

Excerpt from The Quantum State of Being - Chapter 3 by Shakita Abiko

[EXT. CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY]

The familiar creak of the front gate greets KIYOMI MAKOTO (30s, determined) as she steps onto the cracked walkway leading to her childhood home. The house, a relic from another time, stands weathered and neglected—a stark contrast to the sleek modernity of her current neighborhood. The lawn is overgrown, and the once-bright flowerbeds are now consumed by weeds.

[EXT. CHILDHOOD HOME - FRONT DOOR]

Kiyomi hesitates before continuing up the walkway, an uneasy feeling settling over her. She hasn't visited her father in months, but something compels her to come today. She stands before the front door, her hand raised to knock.

[DOOR OPENS]

Before she can knock, the door swings open, revealing her FATHER (70s, frail but sharp-eyed). He's thinner than she remembers, but his piercing gaze is as intense as ever.

FATHER

Kiyomi. You finally came.

KIYOMI

(Smiles, strained)

Hello, Dad.

He steps aside, allowing her to enter. The atmosphere inside is stifling, thick with the scent of old furniture, dust, and mothballs. The living room is dim, the heavy curtains drawn tight against the outside world. The furniture is worn, outdated, and meticulously arranged, as if time has frozen in this house.

[INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY]

Kiyomi sits on the sagging couch, the springs creaking under her weight. Her father settles into his armchair, his eyes never leaving her.

FATHER

You don't visit often.

KIYOMI

(Forces herself to meet his gaze)

I've been busy. Work, you know.

FATHER

(Hmphs, accusatory)

Always busy. Too busy to remember where you came from, it seems.

Kiyomi feels a pang of guilt, quickly overshadowed by familiar resentment. Her father never understood her ambitions, always trying to mold her into something she's not.

FATHER

(Leaning forward)

You've changed, Kiyomi. You're not the same person you were.

KIYOMI

(Keeping her voice steady)

I've grown, Dad. People change. They evolve.

FATHER

(Snaps)

Not in this family, they don't. This family is built on tradition, on roles. Your brothers, your sisters—they all understand that. Why don't you?

Kiyomi bristles at his words but controls her anger.

KIYOMI

I'm not a child anymore. I have my own life, my own path. You can't expect me to live the way you want forever.

Her father's eyes narrow, a flicker of something darker in his gaze.

FATHER

You think you have your own path? You think you can just turn your back on everything we've built?

KIYOMI

(Confused, hesitant)

What are you talking about?

Her father stands, moving slowly to a bookshelf. He pulls out a worn leather-bound book, opens it, and hands it to Kiyomi.

[CLOSE ON: PHOTO ALBUM]

Kiyomi flips through the album, noticing a pattern—her siblings dressed similarly, posed identically at various family events. Her heart races as she realizes the extent of her father's obsession.

FATHER

(Low, intense)

This is the way it's supposed to be. The way it always has been. Each of you has a role to play, just like your uncles and aunts. And you, Kiyomi—you're supposed to be like your Aunt Sachiko.

KIYOMI

(Whispers, horrified)

No. I'm not her. I'm not going to be her.

FATHER

(Taking a step closer)

You don't have a choice, Kiyomi. This is your fate, your duty to this family.

Kiyomi, panicked, stands and backs away.

KIYOMI

You're wrong. I won't be trapped like she was. I won't let you control me.

Her father smiles—a cold, calculating smile that sends a shiver down her spine.

FATHER

You think you can escape, but you can't. I've made sure of that.

Kiyomi's mind races as she pieces together the truth—her father has been behind everything, using organized stalking to manipulate her into submission.

KIYOMI

(Trembling, angry)

You've been following me. Doing all this to break me, to make me into something I'm not.

FATHER

(Calmly nodding)

It's for your own good, Kiyomi. You belong to this family, to its legacy. And I'll do whatever it takes to make you see that.

Kiyomi's resolve hardens. Without another word, she turns and flees from the house, ignoring her father's calls as she races to her car. As she drives away, she realizes that she's not just fighting for her freedom—she's fighting for her sanity.