

The Beginning of Spring

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The Beginning of Spring

by [samtimental](#)

Summary

"So, how was your date last night? You came back to the mansion pretty late, Kageyama. It must have been one hell of an evening." "Ah... my appointment last night was rather enjoyable. One might even say that I had a good time."

Kageyama returns from a night out to an angry Reiko at breakfast. What exactly went on during Kageyama's date and what new revelations will we get about our mystery-solving duo?

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

"Good morning, milady," Kageyama pushed in the heavy wooden chair as Reiko took her seat at the head of the table. "I trust you had a good night's sleep."

His lady gave a snort. "How could I, when the shuffling feet of my butler woke me up from my beauty sleep?"

"My apologies, milady. I did not intend to return so late into the night, but I assure you that it will not happen again." Kageyama turned and placed a glass of freshly-squeezed orange juice in front of his lady.

She gave a 'hmpph' and sliced into the freshly-scrambled eggs. She might have exaggerated how much he had disturbed her sleep last night, but she was determined to let him know how upset she was.

Kageyama turned to assume his usual position standing next to her, awaiting any further instructions. However, Reiko noticed the tiny twitch of his lips, and the slight bounce in his step as he pushed away the breakfast cart. His eyes seemed lost in thought, fixing themselves on a point far off in the distance. As if he just recalled a funny joke, he broke into a grin and chuckled to himself.

"You seem very energetic, Kageyama, considering you were out till late last night."

"Ah," he stopped immediately, rubbing off the look of amusement from his face before assuming a serious expression. "Thank you for your concern, milady." He pushed his glasses higher up against his nose and cleared his throat. "I had a good rest upon my return last night."

"One that was taken at my expense," she muttered not-so-quietly.

But Kageyama showed no signs of rebuttal. Either he did not hear the remark or chose to ignore it, Reiko had not a clue.

"So, how was your date last night? You came back to the mansion pretty late, Kageyama. It must have been one hell of an evening."

"Ah... my appointment last night was rather enjoyable. One might even say that I had a good time."

She almost jumped out of her seat. But what she prevented, her body made up for by dropping the knife and fork on the table. Cling-clang! The sound echoed across the nearly-empty dining room.

He stepped towards her to retrieve her dirty knife and fork. "If I may say so, milady, placing cutlery on the dining table heavily is incredibly rude and unladylike."

Reiko was not sure what she was angry about, but the fire in the pits of her stomach was burning out of control. She clenched her fists and closed her eyes, internally counting from one to ten and back again as she took deep breaths. ... *Ten... Nine... Eight... Seven...*

... Six... Five... Four...

Reiko stood up from her seat. Kageyama turned to retrieve the clean knife and fork from the breakfast tray.

... Three... Two...

He turned towards her.

... One.

"You're fired, Kageyama! Fired!" she yelled, her finger pointed in his face.

"I'm sorry if I was rude, milady, but I just couldn't stand by and watch milady practising poor dining etiquette. The master has instructed that I-"

"YOU. ARE. FIREDDD!!!"

He stood rooted at his position, hands still grasping the knife and fork he had just retrieved. But even in the face of her wrath, he did not betray any feelings of fear or dread at her threat to fire him. After all, it was not the first time she had made the same threat.

"I see... This is my cue to leave then," he gave a sigh as he took a step back from the accusing finger, before placing the knife and fork at the sides of her plate. "I'd thought you wanted to know what we talked about last evening. When the topic came to my work, we even talked about you..."

The muscles in her face relaxed. "You... you talked about me?"

"Yes, milady," he nodded, retreating from the room. "I mentioned how capable milady was, and how- Oh, but milady is not interested to know how the conversation, so I shall take my leave and refrain from speaking any further about the details of the eve-"

"Wait!"

"Yes, milady?" he stopped in his tracks.

She relieved the tension in her muscles as she let out a breath she did not know she was holding. "... tell me about your date. I am... interested... to know more about it."

Kageyama bowed. "As you wish, milady." He returned to his station next to her.

She picked up the fork and knife again and stuffed a slice of roasted potato into her mouth in spite. "What was she like?"

He raised his brow.

"I mean, your date," she said, almost tripping over the word. "What was your date like?"

He considered his words carefully. "Hmm... she was sophisticated and passionate. She was very good at making conversation as well; there was never a moment of silence between us. Oh, and she has many hobbies, including-"

"Show me a photo of her," she demanded as she cut a piece of the sausage on her plate. Her hand trembled slightly as she placed the piece into her mouth.

"Ahh... I'm not sure if my date would be alright with that," he fidgeted. "She does claim she is not very photogenic and does not like taking photographs."

"She must be very ugly then," Reiko retorted, sitting up just a little straighter. "Show me. It's a command."

He looked troubled as he considered the command his lady issued him. She turned to look him in the eyes, silently willing him to do what she instructed. The staring contest continued for what felt like minutes but were actually seconds before Kageyama shrugged in defeat.

"Yes, milady," he let out a sigh of relief as Reiko turned back to her breakfast.

He felt through the pockets on the inner lining of his butler's jacket for the photograph. While he was distracted, Reiko punched her fist in the air as she silently celebrated her victory.

Kageyama fished out a photograph and held it in both his hands, reluctant to show the photograph to his lady. He spotted Reiko's death glare from the corners of his eyes and handed the photograph to her outstretched hand. "Here, milady."

Reiko was prepared to see the photograph of an unkempt otaku or a stoic and mature woman; someone befitting an eccentric butler like Kageyama, whose quirky hobbies included watching reruns of 'Queen Q', studying mystery novels, and reading manga. But the endearing smile of a woman old enough to be her grandmother widened her eyes and raised her brows.

"Th-that's your date?" she turned to face a sniggering Kageyama, who could not keep his amusement to himself. "You're joking, right?"

The look of amusement disappeared from his face immediately as he considered her seriously. "This is no joke, milady. Kawahara-san was so anxious about how she looks in photographs that it took a lot of persuasion before she finally agreed to let me photograph her beautiful smile."

Reiko's hand instinctively clutched the part of her chest where she felt a dull ache. She took a deep breath before she said, "You're right, Kageyama. I meant no disrespect. I just didn't think you were interested in women whom are so..."

He nodded as through prompting her to continue.

"... mature."

Kageyama's brows were raised for a few seconds before descending into a frown. "I don't see how age is a problem in this aspect."

The throbbing in her chest seemed to worsen. "Ah... I see... Well, it is not up to me to judge these kinds of things, after all... As long as you're happy... Kageyama." She found it hard to breathe.

Kageyama seemed not to notice her distress. "Of course, milady. To have finally completed the master's orders so early into the week does leave more time for more personal pursuits."

Eh...? The master's... orders...?

"What do you mean?" she frowned. "What does this have to do with what we're talking about?"

"It has everything to do with what we're talking about, milady," he nodded. "Kawahara-san is the head of the Human Resources Department at the Shanghai division of the Hosho Group. The master has entrusted me with the responsibility to collect analytics from the key departments of his businesses in Shanghai and send a report to him by the end of the month. Seeing that I have finished my task within the first three weeks of the month, there is much cause for celebration.

"EH?!" Reiko shook her head to clear her thoughts. "Wait, so what you're saying is that, your meeting with Kawahara-san last night wasn't a date?"

"I never said it was a date, milady."

"But you never said it wasn't!" she folded her arms.

He frowned. "I apologise, but I had thought that your reference to the appointment as a 'date' was another one of your poor attempts at making a joke. I could not point it out and risk incurring your wrath, milady."

"You've already incurred it!" Strangely, despite her anger, the ache in her chest ceased.

"And for that, I sincerely apologise," he bowed, placing his right hand over his chest as a mark of sincerity and respect.

Reiko raised her glass of orange juice and took a big gulp. The sour taste pricked at her tongue, burning her throat. But that small trail of flames could not compete with the wildfire in her stomach. She downed the glass, hoping to put out the burning feeling within her.

Reiko knew that Kageyama could have lectured her on the unladylike manner of which she was having her breakfast, but when he straightened his back after the bow, her glass was already empty. He noticed the empty glass and turned to fetch the fresh jug of juice from the breakfast tray.

As her glass was filled, Reiko consumed her breakfast silently, thinking about the big blunder she had made and how she could best recover from it.

Kageyama placed the full glass of orange juice back to its position on the table gently. Absent-mindedly, she reached for the glass. What seemed like a jolt of electricity ran through her veins as their hands came into contact before she retracted her hand hastily.

"Erm... so... what did you talk about?" she asked, eyes darting across the room for something to focus on other than the butler standing next to her. "With Kawahara-san, I mean."

He froze for a second before responding. "We discussed the new policies implemented at the Shanghai division."

"Oh? But the appointment lasted for so long. I doubt a conversation on such a topic would require more than an hour."

"Milady is sharp as always," he replied. "Soon after I gathered sufficient data for my report, Kawahara-san began to ask about milady."

"Ah... you did mention that just now," she finished the rest of her sausages. "What did she ask about?"

Kageyama hesitated. "Kawahara-san asked if you were..."

Reiko turned to him, willing him to continue.

"... she asked if milady was attached to anyone at the moment."

She frowned. "Why would she ask that?"

He took off his glasses and reached into his pocket for a square piece of white fabric. "She has a nephew around milady's age and would like to introduce him formally..." He paused for effect before adding, "... as a *date*."

It was likely that an eligible lady of a suitable age like Reiko would one day be snatched off by a knight in shining armor. And ever since she turned 29 that year, her parents had been anxious about her future and sought to make matches for her by amassing databases of the most eligible bachelors in the region. Kazamatsuri-keibu's name was probably on that list.

Kageyama had followed his master's instructions to deliver packages containing the profiles of some of these men, and Reiko had already received 39 of such packages since the start of the year. But Reiko did not know that the influence of her parents' anxiety would so easily reach an employee from the company's Shanghai division.

Reiko took a sip from her glass of orange juice. "And... what did you tell her?"

He wiped the lenses of his glasses and said nonchalantly. "I told her that you were unavailable."

She choked on the juice. Kageyama quickly put his glasses back on and rushed to his lady's aid.

"Milady, are you alright?" he handed her a napkin. "Do you need medical aid? I can assure you that I am thoroughly trained in the Heimlich maneuver-"

"I'm fine!" Reiko emphasised with the shake of her head. "I'll be alright."

The clock chimed in the background, signalling the arrival of the eighth hour. Reiko checked the watch on Kageyama's watch.

"Ahh!!! I'm going to be late!" she cried, getting up from her seat without waiting for her butler to assist her. "Prepare the car, Kageyama. I'll be down in 15 minutes!"

"As you wish, milady."

Kageyama thought that Kawahara was probably the most talkative person he had ever met. But he found her endearing nonetheless. People of her age tended to have many opinions waiting to be shared, and he had the impression that nothing bad could ever come out of indulging her in the conversation.

They had spent nearly an hour arguing about "the best method of preparing roast duck" before finally agreeing to disagree, when Kawahara decided to direct the conversation to another topic entirely.

Or another person, to be more precise.

"Is Reiko-sama attached to anyone at the moment?"

Kageyama smiled politely. "Is there a reason why you are asking this question, Kawahara-san?"

"I have a nephew," she explained. "He's 34 this year, around Reiko-sama's age. I thought I could introduce him her. Our family has been looking for a bride for him too, you see."

"She is unavailable."

Kawahara raised her brows at the curt statement that Kageyama had made. "Ah. I see." She gestured towards the path and signalled to him to walk while they chatted.

The night breeze was cold for this time of the year. The snow had already melted, but the weather still showed little signs of the arriving spring.

The odd couple walked on the pavements under the night sky. It would have seemed like a date if Kawahara were a few decades younger, or if Kageyama's hair were sparse and pale. Kageyama made a mental note to drive by this side of the town the next time he chauffeured Reiko back from the police station. She would have enjoyed the night breeze.

"Tell me, Kageyama-kun," she asked. "What is Reiko-sama like?"

"Very childish."

Kawahara froze at the unexpected answer. "Eh?"

He sighed. "Milady doesn't hesitate to display her emotions on her face. When she is angry, she pouts and gives a heavy 'hmpfh' to show her displeasure. But when she is happy, she

grins like an idiot and it her smile is very contagious."

He paused as his eyes looked into the distance, recollecting his memories.

"But milady is also a very kind person, Kawahara-san," the corner of his lips quirked in the slightest smile. "She has the ability to see the good in people, where others see only the bad. Perhaps that is why she gets hurt inside whenever the murderer is revealed. But that doesn't stop milady from fighting for justice, or make her weaker in any way. In fact, I think it makes her stronger."

"Kageyama-kun," she smirked. "You're very loyal to your lady, eh?"

"Ah," he smiled. "I have to be. After all, I am her butler."

"But it's more than that, isn't it?"

He stopped in his tracks and turned to face her. She had seen that look before, when her fiance had promised to protect her for the rest of her life. That look was etched in her memory, along with the look of guilt he had when he knew that the car accident was going to take him away from her. She never loved anyone else.

"Reiko-sama is very lucky to have someone like you," she said meaningfully.

He shook his head. "I believe it is I who is lucky to have the chance to serve someone as outstanding as milady."

"I envy you, Kageyama," she sighed, leaving a cloud of white wisps disappearing into the night. "You get to stay close to the person you love and admire."

That night, as Kageyama went on his regular check on his sleeping mistress, he pulled her blanket up to her neck and narrowed the window opening. The room instantly felt warmer, cosier even. As he was about to leave the room, he noticed the shadow of a tree branch creeping up on the corner of his mistress's bedroom. He walked towards the window sill, only to see the budding shoots sprouting from the branches.

"Kageyama?" Reiko stirred in her sleep.

"I didn't mean to wake you," he apologised as he prepared to leave the room. "Sweet dreams, milady."

"Good night," she replied, pulling the covers higher on herself.

Kageyama closed the door quietly behind him, bearing one last glance at his lady before he retired for the night.

You get to stay close to the person you love and admire.

He smiled.

Spring was coming after all.

End Notes

I recently had the chance to rewatch the show on DVD, and soon enough I fell into its rabbit hole...!!! There aren't enough fanfics on the internet, so I decided to write one of my own and put it up ;) I do hope to write another fic for this adorable couple soon! Perhaps something in the different stages of their lives...? ;) Let me know what you guys feel about this fanfic!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!