

Tēm, I remember that it was a very unimportant matter.

With the final exam just around the corner, Akiharu Hino stayed in the classroom with the other boys after school when he had more free time due to the absence of the service activities in the education department.

It is very correct to use your free afternoons to study for exams, but after two hours of studying, you will lose your concentration.

Especially because of Todoroki, an idiot who always tries to poke his nose into other people's business, we can only make so-so progress.

Naturally, my gaze wandered away from the reference book on my desk and out the window.

Well, I have been reviewing my work, but not every day, and my grades are not so bad that I am in a hurry, so it should be okay if I slack off a little.

While Akiharu was in a daze thinking this, a strange object suddenly appeared in his field of vision.

Daikichi was dressed in white, but his clothes were very flashy, and even though it was already December, his chest was so bare that it made me think, "I saw something I didn't like. I feel like I'm in a bad mood.

And the fact that such a narcissist is walking around surrounded by three female students in their school uniforms is reason enough to say that the world is wrong.

Anyway, Daikichi and the others walking from the cafeteria were engaged in some kind of conversation, and I could hear their voices as they approached.

Just now, Sanke were ventilating and trying to get some sleep.

I opened the window and left it open, but I had no idea that not only the air but also noises that can really demotivate you were coming in.

Not to mention Sanke who opened their windows at the unexpected turn of events, even Todoroki, who lacks concentration, and even Daichi, who usually maintains a nonchalant attitude, frowned and asked, "Hey, why is it that while we're diligently studying, narcissistic Daikichi is taking advantage of his pink heart full of lovey-dovey time with girls? This is crazy, isn't it!

Shingo didn't study hard in the first place, but I guess I'm getting a little fed up with him, too."

"..... is a hustle and bustle."

(alt: ".....noisy") The mood for study completely fizzles out as the students complain about the current situation.

It's getting to the point where I think we're done for the day, but I want to stop before the sun goes down.

I'm tired of it.

Since there is a rule that he who says such a thing is subject to a vicious game of punishment, there is no way for Akiharu to appeal to the authorities to cancel the event.

If we were to say anything careless at this point, it would be obvious that the Roar, which is already filled with resentment, would be more than happy to start talking nonsense.

Just as Akiharu was about to close the window, he heard Daikichi's voice, which sounded very familiar.

"— — After the test, it will be Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day right away. Especially on New Year's Eve, which is also my grandfather's birthday, the Kazamatsuri family is planning to throw a big party!

"Well, it's Mr. Kazamatsuri's grandfather's birthday!"

Congratulations. I'd like to join the party at if you don't mind.

Of course, we are always happy to welcome those who wish to join us in celebrating my grandfather. I'll be looking forward to seeing you in my more beautiful and splendid appearance.

The conversation, which should have gone unheard if the window had been closed a little earlier, was not the kind of conversation one would have had before a test, but the banter was enough to make Akiharu freeze, her arms almost outstretched.

..... I realize now, thanks to this conversation, that this is a very bad idea.

It may be more accurate to say that I remembered, but the important thing is not how you say it, but what you say.

Somehow, I managed to wrap my confused head around it and make sure it was right. To my great dismay, it was indeed so.

(alt: I managed to use my confused head to make sure it was correct... but unfortunately, it was still the case.) "..... woo wah"

(alt: ".....Uh-wah.....") What's up, akaki? You sounded like a stupid ronin who forgot to bring his examination voucher for the entrance examination he was supposed to take."

If he's going to screw up on such an important occasion, he deserves to be a ronin. No, well, it's a near pin in the sense that he forgot.

(alt: "It's only natural for someone to be rude in such an important situation to be a ronin.) After making sure to butt in to Todoroki's lame-headed remark and closing the window once again, Akiharu returns to his seat and sighs deeply and scratches his head wildly.

And before we could even begin to think about what would happen, everyone was talking.

"..... Hino, what happened?"

You look a little pale. Is something bothering you?"

"You know, I'm sure I have some kind of love sickness, or maybe I'm going to be bald in the future, and I'm worried about it now.

(alt: "Oh, I'm sure I'm sick of love, or I'm going bald in the future, so I'm worried about it now?!")

Aside from the two people who are concerned about me, I will throw a dictionary in their faces to shut them up.

If a guy is off the mark and irritates a point that is too sensitive for a man, he should just writhe in agony for the time being.

But it might be better to talk to Daichi and Sanke, and Akiharu looked at them.

They have a rather neutral or feminine face, but they seem to be popular and may be able to provide some helpful comments.

The situation was becoming more and more urgent, and Akiharu shamelessly spoke to the two.

"I've got a little problem and I need to talk to you about it, okay?"

I said, "Yeah? Whatever you need from me, I'm here to help.

Depends on the content of"

I completely forgot about it until just now, but I promised my cousin I'd give her a birthday present."

The cell phone I am using now was given to me by my cousin Natsume, and I was supposed to give her a gift for her birthday this year as a way of repaying her kindness.

..... That's how it was.

Natsume knows this because I told him via e-mail around September.

When Akiharu felt like sighing again, Daichi, who was scowling, asked him quizzically, "What is it that you want to do?"

I don't think it's wrong to give a gift to your cousin. What's the problem?"

....., but my birthday is at the end of last month.

(alt: ".....The important birthday is at the end of last month."), uh,, and that's

(alt: "..... um.....that is.....") "Did you forget about?"

Instead of answering "yes," Akiharu nodded his head.

They both said aloud, "Wow," without saying a word.

Even without looking, you can tell that they are pulling away from the camera as if they are trying to get a better view of the camera.

If it was my birthday a day or two ago, there is nothing I can do since we are already in the second week of December.

..... No, I should have remembered you at the beginning of last month, but we were busy with training camps, exams, and traveling here and there, so even though Natsume used to send me e-mails everyday, lately they've been rather tepid and boring.

I mean, the day before yesterday, I heard that a kitten was born at my friend's house!

Was it a far-fetched birthday joke or was it a? Whatever the case, the fact is that I forgot, and days that have passed can never be recovered.

In this case, we have no choice but to deal with the situation in a practical manner.

I'm going to pick out a birthday present for you as soon as possible to apologize for the delay.

.....

(alt: "As an apology for being late, I'm thinking of choosing a birthday present as soon as possible, but...") Yeah, that's a good idea.

(alt: "Yeah, that's good.") It is better to hurry. It's bad for your credit."

The question is, what to give. Do you guys know what an appropriate item is? Something a high school girl would like.

When I ask them about it, they look at each other with a subtly troubled look on their faces.

I would have thought that these guys would have experienced receiving or giving a gift or two to girls, but judging from their reactions, it seems they don't have any.

However, since she couldn't come up with any ideas on her own, Akiharu still clung to her and said, "Hey, it doesn't have to be a real experience. Even if it's just something that might make you happy, it would be helpful."

"Uh-uh,, flowers, maybe?"

....., Anything that is filled with feeling... Anything..."

(alt: ".....If you have feelings, whatever.....") "I think you should pick out the lingerie you want him to wear."

Only Sanke' proposals seem to be of any help at the last minute, and the rest are beyond our control.

Especially the roar is not something that should be revived and said, so why does it stand up in vain?

However, I don't have the luxury of bothering with perverts.

I am sorry to say this to Sanke, but sending flowers is so out of character that I don't want to do it if I can help it.

I would like to go shopping today or tomorrow and go through the shipping procedure, but I can't decide what to do if I can't decide on the most important item.

I think it's better to do this than to ask the boys for their opinions.

The next morning, Akiharu arrived at school a little early as usual, grabbed Tomomi Saikei as she was just arriving at her classroom and dragged her to a corner of the classroom.

Naturally, the classroom becomes noisy, and voices begin to scowl and whisper, but I can't afford to worry about that.

Tomomi is used to being misunderstood, and she's very good at suppressing bad rumors about her, so I'm going to go ahead and take this opportunity.

..... What is it, Akiharu? We haven't even greeted each other in the morning.

I'm sorry about that, but what happened to your phone in the first place? I tried to call you yesterday, but I couldn't get through.

I'm sorry, but I try not to turn the power on before exams because it interferes with my studies." (alt: "Sorry, I try not to turn it on before the exam because it disturbs my studies.") After saying this in a voice that was loud enough to be heard by those who were listening, Tomomi, still smiling with an honor student smile, quickly moved her face closer and said, "..... Lately, I've been getting a lot of phone calls from my father-in-law. He wants to spend Christmas with us.

In a whisper, he told me the truth.

Well, it's certainly something that would have a strange effect on the other girls if they knew about it.

Tomomi's father doesn't leave that big of an impression on me, but I guess he must be a big enough presence for the upper class and the top companies to be concerned about his every move.

So, Akiharu also lowered his voice to match his partner's and said, "..... Family Christmas isn't a bad idea, right? You're the one who should be in the mood.

..... How many parties do you think there will be during the New Year's holiday? Considering the company's business, this is no time for family events like cozy dinners. Your father-in-law should know that, but he's just being selfish.

..... This is the kind of conflict that usually occurs when Tomomi and her father-in-law are in opposite positions.

A father who loves his family says to his son, "That's part of the job."

It seems strange that my daughter would say that.

And the other thing I'm wondering is, "....., what is Mikako's position on this?"

..... mother is not in touch. I mean, she thinks I'm going to be able to convince her, and she's just throwing that attitude around."

I don't know what kind of attitude he has, but even so, there is something that Akiharu understands.

(alt: I don't know what kind of attitude he has, but even so, there is something that Akiharu knows.) That is to say, in the end, things will probably end up the way Mikako wants them to.

Neither the black-hearted Tomomi nor the world-famous group leader can compete with that person, who has the air of a boss.

However, thanks to this, or perhaps because of this, I was not able to talk until this morning, which is a bit painful for Akiharu.

"I have a favor to ask of you, if you don't mind."

Tomomi tilted her head slightly and said, "Well, it depends on what you want to talk about. Is there anything you didn't understand in your study for the exam?"

No, I just need you to go shopping with me.

"....., you know, before the exam?"

I ask you to do it with full understanding. I can't handle it on my own."

The language is polite, but the look in the eye says, "What are you thinking, are you insane?"

Tomomi speaks in a straightforward manner, while Akiharu endures the heaviness in the pit of his stomach.

However, considering the time of year, it is not surprising that they were turned down outright.

I'm sure I'm annoying you, and I'm trying not to pester you too much, but I'm thinking, "Do you have an urgent need for shopping?"

The response was not bad, with a resigned tone of voice that said, "It can't be helped.

Akiharu's expression brightened and she said, "Hey, I want to go buy a birthday present for Natsume.

..... is the cousin of Akiharu-kun?

"Yes, yes. The jujube."

..... By the way, when is your birthday?"

But actually, it's already passed. So I'm trying to hurry that"

As they talked, Tomomi's eyes narrowed considerably and she ended up almost glaring at him, causing Akiharu's voice to fade.

..... That's funny? I was hoping that Tomomi, who is a caring person, might be flexible enough to help me buy a birthday present for my cousin, but her reaction was too different from what I had expected. While this strange phenomenon was happening, Tomomi smiled and said with a friendly smile, "I'm glad you're here.

In other words, you want me to help you choose a present for Ms. Natsume, don't you?

Oh, yeah. That's what it means.

"How could you make such a big mistake of forgetting to give your sweet, sweet cousin a gift on her birthday, and then ask for someone else's help?" is a great idea, isn't it?

..... no its what is it sorry"

"Oh, why are you apologizing?"

Not being able to express his true feelings, Akiharu silently looked away from the room.

How can this childhood friend really have such a scary smile?

To say that he is an honor student or that he is trusted by students and teachers is absolutely wrong.

As I regretted my decision to choose her, Tomomi let out a small breath and said, "You know what, Akiharu-kun? Putting aside the fact that it's before the exam, don't you think you should choose your own gift for the girl?"

But you don't know what he wants, and you don't know what would make him happy.

If it's a present from Ms. Natsume, I'm sure she'll be happy with anything from Akihabara-kun, right?

Tomomi's words were all very reasonable and made me feel more and more uncomfortable.

..... I think this may be a problem that I should solve on my own.

I felt like I had made a mistake in the first place by thinking too much about what women would want as a gift, since they might not want something they don't need and I didn't know what they wanted.

At about the same time that Akiharu secretly decides to leave, the two of them are about to leave.

An unexpected third party came in from the side.

Good morning. What are you doing sneaking around in the corner like that?"

Good morning, Ms. Selnia. I see you've arrived at school quite late today.

I took a little time to set my hair," she said. It has left me with little time to enjoy my morning cup of tea.

With that said, Selnia smiles with plenty of room to spare as she strokes her hair, which is always in a fine drill.

However, what he just said sounds somewhat like a lie.

Akiharu guessed that it might be a way to hide the fact that he was studying before the exam, and he was convinced.

It is common for upper division students to act as if they take for granted their efforts and not show it.

Selnia has a strong tendency to do so, and she would never expose her hand to Tomomi, whom she sees as a rival.

..... And if this guy has been studying since this morning, then I'm really no good at being bothered by the gift since yesterday.

There is no doubt that the students are ranked at the bottom of the class, both as students and as human beings, including in the process.

While being aware of this, Akiharu tries to break off the conversation by explaining the situation, thinking that it would be troublesome if Tomomi and Selnia, who have been quarreling over something, start an argument before the examination.

I had a little consultation with Tomomi. It wasn't exactly appropriate before the exam, so I just had to finish.

Consultation? If you need advice, isn't there someone more qualified than Tomomi?

Now, "....."

(alt: 「.....」) (alt: 「.....」) If I say something like that, I'm sure there will be a lot of commotion until homeroom starts, so I'm going to stop this foolish intrusion.

(alt: If I say something like that, it's certain that there will be a lot of noise until homeroom starts, so I'll stop the silly intrusions.) It would be a nuisance to my classmates who are seriously studying for the exam.

Although she felt like she wasn't having enough fun, Akiharu honestly said, "I want to go buy a birthday present for my cousin, so she asked me to go along with her. It's before exams.

My cousin is Ms. Natsume, isn't it?

Before I could finish my argument, the noblewoman nodded her head and, with a confident smile on her face, said, "I'm sorry, but I don't know what to say.

(alt: Before I could finish my statement, the aristocratic daughter nodded to herself, showing a smile brimming with confidence, and said something like this.) It's fine. I'll take you shopping with me.

..... The completely unexpected and out-of-sequence conclusion left Akiharu momentarily at a loss for what to say.

At any rate, after blinking a few times, he looked into Selnia's blue eyes again and said, "..... I'm glad you feel that way, but I'm going today.

(alt: For the time being, after blinking a few times, I looked into Selnia's blue eyes again, and said, "...No, I'm happy, but... I'm going today... ..") It's very sudden. But that's all right.

"No problem?" "No problem, right? Studying for an exam?"

I know that Selnia has been studying a lot for the past few days in order to defeat Tomomi, so I asked her about it.

It's a great offer, but why do you think we didn't consult this guy?

Despite Akiharu's concern, Selnia sniffed a little and said, "Hmph, that's the least of your problems. I study hard on a regular basis, and a few hours in the afternoon won't change the outcome.

..... Does that mean that Ms. Selnia won't make it to the top again?"

No, it's not. Even if you go along with Akiharu's errands, it means that you are still capable of achieving a magnificent result!

Although she yells at Tomomi for going out of her way to say something unnecessary, Selnia does not stay angry, but relaxes her mouth and talks to Akiharu once again.

I would be a little hesitant to give a gift to a total stranger, but I have met Ms. Natsume before, and she is a very nice person. I know of several gifts that would be suitable for her.

That's, which is pretty helpful for me, but"

What is it? You have such a simpering attitude toward my kindness."

Indeed, he is right: it is an unsolicited offer.

I still feel uncomfortable, but I couldn't make the decision on my own, so I decided to consult Tomomi.

If this is the case, there is only one choice to be made.

When Selnia folded her arms and looked at her as if pressing for an answer, Akiharu opened his mouth to thankfully ask her to accompany him and said, "No, there is no need for you to come.

I was so shocked to hear my childhood friend say such an outrageous line right next to me that I kept my mouth shut without saying a word.

..... No, really, what is this black-hearted person trying to say?

Even if they took the liberty of replying with a smiling, honor student smile, it would only lead to an extremely embarrassing situation.

In fact, the look on Selnia's face said, "I'm going to do something nice for you."

The forgiving mood disappeared, and the expression on their faces became stern.

"I don't need"? Why do you have to say such a thing to Tomomi!

As Akiharu watched to see how Tomomi would respond to his opinion, he said, "Because I was the one who asked for your advice. I will support you in choosing a gift.

What? No, but you"

"Oh, I never said no to you, did I?"

Although he put on a composed face, his decision should have been either a rejection or a rejection.

It's only a matter of time before the definitive word comes out, and I can't believe they've given the green light. If anyone can read this turn of events from there, you should probably recommend a trip to the hospital.

(alt: It would have been a matter of time before the decisive words came out, but to think that it would be a shaky OK... If there's someone who can read this development from there, I should recommend going to the hospital.) However, one possibility is that Selnia has taken a bite out of it.

Tomomi's character seems to love messing around with that drill even more than her rivals, so she may have decided to cut down on her precious study time just to play with Selnia.

..... If that's the case, how bad can this childhood friend be?

While Akiharu was torn between the impossible choice of whether to be appalled or to pretend to be someone else to escape reality, the conversation between the two of them continued.

I was asked to go, so I hope you will study hard for the exam. You've been promising to take first place this time around, so you might as well increase your chances of making it happen.

..... You're speaking from way above your pay grade again.! Wouldn't Tomomi-san be better off, as usual, to stay in her cave like a hibernating snake and study?"

No, no, no, I have a lot of experience. Even if I have fun for a day or two, it won't be a handicap of any kind.

"Handicap?"? Have you forgotten how you finished behind me in the gymnastic festival? Do you forget that you, Miss Selnia, have never outscored me in an exam since middle school?

If that's the case, it's as if the results of your next exam have already been announced.

".....!"

(alt: 「T.....!」) Selnia, apparently deeply offended, blushes and glares at Tomomi intensely.

Unfortunately, Akiharu does not understand the nerves of his childhood friend who accepts his gaze with a cool smile.

It's supposed to be damaging enough to cause a slight stomach upset.

I couldn't keep up with the two of them who were creating such an awkward atmosphere early in the morning, and I was praying that the chime would ring and I would be forced to leave early.

Who are you going shopping with, me or Ms. Selnia?"

They both turn to me at about the same time and say something like that.

You were supposed to be at each other's throats a second ago, and yet your breathing seems to be in sync.

And they both know what will happen if they don't choose you, don't they?"

As for Akiharu, it is difficult to choose either of the two.

Why would anyone want to take on such a troublesome role at such an important time before an exam?

It would be normal to say, "Well, we'll leave it to you."

It may be that mutual rivalry makes them want to play a role even though they know it is to their detriment.

I appreciate it, but it is also somewhat annoying.

I believe that the spirit of mutual respect should be demonstrated now more than ever.

But in reality, with both of their gazes and silent spears piercing his body, Akiharu couldn't look either of them in the eye, "Hey, you know, I think it would be better if you just gave me some advice right here."

(alt: However, in reality, the gazes of the two men and the silent spears were piercing through his body, so Akiharu couldn't look straight into either eye, and said, "Well, um, what the hell... As for me, I feel like it would be nice to just give you some advice here, but...") Oh, you can't do that. You can't do that. You don't know what women are thinking and you don't have a good sense of humor.

It's an impossible choice. It's time you understood your own size, okay?"

"....."

I wonder why I'm being so shredded.

Funny, I thought it was a better choice.

And even if he doesn't understand women's feelings, he does have a sensitive heart, so why can't he be a little more careful with what he says? It seems unlikely that such a small request will be granted, and it seems impossible to wait until the time is up.

Anyone could tell by Tomomi's smile and Selnia's eyes.

I'd rather you tell me the magic line that will make this situation go away.

He's not in a hurry, but he's feeling this pressure and a sense of unwillingness that makes his stomach clench, and he wants to get out of this as soon as possible, so he can barely think straight.

..... It was only after I made the suggestion that I realized it was probably the worst thing I could have said.

What am I saying that even a little bit of thought would reveal?

They said, "That's a wonderful proposal!"

There's no reason to say that. And even if they do say yes, if that happens, Tomomi and Selnia and I will meet after school today to discuss it. In her disgusted imagination, Akiharu says, "That was just a moment of indecision.

(alt: There's no reason to say that... and if by any chance it's okay, then Tomomi and Selnia will be the three of us after school today. I was in a daze.') And when I tried to withdraw, he said, "..... well, I don't really mind, do you? Although I do feel a little sorry for Ms. Selnia who is being compared to you.

Oh, I'm the one who should be saying that. It's obvious that this will only cause Tomomi's aesthetic sense to be questioned.

I'm sure you're not very good at jokes, are you, Ms. Selnia? You don't make people laugh, they laugh at you, don't you?

I hope you're in a good mood and can keep smiling until the end.

(alt: "It would be nice if you could keep smiling until the end...!") Before they could pretend it wasn't there, they got very excited.

..... This is no good.

Now, "I guess I'll just leave it at that.

That said, it probably doesn't change the conclusion.

And yet, they must be subjected to the contradictory assault of elegant invective until their spirits are shattered.

In a situation where both of them were smiling, but not smiling at all, Akiharu was having regrets about his own imprudence, and his cheeks were pulled tight. With the oracle's prediction that this afternoon would be absolutely stormy, he wanted to leave early right now because of the headache and dizziness.

(alt: In the situation where both of them were smiling but couldn't smile at all, Akiharu regretted his carelessness and twitched his cheeks... Hearing the oracle's prediction that this afternoon would definitely be rough, he immediately felt a headache and dizziness. I wanted to leave early because of this.) After a depressing morning of classes and lunch, it was finally time to get back to school.

Before homeroom begins, "change your clothes and meet me at the front gate at 2:00 p.m."

The arrangement was made so that Akiharu would follow it maturely.

However, the fact that we were not even asked for our opinion, let alone to refute it, means that we are no longer in a position to be the initiator.

Sighing at the feeling that the world had left her behind, she changed into a pair of slouchy cargo pants and black trainers with a fur mod coat over them, and met them at the main gate where they were to meet..... It was Akiharu, not Tomomi or Selnia, who made the first call.

"....., are you guys going to a party somewhere?"

It should not be surprising that you would want to say such a thing.

Neither of them was dressed in casual clothes.

Tomomi is wearing a light pink dress, black tights, and a white pea coat, which is pretty normal, but she is wearing an unusual necklace and pin-heeled boots.

Selnia was wearing a patterned shirt with an open bosom and a mini tight skirt in this cold weather.

The long coat looks warm, but I'm pretty sure it's mink.

When I asked him the price, he said, "What section chief's salary is that?"

The amount of money must make you want to say, "I'm so happy to have this.

Why are both of you wearing such fancy clothes?

Maybe the shopping destination is a special store only celebrities can enter? As Akiharu frowns in wonder and uncertainty, Tomomi smiles her usual graceful smile, "Nothing out of the ordinary, right? Ms. Selnia may be a bit flashy, but..."

"Oh, but I'm trying to be modest to accommodate Tomomi."

..... No, they're both so obviously flamboyant that I'm floating in the air with them."

In fact, even as I do this, I can feel the sense of being out of place quite intensely.

If the scenery of Hakuryo Ling were to change to a normal downtown area, the two young ladies would stand out so much that people would think that I, in my simple, cheap clothes, was a baggage handler or something.

However, there is no time to change clothes, and it is unlikely that these two egomaniacs would compromise their coordination just because I asked them for a little help.

So Akiharu could only breathe a sigh of resignation and say, "I'm sorry.

(alt: So Akiharu had no choice but to let out a sigh of resignation and say,) Well, never mind. Let's go early and come back early."

I had already asked Tomomi to turn the car around for me, and it should only take me about an hour to buy a birthday present.

You just have to be patient during that time and be careful not to start a fight when you are on the move. No, well, I think that's the biggest problem.

(alt: All you have to do is endure it, and after that, if you're careful not to start a fight while you're on the move... No, well, I think that's the biggest problem.) So, where are you going? Is Sunohara okay?"

No, let's make it a town of Onokura. There are department stores and shopping malls there, so you won't have any trouble finding something to choose from.

Yes, that's right. That's fine with me.

I understand. Then let's go.

He would have liked to be closer to Sunohara, but of course he did not say anything about it and started walking.

We don't want to make waves, and we are in the position of asking them to come along with us.

If they say so, I have nothing to complain about.

The only problem is that I'm worried that the two of them will have their usual run-ins during the hour it takes to get there. I have a precautionary plan for this.

(alt: The only problem is that the two of us will fight each other during the short hour it takes to move, but... I've prepared a preventative measure for this.) While walking, Akiharu lightly lifted his handbag and said, "It's before the exam, so I'm going to study seriously during the trip, is that OK? I've brought an English vocabulary book and some simple problem sets, so if you need anything, I'll lend them to you."

Well, is very well prepared for an Akiharu-kun.

I'm surprised you didn't mention it. I'm going to borrow something for a change."

I would get carsick, so I will listen to the CD of the English text I brought with me.

Okay, success.

At least we will be able to spend our time without any trouble during the trip.

The most important thing to remember is that the best way to get the most out of your home is to make sure that you have a good quality home furnishings and that it is well maintained. I can help you with that.

"..... huh?"

Tomomi's sudden offer makes him look back at her with a broken down half-smile, an expression that is too subtle to be real.

Then, there was a smiling face, but what was it that made me feel a little grumpy?

When I was in elementary school, three of us took turns playing a two-player game, and my friend, who could only watch for so long because it was so hard to get a turn, had a face similar to this one.

I don't think I did anything to offend Tomomi but I don't know.

(alt: I don't think I did anything to offend Tomomi, but I'm not sure.) And while it's true that I failed my last final exam, it was because I made a mistake in filling out the form, not because I wasn't good enough.

(alt: Also, it's true that I got a bad mark on the final exam last time, but that was due to a mistake in the entry, and it wasn't my lack of ability...") No matter what the reason may be, the fact remains that you failed. Since it will be reflected in your grade, you might as well make up for it on the next exam, right?"

"....., that's, well,, that's true, but"

(alt: ".....Well, well.....that's right.....") I think this is probably a very generous offer. Tomomi is not only a good student, but also a good teacher.

The reason why Akiharu is so reluctant to do so is because he knows his childhood friend's personality.

I can't help but wonder if there is something behind this.

"If you want to teach, then I'll teach you real English."

"Oh, is that Selnia? I believe you scored lower than I did on the last final exam and the most recent quiz?"

I'm sure that was due to a simple misspelling. First of all, I definitely pronounce it better than you do!"

(alt: "Oh, that was caused by a simple spelling mistake... First of all, I'm definitely better at pronunciation!?") There is a listening exam but no speaking exam, so that can be a topic for another time. Besides, shouldn't you memorize as many mathematical formulas as you can?

"..... Damn"

(alt: "... Kuh...!") Selnia bites her lip in frustration at the provocative words, but is unable to say anything back.

And Akiharu cannot interfere.

I am very curious as to why my opinion is not sought from the beginning.

This was our plan to prevent the air condition from deteriorating even a little before the start of the race.

Did I do something wrong in a previous life? I have no idea why my childhood friend is so tense, but there is one thing that has become clear to me:

The only thing that awaits us is an unfortunate future in which we will not have even a second to relax during our journey.

Tomomi Saikei thought that while there are good reasons for people to be in a good mood and bad mood, there are more reasons for people to be in a bad mood.

Because I am in a very bad mood right now.

There are many reasons.

She told me that she was invited to this party in the first place because she was looking for a birthday present for her cousin, that Selnia was coming with her, that Selnia was beautifully dressed, and that Akiharu was completely oblivious to my feelings.

Glancing at her childhood friend who is still in the car reviewing her notes on the test, Tomomi is forced to hold back her blubbering.

I don't care if we shop together, what on earth are you thinking of giving a present to a girl of her age?

They probably have no idea what they are doing.

"I think I know what people my age will like."

I think they must have only been looking at the "what is the point of this?"

If it's just a cousin, the biggest problem is that she's a girl who's very direct in expressing how much she likes you.

From Akiharu's reaction, "I don't dislike her, and I don't feel bad that she likes me.

I guess they have already sorted out their feelings by about 3 months or so.

Therefore, there should be no reason to choose an item for confession.

Even though we know this, there is always this coiled feeling of not being able to cleanly separate and throw away

So, in this way, he is in a bad mood, even though he hides it on the surface.

Tomomi secretly sighs as she watches Selnia, who unlike herself does not try to hide her bad mood, roughly wind up her math reference book.

..... As I thought when she asked me to go shopping with her in the morning, I feel that the distance between her and Akiharu is a little different than before.

Although they were aware of it from the beginning, they may have become aware of it.

I know Selnia will deny it if I tell her, but I know that she is in love with Akiharu, with whom she is constantly fighting.

Given Selnia's personality, I don't think she would just let things happen as they come.

It should not be like today, where you just come in and talk about it, but you should be proactive.

If you are not doing so, does that mean you are still not self-aware enough?

Or - Have you become aware of it, but are still trying to decide what to do about it?

Either way, it is just a matter of time.

..... This means that I have very little time left.

I like Akiharu, but that doesn't mean I can answer immediately if I want to be in a relationship with him.

However, I do not want Akiharu to go out with Selnia or anyone else.

I am not sure which way to go, and I think I am in the middle of the road.

(alt: I'm kind of in the middle of nowhere, I think.) I am frustrated with myself, and I am also a little impatient.

However, it is not a problem that can be solved by getting distracted, nor is it something that can be resolved by careful consideration.

The only thing Tomomi could do was to spend more time with Akiharu and try to understand what he wanted to do, while hiding her moods.

I arrived in Onokura in an awkward mood and found the town in the same Christmas mood as Sunohara, where I had been a few days earlier.

In such a situation, walking around with two beautiful women must be a win-win situation.

At least, it should appear that way.

However, Akiharu, who was feeling so narrow-minded that he wanted to be replaced immediately if there was someone he envied, muttered with a grave expression inside the glamorous department store.

"So you've come this far with, but what are you going to buy?"

I could have at least decided that in the car, but the awkward atmosphere prevented me from saying so myself, and I haven't heard anything so far.

Naturally, both Tomomi and Selnia have their own plans and go straight to the elevator without any hesitation, "I recommend a scarf. "I would recommend a scarf, since sizes are not a problem and there should be a good selection for the season.

Oh, what a coincidence. I was thinking of using it as a warm-up gear too. I was thinking of using it as a warm-weather item, but not as a scarf, but as a pair of gloves.

They look at each other with a fearless smile and say I'm really scared now, so please don't do that.

The elevator is starting to look like a door to the jail.

Akiharu silently rode the elevator to the fourth floor, following Tomomi and the others in the mood of a calf being sold.

It is one of the three floors of the women's apparel department, which is completely out of the reach of high school boys, so they would never see the products on the shelves unless they had the opportunity to do so.

So, taking advantage of the opportunity, she follows the two ahead of her and looks around at the items on display. Akiharu stops dead in her tracks when she realizes a very awkward fact.

(alt: So, on this occasion, while following the two people ahead of them, looking restlessly at the things on display... Akiharu, knowing a very embarrassing fact, involuntarily stops.) "Hey, Akibei! What are you doing so carelessly when it's your business?

Selnia immediately yells at me, but that doesn't mean I can't go along with her.

Because, around Selnia, who put her hand on her hip, and Tomomi, who looked around as if she had noticed something, there was a "No, I mean, there is a lot of resistance to go through there"

Resistance? What the hell are you talking about?

Well, it can't be helped. It is a place where a boy wandering about might be reported.

Tomomi, who understood the situation, agreed with me, but her voice sounded not only sympathetic but also slightly amused.

Selnia, after raising her eyebrows once, finally seems to notice and looks at the mannequin next to her.

The slender mannequins that serve as models for the fitting are almost always coated to reveal the skin, which, to be frank, only hides the breasts and crotch.

In other words, Tomomi and her friends are right in the middle of the lingerie department It would be embarrassing to pass through there, so we would like to refrain from doing so by all means.

And yet, Selnia looks at me with a weird look in her eyes and says, "What do you care about such trivial things? If it's not personal, it's just a commodity.

He said something like that with a pout on his lips.

This woman has no understanding of the male mind at her age.

The "mere commodity."

He has no idea how difficult it is for us to deal with.

But it is also quite difficult to explain.

..... Because talking about lingerie is perverted in itself.

It is on the level of torture.

I can only hope that she realizes this, but the look in Selnia's eyes as she folds her arms and looks at me says, "Don't dawdle, get on with it."

It seems as if they are unable to communicate with each other.

As Akiharu looked around to see if there was a route that would allow him to avoid going through a place as dangerous as a minefield, he asked, "Hmmm,, are you really that interested in the lingerie department?"

Huh? Wrong, that's not what I meant!

When Tomomi makes an outrageously mistaken statement, he panics and denies everything.

What is this false accusation that if you find smoke and go to the scene of the fire, you will be treated as an arsonist?

In addition, Selnia's expression was distorted in blatant disgust

How little credit do you have?

In a situation that made me want to cry in many ways, Akiharu waved his hand to the side as if desperately appealing that he was wrong, "It's not like that, I was simply looking at the whole floor to see if I could bypass it, and I didn't have any intention like Tomomi said."

Oh, it's okay. You don't have to make such excuses, it's too late now."

"Not an excuse, but seriously,, what the heck is this after all this time? What's my reputation in your mind?"

If you want, I can go into detail, but I don't think it would be in Akiharu's best interest to do so in such a public place.

"....."

I knew just how far down I was from the bottom, and I couldn't bring myself to ask any more in-depth questions.

This kind of treatment from a childhood friend should not be normal.

There seemed to be no room for persuasion, and my heart began to feel colder than if I had been in a dingy harbor in the middle of the night.

Holding back the shock of being abducted, Akiharu silently looked for an emergency escape route and heard, "Oh? Oh, by the way, this underwear is the same brand as the one worn by Ms. Selnia, isn't it?"

..... Information that seems inaudible, but that you want to ignore, is jumping into your ears.

Tomomi turns behind the mannequin to check the tag, while Selnia picks up a bra nearby. Oh my god, what is this embarrassing sight...! Oh, my God, what is the meaning of this embarrassing sight? They don't seem to mind at all, but as a man, I'm in such a bad situation that I want to leave as soon as possible.

I don't know why it makes me so uncomfortable, but the thought of a classmate, even a close female friend, checking my underwear is very bad for my mental health.

(alt: I don't know why I can't stay here anymore, but seeing a classmate, and a close girl, checking her underwear is really bad for my mental health.) is certainly my favorite brand, but you know better than that, don't you?"

I'm curious about that. The design is so beautiful for its size that it stands out. At first I thought there might be something in it to increase the volume.

(alt: "I'm curious about that. The design is beautiful for that size, so it stands out...At first, I thought they might have added something to increase the amount.") Do you realize how much you're talking out of your ass at?

I am sure that with his growth and development since middle school, one would be skeptical. Because back then, I was more mature than Shikikagami.

Tomomi and her friends, who don't understand the delicate male mind, are getting more and more heated in their conversation, and I really want to give them a break.

It should not be surprising that you feel the urge to turn around and leave this place right now.

However, it was clear that if he ran away, he would face terrible consequences later, so while Akiharu was unable to make a move, the conversations he was hearing began to take a strange turn.

"— Well, let's see which one of us has the best sense of style. I think it's a good idea to compare the two, but I don't think there's any point in comparing them.

(alt: "—It's a great deal, so are you going to have a match here to see which one has better sense? It's a prelude to choosing a present, so... of course, I don't think there's much to compare.") I'm sure you'll be able to find a way to get the job done, but I'm not going to turn my back on a game that I've been challenged to!

(alt: "As always, you say a lot... It's fine, this Selnia = Iori = Flameheart, I won't turn my back on you and refuse to fight!") I think we should choose the best lingerie for Ms. Natsume, since that's what we are here for. I'll just have to tolerate a slight discrepancy in size."

I don't mind. "It's not that he's a somewhat controversial figure, but there is a third-party judge."

Just as he was timing his escape, he heard this voice and stood still and then looked at the two men, pointing fearfully at himself.

Tomomi and Selnia, who had been in the mood to fight on their own, nodded their heads at the same time, as if it was only natural.

So I feel like shouting, "Why are you guys so friendly all the time?

But more important than this is the crisis that is now looming.

Just walking through a lingerie department is embarrassing and emotionally damaging, and then to have to go along with someone picking out lingerie, much less judging it.! If I had known this was going to happen, I would have chosen to pass quickly and maturely, but it's too late.

(alt: Just passing through the underwear department is embarrassing and hurts your heart. If I had known that this would happen, I would have chosen to pass quietly and quickly, but it's too late.) I was tempted to suspect that this was a premeditated psychological attack, but neither of them was looking at me, and their gazes were locked together with the force of sparks flying, as if they were in the midst of a bachi-bachi welding process.

There is no doubt about it, this is a real fight.

Akiharu, who was caught in the middle of it all, said, "Wait for me.

I'll only have one shot at Shall we say anything as long as it's underwear?"

I think that's reasonable. It's not something that will take too much time, so we'll decide within the next ten minutes and bring it here.

Yes, I'm fine with that. I'll see you later."

With that, Tomomi turns on her heel and disappears to the far end of the floor.

Selnia begins to look at the shelves displaying her favorite brands, which she has just been talking about.

And as for Akiharu, who was left behind, she didn't have the courage to run away now.

In order to stay out of the danger zone for the allotted time, we decided to take shelter on a bench near the elevator platform.

After an awkward period of time, Akiharu, who had become so exhausted that her mental strength had been drained just by waiting, reluctantly headed for the lingerie department.

I was fine with the two girls earlier, but if I went solo, I would have been seen as a full-fledged pervert, and I would have walked too fast.

While sitting on the bench, I had already made up my mind, but the air in the lingerie department was still too much for me.

I am so embarrassed and embarrassed that I feel as if I am being sprayed with a poison that is only effective against men.

If it were Todoroki, he would be shouting with joy, and if it were Daikichi, he would be holding a pair of underwear in his hand and talking about design.

I would like to think that it is rather a proof of health, since it is a place where the unfortunate ones are able to thrive.

Tomomi and Selnia were already at the same spot, and they were staring at us.

It seems that everyone except me, the judge, has already prepared for the event.

Does that mean don't keep them waiting too long?

However, running to the lingerie counter is a very strange thing for a person to do, so Akiharu did not change his pace, but went to them and said, "..... Sorry, I'm late.

As a matter of course, he apologized for being a loser.

Because it can't be helped.

I'm not late, and I'm sure it has nothing to do with the competition itself, but there's no way I can say that.

(alt: I'm not late, and in the first place, this match itself is irrelevant, but there's no way I can say that.) I felt as if I was becoming a smaller and smaller person, and while feeling slightly depressed, I put my lowered head back down and looked at them, both of them seemed to be more focused on the competition than on Akiharu. "Well, what did you choose, Ms. Selnia? The result seems obvious, but it's interesting.

Oh, you already admit that I won, don't you? But, you know, a non-winner is not a hobby of mine, right?"

Rest assured, it won't turn out the way Ms. Selnia wants it to.

I was watching them with their smiling faces and challenging smiles, and I thought to myself, "Ah, there are so many smiling exchanges in the world that are far from peaceful."

The "I'm not sure I can do it" feeling.

(alt: It makes me think.) There are no customers around, but if we keep going at this pace, we are bound to attract onlookers before long.

One of the clerks was already looking at us with interest while keeping his distance.

If a new third party were to join the game, the awkwardness would double, so Akiharu opened his mouth to quickly put an end to this unknown game.

I'm not sure which way to look at it. Tomomi's?

I'm going to go to to see mine on display, so I'll start with Selnia's.? You know, that pair of underwear you're holding in your hand?

Tomomi is right, there was a folded pair of underwear in Selnia's hand,..... and even though it was really just a piece of cloth, why did it seem so foreign to her when she knew what it was for?

Maybe it's just an overactive adolescent mindset, but even if that's the case, I don't know how to deal with it.

(alt: Maybe it's just the excessive awareness that's unique to adolescence, but even if that's the case, I don't know how to deal with it.) In addition, he said, "I chose this one! The simple design and the little ribbon accents are perfect for a lovely person like Ms. Natsume, don't you think?"

What kind of situation is it to have your underwear spread out in front of you with such enthusiasm and to be asked for your opinion?

The pale lemon yellow, simple design of the lingerie, except for the edging, may suit Natsume, but when I imagine her wearing it, I find it difficult to judge her.

(alt: It's true that a pale lemon-yellow underwear with a simple design other than the edging would look good on Natsume, but... but as soon as you imagine wearing it, it's hard to judge.) It's like a slight perversion to have such an image in your mind.

And to be asked to share my impressions is mild torture.

Selnia was holding the top and bottom of her underwear with a confident expression on her face, and Akiharu was silent, not knowing how to respond, "..... Hmmm

Tomomi, who had been observing the scene intently, let out a voice that sounded a little like she was impressed.

Since she reacts this way, it must be something not bad at least from a woman's point of view. How's it going? Tomomi, could you have chosen a more flattering lingerie?"

It's a much better design than I expected, but that doesn't change my opinion of its superiority. I'm sure Akiharu-kun will prove it.

(alt: "It's a much better design than I expected, but even so, my dominance is unshakable. Akiharu-kun will prove it.") No, please don't swing it this way.

Instantly, Selnia comes glaring at me.

I want you to understand who made the problematic comments.

However, rather than trying to persuade her, he thought it would be better to quickly move on to the next step, so he pretended not to notice her gaze and spoke to Tomomi.

So, which one did you pick?"

Yes, this way. Follow me.

As she said this, she moved toward the back of the room, so Akiharu closed her eyes, took a deep breath, made up her mind, and stepped into the space filled with underwear.

Even though I try to avoid looking as much as possible, I can feel my face redden at the sight of the multicolored undergarments that keep popping into my vision.

I was in the mood to just disappear from this world, but I reached the far end of the corner occupied by some brand.

There are a number of lingerie displays on the walls, but they have a slightly different atmosphere and shape than the other places.

It is not too revealing, or it doesn't look too much like underwear.

In front of Akiharu, who tilted her head, Tomomi indicated a camisole-like item displayed on the far right with her hand and said, "I chose this babydoll. I also chose the shorts, but this will be the main one.

..... is"

Selnia's mouth twists slightly, as if she had imagined in her mind's eye the image she had dressed the jujube in.

You look a little frustrated, so I guess you thought it wasn't so bad.

I've never heard of baby dolls before, but I guess you could classify them as slips.

Except for the fact that the fabric is thin and a bit see-through, and the length may or may not reach the inseam, it looks like it could be worn outside during the summer months.

Basically, the fabric is white, with a large ribbon at the bust, and the frills are pink and cute. The best part is that it's not as embarrassing to look at as the undergarments and top and bottom sets I mentioned earlier, which I personally think is a high point.

(alt: Basically, it's mostly made of white fabric, with a large ribbon on the chest, and the frills are pink and cute... Above all, it's embarrassing to look at compared to the top and bottom set of the trousers and underwear I mentioned earlier. Not having it is a high point for me personally.)



..... Well, the problem is that when I imagine the jujube wearing it, I want to scratch my head in shame, not to mention judge it.

I want to get out of this situation as soon as possible, and I don't want to spend time worrying about it, and to top it off, the stares from the two people who are forcing me to make a decision are painful.

So, almost without thinking, I said, "Well, I think Tomomi's choice is the better one."

The moment he said this, their expressions changed drastically in contrast.

Tomomi's smile deepens, and the joy of victory in her eyes, well, it's okay, but Selnia, whose eyes are a mixture of frustration and anger, comes up to me with a glare and says, "Hey, what do you mean? If you don't explain to me, I'm not going to understand... No, if you don't explain to me, I'm going to hurt you!"

She extends her index finger and sticks it right in front of Akiharu's eyes.

I don't care what you have to say, but please don't tell me that you still have your underwear in your hand.

I want to look away, but I can't because I don't know what kind of attack I will get if I do that in front of a raging drill.

(alt: It makes me want to look away, but I can't because I don't know what kind of attack will come if I do that in front of a rough drill.) While trying as much as possible not to look at the object protruding from Selnia's hand, Akiharu was careful not to give her any more unnecessary stimulus and searched for a word. So, instead of normal lingerie, I think Tomomi's choice of baby doll might fit her better.

..... ツ.....」

Selnia clenched her back teeth so hard you could almost hear them chattering at our argument, but no vigorous protest came.

Apparently, they weren't far off the mark.

Despite her frustration, Selnia exhaled slowly, as if trying to hold back, and then said, "..... I have no choice. I was also worried about the discrepancy between my noble taste and Akiharu's, since I chose it based on his own viewpoint. I'll make sure to adjust it brilliantly so that I won't make the same mistake in the real show.

I mutter this to myself and lower my arm, which was pointed this way.

Seeing this, Akiharu also let out a small breath.

Thank goodness it didn't turn out to be a riot that brought in employees.

If that happens, no matter how it happened, I'll say, "Did you do it?"

It's a social death flag, because it's going to make people feel like "I'm not a good person.

Yes, that's right, it can't be helped. It is simply because Akiharu-kun is more interested in fetishism that shows through his bare skin than normal underwear.

..... My childhood friend keeps saying bad things about me, but I ignore it.

If we do this, for some reason, we will be punished several times over.

..... or rather, the fact that she wears nothing under that babydoll is a shocking fact.

Since shorts were prepared, the only thing not worn is the top, but is no good. If you imagine it badly, you might end up in serious trouble.

I've been thinking about getting out of the lingerie department as soon as possible," she said. Can I have a moment of your time?"

Yeah?" What, you want to talk, go over there and talk first."

I found some lingerie that I'm interested in, and I'd like to buy some for my own personal use. It won't take long, so can you wait just a minute?"

"Nah"

This development, which may have come naturally as a result of window shopping, still makes Akiharu doubt his own ears.

I've already suffered enough, and now they want me to wait for more.

I wonder if he was so embarrassed that he might die. There was no way she could nod to such an offer, and Akiharu was determined to reject it, "— — Then there are a couple of things I would like to look at too. I'm only interested in the feeling of trying it on, so it won't take too much time."

I'm going to go to "..... What? You too?

No one would have expected a follow-up comment from Selnia.

When I turned around in a hurry to look at the noblewoman who had gone and made the headwind worse, her gaze was already on the corner she wanted to and there was no way I could refuse her.

If it was just a normal outfit, Akiharu would have given her the OK, but the real gift selection would have to wait.

I had them come with me before the exam, and I didn't want to pester them too strongly.

So, Akiharu said with a feeling of resignation as he fingered the safety pin in his right ear.
..... Okay, I'll be as brief as I can.

Yeah, it won't cost much.

I don't need enough time. You just need to take a look around and it won't take long.

Does this driller not understand what it leads to for a man to browse the lingerie department?
The two options are to call the police or take him in.

After he let out a sigh of relief, Akiharu said, "I'll wait for you here. Please give me a call when you're done.

Tomomi and Selnia immediately head to their respective corners.

With the two gone, Akiharu looked around while scratching his head, wondering what to do.
..... And then he realized.

(alt: With the two of them gone, Akiharu scratched his head and looked around...and then he noticed something.) Wait here in the back of the lingerie department? And all by yourself, with no one around you? "..... wow not here"

If you try to imagine it, you can only see the stench of crime in the composition.

Moreover, the scene of him being taken away from the scene comes into the picture, and Akiharu hurriedly leaves the scene.

In this situation, it would be a thousand times better to stay with one or the other.

There is no other way to save ourselves except to withdraw from the market.

It's just a misunderstanding, and even if they call security, I'm sure I can talk them out of it, but I'm sure the rumors will spread at the speed of sound to Hakuryo, and finally the label of pervert will become impossible to remove.! Even though I want to meet up with one of them right away, it's times like this when I can't find the blonde who is supposed to stand out right away.

(alt: It's a misunderstanding, so even if you call the guards, you'll probably be able to somehow manage it if you persuade them, but surely the rumors will spread faster than the speed of sound in the White Mausoleum, and the perverted label will finally stop peeling off...! Even though I want to join one of them immediately, I can't find the blond hair that should stand out only at times like this.) It makes me want to say, "Why are they making such big drills?

However, she was lucky enough to spot Tomomi passing by the shelves, so Akiharu hurriedly went to the shelves.

I think the fact that you see Mr. Black-hearted as an angel is proof that you are being driven into a corner.

Tomomi, who was already holding a pair of underwear in her hand, immediately noticed me and looked around to see what was going on before opening her mouth.

What's going on? Weren't you supposed to be waiting for me over there?"

No, it's more like, I won't bother you, I just want you to stay with me.

(alt: "No, I don't want to get in your way, so why don't you stay with me...") I'm sure that's what you mean. I'm sure that if Akiharu were alone, she would be seen as a great prowler, right? It must be quite inappropriate to talk to her like this, though.

They want to say what they want to say, but I can't argue with them because they have the facts exactly right.

So Akiharu held back, maybe even a little, but he built a smile and said, "Well, just like that, can't you just be my companion? "Well, we're here together, after all.

I don't mind, but"

Tomomi then glanced from the bra in the line to us and said, "..... Shouldn't you have gone with Miss Selnia?"

Is ".....? Why?"

I was so surprised when he suddenly said something I didn't understand that I couldn't help but listen back to him.

I don't want to say that it didn't matter either way because if I answered, I would receive unreasonable anger, but since Tomomi was the one who found it, I don't want to be asked such a question.

Well, it may be necessary to pacify Selnia, but Tomomi is the one who should be afraid if she really gets angry.

In this respect, this choice should be the right one.

While Akiharu was thinking about this, Tomomi stared at him with a cold expression and said, "..... Did you imagine something rude just now?"

An Esper-like comment that sent a chill down my spine flew.

..... That's ridiculous. On what basis?

There is no evidence. It was just a random thought.

And then he says, "Well, it's okay if you're not."

Tomomi continues, "I am not different at all.

If there were a pulse reading anywhere on the display, you would know instantly because your heart is racing from being hit by the pinpoint.

Fortunately, Tomomi did not ask any further questions and began to concentrate on checking the underwear on the shelves.

Although it is a relief for Akiharu that people are paying more attention to shopping, it makes him feel uncomfortable.

What kind of situation is it to look at lingerie together when you are not in a relationship?

Tomomi doesn't seem to be bothered by it, which makes me think that she is just being overly self-conscious.

While Akiharu was fidgeting, not knowing where to look, Tomomi suddenly called out to him.

"Hey, Autumn Sun? We were just talking about what kind of lingerie would suit Ms. Natsume, right?

..... Oh, yeah. I honestly don't want to remember.

(alt: "... Ah, yeah. To be honest, I don't want to remember.") Tomomi smiled at me when I told her that she would understand without having to tell her why.

It may look pretty depending on the person who sees it, but I, who know the traumamaker side of her, cannot accept it honestly.

When Akiharu was concerned that this might not be a very pleasant trend, Tomomi turned around and asked, "So, this lingerie, which one do you think suits me better?"

Tëm, you have a pair of underwear of different colors in your hands, and you ask me such a ridiculous question.

The blow was so stunning, both visually and audibly, that Akiharu involuntarily took a step back.

I would rather praise myself for only taking one step.

I want to get out of here as fast as I can.

The reason I didn't take the plunge was that I had plans to have him stay with me afterwards. If not, she immediately turns away from the smiling Tomomi.

I don't know what my childhood friend is thinking as she presses me to make a choice with a beaming, unclouded smile, but I do know that there is nothing I can do without an answer.

(alt: I don't know what my childhood friend is thinking as he presses me to make a choice with a smile and an unclouded smile, but I know that if I don't answer, there's nothing I can do about it.) Or perhaps I should say that if you don't answer the question, you don't know what you will face.

Akiharu reluctantly looks at Tomomi's underwear and ignores the sensation of a slight rise in body temperature, as if she were admiring a nude painting or a statue of a goddess.

The pure white one has an embroidered floral pattern, while the light crimson one has only an embellished border.

But the similar impression may be due to the same designer. There is a limit to how seriously we can think about this.

(alt: However, it may be the same designer who gives me a similar impression... There is a limit to how seriously I can think about it.) My face is starting to get hot.

Tomomi looked away from Akiharu, who had looked away enough, and Tomomi moved in closer, shaking both hands as if to appeal to him.

Which one do you think is better? Oh, and be sure to give a reason. We don't want you to say it's just a random thought or just for the sake of it.

What a selfish

So, what do you think?

After all, they were not willing to give up without an answer.

It was no use, Akiharu held back his embarrassment and said, "..... Which one is it, the white one? I'm sure you'll be able to find a way to get a good deal on a new one.

If I'm wrong, "If you wear it, maybe it will cure you of your blackness a little."

I don't say that.

I love myself so much.

..... Whatever it is, a high school boy talking about lingerie is such a disgrace that if it was recorded, I would die trying to erase the data, right?

I felt as if something important to me as a human being was being scraped away while we talked.

I would like to let out a big sigh, but I'm sure I'll be blamed by the black-hearted person who misunderstood my meaning, so I'll hold back.

(alt: I want to let out a big sigh, but if I do that, I'll be blamed by Mr. Hariguro for misunderstanding the meaning, so I'll endure it.) Tomomi looked at the white underwear again and nodded her head.

"Hmmm..... Autumn Sun must prefer it this way."

Did you even listen to a word I said? I meant the one that suits you best with my opinion, right?"

This is the kind of thing that shows your taste," he said. If it had been a more extreme race, you would have chosen it, no doubt.

"....., that's ridiculous."

(alt: "...that's stupid") Although I try to deny it, I'm not really confident about it.

I'd much rather have a clearly revealing and sexy design than a slightly different pattern or a slightly different color, so I'm sure I'll be happy.

(alt: After all, rather than having a slightly different pattern or a slightly different color, it's decided that I'd be happier with a sexy style that reveals a lot more clearly.) I'll just try this on for a minute. I'm going to try this on for five more minutes, okay?"

..... Oh, ok, ok, ok. Take your time trying it on. I'll see you later.

I'm not going to tell you what to expect. I'll see you later."

Tomomi then puts the light red underwear back on the rack, grabs two pairs with her original ones, and walks into the nearby fitting room.

I was now alone again, but it was not a good idea to stand there and wait near the fitting room.

(alt: Now that I'm alone again, it's a bad idea to stand by the fitting room and wait.) If you are mistaken for a voyeur or a peeping tom, you can't complain too much.

Now let's see what can do about it.

When Akiharu was thinking about where to go to, he said, "- - Akiharu? Are you there?"
Yeah?"

I turn around when I am called, but there is no one there.

But the voice is Selnia's, and there is a different dressing room there than the one Tomomi is in.

Thinking that since she was approached from the other side, it was probably okay, Akiharu approached the fitting room and knocked on the door, which had a red "in use" sign on it.

Selnia, right? What's wrong?"

Oh, so you were close by after all. Just as well.

To that, Akiharu said, "What the hell are you talking about?

Before you ask back.

A small click is heard, and the door to the fitting room opens slightly.

Then, through a small opening, Selnia's face and arm peeked out, and she said, "Hey! Hey, aren't you wearing any clothes?"

The left arm gripping the door reveals bare skin, which is visible close to the shoulder. If someone told me I was wearing clothes, I would be tempted to ask them which naked people they recommended.

Selnia smiled teasingly at Akiharu's natural impatience and said, "We're trying on underwear, you know. I'll at least take off my clothes.

No, that's not what I'm saying, but if you're going to open the door, do it before you put it on!"

I don't have a choice, because I don't want to have to do it all over again.

After saying something I don't quite understand, Selnia turns her head back to the other side of the door and says, "Could you get me a cup of this same stuff, just a cup size larger?"

He appeared again and extended his left hand toward us.

..... There was a bright red bra that almost hurt my eyes.

After looking at both of their faces, Akiharu swallowed his spit and asked fearfully, "What do you think of this?"

"Don't tell me you want me to take it?"

I thought I told you so. What kind of a crazy statement is that?"

No, you're the one who's suited! What the hell are you asking me to do?

I couldn't help but yell out, but this should not have been a problem.

I could boast to myself that I was rational enough not to say that I was any kind of a pervert.

Selnia, who had made the outrageous comment, smiled with a hint of dismay and said, "You are, after all, an obedience student and a future butler, aren't you? And yet you say you can't even do this level of spending?"

I'm not sure if it's a "..... thing is a thing" thing. I mean, aren't you ashamed to open the door to the dressing room while you're changing? Or is that kind of revealing a popular hobby among the upper class?"

I'm so sorry, I can't believe it. We have calculated the angle so that you can't see us from your position. As long as you don't try to force me to look in, I'll be fine, and if you try to do so, I'll be able to close the door before the evil hand gets to you.

In response to Selnia's confident words, Akiharu decided to calm down a little and take stock of the current situation.

..... Well, the driller is right, you can't see anything but your face and arms as long as you are standing there, attached to the door.

I would have liked to have had a better view of the fitting rooms from a more horizontal position, but there was no way I could do that.

However, if you are making this much noise, the waiters and other customers on the floor may be able to hear you.

If you are curious about what it is and come to see, you could be mistaken for trying to break into a fitting room at that very moment and die socially.! Worst of all, no matter what happens, the damage is done to us.

(alt: If you were wondering what it was and came to see it... at that moment, you might be misunderstood as trying to break into the fitting room and die socially...! Worst of all, I'm the one who will take the damage no matter what happens.) The longer it goes on, the more dangerous it becomes.

Just as he was about to take a call, thinking he could understand why Selnia's guy had so slickly opened the door, Akiharu realized that he was right.

Door gap in the fitting room.

Inside, seen through the cracks, there are hangers with undressed clothes, but that's not all.

On the back wall, there is a mirror on one side, reflecting the door.

There was a clear image of Selnia standing behind the door, wearing nothing but her shorts.

Is something wrong?

"Oh, no! I didn't do anything!"

I was so caught up in the shocking sight that when someone spoke to me, I acted all suspicious.

..... This is bad, it's too much of a surprise, and it's an act of God, and I'm not supposed to do anything wrong, but if they find out that I can see them, for some reason they're going to treat me like a suspect.! The only way to avoid this is to run away from here or have them close the door, and Akiharu hurriedly thrust out his hand to Selnia before she could realize the cause of his upset, "Okay, I'll get it! It's the one that's a size bigger than this!"

(alt: It's crazy, it's too much of a surprise attack, and it's force majeure. The only way to avoid it was to either run away from here or close the door. Is that the guy above you?!") Yeah, yeah,, it's the brand on the left.

I'll look for it on my own, so you stay inside. There's a couple of customers over there, they'll think something's wrong!

"....., I understand."

(alt: "...I understand.") Although she raised her eyebrows in suspicion, Selnia quietly closed the door to the fitting room after handing the bra over to me.

The fact that he even lied about the arrival of other guests to get through the night makes Akiharu want to sit there with a big breath in his mouth.

The trap is that the sight is not pleasant, but it is connected to a life-shortening happening.

"....., damn, what the heck is?"

When Akiharu put his hand on his knee, which seemed to lose its strength, he noticed a strange sensation on his palm and looked down and was about to fall down in earnest.

There it was, the bright red bra I had received, and to my surprise, it was just a little bit warm.

The warmth of the proof that Selnia had been wearing it earlier made me feel less embarrassed and more like, "..... what am I doing?"

I feel like I want to die lightly.

Moreover, since the composition is of a man clutching a woman's lingerie and feeling weak, there is no time for leisurely escapes from reality.

The clerk in the distance was glancing at me, probably because of the noise, and I didn't know when he would come.

I wonder where we went wrong and what we did wrong to cause this

With no one to answer her murmurings, Akiharu began to move to fulfill the most unwelcome goodwill offering in her life.

Although it should have been only an hour since you arrived at the department store, you are as mentally exhausted as if you were on your way home after a mountain hike.

While worrying about whether he would be able to keep up in this condition, Akiharu sat on the bench and waited.

Tomomi and Selnia are currently in the process of selecting a suitable gift and will call on the first person who decides on a gift.

Unlike before, there are many stores, and not all brands of winter clothing are sold in one place, so it will take more time this time.

I feel bad for the two people who are looking for me, but I honestly feel that I am grateful for the time off.

It's too late to get advice on what gift to give and then wonder if it would have been better to come alone.

(alt: I wonder if it would have been better if I had just gotten some advice on what kind of gift I should give and came by myself.) But too often, what we thought was the best thing to do at the time turned out to be the beginning of the hardship.

..... This is way too early to be bringing forward the bad year, don't you think?

Sitting on a bench and hanging out, the moderate air conditioning made me feel quite sleepy.

Just as Akiharu was planning a full-fledged escape from reality, he heard a voice seemingly falling from above him.

"Hey, don't sleep here. You'll get in trouble at the store."

I'm at You're early.

I looked up to see Tomomi standing there with a somewhat stunned expression on her face.

With a genuine expression that she would never show in front of the Hakuryo students, my childhood friend shook her head and said, "It's impossible for me to take a nap while others are helping me. Come on, get up.

"All right. So, did you find anything that looked good?"

I personally had a feeling that this was the one. I'll see what Selnia chooses after I get her opinion on"

"Ah, I see. That's right."

Even if the item Tomomi shows us is good, we can't make a decision until we see what Selnia chooses.

It is not only unjust and unfair, but it is also troublesome and unavoidable.

After letting out a breath (.....), Akiharu stood up and asked, "So, where is your recommendation? Gloves, right?

Yes, I have found something wonderful. This way."

Tomomi gives a self-admiring tour, and Akiharu smiles wryly at her.

How can she, and Selnia, be so confident in their behavior?

I even envy them a little.

I'm amazed that he's the type of guy who has the temperament to lead, a feeling I would never want to say to him, as we proceed through the floor lined with winter goods.

It's not a good comparison, but there are more customers there than in the lingerie department.

However, the clientele is not young people, but rather people in their late 20s to 30s, which is not the type of clientele you would normally see at a casual mass merchandiser.

Naturally, it's unusual to see so many women's clothes, but I try to keep my eyes on Tomomi's back, because I don't want my eyes to wander off and become a topic of conversation again.

Let's see,, right here.

Checking the products on display, Tomomi entered a corner not far from where she had been resting.

The items on display are mostly small items such as hats and capes, rather than coats and other clothing, and the colors and designs seem to be more youth-oriented and vibrant.

Tomomi suddenly stopped walking in front of Akiharu, who looked up at the mannequin and thought, "This looks promising.

It only takes a moment to realize that you have arrived at your destination, but you soon realize that this is not the case.

Because - beyond Tomomi's shoulders, I could see her blonde curly hair, which was too voluminous to be distinctive.

Wow, he created this shit too.

....." It wasn't there earlier. I understand that the process of elimination would lead us here, but it's a little uninteresting.

(alt: "... it wasn't there until a while ago. I know it'll be here if you go by elimination method, but it's a bit lacking in fun.") I'm glad it's less work for me, though.

While we were having this conversation, Selnia seemed to notice us immediately and turned her head.

As one might expect from such a sharp haircut, they are very sensitive in their reactions.

Selnia's eyes widen in surprise, but she quickly narrows them and smiles wryly, "Oh, what's the matter with you two? I don't think it's possible, but I'm ready to admit defeat before we've even been compared.

Of course not. What a reason to throw away a winnable game. Oh, it's not impossible that you do it out of generosity and mercy.

(alt: "Of course not.) "What do you mean?

I would have thought that you, the brilliant Ms. Selnia, would understand without having to tell me, but I'm wrong?"

..... Please, can we please refrain from having these stomach-churning conversations?

I hope that Selnia, in particular, will take the option of not challenging us to a losing argument.

You always get a blowout and then lose miserably.

In any case, there are many people, including the store clerks, who are annoyed by the awkwardness of the situation here, so Akiharu pretends not to notice their exchange and joins in the conversation.

Tomomi had already found something that looked good. How's it going over there?

..... "Well, I'm still looking into it. I have a few candidates, but I'd like to narrow it down a bit more.

(alt: "... Hmph, I'm still examining it. There are some candidates, but I'd like to narrow it down a little more.") "Oh, well, would you like to look at the gloves I picked out with me? If Ms. Selnia likes them, it will save her the trouble of looking through all the others.

Tomomi's proposal, while still provocative, is not bad.

It would only take a little time, and Selnia was curious to see what her rival had chosen, so she said, "Very well, I'll take a look at it.

I responded with a superior look and folded my arms as if to say, "Hurry up and show me the way.

To which Tomomi smiles and says, "This way, then."

I'm sure he's annoyed at though he responds, "I'm sorry.
(alt: I will answer, but... well, I'm definitely annoyed.) For a moment, the edges of my eyes were twitching.

Praying that the situation would not get any worse, Akiharu followed them to the glove display and waited for his childhood friend to pick up the item he wanted.

Tomomi picks up a pair of gloves from the hanging gloves and opens her mouth while holding them up so that she can see them easily.

"How about this one? It's off-white, so it goes with most colors, and you won't have any trouble mixing and matching it with your clothes. The design itself is simple enough to wear to school.

The product was recommended as if by a sales clerk, but it was indeed very nice.

The fine woolen yarn looks warm, and the construction appears to have been well thought out.

This is good enough for autumn weather, but what concerns me is Selnia's reaction.

I glanced next to her and saw the same expression on her face as when she had just been offered a baby doll.

I'm guessing that you think Selnia isn't so bad, but you're too embarrassed to admit it, so you're keeping your mouth shut.

(alt: Selnia doesn't think it's so bad after all, but she's reluctant to admit it frankly, so she's silent... I guess.) Tomomi's smile deepened and she pushed the glove toward me as if to show me.

Look, it's very comfortable to the touch, isn't it? The price is a little low, so I think it's a good deal.

I'm telling you, it's pretty good. If that's what you call cheap, then go to"

Akiharu looked at the price tag, thinking that he might decide on it as long as Selnia didn't object, and then he froze as if he had received a petrification curse.

..... Autumn Sun? Is something wrong?"

What are you being so rigid about? If you don't like it, why don't you just say so?

I was so surprised that they were calling out to me, probably because I had frozen, but that wasn't the point for Akiharu.

I checked the numbers on the price tag several times to make sure there were no mistakes. Absolutely ridiculous.

"..... Hey, it's Tomomi."

(alt: "...Hey, it's Tomomi-san.") "What is it, you call me funny?"

"..... these 'slightly less expensive' gloves..... for 15,000 yen is a typo, right?"

What?" I don't think so, but"

Tomomi's honor student smile broke and she tilted her head back, as if she didn't really understand what I was saying.

Selnia raised her eyebrows and said, "If you buy it at the regular price, it will cost around 20,000 yen. At that price, it's certainly inexpensive.

He says such things to me.

It seems that they are in agreement, and if the price is discounted by more than 20%, I can understand why they say it is inexpensive.

However, it is not so easy for Akiharu to nod his head.

"I like and, but I think they're a little over my budget."

Oh, is that right? How much did you expect to pay?

Tomomi asks me, perhaps because she had forgotten about it, but she seems a little reserved.

It is very difficult to say when you have such an auspicious attitude, but is an important part of the story, so I can't end it by just making it muddy.

Let's see,, a little less"

So how much is it exactly?

I'd be happy to that about 5,000 yen and within 3,000 yen if possible.

Tomomi and Selnia share a similar expression at the honestly uttered number.

The reason for his stunned or surprised face is obvious, and Akiharu is somewhat uncomfortable.

The few times I came to this department store, it wasn't for my own shopping, so I didn't pay attention to the prices, which was a mistake.

It's not like there are a bunch of mass merchandisers and youth stores in the corner, so the price should be commensurate with that. That's a big mistake.

(alt: Well, it's not in a corner where mass retailers and shops for young people line up, so the price will be suitable for that... It's a big mistake.) Even if you go to, the gloves cost over 10,000 yen.

If it were leather, I'd be prepared for that, but that's woolen yarn.

Is it a product of a well-known brand that I don't know about? I'm sorry, but I can't buy these gloves because the amount of money in my wallet is just not enough.

Tomomi seemed to fully understand this, and after letting out a small sigh, she said, "..... Please say that kind of thing as soon as possible. Then you wouldn't have come here in the first place.

There are very few things you can buy on such a small budget. You can find something if you look for it, but there are too few options. The scarves there are usually more than 10,000 yen.

"..... no more, I'm really sorry"

(alt: "... No, I'm really sorry...") I can only bow my head and say, "Oh, dear.

The sighs of "I can't believe I'm doing this!" can be heard, and the atmosphere becomes even more awkward than in the lingerie department, no doubt.

I was not at fault before, but this time it was clearly my fault, and I was really upset.

I feel like crying in a double sense when I think that if we had presented the budget in the beginning, we wouldn't have had to go through that humiliation.

When Akiharu is so damaged that she wants to dive in and weld the lid if there is a hole, she says, "..... We have no choice, let's go to the shopping mall in the downtown area. There are probably several stores there that can accommodate the amount of money you want to spend.

I see. You should be able to make a much more meaningful choice than if you persist here.

Tomomi and Selnia had already reached a decision to move on, and the conversation was proceeding without her.

This further increased his sense of unease, and Akiharu nodded off like a stray dog splashed with muddy water.

I even feel like maybe I'm not wanted in the world.

In reality, however, there was someone who was willing to get involved with me, and somewhat harsh words flew at me.

"Look, it's sunny in autumn. If you keep on waiting, it will soon be night!
Yes, if we stay up too late, Selnia will get hungry and that will be a big problem."
How dare you speak of people as starving piglets!

A piglet is more like a marlin or tuna. The sharp edges are very similar.

"You're making people's haircuts look bad at!"

I thought I was talking about character. I was referring to your personality, but perhaps you're a bit of a prejudice type, Ms. Selnia?

"..... ツ.....!"

(alt: ".....!") Yeah, well, it doesn't seem like they're really involved after all. But when they started fighting whenever they had an opportunity, Akiharu felt a subtle sense of estrangement. When Akiharu remembers feeling slightly alienated from the two of them who start fighting every chance they get, she says, "All they do is talk nonsense. That's all, Akiharu!"

(alt: Yeah, well, I don't even feel like they're really related to each other, but.....Akiharu feels a slight sense of alienation from the two of them, who start quarreling whenever there's a chance. It's autumn weather!") I'm going to go to "..... what? Me?"

I was surprised to hear her name called out, and then, as if by surprise, Selnia turned to me with great energy, her brow furrowed, and she half shouted, "I am the one who is going to make the money.

It's because you're as lazy as a sloth after a meal! This wouldn't have happened if you'd just moved!"

No, I'm not going to let you bite me there. What's with that trend of putting the blame on the losing pitcher?"

..... I don't know what you mean, but you made me look like a fool!

(alt: "... I don't know what you mean, but you made a fool of me!?") And now you're being paranoid? Calm down, nobody said anything about that!

For some reason, the fire jumped to the house, and we tried our best to prevent the fire from spreading, but the drill would not listen to us.

But, perhaps it was the best of all worlds, he quickly turned his back to us and said, "It's all a mess! You will pay for this humiliation one day!"

"Are you talking to me,?"

Of course! Who do you think you are dating?

It is strange that when I am told so outraged, I think, "Yes, indeed, that is true.

Maybe I'm pointing the finger in the wrong direction.

Tomomi glances at Selnia, who starts walking again, grumbling, and then Tomomi follows her.

Akiharu, who had been watching their backs for a while, scratched his head at being left behind for some reason, and while he started walking after them, he suddenly had a thought that made him tilt his head slightly.

Tomomi's eyes I saw earlier.

Was it my imagination, or was there something subtly irritating about the way I felt? If it's the way things are going now, Tomomi's reaction should be to smile wickedly at Akiharu being blamed from an unexpected source, like a collateral damage crash, but I don't know why she was so unhappy.

Well, the only reason to be grumpy would be that the gift was a wasted trip. Even so, I was still a bit annoyed.

(alt: Well, the reason why I'm in a bad mood should be that I chose a gift that was useless, but... even so, I was a little caught up.) Unfortunately, I could not read her emotions or thoughts from her backside, and she was not likely to respond to me if I asked her about it head-on.

Therefore, Akiharu could only speculate by expanding his imagination in various ways, and he was sure that he would never know the correct answer.

The shopping mall in Onokura is not large enough or well-known enough to attract visitors by itself, but it has many stores for young people, so I was able to find a few stores that I liked.

They went through several of them, and many times Tomomi and Selnia argued about the products they brought, but they were not satisfied with the result, so they went back to the first store. In the end, by the time Akiharu was able to buy a birthday present for Natsume, the sun was setting and the sky was dark. In the end, by the time Akiharu was able to buy a birthday present for Natsume, the sun had set and the sky had become dark.

(alt: After going through several of them, Tomomi and Selnia argued over and over again about the products they had brought, and either of them weren't satisfied with just the result, so they couldn't come to an agreement right away, so they returned to the first store. After all, by the time Akiharu was able to buy Natsume's birthday present, the sun had set and the sky had turned dark.) "..... uh, thank you for your cooperation"

(alt: "... um... thank you for your cooperation...") She manages to say something like that in a weary voice, but the response is an angry stare from Selnia.

..... is absolutely unbelievable! I've never seen such a difference in taste despite the low budget and the beautiful items you've chosen."

"I'm telling you again and again, your guy..."

Yes, it was not bad. Not bad.

"..... ツ."

(alt: "... tsu") Even if I try to follow up, one word from the black-hearted person who goes to the trouble of pouring oil and a lot of oxygen into the fire and causing it to burst into flames can ruin a lot of things.

Walking around the city in the cool night air, Akiharu patted his stomach and wondered what was going on.

I heard that Selnia, who is already on her way, is planning to go back to Hakuryo, but before she leaves, should she buy her a sweet treat somewhere to make her feel better? But it will be dinner in a couple of hours, so I think it would be unnecessary to have a snack here.

However, it's hard enough being in a bad mood all the way home. I really don't know what to do.

(alt: That being said, it's still painful to be in a bad mood all the time in the car on the way home... I really don't know what to do.) "....., by the way, it's autumn weather."

(alt: "... Come to think of it, Akihara.") Hmm? What?"

Tomomi softly talks to Akiharu, who sighs in distress.

I tried to match the tone, which Selnia couldn't hear, but the slightly serious expression on the face of my childhood friend next to me suggested that we weren't just chatting.

When Akiharu wondered what was going on, he said, "This may not be the best time to ask this, but you said before that you didn't have much money, right? Is it okay if I use it for a present?"

"..... Uh."

(alt: "..... ah") Oh, by the way, did I tell him about my family and financial situation?

Even when he had just transferred to Hakuryo, he said, "I don't have the money to go to a different school.

I feel like I'm saying, "I'm not sure what to do," and it's understandable that you might be worried.

(alt: I feel like I said that, and maybe it's not unreasonable to be worried.) After dragging them around so much to buy it, it's a little late for that, but it's nice to know that they care about us.

So, to hide his embarrassment, Akiharu put his hand on the pin in his right ear and said, "Well, my monthly allowance has been transferred to my account, and I have a little money saved up, so I'll be fine. Besides, things are a little better than before.

What do you mean by?"

In September, I received a letter saying, 'I forgot to give you an extra allowance when you started high school. So I checked at the bank the other day and found that it was about five times more than before. I know it's strange to say, but thanks to you, I can stand an unexpected expense of about 3,000 yen.

"..... Hmm. That's easy to understand.

Tomomi muttered something meaningful, but Akiharu made no comment because he could understand to some extent.

I don't expect my relative who is my guardian to change his attitude after hearing my daughter's story at Hakuryo," he said.

I can only have the impression that the "I'm not a good person.

The important thing is that I got new winter clothes that I was debating whether or not to buy, and I don't have to turn down a chance to go out with the grandparents for financial reasons, so although I don't appreciate it, I don't have to push back.

Tomomi did not talk about the situation at all, but she still looked at me and her mouth relaxed as she said, "..... Well, if Akiharu is okay with that, I guess I should be okay with it.

As far as I could tell from his mumbled voice, he seemed to have been exposed to a variety of things.

If this childhood friend confessed to me that she actually had the ability to see into my mind like Satori, I would be rather convinced.

Just before Tomomi, who smiled slightly, opened her mouth to say something to Akiharu, who scratched his cheek awkwardly, Tomomi opened her mouth to say something.

"Oh, by the way, Akiharu. Do you know about this?

Selnia, who was walking a little ahead of me, turns around somewhat abruptly and asks me something like that.

Even if he is suddenly told that he knows, Akiharu can only reply with common sense.

Before you ask, tell me what you are talking about. The weather tomorrow or the dinner menu?

Or what's on the menu for dinner?

I don't think that's the case. Do you know what the 24th of this month is?

I wondered what was going on because of his slightly provocative expression, and then I received a question that anyone would understand.

If you live in Japan, even an elementary school student can easily answer what day is the 24th day of the twelfth month.

"Of course I know what that is. It's Christmas. It's Christmas Eve.

Akiharu answered, wondering if the driller was judging him as having the knowledge of a kindergartener or lower, and then said, "Hmph, I can't say that's a correct answer!

With a smile as if to say, "You fell for it," came the unforeseen denial.

Frowning, Akiharu wondered what else could have happened, but could think of nothing.

If this is Valentine's Day, then the surprising "Dried Boiled Fish Day" is the perfect day to celebrate.

I barely knew that there was an answer to this question, but I had never heard that there was a similar trap event for Christmas.

In addition, with no hints, there was nothing he could do, and Akiharu twisted his head to indicate his resignation.

Then Selnia stopped, folded her arms arrogantly, and with a triumphant smile on her face, she said, "It's my birthday on December 24!

..... No, there's no way you could know that, right? I don't even know when you were born!

I was so excited that I had to rush into the room, but that should not have been a problem.

Because, you know, they're like, "That's why we ignorant people..."

I was told it was my birthday with a look on my face.

It's a very personal anniversary.

For some reason, Selnia's smile does not wane in the face of her natural objection to a question that would not be a valid general quiz.

Normally, she would have been upset and angry, but she retracted the words she was about to say in response to the totally different reaction.

First of all, what is this look of reserve after having been angry just a moment ago?

It also looks like a strange joy, as if it has recalled the place where it hid its favorite snacks.

Selnia, who could not hide her bewilderment at the change in circumstances, quickly brushed back her proud hair and said, "I'm not sure I can do this.

(alt: Akiharu couldn't hide her bewilderment at the change in the situation.) Yes, I know I've never told you that before. But now you've learned, haven't you?"

What about?" Well, it's hard to forget that it's the same day as Christmas."

I couldn't read what was going to happen, and when I answered honestly, Selnia's smile deepened gracefully, "Well, then, on my birthday, I'll be expecting a present with a certain amount of sincerity, I hope.

..... With those words, Akiharu was finally able to understand what had happened up to this point.

But that doesn't mean that you can immediately accept it, so you have to say, "Wait, wait, wait, wait a minute. Why is it like it's a decision for me to give you something for your birthday?"

"Oh, you give a birthday present to Ms. Natsume, but you can't give one to me? After all the trouble you put me through before the exam?"

"U....., but you've been saying a lot of things about me that I don't have any sense....."

That's why. If you are dissatisfied with the evaluation, you should be happy that I have given you the opportunity to make up for it by choosing a gift that I would be willing to accept, even if only a little!

"You're a crazy person, aren't you?"

She was direct in her criticism, but Selnia didn't seem to mind at all, keeping her victor's smile on her face. I mean, I'm just hoping to see how it all turns out.

After such sarcastic remarks, he turned around and strode forward.

Almost unilaterally confronted with a demand, Akiharu froze with her mouth half-open.

I've known for a long time that Selnia has a pushy personality, but this was a surprise.

It's not that she's broken her promise, but she wonders what's going on, and as Akiharu stares at the vertical rolls swaying on Selnia's back, "..... so what are you going to do about it?"

Suddenly, I heard such a voice from the side.

Ignoring the mystery of why she should be pressured by Tomomi, Akiharu carefully answers, "I don't know.

(alt: Akiharu's cold tone, which was as strong as the air of a winter night, was of course Tomomi's, and Akiharu answered cautiously, ignoring for the time being the mystery of why he had to take pressure from this guy as well.) I don't know what to do. It's true that I kept her busy, so it looks like I'll just have to give her a random gift."

(alt: "I don't know what to do... it's true that I dated you when you were busy, but it seems like I have no choice but to give it to you randomly.") Hmmm... "something" and "random," right? You're not obligated to do that?"

"I have a sense of duty, you know. He's already taken care of me in my pre-school exams, and I'm sure he won't ask for anything too expensive."

(alt: "Because I have obligations.) And since he gave Tomomi a gift for her birthday, I don't think it's strange for a friend to give her something.

Tomomi got a stuffed animal from a crane at a game center in the summer as a "birthday present.

I should have said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

(alt: I should have accepted it.) Since the meanings are similar, I don't quite understand why Tomomi is so concerned about it.

Anyway, if we keep stopping forever, Selnia is likely to get angry again, so Akiharu lightly tapped Tomomi's shoulder and said, "Let's go for now. If we don't get back to Hakuryo quickly, we'll have to study for tomorrow's exam.

I was about to continue, "I won't have time to do it," when he grabbed my wrist to stop me from saying it.

Moreover, the slightly upturned eyes staring straight at her are totally different from Tomomi's who was chatting with her just a moment ago, "What's wrong?

"Akiharu is and that, Selnia is"

When I asked her about the discomfort, she responded with a few clipped words that did not sound like Tomomi.

Her eyes, which are always unwavering in their confidence and determination, and her ladylike behavior, which she has displayed for hours, seem to have disappeared into thin air, and we don't know why.

Akiharu has never seen his childhood friend move her lips so slowly as if she was about to say something and then stop herself.

"..... Tomomi?"

When I called out to her with a mixture of confusion and worry, the honor student I grew up with turned her head deeply "— — No, it's nothing.

He immediately raised his head, his smile as usual suggesting that he was up to something.

When Akiharu was stunned by the sudden change, Tomomi pulled her wrist lightly and said, "Let's go, shall we? If you stay too late with a girl, you might start a strange rumor again, you know?

What? No, well, that's, that's a problem."

Or I can take the initiative and falsify it, if you like. "Or maybe I can take the initiative and fabricate a story about a failed attempt at a two-timing."

You're really bothering me, stop it!"

Tomomi reacts violently to the scary words, which sound like a joke but are not, and then, in typical black-hearted fashion, she laughs, removes her hand, and goes on ahead of the others.

Akiharu, who was left behind, chased after them at a dizzying pace, but he had no idea what was going on.

Tomomi is a hard to read person, but today she is even harder to understand, and her head feels like it's going to explode.

Still, I keep thinking about it, but I keep coming up with the usual ideas, such as that maybe this is a new way to tease people.

No, well, I'd rather not live a conventional life, but I'd like to avoid it altogether.

"What in the world is and what in the world is?"

The difficult problems, which were of a much higher level than the examinations to be held tomorrow, plagued Akiharu for a long time in the car on the way back home.

"Oh, my God, that's impossible.!"

(alt: ◆ ◇ "Ah, ugh, that's impossible...!")



Tomomi could not bear to hold back and threw out the pen she was holding in her hand.
Then I feel ashamed of myself for saying it out loud.
It's just me in my room, so no one can hear me, but I'm embarrassed.

I don't feel like myself.

But it's not about talking to yourself, it's about a memory that popped into your head a few hours ago.

As I was returning home from Onokura, I remembered what I was going to say to Akiharu and for the umpteenth time, I wanted to pretend it had never happened and pull the sheets over my head.

That's impossible.

I questioned myself, wondering if I was crazy.

Why did I say what I did at that time?

Although he was stopped just in time, that does not mean that he was acquitted by his own judgment.

In fact, so embarrassed that her face became a hot tan, Tomomi plopped down on the notebook she had opened.

I'm not that kind of character.

(alt: "... ugh... I'm not that kind of character...") And then again in my mind, "It wasn't supposed to be like that."

I repeat.

I knew that Selnia's birthday was on Christmas Eve, so I became restless from the moment we started talking about it and kept quiet. But after we were alone together, late, it was a real close call.

(alt: I knew that Selnia's birthday was on Christmas Eve, so from the moment I started talking about it, I became restless and kept quiet the whole time, but... after being late and being alone, was really dangerous.) At that time, when Akiharu said that he was going to give her a birthday present.

What almost came out of my mouth was "What do you think of Ms. Selnia, Akiharu?"

It was a very troublesome word.

It is clear that Akiharu has feelings for her, but it is also clear that they do not seem to be enough for romantic feelings.

If that's the beginning of your feelings, you're a fool.

It was impossible, no matter how impatient he was.

I swallowed down the words I was about to say without thinking, although I was in a great hurry.

The first words that came out of my mouth at that moment were: "Do you like me? What are you trying to ask me,?"

There was no context to the story about how the present was supposed to be.

I don't even know why such a question came up.

But I wanted to ask you that question so badly that I almost couldn't stop myself from asking it.

One minute I'm quietly thinking and the next I'm saying it, and then I'm in such a hurry that I'm about to say more gibberish to cover it up. "I'm rambling too much This doesn't sound like me at all"

I gradually feel depressed and want to cry.

I have been feeling a bit unsettled and unsettled all day.

There are various causes.

Starting with Akiharu's request for my help in choosing a birthday present for her good-natured cousin, studying for exams and whatnot, there are so many things going on, but I think the biggest one is that I don't have much time to spare anymore.

(alt: Starting with Akiharu asking me to help her choose a birthday present for her favorable cousin, there are really a lot of things to do, like studying for exams, but... the biggest one is that I'm running out of leeway. I think it's about being there.) I used to be able to enjoy watching the exchanges between Akiharu and Selnia, even though I was mildly jealous, but this is becoming increasingly impossible.

"..... Oh, God, I thought I could be more dexterous and have a bird's eye view, you know.

(alt: "... Ah, already... I thought I could be more dexterous and take a bird's eye view...") Today, that confidence has been wiped away without a trace.

I wonder if I will be able to continue to do well in this condition.

We have a big climax coming up in just a few weeks.

December 24, Christmas Eve, also Selnia's birthday.

She can't wait to see the big event just a stone's throw away, but this is just the way it is. She feels like crying, and she presses her arms around her eyes as if they were pillows.

(alt: There was a big event right in front of my eyes and I couldn't wait to see it, but to think that it was like this... It really made me want to cry, and Tomomi used her arm as a pillow to cover her eyes. press around), we've got to do something.

(alt: "... I have to do something") I definitely don't want to see Akiharu go out with someone else and the game is over.

It would be a hundred million times better to just crush them without any strategy or calculation.

I was thinking about how to get along with myself better, how to behave normally, and how to make an effort to be liked by Akiharu a little more.

I believe that my experience of playing the role of an honor student for more than three and a half years since I entered Hakuryo and my competitive spirit that cannot be left unchecked will help me to be successful in my career.

It makes me feel like I'm in a good mood.

..... Yes, it can be done.

I have worked hard to make up for what I lacked, and even if that didn't work out, I never gave up, aiming for the best results I could achieve.

So, this time, it's the same way.

It's just that the mountains to overcome are a little more difficult.

There should be nothing you can't do.

Tomomi told herself to wait until she had done her best before brooding over this and that, and got up to go to Then we'll have to start with tomorrow's exam.

Thinking of Selnia, who is probably studying hard in her room right now, I reopened my reference book and notebook.

..... In the end, Tomomi remained unaware until the end of the day.

The reason for his lack of confidence in his words and actions, as well as his awareness of his rivals, can all be traced back to his feelings for Akiharu.

Before you know it, you're like, 'I don't know if I like him as a friend or as someone I'm attracted to.

(alt: Before I knew it, "I don't know if I like you as a friend or as a member of the opposite sex")
I just love you" so much that it hides my worries.

I didn't realize it until a little later.