

Could it be, a black pearl?!

Hey.

My *mechanical pencil* is gone.

I bet I lost it in one of the hallways at school.

I squatted down to search for it in my bag.

Everything else is there...

Izumi is...

Under the stairs.

Waiting for me to finish picking up all the things I dropped again.

I,

Looked at my photo of Ryouichi.

So Izumi wouldn't get upset, I shoved it into the pocket of my school uniform.

Even though it was just one photo, my pocket felt heavy.

What should I do?

Today, Izumi promised that she'd teach me how to cook.

"You're Shinju Himeno, right?"

Huh?

Someone was standing behind me.

Suddenly, I turned *my* head as they said my name.

And they met my eyes.

It was the girl with the jet black straight hair.

With jet black eyes.

I feel like I've seen her somewhere before...

Oh.

Ohhh.

Ohhhhhh.

I remembered.

It's that girl with the smirk like she won something.

It's the girl who was having lunch with Ryunichi.

"I knew it, you are Shinju."

"How do you know my name?"

"Too hee hee."

What the heck.

I asked her a question, and she just laughed in response.

How rude.

She was looking at me like my silence was cute.

Her true personality didn't change at all, though.

She must be the new transfer student everyone has been talking about.

Huh?

There's something shining.

On her chest.

A necklace.

A pearl?

Just like mine?

No.

It's different.

I only saw it for a second but.

It wasn't pink.

It was a totally different color.

It was a color like the depths of the sea.

Dark black...

My necklace has a pink pearl.

But I was surprised at how similar her necklace is to mine.

A black pearl...

My grandma said something about that once...

It had to do with the sea witch Wyndia.

She said she used magic with her black pearl.

I wonder if the black pearl on this girl's necklace is magic too...

No.

It can't be.

I'm overthinking this.

Oh! ♡

I found it!

Ryuichi.

He must be on his way home after extracurriculars.

Lots of people were clamoring down the hallway with him.

But.

My eyes instantly focused in on Ryuichi.

"Ryuichi! ♡"

I called to him.

Actually, I kind of shouted down the hallway to him.

But, the girl in front of me didn't seem to notice Ryuichi.

When I called Ryuichi's name, he jumped and looked around.

"Hey, what are you doing shouting at Ryuichi like that?"

"W-well, it's crowded so..."

"If he loved you, he'd notice you right away and you wouldn't need to shout."

That's what Izumi said.

At lunch.

Outside the window.

The first person to look for Ryuichi was Izumi.

I wouldn't have noticed him without her saying something.

And so.

Although Ryuichi makes me happy, he can't be mine alone.

But.

I wonder if Ryuichi could at least return *my* feelings.

Ryuichi.

By my side.

Thinking of him next to another girl sends a jolt of pain through my chest.

"What are you doing?"

"Ah, Ryuichi! ♡"

She was smiling at Ryouichi.

"I'm sorry."

That girl.

She's totally different around him than around me.

She almost seems kind of cute.

"Miss Shinju, today Ryouichi and I made a promise to each other, and so, I apologize for my rudeness earlier."

Whaaaaat.

A promise?!

No way.

I can't believe it.

What the hell.

"Big brother"

Suddenly, Seiko appeared and stood right next to Ryouichi.

The freshman classroom had just dismissed.

I can't believe they didn't get out until we were already dismissed.

But, that's Seiko for you. An overachiever.

She really does love her big brother, though.

"Seiko, what are you doing here?"

"Hey, big brother, who is that girl with you? Are you two going somewhere together?"

Even though I wanted to hear his response, I could tell Seiko was intently listening too.

"You goof. You know I'm part of the committee in my class who does orientation for all the transfer students."

Ryunichi explained to Seiko.

Oh.

Thank god.

But,

That girl's smile - like she had won something.

It bothers me.

Ryuichi.

I took a final glance at him.

He turned his head back to glance at me too.

And he turned and faced me while walking backwards.

For a moment.

He really looked at me.

It almost seemed like he really took notice of me for the first time.

"The Mermaid's Legend"

Once every 1000 years.

A Mermaid Princess becomes human.

If she finds the person she loves by her 16th birthday.

And makes a vow of love.

But.

If by her 16th birthday she doesn't find her lover.

And doesn't make a vow of love.

And doesn't get a kiss on the lips...

Then, the mermaid world will disappear.

And so.

I can't give up!

If I can become the girl Ryunichi loves, I'll be OK!

It'll be okay...right?

But.

In my heart.

From the first moment we met, my heart has made me wonder.

What if he never falls in love with me... or what if he decides he hates me... what will I do?