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Direct questions or comments to me sweetremiks@tumblr

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KAMIGAMI NO ASOBI – Takeru Chapter 2

TITLE: Transient Waters

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

I eventually got used to our morning practices, and I remembered how good it felt to move my body. I might have been feeling it more than usual, because I hadn't done iai since I came to this school.

TAKERU: Hey, I've been wondering about this, but what's that thing you have?

When we stopped for a breather, Takeru pointed at me. It seemed like he was interested in Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi.

YUI: This pendant? It was originally a sword in my family's storehouse. I just found it one day.

TAKERU: Hmm. Can you turn it into a sword like before?

YUI: Um… yes. Wait a second.

I guess he was curious about the sword itself. When I touched it, the pendant vibrated and grew warm. And, I prayed silently for it to become a sword again. Grasping the hilt of the transformed Ama-no-Murakumi-no-Tsurugi, I held it out in front of Takeru.

YUI: Is this alright?

I touched it again and willed it to turn back. It changed as if responding to my thoughts.

YUI: It's called Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi.

TAKERU: Never heard of it. But it's sure a good sword.

It was rare to see Takeru praising something like this.

YUI: Is it really that amazing? I don't know much about it, but…

TAKERU: Yeah. You don't see a sword like this every day. It's somehow interesting…

If Takeru, who was proficient with a sword, said that much about it, then it must really be something incredible. It was a little late, but I was suddenly more interested in the mysterious

sword. Zeus said that the only one who can handle the sword is me, who was chosen by the sword. But why? Why did it choose me? I'm nothing more than a human. Besides…

???: Help!

???: Help! Someone, somehow!

When I first touched the Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi, I definitely heard some strange voices. The echo of those urgent, pleading voices still remained in my ears. I couldn't forget them. What exactly were those voices…?

BACKGROUND: LIBRARY

After morning practice, I headed straight for the library. I was thinking that the knowledgeable Thoth might know something about the sword.

YUI: Excuse me.

YUI: Lord Thoth… do you know anything about this pendant… about Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi?

There were many massive books piled up on top of the desk. Thoth was reading, and didn't bother to look up at me.

THOTH: Look up that kind of thing yourself. As you can see, I'm busy.

Thoth didn't say he didn't know. Explaining was just too troublesome for him. Finding one document out of the huge collection of books seemed like an extremely difficult task. I had no choice but to get the information out of Thoth.

YUI: Please. Tell me what you know!

YUI: Takeru-san said he was interested in Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi.

YUI: It's so rare for him to be interested in something like that, so I want you to tell me more about it.

YUI: It might be the one thing that can lead Takeru to graduation. So, please, I beg you.

Responding to my impassioned plea, Thoth looked at me with annoyance and finally stood up.

THOTH: Hmph, you're so noisy. Fine… read this.

As if knowing exactly where the book was, he went straight toward one of the bookcases. He pulled one volume off the shelf and offered it to me. From what I could see of the front cover, it appeared to be a book on Japanese mythology. Thoth flipped through the book and opened it to a certain page.

THOTH: Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi is a sword produced from the tail of Yamata-no-Orochi.[1] You should at least have heard of that.

YUI: Yamata-no-Orochi…

Of course I knew that name. It was from an old story I'd heard when I was little.

THOTH: The one who defeated Yamata-no-Orochi was Susanoo.

YUI: !

So, in other words…

CHOICE

>Takeru doesn't remember any of it?
>The sword is actually Takeru's?
>Susanoo is… Takeru?

CHOOSE: Takeru doesn't remember any of it?

YUI: Wait a second. If Takeru-san was the one who defeated Yamata-no-Orochi… why doesn't he remember that?

Takeru had reacted to Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi as if he'd never seen it before. If he was the one who eliminated Yamata-no-Orochi, then that was weird.

THOTH: Right now, the good-for-nothing attending this school is from the time before he defeated Yamata-no-Orochi. He has no way of knowing what it is.

YUI: I see…

It was puzzling, but I had no choice but to accept it. In other words, this meant that Takeru didn't know anything about the sword or Yamata-no-Orochi.

CHOOSE: The sword is actually Takeru's?

YUI: So, that means this sword is actually Takeru-san's?

THOTH: He is merely the reason that sword came into existence.

THOTH: Right now, it's yours. You are the only one who can handle it.

CHOOSE: Susanoo is… Takeru?

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[1] Dicitonary entry: YAMATA-NO-OROCHI (in mythological tradition) A monster that appears in Japanese mythology. It has eyes as red as *hozuki*, eight heads and a tail, and is as big as eight mountains. It was made famous in a story in which Susanoo defeated it. (T/N: *hozuki* is also known as Chinese lanterns or winter cherries. Try looking it up!)

YUI: By Susanoo, you mean Takeru, right?

THOTH: You… have you forgotten his original name already? I'm appalled.

YUI: I-I was just making sure. Sorry.

(choices converge here)

Then, the bell rang for the start of morning classes.

THOTH: That's enough. It's time to teach those annoying classes.

Thoth listlessly headed for the classroom.

YUI: Yes! Lord Thoth, thank you very much!

I quickly checked the book out and followed after Thoth.

BACKGROUND: AUDITORIUM

After the day's classes had ended, I started kendo practice with Takeru.

I tried my hardest to be encouraging, and though Takeru still seemed reluctant, he was more cooperative than before.

TAKERU: Hey, do you have to use this kind of sword in kendo? It's way too light for a real sword.

It seemed like Takeru still wasn't used to the bamboo sword.

YUI: Yes. In formal matches, you use this sword and put on defensive armor.

TAKERU: Armor? Like an outfit for fighting? For a sword that can't even kill, that's pretty extreme.

YUI: Even if it can't kill, it hurts if you get hit by a strong attack. You can even sustain brain damage.

TAKERU: Your brain, huh…? You can really do someone in with that, then.

YUI: N-No… It's not that dangerous…

While telling Takeru about the information I'd read about, I laid out the armor.

YUI: You put this mask over your face, the torso part over the hakama and kendo gi[2], and finally equip the gauntlets.

YUI: When doing kendo, the places you hit are called dadotsu-bui, and these are the forearm, face, torso, and the final one is anywhere with a stabbing motion.

YUI: The thrust is sometimes recognized as valid and sometimes it isn't.

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[2] T/N: Hakama, a large pleated pant-like piece, and kendo gi are both traditional sportswear for kendo. Look up kendo to see the full uniform.

Takeru was listening to my explanation intently.

YUI: It is said that kendo is a martial art that builds character through extensive training in the law of the sword, and that is serves as spiritual training.

TAKERU: Spiritual training, huh…? So it's not just kill or be killed.

Takeru muttered to himself and seemed to be thinking about something.

YUI: Also, it's customary to bow before and after every kendo match. It's a sport that really values etiquette.

YUI: It's precisely because you have an opponent that it's possible to polish your skills and strengthen your mind.

YUI: That's why it's important to thank and respect your opponent, to honor the code of politeness, and remain humble and not proud.

TAKERU: …It's kind of… a weird sword art.

I don't know what I would do if he said he didn't want to do it anymore… I fearfully peeked at his face.

YUI: …Is it weird?

TAKERU: It's not enough to just polish your skills, right?

TAKERU: Your heart… has to get stronger too… right?

Takeru averted his eyes and strengthened his grip on the sword hilt. Relieved that he hadn't changed his mind about kendo, I picked up a sword as well.

YUI: Alright, let's get started!

We practiced together, mimicking the forms of real matches. We did the motions over and over until we were satisfied. Before I knew it, the sun had begun to sink.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

Drenched in the evening sunlight, the field was more beautiful than usual. Before returning to the dorm, we stepped outside to get some fresh air. The chilly wind felt good on my body.

YUI: Mmm! Moving with all that armor on feels really constricting if you're not used to it.

YUI: The mask is surprisingly heavy.

The conditioning I'd been doing every day in practice built up, and my body hurt in many places. I rolled my shoulders and loosened the stiffness in my neck.

TAKERU: You're missing something in the way you train. You have to learn from me.

He puffed out his chest in pride. Even in human form, Takeru had astounding physical capabilities. But, even though he was in human form, I had a strange feeling that something in the way he carried himself was different.

YUI: Is that so?

I poked at his muscles.

TAKERU: Uwah… ow ow ow… you! What are you doing?!

YUI: I thought maybe your muscles were sore, so I tried testing that out.

YUI: Didn't it hurt just now?

TAKERU: Stupid, there's no way I'm sore! It's just your imagination, honestly.

Takeru abruptly turned away. It was just a natural reaction to exercise. There wasn't really a reason to act tough… Seeing Takeru like that was a little strange, and I started to laugh.

YUI: Uhahaha!

TAKERU: Don't look down on me. Geez…

YUI: I'm sorry. I wasn't looking down on you.

TAKERU: Hey… don't move.

YUI: Huh?

TAKERU: There's something on your face.

He placed a hand on my cheek and fixated on my face. As he looked at me closely, my heartbeat increased. Takeru's serious gaze captured and held me there.

YUI: U-Um… It's fine…

I tried to brush away his hand, but I couldn't move.

TAKERU: It's not fine. It spoils your cute face.

YUI: C-Cu…!

My body stiffened at Takeru's words.

TAKERU: Mmkay… there. It's all clean now.

He rubbed my cheek with his thumb many times. A happy expression rose to his face.

YUI: …

This was the first time I'd seen his smile up close, and I had no idea what to say or do. The place where he'd touched grew warm, and I could feel my pulse there, throbbing.

TAKERU: You're a girl. You need to be more careful.

When he was done, he gently stroked my hair.

YUI: …Thank you… very much…

It was a kind gesture, as if he was soothing a child. My head steadily grew warm.

TAKERU: It's nothing. You sure like to exaggerate.

YUI: But this is the first time I've been treated so nicely… I'm a little flustered.

From my personality and the fact that I had always been doing iai, I'd never been treated like a girl in this way. I was always on the same level as the boys. There was no boundary there.

YUI: People didn't really worry about me. They always told me that I was so calm and strong.

Because everyone said that me, I started to think that should be that way.

TAKERU: You're really pushing yourself. No need to be so stiff.

TAKERU: When you're with me, I'll protect you. So just, relax a little.

YUI: …

It felt like something in my heart fell with a thump. I've never complained to my family before. I might have been subconsciously living with my guard up all the time. Takeru's casual kindness thawed my heart.

TAKERU: Okay, I'm starving. Let's get going.

He moved away and stood up, offering a hand to me.

TAKERU: Here, grab on. Or what? You can't get up 'cause your muscles are sore?

YUI: N-No way!

When I touched his strong, sinewy hand, he lightly pulled me up. He walked in front of me, and as I watched his back, his words from earlier continually ran through my head.

BACKGROUND: YUI'S ROOM

MELISSA: Kutanagi. What are you reading?

Melissa clung to my hand as I turned the pages of my book.

YUI: Melissa-san. I can't turn the pages like this.

He gazed at my fingers, and seemed to be thinking intently about the letters he couldn't read.

MELISSA: Don't say that, let me in too! I'll read with you. What do you wanna know?

YUI: It's about Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi. I was interested in why a sword came out of Yamata-no-Orochi's tail…

I searched through the book Thoth had handed to me, but it didn't seem like it could tell me that reason.

MELISSA: You can't do anything about that. It's probably just some whim of the gods.

Melissa might be right. In the world of the gods, common sense wasn't very useful. I moved Melissa over a little and flipped through the pages. Melissa hopped around as if chasing after the pages.

YUI: Ah…

Then, I found something about Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi that caught my eye. A long time ago, when the people in Japan would raise their prayers to the gods, they would often use a sword in the ritual. In other words, a Shinto ritual.

YUI: A sword is… something that can connect gods and humans…

I read a sentence from the book aloud and suddenly remembered something. This had something to do with the fact that the Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi was in my family's shrine. It might have originally been an object of worship. But, why would one of the Imperial Regalia[3] be at my house…?

MELISSA: There're tons of things you won't know even if you think about 'em.

MELISSA: Don't force yourself. Relax and hang out with me!

YUI: Alright. …I'm done reading for now.

I don't know… that might be true, but my head was still full of thoughts about my sword. And I also couldn't help but think about Takeru. I reflected back on that time during our last club practice and sighed. It was endless repetition. I wanted to think about the sword, but my changing feelings for Takeru were getting out of hand.

MELISSA: Oh! What do you wanna do?

YUI: It's already bedtime, so I was thinking of going to sleep.

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[3] Dictionary entry: IMPERIAL REGALIA (in mythological tradition) A word for the three treasures, Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi, Yata-no-Kagami, and Yasakani-no-Magatama. In Japanese myth, these three items were granted to Ninigi-no-Mikoto by Amaterasu when he descended to earth. These items actually exist, and are still worshipped to this day.

MELISSA: Wha?! You're sleeping?! Who's gonna hang out with me?!

YUI: I'm sorry, Melissa-san. Good night.

There were just so many things I didn't know the answer to, but someday, I might learn the reason why I have the Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi. And, how I feel about Takeru… Thinking about these things, I drifted off to sleep.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

TAKERU: Alright, let's do some laps first! Come on!

YUI: Y-Yes.

Takeru was always so energetic in mornings. His physical strength knew no limits. He really was full of vitality.

YUI: Haa… Haa…

TAKERU: What, tired already? That's pitiful…

YUI: I-I can keep going. I'm not tired yet.

I didn't want Takeru to underestimate me. I willed myself to continue running.

TAKERU: You're pretty strong for a human.

YUI: For a human? That's not a good way to put it.

His prejudice was slowly disappearing, but it still made me sad to hear him talk to me like that.

TAKERU: But it's the truth, right? Humans get tired fast, and they die fast.

YUI: Compared to gods, of course humans are inferior, but…

TAKERU: You mean they're weak. That doesn't mean they're bad.

TAKERU: If something's worrying you… I said I'd help you. So if anything happens, let me know.

YUI: Takeru-san…

If it was something that was worrying me, the first thing that came to mind was…

YUI: Then please learn more about humans!

He was nice to me now, but it was hard to say that he understood humans as a whole. I wanted him to know more about humans and begin to accept them.

TAKERU: Haha, what? Geez, I got it already. I don't mind.

TAKERU: I don't really care about humans, but you won't shut up if I don't do it.

He joked and poked lightly at my head.

YUI: But you should care!

Continuing this kind of exchange between us, we ran our morning laps together. I felt that I'd gotten closer to Takeru a little… But I was also thinking of ways I could help Takeru understand humans better.

BACKGROUND: CLASSROOM

Since club activities started, Takeru usually came to class every day. But even then, he would still sometimes skip on a whim, and I would have to go to the roof and bring him back. He complained the whole time, but he followed me back to the classroom.

LOKI: Ta-tan, Ta-tan! Tell me your brother's weakness! He won't even laugh when I tickle him!

The trickster Loki approached Takeru as he came in.

TAKERU: Huh? Why do I have to tell Bro's weaknesses to someone like you? Go away.

Takeru had tremendous trust in his brother Tsukito. It was obvious that Loki wouldn't get an answer out of him.

LOKI: Ta-tan just can't be fooled, huh? You could be a teensy bit more cooperative, you know? So stingy.☆

Loki poked at Takeru with his index finger. Did he not know the meaning of "making someone mad"?

TAKERU: Shut up! Just shut your mouth for a minute!

Takeru make to slap away Loki's hand, but Loki deftly avoided him.

LOKI: Ahhh scaryyyy!! Ah, Ta-tan, you're so interesting. I always have to be on my toes!

Loki cackled and ran away. I wonder what he was planning to do…

It wasn't just Loki; Takeru seemed to be more open with everyone in the class lately. Even Zeus or Thoth wouldn't think of Takeru as a failure now.

BACKGROUND: AUDITORIUM

Morning, noon, after school… I spent my whole day with Takeru. I never thought we'd share so much time together in the club. There was no doubt that the person I was closest to and spent the most time with was Takeru.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

As we were heading over to the gym as always, something happened along the way.

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Hey you, wait a moment.

YUI: …Yes? What is it?

One of the students whom Zeus created for the school called out to me. They didn't normally interfere with what I was doing. It was rare to be stopped like this.

MALE GREEK STUDENT: I've actually been interested in you for a while now.

YUI: Huh?

MALE GREEK STUDENT: I've always… always only looked at you.

A wicked smile was on his face. This is weird… But before I could finish that thought, the student roughly grabbed my arm.

YUI: Ah!

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Come… Come… with me. Come be mine.

His eyes were blank, as if he was possessed.

YUI: Let go…

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Aghhh!

Before I even screamed, a shadow fell in front of me.

TAKERU: Didn't you hear her, you bastard?! She said let go!!

When I looked up, I saw that Takeru had grabbed a hold of the student.

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Th-That hurts…

TAKERU: Let her go!

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Agh!

TAKERU: Let go, let go!

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Gh!

TAKERU: Let goooo!

MALE GREEK STUDENT: Urgh…

The student was hanging from his collar, and, with terrifying power, Takeru was beating him up like a sandbag.

YUI: T-Takeru-san…!! I'm… fine now.

He hesitated for a moment, but he continued to hit the student over and over. He was too far gone, and my words wouldn't reach him.

YUI: He let go of me already… Takeru-san!!

It wasn't until I grabbed him from behind to pin his arms down that his movements finally stopped. The student hung limp and lifeless in his hands.

TAKERU: …I-I… did it again…

ZEUS: Look, you broke the toy I made.

YUI: Z-Zeus-san?!

In his child form, Zeus walked up to us, amused.

YUI: The… toy…?

ZEUS: To learn more about humans, I experimented with feelings of love and tried to give them to one of my dolls…

ZEUS: It appears to be a failure. I might have been too excessive with it.

ZEUS: However… your temper is as quick as always.

ZEUS: To lose yourself in emotion and repeat the same error over and over… you still have much to learn.

ZEUS: That is why you are labeled as violent.

TAKERU: …

ZEUS: So, I suppose I will collect my failed experiment and try something else…

Zeus snapped his fingers, and the doll transformed back into dirt. After confirming that the student was gone, Zeus turned toward the school building with a wave of his cloak.

TAKERU: …

YUI: Takeru-san, come over here.

Takeru looked really depressed. I invited him into the courtyard, where there were fewer people.

BACKGROUND: COURTYARD

We sat down on a bench in the courtyard and surrendered ourselves to silence. Takeru's hands were red from clenching them so hard.

TAKERU: I'm not surprised he called me violent. …I hurt someone again.

TAKERU: I can't even stop myself. Why am I always like this…?

He struck his tightened fist on the bench, as if admonishing himself.

YUI: Don't blame yourself so much. You've definitely been changing since you've been here, Takeru-san.

TAKERU: …I don't need your pity.

YUI: It's not pity.

YUI: When Loki-san provoked you that one time, you got so angry that you turned back to your god form. But this time was different.

YUI: And this time, you saved me.

YUI: You did act violently, but you were protecting me, right?

TAKERU: …

Takeru nodded wordlessly.

YUI: The Takeru-san then and the Takeru-san now are totally different.

YUI: It's just that you haven't come to understand that change yet.

TAKERU: You mean I'm changing, but I haven't accepted it yet?

YUI: That's right. I was the same way, but in my case, it was just my circumstances.

YUI: In the human world, I was standing at a crossroads in life. I had no idea what to do.

YUI: My head was full of worries about that, but then I was thrown into the world of gods…

YUI: I didn't even know one thing form another. I was so confused.

YUI: But, the situation drove me into a corner, and I had no choice to accept it.

YUI: I had to lay myself bare, and I learned some things about my true self.

TAKERU: Your true… self.

TAKERU: It's true that you won't even notice yourself changing if you don't know yourself at all.

YUI: I was scared of changing at first. It felt like I was going to lose everything.

YUI: But even that anxiety changed into proof that I'd grown. I felt like I'd gotten a little stronger.

TAKERU: Hah… you might be right.

TAKERU: God or human, nobody knows themselves that well.

TAKERU: That's why it'd good to confirm things with someone else like this…

It might take him a while to accept himself, but he is definitely trying to move forward.

TAKERU: You're… probably disgusted with me.

YUI: That's not true. I'm grateful that you came to save me.

YUI: If you hadn't have come, I might have had to beat him up myself, you know?

I raised my fists in front of my face, posing as if starting a fight.

TAKERU: You really look like you could hit someone. Scary, scary. I need to make sure you don't hit me too.

He held his hands in front of mine and lowered my arms.

TAKERU: If you're alright with it, then stick around with me. Until graduation, okay?

YUI: …Takeru-san. Of course. Let's do our best with our club!

My chest felt warm after hearing the word "graduation" coming from his mouth. The first time I met him, that kind of thing was unthinkable. I felt a definite change there. And from the bottom of my heart, I wanted to cheer him on.

BACKGROUND: YUI'S ROOM

YUI: Hm-Hmm-Hm♪

MELISSA: You seem to be in high spirits, Kutanagi. Did something good happen?

YUI: I've been enjoying myself a lot lately. Class is fun, club activities are fun…

I sensed that the more time I spent with Takeru, the closer we became.

YUI: And it seems like I'm finally getting a good response. There's hope for graduation.

MELISSA: That's great! You youngsters sure like to have fun.

Zeus had only just made him, but Melissa was already talking like an older person.

MELISSA: So this is youth. Heh, I'm jealous. Busy with both love and studies.

YUI: Love… no way. Don't joke around like that.

MELISSA: I'm not really joking around. Just seeing it calmly, that's what it looks like to me.

MELISSA: It's not a bad thing, really. Taking it slow is best, right?

I'd never thought of it like that, but when I thought of Takeru, my heart beat faster. I was confused with this new feeling, but even so, it wasn't bad.

BACKGROUND: CLOUDS

I didn't know whether these feelings were love or not, but right now, I was at the height of my youth, as Melissa had put it. The least I could do was devote myself to club activities night and day. Every day, every night, together with Takeru.

BACKGROUND: AUDITORIUM

I'd made preparations to start practice as always, but…

TAKERU: It's hot… I'm melting…

YUI: You too, Takeru-san? Somehow it's hot all of a sudden.

Wait, it wasn't just hot. This hot, sticky air is just like… Realizing something, I looked out the window. The view outside had changed while I wasn't paying attention. The trees that had been filled with red leaves were now growing green and thick. I could feel a bright, lively, vitality coming from them.

YUI: Did it… turn to summer?

TAKERU: Ah, that's why… of course it's hot. That guy still does whatever he wants.

YUI: It feels weird to go from autumn back to summer, doesn't it?

TAKERU: But still, that has nothing to do with us. Here, let's keep going.

Takeru was continuing practice, as if he had no interest in what was going on outside. It was true that the seasons had nothing to do with our club activities. But in the heat, I could definitely lose my motivation.

YUI: Ah, that's right!

TAKERU: What's with you all of a sudden?

I'd suddenly let out a loud voice, and Takeru stopped swinging his sword.

YUI: Yes! I was just thinking that since it's summer, it makes me think of training camp.

I wanted Takeru to learn more about humans with me.

YUI: If we did that, we could be together for longer…

As soon as I said it, I realized what I'd suggested. I might have said something really weird. When I looked at Takeru's face, he was staring back at me with a strange expression.

TAKERU: Training camp? What's that? Does it have something to do with summer?

Phew… It looked like he was worried about simply not understanding a word.

YUI: In training camp, we take advantage of the long break and go to a new place to focus solely on club activities.

YUI: At a human school, there's normally a month for summer break, so we have camp during that time.

YUI: But I don't know if we have summer break at this school…

If we wanted to have a school life just like humans, then I think having a summer break would be good.

TAKERU: Oh? That sounds interesting. So the point is to discipline yourself? Let's go train in the mountains!

YUI: M-Mountains?

TAKERU: When you talk about discipline, it's gotta be in the mountains.

Takeru seemed pretty excited. Seeing his eyes sparkle, I wanted to make the camp a reality. Since I have a chance, I'll try talking it over with Zeus.

BACKGROUND: THRONE ROOM

When kendo club hours were over, I visited the headmaster's office.

YUI: …so that's why I'd like to have a training camp. Do you think you could give us a month for summer break?

After I explained everything, I peeked up to see Zeus's reaction. If he said no at this point, then it was over… but how did he take it?

ZEUS: If you say it is necessary, then do as you like.

ZEUS: I have a debt to repay to you as well. It should be fine.

The debt he mentioned was probably about that time I got involved with one of his dolls.

ZEUS: You may be able to learn things you cannot normally learn.

ZEUS: There should be no need to trouble myself with preparing another toy.

An amused smirk rose to Zeus's face.

YUI: What?! It's really okay?!

I was surprised at how easily I'd gotten his permission. Zeus didn't even look like he'd thought that hard about it.

ZEUS: Besides, I had been thinking that it was about time for a needed break.

YUI: Thank you very much!

ZEUS: In exchange, I expect results.

YUI: Results…

ZEUS: Training oneself in body and mind leads to maturity, does it not?

He repeated back what I had explained to him earlier. I nodded in response.

YUI: Yes. I will definitely show you some results!

ZEUS: A good answer. I have high expectations for you.

I felt pressure when I heard that, but I couldn't go back on something I'd said myself. But Takeru was full of eagerness to train, and I was sure he would show some good results. He was surprisingly serious.

YUI: About the location, is there a place where we could have the training camp? Like the mountains or something like that.

The plans for the camp were moving rather quickly, so I confirmed things one by one. Takeru was really hoping for a place in the mountains.

ZEUS: If it is necessary, I will make it. What sort of establishment do you want?

It was so easy for him to say he'll just make something if we didn't have it. Zeus was really amazing. I explained the details of the special aspects of a training camp facility.

ZEUS: This should be fine. Use it as you please.

YUI: It's done already?!

It felt like he'd activated his powers, but it was just for an instant.

ZEUS: All that is left is for you to complete preparations and begin the camp. Just in case, I assigned Thoth as a supervisor.

YUI: I understand. Thank you very much! I'll send word out about camp immediately. Summer break will begin next week.

I left to tell Takeru and everyone else.

BACKGROUND: DINING HALL

I left the dorm and headed for the dining hall. I'd gotten there a little late, and there weren't many students inside. I saw Takeru eating at one of the corner tables, so I walked over to him.

YUI: Takeru-san, I got permission to do the training camp!

TAKERU: Huh? Seriously?! We can really go train in the mountains?!

His hand stopped midway to his mouth, and he smiled brightly. His reaction was a lot happier than what I had anticipated.

TAKERU: Crap… I might actually be pretty excited.

Just from seeing his face, I was filled with happiness. I was glad I'd made the suggestion.

TAKERU: Anyway, when does it start? Right away?

Takeru already seemed like he was itching for it to start.

YUI: Sorry, but it won't be happening right away.

YUI: We'll be doing some preparations, so it starts next week.

TAKERU: Woo! I'm getting fired up! Don't cry if the training's too intense!

YUI: Yes!

Thinking on the preparations I still had to do, I realized things would get pretty busy the next few days. I should notify other clubs besides the kendo club. I need to move things forward quickly until next week.

BACKGROUND: CLASSROOM

I had every club draw up plans for training camp, and it became a hectic few days. I was also steadily working on the kendo club's training schedule. All that was left was to wait for summer break.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

A few days passed—

BACKGROUND: AUDITORIUM

Today is the closing ceremony before summer vacation.

ZEUS: Tomorrow begins summer vacation, but it is also a time to build up your strength.

ZEUS: Though this may be period of rest, do not allow yourselves to grow lazy. Strive to make an effort toward each club activity.

Zeus delivered us a speech from the podium, both scolding and encouraging us. Once he explained the important parts of summer break, the ceremony ended safely.

BACKGROUND: CLASSROOM

LOKI: Summer break summer breaaak! We can play around lots now!

THOR: …I don't know about that.

BALDER: We're supposed to be getting ready for training camp, but it's like a zoo right now in my club.

APOLLON: It sounds super fun, it should definitely be fun! I'm getting really excited!

THOTH: Everyone, be quiet. I'm explaining the important parts.

When Thoth stood at the front, the noisy classroom quieted down.

THOTH: Since you are all going to different places for training camp, it would be difficult for me to supervise. Therefore, I will not be participating.

I thought I remembered Zeus giving Thoth the task of supervising us, but… It probably just became too much of a hassle for him.

THOTH: Each one of you, be careful and make an effort in training camp. That will be all.

Leaving us with only those words, Thoth excused us and exited the classroom. I guess he was serious about not supervising us.

YUI: Takeru-san, we should get going too.

TAKERU: Ahh, wait a sec. Bro!

Called over by Takeru, Tsukito appeared.

TAKERU: I invited Bro to training camp with us. He's alone in his club, and besides, with him it'll be awesome!

TSUKITO: I will now be accompanying you. I am looking forward to working together.

I seemed like Takeru was concerned about Tsukito, who was in the literature club all by himself.

YUI: Ah… I see.

Though I was surprised at the sudden addition, I was happy that we had more people. But somewhere in my mind, I also thought that he should've told me sooner. I felt a little left out realizing that I was the only one who didn't know. I knew this childish feeling wasn't a good thing, so I acted normally.

TAKERU: Sorry. I wasn't trying to be quiet about it, I just didn't have time to discuss with you.

TAKERU: I was just asking Bro about his summer plans, and he said he didn't have any.

TAKERU: And besides, isn't it bad if it's just the two of us?

YUI: Uh… what do you mean?

TAKERU: I read in a book somewhere that it's bad for a man and a woman to sleep under the same roof if they're not married.

TAKERU: That's what they call courtesy, right? You're a girl. It's better to just stay focused.

To think Takeru worried about it that much… I was so surprised, no words came out of my mouth.

TAKERU: Hm? Did I get something wrong?

YUI: No, not at all. Thank you for your concern.

TAKERU: Yeah! Okay, should we go?

Just like this, the three of us headed for the mountains…

BACKGROUND: MOUNTAIN PATH

YUI: Haa… Haa…

The road up the mountain was steeper than I was prepared for, and the path to the site was long.

TAKERU: What, are you tired already? That's proof you're not doing enough daily training.

YUI: I-I… can keep… going…

A few steps ahead of me, Takeru was walking easily, not even breaking a sweat. He was showing off the difference in our strength.

TSUKITO: The footing is uneven here. Please be careful.

YUI: Okay…

Tsukito's face was unexpectedly calm as he continued forward. Since he was actually a god, maybe his physical strength surpassed mine anyway…

I finally caught sight of the building in the distance.

BACKGROUND: DOJO

YUI: We're finally here… It was farther than I thought.

Exhausted, I dropped my bags on the floor.

TAKERU: Hey, why're you taking a break? We're starting club activities now. We're having a match!

YUI: What?! Right now?!

TAKERU: Are you still half-asleep? Of course it's right now. What kind of camp do you think this is? Here, hurry up and get ready.

Filled with motivation, Takeru immediately took out some bamboo swords and started getting ready. At this point, it was clear he wasn't going to give me a break.

TAKERU: While we're having match after match, we can find out what we can work on, and focus on that for the rest of the training camp.

In other words, we're trying to find our weak points.

TAKERU: I know you can get stronger. It might be hard, but you'll do it, right?

YUI: Of course. I think that's a good plan.

When I thought about Takeru having expectations for me, I felt like I could give it my best, even if I was in a tough spot.

TAKERU: Bro, be our referee!

TSUKITO: Referee? I don't mind, but…

YUI: I'll explain everything, okay?

YUI: Tsukito-san, you also have literature club activities to take care of, right? Is this okay?

TSUKITO: I plan to write my novel in my spare time. It is no problem.

YUI: Thank you very much.

After explaining the basic rules to Tsukito, I changed into dougi[4] and began my match with Takeru.

TAKERU: Here we go!

YUI: Okay!

It had been a while since my last match with Takeru, and I didn't notice my hands tighten around my sword in nervousness. Plus, it was our first match with a referee.

Concentrating, we exchanged serious blows. I felt strangely tense, perhaps because this was different from normal. Takeru was really strong. I wanted to get even one hit in, but I was overwhelmed by his huge power.

TSUKITO: The winner is Totsuka Takeru.

Right as Takeru took his second point, Tsukito announced the winner. I lost… We bowed to each other and took off our masks. Takeru ran up to me.

TAKERU: You've gotten stronger.

YUI: Really?!

I was beginning to feel depressed, but Takeru's words saved me.

TAKERU: You don't flinch when my sword comes at you. You've got guts now. Don't you think so too, Bro?

TSUKITO: Yes. You were very brave.

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[4] Similar to karate robes. It's also what Takeru is wearing in this scene.

YUI: I’m honored to hear that.

TAKERU: So, did you find out my weak point from what we just did?

In response, I said…

CHOICE

>You don’t have any
>Your movements are a little excessive
>You rely too much on power

CHOOSE: You don’t have any

YUI: …You might not have a weak point.

TAKERU: It’d be nice if I didn’t, but there’s gotta be something. Think about it seriously.

CHOOSE: Your movements are a little excessive

YUI: You’re pretty quick, so I think that covers it, but you sometimes make unnecessary movements.

YUI: It’s connected to leaving yourself open, so maybe try not to do that…?

TAKERU: You found me out… Yeah, I was also thinking maybe I was doing that…

He scratched his head as he said that.

CHOOSE: You rely too much on power

YUI: I think you rely too much on your own power, Takeru-san. It’s like you’re trying to completely overpower me.

TAKERU: That’s… well, yeah, maybe. Okay, I’ll watch out.

Takeru mumbled his words here and there, and finally just fell silent. It seemed that Takeru was thinking the same thing himself.

(choices converge here)

YUI: Also, it’s not like you can improve on it, but you might have a disadvantage with your physique.

Compared the other gods, Takeru had a small build. He wasn’t much taller than me, and that made him easier to fight.

TAKERU: Physique? Why? That shouldn’t count as a weak point.

Takeru knit his brows in a puzzled expression. It didn't look like he was even aware that he was small.

YUI: I-Is that so?

TAKERU: This is me. Height, weight, everything.

TAKERU: Knowing that tells me what I can do.

TAKERU: It's easier to make tight turns and harder to be hit.

I'd never looked at it from that point of view before. It was a fresh feeling.

TSUKITO: Totsuka Takeru, you are quite the optimist.

TAKERU: You're just wasting time thinking about things you can't change!

He puffed out his chest, looking happy that Tsukito had praised him.

YUI: What do you think, Tsukito-san?

Since he had been watching us, he might have some suggestions.

TSUKITO: This is just my impression from one match, but it appears your strength and stamina are lacking.

TSUKITO: As for Totsuka Takeru, your weak point is not as conspicuous, but your movements are subtly rougher than they should be.

As our referee, Tsukito had paid attention to even the smallest details.

YUI: Not enough stamina…

TAKERU: Rough…

Takeru and I seriously considered Tsukito's instruction. We had to become more self-aware.

TSUKITO: Kusanagi Yui can focus on building up stamina, and Totsuka Takeru can work on refining sword skills. How would that be?

Tsukito actually gave us some advice as well.

TAKERU: Then I'll add more practice swings to my routine. Kusanagi, start running.

YUI: I-I should've known this would happen…

My body felt heavy when I thought about running along that mountain path. But this was training camp. I needed to work hard and not get discouraged.

BACKGROUND: MOUNTAIN PATH

I silently ran along the mountain path alone, and by the time my special training was done, evening was already approaching. My body was completely worn out. It just couldn't keep up with the conditioning. There are certain kinds of training that can help with this, but…

When I finally staggered back to the training site, there was a nice smell coming from inside. Were they preparing dinner?

BACKGROUND: DOJO

When I came inside, a loud clanging sound echoed through the building.

TAKERU: Hey, Bro. …Are you okay?

TSUKITO: I am fine.

Takeru stopped practicing his swinging, and, looking anxious, he peeked at what Tsukito was doing. Tsukito was cooking in the kitchen. I heard the clanging sound again, and a bunch of vegetables fell to the floor and rolled around. It smelled really good, but for some mysterious reason, it wasn't becoming a meal.

TAKERU: Bro, let me pick them up!

As Tsukito continued to drop things, Takeru frantically ran over to the kitchen to help. …Are they alright? Tsukito always seemed pretty serious and capable, so I was shocked at his clumsiness. When I looked at him, he was using a kitchen knife as if it was his very first time. It was something that came easily with practice, but it didn't look like he used one regularly.

TAKERU: Bro, be careful! I'll do that part, okay?

Takeru finally put down his bamboo sword and grabbed the kitchen knife. From the way his hands moved, Takeru didn't seem used to it either. I felt anxious.

YUI: Takeru-san, should I do it instead…?

TAKERU: No, it's okay. I said I'd help. Go rest up a little. You're probably tired.

TAKERU: This is just like cutting down an enemy, right? …Like this?

TAKERU: Whoa!

Takeru raised the knife high and split the vegetable perfectly in two. But his swing was so hard the pieces flew up into the air.

YUI: That's not safe, Takeru-san!! You need to cut it more gently and carefully.

TAKERU: Gently and carefully…? I've never cut something like that before, but… like this…?

This time, he fearfully lowered the knife and cut the vegetable into misshapen pieces.

YUI: That's right. Looking good.

He seemed to be gradually getting the hang of it, and we proceeded with some difficulty.

TAKERU: By the way, what were you trying to make, Bro?

TSUKITO: One reference book said that curry is a common dish to eat during training camp.

It was always easier to make a dish that could feed a lot of people.

TAKERU: Oh? How do you make it?

TSUKITO: The instructions are written in here.

He quietly took out a recipe book.

TAKERU: Oh, then I can just look at this. Okay, I'll take care of the rest. You should go write some of your novel!

Takeru was already staring at the recipe closely, determined to do the cooking in Tsukito's place. By showing his willingness to try, Takeru expressed his care for his brother Tsukito.

TSUKITO: Then, I will leave it to you.

Tsukito handed the kitchen over to Takeru and left.

YUI: Tsukito-san is really clumsy. I was surprised.

TAKERU: Bro doesn't really have any preferences for food. He forgets to eat all the time.

TAKERU: And if he's not interested in something, he won't do it at all.

TAKERU: He has no sense of daily life. It's not good for him, so I just can't leave him alone.

TAKERU: Sometimes he just falls asleep while I'm not looking. But since he's my Bro, everything is great.

His expression was gentle as he spoke. I could really sense his love for his brother. Seeing him like that, I said…

CHOICE

>You're pretty fussy
>You really care about your family
>You two are really close

CHOOSE: You're pretty fussy

YUI: Takeru-san, you're surprisingly fussy.

TAKERU: No. It's because he's my bro. I don't really care about anything else.

In other words, only Tsukito was a special existence to him.

CHOOSE: You really care about your family

YUI: You really care about your family, don't you?

TAKERU: Of course! Family is important right? Bro and I are brothers!

He looked really happy as he talked about his bond with Tsukito. His trust and love for Tsukito really came across.

TAKERU: Do you have any brothers or sisters, Kusanagi?

YUI: I have two older brothers.

TAKERU: Whoa, that's awesome!

YUI: Awesome?

TAKERU: You're never lonely that way.

Not lonely… huh. I'd never thought about it that way. But, I wonder if Takeru thinks of Tsukito like that… as an irreplaceable older brother.

CHOOSE: You two are really close

YUI: You two are really close, aren't you?

TAKERU: I'm glad it seems that way! There are some things I still can't understand about him.

(choices converge here)

TAKERU: Umm, next is… ouch!

Takeru was looking at the cookbook while cutting vegetables and seemed to have accidentally cut his finger.

YUI: Are you okay?!

TAKERU: It's just a scratch. Just lick it a little and it'll heal.

YUI: B-But… how about I do the chopping?

TAKERU: When a man says he'll do something, he sees it to the end! No interfering.

YUI: I-I understand…

He didn't have to refuse like that, but I guess he had his own pride to consider.

TAKERU: And, next is…

I couldn't take my eyes off of him as he valiantly tried to cook. I wonder if this is part of his feelings of concern for Tsukito. Seeing him so eager was really charming.

I continued to watch over Takeru without directly helping, and finally, the curry was done.

TAKERU: Dinner's ready, Bro! Let's eat!!

Huge pieces of vegetable were floating around in it. It looked like curry that a boy would make. It was somehow similar to curry in the human world, and I felt nostalgic.

TSUKITO: Good work, Totsuka Takeru.

We gathered in a corner of the dojo and began to eat the curry together.

TSUKITO: This is…

When Tsukito took a bite, his eyebrows twitched.

TAKERU: H-How is it, Bro? Is it okay?

Fidgeting, Takeru waited for Tsukito to respond.

TSUKITO: Delicious. If one were to say it was good or bad, this would certainly be in the good category.

TAKERU: Really?!

Just from hearing Tsukito's thoughts on his food, Takeru was like a happy child.

TAKERU: You never compliment my food! It was so worth it to cook this time!

With his usually blank expression, Tsukito continued to eat the curry. Considering Tsukito wasn't interested in food, this was probably an unusual sight.

TAKERU: Kusanagi, take a bite. How is it?

This time, he wanted my thoughts on it.

YUI: I was worried about how it would come out, but it's so good, I'm surprised!

I answered him honestly. The vegetables were rough and uneven, and the rice was a little hard. But the flavor of the curry was unexpectedly good. It went down nicely and whet my appetite.

TAKERU: Then let's go get seconds! I made a lot!

After receiving our praise, Takeru was in a good mood.

TSUKITO: Totsuka Takeru, seconds please.

TAKERU: Bro, you're already done? So fast!

Seeing Takeru enjoying himself and Tsukito being so relaxed, I felt really calm and happy. I realized then how tasty food can be when it's made for the people you love. Mixed in with the two brothers, I felt like another member of their family.

YUI: Ah, Takeru-san. We should patch up your finger.

I kept noticing the several small cuts on his fingers as we ate.

TAKERU: I'm fine. More importantly, we'll be practicing more after we're done eating.

YUI: No, you shouldn't take small wounds lightly. Here, show it to me.

When I touched his fingers, he pulled his hand away quickly.

TAKERU: I said I'm fine already. You're just exaggerating.

YUI: No I'm not. If it was me or Tsukito-san dealing with it, what would you do?

TAKERU: Of course I'd take care of it immediately… Ah…

YUI: See? It's the same. I worry about you just as much, Takeru-san.

YUI: With the people you hold dear, you pay attention to even the smallest things.

TSUKITO: Hm… So that's the nature of this behavior. This is good reference.

YUI: What is?

When I looked over at Tsukito, I saw that he was watching us and taking notes.

TSUKITO: Don't worry about me. Please continue.

YUI: Even if you say that…

TSUKITO: I see. Then I should explain myself.

TSUKITO: I am currently using you two as models for my novel.

TAKERU: What kind of story is it? Like a superhero story?

TSUKITO: No. It is a story about love and youth.

TAKERU: L-Love?! Why are you writing about that again?

YUI: That's right. That doesn't seem like you, Tsukito-san.

TSUKITO: At Apollon Agana Belea's suggestion, I drew lots to decide.

TSUKITO: Because I did not know what to write.

TSUKITO: The theme is first love between a young man and woman.

When we heard what Tsukito said, Takeru and I turned to each other, shocked.

TSUKITO: I felt that you two fit the theme, so I went ahead and used you as a reference.

So that means… Tsukito thinks Takeru and I look like a couple. As if Takeru thought the same thing, his face grew bright red in an instant. The rest of my meal didn't go down as well, since I was so conscious of Tsukito's gaze.

After dinner, Takeru and I started to practice again, and Tsukito sat on the porch to write his novel. I felt the calmest when the two of us were practicing.

TSUKITO: Today's writing has been completed. I will be going to watch the moon.

Suddenly standing up, Tsukito left the dojo alone. Takeru and I were left inside.

TAKERU: Let's wrap up soon. Training camp has just started, anyway.

YUI: Right. Though I think we really worked hard on the first day.

After practicing until I was about to drop, I felt a strange sense of satisfaction.

TAKERU: Feeling like, "I'm exhausted—!" is somehow really refreshing.

Takeru lied down flat on the ground with his limbs spread out, facing up at the ceiling. I sat next to him and hugged my knees.

YUI: It feels nice to get moving.

TAKERU: Yeah… it's not bad. Mhmm.

His expression was bright, and I could tell he was satisfied with training camp so far.

YUI: It's… really fun to do club activities with you, Takeru-san.

Seeing his face, I let out my honest feelings.

TAKERU: Fun…? There's no room for "fun" in the art of the sword. But…

Takeru sat up and crossed his legs.

TAKERU: It's better than doing it alone.

TAKERU: With a partner to train with, it's somehow easier to look at yourself calmly.

There was something much softer about him right now. I caught a glimpse of a small smile on his face, and I was fascinated. Little by little, Takeru has been showing me his different expressions. I thought he was scary at first, but now, I knew he was really straightforward and kind.

Through this camp, I want to get to know Takeru even more, and I want him to understand humans. I suddenly thought about that as I looked at his happy face.

YUI: Tsukito-san hasn't returned yet. It's about time to sleep…

A lot of time had passed since Tsukito left.

TAKERU: Ah, Bro's fine.

YUI: …?

TAKERU: It's his habit to gaze up at the moon all night.

TAKERU: That hasn't changed since we got these human forms.

TAKERU: So let's just sleep first.

I was surprised he had a habit like that, but it seemed like it was okay not to worry about him.

We took turns in the bath. When we were getting ready for bed, I noticed something very important.

YUI: There's only one futon…

Normally, there would be one for each person, but this was a world of gods. Not everything fit with common sense. To top it off, Zeus was the one who prepared all of this. It wasn't strange for him to leave something out.

TAKERU: That's not really a problem. I don't need a futon. Go ahead and use it.

YUI: We can't do that.

YUI: I would feel really bad. I don't think I'd be able to sleep like that.

TAKERU: Then what do we do? We can't just sleep together.

YUI: Together…!

My heart skipped a beat just hearing that.

TAKERU: I don't really care, but I think it'd bother you. So be good and sleep already.

Leaving me with that, he lay down, and sprawled himself out on the tatami floor. No matter how hot it was, sleeping without a futon wasn't good for the body.

YUI: Okay, how about we separate the futon and the blanket and use those?

YUI: If we spread out the blanket, then Tsukito-san will also have a place to sleep when he comes back.

TAKERU: Interesting. I didn't even consider that.

TAKERU: But, if you say so, then it must be right.

With an amused smile, Takeru helped me spread out the blanket.

TAKERU: Alright! All done. Okay, time to sleep!

Takeru claimed his spot on one side of the futon and stretched out his limbs. I made the more reserved choice and took the very edge of the other side.

TAKERU: Why're you sleeping all the way over there? Come this way a little. Otherwise there's no point in all this futon space.

YUI: Uh… but…

TAKERU: What? You don't trust me?

YUI: Th-That's not what I…

TAKERU: Then it's fine. I won't do anything you don't like.

TAKERU: If I felt guilty, then I wouldn't say this, right?

He was bluntly saying all these things without even showing embarrassment.

TAKERU: Well, if you don't want to be closer to me, I won't force you. Anyway, just get a good night's sleep.

YUI: I don't…. dislike it.

Saying that, I moved over to the middle of the futon. I was nervous about Takeru as I approached him, but I was probably just being too conscious of his presence next to me.

TAKERU: Right, that's great. I'm gonna sleep now. 'Night.

As if this was a completely normal situation, Takeru laid back and slowly closed his eyes.

YUI: Good night…

I turned off the lights. At first I was nervous, but… Once I heard Takeru's steady breathing, I was relieved, and I fell asleep too.

……

How many hours has it been?

My eyes snapped open at the sudden impact.

YUI: ?!

Still half-asleep, I had no idea what had happened.

TAKERU: …Mn. Zz… zz…

YUI: Takeru-san…?!

I heard his slow breathing right next to my ear. His arms were wrapped around my waist, as if he had hugged me from behind. Even though he had been pretty far away from me, it seemed he tossed and turned in his sleep.

TAKERU: Mnna… Mnya… Mn…

The sensation of his muscles on my back made my body heat up. I needed to somehow wriggle out of his arms without waking him up…

TAKERU: Don't run away… Come… here…

But Takeru squeezed his arms around me even more. I let out a silent scream, and my body stiffened.

TAKERU: You're so… warm.

YUI: Gh…!

When he whispered in my ear, I felt pleasure run through me like an electric current.

TAKERU: Stay… with me… forever…

I knew he was just talking in his sleep, but my heart fluttered.

TAKERU: I'll… protect you…

Were these his true feelings? That was all I could think about. I spent many sleepless hours listening to his gentle whispering…

When I awoke the next morning, Tsukito was sleeping where Takeru had been.

TAKERU: You awake? I'm making breakfast.

YUI: You wake up early, Takeru-san.

It wasn't like I woke up late, but I was surprised that he was almost done making breakfast.

TAKERU: I always wake up when the sun rises. Though that's when Bro goes to sleep.

They were a strange couple of brothers.

YUI: I'll help with the cooking.

TAKERU: Sure. Bro's not gonna wake up right now, so this is just for us.

I made a simple breakfast with Takeru. Tsukito didn't wake up even when we were done eating.

TAKERU: While he's asleep, I'm gonna go take a peek at his novel.

YUI: Is it okay to just read it?

TAKERU: It’s fine! We’re helping out with it, after all.

Takeru opened Tsukito’s notebook and peeked inside.

TAKERU: …

YUI: What happened?

Takeru’s expression changed drastically as he flipped through the pages. I was curious, and when I peeked in from the side…

TAKERU: No… you shouldn’t see this. There’re things you really shouldn’t see.

Takeru closed the notebook, his face bright red.

YUI: Huh…? What do you mean?

Becoming even more curious in this situation was a fault of humans.

TAKERU: There’s Bro’s reputation, too. I’m gonna pretend I didn’t see this.

After placing the notebook back where he found it, Takeru pushed me away.

YUI: U-Uh… okay.

What could’ve been written in there?

TSUKITO: …

Oblivious to our concerns, Tsukito was still sleeping soundly, his expression peaceful. When I get the chance, I’d like to read the novels of Literary Master Tsukito, works that could stir up the hearts of their readers.

After that… training camp was going along pretty well. I spent my days together with Takeru and Tsukito, from when I woke in the morning to when I went to bed at night. It was strangely like we were all living together while practicing kendo.

BACKGROUND: MOUNTAIN PATH

Running along the mountain path had become part of my daily routine. Because I’d been doing this every day, I didn’t feel out of breath as much.

YUI: Wow… So pretty…

At the sight of the evening sun peeking through the trees, I slowed and stopped. The beautiful red sky looked like it was on fire. It was a magical sight. The scenery on the mountain was very different from the scenery around school. There were so many nice things about being here... I was deeply moved.

BACKGROUND: DOJO

Finishing up today's quota, I returned to the dojo. Inside, Takeru and Tsukito were preparing dinner.

TAKERU: B-Bro! The water's hot, so be careful, okay?

TSUKITO: Should I cool it down?

TAKERU: No, if you do that, it'll just be regular water! It's not gonna boil like that!

TSUKITO: Is that right?

He was probably thoroughly used to it by now, but Takeru was being led around by Tsukito as always.

YUI: I'm back from my run.

TAKERU: Welcome back. Dinner's almost ready.

YUI: Okay. I'll help too.

I entered the kitchen and washed my hands.

YUI: The sunset was so pretty as I was running back. It was even prettier than the one we see at school.

I really wanted to express that feeling to them, and my voice rose with excitement.

TAKERU: It's different between the mountains and school?

TSUKITO: The moon viewed from the mountains is also exceptionally beautiful. Its brightness is different.

TAKERU: Oh? If Bro sees the moon every single night and says something like that, it must be really different. The sunrise might be different too.

Takeru seemed interested.

YUI: I want to see the sunrise too.

TAKERU: Then how about going to see it tomorrow morning?

YUI: Yes!

I was happy he invited me, and I nodded vigorously.

TAKERU: You really wanna see it, huh? Okay, it's settled. What about you, Bro?

TSUKITO: I will be asleep.

TAKERU: Right.

He was used to sleeping when the sun came up, so it just couldn't be helped.

TSUKITO: Don't mind me. Please go see it together.

TAKERU: Got it, Bro.

Though he nodded in agreement, Takeru looked a little lonely.

YUI: Then, what about going to see the moon together afterward? Tsukito-san will definitely be awake then.

TAKERU: That's a good idea! Bro, let's do that.

Takeru's expression instantly brightened up at my suggestion.

TSUKITO: If that is what you wish to do.

Tsukito agreed. We would gaze at the sunrise, then at the moon. That would definitely become a good memory of this camp.

TAKERU: …Hey, wake up. I said wake up.

YUI: Mn…

TAKERU: Wake up, Kusanagi!

YUI: !

He yelled in my ear and I sat straight up. It was still dark inside the dojo.

TAKERU: We're leaving. If we don't go now, we won't make it. Hurry up and get ready.

YUI: G-Got it.

BACKGROUND: MOUNTAINTOP

We continued up the dark mountain path, heading for the summit.

YUI: The stars… are so pretty…

The clear sky above was studded with sparkling stars. Soon, these stars would disappear, replaced by the sun.

TAKERU: We're almost at the summit. Keep going.

YUI: Yes…!

The sky lightened little by little. Dawn was approaching. We were able to reach the summit before the sun showed up.

YUI: Which way is the sun…?

TAKERU: It’ll come from that direction.

Takeru pointed straight at the eastern horizon. Most of the sky was still dark, but a fresh blue color was seeping into the edges. I was fascinated by the slowly changing sky. It was breathtaking. When the sun finally showed up, the sky overflowed with light. Little by little, it shone over the Garden.

In front of this impressive, divine sight, I said…

CHOICE

>I’m glad we could see this together
>I’m moved
>I feel accomplished

CHOOSE: I’m glad we could see this together

YUI: It’s so pretty…

YUI: I’m glad I could see this together with you, Takeru-san.

When I smiled and looked over at Takeru, I found him staring right at me.

TAKERU: You exaggerate with every little thing, seriously.

TAKERU: But, it’s really pretty. ‘Cause you’re here… maybe.

He quickly averted his eyes. The morning sun lit up the side of his face.

CHOOSE: I’m moved

YUI: Seeing something so pretty is really moving…

TAKERU: I’m even happier seeing your satisfied face. I’m glad we came…

Takeru looked at me and smiled. I felt really happy too. I wanted this moment to last forever.

CHOOSE: I feel accomplished

YUI: Climbing up to the summit, seeing the sunrise… I really feel accomplished.

TAKERU: It’s something we see every day, but it sure feels special after spending some time getting here.

Takeru spread his arms wide and took a deep breath.

(choices converge here)

As the sun slowly rose, the sky became brighter and brighter.

YUI: Seeing the sunrise so clearly like this... It makes me feel thankful to the gods.

TAKERU: A sun god… huh?

A shadow fell over Takeru's face. It was so sudden that I wasn't sure if I'd offended him somehow.

TAKERU: Tch. I just remembered something I didn't want to.

YUI: But I think it's a given that humans would give their thanks and prayers to the gods.

TAKERU: …Thanking them won't do anything. Especially not with those guys.

Takeru scowled, looking uncomfortable. I wanted to restore his good mood, so I chose a topic he would be more interested in.

YUI: Did you know? There are other uses for swords besides fighting.

YUI: A long time ago, people used swords to raise prayers to the gods.

YUI: That's why the iai I've been doing, and the kendo we're doing now…

YUI: Since they use swords, they might be linked to the gods somehow.

TAKERU: I don't think those guys up in Takamagahara would grant any human's wish…

But Takeru was still frowning. I didn't know why Takeru thought that way. Even so, he must have had his reasons.

TAKERU: I'm in a bad mood now. Let's go back.

Takeru turned his back to the sun and began to descend the mountain.

YUI: Takeru-san, wait!

He had already started to leave without waiting for me, so I hurried to catch up with him.

YUI: Wait…

My feet slid on an uneven slope.

YUI: Ahhh!!

I slipped onto a steep incline, and I knew I was going to fall all the way down.

TAKERU: Kusanagi!!

Takeru stretched out a hand, but it didn't reach me.

TAKERU: Shit!!

It was only a moment. His form suddenly different, Takeru leaped forward, and with a nearly invisible speed, he grabbed my arm.

YUI: Ah…

But as soon as he grasped it, a sharp, piercing pain ran through my arm.

TAKERU: S-Sorry. Are you okay?!

As he helped me up, he nervously checked on my arm's condition.

TAKERU: …We need to treat this right now…

His face was clouded with seriousness.

TAKERU: Hold on. We're going down.

YUI: Eh? Ah…

I thought he was going to forcibly pull me along, but he picked me up in his arms.

YUI: T-Takeru-san?!

TAKERU: Just be patient. It might be a little rough, but hang in there.

Still in his god form, Takeru set off at an incredible speed down the mountain.

YUI: Takeru-san, Zeus-san will get mad if you do this!

It was forbidden to go back to one's original form within school grounds.

TAKERU: Don't be stupid! Just think about yourself!

TAKERU: I don't care if Zeus yells at me!! You're the most important thing right now!!

He yelled, as if declaring it, and tightened his arms around me.

TAKERU: I… I said I would protect you, didn't I?

TAKERU: I don't want to lie to you, even if I have to make sacrifices.

Takeru was really trustworthy. Even in this situation, I could feel my heart racing.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

We cancelled training camp and hurried down the mountain. When we were back at school, Takeru immediately took me to the infirmary and called over Thoth, who was also on vacation.

THOTH: Stop causing problems for me. She has a bone fracture.

The arm Thoth was examining had a very distinct bruise on it.

TAKERU: …I changed back into a god and accidentally hurt her.

YUI: No, it wasn't your fault, Takeru-san…

Takeru was being way too honest, and I found myself covering up for him.

THOTH: You can tell from the bruise what kind of power was exerted on this arm. Excuses will not work.

Then…

ZEUS: Takeru, come to the headmaster's office immediately.

I heard Zeus's voice coming from somewhere.

TAKERU: I'll be back.

As if he was already prepared for this, Takeru was calm.

YUI: Please wait! I'll come too.

I had finished receiving treatment, so I got up to chase after Takeru.

THOTH: I will go too. This happened under my supervision.

Thoth made an awfully uncomfortable expression.

BACKGROUND: THRONE ROOM

When we arrived at the headmaster's office, Thoth explained the situation.

ZEUS: I trust you have not forgotten the last time you caused this problem.

TAKERU: …

Takeru said nothing, not even an excuse.

The air inside the office was heavy. I…

CHOICE

>Object to Zeus
>Stay silent like Takeru
>Seek help from Thoth

CHOOSE: Object to Zeus

YUI: Please don't scold him like that. He was just trying to save me, so…

ZEUS: You do not have a say in this issue.

Met with a strict glare, I held my tongue.

TAKERU: It's fine, Kusanagi. You can't change the truth.

CHOOSE: Stay silent like Takeru

I didn't want to say anything unnecessary. I had no choice but to stay silent, like Takeru was.

CHOOSE: Seek help from Thoth

Without thinking, I turned to Thoth with pleading eyes and sought help from him.

THOTH: …

Thoth was silent, his expression unchanged.

(choices converge here)

ZEUS: Your violent behavior and unauthorized transformations could potentially exert a bad influence on other students.

ZEUS: Until you have reflected on your mistakes and repented, going to school is forbidden. The kendo club is also henceforth dissolved.

Zeus's merciless declaration rung throughout the office.

YUI: That's horrible! That's too much.

Aside from forcing Takeru to repent, the punishment was too severe.

YUI: Not only banning him from school, but dissolving the club…

I'd finally managed to get him interested in clubs and school, and he was finally actively participating. With this, everything would go to waste.

TAKERU: …I got it. I'll quit everything.

His expression was complex, a mixture of bottled-up anger and sadness. It was painful for Takeru himself to lose the life he had right now.

TAKERU: …Shit!! No matter what, I always end up like this!

Irritated, Takeru turned around and left the headmaster's office.

YUI: Takeru-san!!

As I watched Takeru's back, it looked like he was rejecting me. It was painful to see. I felt my chest tighten.

At this rate, Takeru would be distanced from me again. I knew I had to chase after him, but my feet wouldn't move. I couldn't just leave him…

NEW CHAPTER: Takeru Chapter 3 – "Treasure of the Azure Sea"