

Ocean Avenue

Von Makikolgami

Kapitel 7: Light Up The Sky

After dinner and watching Gen unpack his presents from his family - with Hiruma sitting in a corner, cackling to himself – Mamori dedicated herself to the dishes, while the rest of the family split up. Youichi went to his room to call his girlfriend, Ken mumbled something about homework, Takeshi resumed his game and Sachiko was allowed to play with her father's beard until Mamori was done with her chores.

The dishwasher was running when she went upstairs and passed Youichi's room, hearing him talk heatedly on the phone. She smiled to herself, secretly wishing for a wedding and some grandchildren soon, although she had enough to do with Sachiko. Walking on, she got to the room of her second son and knocked.

"I'm coming in~!" she chanted before she opened the door. She saw her son sitting at his desk, glaring at some books with mathematical formulas. He was tapping his pencil so hard that he kept breaking the tip of it. Mamori chuckled softly, because she knew just how hard Ken was taking the flat-out refusal.

"Still sulking?" she asked gently, putting her hands on his shoulders.

"Is he still laughing?" Ken asked back, grudgingly.

"I fear so," Mamori admitted sheepishly, remembering how Hiruma had cackled under his breath as she had collected the last dishes.

"God damn, I can't believe that you and dad think so highly of him, mom," he growled. "I can't believe I thought he would just train our team because he liked to play football. Now I understand why You-nii was ticked off that easily."

Mamori smiled her best motherly smile as she remembered Hiruma during his High School days. "It's... complicated. He achieved what he wanted; he has no more goals with American Football nowadays so he's not interested in it anymore. Just like... your dad."

"Yeah, but dad's working hard for another dream," Ken argued. "I have not heard with what this guy is earns his money."

"Believe me, you don't want to know that," Mamori laughed sheepishly. "It's probably

something hardly legal, but he'll be good at it."

"Hardly legal?" Ken frowned.

"Something like... gambling. The last time I saw him, he was an expert at any card game, but mostly Black Jack," Mamori explained. "It's an easy game for somebody with photographic memory and profound statistic knowledge."

Ken nodded. "Tamura does the same, he's just... very lazy about it. He would be so much better in school if he actually paid some thought to what he *should* do than what he *wants* to do. Ah, I just wish he is going to be more of help recruiting other members than the last time we tried..."

"He is very direct, isn't he?" Mamori asked, listening to her son's worries.

"Too direct for his own good," Ken sighed. "The last time he admitted something, he was rewarded with a week detention because he called his sports' teacher a 'lazy ass' – although it's the truth. I hope he doesn't scare away anybody by telling them that we never played in an actual game... It sounds better when I say that we never lost any game. Ah, what would I give if we had a famous coach like Hiruma-san."

Mamori patted her son's back as he plopped his head down on the table in an exasperated motion. "Well, just make it clear to him that he loves the game. Then you'll be able to convince him to train you."

"Yeah, but how can I do that? I tried my best during dinner, but he just kept laughing," Ken pouted, thick brows knitted tightly.

"Just... do what you can do best," Mamori advised. "If you manage to recruit some people for your team tomorrow, he may see that you're serious about this matter and he might reconsider what you said... Do you know what? I'm making him get you from school tomorrow. I'll send him in a little earlier so that he can see how good you are doing."

"But, mom! We don't have practice tomorrow!" Ken protested.

"Well then, you better have, because it may be your only chance to leave some impression," Mamori grinned and patted her pouting son's shoulder again. "Make up a good training plan for tomorrow, I'm going to see Sachiko to bed."

Before Ken was able to voice any protest, his mother had left the room, content with herself.

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"Daddy, why is You-ji still laughing?" Sachiko, who sat in her father's lap, asked innocently as she pulled on her father's new tie. Musashi chuckled, glad that she

pulled on the end that would not choke him to death.

"I don't know, love," the man sighed and shot the blond a glare. "Maybe he remembers a really funny joke that somebody told him?"

"Oh!" the girl clapped into her hands happily. "Can he tell us that joke? I want to hear a good joke, too!"

"Kekeke, fucking princess, you wouldn't understand it anyways," Hiruma cackled, already holding his stomach from laughing so much.

"But You-ji," the girl said sternly with a look that resembled one of her mother's, "it's not nice to laugh without telling the others why you're doing so."

"She's right," Musashi chimed in, looking expectantly at the blond. "So either you stop laughing right now on behalf of my son or-"

"He got both your and his mother's stupidity," Hiruma said quickly. "And you, fucking princess, I thought you weren't prone to making up names for people."

"I'm not making up a name for you," Sachiko pouted. "Uncle Hiruma is just too long to say-"

"And it makes me sound like an old pervert," the blond stated, a fleeting wave of shock washing over his face.

"You are an old pervert," Musashi mumbled, not loud enough for his daughter to hear though. Hiruma on the other hand – being blessed with superhuman hearing – heard it well and grinned broadly.

"And You-ji is a lot more easier to say," Sachiko concluded, fully ignoring what the men were bantering about.

For a moment Hiruma looked at her as if he was going to bite her head off. She never backed up though and held his gaze defiantly, her arms crossed over her chest. Musashi watched the silent battle and shook his head in semi-amusement. Really, if he needed another confirmation that his daughter was just exactly like her mother, it was this staring-contest with Hiruma. Just the same as back then. They used to argue about everything as well and it always ended exactly the same way.

Hiruma started to grin and then chuckled again, patting the girl's head. "Fine, I like your guts. You can call me You-ji."

"Yay!" the girl cheered, jumping up from Musashi's lap just to hug Hiruma quickly, before he could back off, around his neck. Overwhelmed like that, Hiruma had no other choice but to wrap his arms around the little body and before he knew it, he had his arms full of her and lifted her up.

Musashi's smile grew and decided that Hiruma needed to spend more times with kids.

His kids especially, since he needed to warm up to them, if he wanted to spend more time at his house.

The man frowned, wondering what he was thinking about now when suddenly, he heard Mamori enter the room.

"Alright, little lady, it's time for you to go to bed now!" Mamori said loudly, announcing her presence. A loud protesting sound followed this and Sachiko pressed her face against Hiruma's shoulder, hiding her face so that he mother would not see her. All three adults' eyes widened in surprise, and Hiruma looked down at her head in surprise.

"You don't want to go to bed?"

Sachiko shook her head, still hiding her face against his shirt.

"Oh, well, I don't like to sleep either," Hiruma admitted, grinning down at her when she looked up at him in surprise.

"You don't?" she asked, sounding hopeful that he would help her in her quest to prolong sleeping time successfully this time.

"Hiruma..." Mamori warned, her voice warning him not to tell her anything stupid.

"No, I can't sleep well," the blond admitted. "I have so many things to do, so much stuff to take care off that I don't want to sleep."

"Yes! So much to do!" Sachiko nodded seriously. "I have to finish that puzzle that I got for my birthday! It's *really* important!"

"Oh really?" Hiruma said. "You know, your father once told me that he needs his sleep, more than anything. I told him he was stupid for that, but he said, he would not be able to think, walk or talk straight if he was sleepy. I brushed it off, but I knew that he was right."

"Really?" The girl's big round eyes looked up at him and he had to suppress a toothy grin, but only managed half-heartedly.

Hiruma nodded. "I brushed it off, but I soon drifted off to sleep in the most ridiculous places... it almost bordered on narcolepsy."

"Narco...?" Sachiko repeated, her brow furrowing.

"It's a *really* bad sickness," Mamori chimed in. "Do you want to get sick?"

The girl shook her head viciously.

"Well, then I'll get you upstairs and get you to bed, okay?"

"No!" Sachiko shook her head again. "I want You-ji to carry me to bed tonight!"

"But-" Mamori tried, but Hiruma shook it off with a laugh.

"It's fine. I haven't told her the whole story yet and she deserves it."

"If you just leave out the... adult parts," Mamori mumbled, giving him a dark, warning look.

The blond grinned. "Don't worry, I won't. I don't want to have both your wraths directed at me for corrupting your youngest offspring."

"Ne, ne! Tell me! What happened then?" Sachiko bounced up and down in his arms, giving him a hard time to hold her.

"I tell you once you're in your bed, okay?"

"Okay!"

Musashi watched in disbelief as Hiruma followed Mamori out of the living room, the child securely holding onto as if her life depended on it. And he did not look unhappy about it, too. Maybe things had changed more than he had thought at first.

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After a tour through the rooms upstairs – led by Sachiko herself, who eagerly explained every detail to her new uncle – Hiruma had carried her from the upper bathroom to her bed.

"You know, the only one who can make me sleep soundly is your father," he said silently, so that nobody else in the girl's room could hear it. "But it's a secret that I never told anyone, okay? So you have to keep it to yourself, understood?"

"Yes! I won't tell anybody! I will take it to the grave!" she said cheerily. "How does he do it?"

Hiruma chuckled. Of course she wanted to know. "I can't tell you yet. Your mother would kill me if she knew that I did..."

"Aww..." Sachiko pouted, making Hiruma grin.

"Well, you can say he gives me a special goodnight kiss," the blond explained, watching with amusement how the girl's eyes grew in surprise.

"Really? Mommy gives me a special goodnight kiss, too! She does it every night," she said, nodding wildly, "it makes me feel good! First she kissed my forehead, then my left cheek, then my right cheek and then kisses my nose! It tickles a bit, but it cheers

me up every time!"

Hiruma laughed softly. "Yeah, something like that. Come on, I'll get her for you so that you can sleep-"

"No! No!" Sachiko interrupted him. "I want *you* to kiss me goodnight today!"

Too surprised to say anything, Hiruma's eyes widened considerably and he almost forgot to breathe so that he did not break out into laughter. Instead, he managed to only snort, but shook his head.

"I'm sorry, I can't do that. I'm not your mother or your father-"

"But you're uncle You-ji!" Sachiko reasoned. "You can kiss me goodnight because I said so!"

"Maybe another day," Hiruma mumbled as he turned away from the bed. "Sleep well."

"Aww... Okay! Sleep well, too! Bye-bye!" Sachiko waved at him. "But tomorrow you'll kiss me goodnight, okay?"

But Hiruma had already left the room. Mamori smiled wryly as he stepped closer to the bed and delivered the goodnight kiss to her daughter. "Don't bother him too much... he's not a family person."

"I think he was doing pretty well," Musashi said softly as he put a hand on her shoulder. "His only problem is with getting close to somebody..."

"I know," the woman sighed, patting her husband's hand. "Come on, go after him. I'll say goodnight to the boys and then go to bed myself... I bet you two have a lot to talk about, don't you?"

Musashi did not know what to say to that, but he nodded anyways and followed his wife's advice.