

Split soul

Von Gepo

Kapitel 24: A second date

Ayako smiled upon opening the door. She was wearing a stark white dress and some modern glass jewelry. Her hair was done up, her make-up exquisite. It would be a pleasure to mess her up. He could imagine how debauched her red lipstick would look on her chin, her mascara on her cheeks from tears running down her face, her hair in his grasp. Maybe he would get away with ripping her dress, blood and semen running down her ties and staining the whiteness.

His mind was getting ahead of him. He had promised Seijuro he would not hurt her. She wasn't one of his conquest, she was a person to be cherished and respected. That thought made him sigh internally – but he had promised. He kept his promises, even if no one ever kept promises to him.

"Don't you like the dress? Or have I overdone my make-up?" She looked up with unsure eyes.

"No, you're perfect. I just remembered something." He smiled at her. "Are you hungry? I did not reserve at a restaurant. I thought you might like a bar more but I am open to suggestions."

"I haven't been to an Izakaya in years." Her lips curved joyfully. "So I look well enough?"

"You are beautiful no matter what you wear." It was one of the smooth lines he had stolen from Seijuro.

"You flirt! I'll get my purse." She turned, put on her shoes and grabbed something he would label as a bag rather than a purse. But who was he to judge women's accessories? "How was your day?"

"Exhausting. I have a leech that demands food every few hours. I need my own caterer by now." He was fourteen weeks pregnant by now and his stomach suddenly demanded food like crazy. "My team of incompetent teenagers is happy about that, they love to eat. Especially that sixteen-year-old, she is insatiable. How can petite girls eat that much?"

"I guess she is a growing Alpha. Isn't she?"

"Yeah ... though she should be done growing into anything but circumference."

"How is training them working out?"

He just groaned. Honestly, they were a pain. Most of them. But in combination they were just too much. He said: "Law is trying to take out everyone else. Instead of bringing in any results he focuses on destroying everyone else's work. But he's fucking good at paperwork, so I haven't fired him yet. Economy is average at about everything and if he doesn't shape up soon, he'll be gone before Law. On the other hand he is the most normal of them all and makes a good face for official events."

Jobless is a genius with computers but he tends to be a better spy than someone able to get work done. He is unable to do any repetitive jobs like filling papers or writing contracts. Seika is the one best suited to my job but she is only sixteen. She can neither represent nor sign anything nor will anyone take her seriously. She is also immature as hell. I really don't know what to do with those people."

"Well, it sounds solvable. Economy gets to be the face, Law the one doing the work, Seika the brain. And you hire Jobless for every underhanded task and make him an advisor. I imagine him to be ruthless and nearly as able to find loopholes as you." She seemed proud about her advice.

"It sounds great in theory but I would need them to work together for that." He shook his head in exasperation. "Jobless doesn't care for anything but playing around on computers and Seika is caught up in nailcare. Economy and Law try to scratch out each other's eyes. I don't know if I shouldn't just start again with different tests."

"How likely is it that the next team is going to be better? Sometimes you have to work with the people you get. All of them are highly intelligent and capable of running the company instead of running away in fear. You have a multi-billion-yen empire, it's not an easy task to manage that." She placed her hands on his arm and leaned a bit against him while they walked. "Just the thought terrifies me. If you told me to sit in your seat I would have a panic attack."

True, none of them had panicked yet. All of them were eager, all of them seemed to have fun with the work he threw at them as long as it suited their interest. He was unlikely to find better people who would do his job without trying to take him out. He wasn't too sure about Law in the long run but for now he was manageable.

"You are right. My standards are just too high. I am my father's son after all."

Her smile vanished. Shit, had he hurt her? How? Was it bad to mention his father? Seijuro always had strange reactions as well.

"It sounds like praise for your father," she whispered faintly.

"Well, yes ... I hate him with all my heart but I am able to see that he was a driven man with unbelievably high standards. It was what broke us. No one could live up to his expectations."

"No one could live up to his abuse. He raped you. That has nothing to do with expectations." Her voice was strong and soft at the same time.

"I am pretty sure we would have broken anyway, even if he had not raped us. Just his work ethics and standards were too much for any child. With the growth of our company, the prerequisites for managing it grew unbelievably high. If I tasked myself with raising a child that could manage the future company all by itself I would have no idea how to go about it. I would need to clone the child."

"So you know you need a team of people." Ayako smiled at him.

"Yeah, I do ... you mean to say I need all four?"

"That's right." She nodded.

"Okay." He sighed. "You are most likely right anyway. I'll try my best to get them to work as a team instead of enemies." They had entered an entertainment district.

"Which one do you like?"

She pointed at one a bit off which seemed cozy instead of modern and not highly frequented. He followed her wish and steered them inside. After she drew in a deep breath as if the place had any kind of special smell, she suddenly turned and said: "Isn't this a bad idea? I mean, you are ... it's not like you can drink anything."

"I can order milk." He smirked which made her laugh.

They sat down at an unoccupied table. Ayako flipped through the card for a bit before

smiling secretly at him. A waiter asked for their orders to which she answered: "We'll take Edamane, Wasabi nuts, a virgin Mojito and a glass of milk."

The man blinked in silence before he seemed to catch himself: "Warm or cold milk?"

"Cold. You may add ice and fresh mango," Akashi answered.

After watching their waiter leave Ayako asked: "So, are you used to ordering milk?"

"May I remind you that I am nineteen? Of course I normally order alcohol-free cocktails at meetings but I don't like them. They are too sweet. So yes, I order milk when I can get away with it."

"Oh gods." She groaned and put a hand on her head. "I mostly forget how young you are. I feel like a cougar."

"I don't think that description suits our situation." Though he was amused by her reaching that conclusion as well. He remembered how he had taunted Seijuro about this. "Have you ordered your drink out of pity or do you prefer non-alcoholic beverages?"

"I like to keep my head." She looked away and grinned sheepishly. "Though with what the evening might lead to maybe I should drink up some courage."

"You do not need alcohol for courage. If you think you need bravery for saying no alcohol will not give you that. It makes you stupidly say yes even when everything inside you is screaming no." He knew too well. Those were memories shared with Sei. She had always drank while he screamed at her to stop. Alcohol, drugs, whatever their father wanted to try out, she had gulped it down.

She smiled at him sadly but kept to a nod before changing the topic: "So do you like classical music as well?"

"I hate it with a vengeance." Hopefully that did not affront her. "Not because it really is bad but because of the memories I link to it. I like metal opera best."

"Metal opera?" She raised an eyebrow.

"When the growling death metal singers suddenly spring a ballad on you, that's what I like best." He gave her a rogue smile. "Scary guys with a soft spot are my thing, you know?"

She blushed furiously at that and said: "You make everything into a flirt, aren't you?"

"Aside from intimidation that's my only social skill." The rest had gone to Seijuro. The one who had actually visited a debate club for five years. Akashi was so happy he had been able to skip having to have boring talks about politics and science with brainless rich kids. Meeting Shintaro had been the only good thing about that club.

"So let's cut to the heart of things, Mister businessmen. You want to sleep with me?" She leaned nearer.

"Very much so. What are your thoughts on that?"

Before she could answer they were interrupted by their waiter bringing their drinks, announcing Akashi's an iced mango lassi. Just as well, he liked lassi. It went well with the edamane of which he took one. Nice. They said their "Kanpai!" before trying their drinks. Akashi was surprised to taste freshly made lassi instead of premade stuff.

"Nice. My drink is good." She smiled at him before lowering her gaze in a flight of shyness. "So ... I would like to know what to expect. Seijuro warned me off of you, you know?"

"Not one of his smart moves." Akashi's pupils contracted. "Just because I am not as lovey-dovey as him doesn't mean I am a horrible creature."

"I saw Chiho, remember? I know what you can do to a women."

"I can do a lot more than that." He had lowered his voice and reminded himself he did not want to intimidate her. "But that was what she was comfortable with. At least she

told me that. If she lied to me about her boundaries, I fail to see how that is my fault." "It's not lying when you don't know!" Ayako's eyes sparkled with anger. "Gods, that's ... ugh! I don't even know where to begin. Just because someone doesn't say no does not mean he or she says yes. There are a lot of things you endure for someone else, especially if that someone is important to you. If you asked me for anal I would not say no but I would not enjoy it. I would do it for you because you want it."

"That's plain stupid." He blinked at her. "Why would you do something you don't enjoy? Do you really think "I'm doing it for you" would make your partner happy? The only thing you get for that is having your partner feel like shit for exploiting you."

Ayako looked at him with wide eyes. Was that really such a far-fetched concept that it was making her speechless? Wasn't it just common sense to only agree to things you actually wanted? He enjoyed his work. He enjoyed sex. Hell, he even enjoyed some conversations with this women, even though he abhorred the idea of dating. What he did not enjoy was walking around with a leech inside of him but he could endure that. It didn't mean he had to like it.

"My husband was happy every time I put out, even if I did not want to." Her voice was no more than a whisper, her tone next to dead.

"Your husband was a rapist who enjoyed seeing people in pain."

"And you don't?" Her eyes narrowed. "Do you seriously want to tell me you don't like your partner crying and begging you to stop?"

"I do like that. But only after they have consented that they want that as well. Good, my means of getting consent have been questionable before, I give you that, but I learned since then. I want you to go into this fully consenting."

"Because Seijuro would not forgive you otherwise?" Her voice was as cold as his drink.

"Because you would be gone sooner than later if I raped you. No matter my tastes I like to realize them with one partner and one partner only. I am not interested in fucking one boring one-night-stand after the next." Wasn't that logical? Having one steady sex partner was the easiest and most satisfying. He was still unsure about the relationship business attached to it but Seijuro had made him curious.

"Huh ... I think I begin to see where you're coming from. It is radical but logical. It is just detached from all feelings." She shuddered. "I understand why you are like that but it leaves me freezing inside."

"My partners normally say that sex with me is incredibly hot." If they said anything afterwards and did not run in fear from him. Now that he thought back on it he was able to feel regret. It was strange to look at his own memories with the ability to feel.

"I'm sorry, I take that back. It was very insensitive. You are right. Up to now I have never had sex with the ability to feel. This is new for me too."

"What does it change?" By now she looked rather put out.

"Well ... I don't know yet. But I care more. I never wanted my partners afraid of me, especially those that mattered to me. Tetsu ... is it okay to talk about Tetsu?" She nodded so he continued. "I knew deep inside that Tetsu did not want what I did to him. Even then. I just knew that I could manipulate him into wanting me ... or at least believing he wanted me. Once you are used to your own lies you start to believe them. And he was a believer in the end. He really thought he wanted me. And then I got impatient and pushed too hard too fast and lost him." He had been an idiot. "I wanted him dependent on me because I wanted full control over him. I know now that that was ... idiotic at best. It's not what I really want in a partner. I want trust instead of control. I just did not know how to do that back then. Honestly I don't know how to do that now. That's Seijuro's specialty. He's the one that's all about trust while I am

... a control freak. Shit." He closed his eyes and sank back into his seat. "I need a lot of control. Relationships are something that's way over my head. Sex is okay but only if I'm in control. I need to feel safe. And I do understand that my partner wants to feel safe as well. It's why I ask. I don't do anything without asking first. I did that in the past, yes – until I understood how much I hurt others with it. I am past the point where my desires overrule my partner's desires. Yes, I'm still pushy but I want a partner that I can respect as my equal. I need someone for that that makes me feel safe because she is able to set clear boundaries. I don't want to be hurt and I don't want to hurt others, no matter the sexual practice we do."

Gods, had he really just held such a monologue? Worst of all a monologue over his feelings? She would laugh. Of course she would, he most likely sounded ridiculous. He sounded ridiculous to himself. Just why had he told her? It was a mistake to give her this much and he never-

Why was she smiling? Was she laughing at him? He growled at her lowly and got a waft of her pheromones for it. It made everyone in the Izakaya turn their heads to them. He threw some money on the table – enough for their drinks, the food and whatever else they might be charged with – before standing and leaving. She wordlessly took her purse and ran after him.

It was her hand on his that made him stop. Barely. He wanted to rip his hand away and go. Her voice was only a whisper but he heard it even though they stood on a road in the middle of Shinjuku: "This is trust. Telling me all that is letting go of control and trusting instead. It's taking a leap even if you fear to be hurt for it."

It was weakness. Weakness. Foolishness. Hurt. Pain. He knew all about pain. Pain was his world, had been his world forever. He could only trust in himself. Why should he offer up a part of himself to another human? Why should he enable her to hurt him? He turned and looked her in the eyes: "I don't know if I want that."

"I think your heart already made the decision for you." She smiled at him, a blinding, terrifyingly beautiful smile. "Do you want to sleep with me? Even knowing that I might hurt you?"

He shook his head.

"Call me if you want to try." She let go of his hand.

He looked at her for another moment before turning and walking away without another word.