

People say that spring is a season of encounters and partings, but there are several phases to it, as you might expect.

Although it is already the end of January, there is still a long time before the graduation ceremony, and there are several third-year students who will be taking outside entrance exams.

The library is crowded every day with people taking exams, and the café terrace is increasingly filled with customers ordering sweet drinks and desserts with their vocabulary books in hand.

Even now, such a busy scene is beyond his line of sight, and Akiharu Hino is watching it with one elbow on the table.

I mean, Mutsuki is much more hectic than Shi-Season.

When I mentioned what I felt during the cleaning and service activities, I was told, "Well, that's just the way it is. It is mainly adults who are busy at the end of the year, and children are not so busy. For students, now that the National Center Tests are over, it must be the time to put in the last bit of energy."

A comment from the seat across from me was so accurate that I turned my head to face the front without thinking.

The childhood friend with a gentle smile on her face, as if she were an honor student, sipped iced lemon tea, a harsh drink in winter, even though the café terrace was heated to a certain degree. If you're someone who's willing to go outside of Hakuryo, I'm sure it's even more so.

(alt: With a gentle smile that seemed to be that of an honor student, my childhood friend brought a cold drink such as iced lemon tea to his mouth, which is a tough drink in winter, even though it was on the cafe terrace, which was reasonably heated. But I also get impatient, especially if you're someone who has the guts to go outside the White Mausoleum.") "Is that what it is? I mean, I'm surprised that so many students go to the trouble of taking an outside exam.

As for Akiharu, he is not quite sure about that.

Since you entered a private school with a narrow escalator system, why not just take the internal exam and go on to school?

Tomomi, who was twirling the straw in her iced tea glass, lowered her eyebrows in a wry smile at our question.

..... No, no, no, that's just a face that makes fun of you.

In a secluded place, they would have looked at me with disgust.

As if to confirm Akiharu's prediction, Tomomi lowered her voice and said, "I'm not sure I can do this.

(alt: As if to prove Akiharu's prediction, Tomomi lowered her voice a little.) If you just want to graduate from university, that would be enough, but I'm sure there are many people who will find something they want to do while attending Hakuryo. There are people who want to study under their favorite professors in specialized fields, and there are also people who want to go on to music or art universities.

(alt: "If it's just graduating from university, that should be enough, but I'm sure there are many people who find what they want to do while commuting to the Byakuryo? There are people who go on to music colleges and art colleges.") "....."

(alt: 「.....」) It is indeed understandable.

I had not considered the fact that, although there are differences in level, there are major differences from classes in high school, where students learn basically the same content.

When Akiharu gazed at his childhood friend in amazement, Tomomi smiled shyly and said, "It's true, there were no third-year students who wanted to go to Geidai this year. "Well, it's true that there were no third-year students who wanted to go to Geidai this year, and maybe there won't be any next year either.

What? Why?"

When you have a great person in your life, you feel the difference in talent. If the stimulus is too strong, it's no different than taking a dramamine.?"

When he was told that much, Akiharu was finally able to come up with an idea.

It might be the same as a high school baseball player feeling his limitations in the face of a super high school pitcher who is sure to play a big role in the Koshien tournament.

I think I will join a different club in college and give up baseball as a hobby, maybe play grassroots baseball or something.

I can think of someone who fits the profile of a super high school pitcher.

There are many out of the ordinary students in Hakuryo, but if you are in the arts, this is the person who should be the first person you think of.

..... or rather, the person you are planning to meet, so it's only natural that you should be aware of it.

It's about time for the seniors to arrive, so don't say anything rash, okay? You're going to have to start treating me like a newborn hamster, okay?"

I've known Mr. Sakurazawa longer than Akiharu, you know. I don't care if we're just getting to know each other."

Tomomi is mumbling a lot of complaints, but I can't listen to every word she says.

The only thing that matters is, "Please don't say anything that will upset my seniors. We have an exam at stake, and I don't want to fail.

"You've got a terrible way of putting it..... You're getting all cocky, Akiharu."

Tomomi said a rather funny line for a classmate to say, and then she looked at me with narrowed eyes.

Just that one thing sent a shiver down my spine and a bad premonition, making my cheeks hang down.

As usual, the pressure from this black-hearted person is unbelievable.

How does one grow up to be such a traumatizing creature, whose eyes can provoke trauma just by looking into them? Anyway, it's bad enough that I'm dealing with the person who has carved out all the things I don't want to remember from my childhood.

It is more constructive to think about how to minimize the damage than to look for a way to win.

As Akiharu was thinking like a loser, wondering at what timing to apologize for such a pathetic remedy, he said, "— I'm just kidding.

Go to?"

I'm just kidding. Don't worry, I'll be fine.

I couldn't help but make a strange noise, but that should not be a problem.

I can't believe that Tomomi's black-hearted childhood friend, who carefully rubs pepper extract into her wounds and then casts them so she can't even wash them, would show mercy on me before raising the white flag.

This means that could be a trap, but! "..... If you doubt it, can I give you what you want?"

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! Of course I believe Tomomi!

The chilling sound instantly made Akiharu feel innocent.

I had black spots as well as white, but I was so cute myself.

The most important thing to remember is that the best way to get the most out of your own home is to be a good friend.

It's as if they were saying, "You're so transparent.

However, he knew that if he admitted it, he would suffer a great deal, so he kept saying that he was going to prove his innocence at any cost.

Tomomi sighed and looked troubled for some reason.

It's quite a reaction. Well, I guess it's just rust from my own body.

(alt: "That's quite a reaction... Well, it's probably just the rust that came out of my body.") In a somewhat listless voice, I heard a word of regret.

From Tomomi's mouth.

While Akiharu was blankly shocked at the unusual and shocking situation, Tomomi seemed to have regained her composure and returned to an honor student smile and said, "Don't worry about me. Tomomi, meanwhile, seems to have recovered her composure and returned to her graceful smile, "Don't worry about me.

I'm sure that's okay. If you don't want to do it, I won't force you to do it.

(alt: "... Ah, I think it's fine there. Originally, if I didn't like it, I wouldn't force myself to ask.") I'd like to say, "I'm sorry you're in such a mood for the exam, but I think it's fine too."

(alt: "Even though it's an exam, I'd like to say that with that kind of attitude, but I don't think that's okay either.") Yes?" I'm relieved to hear you agree, but you're being too lenient with Tomomi."

If I can cooperate as I did at the last ball, we can have fun playing games to win the partner card, but it's no use if I can't, right? Besides, the conditions are the conditions, so there's no need to go overboard this time.

Worst case scenario, there's still one more card left to be won. I don't know what they're going to ask for after, so I don't want to ask if I can help it."

(alt: "Worst case scenario, there is still one more chance to get the card.) In my mind's eye, I see the Middle Eastern duo of the mysterious and lovely master and the all-powerful and dangerous follower.

I am sure that Aiche will be very happy to accept the card and give it to me.

However, it is best to avoid Hedier, as he may use it as a loan to force you to participate in some nefarious scheme.

However, it is not.

The only options now are to ask either Mina or Aiche to do it. If the little senior can't do it, then we are left with no other option but to form a husband-sister duo.

"Wow,, you're really giving me a hard time, aren't you,?"

Feeling heavy, she blurted out a few words and let out a small sigh.

In the dormitory, as a rule, two students share a room.

So, even if we didn't make any particular plans, we would naturally go to school together with our roommates, but it had become a habit for us to go together with Todoroki and the other students.

It is only natural, since the route to the school building is the same, and all but one of the men are living together.

I think and Daikichi might continue to run amok even if they sleep under the same roof.

However, there is no earth today.

Since they arrived at school earlier because they wanted to think about something, there were only three of us here, including Todoroki and Sanke.

I would like to consult with them if they have any problems, but since it is not good to be intrusive when they are not asking for it, I decided to keep it quiet for now.

With one less person than usual, Akiharu and the others were about to leave the dormitory when they passed by the lobby and were about to leave when Todoroki unexpectedly stopped in their tracks.

Oh? What's that Shikikagami guy doing?"

Oh?" What's wrong with Shikikagami?"

While listening back, Akiharu turns his head to follow Todoroki's gaze.

Shiki-Kamikami, who is on the taller side for a girl, immediately caught my attention, but she was standing in front of the bulletin board on the wall near the entrance to the lobby, looking pale in some way.

Before she could ask him what was going on, Akiharu noticed the sign Shikikagami was looking at, and turned his attention to it to see what it said, "..... 'Notice about January's Education Department Examination'? " 'Notice Regarding January's Subject Tests'?

"Yeah, which one? Oh, really."

A sign is an unusual pattern. I'm sure the sensei will tell me directly afterwards.

(alt: "It's a rare pattern for posters.) Sanke and Todoroki also gather and begin reading the announcement in question.

Akiharu had already reached the end of the book, having started reading it earlier.

I had a general idea of what was going on, but I knew that Shikikagami should be blue as well.

It doesn't say what exactly you will be doing in this exam, but it does mention one very important thing.

"This time, the partners will be upper secondary school sophomores only. That's a very difficult condition to fulfill.

While muttering, Akiharu realized the reason why Shikikagami was acting strangely.

Shikikagami often received cards from her sister, but Saori was a third-year student and could not participate in the exam this time.

In other words, the best advantage was lost in the first move.

I'm inclined to feel a little sorry for you, but Shikikagami is not the only one with problems.

.....

(alt: I feel a little sympathetic, but... it's not just the Shikikagami that has problems.) I don't know what to do, I'm not sure if I'll get a card."

(alt: "Limited to 2nd year students huh... I'm worried if I can get a card.") I'm not sure what to say. I don't know anyone in my second year. I know a few guys with good looks and style.

(alt: "Hey, you know. I didn't know anyone in my second year, did I? I know a few people with good looks and good looks.") Sanke and Todoroki's expressions were also clouded, and Akiharu was aware that he was looking unhappy.

In fact, no student in the education department should be happy about it.

First-year students in the first grade have classmates in the upper grades and have some opportunities to interact with other students in the same grade, but most second-year students and above only have contact with each other through service activities.

Better still, I'll ask since I have a good guess. Worst-case scenario, you might miss the exam once or twice, but that's okay."

I'm also going to ask my seniors who helped me in middle school for help, but I'm still worried.

(alt: "I'm going to ask a senior who took care of me when I was in middle school, but... but I'm still worried...") Akiharu thinks that he and Shikikagami are still in a good place.

I know of two seniors in my second year at, or rather one senior and one set of seniors, and Shikikagami was originally a student at Hakurei Ling, so she should know some of the upperclassmen.

The problem is with the other students in the education department, for whom we can only say, "I am sorry for your loss.

Well, just as I met with Minna and Aiche, Sanke and Daichi might have a message or two to share with the upperclassmen.

The Roar may be well known, but the odds of it being out are too high, so I'm going to abandon it at this point.

After finishing his thoughts, he was able to calm down a little, so Akiharu lightly tapped Shiki on the shoulder, who was still anxious, and said, "Well, it's going to be all right. Even if you don't participate, you've been able to participate every time so far, so don't worry about it just once.

There are four days left until the date of the exam, and from Tomomi's and Selnia's impressions, Shikikagami seems to be well-liked by the same sex, so I should be able to ask her to do the exam.

Shikikagami nodded her head in agreement, saying, "So, if it's any consolation, I'll be happy to help.

Yes,, thank you very much."

Akiharu smiled back and said, "I didn't do anything to warrant a thank you, but I'm glad you're feeling better, even if only a little.

Then I glanced at the lobby and said, "Well, I'd better get out of here, or I'll be late. I'll think about the exam later, so let's get going.

Yes, that's right. I don't see what can be done by talking about it here.

Mikey is so indifferent. Since it's a good opportunity, we can make Shikikagami say this and that to raise her spirits.

Since it seemed that he was making sexual harassment comments again, Akiharu knocked Todoroki down on the side of his head with a bag that he swung fully.

I suddenly feel tired watching the idiot blow away with more force than I can feel, and I feel tired, as I always do.

Being different from the norm may mean doing something special.

If this is the case, it might be a good idea to at least keep in mind that the next NAT examination may be different from the previous ones in that it may have a special format.

(alt: If that's the case, it might be better to at least keep in the back of your mind that the upcoming vocational education exam may have a special format that's different from the one you've had so far.) It's hard to predict what to expect, so it's impossible to plan a

countermeasure. However, if you don't prepare yourself even a little, the degree of shock will be different on the day of the event.

..... but that's only if you can participate in the exam.

While changing his shoes in the shoe box, Akiharu thought about who he should contact first, and the answer came immediately.

Although he may look like an elementary school student, and he is old enough to have graduated from high school, it is still best to ask an experienced sophomore, and a genius artist with a worldwide reputation, to do the job.

It's almost a choice between two options, and as long as one of them is a landmine, it's a fair one.

The only question is whether that reluctant senior will take the job.

(alt: However, the problem is, "... will that passive senior take over...") The words she unintentionally mumbled made Akiharu feel melancholy.

◇ "..... test, counterpart of"

After the explanation, after a long pause, Minami's mumbled voice did not sound like she was in any way concerned about the situation.

Across the table, a small senior, holding a cup of hot cocoa wrapped in both hands, glances at me with a vacant expression on his face.

..... Yes, it's not a feeling that I can accept with open arms.

Just as Akiharu began to think about how to persuade her, Mina took her hand away from the cup of cocoa and said, "I don't mind if I do that for you.

"Oh, really? It's Sunday, is that okay?"

Yes. That's fine, but, you know,?"

After the unexpectedly positive response, I was even more concerned about his lackadaisical attitude afterwards.

What is the cause of that squirrel-like behavior of the little squirrels, wondering whether to leave the nest or not?

Then, the air at the table became a little awkward because the senpai started to get fidgety, and the students at the other tables who sensed it sensitively started whispering in hushed voices. I wonder if strange rumors will start circulating again... .. As Akiharu was feeling sad, Mina opened her small mouth while looking at me with an upward glance and whispered in a whisper.

(alt: Then, perhaps because the seniors were starting to squirm, the atmosphere at the table became a little awkward, and the students at the other tables who sensitively sensed this began to speak in whispered voices... Another strange rumor began to flow. Isn't that... Akiharu was in a sad mood, and Mina looked at me with an upturned gaze, opened her small mouth, and whispered.) I don't know what I'm going to do on the exam, do I? You're not strong enough and you can't do all the princess stuff, can you?"

Uh,"

It is true that the contents of the subject tests are often not known until just before the exam, and this time was no exception.

Based on past cases, this will probably not be a physical contest, but who knows what will happen next time, and it may be something that requires some of the skills of a young lady.

But, well, "You can decide whether or not you want to participate after you know what you are actually going to do. If you don't catch anyone and don't get a card, you won't be able to participate in the first place, so you don't have to worry about it that much.

"Oh, yeah? Because if there is someone else who can do it properly, you should ask them to do it, not Minna.

If I wasn't bound to sophomore year, I would consider it, but the conditions are so strict this time that I'll give up if seniors can't make it. Even if I can't participate in the exam at least once, I just have to try harder next time."

"Ummm... but you have Mr. Hadim, right?"

That's the endgame. If you owe her too much, you never know what she will demand of you.

It is still fresh in my mind that I was almost duped last December.

So when I found a conspicuous stash like a fitting room in the second grade line at the opening ceremony, I thought about complaining a bit, but after thinking about it, I decided against it.

Aishe, the master of the house, did nothing wrong, and that snarky maid of honor said, "It's my fault for taking the liberty of making up my own mind.

She was about to bombard me with a thousand words.

There was also a high risk of being knifed.

If you continue to owe such a person a debt, you may have to repay it with your body, which is really scary.

Not in the sense of physical labor, but in the sense of entering the other person's family register.

So Akiharu smiled bitterly and said, "So, well, I won't ask you to force yourself on me, senior. To be honest, I'm just grateful for the card.

When I frankly tell her how I really feel, she shakes her shoulders and blushes, as if she is choking.

Then he drank some cold cocoa and looked at me again.

Then is good. For you.

Thank God. Thank you, senpai."

When I thanked her with relief, she blushed even more and started drinking cocoa.

It's kind of a smiley scene.

It's strange to feel that way about someone who is three years older than you, but since it's the other person, there's no discomfort at all.

As Akiharu was feeling like an old man staring at a familiar kitten that had come to play on the porch, Kaminami put down her cup and wiped her mouth with a paper napkin when she finished drinking.

I don't have my card with me. So I'll either have to go back and get it now or give it to you tomorrow."

I'm going back to the dormitory, so I'm going to drop in at the Upper School dormitory. I have service tomorrow at noon and after school.

Then, Akiharu stood up and said, "Hurry up, I'll do my best.

If we take too long, it will be daylight.

And from another table, "....., Mr. Sakurazawa's life is in danger."

and "..... tricked into"

I was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

Mina nodded her head slightly and got up from her seat, holding her sketchbook that was propped up on the chair next to her as if to embrace it.

I thought that since we were going to the dormitory for higher education, he would lead the way, but when he looked up at me without moving, Akiharu sensed my intention and started walking away.

I felt Minami coming up behind me, and I couldn't help but relax my mouth.

I really wonder if this senior is passive or if he can survive on his own.

But, well, if it's such an adorable creature, people are bound to want to help it, so I guess it's all right.

Akiharu himself is aware that he is one of them, so he leaves the café terrace and walks along the road leading to the dormitory for higher education without complaining or making fun of them.

Well, Pina said she's moving to a new dorm next year, but was that because of her seniors?"

Yeah, like that. They wanted to live in a Japanese-style building since they came to Japan, but they come to the same dormitory because it's easier to work and play.

(alt: "Yeah, it seems so. Since you came all the way to Japan, you wanted to live in a Japanese-style building.) "..... He doesn't have any friends in middle school, you know."

(alt: "...It seems like he didn't have any friends in middle school...") But you said you were worried because Shikikagami was there.

I guess he's still not used to that cat loving. Well, even though I know he doesn't mean to hurt her, it might be hard for a type like Pina.

After about five minutes, we arrived in front of a Western-style castle, a building that did not look or feel Japanese in any way.

I think it is absolutely wrong to call this a dormitory, but it is already an everyday scene, so there is no sense of discomfort anywhere.

Familiarity is a terrible thing.

I think it's amazing how adaptable we humans are, especially after less than a year.

Well, I'll get it quick.

No, there's no need to rush. Don't fall down, senpai.

"She's not such a naughty one!"

Looking back at Minami's back as she walked into the dormitory with her cheeks puffed out, Akiharu said, "Well..."

He leaned against the outer wall.

This location should not be visible from inside the dormitory.

As long as the students coming and going don't see you and make a fuss, you should be fine until the seniors come back.

..... But why do I have to be so concerned about being outside the building, on the grounds of my school? I think that since we have gotten used to them, the ladies should get used to us, too, but I still feel that their vigilance is no different from that of a wild Siberian tiger.

It's a world that can't go on.

Although I said there was no need to hurry, I was praying for Minami's return as soon as possible,....., and then I heard someone coming out of the dormitory.

Just as Akiharu was about to turn away from the scene, thinking that other students of higher education should keep their distance from her, she said, "Akiharu? What are you doing here?"

..... What's that, Selnia?

I turned to look at the familiar voice and saw my classmate Selnia.

However, there was one thing that made Akiharu raise an eyebrow.

As usual, she is a stunning blonde drill and wears a warm fur coat over her school uniform.

.....

(alt: As usual, she had beautiful blond hair and was wearing a warm fur coat over her school uniform... I knew that far.) The problem is the carry bag being pulled by hand.

It looks so large that a single person could fit in it if he or she shrunk down.

..... What? Are you going on a trip somewhere?"

It's unlikely that they would take something like this for a walk, and I think that's appropriate.

However, today is the middle of a weekday, and there will be classes tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

I don't think even upper secondary school students would skip school to go on a trip. I'll be back on Sunday, won't I?

I thought it was, but it was similar.

While thinking about the difference between going out and coming home, Akiharu looked at Selnia's luggage and asked, "Isn't that a bit too much to ask just to go to Atami? Don't they have clothes there, too?"

Why do we have to talk about going back to our separate house in Atami when we are going home? It's our main home in England, isn't it?

I'm going to go to and see if I can find it. Oh, yeah, right."

I had already had an image of Selnia's house in Atami, so I assumed that was where she would be returning home.

Even though he is a quarter, he has such a European/American look.

Well, familiarity is a wonderful thing.

While Akiharu was making a strange gesture of admiration, Selnia opened her mouth with a glare, her brow furrowed in disapproval.

That's why I'm going to You haven't answered my question yet, you know."

What?" Oh, that's why I'm here. I'm waiting for you to come back because I got a partner card from my senpai.

Mr. Sakurazawa told, "I would like to say, however, that if you try to do anything against him, you must remember that people who love paintings all over the world will hate you for the rest of your life."

With threats, he narrowed his eyes even more and became more intimidating.

Even without being told such a thing, I have every intention of being attentive to Autumn Sun.

I also feel that I will be resented more by pedophiles than by those who like painting, but I won't say anything about that.

I understand that there are things I can say and things I will be beaten up for saying.

Akiharu, who refrained from speaking out of turn, waved his hands in the air and said, "I appreciate your advice, but why are you going back home again at this time of the year? Is it a legal matter or something?"

No, it's not. The event was originally scheduled to take place during the winter break, but it was delayed due to a conflict of schedules.

"Wow, even for, it must be really important to you that you don't care if it's on a weekday or not."

We don't know what it is because we haven't been told. It's worth going home just for that.

Selnia answered proudly, but Akiharu couldn't understand it.

I can understand if she is happy to see her grandparents, but from the look in her sparkling eyes, it seems like she is feeling honored.

Akiharu was inclined to tilt his head back and wonder if this kind of thing was unique to the nobility, but then he thought to himself, "If we are late for the flight, there will be trouble, so shouldn't we get going?"

I am a member of, yes I am. If you try to disturb the customs of Baili Ling without my presence, you will not be tolerated.

With words that would be highly misleading if a stranger were to hear them, Selnia leaves, dragging her caster trunk behind her.

If I wasn't in the middle of waiting for someone, I would have carried her luggage to the front gate, but since I couldn't leave this place, I silently watched her leave the room without saying a word.

Just as her back and her golden curls, so characteristic of her, disappeared into the distance, I heard footsteps coming from the dormitory.

Excuse me. I've got something for you.

Breathing lightly, Minami comes up to me and holds out a red card in her hand.

I told them there was no need to rush, but I feel like I ended up making them feel uncomfortable.

Half happy and half apologetic, Akiharu accepted the card with a smile on his face and said, "Thank you, senpai. Please give me the exam as well, if you can."

"Uh, yeah. Um, I just passed Mr. Flameheart, did you see him?"

"Ah, he passed by a little while ago. She said she had to go back to her parents' house for something."

"Hmm, I see."

She muttered and nodded her head, but then looked as if she was pondering something.

Akiharu, who was curious, put his partner card in his pocket and asked, "What is it? What's wrong with Selnia?"

"Uh, the Flameheart's parents live in England, right?"

Yeah, I know, but...

I think I accidentally thought it was Atami a few minutes ago, but Akiharu quickly ignored that and nodded his head.

"Is it really necessary for you to go all the way to England for a non-vacation,?"

I don't know. I heard my grandfather called me, but he said he'd be back on Sunday, so I guess it's not something that will keep him here for days, but that's about all I know."

(alt: "No, I don't know. It seems that my grandfather called me, but... he said he would be back on Sunday, so I don't think he'll be detained for many days, but that's about it.") You mean for a quickie?

"Oh, but you said it wasn't a legal matter."

As we were discussing our speculations, it became clear that Akiharu was also interested in the "business".

I was beginning to worry about the "what if" factor.

Despite his father's gentlemanly appearance, his father was a childish man who left a lot of childish traits behind, so the grandfather he summoned may have been of the same ilk.

If so, it might be a surprise party, or perhaps you invited them because you wanted to go see a play with them.

It is impossible to know to what extent the common sense of a student will be understood by an aristocrat's grandfather.

..... reminded Akitaka of one more clue.

"Well, he said something about how he was supposed to do it over the winter break, but his schedule got moved up."

"So, what was originally planned for?"

Hmm?" Did something flash in your mind?"

She made an unusually loud voice for Minami, and her face was a little upturned, as if she was excited.

As Akiharu stared at him, wondering what in the world he had come up with, the little senior grabbed both of his hands, put them together in front of his chest, and looked up at him as if stretching, "Perhaps, just perhaps, we could have a blind date?"

..... He made an outlandish comment that made me wonder from what other dimension he had just sprung.

When he saw the little senior with sparkling eyes, Akiharu couldn't help but think, "Wait a minute, little boy.

I feel like saying, "I'm not going to do it.

Where did they get the word "arranged marriage" from?

Moreover, her eyes were shining as brightly as ever, and she had the expression of a dreamy maiden.

The shock of the situation almost made her dizzy, so Akiharu put his right hand on her temple and hesitantly asked Mom Momi-minami, "What do you want me to do?

"Uh,, that, what is it? What makes you think that, senpai?"

Because it's so important to me that I'm going to do it even if it has to be postponed because of family business.

(alt: "Because it's something important to do even if it's postponed due to family business...")

"No, I think it's a forced marriage match."

"Yeah, I guess. Did you see a girl in your class who is seeing someone or has a daughter-in-law?"

She may have lost some of her confidence, and her voice was lowered, but from Akiharu's point of view, it was a shock.

I still underestimated Hakuryo, thinking that a blind date at my age would be an anachronistic development.

There was even a word for the supposedly misplaced wife on the TV or in a book.

Is the upper class a static phenomenon? However, I don't think that Selnia fits into this category.

But you know what, I've never heard that kind of thing from him. I'm overthinking it.

(alt: "But... I've never heard of that kind of thing from him, you know? You're thinking too much...") Scratching his head, Akiharu denied it, "No, that's not necessarily so.

What? What was that voice?

A completely unexpected voice came from behind me, and I turned around to see Pina standing there with her silver hair and twin tails swinging.

She seemed to have changed into her casual clothes, and dark brown pants were visible from the hem of her coat.

When she tried to ask why he was here (.....), Akiharu swallowed the words she was about to offer.

I can think of only one reason for this little princess to be here.

"Oh, Pina? What are you doing here at this hour?"

I was free until dinner. I had some free time until dinner, so I came here to discuss the next issue of Doujinshi with Mina.

As I thought, it was so.

I am torn between whether it is easy to understand or whether I should tell them to make more friends.

Well, it seems that since the second semester, there are more and more people to talk to, so it's probably best not to say anything rash.

I don't have many friends either.

Akiharu turned to Pina again and asked, "So, what doesn't make you think that's the case?

That woman with the vertical roll that looks like a croissant is a noblewoman, isn't she? It wouldn't be surprising if she had a daughter-in-law or two or three, especially at her age.

"..... Seriously, so?"

When I asked her in return, she nodded her head and said, "Well, I have an offer for you too, you know. Marriage is still an effective political card to be played, so it is only natural. However, not only her parents but also the ministers and others have expressed their desire for her to marry someone of their choice, and it seems that she has turned them all down.

..... is -.....

(alt: "..... huh.....") It may be a scene that should be described as "the quintessence of royalty," but at this moment, it is all Akiharu can do to express his admiration without being too enthusiastic.

In other words, it's possible to have a real blind date.

Well, Selnia's offer may or may not be a marriage proposal, and even if it is, whether or not she'd accept it remains to be seen. No, but a high-profile marriage proposal has already created a level of intrigue that she can't refuse. It's created a situation where we can no longer refuse. "No? What's wrong, Akiharu?

What are you thinking about?

What? Oh, no, it's no big deal."

When the two little children called out to him, Akiharu looked up in a panic.

Unconsciously, "the possibility

I was thinking about the "what if" situation, but I don't know what to do with that kind of concern.

(alt: I've been thinking about it, but what am I going to do about it?) I'm sure Selnia hasn't arrived at the airport yet, so if you call her, she'll answer, but there's nothing to stop her, and she has no right to do so, she's just not thinking straight.

(alt: Selnia probably hasn't arrived at the airport yet, so if you call her, she'll answer, but there's no way you can stop her, and you can't have that kind of right.) Perhaps he had a fever.

My heart was palpitating strangely, and my head felt light-headed, as if I was about to reverse. I'm sorry, but I'm going back to my room now. Thanks for the card, senpai.

(alt: "Ah... I'm sorry, but I'll be going back to my room soon. Senpai, thank you for the card.") Uh, yeah. Um, are you okay?

You don't look so good, do you? You've got a cold to take care of.

"Yes, I will. I'm just going to be quiet, since I have an exam coming up."

While appreciating their concern for her, Akiharu said goodbye and left the place.

I walk down the road to the dormitory feeling uneasy and restless,..... stopping halfway and scratching my head.

"Oh, no! In times like this, you should either exercise, take a bath, and go to bed.

Planned to study old texts, which I am not good at, in the evening, but changed the plan.

I can't get into it in this state anyway, so I'm giving up on it.

If this was a more serious problem, I would be able to talk to Tomomi or Daichi about it.

(alt: If this was a more serious concern, then I should be able to talk to Tomomi or Daichi... thinking that, Akiharu shook his head.) I decided to run back to my room and start running under the darkening sky.

Sunday afternoon.

In the classroom that had been designated as the meeting place for the subject test, Akiharu looked around and muttered in a small voice, "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do.

(alt: In the classroom that had been designated as the meeting place for the secondary education exam, Akiharu looked around and muttered in a low voice.) I knew wouldn't be a good turnout this time around.

Although I had expected this, there were only seven groups, including myself.

Shikikagami seems to have succeeded in catching his acquaintance, but not only Todoroki but also Sanke were nowhere to be found.

I think it's great that they have a great land, but it looks like they had a harder time than usual and only got two cards.

However, as usual, Daichi seemed to be troubled, or perhaps he was feeling somewhat empty, which may have been due to the fact that he did not move too aggressively.

In any case, I was reminded once again of the difficulty of participating in the exam and how lucky I was to happen to know someone who happened to be there.

That is why we have to do our best as long as we can participate.

The blonde drill that had been bothering me for a while was gone after one night, and although it wasn't a, I was able to avoid thinking about it to some extent, and I should be on a plane back home by now.

He will probably be back by nightfall, so you can text him or ask him what he wanted tomorrow.

I'd like to concentrate on the exam, but I'm not sure I can do that right now.

(alt: Right now, I want to concentrate on my exams here.) "..... Hey, senior."

(alt: "... hey, senpai.") What? You've already started?

Well, I guess it's about time, but are you sure you're ready for that?"

I asked without thinking, but the uniformed girl standing behind me was so obviously nervous that she grabbed the hem of my morning coat and wouldn't let go.

The color of his face has turned white, and it is hard to tell which one of us is taking the test.

There is no need for her to be so shy, Akiharu thinks, but there is still another possibility, so he decides to ask her about it.

Maybe you're the type who has trouble sleeping or has a stomach ache before an exam?"

How do you know?

"..... No, well, yeah."

(alt: "... No, well, yeah...") Even if you don't have good intuition, you can usually tell, so I don't want you to look at me like I'm an esper.

Just as Akiharu began to think about what he should say to her to help her relax, he saw the classroom door open.

Naturally, we had no time to talk with the blue-clad maid who was coming in.

So instead of telling her to calm down, Akiharu gently patted Minna's small back a few times.

I could feel my body trembling in my palm, but I could see Fukayoshi standing on the podium about to speak, so I kept my gaze fixed on the front of the room.

"So, we will now begin the January school examinations."

As usual, he announced in his subzero voice, "Unlike the previous years, this year's examinations will not include practical skills, but only a written test and an interview. First, I will ask each of you to fill out the items on this form, and after collecting the forms, we will conduct the interviews one pair at a time.

"Um, excuse me, what do you need me to fill out?"

The student who raised the question was an upper division student who seems to be working with Shikikagami, and he looked calm and collected, just like an upper division student.

I wish our little seniors could learn from them, but I guess I shouldn't make unreasonable requests.

Each of us has our own personality.

While I was thinking about this, I gently raised my finger to adjust the position of my glasses and looked at the upper education student who asked me a question.

The test is to see how well I understand my husband. I will explain the details later, but in short, it is a quiz about your perception of your husband. In addition, we are asking you to write down your personal information, so if you don't want to answer the question, you can leave it blank."

After saying this, she looked around at the other students and said, "You will fill out the form here, but we will ask you questions during the interview. We will collect the forms here, and you will be able to decide whether or not to answer the questions during the interview at the new location.

(alt: Having said that, Fukagawa looked around at the faces of the other students and said, "I'll fill it out here, but I'll ask the secondary school students during the interview. I will collect the form, so I would like you to decide whether or not to answer at the time of the interview at a different location.") Hearing the explanation, Akiharu nodded in his chest.

In other words, if you don't want to tell us, you don't have to tell us, but please fill in the form as a criterion for judging whether or not it is a correct answer.

I think of, but I don't say it out loud.

If he doesn't, there must be a good reason for it.

Not only Akiharu but also other students seem to think so, and no one interferes.

He nodded as if to confirm this and said, "We will begin the examinations immediately, so please take your seats and wait for the rest of you in the upper grades. The obedience course students will move to the next room. After that, when it is time for your interview, I will call you out, so please come to the reception room in order.

Instead of saying, "That's all I have to explain," he walks down from the podium with the printouts in his hand and places them one by one on a nearby desk.

I had to move on, so I looked at my partner to see if I could say one last word to him. His face had turned a little red, as if he had been full of energy for some time.

(alt: It seemed that I had to move, so when I looked at my partner to say something last, he seemed to be full of spirit before he knew it, and his face turned a little red.) I don't think the content is worth the effort. Well, it's better than earlier when I almost collapsed from anemia.

(alt: I don't think it's something that would require me to work that hard, but... well, it's better than before when I almost collapsed from anemia.) Anyway, Akiharu lightly pushed Minami back to encourage her to take a seat and said, "Well then, I'm going to go, but hang in there.

"Uh-huh. I'll do my best!

The eyes that looked at me with clenched hands were so full of enthusiasm that I couldn't help but wonder if she was a different character.

Perhaps it is because he is always too energetic and often works with Pina, who is always running amok.

Akiharu was half in admiration and half in wonderment that such a thing could happen, and after watching Minami go to her seat with full enthusiasm, he left the classroom.

It was about ten minutes or so after we moved out of the classroom and began talking in a low voice with our fellow students in the Education Department.

Akiharu took a small deep breath in front of the reception room as he was called out of the office much earlier than he had expected, and was named the top batter.

It is not that I am so nervous that I need to prepare myself, but when I have to take an exam and enter a room that I do not usually have much contact with, I feel a little nervous.

But we can't just stand there forever, so we let out a short breath, knock on the door, and from the inside say, "Come in.

Open the door as if it were a signal.

I had been in this spacious reception room before, but the furniture had been rearranged.

Facing them is a magnificent desk with a printout in one hand, where she sits.

For a moment, Akiharu wonders if his senpai has arrived yet....., but then he sees her fluffy hair and realizes that she is sitting on the sofa.

It was too small and almost hidden by the backrest for me to recognize it immediately, but it was safe to do so before I could speak.

I almost pouted in front of an important event.

While Akiharu was sweating coldly by himself, Kikan narrowed his eyes behind his glasses and asked, "What happened? We will begin, so please sit down quickly.

I got it. I'm sitting down."

After replying, Akiharu immediately sat down on the vacant sofa and glanced to the side.

Where had the energy of a few minutes before disappeared, and there was only the tense, hardened expression of a returnee, and a look of help thrown toward me.

Well, but it can't be helped.

It was supposed to be a short time, but it must have been tough for this senior to be alone with Mika.

It's not like they could relax with small talk, and since they were probably creating a mute space, it's natural that they would freeze up.

Although I felt a twinge of pity for her, I asked her a few questions about her partner, Miimi Sakurazawa. Mr. Sakurazawa, please listen to the answers and answer whether they are correct, incorrect, or you will remain silent.

"Yes. Yes."

(alt: "Eh, uh... yes...") We will begin the interview as soon as possible. Mr. Hino, if I may?

When she heard a voice urging her to begin, Akiharu nodded reflexively.

I should have timed it immediately, but it was too late.

Mikanba put the printouts on the desk, turned his piercing gaze toward us, and the exam began without warning.

First of all, it is Mr. Sakurazawa's birthday. Do you know what day it is?

..... Moreover, a difficult problem came out of the blue.

Recently, I accidentally forgot my cousin's birthday and was in a panic, and because of that, I had to give a present to Selnia on her birthday.

Not wanting to make a mistake from the very beginning, Akiharu raises his eyebrows while fiddling with the safety pin in his right ear, and thinks desperately.

I am sure I have heard of this before.

Pina once told me, "She was born prematurely, so a little delay in growth is inevitable.

I was just starting to talk about when her birthday was, and I should have been able to tell you when it was.

Let's see, I believe it's April, the 3rd?

Mr. Sakurazawa, how are you doing?

..... Oh, you're right. You remembered."

(alt: "... Ah, you're right. I remember...") Akiharu responds to Minami's voice, a mixture of surprise and admiration, with a timid smile.

To be honest, I was quite relieved because I had quite hazy memories.

However, just as we are getting off to a good start, we hear a quiet voice that cools the heat that had been rising in an instant.

Next question. What is Mr. Sakurazawa's height in centimeters?

"..... hmm."

(alt: "..... Hmm") I have never heard the correct answer to this question.

So, since he could only answer with a rough guess, Akiharu thought for a moment and then said, "One hundred thirty-five or so?"

"Mi-Mina is not so small!"

At the moment I answered, my senior, who stood up vigorously from the sofa next to me, blushed and appealed to me that I had answered incorrectly.

However, I don't agree with such a statement.

As you can see, they are so small even when standing up, so they must have been pretty good.

So how many is the correct answer?

It's that thing, it's a hundred and fifty-nine centimeters long!"

..... No, you're reading too much into it.

(alt: 「.....No, as expected, you read too much into mackerel.....」) "....."

It is too much to ask for.

It was a rare sight to see him so awkwardly exclaiming, but that was not the end of the story.

Akiharu sat on the sofa, scratched his cheek with his index finger, and spoke to Minami as if he were handling an explosive device.

"Excuse me, sir? At your height, you're probably going to be bigger than the ground. Of course, you'll be much bigger than Pina, right?"

"Oh, she's actually bigger than Pina. I'm a high school student, so it's only natural."

..... Even with those distinctive twin tails removed, Pina's clearly supposed to be bigger than her predecessor, right?"

"..... ugh"

(alt: "... Uuu...!")



Perhaps it was too much to ask of her, she kept her mouth shut and instead gave me a defiant look.

Feeling a little embarrassed, Akiharu was unable to say a word in pursuit.

When they look at me like that, I should not feel bad in the slightest, but I feel so guilty that it's amazing.

When I looked at Fukayoshi for help on how to resolve the situation, the maid teacher coughed a little and said, "..... Excuse me, Mr. Sakurazawa, but I'm not sure if I can help you. There seems to be a slight difference between your earlier answer and"

(alt: When I looked at Fukagawa asking for help to find a way out of this situation, the maid cleared her throat and said, "...Excuse me, Mr. Sakurazawa. And... it seems there is a slight difference.") I'm sure you know, those are the numbers I measured last spring. Now it must be ugh"

(alt: "That's, umm, it's the number I measured last spring.) "..... No response is acceptable?"

It's implicitly said, "Because it's too much of a stretch. I can't listen to you."

It was very easy to understand that he was saying, "I am not a good person, but I am a good person."

If this had nothing to do with the exam, it would probably just be left alone. However, considering the fact that the exam is based on a declaration system, I think it is a difficult measure to take even if it is a quiet one, since it is directly related to the results of the exam.

And as for Akiharu, who will actually be affected by the grades, I want him to face the truth properly if possible, but seeing his eyes half-crying, I can't help it.

It makes me feel like a real bully, and I want to throw in the towel, and honestly, it doesn't matter if my score gets a little worse or not.

While I was watching Minna, thinking that I would leave the decision to her, she was glancing at me, as if she was aware that this was an exam.

If I hadn't known that this was the cause of the height fraud, I would have been tempted to offer a helping hand.

After a few moments, the air seems to deflate, and Minna's shoulders slump, "I'm going to change to secret"

In a quiet voice, he said that instead of giving up.

Hearing this, Akiharu is relieved that he did not become stubborn.

Shinkan was the same way, her face like a mask of ice was unusually broken.

However, it only lasts for a few seconds, and he quickly returns to his cold expression and picks up the printout he had put on the table to finish it off.

I will now move on to the next question. Do you know where Mr. Sakurazawa was born?, this is going to be a challenge."

I tried to think about it with a furrowed brow, but I was completely at a loss and had no choice but to rely on my intuition to answer.

Although several questions followed, not a single one could be answered with confidence, making me realize how little I really knew about them.

Although I have fewer opportunities to get involved with them than my classmates, I consider them friends, not just acquaintances, and this is a bit of a stretch.

"Now, I have one last question for you.

While she was reflecting on the situation, it was already the last day of the event, and Akiharu stretched her back to make up for it.

While we were waiting for words from Fukaba, the maid teacher looked from the print to us, opened her lips slightly, and asked the last question.

What is your dream for the future, Mr. Sakurazawa?

"..... Dreams for the future?"

Yes, it is. It's not about what you want to do after graduation, but about what you want to become.

"..... will"

(alt: "..... future.....") Muttering, Akiharu looked at nature and at Minami.

I've never heard of the future dreams of this tiny senior, but I know he has a bright future ahead of him.

And not just a few, but people from all over the world.

Tomomi has even said that she would be awarded some kind of cultural medal within a few years, so everyone thinks she has a future as a painter.

He seems to want to but after thinking silently for nearly ten seconds, Akiharu finally comes to his own conclusion and looks up.

"..... Getting Married?"

I'm not sure, but I try to give an answer that I think might be the answer to, to which Fukayoshi responds with a slight raised eyebrow and a startled reaction.

(alt: I wasn't sure, but I tried to give an answer that seemed to be this... but Fukagawa raised his eyebrows slightly and reacted in surprise.) Then look at Minna, who is easily recognizable by her surprised expression: Oh no, I might have missed that one.

As Akiharu scratched his head, feeling embarrassed because he was so confident that he had slipped so boldly, he heard the stiff voice of Fukayoshi.

Mr. Sakurazawa, how are you doing? Mr. Hino answered like that.

"....., uh, that isn't wrong, maybe"

(alt: "..... Uh..... Um..... I'm not mistaken, maybe.....") What? Really?"

I had assumed that it was a bad idea, so I reflexively asked her again.

Even though she had lied out of concern, she had not received any words of condemnation from Deep quiet, so it seemed like she had really been right.

As Akiharu exhaled, feeling more relief than joy, he said, "Well then.

The voice of the quiet voice was heard, making us conscious of the fact that we are not alone.

This is the end. Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Sakurazawa.

Uh, of, yes.

He then looked up and looked at Akiharu and said, "As you may have understood through the examination, there are many things that a potential partner may not know if he or she does not have many opportunities to interact with you on a regular basis, even if he or she is a potential partner. A master does not need to know much about his employer, but remember that a good butler or maid needs to know a great deal about his master in order to be attentive to his needs.

Akiharu nodded silently at the explanation, which was just as sincere as in class.

Perhaps if we had chosen a first-year student instead of a sophomore, the result would have been even tougher.

For example, I only found out about Selnia's birthday last month, and I don't even know what Tomomi, my childhood friend, wants to do in the future.

I think I know a little about my roommate Daichi, but there are still many things I don't know about her past.

(alt: I think I know a little about my roommate Daichi, but there are still a lot of things I don't know about the old days.) From now on, we must be conscious and make an effort to know properly.

No matter how much technical knowledge you have acquired and how good you are at brewing tea, it will be useless if you do not understand the region and the way of drinking tea that the other person likes.

It was more than informative, it made me realize how immature I am, and I learned more from it than I would have in a normal classroom setting.

I also learned that I still have a lot to learn even though I will be moving on to the second grade in a little over two months.

As Akiharu was again strongly aware that he would do his best from now on, Fukayoshi nodded his head as if he could see right through her, and his eyes softened slightly. After that, this examination will be over.

I understand. I don't have to go tell my partner?"

I'll be on my way to you, don't worry."

I think that since she is a student, she should be able to use it without concern, but considering the efficiency of the process, it is not a place for opinions, so Akiharu silently gets up from the sofa.

Seeing Minami standing up in a hurry, Akiharu made a speech before leaving the reception room.

As she started walking back to her old classroom, she looked back at Minami and said, "I'm thinking of going back to the dorm after I'm done with my calls, but what are you going to do after that?"

I'm going to go there because Pina said she was in the club room. I have a more important question:

Hmm? What?

When Akiharu casually asked her about the same route to the classroom stairs, she looked up at him with her fingers intertwined in a gesture of confusion.

"Well, you know...? How did you know that Mina wanted to become a bride?"

"..... Uh."

(alt: "..... ah") You've never said that, have you? Because I haven't even told Pina."

He asked me curiously, but I didn't think it was that difficult for him.

First of all, although we were successful, it was more of a hunch, and we felt that we were simply lucky.

Another big thing is, "I never asked you what you want to do in the future, but 'get married and have a happy family' is a good candidate for a girl of your age, isn't it? My cousins and I used to say it all the time when we were kids."

"....., but Mina is"

(alt: "... but Mina is...") I can somehow understand what my seniors want to say even if I don't listen to all of it.

So Akiharu put a smile on his face and patted Mina's head a little violently.

I know you like to draw pictures, but that's not the same as your future dream, right? In general, it seems that you have already succeeded as a painter, so it would be strange for you to make it your goal.

"....., but everyone else is."

(alt: "... but everyone...") I think I've told you this before, but you just have to go with what you want to do. Your parents would never force you to paint, would they?

The question was a mixture of speculation, but Minami nodded her head in agreement.

I was not particularly surprised, since I had expected that to be the case.

She had been seriously ill for a long time and was finally getting better, so it would not have occurred to me to force her to do something.

As far as I could see, the seniors were not being pushed to be involved in artistic activities.

Well, getting married and creating a happy family is quite a difficult task for such a common wish. Especially in the case of my senpai, you'll have to do something about your shyness first.

..... U -

(alt: "... Uh...") Mina growls at Akiharu, who is making fun of her, even if it means to blow away the serious atmosphere that was about to break out.

Then, for some reason, he looked up, sucked in his breath as if he had made a big decision, and said, "There is someone I can still talk to properly and he will give it to me."

She said this to me, her plump cheeks flushed like apples.

Surprised, Akiharu forgot to blink and looked at Miminami intently.

It's a shocking statement to hear that someone like that has been created without your knowledge.

But soon his cheeks relaxed and he said, "Oh, yeah. I'll cheer you on if you don't end up being a father or something, okay?"

Try to appeal to your allies, saying that even though you can't do much, you are willing to help.

..... But for some reason, the person I was appealing to crumbled to the ground.

"..... uu..... I'm so depressed."

(alt: "..... Ugh..... It's already frustrating.....") No, it's too early! I mean, I didn't even do anything.

(alt: "No, it's too early!? Or rather, even though I haven't done anything...") I mean, you worked really hard. But, damn it!"

She made an unusually loud voice and held her head while crouching down.

Even Akiharu is troubled by such a reaction right in front of his eyes.

Perhaps he had been doing a lot of work behind the scenes and was losing heart because of the lack of response? If so, it may have been a bit rash.

However, it is difficult to choose the right words to say when you don't know exactly what you have done, why you have done it, and what kind of person you are talking to.

So all I could do was crouch down next to you and say, "..... Well, that's it. If you don't give up, you might be able to do something, you know?"

"..... ugh"

(alt: "... Ugh...") The voice sounded as if coarse salt had been applied to the wound, and Akiharu realized that his attempts to comfort her had failed.

After parting with a dejected Minna, Akiharu went to the classroom where he was waiting, told Daichi to go to the reception room, and left the second school building.

I started walking back to my dormitory to change my clothes and just as I was about to do so, I found something a little strange and immediately stopped.

In the second school building, I saw a figure sitting next to the entrance to the elevator that I had just come out of.

She was dressed in a soft gray knit dress and black tights underneath, looking a little cold, and she was someone Akiharu knew.

I thought I'd just pretend I hadn't seen it, but while I was still wondering what to do, our eyes met.

In addition, the other person stood up and smiled at me, making it impossible for me to ignore him or her.

Having no choice, Akiharu scratched his cheek and decided to talk to the suspicious upperclassman.

What's wrong, Saori? What's the matter, Saori? Sitting here like this?

No, it's nothing serious.

(alt: "No, it's not a big deal, but...") Contrary to her words, Shikikagami's Saori's voice, which usually sounds like it is coming from a field of flowers, has a somewhat humid or melancholy tone to it.

Akiharu frowns and immediately realizes a possibility.

Are you here to see how the Shikikagami is doing?"

When I asked her about it, Saori's smile faded slightly.

I wondered if I was right, since I always play the role of my sister's partner, but it seems I was right.

Um, have you finished the exam yet?"

I'm done, but Shikikagami isn't yet. I think it will be finished within an hour at the latest.

I see. Sanae-san, will you be able to do well? She is a clumsy child like her mother and grandfather, so I am very worried about her.

When I put my hand on her cheek, Saori-san let out a deep and troubled sigh.

She was so sexy that it made me nervous, but her sisterly comments left a stronger impression on me, and I involuntarily looked into the face of the senior student in front of me.

She takes her clothes off and off again, and her many silly remarks make it hard to see her that way, but I think she has a soft spot for her younger sister.

He may be very overprotective, even marrying for the sake of his family.

Although it wasn't so much that I wanted to reassure Saori-san, I was still moved by her.

So Akiharu's mouth slightly parted and she said, "You don't have to worry so much, Shikikagami will be fine.

Are you sure? Are you willing to risk your life?"

"No, I wouldn't bet my life on it, but, well, I'll be fine."

Do you have a reason for going that far?"

Normally, it would be easy to convince her, but today Saori-san is not backing down right away.

Are they too worried, or are they too trusting of Shikikagami?

If it was the latter, it would ruin what was already a beautiful story.

Anyway, if they want me to tell them why, I'll just tell them.

While putting her hand on the safety pin, Akiharu glanced toward the school building and said, "In this exam, it's important to know how much you know about your partner. I think the best score will probably be Shikikagami's."

Well, really?"

Saori's eyes roll back in disbelief, but she nods her head and says, "We had a little wait time between exams, and I was talking with a student in the obedience course. At that time, he knew not only about the upper secondary school student who had become his partner, but also about the partners of the other guys.

While talking, Akiharu recalls the classroom situation before he left.

Shikikagami, who was unusually active in the conversation, answered the questions about the upper secondary school students in an easy-to-understand manner.

I don't know how correct I am, but I can at least say that I was much better informed than most of the other students.

(alt: I don't know how accurate it is, but at least I can say for sure that I had a lot more information than the other students.) I think it may have something to do with the fact that they have an advantage because they were originally students at Hakuryo, but I don't think that's the only reason.

Shikikagami is the type of person who looks out for everyone and loves people, so I'm sure she will be hired as a maid after she graduates Even though he makes a lot of mistakes, he's a hardworking guy who's not easy to hate.

(alt: "Since Shikikagami watches everyone well, and yet she's the type of person who likes people... I'm sure she'll be hired as a maid even after she graduates. He's a hard worker.") In a simple case, it would be much faster to count from the bottom, but I am sure that Shikikagami will be fine.

Partly because he's a bright guy, and partly because, in the end, someone said, "We had no choice."

I think they will reach out to us with a "thank you".

..... If only we could do a little less screwing up and destroying things.

I think that is what virtue is all about.

I have to learn from them.

I feel like I said some pretty embarrassing things at

If Tomomi and others hear about this, they are likely to play with us again.

Akiharu suddenly became embarrassed and asked, "Well, graduation ceremony is in a little over a month. What are you going to do about your future plans?"

He tried to shift the subject by scratching the itchy scar on his left eyebrow with his finger.

Perhaps a little relieved, Saori softened her expression a little and slowly folded her arms as if to support her large breasts from below. I heard that my father was fired from the part-time job he just got, and my grandfather lost his pension through horse racing.

..... As usual, too bad about the family.

What kind of family is it where the breadwinner is the daughter of a high school girl?

Perhaps her inner feelings came out in her expression, Saori looked at me and giggled.

Modeling can be interesting, too, you know? It's fun and refreshing to make money on my own, and I'm happy with my life now.

Uh, would be fine, though.

I am also thinking of living on my own after I graduate from Hakuryo. The apartment where my family lives is too small, and it will be difficult to find a place to work. I am not able to do anything, so I have no end of worries.

(alt: "Also, after I graduate from the Hakurei Mausoleum, I'm thinking of living alone. The apartment where my family lives is small, and it's going to be difficult for my work... but I'm worried because I can't do anything. I will never run out.") I'm sure she's more than just a little sister to me, so I'm not sure what to expect.

(alt: It's true that she's more than my little sister when things go wrong, so I'm quite worried.) It's not that she can't cook for herself, but that she can't do a single household chore. If you are not good at it, your house will be trashed within a month, or you will have nothing to wear and won't be able to go out, or you will try to do some housework and it will catch fire.

(alt: You're not at the level where you can cook for yourself, and you can't even do a single housework, right? If things go wrong, it will turn into a garbage house within a month, or you won't be able to go out because you have nothing to wear, or you will catch a fire while trying to do housework...all of these are possible.) The only thing I could see was a bad ending, and as Akiharu's cheeks hung back, Saori leaned in close and smiled at me from a distance, her breath on my cheeks.

I was nervous just to be in the presence of an extremely beautiful woman who exudes a high-school-quality sex appeal, but I asked her, "If it's all right with you, will you take care of her for me?"

"Yeah, no, I mean, you're in good hands."

Dinner, laundry, and cleaning. I'm also good at washing myself, so let's wash each other in the bath.

"No, no, no, wait! What's that? That's a story that's evolved and gone beyond the scope of caring!

I forgot to use honorifics and made a serious thrust, but this was absolutely inevitable.

And the fact that they are smiling and not at all effective makes it all the worse.

I think a pair of futons is all you need. What's that? It's kind of like living together, isn't it?"

It's like, "Oh, my God, this is a completely sordid affair, you know? I mean, even in the messy life sense!"

If it can't be just the two of us, it can be the three of us, including Sanae. I'm worried about whether Hino-san's stamina will last.

(alt: "If the two of us can't be together, then Sanae-san and three of us are fine, you know? I'm worried about Hino-san's stamina...") "You, living with your sisters, you're surely going to run out of patience with all that poking and prodding!"

Well, sounds so nasty, it makes me nervous."

No, I can not.

This person is too invincible.

I want to strongly say that this is no match for them, and that we are the ones who are getting nervous.

Akiharu, unable to do anything about Saori's happy smile, is dizzy from her ever-increasing heart rate and shouts out to get rid of her strange imagination.

Oh, God, I'd better get going!

Is that so? I'll go to and wait for Sanae-san to finish her exam.

And I said, "Okay, see you later."

When a senior student gave him a polite goodbye greeting, Akiharu said, "Well then!

I quickly finished and left the place.

As I walk at a brisk pace, I sneak a glance back at Saori-san, who is looking at me.

His sexiness and defenselessness are really dangerous.

When she was bending forward a little, her collar was fluttered, and her white cleavage showed a grand hello.

As a man, it makes me happy, but it's hard for me to keep my wits about me.

I wonder if would be okay with a man like that, living alone, without a sense of crisis? I'm really worried that she might be easily deceived by a bad guy.

She was thinking seriously about whether it would be better if she herself took the role of insect repellent once in a while, not to mention taking care of the insects, and that's why she was late in responding.

"Wait, it's Akiharu!"

Oh? What's, Selnia?"

I was surprised to hear a loud voice from out of the blue, and doubly surprised to see Selnia, who was supposed to be back in England, on the other end of the line.

It's been a few days since I've seen her, but there's no mistaking her for someone with her distinctive hair and appearance.

Akiharu stopped and blinked several times while looking at Mr. Drill, who was staring at him with his hand on his hip, and then spoke out the first question that came to his mind.

I was surprised at how quickly it happened. I thought it was going to be at night.

I came back to Japan in the morning and had lunch with your father. We just arrived at Hakuryo.

At this suggestion, Akiharu noticed for the first time that a carrying bag was placed behind Selnia's legs.

I can't tell you how surprised I was that something that big didn't catch my eye.

The shock has worn off, I've calmed down a bit, and I can think a little more clearly.

Then I remembered something I had originally wanted to ask first.

Uh,, yeah, that's it.

Yes? What is it?"

"And, uh,"

When she finally asked him, she became strangely nervous, and her words became muddled.

I felt uncomfortable asking her questions because I was making small talk, but for some reason I couldn't look Selnia straight in the eye.

As if annoyed by this, Selnia moved her hand on her hip in a busy motion and said, "If you have something to say, say it quickly. I'm tired from my long journey.

"So,, that was it. What was it all about?"

What is what? You're not getting the point.

That's why your grandfather called you. "That's why you were invited by your grandfather. There was a rumor over here that you might be arranged marriage.

Well, it's just a rumor or something like that among a very small group of people in Minato and Pina, but we'll skip that part.

After a few detours and bouncing around, I finally arrived at the main point, only to find that I had done it again, and I was filled with a strong sense of embarrassment and dismay.

Why do we have to react like this to Selnia after all these years?

When Akiharu was feeling a strange impatience because he could tell that he was out of tune and not like himself, but he didn't quite know what was causing it, he saw a change in Selnia's facial expression.

After a moment of blatant scowling, he then relaxes the crease between his brows as if in resignation and says, "..... I don't know how that rumor got started, but I'm sure it's not far off.

(alt: Just when I thought he frowned openly, he loosened the wrinkles between his brows as if giving up and said, "...I don't know how the rumor came about, but...it's not that big of a deal.")
"So was really a matchmaking?"

Selnia sighed and shook her head in surprise.

"My uncle wants to be introduced to, not me."

".....? Introducing who?"

That's, Saori Shikikagami.

Is it? Saori-san?

My voice was a bit muffled, but that should not be a problem.

It was an unexpected turn of events, and one that I had not expected to hear here.

Selnia cowered her shoulders in disgust as she watched Akiharu frown, unable to understand what she was talking about.

"The company that Saori is modeling for, you mentioned before that it was owned by your grandfather, right?"

I think I've heard of

My uncle happened to see Saori in a magazine and liked her, and when he found out that the company she worked for was owned by his grandfather, he asked me to introduce her to him."

"Yeah, but isn't he old enough to be my uncle?"

Unless they are older siblings, they are not so different from their parents' generation.

In other words, Saori and I should be about the same age as parents and children. It's not so unusual for older couples to be together, but an uncle and a friend's sister is an unbearable combination.

(alt: In other words, Saori-san and I should be about the same age apart from each other as fathers and daughters, but--- "You must be over 40 years old.... Of course, it's not uncommon for a couple with an age gap... but... Uncle and Being my friend's older sister is an unbearable combination, isn't it?") "You mean that thing? They called you in here to ask you to bridge the gap in person?"

Yes. Grandfather was unusually proactive in finding a partner for his uncle, who never found one, so he felt compelled to help him out.

(alt: "Yeah. Even as a grandfather, my uncle, who never tried to find a marriage partner, was unusually aggressive, so I couldn't help but want to take care of him...") Selnia said in a tired tone, but Akiharu, who was listening, could only be dumbfounded.

Even at any rate, he is too much of a parental idiot.

How is it that you spoil an old man who has reached the age of maturity?

So what are you going to do about it? Are you going to introduce me?"

When I asked her the important part, Selnia's expression became blatantly sullen: "Do you think I will? I don't dislike her, so if it's just to help out by delivering letters or asking if there's someone she likes, I'd be quite happy to do it, but that's as far as I'll go.

He may say that he laments his family's running amok, but he still says that he will cooperate with them to some extent.

At any rate, it wasn't about matchmaking, Akiharu breathed out a sigh of relief and immediately recalled that he was not talking about matchmaking.

Why should we feel relieved there?

I was puzzled by the feeling of having the support in my chest removed, and trying to shake it off, Akiharu said, "I understand that you were called because of that uncle, but weren't you told anything? It's like a marriage proposal that might have been brought up along the way.

..... After I said that, I felt like I had to ask myself what I was rehashing.

I want to pretend it never happened, but it's too late.

It is often said that the water is never returned to the basin.

Akiharu, who had faint hopes that she would not be missed by some miraculous coincidence, fearfully looked at Selnia's situation.

Mr. Drill, with his trademark vertical roll backward, smiles a little through his nose and then looks at us with his arms folded in a pompous manner.

Who do you think you are talking to, Akiharu? Selnia = Iori = Flameheart, isn't it?

..... Well, if it looks like you don't get it, maybe I should take you to the hospital? Or has your jet lag morphed into something more morphological?"

"How can it be that I'm the one who's demented?"

She seemed to be unaware of her habit of saying crazy things with impunity, and she bared her teeth and yelled at me.

I am talking about the blood that runs through my body! I'm talking about the blood that runs through my veins.

I'm not sure, so please give me your conclusion. What do you mean?

So if the Flameheart family is so concerned about family and bloodline, there is no way that a quarter like me could have been born!

"....., uh, that's what I'm talking about."

(alt: "... ah, that's what it is") The explanation was given angrily, which made Akiharu finally understand what he wanted to say.

In other words, that.

I guess people who valued bloodlines would not have allowed marriages that mixed foreign blood.

Although I was convinced, Selnia's irritation was still unresolved and she gave me a hard look, saying, "What I look for in a member of the Flameheart family is character and talent, but what I respect even more is their will. It's a little different from the common sense of nobility, but what you should really get is not just a title in blood or property, but someone you can be proud to call a member of your family.

So, no wives, like in the novels or anything?"

I see. There are times when they encourage you to do something, or ask you to do something, but it's not something that your grandfather or father would ever do without your permission.

I see... ..

(alt: "Ha - I see.") The aristocracy had a strong image of being more formal, marrying and adopting children without any pretense for the development of the family, but apparently this was not the case.

It may be that Selnia's house is exceptionally different, but even so, it is surprising.

But if you think about it, that father would never have done that.

He was the opposite of a hard-nosed stiff, willing to play chess with his daughter's classmates until he won.

If I had known that he was a gentleman and good-looking, but had a strong childish impression of me, Minna and Pina might not have proposed the idea of a marriage match.

I should have asked Tomomi, who's a good source of information," Akiharu scratched his head in belated regret, "If it was an arranged marriage, then..."

"..... huh?"

Not expecting this topic to continue, Akiharu was caught off guard and looked at Selnia vaguely and defenselessly.

The anger she had shown earlier was gone, and she looked at me cautiously, as if gauging the distance.

Yet, the hands with folded arms seem to have a lot of strength in them.

If I was in an arranged marriage, I would have to ask if I had a fiancée, but I wouldn't care. If that were the case, what would you do, Akiharu?"

"Hey, what do you want me to do with?"

I don't have an answer to the outlandish question, but Selnia doesn't seem to like it, her lips twisting slightly, "Isn't there something? You know, like coming to interfere, or trying to destroy the mess.

"No, wait, what kind of a fool am I if I just barge in on an arranged marriage out of the blue? I mean, you don't do blind dates, do you?"

I'm talking about, for example! If I have a girlfriend and I'm going to marry her, then I don't care if it's not an arranged marriage, but if I have a girlfriend and I'm going to marry her, then I'm going to marry her.

Selnia, who seemed to be getting more and more excited as she talked, was excitedly excited and started to talk.

But Akiharu couldn't go along with that and kept raising an eyebrow.

If you marry the person you are dating, that is a legitimate goal, and there should be no other choice but to celebrate.

And "There's nothing to do but celebrate."

I know that I am not the only one who was offended by the fact that it was just a metaphor.

It should be the usual pattern to tease them while offering appropriate congratulatory remarks.

Akiharu, who could tell even by himself that he was in a slurring mood, held back the urge to lash out his tongue, fingertip playing with the safety pin in his right ear, and asked Selnia in return.

"Is there such a thing as a girlfriend?"

No, I won't! Don't ask me what I think is obvious!

No, of course not, no matter how almost all-girls' school you are, that's no way to talk about it.

Akiharu was somewhat dumbfounded and tried to calm down, wondering why he was in such an unintelligible state of tension. The actuality that you're going to be helping your uncle with his courtship activities is understandable, but if you're causing such hysteria, you're going to end up being single for a long time to come. Calm down a little bit."

..... The adult response was supposed to quiet the jagged horse, but somehow he managed to say something that further raised his blood pressure.

It's strange, it wasn't supposed to be like this, Akiharu thought, sweating coldly at his own comment.

However, even if you regret it, it is already too late.

Selnia's temples seemed to be so tense that a blue streak seemed to appear on her temple, and her beautiful face was stained with a powerful anger that would make a child instantly burst into tears.

The noblewoman of the quarter unfolded her arms and shook her tightly clenched fists, "Who do you think you are to tell me to calm down? Besides, your uncle is long gone!

Then what are you getting so worked up about?

It's against those spoiled people who don't understand the human condition at all!"

She is stared at and shouted at with all her might, but Akiharu doesn't retreat and glares back at her.

When I didn't understand what he meant and couldn't remain silent because he was taking it out on me like this, he opened his mouth aggressively and said, "So what's the problem with me? You're the one who started talking about something you don't understand and taking over and making all these crazy comments, aren't you?"

"Oh, no, you're just another self-satisfied selfish person!"

Because you're the one who's supposed to be doing all the talking!

As we were arguing, I noticed that the distance between Selnia and me was almost gone, and we were in a dangerous position where I could slap or high-kick her if she wanted to.

If she were a normal young lady, there would be no need to worry, but she has a track record of attacking people even when they first meet.

Although she has no intention of taking any other option than to avoid the attack, Akiharu is determined not to lose and looks back into her azure eyes.

Perhaps offended by this, Selnia raised her eyebrows in annoyance and said, "Oh, my God, that's so annoying! How could you fall in love with such a man?"

Selnia's screeching voice suddenly stops.

Not only that, Akiharu was struck by a feeling as if the air and time were frozen in place.

The anger that had filled her face just a few seconds ago was quickly slipping away from her face.

She blinked constantly, her lips trembled, and she was extremely agitated.

However, Akiharu is also upset, and he reflexively tries to talk back, but his mouth is about to open.

Because if I didn't mishear you just now, you wouldn't have said something terrible, would you? I mean, it's probably not accurate, because I was so excited, but I'm pretty sure said something along the lines of, "I love this guy."

I'm not sure what you're talking about...something like That's ridiculous.

(alt: , or something like that.) I've heard that Selnia, who is somewhere between a fighter and a tease, and a proud young lady who always looks up to you, likes you.

This should not be possible under normal circumstances.

But from the way he looked, it didn't seem like he was trying to deceive us. But perhaps it wasn't Selnia herself, but a friend of hers who fell in love with her, and she accidentally said something. No, my heart is racing, and it's getting kind of hard to take it anymore.

(alt: However, it doesn't feel like you're trying to deceive me with that look... No, but maybe it's not Selnia herself, but someone who has fallen in love with her friend, and carelessly blurts out. The theory that it's gone... it's no good.) The most important point is still the same: Are you sure you did not mishear me?

Holding her fidgety and restless hand tightly, Akiharu pushed down her feeble attempts to pretend she hadn't heard anything, and gathered her courage to say, "Oh, and that was just now..."

No, no!

As I was about to ask her, Selnia denied it with all her might.

Her normally strong eyes are weak and panicked, shaking her head so much that her hair seems to be in disarray.

Her attitude was so unlike Selnia's that one might have wondered if she really was the blonde driller's boisterous noble daughter.

Selnia, whom Akiharu had never seen before, was distraught in front of his eyes, and he stood there, not knowing what to do.

Selnia pressed her hand to her cheek, looking more and more nervous as she was unable to take action, and her gaze wandered from place to place, "That's not what I meant. It's not like that. I'm sure it's a mistake! There must be some kind of mistake!

(alt: Seeing this one who couldn't take any action, Selnia pressed her hand against her cheek as if she was getting more and more temperamental. I'm sure... that's right! There must be some kind of mistake!") "Uh,, is that right?"

When Akiharu, driven by the momentum, spoke with her, Selnia's expression brightened and she said, "Eh, yes, that's right! Of course it is! I'm not saying anything"

He was speaking rapidly as if this was the moment to win, but then suddenly stopped talking.

The mouth, which was about to break into a smile, tightened and became as if it was holding something back "No, no, I don't think so.

In the midst of her anxiety and worry, Akiharu heard such a murmur in her ear.

Celunia, who looked at me with her cherry-red lips curled into a tight knot and her chin slightly pulled back, looked so interesting that I wanted to ask her where she had lost her panic earlier.

She looks as if she is about to go into battle, and her azure eyes, which give the impression of strong will, are looking straight at us.

Akiharu's eyes were so intent on not escaping that she was completely engulfed by them, unable to move.

It's not like me to just go to and pretend it didn't happen. Even if you don't intend to, you have to take responsibility for where your arrows go. And I just learned last month that there won't always be another opportunity."

(alt: "... It's not like me to pretend that something wasn't done. Even if it wasn't my intention, I should take responsibility for the destination of the arrow I shot... and forever. I just came to understand last month that there won't be another chance...") His quiet, yet powerful voice seemed to be telling a story to himself.

It's like trying to inspire by binding yourself with your own words and putting your back into the water.

Despite this situation, Akiharu thought it was very Selnia-like and looked at her somewhat dazzlingly.

Then and it's incredibly beautiful.

As Akiharu was thinking that if a goddess of war actually existed, she would feel like this, Selnia slowly opened her lips and spoke to him.

I know it wasn't supposed to be like this, but I'm going to say it. Yes, I'm going to tell you. I'm going to tell you. I'm going to tell you.!

(alt: "It wasn't supposed to be like this, but I'm going to say it.) "....., you're such a jerk."

(alt: ".....That's so, I don't like it.....") I hate it! I don't understand what this is all about!

Why am I being made to look like this, like this!"

..... That's strange.

I thought he was going to confess, but he really doesn't want to. What does this mean? Selnia's anger is ignited again, and Akiharu, who is not keeping up with the situation, scratches his cheek with his fingertip and says, "Ahh..... well, it seems like she said she liked me earlier"

I asked him about it while thinking that it might have been a mistake.

Then Selnia gave me a very strong glare and said, "Yes, yes, yes! I like you, what's wrong with that?

I was very angry with him, but he said it clearly.

And he didn't stop there, he grabbed the collar of Akiharu's coat and said, "This is not a joke at all! Even in a bad taste French movie, they wouldn't go this far! It's so terrible that I, of all people, have to be the one to fall in love with Akiharu!

"Hey,, do you like me or not?

Neither of them! Otherwise, we wouldn't be in this mess!

So why do I look like I'm being accused of something?

He scratched his head and blurted out, but he couldn't quite get his head around what was going on.

When I was told that she liked me, rather than feeling happy about it, I felt as if the shock was so strong that all my senses had become numb.

While Akiharu wonders if this is really happening in real life, Selnia removes her hand from holding his collar and takes a step back.

However, his fiery eyes remained the same, and his mouth twisted in bitterness as he said, "Oh my God, you're always, always messing with my pace, aren't you? You keep doing this all the time!

"..... that that so"

(alt: "... that... that's why...") What the hell?

"..... No, it's nothing."

(alt: "... No, it's nothing...") The two men stared at him as if he were a bitter enemy, and Akiharu quietly withdrew without making a statement.

This is not a goddess, but a demon.

Unable to contain herself, Selnia turned on her heel, growling deep in her throat like a hungry lion, and returned to her original position to pick up her suitcase.

Then he turns around again and says, "I'm going to go back to my room now! I will make up for this, you just have to wait and see! And don't talk to me for a while, because I'm very angry and disgusted.

He spoke one-sidedly, and then walked roughly to the dormitory.

Akiharu, watching in a daze, realized that he was about to be left behind, and hurriedly shouted to his back as he moved away.

Hey, wait! What am I supposed to do now that you're saying that?

Cernea's voice seemed to have reached him, and she did not stop, but turned her face toward him and said, "You decide what you want to do!

He blackmailed her and left without further ado.

As Selnia moves away, Akiharu reaches out to her and almost freezes in his position. In a flash, he disappears and loosely lowers his hand.

(alt: Akiharu froze in the position of reaching out his hand to Selnia, who was going away... In an instant, he disappeared and slowly lowered his hand.) You are absolutely right.

You should think and decide what to do by yourself.

I couldn't find the words to say back to him.

But I'm not sure... I've been told suddenly that I like her.

(alt: That said, — — he suddenly told me he liked me.) And to be so angry with them.

Moreover, there were no demands.

There should have been a lot of things like "go out with me," "tell me what you think," "tell me how you feel," etc., but there was nothing.

Just, "I like it, but I don't like it."

And then he told me not to talk to him for a while, and that I should make up my own mind.

I was stunned and muttered to myself, but the answer was not lying anywhere.

The urge to crouch down with his head in his hands came over him, but Akiharu held it in, exhaling heavily and looking up at the sky. "..... .. what do I want to do"

It was a question to myself, not to anyone else, but I didn't have a clear answer.

I could only tell that there was indeed a feeling of uncertainty, as if hidden by a thick fog.

The most popular place to be is Hakuryo on an unpopular Sunday, when loud voices can be heard even if they are a little far away.

Moreover, when you know that it is the voice of someone you know well, it should be natural to become curious and go to see what they have to say.

The two were on the opposite side of the school building from where Selnia had left, with Akiharu's back to them, and they were completely unnoticed by the two excited students.

So, even in the middle of the process, they are still unaware.

Tomomi watched their conversation through to the end.