**A Fork in the Road**

by Emi Tsuruta

Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I think I believe in true love. Somewhere out there, there must be a soul mate for you, and once you find that person, you'll love them for the rest of your life. At least that's what I always thought.

In reality though, things don't always go so smoothly. Take Ryosuke and me for instance. When we first started going out, we were so into each other. The sex was amazing. We couldn't get enough.

Gradually though, things slowed down. Real life began to get in the way, and we didn't always have time to go out, and do stuff. I still thought that we'd be able to make it work though. But life is never simple, is it?

Even when I first met Ryosuke, I knew there must have been other women in his life. The first time I met Kiyomi, I swear I thought she was his girlfriend. The two of them were so close. She'd arrived in California a couple of years before I did, and it was only after Ryosuke and I started getting more serious, that she finally found a boyfriend of her own, Eden. Every time Kiyomi called, Ryosuke would perk right up, and make plans to meet. The times the four of us got together, there was this weird sexual tension between Ryosuke and Kiyomi. I think even Eden sensed it. At the time, I think I was able to 'outsexy' Kiyomi, but even so, it was clear that she had some kind of hold over Ryosuke, and it was very powerful indeed.

Then, there were the girls Mieko and Masayo. The story there was that Ryosuke was just helping our friends Kenta and Futoshi to get to know Mieko and Masayo, so they could ask them out. There was this obvious chemistry between Ryosuke and Masayo. I don't think they slept together, but it's hard to tell for sure, you know?

More recently though, there was this American girl, Demi. My friend Asuna (Ryosuke's cousin) and I had gone to the beach in the afternoon, but there was supposed to be this party at Asuna's place that evening, hosted by her room mates Maria and Sandra. When Asuna phoned home, the party had already started, so Asuna and I headed straight there without bothering to change out of our swimsuits. There were all kinds of people there, but what immediately caught my eye was Ryosuke sitting off in the corner talking with this American girl. She had longish black hair, and was fairly pretty I guess. She looked like she was from Greece or somewhere. I asked Asuna who the girl was, and she said,

"Oh that's Demi, a friend of Maria's."

I'd never seen Demi before. I'd never even heard of her, but here Ryosuke and she were talking away, all friendly-like, caught up in their own little world. I went over to say hi to Ryosuke, but Demi was saying something to him, so he completely ignored me! I couldn't believe it. He was supposed to be my boyfriend, but it was like I wasn't even there.

Anyway, I was still in my wet bikini, and needed to get changed, so I wandered back to the bedroom area. Asuna was in the washroom, and in Asuna's room, there were a whole bunch of people I didn't know, so I couldn't change there. My bikini was getting all cold and clammy though, so I really wanted to get out of it.

I came back out to the kitchen, looking for my bag with all my clothes in it. I finally spotted it under the table Ryosuke was sitting at in the dining room. I waved for him to pass it to me, but he was so wrapped up in his conversation with this Demi woman that he didn't even notice me! Boy, was I steamed! Can you imagine?

Where am I supposed to get changed? Way down the end in Sandra's room, there is a spare bathroom, but Sandra's boyfriend Craig might be down there, and I wasn't in the mood to deal with him. I thought about this some more, and then eventually, I began to wonder if I should just change here in the kitchen. I still had my towel in my purse, so I could wrap it around me, and then go fish my clothes out of my bag. Now there's a plan.

Still vaguely trying to get Ryosuke's attention, I lifted my hoodie up and over my head, taking it off. Everyone else at the party was fully dressed, but here I was standing in my bikini in the kitchen. I dried my body off as best I could with my towel, and then wrapped it around me. The towel seemed to be long enough to cover up my private areas. People sitting in the living room couldn't see me, and the only people in the dining room were Ryosuke and Demi who weren't paying attention, a Japanese boy and a couple of American girls sitting with their backs to me.

Quickly, before anyone came, I pulled off my bikini bottoms, and pulled my bikini top out from under the towel. I pulled the top of my towel up making sure that it was covering my breasts. I wouldn't want to flash anyone my nipples by mistake. I tried again to signal Ryosuke to hand me my bag, but he was still caught up in Demi's spell. I was so annoyed.

Anyway, seeing no other choice, I finally zipped out around behind him to get my bag. It was kind of under the table, so I got down on my hands and knees to fish it out, vaguely worrying that stretching out like this might pull my towel up, exposing my bare behind. I felt nervous and more than a little excited. Now that I was out in the dining room, I could see all the people in the living room. Hopefully, they can't see me with the table in the way.

I couldn't quite reach my bag, so I elbowed Ryosuke in his calf, trying to get him to help. He finally noticed me, but looked down trying to pretend like he didn't know me. I scowled at him, still trying to get him to pull my bag over. He just patted me on the head like I was his kid sister or something, and turned back to Demi.

Realizing that he was going to be no help whatsoever, I slowly lowered myself down again, worried that my breasts might pop out of my towel. Sure enough, just as I was about to reach my bag, the knot in the towel came undone, causing it to fall open at the front.

I froze, trying to decide if I should leave the bag to tie my towel back up, or just leave it like that. As far as I could tell, the people in the living room hadn't really noticed me. The only ones who could see me were Ryosuke, Demi if she looked over, and people out the window in the parking lot. It didn't look like there was anyone outside, so I slowly straightened up, allowing my towel to fall back onto the carpet at my feet. There I was kneeling - stark naked - right next to this huge picture window in an apartment filled with people.

I felt embarrassed of course, but more than that, I felt this sudden rush of sexual energy coursing through my body. I hadn't really meant to do this, but now that I was naked, it felt great. Ryosuke glanced down, and seemed quite shocked to see me naked all of a sudden. Demi leaned over to see, and she looked pretty shocked too. I just kneeled there, smiling meekly at the two of them, not even trying to explain.

"What are you doing, Emi? Stop fooling around," Ryosuke snapped at me, genuinely annoyed.

"Who is this girl?" Demi demanded. The commotion was attracting too much attention, so I finally gathered up my towel, and wrapped it back around me, smiling meekly, waiting for Ryosuke to explain.

"Uh... this is my girlfriend, Emi," he finally admitted. Demi looked a bit upset, perhaps not so much at me for flashing them, but more at Ryosuke for not mentioning he had a girlfriend. As I suspected, he had been hitting on her! I knew it. So much for true love.

Anyway, I picked up my bag, and beat a hasty retreat, running out through the kitchen, living room and down the hall to see if Asuna was out of the bathroom yet. She was, but someone else had gone in. Asuna was surprised to see me still in my towel, but once I explained, she asked everyone to leave her room, so I could change. While I was waiting in the hall, Sandra's boyfriend Craig spotted me, and looked me up and down. Ah well. At least I have one admirer.

Anyway, once they'd all cleared out, I got changed into my street clothes, so I was decent again. I finally went out, and managed to tear Demi away from Ryosuke. In any case, Demi seemed kind of angry at him, so I think I managed to scare her off. The whole incident got me wondering though about whether he hit on other girls when I wasn't around.

After that, relations between Ryosuke and I became a bit rockier. It wasn't just the jealousy though. I'd flirted with other guys, but in my heart, I'd always intended to stay with Ryosuke. Another problem we had was we disagreed about where we should live. Ryosuke wasn't happy at the sushi restaurant, and wanted to go back to Japan to find a better job, while I wanted to stay in Oceanview. That was a biggie, and not so easy to solve.

I did want to work this out though, so to make him happy, I finally agreed to go to the nude beach with him. He'd been pushing me to go with him for years. We'd been once before, but on a day when hardly anyone was around, the day of the barbecue, just for a short time. Now it was summer and the high season, so I hoped that might cheer him up, show him the good points about living here in Oceanview. There are no nude beaches in Japan.

So one day, we packed up, and headed to the beach. Unfortunately, on the way, we got into an argument. I think he ogled some blonde girl, and I remarked on it, and we started bickering. Even when we got there, and there were all these naked people around, he was still in a bad mood. I stripped out of my clothes fairly soon, hoping this would cheer him up, but no such luck. He was still brooding. He eventually stormed off to go swimming by himself.

So there I was sitting naked on my towel, feeling kind of at sea. Ryosuke and I had been going out for four or five years by then. I'd gotten so used to having him around, but now it was like everything I did seemed to go wrong. I felt kind of helpless and alone.

Not sure what else to do, I got out my cell phone, and gave my friend Satomi a call. While I listened to the recording on her voice mail, I glanced down the beach, and noticed this American guy lying face down, not far away, looking back at me. I wasn't sure what he was doing at first, but as I looked closer, I suddenly realized that he was cradling what looked to be a camera in his hands. Oh god! He must be taking my picture! Here I was sitting out here right in the middle of the beach - buck naked - but I'd been so wrapped up in my own troubles I hadn't even noticed him till then.

Maybe if I'd been in a less fragile mood, I might have yelled at him, but for some reason, at that particular moment, I found his interest in me oddly comforting. The guy was handsome in a way with his dark hair and tanned skin. Here I was thinking I was losing my touch, but this guy seemed fascinated by me, this sad-looking Japanese girl sitting naked on the beach by herself. Realizing I was on camera, I brushed the hair out of my eyes, and even managed to muster a brave smile.

It was kind of embarrassing though having him take my picture with me being naked and all. I turned away from him, continuing to straighten my hair, but I swear I could still hear him clicking away. This was all quite astounding. I don't think I'd ever had a guy take my picture on the nude beach before. So you are out here naked, and what are you supposed to do? How are you supposed to react? I guess I should have covered up at least, but I didn't. I just kind of sat there, mulling the situation over.

I eventually turned back towards him, but he was still lying there staring straight at me. Flailing around, trying to look natural, I lay down, accidentally giving him a peek at my pussy. I turned to lie on my back, looking around to see if anyone else was watching us. When I turned though, I inadvertently spread my legs open, giving him an even better shot of my pussy. What on earth am I doing? I'm acting almost as if I want him to take my picture. This isn't very ladylike now, is it?

Feeling a bit more self-conscious, I sat back up, trying not to look at the guy. Still facing him, I turned, and swung my legs around in front of me, pulling them up so I could rest my elbows on my knees, letting him see my pubes. In a vague effort to recover some modesty, I pulled a towel around my shoulders, but this did nothing to hide my pussy.

I hadn't actually been trying to flirt with the guy, but I guess Ryosuke had noticed, and came back. Ryosuke still looked a bit sore, but he got down on all fours, and gave me a kiss! I swear Ryosuke almost never kisses me in public, but I guess that was his way of apologizing.

The photographer guy might have got in one last shot of us, but with Ryosuke there, he seemed worried, and put down his camera. I didn't tell Ryosuke about the photographer. I didn't want to upset him. He did agree to get dressed, and head out. I pulled my hoodie and shorts back on, and Ryosuke and I went for some lunch. As I walked past the photographer, he gave me a big smile thanking me I guess for letting him take my picture.

I was worried for a while after that that those pictures might get out. I've kept an eye out since then to see if the pictures popped up somewhere, but I haven't seen them yet. Let me know if you do.

So anyway, things between Ryosuke and I seemed to be getting better, but just around that time, Ryosuke got a call from Kiyomi. She'd just broken up with Eden, and wanted to come up, and stay with Ryosuke for a few days while she recovered. Now I guess I can understand her wanting to reach out to Ryosuke after the break-up, but there was just no way I was going to let her stay at Ryosuke's place in his room. There had always been this sexual tension between the two of them, and now she was single and emotionally vulnerable. Staying together would just be asking for trouble. Ryosuke was like "she's just a friend," and "nothing will happen," but I was like "No way!" Given how insecure I was feeling after the Demi incident, it was too much to ask.

Anyway, Ryosuke and I talked and talked, trying to work out some kind of compromise, but he wouldn't budge. He didn't want to leave Kiyomi alone in her hour of need, and I didn't want the two of them sleeping in the same room together. When we couldn't solve this, Ryosuke proposed that he and I should take a 'break.' It wouldn't be like we were breaking up exactly, but just that we would take some time off, so we could each do our own thing. I was vaguely horrified, but it was hard to see any other way of dealing with our disagreement. Finally, after more talk and hand-wringing, I agreed, and resolved to make the best of it. We said our goodbyes, and headed our separate ways.

So here I was single again. It had been such a long time since I'd been on my own I wasn't really sure what to do at first. Sure, I was vaguely interested in some guys: Sandra's boyfriend Craig from the party, Ryosuke's host brother Daniel, the married man from the grocery store, but there wasn't much chance of me getting together with any of them.

There was this one other guy I was mildly intrigued by. His name was Todd. He used to live in Satomi's dorm, but the rumor was he had graduated, and moved out. He had black hair, an angular look and these soulful eyes. When I talked to him, he always looked me straight in the eye. I mean he really listens like he cares. The problem was though that I had no idea how to get in touch with him. He did show up at Satomi's dorm every once in a while, but it was usually late at night unannounced. I talked with Satomi though, and she agreed to let me sleep over in her room now and then.

Satomi usually goes to bed pretty early though, so if I was still awake, I'd go to their house's common room. My hope was that I'd bump into Todd, but actually, there usually aren't that many people around at that time of night. There was this one Korean American girl, Lori, who was usually up, so she'd come in, and we'd chat. She's a funny girl, petite, but with really big hair and lots of black eye make-up. I guess the guys don't hit on her that much, but she laughs a lot, and is kind of sexy... to my eyes anyway. It was nice to have someone to talk to when I was up late.

Lori knew Todd, but she had no idea when he would show up either. Lori and I would keep this late night vigil, watching talk shows, and gabbing about girl stuff while we waited around to see if anyone would come by. Once or twice a night, the dorm's porter came through to check that everyone was safe, and that the doors were locked. Sometimes a few guys would drift through on their way back from some late night party or pub crawl. I saw the medical student Anton a few times, but he already had a serious girlfriend. Usually, though, things were pretty quiet.

One question that I wondered about at first was what I should wear when I went out to the common room. I mean it was night time after all. Practically everyone was asleep already, so I didn't think there'd be anything wrong with going out there in my pajamas. Lori dresses pretty casual, and I'd seen other girls wandering around in their nightwear in the halls. At first, I felt as if I should get dressed up since it is a public area, so I'd change back into my jeans and blouse before going out. After a while though, it didn't seem like such a big deal, so I'd go out in just track pants and a t-shirt or whatever I happened to be wearing to bed that night. The truth was that I'd kind of gotten into the habit of sleeping naked at Satomi's - it was easier there than at home where I had to worry about my host mom's son, Brandon, coming in. At the dorm, I'd usually pull something on before going out to the common room.

Anyway, Lori was a pretty earthy girl, so I knew she'd probably be cool with just about anything. The porter never even stopped to look at us. S/he just rushed through the hall behind the entrance, checked the outside door, and then came back through before heading to the next common room. The guys who stumble through were probably too drunk to notice much either, and they never stayed long. And then there was Todd. Well, I don't think he'd complain much if I dressed casual. He seemed to be kind of into me, or so I hoped anyway.

My first little experiment was going out to the common areas in one of my jogging outfits: pink stretch cotton shorts and a matching pink short-sleeved top. Perhaps not all that daring - I wear this outfit in the fitness center - but like I said, I was mainly planning on testing the waters at first. Lori didn't say anything when she saw me, and soon, we were joking and chatting away, the same as always.

The porter came through around midnight. Lori stayed for another hour, but when the TV show we were watching ended, she said good night, and headed off to bed. I didn't feel all that sleepy, but it had gone quiet, so I don't think much of anyone in our 'house' was still up. I flicked through the channels, but there didn't seem to be much on TV. I got up, and went over to the window peering out into the courtyard. There was no one in the quad, and the Arts building across from us was all dark. Am I the only one still awake?

I started to get this feeling like butterflies in my tummy. I don't know if you ever get this, but it usually comes when I realize that I might be able to... how should I put this... get naked without getting caught I guess. I'd left my lucky charm necklace back in Satomi's room, but it really did seem like no one was around. It got me wondering if I could get away with it. I don't think I did anything that first night, but I'd sometimes find myself daydreaming about it over the next few weeks.

Then this one night, I was down there again. I hadn't seen Lori around, so I think she must have gone to bed early. I was wearing soft brown brushed cotton boy-style pajamas, sitting in the common room with the TV on, just kind of spacing out. This whole being single business had gotten old really fast. I kept wondering if I should call Ryosuke, and see if Kiyomi had moved on yet. He hadn't actually said that they'd sleep together, and she might not even be ready for a new relationship yet anyway. Anyway, better not to think of that. I should probably give him his space for now.

The porter had already gone through, and it was getting pretty late by then. Almost all the lights were off outside. I was debating going to bed myself, but before I did, I decided to have a little fun. Checking the door to make sure no one was coming, I slowly pulled down my p.j. bottoms, stepping out of them. It still seemed safe, so I pulled off my p.j. top too, sitting there naked in the common room. Feeling adventurous, I got up, and went over to the window looking out at the grass and bushes in the quad. Luckily, there didn't seem to be anyone around outside, but I knew I was taking a terrible chance, getting naked in such a public part of the dorm, so pretty soon I pulled my p.j.'s back on, and went back to Satomi's room to sleep. Of course, I didn't tell her about my little adventure, but it was kind of fun while it lasted.

After that, a lot more things happened, but I'd better save that for another time.