

Ocean Avenue

Von Makikolgami

Kapitel 19: How I Go

"Mom! Tell me this is NOT true!" Ken yelled as he made his way into the kitchen, the newspapers in his hands. The first page was full of big letters and a big picture of his father.

"What do you mean," Mamori asked in a bored, almost stoic tone as she prepared the rice for everybody's lunchboxes. Sachiko sat in her stool in the back, happily munching away on her piece of toast while Takeshi watched the whole scene over the top of his handheld player.

"Mom, don't give me this! They surely must have called you already! He must have been brought to a hospital first, right?!"

"Please, Ken, calm down, what is going on, I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about," his mother said in her stern motherly tone, the one that told her children that she knew more than she tried to let on.

"Mom! Stop fucking with me-"

"Don't talk to me like that!" the woman interrupted him and raised the rice-scooper to hit him with it.

"I'm sorry for using swearwords, yeah, I know, you don't need to berate me on that," Ken defended himself, "but shouldn't they inform you if your husband had a fatal accident on a construction site?!"

"What?!" escaped Takeshi's mouth and he dropped the handheld onto the table. "Dad died?!"

"That's what they say here," Ken said and pointed wildly onto the big headline which read: "Fatal Accident! Boss Takekura Gen dead!"

"What?! How did that happen?" Takeshi asked as he grabbed the newspaper out of his brother's hands and skimmed through the article underneath it, and then the ones on the next pages.

"Ken, Takeshi, please calm down. I did not receive a phone call last night, from

nobody, not even those reporters. I don't know what's supposed to happen, but I do think that if something had happened a site of your father, somebody would have informed me--"

"Sorry mom, for being so late," Youichi mumbled as he stumbled into the kitchen and helped himself to a cup of coffee. "There was an accident..."

"I know! They say dad died in it!" Ken jumped in before his older brother could even start explaining what had really happened.

Youichi just stared at him with his amber eyes and then sighed. "Damn, I had really hoped to be faster than the newspapers. Yeah, he had had an accident. He's not with us anymore," he sighed, but did not sound very sad about it. In fact, he sounded more annoyed than sad.

"How can you say such a thing without making a face?! How... how can you tell us about the death of your own father without shedding a single tear?!" Ken cried, his own eyes watery and blinking as he grabbed the older one's collar and shook him.

"...Youichi, come, we need to talk in private," their mother said suddenly, wiping her hands clean on her apron. "Ken, you stay here and keep an eye on the rice. We... we will see about things later."

"Yes, mom," Ken said, but wanted to follow the two to listen in on them. He knew his mother well enough though that he would not be able to stand a chance. Thus, he sat in the kitchen with his crying little brother, trying to console him while he himself wanted to wail like a baby, throw a tantrum and seek revenge on whoever was responsible for that stupid accident.

Sachiko on the other hand did not quite understand what was going on, but she knew that it was better to be quiet now than to start seeking for attention herself. Still, the ongoing silence between her two brothers was making her nervous and she also wanted to know what was going on.

"...Ken-nii?"

"Hush, Sachiko, everything will be alright," Ken lied for the sake of his little sister. "It's just that... we won't be seeing dad for a long time."

"Really?... why?" she asked, tears starting to well in her eyes already.

"He... he went on a business trip. For a longer time. We... we don't know when we will back. So, until then, we have to manage on our own, do you think you can do that?"

Sachiko smiled and grinned self-assured. "Of course I can! I still have mom!"

"Yes, we still have mom! And Youichi and me and our friends..." Ken sighed and patted Takeshi's head to cheer him up as well. It helped him to know that he could depend on his family in these hard times, but he still wanted to seek revenge on

whoever killed his father.

On the other hand, what happened to his father's friend, Hiruma? After that disastrous game against Shinryuujii he had not really seen him again, but it seemed like he was staying together with his father, so he should have known what was going on during then nights that he had not been with his family. Sometimes his father had dragged the blond to their family dinners, but you could see clearly that he was not very happy to be there and Ken often wondered why. He should be happy to be with them, because they seemed to be the only family left for him, at least if you believed what the head of the Takekura-family said. Also, his mom seemed to be quite keen on including him in every family-business, too.

Suddenly he heard some rustling with the door that opened behind them, and three pairs of eyes looked at their mother in waiting expectation.

Mamori looked pale, sad, but also very angry. She managed to keep herself down though to explain to her children what Youichi had just told her. "Your father... he has gone far, far away. He won't be coming back soon."

"So he's really dead?!" Ken blurted, unable to hold back anymore.

The woman flinched slightly, but the only affirmation that the boy got was a small, almost unnoticeable nod from her.

"Since... since he's not around anymore, I will take the lead of Takekura constructions in the mean time, until Youichi finished his studies. You know that he will be done in about two years, so that won't be much time. Your... your father would have wanted that."

"But mom! I can help you! You don't have to work more than you already do!" Ken protested, but one look from Youichi shut him up immediately.

"Don't you think I tried that already? It's not like I'm really needed in university, but she insisted that I finished my studies. I mean, we're all old enough to look after ourselves, so there should be no problem if we both take turns to look after Takeshi from time to time, right?" the older Takekura-son said calmly.

I still disturbed Ken how his mother and his brother could be so absolutely calm about this whole thing while still wanted to go around and get the head of that guy who was responsible for this!

"How did he die?" Takeshi asked suddenly in a quiet voice. All eyes turned to him and then to Youichi, who seemed to be the one to know most about it. "I... I mean, I read in the newspaper that he fell from the 20th floor of an unfinished building into the mould of a pillar with was filled with quick-dry concrete that was still wet then, but already completely hard when they started searching for him."

"That's... about correct," Youichi said, scratching the back of his neck in an embarrassed notion. "I really don't know how it happened exactly either, but it seems

like Tamahachi saw him standing up there with somebody, but when he looked again, there was nobody there. So he thought that he had imagined things, until there was the sound of something falling into wet concrete. Then he saw that dad's car was still there and even though he looked everywhere for him, he was nowhere to be found. Hence, he assumed the worst, called the police and me, then the press got wind of it and that's about it."

"...So there's the chance of that other person pushing him down?" Takeshi asked silently and voiced Ken's thoughts with that.

"Please, why should there have been another person? It was night, it was dark and Tamahachi said he could not quite make out if there was another person or not. He's not even sure if he saw dad there, but since this is the only solution and he's not answering his phone anymore, we have to assume the worst."

"...So we don't know anything, really," Ken concluded, hope rising in him that this was just one giant misunderstanding and that their dad was in fact still alive and kicking.

"...If you want to look at it like that, then yeah. We don't know anything, other than dad has disappeared from the surface of the earth to god knows where," Youichi admitted. "But it's no use to wait for his return if we don't know what happened and the public sees him as dead already."

"Yeah..." Ken nodded, while Takeshi was biting his lower lip.

"Okay, then, you will go to school like every day, okay?" Mamori said and started to prepare their lunchboxes. "If... when I know more, I will write you a mail or call you, okay?"

"But mom! Our father just died! Can't we stay at home and help you with things?" Ken protested.

"No, I will be fine. I won't be home much anyways, so it will be better for you if you're at school, doing something that'll bring you further in life instead of chasing stupid wishes that aren't true anyways," Mamori said sternly. "Youichi and I will take care of everything, understood?"

"Yes, mom," Ken and Takeshi sighed in unison, but they both knew that neither of them would listen to that.

"Good, now finish your breakfast and hurry up or you will be late for school," their mother continued preparing their lunchboxes with mechanical efficiency. Her children sighed and continued their breakfast, even though they didn't have any real appetite anymore.

~*~

"Mamori-san! It's been a long time! How have you been?" Yukimitsu Manabu asked as his current client entered his office. He smiled as he showed her to a seat, getting her a glass of water himself instead of asking his personal assistant to do so.

"Oh, it's been rough times lately," the woman smiled serenely. "I think you read the newspapers?"

"Yes, I did," the almost bald man said as he sat down across the desk of her. "I believe it's all lies?"

"Unfortunately not," Mamori sighed. "I know what happened, but I fear that there will be a lot of voices for a public trial, which is absolutely unnecessary."

"But it will get you a lot of publicity," the lawyer said, trying to overcome his surprise of the sudden announcement of one of his schoolmates and friends.

"Yes, but that's probably not the best thing for Takekura Constructions. We never wanted to be in the spotlight of society and tried to play in the background while others took the front row for us. They deserved it more than we did, we only did hard work while they entertained the public," Mamori reasoned. That had been her husband's doctrine and she tried to continue living by that.

"I understand. But by the way that things happened, it will be hard to stay in the background. You know that people will try to put their noses into things that they should better not know?" Yukimitsu said, already starting to take notes. "But first things first. In case of a trial or just an investigation for murder, we should be prepared for everything. I need all witnesses, everybody who knows just the tiniest bit of what could have happened that day."

"I will arrange that. Are you free any time soon? I can show you around on the construction site where it happened. You can ask everybody there."

"Well, I lost the last case and ever since I have been getting a bit less clients, so I'm actually free for the rest of the day and all day tomorrow," the other said sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck. "So, if that's fine with you, I would like you to show me the site today? Before too many policemen trampled over all those evidences left."

Mamori laughed softly, reminding the man of their high school days, during the spare times that she had been able to laugh so freely. Secretly he wondered though how she was still able to laugh like that when her husband had just died. "I'm sorry, but of course you can come with me today," she smiled. "I only have to be at the kindergarten at the right time to collect Sachiko."

"Oh, your youngest one, right? How is she doing?" Yukimitsu asked curiously, hoping to distract her from her worries to see her smile more often. "And what are your sons doing? I heard that your second is trying to make the Devil Bats as successful as they were back in our days."

"Oh, yes, he is. But they are still lacking the right coach. He asked Hiruma, but he

refused up to now," the woman told him.

"Oh? He's still in Tokyo?" Yukimitsu inquired, but only got a shrug in response. "I don't know. I know that Gen knew where he was and that he dragged him to some of our family dinners, but I don't know where his hotel is or anything. The only one who knew that was Gen..."

For a moment the balding man looked her thoughtful face and wondered what was going on in her mind and behind this cryptic story, but before he could ask, Mamori spoke up again.

"I do have a feeling though that he is nowhere near anymore," she said with a crooked smile. "I don't know why, just call it female intuition."

"Oh, I learned to trust the subtle feelings of a woman before all hard facts," Yukimitsu chuckled. "So I will be very unlucky to see him again some time soon."

"I think, we all will be very unlucky with that," Mamori agreed. "Oh, I have another favor to ask. I need a personal legal advisor in a special case. I will tell you everything on the ride to the construction site, is that okay?"

Yukimitsu nodded and told his assistant that he would be leaving the office for the rest of the day and that she was allowed to go when she was finished with that day's paperwork, too.

She thanked him and set them off with a smile.