

Don't give up, Princess!

Cooking in the Kaidou family kitchen.

Practicing making tomorrow's lunches.

I'm doing OK at making chicken katsu.

But, it doesn't look anything like the kind Izumi makes.

Then again, Izumi is 100% the family-oriented type.

She wouldn't be the type to make Ryuusichi complain.

Actually, I think the two of them would get along really well.

But.

"N-no!!! The water isn't supposed to boil over like that!!"

"Shinju, if we don't use water, then there's no way we can cook."

"But I don't want to."

"Is there some reason you're against using water?"

Izumi made a mysterious face.

But if I touch water, I'll turn back into a mermaid.

And I don't want anyone to find out that I'm a mermaid.

So.

Cooking is hard.

I think I'll stick to chopping vegetables, and leave the washing up and anything else to do with water to someone else.

This is really important, so I can't mess it up and forget.

"What are you doing, Shinju?"

"Well, You said if I don't use water, I can't really cook anything."

Lunch with the transfer student girl.

In my head, I kept thinking of her over and over.

She was really gorgeous.

She looked really sweet too.

I glanced over at Izumi's lunch, and it looked really good.

Even though I can't use water, I shouldn't just give up.

I don't want Ryuichi to hate me...

I can't let anything other than him liking me be an option.

So, I've got to become the kind of girl that Ryuichi likes.

What...

What should I do?

Izumi's "love".

The transfer student girl's "love".

Seiko's "love".

And my "Love" too -

"Izumi, I can't give up."

I've got to be true to myself.

"Shinju!?"

"I'm never going to be family-oriented, so I give up on that."

Really.

I can't be around water.

There's nothing to be done about that.

"Are you going to give up on Ryouichi, too?"

Well...

"I mean, I can do my best at cooking, but I think others will still be better than me at that..."

And that's true but...

I.

I don't want to force someone to like me.

And when I met Ryouichi for the first time,

I realized I liked him.

I'll confess.

I'm shaking.

But.

I think I'll be okay.

But.

He might hate me.

But.

Maybe it'll make Ryouichi like me.

"But, that's no good."

"I'm being serious. I really do like Ryouichi, I think."

"I like him. But..."

If even one drop of water touches me, I'll definitely turn into a mermaid.

And I can't let him see me as anything other than human.

I can't give up.

It can't be helped.

But -

My heart stopped.

Is this - "The Legend of the Mermaid"?

Maybe my feelings are wrong.

Maybe I've misunderstood how I really feel.

Bam.

The front door suddenly slammed.

Soon after, Seiko's voice followed.

"Big brother, are you home yet?"

"Seiko-chan?"

What is she doing here.

She was huffing and wheezing.

Did she run home?

She seemed completely out of breath.

Her face looked blue.

"Where's my brother?"

"He's not home yet"

"I saw him waiting for someone at the school gate, and thought maybe he had gotten home and came in through the back."

Seiko.

She was always waiting around for Ryuichi.

She really does love him.

"Before I came home, I thought I saw that girl he was hanging around before."

"The girl from before?"

I'm sure she meant that transfer student girl.

She was with him...

Seiko had explained that Ryuichi was on a class committee to take all transfer students through orientation.

But,

The clock on the wall.

Showed that it was nearly 6 PM.

There was no way he was still doing an orientation by now.

"I can't believe it, jeeezeeez. He should be home by now."

Seiko hit the nail on the head.

"JEEZ!"

Without thinking, I shouted.

Seiko jumped, and made water splash near me.

Oh no, I'm in danger now.

I noticed that Seiko was all wet.

"Ah, sorry, it was raining on my way home."

Rain?

Oh, it is raining.

I can see it outside of the window.

It's still raining.

"Hey, Shinju, you dropped something."

Huh?

Dropped something...?

Izumi looked thoughtfully at me.

And suddenly I had a really bad feeling.

"What is this?"

"Oh, thanks Izumi. I'll pick it up."

That's what I said.

But it was already too late.

Izumi saw what I dropped.

"Shinju, that picture..."

I knew I had a bad feeling for a reason.

My picture of Ryuuchi had fallen on the ground.

Izumi turned to me with a shocked face.

I could tell from her face that she was upset.

"I'm sorry...When you dropped your bag, Izumi, it fell out."

That part of what I was saying was true.

"I just forgot to give it back to you."

"Well, now I guess you know how I really feel."

"I knew about it even before this."

Izumi untied her apron.

All the time I had been talking to Izumi about Ryuuchi, she had felt the same way about him.

Izumi's face looked sad.

In all the time I thought about Ryuuchi, I never wanted her to make that face.

"I know that the person you liked, Izumi...was Ryuuchi, all along..."

Izumi nodded her head.

Izumi must really, really, really be in love with Ryouichi.

"Well then - why did you say you wanted my help with him?"

"When you knew...that I wasn't even brave enough to confess how I feel about him..."

"Because I thought that out of the two of us, Ryouichi definitely likes you better."

Izumi smiled as soon as I said that.

"I'm pretty sure Ryouichi likes you more than me, Shinju."

Izumi thinks that Ryouichi likes me more than her.

Secretly I agreed.

But,

I wouldn't let her know that.

The rain outside of the window.
Kept getting heavier.

"What's wrong, Shinju? Are you waiting around to welcome Ryouichi home?"

"It's just that, I can't go out there."

"Why not? I don't think you'll get locked out."

"I just can't go out."

If even one drop of the rain touches me, I'll turn into a mermaid.

And another drop of rain would turn me back into a human again.

Anyway, the humans definitely must not see me in my mermaid form.

And then I won't be the girl that Ryuichi likes.

He won't like me at all.

So I've just got to hope that he likes me like this instead.

I am a Princess, after all.

The one the "Mermaid's Legend" foretells of.

I thought that being more like Izumi would help my chances.

But maybe that's not enough.