

Ocean Avenue

Von Makikolgami

Kapitel 17: Inside Out

Mamori glared her hardest at her husband, even though she did not quite mean it. She just hated the fact that she had known things would come to this. She had always known that she would be the one losing out in this complicated triangle of love, lust and necessities because Gen and Hiruma were destined for each other and that was nothing that she could change.

And even though she had come to love him over the years and had thought that maybe he had too, it kind of hurt when she had to realize that there was no way for her to win against that one true love.

On the other hand it was pretty romantic, just like the kind of love she read about in her novels, to keep loving somebody over the years and physical distance and everything, but she could not help to feel angry with her husband to do things like he had done them.

A few meters away, Hiruma stared down at the boy who had been so brazen to hit on him. Not that there had not been many like him before, but he was definitely the youngest so far. A part of him honestly respected him for his courage. Still, he regretted nothing. The kid was definitely one who had to learn things the hard way.

"How long do you plan to lie on the ground like this? Come on, you have a loss to celebrate." With that, he started walking back to the café.

Kouichi picked himself up, coughed and wiped away some blood, staggered a little from the dizziness before he was able to walk straight. They had not walked very far when they heard two voices – one male, the other female – arguing heatedly.

"How do you think I will be able to raise the kids alone? What have you... Just how?!"

"Please calm down, I have a plan, a good plan. I won't leave immediately, in 5 years maybe, so there will be enough time to prepare everything. So please calm down–"

"I knew that this day would come! I knew it when he left, when he agreed on doing *that!* He never said it out loud, but whenever I see him looking at you it's like 'He's mine bitch and you know it! And I'm here to take him from you!' And I can practically hear him cackle–"

"Mamori, please calm down, you're not yourself. You know he won't ever say anything like that—"

"The fact that he doesn't say it doesn't mean that he won't do it! And you should know that best!"

Musashi sighed. "Please, calm down. It's not like you ever loved me, just like I never really loved you."

Hiruma stared in disbelief at the couple in front of him. That had to be the first time that he ever saw them argue, no, fight. And he wondered what happened to the time that Musashi had bought earlier.

"This... looks bad," Kouichi said next to him, a thin trickle of blood making its way down along his eyebrows.

Hiruma found himself forced to agree, especially when Mamori's palm connected soundly with Musashi's cheek.

"You didn't have to say that!" she cried out, almost screamed as even from this far away Hiruma was able to see the tears in her eyes from the hurtful words that Musashi had just said. "I loved your and our family with all my heart and I really thought that you had, too!"

"Oh shit," Kouichi whispered, then suddenly his vision went black and he collapsed next to Hiruma, unconscious.

"Fuck."

Never had this word been more appropriate for any kind of situation, Hiruma thought, suppressed to hit his forehead with his palm and picked up the unconscious boy. For a second he wondered if Kouichi would have been happy to be this close to him, but then he directed his attention towards the bickering married couple.

"Oi, you two! Could you lend me a hand here?"

Musashi's head whipped around, staring at the blond first. "Hiruma! How long have you—"

"Kouichi!" Mamori cried out instead, her mother instincts taking over before anything else. With one look she ascertained the situation, saw the blood trickling down the boy's face and glared at the older blond as if he had done something. "What happened?"

"He hit on me," Hiruma dead-panned.

"...You mean, he hit you," Mamori corrected.

"No, I hit him when he hit on me," the blond said, not looking into her sapphire blue eyes.

"You did *WHAT?!*" Mamori exclaimed and practically pulled Deimon's current wide receiver out of the blond's hold. "Why would you do something so unbelievably *ridiculous?!*"

"I told you, he hit ON me! Had to teach the dumbass a lesson," Hiruma mumbled, not really happy with the consequences of his actions. Still, he did not regret them, but he would a fool to rub that into the mother hen's face.

"...Gen, get here," Mamori ordered and since Musashi was never the man to disobey any orders when he knew he was at the shorter end of the line, he walked over reluctantly, his left cheek turning crimson. He took his son's teammate out of his wife's arms, threw his arm over his shoulders and watched in horror how Mamori aimed and took a well-aimed swing and hit Hiruma hard and square in the face.

Musashi winced as Mamori watched – with a certain amount of satisfaction that kind of scared the older man – Hiruma fall to the ground in slow-motion as she shook her now aching right hand.

"So, and now one of you calls the ambulance while I tell the others that the party is over."

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A few hours later, Musashi and Hiruma said in the waiting room of the local ER, both with a cooling pack pressed to their face. Mamori was currently busy telling Kouichi's parents what the doctor's had told them earlier, namely that the boy's injuries were not so bad, just that he fainted due to the loss of adrenaline and something else, Musashi had not really listened to all of this.

He was much more concerned with the fact that somebody might have overheard his quarrel with his wife.

"...Fear of paparazzi?"

"...yes," Musashi admitted with a sigh. "I will have to explain this tomorrow... I have a meeting." He motioned to his swollen cheek.

Hiruma snorted and then hissed as a wave of pain shot through his face. "At least you only got the palm... I got the full fist and a black eye for free in addition to that."

Musashi cast his eyes sideways and snorted at the pathetic picture of the blond. Mamori really had not held back with her punch and his left eye was already almost completely swollen shut. He held the cooling pack gingerly to it and tried to hide it mostly behind it. Well, there was no doubt that Mamori had a strong right arm.

"I'm sorry," Musashi chuckled. "Good thing you don't go out that often... and that you don't have to meet people who can ask uncomfortable questions."

"Yeah, but just me being here causes you that," Hiruma said, absolutely serious. "I shouldn't have come back now."

"...No," Musashi said after a moment's hesitation. "No, it's a good thing that you came back now," he sighed. "In three or five years – maybe when Youichi is married and produced some kids on his own – I wouldn't have the courage to follow you... I'm not getting younger and sometimes I notice it, no matter how much I want to deny it."

He shifted the cooling bag against his cheek absent-mindedly. He knew that he would hurt a lot of people as a consequence for his actions and he still hadn't figured out just how to do it, but... he would do it. Stubbornly see it through, just like in the old days.

"...You're a sucker for kids, aren't you?" Hiruma teased, a small smile playing around his lips. "You just like to take care of them, don't you?"

Musashi stared at the blond, surprised by the sudden soft jab that lacked any malice or teasing that he had expected from the other. "I..." he started, but then snorted. "You seem to have a soft spot for kids, too. The way you handled Sachiko—"

"I had to take care of an abandoned kid once, while her mother was shopping. She called me all sorts of names and was the brattiest brat that I had ever encountered," he elaborated, staring at the tips of his shoes. "I hated her. But her mother forgot her just like that, when she was such a lively girl, I couldn't understand it. And it took her until fucking midnight to figure out that something was missing, too!"

Watching in poorly concealed awe, Musashi didn't know what to do with that explanation. He had always thought that kids would run away screaming from the self-proclaimed demon, but to argue with him and make him get fond of them while he did not like them before... that was a new one.

"That was the most educating day in my life," Hiruma sighed. "That brat showed me how to change diapers with her doll that kept on busting her fucking diapers, and it was just a doll, for fuck's sake! And it had the most obnoxious voice, too! Like this, 'Mama! Mama! I made poopoo! Change my diaper!'"

Musashi restrained himself but somehow the image of Hiruma getting unnerved by a doll was just too amusing. First, only chuckles bubbled out of him, but with his imagination running wild, it turned out to be a full-fledged roar of laughter.

"That's not funny! That brat made me change that fucking doll's diaper for twenty fucking one times! Twenty-one! As if she knew the meaning behind that number!"

By then the older man was laughing so hard, that he had to hold his sides, tears of joy streaming over his face. "Oh, stop that, will you? This cheeks hurts like a bitch, just so

you know. And laughing doesn't help either."

The devilish ex-quarterback grinned. "That's why I told you it's not funny! Geez, fucking old man, you never listen to me!"

Being unable to answer, Musashi just kept on laughing until his wife returned.

"...What are you laughing about?" she asked, incredulously, looking sheepish.

"Nothing important," both men said in unison, Hiruma's tone slightly bored while Gen just kept on grinning. She raised an eyebrow at that, but did not ask for further explanation. They had probably just been making fun of somebody.

"...How are your cheeks?" she asked in a small voice. "I'm so sorry for hitting you, really, I thought I had grown a little over the years, but—"

"It's okay," Gen smiled. "I'm sorry I hurt you, too. Let's talk about it later, okay? Just the two of us..."

Hiruma just kept his mouth shut, knowing that Musashi would inform him of the outcome anyways, but his wife did not think so.

"No, this involves Hiruma just as much. He should be there, too," she said firmly. "Let's go eat somewhere later—"

"No. Let's talk at home. I don't want to risk anybody overhearing what is going to be said, today was risky enough," Musashi interrupted her train of thought.

For a moment, they stared at each other, battling for dominance until Mamori sighed and gave in. "But I am not cooking... and you buy the alcohol. I know I will need some."

"Sounds good to me," Musashi said with a bemused snort. "Do they still need us here?"

"No, everything's fine so far. I explained to Kouichi's parents that he had had a rough day on the field, I'm not sure how well they would react to the revelation that a full grown man beat up a highschooler just because he felt disturbed by his choice in partners," she said, glaring down at the blond, who chose to ignore her and cross his arms in front of his chest defiantly.

"Let's hope somebody remembers to tell Kouichi that this is what he's supposed to say..." Musashi sighed, not quite happy with those lies, but he had more important things to tend to than dealing with teenage boys.