon said softly, placing her palm on top of his. "It's better to admit how you feel now that she's still single, because if she's taken, you'll deeply regret not doing so when you clearly had a chance with her. And even if you get turned down, it is not the end of the world. You may think you are worthless, but there will always be someone who thinks you're more than enough."

The rest of the audience agreed with her, which made Namjoon understand that he had been too hard on himself when it came to love.

He was used to being rejected, but this was the first time he was afraid of being rejected. His emotions got the best of him, and he began to think so critical of himself that he forgot about the positive aspects.

"I apologize for disturbing you, Namjoon, but would you mind making more sauces?" The mother asked as she approached the bonfire.

"Of course, Auntie," he replied as he excused himself into the kitchen to prepare more of the required sauce.

When Kosuke saw him enter, he nudged Katsumi. "It's now or never," he murmured, and Katsumi took a big breath and puffed it all out, her pulse racing furiously in anticipation of what she planned to do.

She dashed inside, took another quiet huff, and approached the man, saying, "Let me help you." Her quick arrival astonished him, and he began to stammer.

"T-thanks," he managed to say. While Katsumi prepares the ingredients and liquid seasonings, Namjoon mixes all of them together in a big bowl.

"Tomorrow is our final day before we head back to Seoul. Do you have any plans?" Katsumi asked.

"No, not really."

"Would you like to go somewhere tomorrow?" His heart beat in response, but he knew he shouldn't get too thrilled.

"Will the others join us?" he inquired.

"I-i was thinking of just us, if you don't mind." His head turned to her in surprise, and he noticed her demeanor seem agitated as she focused on crushing the garlic.

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He read the vibe and concluded this was no ordinary hangout; her reaction indicated he was being invited on a date. It was his chance, and he knew he couldn't slip this away from him.

"Sure," he answered calmly as he went about his task. Katsumi had anticipated being turned down, so when she wasn't, her eyes widened, her pulse raced, and she exhaled a gentle sigh of relief. "Where would you like to go?" he inquired.

"How about a museum? Or how about the movies? But I'm alright anyplace as long as I'm with you." Once again, she manages to effortlessly make his heart race, and he hides it by clearing his throat.

"I see, then I'll plan where to go tomorrow, keeping in mind your suggestions. After that, can we go out to dinner?"

"Perfect."

"Great, see you tomorrow then," he said with a lovely smile that moved her heart and made her blush.

Once he was out of sight, Katsumi turned around and drew her arm in with a quiet cheer before stepping outside to tell the others about the wonderful news.

Namjoon, on the other hand, sulked after setting the sauce bowl down, cringing at what he said to Katsumi before walking away. '*See you tomorrow then,*' remembering his words made him cringe even more.

'See you tomorrow? Really? You're staying at the same mansion as she is; of course you'll see her tomorrow!' he reprimanded himself in distress. However, all of that changed when he noticed Katsumi smiling even brighter with the others, which led him to think that as long as he made her happy, he could take the cringy moments.

39

WELCOME BACK TO SEOUL!

THE night lasted till midnight. Everyone had fallen asleep except Namjoon, who was still awake in his bed. He was in the process of planning their destinations for a later date.

His perfectionist behavior became involved, and when afternoon arrived, he made certain that everything was heading in the proper direction toward perfection. His style, hygiene, locations to go, and items to bring with him in his pocket consist of just two items: his wallet and car keys borrowed from Auntie.

He parked the car in front of the front door and went to find Katsumi. But just as he was about to fetch her, there emerged the lovely lady, clothed in a ruffled hem dress, her hair freely loose, revealing her silky hair in a hush cut with a headband on top.

Namjoon was astounded by her beauty from head to toe, from haircut to clothes. It seemed as if the headband was a tiara, and she resembled a beautiful princess in his eyes.

"I'm ready," she said as she stepped down the set of stairs towards him, and he grinned, beaming, while opening the car door, attempting to conceal his reaction from the pounding of his heart.

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"After you, princess." His voice was deep but sweet, and it rang in her ears, sending thrills down her spine.

"Thank you," she said with a bashful grin as she took his hand that guided her inside the vehicle. She took a deep breath in the car before the man sat in the driver's seat and tightened his seatbelt.

She followed, but she tugged the belt so hard that it became trapped. Namjoon notices her struggle and decides to assist her by leaning in closer and pushing the belt a little before easily drawing it and securing it safely.

Her heart raced faster as her cheeks reddened from the sudden closeness they had for a brief moment.

"Thanks."

"It's no problem; let's go," he said, shifting into neutral and driving to their first location. Namjoon followed Katsumi's suggestion and went to a museum known for its digital art display.

It was filled with magnificent computerized landscapes, and stepping into the space seemed like being inside a world of fantasy.

Afterwards, they went to browse around other stores for gifts for themselves and bought some snacks while they were there.

They then went to a beautiful park and snapped more photos for remembrance and to share on social media. They lingered for a few moments before heading to the theater to see a movie.

Finally, to round off the day's activities, they went out to supper at a posh restaurant. He was able to reserve a table outside on the premises' balcony with the help of Yoongi to obtain a better view of the scenery below.

Katsumi was impressed when she saw this. "When did you manage to get a table reserved for us?" she inquired as they approached their seat.

"Yoongi assisted me since he speaks Japanese fluently," he said, and the vista of the surroundings stole Katsumi's breath away after they were led to their reserved seats.

Namjoon drew a chair and extended his hand to it, saying, "My lady?" Katsumi giggled at his remark and went along with his play.

"Thank you, gentleman," she said before he took a seat in front of her and began to order their food.

Back at home, the rest of the family was eating dinner in the dining room with both parents present, and Kento was the last to arrive. He saw two empty seats and began wondering out loud, "Where's Namjoon and Katsumi?"

"Didn't you hear from them?" Eunsun asked, eliciting a perplexed look from Kento as he took a drink of water.

"Heard what?"

"They're on a date."

The father, who was slurping soup, and the son, who was drinking water, choked on their beverages as a result of Eunsun's unexpected statements.

"Oh, honey, there is nothing to be concerned about! Katsumi is no longer a girl; she is a woman now," the mother chuckled.

"Eighteen is still a young age, Isa," said the father.

"Darling, we met in kindergarten, began dating officially in junior high, and married in college. She is old enough to be in an intimate relationship."

"Marriage?!" yelled the father. "You say they'll marry?"

"Of course, someday they will, but not now."

Kento opened his mouth to respond, but stopped and thought about the matter more positively, which culminated in his nodding in

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contentment. "Well, if that happens, at least I don't need to hear her yapping and complaining all the time."

Eunsun nodded, agreeing. "And we don't need to hear her off-key singing suddenly at midnight."

The father had his mouth open and was going to argue, but he stopped himself, and their proposition was perceived more positively, resulting in his nodding in agreement. In amazement, he scoffed. "Maybe sending Katsumi off to marriage isn't a bad idea after all."

The mother sneered and shook her head, stunned at their abrupt switch-up.

An hour later, Katsumi was done with her business inside the restroom. She took a while inside, washing her hands and checking her appearance in the mirror, retouching her look.

She returned to her table, where Namjoon was now standing. Her brow furrowed, wondering why he was standing there waiting for her.

He grinned at her, took a long breath, and huffed quietly as they exchanged glances. "I thought you were really arrogant, self-centered, and insensitive, and to be honest, I thought we wouldn't get along as friends," he said, which received an even more confused look from Katsumi. "But I noticed I judged you too early, because once I got to know you, you were the polar opposite of all that. It's been a year since we met, and I know we got off on the wrong foot at first, but after being your friend and getting to know you better, I've realized you're not such an awful person."

"Namjoon-ah, I have no idea what you're trying to say or imply," she said, which elicited a shaky sigh from him as he bowed his head and gulped anxiously.

As he began to hesitate, his breathing became wobblier, but he took another great breath in and swallowed the anxiety.

He then revealed a bouquet of roses hidden behind him, which caught her off guard because she wasn't expecting anything from him after everything he had planned for her today.

She gently took it from him while admiring the beauty of the flowers. "I like you, Katsumi. Not just as friends, but more than that," he gulps. "And I want to be in a relationship with you," he said.

While waiting for her response, he noticed her softly glancing at the bouquet he had given her, and he began to feel anxious and think negatively about her actions.

"Is it not to your liking?"

"No, it's absolutely stunning. It's just that..." she pauses, "please wait," and scurries back inside towards the counter, placing the bouquet on the table.

Namjoon waited patiently for her return, confused and stunned when he saw her return with a new arrangement of ambrosia flowers.

"I was planning on confessing to you today as well, so I bought a bouquet just an hour ago while we were choosing our meal and had the staff members take care of it once it arrived so that I can give it to you tonight. Surprise!" she chuckled as she handed it to him, her breath a little heavy from the small jog she did from retrieving it.

He took it with care, hoping for the best. "So, does this mean...?"

She gave a nod. "I'm more than happy to be in a relationship with you, Namjoon-ah."

Her deeds and words brightened his day, as well as hers. They finished their meal with a delicious dessert. After watching their confession, the restaurant was moved and awed by how it went, and to celebrate, they offered them a complimentary cake.

It was the perfect way for them to spend their final minutes on their date. After they had their dessert, they returned home. Katsumi

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had expected her father to be distressed while waiting for them to return, but instead, the polar opposite happened.

Her father and Kento were overjoyed for them both when they revealed their official relationship and congratulated them on their new status.

The following day came the schedule of their flight return to Seoul, Korea. Butler Murase had their things set in the living room for them to take to the airport first.

They had their final meal with the twins' parents. With the war concluded and no potential threats in the future, their lives felt renewed after a long time.

They could now concentrate on their academics and pursue their future ambitions. Everyone was given pocket money before they left the mansion to use however they pleased.

The buddies were initially apprehensive about accepting such a large quantity of money, but because Auntie insisted so strongly, they had no other option but to accept it.

"You are free to return at any time! You are always welcome here!" she stated as the rest of the family waved goodbye to the friends and twins before the chopper took them to the airport.

Summer break was only two months away, and they intended to visit Japan. But first and foremost, they needed to focus on their academics and pass their final exam.

It was unfortunate that they couldn't join on the founding anniversary, but they were certain to join again the next school year. Furthermore, they had two new faces enrolling in the same school, implying that more members might join their booth.

As the jet was landing in Seoul, they noticed Kazuha waiting for them outside with Yoongi's younger sister and brothers.

After thanking the stewardess and pilot, Katsumi was the first to disembark the plane. She then waved to her older sister, who returned the gesture before proceeding down the steps. They both met in the center and hugged each other tightly.

"Good to see you back!" she exclaimed joyfully.

Katsumi sighed softly in relief and excitedly raised her shoulder. "It's good to be back."

"I heard we're war-free from the Yoshida clan, and the real perpetrator of Hoshi's murder has been arrested."

Kento sighed deeply in tiredness, "Indeed so," and Kazuha responded with a joyful smile and a contented sigh.

When Yoongi's siblings spotted him descending down the stairs, they yelled out his name and gave him a big hug when he reached the ground. He grinned and hugged each of them back. Although he was happy to see them, he was surprised and wasn't expecting them at all to greet him at the airport.

"What are you guys doing here?" he inquired in a playful tone.

"Kazuha noona told us you were coming back, so we wanted to greet you in person," his younger brother explained.

"Where's mom?"

"There's no need to worry, Yoongi-shi. Your mother is in the hospital recovering. She was meant to accompany us, but the doctor in charge refused."

Yoongi was taken aback by what he had heard and kept asking himself until he blurted out, "Mom is in the hospital?"

"Yes, but she is now fully recovered. Although she wasn't allowed to see you here, we were given permission for her to eat with us at a nearby restaurant," she stated with a smile. "Shall we proceed?"

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She motioned towards the door, then enthusiastically put her arms around the twins on the way. "So, I also heard from Mom about your relationship with Namjoon."

Katsumi snickered at her remark, which made Kento smile as well. "Mom really loves to keep you updated."

"How did you both come to be? Who confessed first?" she stammered. "Did you kiss? Come on, tell me all the juicy details!"

"Oh great, here comes our gossipmonger older sister," Kento remarked sarcastically, and they all laughed.

"I'll tell you later, sis. It's a long story."

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, Teresa, also known as Rosequarts C., was born in 2001. Although she graduated with a degree in studio art, her love for storytelling began early. During her junior high years, she decided she wanted to write her own stories, starting with lighthearted fanfictions created just for fun, most of which remained unfinished. It wasn't until the end of her junior high years that she began her first serious fanfiction project.

Inspired by stories she discovered on YouTube, Teresa eventually created her own channel dedicated to sharing her written works. She continues to create and post her stories, not minding the size of her audience but rather hoping to reach the right readers who will appreciate her imagination. Her goal is to bring joy and inspiration to her readers, the same joy she feels when bringing her characters to life.

Writing isn't her only passion. Teresa also enjoys gaming, cooking, dancing, singing, and crafting jewelry with clay and resin, creative outlets that help her unwind and fill her life with happiness.